

# A Commentary on Homosexuality from a Scottish Christian Evangelical and Biblical Perspective

## 1. Introduction

The following commentary was prepared by a group of concerned Scottish Evangelical Christians, including homosexual Christians, with the aim of providing a brief addendum to some of the theological discussions taking place on homosexuality based on Biblical principles. In this respect, it seeks to complement some of the substantial work already available on the topic. Moreover, it should, by no means, be seen as an exhaustive presentation of all the arguments on the issue.

## 2. Homosexuality: Social and Biological Aspects

Research relating to the causes of homosexuality and heterosexuality are still very much ongoing and have, so far, been inconclusive. However, it is generally accepted that it is unlikely that a unique cause for homosexuality or heterosexuality exist. Instead, several elements including both biological and social-environmental aspects may be responsible, at the same time and in varying degrees, for the homosexuality or heterosexuality of a specific person<sup>1</sup>.

What is certain, however, is that some biological aspects are present in the homosexuality of a number of persons since every study undertaken thus far, has shown that male homosexuality is 2-3 more prevalent than female homosexuality. There is, therefore, something in the man's make-up as a biological man (as opposed to a biological woman) which makes him more prone to homosexuality.

Moreover, it should be noted that the morality of homosexual practice is not dependent on whether or not a tendency for homosexuality is inborn or has some biological aspects. For example, it is not because a tendency for paedophilia may be shown to sometimes be inborn in a person that it should be accepted as a moral alternative by society.

The possibility of a homosexual person being able to change his or her sexuality has also been the subject of a lot of debate and research over the years. In this regard, it should be noted that although steady changes towards heterosexuality and miracles do indeed take place, these are not automatic for all those concerned with homosexuality for reasons that only God can perceive.

## 3. Theological basis of heterosexuality and homosexuality

### 3.1. Interpretation of the Bible

This document will not seek re-examine the excellent work, already in existence, in biblical interpretation and commentary, such as:

- **Mark Bonnington and Bob Fyall, *Homosexuality and the Bible***, Grove Books Ltd., 1998.
- **David Wright, *The Christian Faith and Homosexuality***, Cutting Edge Series, Rutherford House, 1994.
- **Martin Hallett, *What Does the Bible say about Sexuality and Homosexuality?***  
<http://www.truefreedomtrust.co.uk/WhatdoesBiblesay-new.html>
- **Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics***
- **Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow?: Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate***

These studies (and others) confirm that the Bible is opposed to homosexual practice but not to homosexual persons.

### 3.2. Why have two sexes?

It is interesting to note that in many theological discussions relating to homosexuality, the topic has often been studied on its own without first seeking to understand the full theology behind heterosexuality.

Only a few theologians have indeed asked themselves why heterosexuality should exist at all and how the 'falling in love' or attraction between heterosexuals should be understood and interpreted from a theological perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> Studies relating to the biological aspects of homosexuality have often been undermined by wrong methodology in which all homosexual persons were considered to have similar reasons for their sexuality. However, this methodology has now been shown to be inappropriate since it would be similar to putting all persons with cancer (including lung, skin and breast cancer) into one group and then trying to find similarities between the different affected persons.

Therefore, it is important to first separate the different kinds of homosexuals to be studied (for example whether they were affected from earliest childhood or after the beginning of adulthood) before a research project is considered.

In addition, it should be indicated that even if different biological reasons for homosexuality are studied, the results will be difficult to interpret since social-environmental aspects such as the lack of adequate male role models in childhood may sometimes also be present

These theologians have also suggested that, in order to better understand some of the reasons behind the relevant issues of homosexuality, it may be useful, initially, to understand the background of the existence of sexual differences between men and women. Accordingly, they suggest that God had a good reason to not just create human unisex hermaphrodites capable of procreating amongst themselves in, for example, a similar manner to snails.

And although these theologians are aware that God's mysteries will never be totally revealed, they believe that an intelligent 'glimpse' of God's creative plans and order are possible when a number of passages of the Bible are considered.

They note, for example, that the apostle Paul experienced a glimpse of the mystery of the relationship of love which is made possible between two persons of different sex when he studied the relationship of love which is made possible between Christ and His 'bride' the church, as indicated in Ephesians 5 v.21-32.

