

Homosexuality: God's Word and Our Witness

Faculty Essays from
the Theological Seminary and
Bible School of the
Association of Free Lutheran
Congregations

This booklet contains a collection of essays that were prepared in 1989 by the following AFLC Schools faculty members: Donald Greven, Philip Haugen, Robert Lee, Steven Lombardo, Francis Monseth, and Ralph Tjelta. They were prepared in response to a request from the AFLC-Canada, and received by the annual conference of that church body.

The Coordinating Committee voted this year to publish these essays in a booklet for distribution among our congregations as well as to other interested friends. The twin issues of homosexual ordination and marriage are currently generating extensive discussion and debate within many denominations, and it is the committee's prayerful hope that this booklet will serve as a valuable resource for personal and group study, as our fellowship of congregations strives to stand on the Word of God in conviction and compassion.

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PREFACE

Our generation has witnessed a dramatic shift in terms of the range of topics for ethical discussion within nominal Christendom. Homosexuality is an issue that has moved to the forefront of debate. Christians were united until recent times in viewing homosexuality as a departure from the ethical standards of sacred Scripture. There was common agreement that homosexuality represents a deviation from God's holy will and is therefore sinful.

Today some denominations are affirming homosexuality as natural and normal, to be accepted within the bounds of Christian propriety. Others are debating the ordination of practicing homosexuals and the blessing of homosexual "marriages." Some argue for a distinction between homosexual orientation and behavior, believing that the former describes an inborn condition that is fully acceptable in the sight of God and should not therefore be viewed negatively by the Church.

It is against the background of these developments and discussions that these studies were commissioned, seeking to present the biblical view of homosexuality as sin, whether in desire or in deed. There is, however, a deep concern to underscore the reality of hope for the homosexual who comes to Christ in repentance and faith. Indeed, there is forgiveness and deliverance in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. Through His name, healing can be a blessed reality.

There are five parts to this series. The first discusses key Old Testament passages dealing with the subject, and the second surveys the relevant New Testament passages. The third considers how the Church has viewed homosexuality in the past, and the fourth addresses the question of a distinction between homosexual orientation and behavior. Finally, guidance will be suggested for those who seek to help the homosexual find forgiveness and deliverance.

The writers of these studies share without reservation the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and, as such, is fully trustworthy in all its parts. They stand with those who uphold the complete inerrancy of Scripture in the original autographs, and have approached this topic with the prayerful concern to set forth what the Bible teaches, recognizing its absolute authority in all matters of faith and life.

It has been the aim of the writers, also, to employ the time-honored biblical principles of interpretation as reflected in the Lutheran confessions, believing that the historical-critical approach is unnecessary and unworthy in the light of the Bible's own witness to itself as God's Word. The writers stand with those who recognize the grammatical-historical method as an enduring and entirely adequate approach to the written Word of God.

These studies are certainly not an exhaustive treatment of the subject. The goal, nevertheless, is to affirm what Scripture teaches concerning homosexuality, the witness of the Church over the centuries, and the need for evangelical Christians today to minister to those who are tempted to or trapped in this sinful lifestyle.

OLD TESTAMENT

The discussion of homosexuality in the Old Testament must begin with a discussion of the origin of sex and its purpose from the beginning (Genesis 1 and 2) when the human race was created by God Himself.

Creation

God established at creation the fundamental creation and distinction in the human race, that of male and female. This distinction, male and female, was reflected by way of identity and function in the human body, and was established as the basic fundamental distinction and division of the human race according to God's divine plan and received His blessing. In this divine plan God intended that the attraction of male to female, and female to male, was to be the natural and normal orientation and drive which would fit into His divine plan for human society. Heterosexuality was thus established at creation as God's ordained design for sexual relationships, and the coming together of male and female in the sexual act was to be the relationship described in Genesis 2:24 as "becoming one flesh" which would act at the foundation of marriage and the family. Further, this sexual act of intimacy between male and female was to be confined to the context of marriage and was to be seen as God's provision for the propagation of the human race and for the establishment of the most intimate, compassionate and satisfying of all earthly relationships. This intimacy of relationship is described in Genesis 4:1: "Now the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived and bare Cain, and said, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord.'" (KJV) The term "knew" means the physical sexual intimacy for intercourse.

Marriage was created by God to be a fundamental institution of God. It is the indissoluble union (except through death) of one man and one woman for life in a relationship of mutual love and faithfulness in a fundamental oneness of life as a duty to humankind, to the Kingdom of God, and to self, to the

ultimate praise and glory of God. Celibacy is an acceptable exception to marriage for those to whom it is given for justifiable reasons with the understanding that it is to be accompanied by personal control over the sensuous nature. Homosexuality, therefore, is contradictory to this fundamental creation of God and His purpose and is a perversion of God's original intention, together with other sexual perversions belonging to the realm of mankind's fall into sin, subject to His judgment and condemnation. Deliverance from this sin, as well as from all other sins, comes through the Divine Savior first promised in Genesis 3:15.

The Moral Law

Further, when God gave the moral law in the form of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, He commanded, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." God, by this commandment, in revelation of His holy essence, has forbidden every form of unchastity. This includes not only the external act, but also "every kind of cause, motive, and means. Your heart, your lips, and your whole body are to be chaste and to afford no occasion, aid or encouragement to unchastity" (from Luther's Large Catechism). This commandment requires not only that a man live chastely himself but that he also does all that he can to help his neighbor to do the same. This would apply both to the husband and wife in the married relationship, which this commandment is designed to protect, and would indicate that they are to assist one another in maintaining lives of chastity and a relationship of sanctity. Here again homosexuality would be included with other sexual sins as a form of unchastity and would stand condemned by the very commandment of God.

Sodom

The judgment of God upon homosexuality and other sexual perversions is seen in two other Old Testament passages. They are Genesis 19:1-14 and Judges 19:1-30. The Genesis 19 passage presents several facts regarding the sin of homosexuality. The first is that the correct understanding of the verb "to

know” is, in this context, to desire physical sexual intimacy with the guest of Lot. Some would maintain another meaning for this word, that it refers to “simply becoming acquainted with” as in the sense of an introduction with an explanation of one’s past life and present intentions. It is clear, however, that this is not the case here, because Lot implores them not to commit wickedness. Nowhere in the Bible do we find it to be a sin to become acquainted with someone when the purposes for doing so are pure in their intention.

