

**The Zenit News Agency Interview:
The Bible and Homosexual Practice: An Overview of Some Issues**
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It is not possible in so short a compass to do justice to 500 pages of research. However, I will attempt to hit some key points. I will begin by talking about the two most important sets of texts: the Levitical prohibitions and the texts in Paul. Included here will be a brief discussion of whether “new knowledge” about homosexuality as an innate condition changes matters for us. I will then proceed to a broader array of texts in the Bible, both implicit and explicit, that make clear a pervasive and strong condemnation of homosexual practice. In this context I will also address the alleged silence of Jesus on the issue of same-sex intercourse. Finally, I will say a few words about why the Bible’s teaching should remain normative and how Christians should respond to the current crisis.

Q: Could you outline the principal passages in the Bible that you believe are the basis for prohibiting homosexuality?

There are two particularly important sets of explicit texts. First are the prohibitions in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which declare that for a man to “lie with a male as though lying with a woman” is “an abomination” or “detestable act”—in Hebrew, *to’evah*—something utterly repugnant to God.

The second set is the Apostle Paul’s references to same-sex intercourse, for which the key text is Romans 1:24-27. Here he treats same-sex intercourse as “exhibit B”—with idolatry as “exhibit A”—proving gross and deliberate human sin on the part of Gentiles against the truth about God accessible in creation or nature.

Also important in Paul is his reference to “males who lie with males” (*arsenokoitai*) and “effeminate males who play the sexual role of females” (*malakoi*) in the vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9. The context here is the comparable issue of a case of incest at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5). Paul argues that the community of believers at Corinth should not deceive themselves: believers who participate in serial and unrepentant fashion in immoral sexual activity—be they participants in incest or in the solicitation of prostitutes (*pornoi*), adulterers, or participants in same-sex intercourse—along with believers who engage in serial and unrepentant fashion in idolatry or egregious cases of economic exploitation and the like, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The term *arsenokoitai* reappears in the vice list in 1 Tim 1:10. In the discussion that follows we will not spend much time on these texts. It will suffice here to point out that what Paul means by *arsenokoitai* has to be unpacked in light of what Paul finds offensive about same-sex intercourse in Romans

1:24-27. Those who tend to dismiss the term *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10 as utterly beyond knowing often act as if Romans 1:24-27 did not exist. There are also a reasonably large number of other texts that explicitly or implicitly indicate opposition to same-sex intercourse, leaving little doubt that such opposition was the consensus position of both Testaments, as well as of the historical communities out of which these texts arose.

Q: Sometimes modern-day skeptics reject Leviticus.

The texts in Leviticus are often dismissed on one or more grounds. For example, it is claimed that these prohibitions have no more significance for the church today than other defunct purity laws; or that they have in view only same-sex intercourse conducted in the context of idolatrous cults, prostitution or adult-adolescent unions. Yet such arguments overlook at least seven points.

First, the prohibitions against same-sex intercourse occur in the context of other types of sexual activity that the church today still largely regards as illegitimate: incest, adultery and bestiality.

The strong prohibitions against these forms of sexual activity represent the closest analogues to the prohibition of same-sex intercourse. This is particularly true of the incest prohibition which, like the prohibition of same-sex intercourse, rejects intercourse between two beings that are too much alike. Leviticus refers pejoratively to sex with a family member as sex with the “flesh of one’s own flesh” (Lev 18:6). Bestiality is wrong for the opposite reason: it is sex between two beings that are too much unlike.

Second, the attachment of purity language in ancient Israelite culture to such acts as incest, adultery, male-male intercourse, idolatry, economic exploitation, and the like—far from suggesting an amoral or non-moral basis for the rejection of such acts—actually buttresses the moral focus on the inherently degrading character of the acts themselves. It underscores that any talk about the positive moral intent of the participants is irrelevant.

For the same reason, the Apostle Paul many centuries later connected the language of impurity with acts—usually sexual acts—that are rejected on moral grounds: not only same-sex intercourse but also adultery, incest, sex with prostitutes, and promiscuous sexual activity (Romans 1:24 and 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; cf. Ephesians 4:19; 5:3, 5; and Colossians 3:5).

Third, unlike a number of the now-defunct elements of the Holiness Code to which reference is often made, the indictment of same-sex intercourse is particularly severe, as suggested by the specific attachment of the label *to’evah* and by making it a capital offense.