In other words, some theologians suggested that the bond between a man and a woman in marriage is like that of (or a model of) Christ and the church. Others, however, believe that this bond between a man and woman is not only 'like' that of Christ and the church but 'is' the same bond but expressed in a different manner and between different actors. Accordingly, they believe that the relationships between (a) a woman and a man and (b) Christ and His church are somehow, and in a very mysterious way, 'inter-linked' and 'interdependent' since they come from the same 'source' of love in God through creation. In addition, these same persons suggest that both relationships of love have a sort of 'direction' between the female actors (the woman or the church) and the male actors (the man or Christ). They also suggest that the 'direction' in the relationship which exists between the husband and his wife gives the man an opportunity to make room for the woman and to let her come to herself in the fullest and most complementary way. In doing this, the man has the role of a "loving and servant leader", but in such a manner that the mutual complementariness of himself and his wife comes into expression.

These theologians, moreover, suggest that if the 'direction' in a relationship is distorted between two actors (such as in a homosexual relationship where there is no longer a 'direction' since the relationship is between two actors of the same sexual identity), then because of the 'interdependence' of these relationships, the relationship between Christ and His church would also be undermined, in that a relationship of equals would also be forced upon it. In other words, the homosexual relationship would try, in a mysterious way, to make the church take the role of Christ (a form of idolatry) or make Christ take the role of the church (whereby He would lose His deity). And this, they suggest, can only be considered as a complete distortion of who God really is.

It is also noted that there is always a strong element of role-reversal in idolatry (Rom 1: 21-32). Instead of the Creator making the creature in His own image, the creature is making the Creator in his own image. This is presumably a part of man's rebellion by which he seeks to be as God (Gen 3:5) or to call God into judgement (Gen 3:10-13).

The aforementioned argument is therefore seen, by some theologians, as one of the most relevant arguments against homosexual relationships since it emphasises the crucial nature of relationships and their directions between the female actors (the woman or the church) and the male actors (the man or Christ).

### 3.3. Sexual identity

When considering the nature of the relationships between a man and a woman, it may be helpful to stress that biomedical science has not yet found an accepted definition of a 'man' and of a 'woman' as such. Indeed, science has often found it difficult to distinguish between:

- (a) the manner in which a person considers his or her own sexual identity<sup>2</sup>,
  - (b) the manner in which other people consider the sexual identity of a person,
  - (c) the physiological aspects of a person such as his or her sexual organs,
  - (d) the genetical aspects of a person such as his or her XY or XX chromosomes, and
  - (e) the neuro-psychological make-up of a person controlling the attraction of a person towards another sexual identity.
- For example, this make-up results in most heterosexual persons being unconsciously attracted (amongst other traits) to:
- (1) another human person (as opposed to an animal),
  - (2) a person of the opposite sex (as opposed to the same sex) or
  - (3) a young person (as opposed to a very old person).

In other words, most heterosexual persons are 'wired' to (1) be attracted to another person (as opposed to not being attracted to anyone) and (2) only be attracted to specific kinds of persons without being conscious of (or even understanding) the manner in which this 'falling in love' or attraction takes place.

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<sup>2</sup> The manner in which a person considers his or her own sexual identity may be determined by factors in his or her social environment and male or female neurology.

The difficulty in determining the 'sex' of a person arises because, in some cases, a real mixture of the aforementioned sexual aspects may be found in a specific person.

For example, until a few years ago, genetic tests were undertaken on women tennis players at Wimbledon to determine whether or not they really were 'women'. But this has now been stopped for ethical reasons even though 'women' with a male body (but female sexual organs) are unquestionably stronger than 'women' with a female body.

In addition, from a theological perspective, an adequate determination of a person's sexuality with respect to the aforementioned traits is also still ongoing. In this regards some theologians (but not all) question whether it may not be the manner in which a person considers his or her own sexuality which may be determinative.

### **3.4. The suffering of the homosexual person**

In society, homosexual persons are generally defined as individuals who are attracted to the same sexual identities as the one which they consider themselves to have. In other words, though the person is aware of his or her own sexual identity, he or she is also attracted (for some ill-defined reason) to a person with the same sexual identity.

And, in this respect, it is interesting to note that a minority of homosexual persons have indicated that they were aware that something was deeply 'wrong' in them, as very young children, well before they were introduced to any Christian , moral or social issues or expectations.

Moreover, the 'wrongfulness' of their attraction to other same sex persons came as a result of the incredible pain and suffering that was initiated in them through this homosexual attraction.

In other words, for a minority of homosexual persons, their opposition to homosexual relationships did not originate in their awareness of Biblical precepts. Instead these precepts came as a kind of confirmation to what they already knew and had experienced since early childhood.

So how do these homosexual persons, including children, explain their deep experience of suffering when confronted to homosexual attractions?

An answer to this question may be proposed by first looking at heterosexuality and the manner in which heterosexual persons 'see' one another when they are attracted to each other. In a way, heterosexual persons who are neuro-psychologically attracted to one another, are attracted to the whole sexual identity of the partner which 'enters into them' as a 'complement' to their own sexual identity, thereby becoming a unity of one flesh (Gen 2:24).