Secondly, there is no doubt that a lifestyle of homosexuality in all its forms was a common practice in this city (v. 21). Lot may have been preaching against these sins, because the men of the city now threaten Lot and his guests with violence in the fulfillment of their impassioned lusts. There are those who would maintain that it was only the act of attempted homosexual “rape” that brought the judgment of God upon the city, and that God’s judgment does not include those who enter into a homosexual relationship with natural willingness. Both are included as the sins of this city, however, which is evident from the fact that (v. 20) the sin is described as exceedingly grave even before the attempt at homosexual rape. To suggest otherwise is to beg the question. One could reason, in fact, just the opposite by noting that the blindness of verse 11 was the punishment for attempted homosexual rape, whereas the destruction of the city was the punishment for the sins in which they all mutually and willingly were involved (v. 4).

The final fact to be noted is that the investigation of the two angels confirmed the previous statement concerning the wickedness of the city. God destroyed the city in judgment because of this wickedness, as an illustration of the final judgment which will come upon all sinners bound in unbelief by all consuming and controlling lifestyles such as homosexuality. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals ... will inherit the kingdom of God” (See I Corinthians 6:9-10)

Judges 19

The incident in Judges 19 is similar to the one in Genesis 19, but there are some differences as well. In the first place, it should be noted that the reason for the choice of Gibeah for a night's lodging was that it would mean staying in the city of one's own people rather than running the risk of dwelling in the midst of foreigners. The failure to provide hospitality for this man, even after he had remained in the city square for some time, was inexcusable. The fact that an old man, coming into the city late in the day, was the only one left to offer hospitality is indicative of the serious sinful condition there. Another point of difference is that this terrible sinful condition was committed by a certain group of the men in the city, whereas all of the men in Sodom were involved. The tragic consequence was that, instead of delivering them up for righteous judgment, the tribe of Benjamin actually protected these men who had committed this abominable sin. A third difference is that, instead of using a supernatural means of judgment, God used the other tribes as a chastening instrument.

One of several similarities between the two accounts is that it was homosexual lust which in both cases led to overt acts of sin and the stern judgment of God. In both cases a most unwise, if not sinful, solution was proposed to satisfy the lustful demand of the wicked men, which in both cases was a definite attempt to engage in homosexual activity with the guest. Finally, another similarity is the fact that God brought judgment upon the entire city as punishment for the sins prevalent there. Both these accounts reflect what had already been established in the creation of God, i.e., that homosexuality is a perversion of God's will and may incur His holy wrath.

The Holiness Code

Another Old Testament account dealing with homosexuality which needs to be considered is the holiness code found in Leviticus, chapters 18 and 20. It reads, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination"

(18:22), and “If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them” (20:13).

In order to correctly understand these verses, one must determine whether this law is ceremonial, civil, or moral. If these verses speak of ceremonial law only, as some would suggest by associating them, for example, with cultic purification, then they would have been abolished in Christ and would not be applicable today. It is necessary, however, to realize that ceremonial law anticipates the person and work of Christ for salvation. The prohibitions against homosexuality do not do this. Rather, it should be noticed that because the verses state that homosexuals were to receive the death penalty in Israel, it is placed in the sphere of other moral offenses to be punished by the Jewish magistrate and not in the sphere of temporal ceremonial legislation.

The fact that these verses reflect moral law is seen from the context (“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”), and from the fact that prohibitions against homosexuality are inherently contained in the creative event as well as in post-ascension Scripture (Romans 1). There is a reflection of civil law in these verses because this offense carried the penalty of capital punishment in ancient Israel. There are no ethical distinctions regarding the punishment of homosexuality because it is understood that under no circumstances can homosexuality be regarded as a morally acceptable alternative in society. According to the moral law, homosexuality is sin, and according to civil law homosexual acts are criminal. They are a violation of public morality with consequences so serious that the civil government, ordained by God, must act to avenge God’s wrath against evildoers who commit them, to curb and restrain outward behavior and to establish limits and public standards to which all members of society must conform.

Finally, one additional comment may be mentioned in regards to the Old Testament teaching about homosexuality. When God called the nation of Israel into ex-

istence, she was to be a holy nation to live in contrast to the surrounding heathen nations. The command of God to Israel, "Be holy, as I am holy," included sexual purity. The fact that Israel failed to be holy is seen in the message of the prophets. Idolatry and sexual impurity went hand in hand in the nation, as she increasingly imitated the heathen nations in these sins. The solution proclaimed by God through the prophets was genuine repentance and true faith. Only then could sinners be reconciled to God and receive power to turn from idolatry and to cease sexual impurity. Then, and only then, would they reflect God's glory and receive His abundance of blessings.

This conclusion is seen to be accurate because it reflects the unity of Scripture, the proper application of Law and Gospel, and the proper place of Law in the life of the believer. Today and always the true Christian Church reaches out to the homosexual, and to all sinners, with the love of Christ, which leads to repentance, faith, and restoration to God. The love of Jesus delivers from sin, it does not justify bondage to sin.

New Testament

There are three primary New Testament texts relevant to the topic of homosexuality, all in the Pauline epistles. The texts are Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11; and I Timothy 1:8-10. The focus of this study will be the Romans text, with only a brief mention of the other two. All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise indicated.

This study is approached on the basis of several presuppositions:

- The Word of God is authoritative and inerrant in everything it discusses, including the topic of homosexuality.
- All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God; all, including homosexuals, are sinners and are saved only by grace through faith in the substitutionary death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no one who does not need this free gift of God.
- God's desire for everyone, including the homosexual, is that he would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.
- The Biblical writers, in order to communicate, obey the basic rules of communication. What they say is what they intend to communicate, unless they clearly indicate that they are using symbolical language or other figures of speech.

Romans 1:26-27

The context of these two verses is a portion of Scripture where Paul is demonstrating the sinfulness of all mankind (1:18-3:20). He teaches the reader in this section that sinful action is the result, the outgrowth, of a sinful condition. In other words, the Word of God teaches that all, without exception, are by nature sinful and unclean. Actual sin is the result of a natural condition, and proceeds from this condition in every child of Adam.

In Romans 1:26-27 Paul discusses the topic of homosexuality. The fact that he is discussing this topic is clearly indicated in verse 27, where he describes “men with men.” The word that Paul uses for “men” here is a word that places strong emphasis on sex.¹ Paul’s emphasis is on one who is sexually a male committing indecent acts with another who is sexually a male. There is no question but that homosexuality is the topic.