Same-sex intercourse was regarded by ancient Israel as a particularly severe infraction of God’s will. Indeed, we know of no ancient Near Eastern culture that adopted a more rigorous opposition to all forms of same-sex intercourse. True, the New Testament and

the contemporary church does not apply the penalty attached to this act in the Levitical code. But, then again, it does not retain the Old Testament valuation of adultery, incest and bestiality as capital offenses either, even as it still rejects such forms of intercourse as immoral.

Fourth, the prohibitions of same-sex intercourse are not limited to particularly exploitative forms but are rather unqualified and absolute.

The general term “male” is used, not “cult prostitute,” “boy, youth,” or even “neighbor.” The prohibition applies not only to the Israelite but also to the non-Israelite who lives among them (Leviticus 18:26). The fact that both parties to the act are penalized in Leviticus 20:13 indicates that consensual acts are being addressed.

Idolatry is hardly the main concern since the prohibition in 20:13 is set in between prohibitions of adultery, incest and bestiality; it does not follow immediately upon the prohibition of child sacrifice as in 18:22. Moreover, male cult prostitution was not the only context in which homosexual intercourse manifested itself in the ancient Near East generally. It was merely the most acceptable context for homosexual intercourse to be practiced in Mesopotamia, certainly for those who played the role of the receptive partner.

Fifth, the reason for the prohibition is evident from the phrase “lying with a male as though lying with a woman.” What is wrong with same-sex intercourse is that it puts another male, at least insofar as the act of sexual intercourse is concerned, in the category of female rather than male.

It was regarded as incompatible with the creation of males and females as distinct and complementary sexual beings, that is, as a violation of God’s design for the created order. Here it is clear that the creation stories in Genesis 1-2, or something like them, are in the background, which in turn indicates that something broader than two isolated prohibitions is at stake: nothing less than the divinely mandated norm for sexual pairing given in creation.

Sixth, the non-procreative character of same-sex intercourse was no more the primary consideration in the rejection than it was for the proscription of bestiality. Incest and adultery, two other sexual acts rejected in Leviticus 18 and 20 are certainly not wrong because they are non-procreative; but neither is the primary reason for their rejection that fact that children might arise. All three are wrong because they constitute sex with another who is either too much of an “other” (sex with an animal) or too much of a “like” (sex with a near kin and sex with a member of the same sex). These are transcultural creation categories, not superstitious dregs from a bygone era.

Q: How are these prohibitions reflected in the New Testament?

The Levitical prohibitions of same-sex intercourse are clearly picked up in the New Testament—our seventh point. The Apostle Paul, who emphasized that the Mosaic law

had been abrogated, nevertheless saw significant continuity with the moral code of the Spirit.

The basic categories of sexual immorality—such as same-sex intercourse, incest, solicitation of prostitutes, adultery, etc.—remained in place for believers in Christ (so 1 Corinthians 5-7). Indeed, Paul formulated his reference to “men who lie with males” (*arsenokoitai*), one of the groups of people whom he insists will not inherit the kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, directly from the Levitical proscriptions of male-male intercourse. Clearly, then, Paul himself did not believe that the abrogation of the Mosaic law rendered obsolete the rejection of all same-sex intercourse for believers.

Q: What does Romans 1:24-27 say?

The text in Romans 1:24-27 is worth quoting at length: “because of the desires of their hearts God gave them over”—that is, those who chose not to worship God as God—“to an uncleanness”—that is, filthy conduct—“consisting of their bodies being dishonored among themselves. . . . God gave them over to dishonorable passions, for even their females exchanged the natural use”—that is, of the male as regards sexual intercourse—“for that which is contrary to nature”—that is, sexual intercourse with other females—“and likewise also the males, having left behind the natural use of the female, were inflamed with their yearning for one another, males with males committing indecency and in return receiving in themselves the payback which was necessitated by their straying”—that is, from the truth about God evident in nature.

Here the intertextual echoes to Genesis 1-2 are even more pronounced than in the Levitical proscriptions.

Q: You have examples of this, of course.

In the context of Romans 1:18-32 there are obvious allusions to Genesis 1 in the words “ever since the creation of the world” (1:20) and “the Creator” (1:25).

Also unmistakable is the link between Romans 1:23—referring to idols “in the likeness of the image of a mortal human and of birds and of four-footed animals and of reptiles”—and Genesis 1:26—“Let us make a human according to our image and . . . likeness; and let them rule over the . . . birds . . . and the cattle . . . and the reptiles.”