For some homosexual persons, on the other hand, who are neuro-psychologically attracted to a person of the same sexual identity, this identity does not 'enter into them' as a 'complement' to their own sexual identity (they are already of the same sexuality) but as a 'competition' to who they are. This is because there is no possibility of a peaceful cohabitation of sexual identities in a person, which do not 'complement' each other<sup>3</sup>.

In addition, the very manner in which a person is (heterosexually or homosexually) attracted to another person is then also in operation. This means that a person is very likely to 'see' the other as being very beautiful or 'perfect' in his or her sexual identity.

For some homosexual persons, however, this may result in deep despair. This is because they are aware of their own limitations and will often feel that, in the competition of the two same sex identities which are present in them, they will always result in being conquered by the 'perfect' foreign identity. As a result, their own original identity will often be completely defeated, crushed and denied even existence by the new 'perfect' identity which has entered into them and taken over. In this case, the homosexual person will feel the denial of his or her own identity very deeply. And as a result, he or she may often consider his or her own destruction, including through suicide<sup>4</sup>, in order to comply with the new foreign identity that has taken over in his or her being.

In other words, when a same sex identity enters into some homosexual persons, this new identity completely overpowers their own sexual identity. Moreover, this is happening through the neuro-psychological attraction of the homosexual person and often against his or her will.

This means that, in a very similar manner to what is happening during a heterosexual rape in which the whole sexual identity of the rapist enters and overpowers that of his or her victim, in some (but not all) forms of homosexuality, the sexual identity of a person is also entering and overpowering the same sex identity of the homosexual person.

## **4. What the Christian churches can do**

For many hundreds of years, the Christian church, as a whole, has ignored the issues relating to homosexuality. This has happened because many Christians probably considered the topic as being taboo and may not have had enough courage, understanding or love to seek to help homosexual persons. In other words, many Christians may have betrayed their responsibility and calling to be a light of love and compassion to the world in this area of deep suffering and despair. It is therefore of no surprise that many homosexual persons still feel very angry towards Christians and consider them as the main source of their condemnation and rejection by society.

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<sup>3</sup> In any 'sexual relationship', be it between two human persons or between Jesus Christ and His church there is indeed no room for anything else apart from complementariness and exclusivity.

<sup>4</sup> Male homosexual persons are about 12 times more likely to commit suicide than male heterosexual persons.

In the past 15-25 years, however, the Christian churches have sought to better understand homosexual persons and many (but not all) have tried to reach out towards them in a spirit of love and compassion.

In some churches, this spirit of love and compassion towards the homosexual person, has resulted in their acceptance of homosexual relationships.

Other churches, on the other hand, have not gone down this road for their own theological reasons. They have stressed, instead, that it is important to examine the manner in which God may be affected by a same-sex relationship. And as a result of a theological and biblical understanding (see aforementioned comments) that suggest that God may indeed be deeply opposed to homosexual relationships, the question then arose whether the love between two homosexual persons should have priority over the love of God by Christians.

This has led some Christian churches to oppose homosexual relationships but seek to become more supporting and loving towards homosexual persons which they find in their community. Homosexual persons who may also agree with the church that same-sex relationships are wrong and who are suffering very deeply because of their predicament. For example, some Christian homosexual men have indicated that they are in torment because of their strong attraction to other Christian men in the church and often do not know what to do with this painful attraction. In addition, some may be uncertain whether to talk about their situation to their pastor or other Christian friends and may not tell anyone of this feeling of despair for many years.

In addition, some homosexual Christians may suffer from a deep sense of loneliness as they seek to battle against their own thoughts. Moreover, they may consider that they do not really fit in a church that often emphasises the importance of the biological family model. A family model which provides love and belonging to family members in which they have no part. They then seek to survive in a church in which they increasingly feel abandoned, lonely and unloved by anyone in any meaningful way.