Some have argued that Paul is not speaking about all kinds of homosexual behavior, but only homosexual behavior that is “promiscuous.” The argument is that homosexual behavior based on fidelity and bounded by love between the homosexual partners is acceptable to a holy God. This argument is based on the meaning and interpretation of the word “natural” as it is used in verses 26 and 27. The thought is that “natural” means “that which is natural to the individual,” rather than “according to the order of creation.” If this is indeed the meaning of “natural,” then Paul is saying that the one who is “naturally” heterosexual sins when he/she engages in homosexual behavior. He would also be saying then that the one who is “naturally” homosexual sins when he/she engages in heterosexual behavior. Thus the argument runs that Paul is not condemning all homosexual behavior in verses 26 and 27, but only that which is “unnatural” - that is, only that which is contrary to the personal sexual disposition of the individual.

What then is the meaning of the word “natural?” By definition, the word can mean either (1) “natural characteristics or disposition,” or (2) “natural as the regular natural order.”² Definition #1 allows for “natural” to be understood in the sense of personal disposition and characteristics, that which is natural to an individual. In definition #2, “natural” is used in the sense of the regular order of nature as created by God.

There are a number of reasons why “natural” in verses 26 and 27 cannot be understood in the sense of definition #1, “personal disposition or inclination.” In verse 27, Paul declares “the men abandoned the natural function of the woman.” The word “natural” here may be descriptive of the men; that is to

say “the men have abandoned the use of the woman that is natural to them as men.” However, the word “natural” here most certainly applied also to the woman; that is, the men have abandoned the use of the woman that is natural to her. We can confidently say the word “natural” is descriptive of the woman, because that is the way the word is used in verse 26: “their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.” Here “the natural function” described that which is natural to the women, because there are no men involved in the relationship described in verse 26. Paul is describing in verse 26 sexual activity between women only. Since that is so, then it is very proper to understand “natural function” in verse 27 as it is understood in verse 26. It may mean “that which is natural to men;” it most certainly means “that which is natural to the woman.”

Recognition of this use of “natural function” in verse 27 is important, because it renders definition #1, “personal disposition and inclination,” impossible in this context. Paul declares in verse 27 that it is the men who abandon the natural use of the woman. It is impossible for a person to abandon the “personal disposition and inclination” of someone else; rather, a person abandons his/her own personal disposition and inclination. If Paul meant here to condemn only homosexual behavior that is contrary to one’s own personal nature, then he would have said, “The men abandoned their own natural use” because the point being made is that these men sinned against their own natural condition. Paul does not say that, because he is not talking about “personal disposition and inclination.” He is talking about that use which is natural to creation - the natural use of their sex functions - and thus condemns all homosexual behavior.³

There is conceivably one sense in which men could abandon the personal disposition and inclination of the woman. By stretching the definition and use of the terms, “abandoning the natural function of the woman” could refer to a situation of forcible rape, where a woman who is “naturally” homosexual is forced into a heterosexual relationship, and thus is caused

to act contrary to her “nature.” This obviously is not what Paul is talking about; he is not speaking about a heterosexual relationship at all, but “men with men.” Again, the conclusion is that “natural” does not refer to “personal disposition and inclination” but to “that which is consistent with the order of creation.”

In verses 26 and 27, the terminology Paul uses for “men” and “women” is also significant. The words carry a special emphasis on the distinction of sex; Paul is emphasizing that he is speaking about those who are sexually men and those who are sexually women.⁴ The terms Paul uses here are found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) in Genesis 1:27. There, in the description of creation, the Word declares, “Male and female He created them.” Paul’s use of this terminology for “men” and “women” strongly suggests that “natural” refers to that which is natural according to the order of creation. Genesis 1:28 describes for us the sexual relation which is natural to creation: “And God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ...’” Paul is not speaking of “natural” according to personal disposition, but “natural” according to male and female as created by God. Thus Paul’s emphasis may be summarized:

God has ordained “the natural order” for sexual relations in His creation order: the normal, and normative, pattern of male and female becoming one flesh. God’s creation ordinance, with the specific distinctions between male and female, intended for heterosexual relations to be “natural.” Man’s inherited condition and ordinary biological process ... is therefore heterosexual ... There is in the biblical perspective no such thing as “natural homosexuality.” It is always at base a perversion of the created order.⁵

Another point worthy of notice in verse 27 is that Paul states that “men abandoned the natural function of the woman.” The fact that the word “woman” is singular and used with the article “the” indicates that Paul is using the word “woman” to

refer to all people who are sexually “woman.” The article is often used with singular nouns “in a representative sense for the whole class.”⁶ In other words, Paul is not speaking about one particular woman, nor is he speaking about the natural use of one particular woman. He is speaking about the whole class of people called “woman.” The use of the article indicates that Paul does not divide “the woman” into two groups, those who are homosexual and those who are heterosexual. Rather, there is one group called “woman” - those who are sexually female. The “natural function” Paul has in mind then is not “personal disposition or inclination” of each individual woman, but that which is natural to all women, regardless of personal disposition. The thrust of Paul’s argument is that “men and women have departed from what is natural for mankind, not for individual persons. His discussion was generic and categorical, dealing with the sexual function that God has ordained as natural for man, not with the individualized sexual natures of diverse individuals.”⁷

Notice must be taken also in verses 26 and 27 to whom “their women” (v. 26) and “the men” (v. 27) refers. The word “men” in verse 27 is used with the article “the”: Paul is talking about “the men.” These men, to whom the word “their” also refers in verse 26 (“their women”), are the men who have been discussed by Paul in verses 18-25. They are those “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (v. 18), who “did not honor Him as God” (v. 21), and who “exchanged the truth of God for a lie” (v. 25). Who are these men? Is Paul speaking about only a small, limited group of people, or is he speaking about all men by nature?

The men described in verses 18-25 are potentially all men. In other words, there is no one particular group of men that “has a corner” on the unbelief and disobedience described in verses 18-25. The heterosexual is not exempt from verses 18-25, nor is the homosexual. This means then that “the men” of verse 27 and the “their” of verse 26 is referring to all men - whether heterosexual or homosexual. Paul in verse 27 is not condemning only homosexual activity between heterosexual men; he is condemning all sexual activity of “men with men,”

whatever these men might consider their sexual disposition to be.