Paul’s denotation of the sexes in Romans 1:26-27 as “females” and “males” rather than “women” and “men” follows the style of Genesis 1:27: “male and female he made them.”

Q: What are the implications of such an echo to Genesis 1:26-27?

For Paul, both idolatry and same-sex intercourse reject God’s verdict that what was made and arranged was “very good,” as Genesis 1:31 says. Instead of recognizing their indebtedness to one God in whose likeness they were made and exercising dominion over the animal kingdom, humans worshipped statues made in their own likeness and even in the likeness of animals.

Similarly, instead of acknowledging that God had made them “male and female” and had confined legitimate sexual intercourse to opposite-sex pairing, humans denied the transparent complementarity of their sexuality by engaging in sex with the same sex, females with females, and males with males.

Q: Would this harking back to Genesis be natural for Paul?

That Paul should have the creation stories in the background of his critique of same-sex intercourse is not surprising.

In an earlier letter to Corinth, when Paul discussed the case of incest, he drew on a hypothetical analogy of sexual immorality—solicitation of prostitutes—and in the process appealed to the creation texts: “a man ... shall be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, cited in 1 Corinthians 6:16). It was in this context that Paul listed serial, unrepentant same-sex intercourse as one of the behaviors that could lead to exclusion from God’s kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9). So, clearly, just as Paul had Genesis 1:27 in the background when critiquing same-sex intercourse in Romans 1:24-27, so too he had Genesis 2:24 in the background when critiquing same-sex intercourse in 1 Corinthians 6:9.

Like any other Jew in his day, it was not possible for him to think about sexual immorality apart from such an appeal. In the same way, when Jesus criticized divorce and remarriage he too cited from Genesis 1:27—“God made them male and female”—and Genesis 2:24—“for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.”

Consequently, any assessment of sexual immorality by Jews and Christians of the first century ultimately had in view the creation stories. It is for this reason that attempts to limit Paul’s—or any other early Jewish or Christian—critique of same-sex intercourse to particularly exploitative forms is doomed to failure. Moreover, for all the occasional critique of homosexual behavior that could be found among some Greco-Roman moralists, it did not approach the degree of revulsion experienced by Israel and the church. Jews and Christians stood apart from all other cultures of their time in their absolute opposition to all forms of homosexual practice.

Paul’s own wording in Romans 1:24-27 makes clear that the contrast in his mind is not between exploitative and non-exploitative forms of homosexual behavior but between same-sex intercourse per se and opposite-sex intercourse: females exchanging sex with males for sex with females; males leaving behind sex with women and yearning for sex with other males. In Paul’s view—and indeed in the view of every Jew or Christian from whom we have firsthand written records within a millennium or more of Paul’s day—what was wrong, first and foremost, with two females or two males having sex is the same-sexness of the erotic act, an act that was intended by God to be a reunion of complementary sexual others according to Genesis 1-2.

Q: You have argued that Paul had the creation stories in Genesis 1-2 in view when he rejected all homosexual practice. How does his argument that homosexual practice is “against nature” fit into this?

Jews and Christians recognized that the scriptural understanding of human sexuality was not accessible only to those who had exposure to the Scriptures of the Jews.

Since the Creator had designed human sexual pairing for complementary “sexual others,” it is not surprising that such a design was imbedded in compatible opposite-sex differences and still observable in the natural world set in motion by the Creator’s decree.

Hence, Paul could argue in Romans 1:24-27 that even Gentiles without access to Scripture had enough knowledge in creation/nature to know that same-sex unions represented a non-complementary sexual pairing, an “unnatural” union, a violation of Creator’s will for creation.

The naturalness of opposite-sex unions is readily visible in the areas of anatomy, physiology—that is, the procreative capacity—and in a host of interpersonal aspects that contribute in our own day to the popular slogan, “men are from Mars and women are from Venus.” To tamper with that naturalness and to act as if male-female sexual differences are not vital components of sexual pairings is, in short, to reap the whirlwind. There is no disharmony between Scripture and nature on this score.

Q: What about those who argue that “we now know” today that people are born with homoerotic attraction and thus it is a "natural" phenomenon?

Four points can be made here.

First, Paul was not saying that every human impulse is “natural” and therefore God-approved. He went on to list in Romans 1:29-31 a series of impulses and behaviors that have some innate proclivity—including covetousness or envy—but which were not, for that reason, “natural” or morally acceptable. Paul distinguished between innate passions perverted by the fall of Adam and exacerbated by idol worship on the one hand, and material creation that was left relatively intact despite human sin on the other hand.