### **Recommendations:**

- ***The church should seek to set aside its sense of taboo towards homosexuality.***
- ***The church should differentiate between being a homosexual person (which an individual sometimes has no control over) and a homosexual relationship (which is subject to moral decisions).***
- ***The church should unconditionally accept and love the homosexual person, as another child of God, whom He deeply loves,***
- ***The church should oppose homosexual relationships, since they are proscribed in the Bible and profoundly undermine the relationship of Jesus Christ with his church (Ephesians 5 v.21-32),***
- ***The church should continue to investigate the theology of sexual relationships.***
- ***The Church should oppose what can, in some cases, be considered as a kind of rape of a homosexual person's identity by the involuntary and non-complementary entrance into his or her own mind of a same sex identity.***
- ***The church should be welcoming, open and understanding towards homosexual persons.***
- ***The church should be a source of encouragement and support to homosexual persons.***
- ***The church should remember that sexual sins are no worse than any other sins.***
- ***The churches should pray more for homosexual persons.***
- ***Homosexual church members should be considered as an 'asset' to the Christian community and not as a 'problem'. They can, indeed, reach out to other people in pain and to other homosexual persons.***
- ***The management team of a church should discuss with homosexual persons their role, risks and responsibilities in the church so that they can fit-in appropriately.***
- ***The church should address the loneliness problem of homosexual persons.***
- ***The church should not automatically oppose certain homosexual Christians working with children.***
- ***The church should seek to protect homosexual persons, who have problems with children, from these children.***
- ***Heterosexual Christian friends should seek to alleviate the cross of the homosexual person by offering them their deep compassion and assistance in the fight against any homosexual temptations. Through this assistance a faithful solidarity may also be shown in avoiding being the source or the cause of any traumatising and dangerous situations. For example, when people only wear a minimal amount of clothing.***

- ***There should be a means for each homosexual person to be able to contact a friend when the going becomes really difficult.***
- ***The church should regularly encourage the homosexual person not to give up in the battle over temptation. Christian friends should acknowledge the incredible battles being fought and remind the homosexual persons that they are not alone in the battles.  
The deep friendship and brotherly love of those in the church will represent the greatest help for the homosexual person who will be afraid of life and of the church.***
- ***Homosexual persons should be advised that Christian self-help groups supported by competent counsellors are in existence enabling compassionate assistance and encouragement.***
- ***Ministers should make a point of preaching about homosexuality on a regular basis in order to remind those in the church that God deeply loves and accepts homosexual persons though He opposes the relationships.***

## **5. How to help homosexual children**

The fact that homosexual persons can be children has often been completely ignored by many Christians in the church. A number of Christians do, indeed, believe that homosexual persons are somehow parachuted into existence as adults without having, in any way, grown up as children with the issues.

Again this may have happened because many Christians may feel uneasy toward the reality that these children may exist in the Church and the fact that they do not know how to respond to their needs.

As a result, many homosexual Christians have indicated how completely abandoned and betrayed they have felt, as children, in the Christian community. A community that has often simply denied their existence as impossible.

But homosexual children do exist and some persons have indicated that their very first ever thoughts, at the age of 2-3 years old, were strongly homosexual in nature (as opposed to the normal feelings towards their same sex parent). Moreover, some children testify that the pain of being attracted, in a homosexual manner, to young men or women (which makes them, in a way, adultophiles) began at the same very early stages. And because of the pain, these children know that something is deeply wrong in them without having ever been introduced to religious morality or social expectations.

Of course, the most appropriate persons to address the needs of these homosexual children are the parents who are best placed to seek to understand what is happening in their children. All parents, therefore, need to be aware that their child may be affected by homosexuality and not just deny (and dismiss) this prospect as impossible. They should also learn to recognise certain signs in their child which may inform them that he or she may be affected by homosexuality.

### ***Recommendations:***

- ***Though sociological research relating to homosexual children has hardly begun, it should be undertaken as a matter of urgency in order to address the needs of these children both at home, in school and in the church.***
- ***The church should equip all parents to learn to recognise the signs that may indicate that their child is struggling with homosexual attractions.***
- ***Every homosexual child should be unconditionally accepted and loved by his or her parents, siblings, and peers at school as well as in the church. Any discrimination or rejection of the homosexual child (who can be as young as 2-3 years old) should be strongly countered.***
- ***The church should protect children from those homosexual adults who have problems with children.***
- ***The church should protect homosexual children from heterosexual persons who may unwillingly be a source of suffering to them. This may happen, for example, if these persons only wear a minimal amount of clothing.***
- ***Parents should seek to help the child to not reject himself or herself because of the deep incomprehensible suffering, despair and pain that he or she may be experiencing.***
- ***Parents should seek to guide their homosexual child into the love of God. They should also share, with their child, God's opposition to homosexual relationships and the fact that God will always help the child in his or her battles against homosexual temptation.***

**Note:**

**- This commentary on homosexuality has been endorsed by the Christian Evangelical Self-help Group on Homosexuality of Edinburgh which has members in the different churches including the Church of Scotland, the Salvation Army, the Scottish Pentecostal Church and the Baptist Union of Scotland.**

- The following individuals are in support of this Christian Self-help Group on Homosexuality:

- Mr. Philip Boydell MA, Member of the Episcopal Church of Scotland and a Leader of the Navigators' Student Ministry in Edinburgh.

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