A writer means what he says unless he clearly is using a figure of speech. If this basic and necessary principle of communication is applied to Romans 1:26-27, it is necessary to conclude that Paul is condemning all homosexual behavior as “against nature” and contrary to the will and purpose of a holy God. In summary, (1) “natural” cannot mean “personal disposition” for the reasons cited above; (2) the words Paul uses for “men” and “women” emphasize sexual distinctions, of creation; (3) Paul is speaking about “woman” as a representative of the entire female race; (4) “the men” he discusses are all men, including both heterosexual and homosexual.

I Corinthians 6:9-11

Paul clearly indicates in his instructions to the Corinthians that eternal salvation is possible for the homosexual as well as for the idolater, the adulterer, the thief, the covetous, the swindler, etc. Every person should rejoice at the statement, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Every person should rejoice, because by nature every person is included in the list that Paul names in verses 9 and 10. But God in Christ has redeemed the helpless sinner who in faith looks to Christ as his deliverer.

The word “but” in verse 11 (“but you were washed ...) indicates strong contrast with the preceding statement, “And such were some of you.” The verb “were” is past tense; Paul is saying that this is what they were in the past, not what they are in the present. Now they no longer are these things, because they have been cleansed, sanctified, justified. Thus homosexuality, together with the other sinful conditions listed, is something that God delivers the believer from, not something suggesting that “natural” means “natural according to the order that He leaves the believer in. This does not mean that the believer will not have any struggles with these things; it does

mean that Christ died to set us free from them. “And such were some of you, but you are washed ...”

The word “homosexual” which Paul uses in verse 9 is a very clear and definite term. The word literally means “a male who beds a male,” or, as J.H. Thayer declares, “one who lies with a male as with a female, a sodomite.”⁸ Some suggest that perhaps this word does not refer to all homosexual behavior, but only that which is promiscuous and contrary to “nature.” The preceding discussion of Romans 1:26-27 speaks to this argument. Also, notice that Paul does not suggest any exceptions to his condemnation of homosexual behavior. Paul’s silence in this instance speaks volumes. Homosexuality was not rare in Paul’s day; in fact it was probably as well known in his day as in the present.⁹ The fact that Paul condemns homosexuality without any restrictions suggests that he is saying exactly what he intends to say. Even as he condemns all thievery, all coveting, all swindling, etc., so he also condemns all homosexuality.

I Timothy 1:8-10

The word Paul uses for homosexual in verse 10 is the same as that used in I Corinthians 6:9-11 (see the preceding discussion). Notice again that homosexuals are not singled out for special treatment; they are placed alongside of liars and kidnappers and perjurers, and others, and all fall under the same rebuke and sentence of condemnation. According to the law of God, all by nature and by deed stand condemned and without hope. According to the Gospel of God all who are justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ stand forgiven with the certain comforting hope of eternal life. He died so that we might live. This is the only sure hope for all humanity.

O.K. Storaasli writes concerning these three passages of Scripture:

All people need the message of the grace of God,
whether heterosexual or homosexual, whether

idolaters or worshippers of the true God ... all Gentiles are guilty before God and need His forgiveness, just as do all Jews also, and homosexuals are only one of the examples which are caught in the net ... Justification and new life is for all who through faith claim Christ as their “mercy-seat” or Deliverer.¹⁰

With thankfulness and joy we would emphatically agree with this statement.

Consistent with the Holy Scripture, however, we must recognize that the “net” of salvation graciously delivers the sinner from slavery to his/her sin (Romans 6:6, 12-14). This never means in this life that we as needy, desperate sinners will ever be free from the struggle with sin, but it does mean that we do not have to be enslaved to sin. Thus the child of God engages in the struggle against sin joyfully, yet with pain and tears, recognizing there will be failure, rejoicing in the continual forgiveness of the Father, but never, ever saying that somehow the sin “doesn’t matter.” The cross and the empty tomb show us how much our sin does matter, and stand as our hope and our deliverance.

¹ W. F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 109.

² Ibid., p. 877. For a thorough discussion of the meaning of “natural,” see James B. DeYoung, “The Meaning of ‘Nature’ in Romans 1 and Its Implications for Biblical Proscriptions of Homosexual Behavior,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 31 (December 1988): 429-441.

³ John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979 reprint), p. 47.

⁴ Arndt, op. cit., p. 109; H.A.W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans (Winona Lake: Alpha Publications, 1980 reprint), p. 66; M.R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons 1903), p. 20; Murray, op. cit., p. 46.

⁵ Greg Bahnsen, Homosexuality: A Biblical View (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 57.

⁶ A.T. Robertson, The Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 757.

⁷ Bahnsen, op. cit., p. 57.

⁸ J.H. Thayer, Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 75.

⁹ Bahnsen, op. cit., p. 50; DeYoung, op. cit., pp. 435-437.

¹⁰ Olaf Storaasli, “Homosexuality and the New Testament,” mimeographed unpublished paper, Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, pp. 9f, as quoted in Six Studies on Homosexuality (The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada: The Division of Social Service, 1985), p. 25.

THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH

It is clear from ancient history that homosexuality has existed in many civilizations. The prohibitions against it in both the Old and New Testaments also witness to its incidence in the cultures in proximity to Israel and the Church. While most cultures have treated it as a problem to be addressed, it appears that some cultures, i.e., the ancient Greeks, looked upon homosexuality with a degree of approval.

Early Church Fathers

Though some writers suggest that the Church in its earliest centuries exhibited considerable tolerance toward the practice of homosexuality, and that it wasn't until the late Middle Ages that intolerance and hostility arose,¹¹ the witness of the early Church speaks otherwise. Homosexuality, in the eyes of the early Church, was considered not an ordinary sin, but a "monster crime." The Council of Ancyra approved two canons relating to this and similar offenses, imposing heavy ecclesiastical penalties on offenders. St. Basil imposes the penalty of adultery, namely, twenty year's penance (Canons 62 and 63); the Council of Eliebris refused communion, even at the last hour, to those guilty of this "crime with boys." There was an old Roman law against homosexuality called the *Lex Scantinia*, mentioned by Juvenal and others, which lay dormant until revived by Christian emperors. Constantine made homosexuality a capital offense, and ordered it punished with death by the sword, while Theodosius decreed that "those found guilty should be burned alive."¹² All this suggests severe treatment by both Church and state. Rather than toleration, one witnesses intolerance to the point of unwillingness to recognize the reality of forgiveness.