Second, some current theories of homosexual development are essentially compatible with Paul’s own view of sin. In Romans 5 and 7 Paul speaks of sin as an innate impulse operating in the human body, transmitted by an ancestor human, and never entirely within the control of human will. This is precisely how most homosexual-affirming advocates describe homosexual orientation today.

Third, theories about a congenital basis for homoerotic attraction were widespread in Paul’s day, as was the existence of men whose sexual desire was oriented exclusively toward other males. We may have refined the view of exclusive innate attraction to

members of the same sex, but the basic elements of this theory were already in place in antiquity and still made little difference to critical assessments of homosexual behavior. Why? Because it is obvious—especially in a worldview that incorporates the notion of a human fall from an original sinless state—that innate impulses are not necessarily moral simply because they are innate.

Fourth and finally, it is not quite true that science has now discovered that homosexual impulses are given at birth, whether through genes or hormones or special homosexual brains. In fact, studies to date indicate that homoerotic impulses are not congenital. Rather, whatever contribution is made through genes, hormones or brain-wiring is largely indirect and subordinate to macro- and micro-cultural factors [see pp. 384-432 of my book].

For example, cross-cultural studies have been done showing a wide variance in the incidence of homosexual behavior and homosexual self-identification in different population groups, ancient and modern. And the most important identical twin study to date, recently conducted by J. Michael Bailey, “did not provide statistically significant support for the importance of genetic factors” in the development of homosexuality.

Q: Anything else that you want to say that might indicate that Paul was opposed to all forms of same-sex intercourse?

Yes, in addition to, first, the allusion to the creation stories in Genesis 1-2 and to, second, the broad argument from nature, three other points can be made that show that Paul’s critique of homosexual practice was not limited in scope only to certain exploitative types.

Third, Paul critiques not only male homosexual practice but also female homosexual practice. The latter did not conform to the male pederastic model, nor did it usually entail cultic associations. Apparently, then, Paul’s main problem with homosexual behavior did not have to do with pederastic or idolatrous dimensions.

Fourth, the fact that Paul indicts both partners in same-sex unions and speaks of mutual gratification indicates that he does not have in view forms where coercion is involved.

Fifth, glowing tributes to homosexual love in Paul’s time and the wide variety of manifestations of same-sex love in Greco-Roman society give the lie to contemporary claims that Paul could not have conceived of caring homoerotic unions when he opposed same-sex intercourse.

Q: Many people are willing to concede your point that both Paul and the authors of the Levitical prohibitions were unequivocally against all homosexual practice. But they would counter-argue that same-sex intercourse is not much of a concern to Scripture because it receives so little attention. What is your response?

There are two problems with this claim. The first is that there are a fair amount of texts that speak strongly against same-sex intercourse.

Despite allegations by some scholars that the stories of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-11) and of the Levite at Gibeah (Judges 19:22-25) only express opposition to homosexual intercourse in the context of rape, these stories do include male-male intercourse per se as an important factor in the evil behavior of the inhabitants. To them can be added the story of Ham's sexual act on his father Noah (Genesis 9:20-27).

That these stories are relevant to an indictment of same-sex intercourse generally is apparent from: (a) the wider narratives of both the Yahwist and the Deuteronomistic historian which elsewhere indicate a restriction of appropriate sexual activity to heterosexual relations; (b) ancient Near Eastern texts that censure male-male intercourse for reasons other than coercion; (c) the assessment of Sodom's sin by a number of later texts, including Ezekiel 16:50, Jude 7, and 2 Peter 2:7; and (d) the motifs common to the Ham and Sodom stories on the one hand and the denunciation of Canaanite sexual sins in Leviticus 18 and 20, including Canaanite participation in non-coercive male-male intercourse as a basis for expulsion from the land.

Also to be included among anti-homosex texts are a series of texts in the Deuteronomistic history (Joshua through 2 Kings) that speak disparagingly of cultic participants in homosexual activity: 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7. These texts are grounded in the law of Deuteronomy (23:17-18) and continued in the Book of Revelation (21:8; 22:15). They show a special revulsion for males functioning as receptive partners in intercourse with other males, referring to them as "dogs." Parallel Mesopotamian texts indicate that the main issue is not cult association or fees but rather behaving sexually as though female rather than male.