Clement of Alexandria has been called "the first known Christian scholar." He became head of the catechetical school in

Alexandria in 190 A.D. Among his principal writings is The Paidagogos (The Tutor), and in this work he includes discussion of the sin of Sodom in terms of its judgment:

The fate of the Sodomites was judgment to those who had done wrong, instruction to those who hear. The Sodomites, having through much luxury fallen into uncleanness, practicing adultery shamelessly, and burning with insane love for boys; the All-seeing Lord, whose notice those who commit impieties cannot escape, cast His eye upon them. Nor did the sleepless guard of humanity observe their licentiousness in silence; but dissuading us from the imitation of them, and training us up to His own temperance, and falling on some sinners, lest lust being unavenged should break loose from all the restraints of fear, ordered Sodom to be burned, pouring forth a little of the sagacious fire on licentiousness; lest lust, through want of punishment, should throw wide the gates to those who were rushing into voluptuousness.¹³

Clement describes homosexuality as an “insane love for boys” and validates the divine judgment that consumed Sodom and its inhabitants. Sodom is a sober warning to all who are tempted to engage in such practices, he avers.

One of the leaders of the Church in the post-Nicene era was John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople. This “golden-mouthed” (chrysostomos) preacher was among the most distinguished of the Greek fathers and, next to Augustine, was a favorite with the sixteenth century reformers. Nearly all of his writings have survived, including hundreds of sermons.

In Chrysostom’s commentary on Romans, he devotes an entire homily to a discussion of chapter one, verses 26 and 27. The following comments are pertinent to a discussion of homosexuality:

All these affections then were vile, but chiefly the mad lust after males; for the soul is more the sufferer in sins, and more dishonored, than the body in diseases. ... And thus not only was their doctrine Satanical, but their life too was diabolical ... To leave the natural use of the woman is an evident proof of the last degree of corruptness, when both sexes are abandoned, and both he that was ordained to be the instructor of the woman, and she who was bid to become an helpmate to the man, work the deeds of enemies against one another. ... For everything which transgresseth the laws by God appointed, lusteth after monstrous things and not those which be customary.¹⁴

It appears that Chrysostom is representative of the convictions of the early Church in his assessment of homosexuality. There is no indication in the extant writings of the teachers and leaders of the Church that an alternate view existed. Indeed, the writings suggest a tendency to isolate homosexuality as “a monstrous crime,” describing it as “madness” and “insanity.”

The noted church father Augustine of Hippo included the following in his Confessions (3:8:15), written in the year 400 A.D:

Those shameful acts against nature, such as were punished in Sodom, ought everywhere and always to be detested and punished. If all nations were to do such things, they would be held guilty of the same crime by the law of God, which has not made men so that they should use one another in this way.

The Reformers

While the reformers of the sixteenth century were chiefly occupied with heralding the great re-discovered themes of his-

toric Christianity - grace alone, faith alone, the Word alone, the priesthood of all believers - they also offer commentary in their expositions of Scripture on the full range of biblical topics. One of these is homosexuality, or, as it is often termed by our forefathers, sodomy.

Martin Luther is properly remembered most of all for his emphasis on the chief article of faith, justification by grace alone. However, he is also a fruitful source in his expositions and applications on the subject of Christian ethics. In his commentary on Genesis, he is blunt in his assessment of the sins of Sodom:

The heinous conduct of the people of Sodom is extraordinary, inasmuch as they departed from the natural passion and longing of the male for the female, which was implanted into nature by God, and desired what is altogether contrary to nature. Whence comes this perversion? Undoubtedly from Satan, who, after people have once turned away from the fear of God, so powerfully suppresses nature that he blots out the natural desire and stirs up a desire that is contrary to nature.¹⁵

Luther was unable to accept the viewpoint that homosexuality is an inherited condition for some or that one's social environment is the major factor in its development. Rather, he attributed the "perversion" of homosexuality to Satan as well as to the willful disobedience of those who do not "fear God."

Luther makes frequent reference to the Sodomites and their sin in his commentary on Genesis, and points to their fiery judgment as a warning of God's hatred against all sin. For example, he writes: "For Peter is not lying when he calls Sodom (II Peter 2:6) 'an example to the ungodly,' and the very nature of their sins is such that God cannot remain silent about them forever."¹⁶ In direct reference to homosexuality in his commentary on Romans, Luther states, "The body is disgraced and degraded most viciously not only by adultery and similar vio-

lations of chastity, but **all the more** (emphasis added) by the degrading perversions that are here named.”¹⁷

It is clear that Luther would not countenance an interpretation of the Bible which minimized or justified the sin of homosexuality. In consonance with the early Church fathers, he is forthright in labeling homosexuality as a “degrading perversion.” Nor is Luther alone among the reformers in his position. John Calvin is also unmistakable in his recognition of homosexuality as sin. He discusses the matter in his commentary on Romans, as follows:

..... he (the Apostle) brings, as the first example, the dreadful crime of unnatural lust; and it hence appears that they not only abandoned themselves to beastly lusts, but became degraded beyond the beasts, since they reversed the whole order of nature. ... He calls those disgraceful passions, which are shameful even in the estimation of men, and redound to the dishonoring of God.¹⁸

Calvin uses terms like “dreadful crime,” “beastly lusts,” and “disgraceful passions” to depict the sin of homosexuality. Not only is the act recognized as sin, but also the desire (“lust,” “passion”) is considered reprehensible in the sight of a holy God.

The teaching of the Christian Church until the present has been consistent in describing homosexuality as sin, often in language that appears to the modern churchman as harsh and extreme. As the Law is proclaimed in its sternness, however, the Gospel in its sweetness is also announced as the gracious forgiveness of sin (including homosexuality) for everyone who repents and trusts in Christ as Savior.

Debate regarding the possible legitimacy of homosexuality in some form as an alternate “Christian” lifestyle would have been considered unthinkable by our spiritual forefathers. There was only one approach to this matter: repentance and faith leading to a daily forsaking of the old life of sin in favor of following Christ in surrender to His gracious will. The

Church of past generations would be astounded and dismayed that modern churchmen could possibly open discussion of an issue that is so definitely and decisively described as sin in the authoratative Word of God, the Scriptures.