Q: And what is the second problem with claiming that Scripture shows little concern for homosexual practice?

Texts that implicitly reject homosexual unions run the gamut of the entire Bible, including not only the creation stories in Genesis 1-3 and the apostolic decree in Acts 15:20, 29, and 21:25, along with other occurrences of the word *porneia* ("sexual immorality") in the New Testament, but also the whole range of narratives, laws, proverbs, exhortations, metaphors and poetry that in addressing sexual relationships presume the sole legitimacy of heterosexual unions.

For example, when the relationship between God and Israel or between Jesus and the church is depicted as an intimate covenant relationship between adults, it is always imaged as a heterosexual relationship, never as a homoerotic relationship. And this is so despite the apparent incongruity of male-dominated communities imaging themselves as females. Why? Because the idea of a homosexual union was utterly repugnant to biblical authors.

Another example: why is it that there exists not a single law in any of the legal codes in the Pentateuch that distinguishes appropriate and inappropriate types of same-sex erotic

relationships? After all, such laws abound for heterosexual relationships. The reason is self-evident: all same-sex erotic relationships were regarded as inappropriate. Nowhere is there the slightest indication of openness anywhere in the Bible to homoerotic attachments, including the narrative about David and Jonathan.

The reason why not every author of Scripture explicitly comments on same-sex intercourse is that some views are treated as so obvious that very little needs to be said. The only form of consensual sexual behavior that was regarded by ancient Israel, early Judaism, and early Christianity as more egregious than same-sex intercourse was bestiality. It is no accident that bestiality receives even less attention in the Bible than same-sex intercourse—it is mentioned only in Exod 22:19; Lev 18:23 and 20:15-16; and Deut 27:21. Incest receives only comparable attention. Yet unequivocal opposition to bestiality and incest by every biblical author and by Jesus can hardly be doubted.

The “big picture” of the Bible on the issue of homosexual practice is not some vague concept of love and tolerance of every form of consensual sex but rather the complementarity of male-female sexual bonds and the universal restriction of acceptable sexual activity to heterosexual marriage.

Q: Speaking of Jesus, some argue that because Jesus said nothing about the matter that it was not an important issue for him. What do you think?

There is no historical basis for arguing that Jesus might have been neutral or even favorable toward same-sex intercourse.

All the evidence we have points overwhelmingly to the conclusion that Jesus would have strongly opposed same-sex intercourse had such behavior been a serious problem among first-century Jews. It simply was not a problem in Israel.

First, Jesus’ alleged silence has to be set against the backdrop of unequivocal and strong opposition to same-sex intercourse in the Hebrew Bible and throughout early Judaism. It is not historically likely that Jesus overturned any prohibition of the Mosaic law, let alone on a strongly held moral matter such as this. And Jesus was not shy about disagreeing with prevailing viewpoints. Had he wanted his disciples to take a different viewpoint he would have had to say so.

Second, the notion of Jesus’ “silence” has to be qualified. According to Mark, Jesus spoke out against *porneia*, “sexual immorality” (Mark 7:21-23) and accepted the Decalogue commandment against adultery (Mark 10:19). In Jesus’ day, and for many centuries before and thereafter, *porneia* was universally understood in Judaism to include same-sex intercourse. Moreover, the Decalogue commandment against adultery was treated as a broad rubric prohibiting all forms of sexual practice that deviated from the creation model in Genesis 1-2, including homoerotic intercourse.

Third, that Jesus lifted up the male-female model for sexual relationships in Genesis 1-2 as the basis for defining God’s will for sexuality is apparent from his back-to-back

citation in Mark 10:6-7 of Genesis 1:27 (“God made them male and female”) and Genesis 2:24 (“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”).

These are the same two texts that Paul cites or alludes to in his denunciation of same-sex intercourse in Romans 1:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9. For Jesus, marriage was ordained by the Creator to be an indissoluble (re-)union of a man and woman—two complementary sexual others—into one flesh. Authorization of homoerotic unions requires a different creation account.

Fourth, it is time to deconstruct the myth of a sexually tolerant Jesus. Three sets of Jesus sayings make clear that, far from loosening the law’s stance on sex, Jesus intensified the ethical demand in this area: (a) Jesus’ stance on divorce and remarriage (Mark 10:1-12; also Matthew 5:32 and the parallel in Luke 16:18; and Paul’s citation of Jesus’ position in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11); (b) Jesus’ remark about adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:27-28); and (c) Jesus’ statement about removing body parts as preferable to being thrown into hell (Matthew 5:29-30 and Mark 9:43-48) which, based on the context in Matthew as well as rabbinic parallels, primarily has to do with sexual immorality.