The fact is that there is a clear orthodox Christian teaching on the subject of homosexuality that comes from the early centuries of the undivided Church, and it has remained unbroken until recent times. The most frequently quoted text, Romans 1:22-28, is interpreted by all classic commentators to teach that homosexual behavior is sinful, a voluntary activity rooted in idolatry that is divisive for the relationship between God and humanity, as well as divisive for the relationship between men and women.

CONDITION AND CONDUCT

Recent studies on homosexuality admonish us to be sensitive to the distinction between homosexual conduct and homosexual condition.

Homosexual conduct or behavior refers to the sexual activity in which a person engages. The homosexual condition, in contrast, is an inner factor, a propensity or orientation. "This inner factor is described as a preferential attraction to the same sex, an emotional and physico-sexual propensity toward others of the same sex, eroticism directed toward the same sex, a way of thinking and feeling, etc."¹⁹ The condition, some insist, is a matter which is generally beyond a person's control. Therefore, the homosexual propensity is not something for which a person is morally responsible; it is no more to be blamed than to be born color-blind or left-handed. One Lutheran Church body, in a statement on homosexuality, declared:

God's Word is silent about homosexuality as a propensity. In view of this and in the light of medical and psychological evidence, the Church may not condemn and judge homosexual propensity ... As in the cases of pain and disease, the Christian homosexual should accept his homosexual propensity in obedience to God, bear his cross bravely, seek all possible professional help and pastoral aid, and in faith resist the strong temptation to rebelling and murmuring against God or of dismissing his life and pointless and senseless.²⁰

Another writer, in an article published in an official Lutheran magazine, states: "Homosexual persons should be welcomed as responsible, voting members of a congregation with no requirement that they promise to change, or try to change, their sexual orientation."²¹

Those who press for this distinction hold that the Bible does not really address what is now known about homosexuality. This is because the Scriptures do not differentiate between the outward conduct and the inward condition. If the Bible does condemn homosexuality, according to this view, the condemnation pertains only to outward acts since it does not discuss the inward condition. The sexual orientation of a person was not understood or recognized in Biblical culture, and so the Bible makes no mention of it.

Granting the premise that the Bible never distinguishes between condition and conduct, we then may rightly ask: Why does this necessarily preclude the homosexual condition? In fact,

... the inference to be drawn may be just the opposite of that suggested. We are told that the Bible's condemnation of homosexuality pertains only to outward acts, since it does not isolate and discuss the inward orientation. However, one should draw the opposite conclusion: if Scripture does not distinguish between orientation and act, the distinction is not morally relevant. Under the category of homosexuality, Scripture is to be understood as condemning both orientation and act, for there is no need in ethics to distinguish them.²²

Indeed, both orientation and behavior are condemned, since "original sin is the source of all actual transgressions for since the fountain has been polluted, the waters flowing from it are likewise unclean."²³

Moreover, the premise itself is flawed. The Bible does recognize the distinction between condition and conduct. Jesus said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). Our conduct is the result of our condition, for "out of the heart are the is-

sues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

Scripture teaches that every person is born with a depraved nature, and this inherited nature (condition) is the source of sinful actions. “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:14-15).

Lust is one expression of that inherited sinful nature, and the Bible condemns lust in all types, whether heterosexual or homosexual. In the Biblical outlook, a recognition of the fallen nature is not intended to provide man with an excuse for unlawful behavior, but to bring him to a recognition of his need for the redemptive grace of God, which can liberate him from moral and spiritual bondage.²⁴

In Matthew 5:27-29 Jesus condemns heterosexual lust or sinful desire. He says that everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart. Here specifically it is not only the conduct (behavior) which is censured but the condition (orientation) of the heart. Paul also reproves the condition and not merely homosexual behavior when he writes of homosexuals who “burned in their desire toward one another” (Romans 1:27), and who were given “over to degrading passions” (Romans 1:26). It is, therefore, wrong to maintain that Scripture addresses only homosexual conduct and not condition.

In forthright language Paul holds men and women morally responsible and under God’s wrath for burning with homosexual desires, which he ethically describes as vile affections. The act/orientation distinction, then, does nothing to mitigate the Bible’s censure of homosexuality. We cannot agree with those who claim that Scripture knows nothing of sexual inversion (ori-

entation), nor with their baseless judgment that a homosexual disposition is morally neutral.²⁵

But, some protest, if the condition is biological, how can a person be held responsible? There were nineteenth century theories about the causes of homosexuality suggesting that the condition was the result of biological factors. Recently it has been proposed that genetic and chromosomal factors predispose a person toward homosexuality. However, Dr. John Money, an authority on the physiological aspects of human sexuality, concluded on the basis of available studies that “there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that homosexuals or bisexuals of any degree or type are chromosomally discrepant from heterosexuals.”²⁶

An imbalance in the sex hormones is also given as a possible cause of homosexuality. “It has been pointed out, however, that while the sex hormones are crucial for the physiological development of the organs needed for the sexual act and for increasing their sensitivity to stimulation, psychological factors are the crucial elements that influence the choice of the sexual partner and the intensity of sexual emotions.”²⁷

While the discussion of the origin of homosexuality continues to be widely debated, (Is that homosexual born this way, or does he learn to be this way?), it is well to bear in mind the following:

There is neither scriptural support nor solid medical evidence that homosexuality is a constitutional, involuntary, or irreversible condition. Moral responsibility for homosexuality has not been dissolved through scientific study. The natural and human sciences have not, contrary to a widely publicized polemic, rendered any agreed upon or individually substantiated verdict about the cause of homosexuality.

Perhaps in the future they will. But whether they

do or not, the Christian will keep certain scriptural truths in mind. With reference to the congenital theories, it must not be forgotten that God's Word teaches that homosexuality is not "natural" at all. Whatever physical factors may influence it, homosexuality cannot be viewed as biologically innate. It is artificial and learned contrary to what a man is by God's creation. Even in a fallen world with all of its distortions and miseries, Paul characterized homosexuality as "against nature" - as "improper," an "error," a fundamentally wrong way to live and use the human body.

With reference to psychogenic theories, we would recognize that at base they make homosexuality out to be some form of learned behavior, a matter of one's reactions to social influences, environment, training, or exposure. This may or may not help some day to see which influences uniquely contribute to homosexual reactions, but the fact will remain that such learned behavior can be unlearned and altered.²⁸

Homosexual condition and conduct are sinful. The Scriptures clearly indicate this (Genesis 19:1-11; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Judges 10:16-25; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9; I Timothy 1:10). To rationalize or justify homosexuality in any way is not only to deny the reality of sin but also to resign the homosexual to a life of perversion and hopelessness. The homosexual can change,²⁹ and the first step is acceptance of Biblical teaching about homosexuality ... that it is sin and must be forsaken in God's power. One pastor, who helped a number of homosexuals when other pastors and physicians could do nothing with them, was asked the secret of his effectiveness. "They have got to see that it's sin; I hold them to that."³⁰ The recognition of the sinfulness of the sin is crucial for effective therapy. It is only this awareness of great need that prompts reception of a great Savior. And when homosexuals call on the Holy Spirit to enter their lives, "change occurs on two fronts,

forgiveness and the healing of memories, and change in the overt sexual behavior and desires.”³¹ The Word of God certainly encourages all people, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), to discover that “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7). The homosexual, too, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can receive this gracious provision of God.

¹¹ James F. Childress, John Macquarrie, eds., The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 272.

¹² John McClintock, James Strong, eds., Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. IX (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1867), p. 859.

¹³ Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, eds., The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. II (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), p. 282.

¹⁴ Philip Schaff, ed., The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. IX (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), pp 355-356.

¹⁵ Martin Luther Luther's Works, Vol. III, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 255.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 296.

¹⁷ Martin Luther, Commentary on Romans (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. 31.

¹⁸ John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. XIX (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing House, 1979), p. 79.

¹⁹ Bahnsen, op. cit., p. 64.

²⁰ "A Statement on Homosexuality" formulated by the Commission on Social Questions, Lutheran Church of Australia, 1975.

²¹ Lawrence E. Holst, "Key Questions," The Lutheran Standard (July 12, 1985), p. 6.

²² Bahnsen, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

²³ John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 224.

²⁴ John Jefferson Davis, Evangelical Ethics (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1985), p. 123.

²⁵ Bahnsen, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

²⁶ Davis, op. cit., p. 110.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Bahnsen, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

²⁹ It has been argued that sexual orientations cannot be changed. This cannot be sustained, however. Davis (in Evangelical Ethics, pp. 111-112) points to the studies of Anna Freud, Bergler, Bychowski, Lorand, Hadden, Ovesey, Eber, Socaidles, Glover, Bickman, and Hatterer which indicate homosexuality can be reversed. He also mentions the 66 percent success rate in changing homosexual orientation from the studies of Masters and Johnson. In the light of these studies representing success rates with human means, Davis asks: "If the resources of divine grace and the power of the Holy Spirit become part of the therapeutic process, then who can say that the homosexual who desires change has no real hope of success?" A more recent study was released by Dr. Robert Spitzer in May 2001, showing "that some people can change from gay to straight, and we ought to acknowledge that," as reported by the Associated Press, 9 May 2001.

³⁰ J.I. Packer, "John's Holy Sickness." Christianity Today (November 4, 1988), p. 11.

³¹ Stanley R. Strong, "Christian Counseling with Homosexuals," Journal of Psychology and Theology 8, no. 4 (Winter 1980), p. 285.

MINISTERING TO THE HOMOSEXUAL

Presuppositions

Soul care is never neutral. Every Christian approaches each situation with certain presuppositions or principles in mind. These are the convictions that determine the way in which we view problems as well as the approach to helping others. The soul care of homosexuals is no different, as it is important for concerned Christians to honestly consider his presuppositions before any beginning can be made.

The first presupposition is a general one, namely, that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God and “is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16). The approach presented in this essay, therefore, will both accept what the Scriptures say about homosexuality and have confidence in the Scriptures as a means of grace to bring healing.

The second presupposition is based on the first. The Word of God, both Old and New Testaments, clearly teaches that homosexuality is sin. A Biblical Christian cannot condone what the Scriptures condemn. Nor can this fact be evaded by drawing a distinction between orientation and act, or by seeking for a cause behind the condition. Sin always implies responsibility.

The third presupposition builds upon the second. Since homosexuality is identified in God’s Word as sinful, then we can offer hope. There would be no hope if we were dealing with an inborn condition, a hormonal imbalance or genetic flaw. But we do have a powerful message of liberation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for repentant sinners. The Gospel is a message of hope. In the sixth chapter of I Corinthians, Paul lists homosexuals among the unrighteous who shall not enter the kingdom of God, but in verse 11 adds the startling words:

“And such were some of you ...” Note the past tense. The verse continues: “... but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

For this reason it is best not to put the “homosexual” label on a believer, as in “Christian homosexual,” for this suggests that homosexuality is a permanent condition, contradicting such clear teaching as II Corinthians 5:17 which declares: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.” Homosexuals are not born, they are made, and there is hope in Christ for real change.

It is an acceptance of defeat before soul care begins to suggest that some homosexuals cannot change and that the Church should recognize the validity of “mature homosexual relationships” as the only practical answer for them.³² Nor does the message of hope shine much brighter in another book suggesting that saved homosexuals must learn to accept their condition and live with it.³³

Procedures

Homosexuality is sin. We say this because the Bible says it. Scripture does not identify homosexuality as more immoral than other sins, nor is it the unforgivable sin. However, it must be considered in the category that Dr. Jay Adams labels “life-dominating sins,” that are fed by a vicious circle including all areas of life. This means that all areas of the homosexual’s life must come under review and that a complete re-structuring will probably be necessary.³⁴

The sin of homosexuality should not be the focus for soul care. One who has considerable experience in such a ministry writes: “In our counseling we have found that very little of our time is actually spent discussing homosexuality.”³⁵ Instead, we will find ourselves dealing with attitudes such as rejection, rebellion, fear, bitterness, envy, self-pity, etc.

Adams lists a fourfold approach to the matter of complete restructuring:

1. Christian conversion
2. Acknowledgement and confession of the sin of homosexuality leading to forgiveness
3. Fruit appropriate to repentance
 - a. abandonment of homosexual practices and associates;
 - b. rescheduling of activities, etc.
 - c. restructuring of the whole life according to Biblical principles by the power of the Holy Spirit;
 - d. less emphasis upon sexual experiences (“I will not be mastered by anything” I Corinthians 6:12);
4. Unless God gives the gift of continence, seeking to learn and manifest a life of love by giving oneself to his spouse within the bonds of heterosexual marriage.³⁶

Other professional counselors agree with this approach. Philpott refers to the need for adopting a totally new lifestyle.³⁷ Another counselor, George Rekers, calls it “environmental planning.”³⁸ The solution for homosexuality, like the condition itself, involves choice and decisions that shape the total orientation and direction of a person’s life.

Michael Saia, in his work on the counseling of homosexuals, emphasizes traditional spiritual disciplines. He encourages the newly converted homosexual to study the Word, worship and pray, and to learn the fear of God from other believers. A true fear of God (reverence and awe) results in a hatred of sin. Saia’s fourfold obedience-orientated approach to the healing of homosexuality includes: (1) knowing God, (2) understanding ourselves, (3) resisting the enemy, and (4) relating properly to other members of the body.³⁹

One should immediately notice that this approach is no different from helping people who struggle with other areas of

sin in their lives. Yet it must be clearly stated that the soul care of homosexuals is no easy task and that the attrition rate for new believers may be quite high. This is also true for other life-dominating sins such as alcohol and drug addiction. It is still clear, however, that the soul care of homosexuals is essentially no different from other Christian nurture, and this is an encouragement to believers who desire to help but wonder if they are qualified or adequately trained to do so.

Thus, a Christian may say, “I understand,” even if he has never struggled with homosexual temptation, since the warfare with the flesh is the same regardless of the nature of the sin, just as the remedy is the same. A faithful and clear application of Law and Gospel is the answer to the homosexual sinner’s need, too.

A few cautions are in order. “The response of the Christian on the issue of homosexuality,” writes Kenneth Gangel, “must not be one of emotional trauma toward the repulsion and stigma attached to the movement and its adherents.”⁴⁰ The danger of homophobia (fear of homosexuality) must be honestly faced and rejected if one is to minister effectively.

Many years ago this writer was discussing the topic of homosexuality with a group of pastors. One of the men asked how we would feel if someone came to us and said that he was homosexual. We expressed shock and distaste. Later we discovered that the pastor who asked the question was struggling with this sin himself, and our thoughtless responses closed the door to his seeking help from any of us. Our attitude toward homosexual sinners must be one of conviction and compassion, seeking to save the lost, strengthen the struggling saint, and welcoming the repentant sinner as Christ welcomes him.

Also, beware of emotional dependency. The person who struggles with homosexuality may often be someone who has experienced much rejection in his life.⁴¹ You will become his friend as you help him through his struggles. Perhaps you

will show him affection as well as concern. It is important, however, that you do not assume the place in his life that only belongs to the Lord and that you encourage him to participate in the fellowship of other believers.

Finally, “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12). One author warns against what he calls the “Galatian kickback” (6:1), reminding the counselor to look to himself, lest he too be tempted.⁴² All Christians share the same sin nature as the ones whom we seek to help. Therefore, we need to take care to pray for ourselves, as well as those to whom we minister, so that we might not fall into temptation while trying to help others.

Prevention

The best strategy for dealing with homosexuality, state the authors of a book specially written for parents, is “prevention, prevention, prevention.”⁴³ Although it seems that a combination of contributing factors come together to form the environment for the development of homosexual preferences, research reveals that there is usually a relationship problem with the father at the root.⁴⁴ Rekers maintains that the first step in dealing with the problem is to realize that family members are responsible to promote future sexual normality.⁴⁵ The years between three and ten years old are crucial in the development of gender identity, and it may be claimed as a certainty that “it is just about impossible for a homosexual to be the product of warmly loving, sensible parents and a sexually well-adjusted home atmosphere.”⁴⁶

The conclusions to the above are obvious. Too often our concern for helping the homosexual is limited to those in whom the condition has already been confirmed through years of sinful practice. Our first concern should be the home and the instruction of Christian parents in creating a healthy family atmosphere, as well as the development of an increased sensitivity to those children who might be called “pre-homosexual,” due to various circumstances in their family lives. Homosexu-

als are made, not born. “It’s not easy to produce a homosexual,” states one author. “You’ve got to work at it.”⁴⁷ Prevention is possible.

Conclusion

Sin is real, and so are the ruined lives that sin leaves in its wake. Homosexuality is sin, and the world needs no further proof of this fact than the wreckage that results from bondage to the lifestyle so cruelly misnamed “gay.” But there is a Savior, and so there is hope. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

- ³² H. Kimball Jones, Toward a Christian Understanding of the Homosexual (New York: Association Press, 1966), p. 108.
- ³³ Alex Davidson, The Returns of Love: Letters of a Christian Homosexual (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970).
- ³⁴ Jay E. Adams, The Christian Counselor's Manual (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), p. 206.
- ³⁵ Ed Hurst, Homosexuality: Laying the Axe to the Roots (Minneapolis: Outpost, Inc., 1980), p. 6.
- ³⁶ Adams, op. cit., pp. 411-412.
- ³⁷ Kent Philpott, The Third Sex? Six Homosexuals Tell Their Stories (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, International, 1975), p. 189.
- ³⁸ George Alan Rekers, Growing Up Straight: What Families Should Know about Homosexuality (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), p. 123.
- ³⁹ Michael R. Saia, Counseling the Homosexual (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1988), pp. 97-102.
- ⁴⁰ Kenneth O. Gangel, The Gospel and the Gay (Nashville and New York: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1978), p. 29.
- ⁴¹ Saia, op. cit., pp. 50-54.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 221.
- ⁴³ Peter and Barbara Wyden, Growing Up Straight: What Every Thoughtful Parent Should Know About Homosexuality (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 234.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 15, 61.
- ⁴⁵ Rekers, op. cit., p. 113.
- ⁴⁶ Wyden, op. cit., pp. 18, 36.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

The 2000 Annual Conference of the AFLC approved the following resolutions:

■ WHEREAS, we live in a culture in which homosexuality is being more aggressively promoted and more broadly accepted,

BE IT RESOLVED, that we the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations reaffirm our love in Christ for every person including those involved in the homosexual lifestyle, while rejecting their lifestyle itself as sin,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage our congregations to pray for and support with their gifts those individuals and organizations seeking to reach and rescue those in a homosexual lifestyle by Biblical means and message.

■ WHEREAS, the attack against Biblical Christianity is so intense in society today, including a direct assault against the Bible's teaching on marriage and family,

BE IT RESOLVED, that we as the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations reaffirm our uncompromising stand on God's Word that marriage is instituted by God to be between one man and one woman.