Simply put, sex mattered to Jesus. Jesus did not broaden the range of acceptable sexual expression; he narrowed it. And he thought that unrepentant, repetitive deviation from this norm could get a person thrown into hell.

Where then do we get the impression that Jesus was soft on sex? People think of his encounters with the adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11, the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50, and the Samaritan woman who had many husbands in John 4.

What the first story suggests is that Jesus did modify the law at one point: Sexual immorality should not incur a death penalty from the state. Why? Not because sex for him did not matter but rather because stoning was a terminal act that did not give opportunity for repentance and reform. Moreover, all three stories confirm what we know about Jesus elsewhere: that he aggressively sought the lost, ate with them, fraternized with them. But the same Jesus who could protect an adulterous woman from stoning also took a very strong stance against divorce-and-remarriage.

We see a parallel in Jesus’ stance toward tax collectors, who had a justly deserved reputation for exploiting their own people for personal gain. We do not conclude from Jesus’ well-known outreach to tax collectors that Jesus was soft on economic exploitation. To the contrary: All scholars agree that Jesus intensified God’s ethical demand with respect to treatment of the poor and generosity with material possessions. Why then do we conclude from Jesus’ outreach to sexual sinners that sexual sin was not so important to Jesus?

Q: Some would still argue that the teaching against homosexuality is related to cultural and social conditioning. Now that society is more accepting of

homosexuality, why shouldn't Christianity change its position? In other words, why is this teaching inalterable?

Ancient Israel, early Judaism and early Christianity never adopted the position that they should alter their ethical standards simply because the broader cultural milieu took a more accepting view of some practices.

They all lived in environments where male-male intercourse was often more of an accepted practice than it is in our own contemporary culture. Yet, far from capitulating on their position regarding acceptable sexual expression, they maintained clear distinctions between their own practices and the practices of those outside the community of God.

This is what holiness refers to: being set apart for the exclusive use of God rather than conforming to the ways of the world. Jesus himself called on his followers to be “the light of the world” and “a city built on a hill,” and not to act “like the Gentiles.” The view of Scripture against same-sex intercourse is pervasive, absolute and strong, and was all those things in relation to the broader cultural contexts from which Scripture emerged. It was then, and remains today, a core countercultural vision for human sexuality.

As crosscultural studies indicate, cultural affirmation of homosexual practice will lead to higher numbers of self-identifying and practicing homosexuals and bisexuals in the population, which in turn will lead to an increase in the ancillary problems that affect the homosexual and bisexual population at a disproportionately high rate.

This includes health problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, mental illness, substance abuse, and a 10-year or more decrease in life expectancy; problems in relational dynamics, including a high incidence of non-monogamy (especially among male homosexuals) and short-term relationships (especially among lesbians) due to the distinctive natures of males as males and females as females; and higher incidence of adult-adolescent and adult-child sexual activity.

For the macro-culture generally, approval of homosexual behavior will all but annihilate societal gender norms of any sort, promoting the normalization of the most bizarre elements of the homosexual movement—transsexualism, transvestism—thereby increasing gender identity confusion among the young. Indeed, we can expect a lessening of aversion to various sexual relationships hitherto regarded as sexual perversions—for example, “threesomes,” “open” committed relationships, adult-adolescent sexual relations, and consensual adult sex between close blood relations—owing to a complete abandonment of single divinely-sanctioned, nature-imbedded model for acceptable sexual expression.

On top of all this, we can expect—given the track record to date of the leadership in the homosexual lobby—the public marginalization and eventually persecution of any who make known their opposition to homosexual behavior. If anyone needs any proof of this, they need only look at what is happening to the Boy Scouts and the Salvation Army, and to Christian student groups at colleges and universities who are derecognized for their

stance on homosexual behavior. Or examine the mandatory “sensitivity training” programs and “zero tolerance” policies implemented in some school systems and major corporations, alongside the official endorsement of homosexual organizations that tar those who question the acceptance of homosexual practice with the label of “homophobic bigots,” akin to racists. Is this something we want our children to face?

God has deemed that sexual intercourse be an experience between complementary sexual “others” that creates a “one-flesh” union, a celebration of sexual diversity and pluralism in the best sense of the terms. There is clearly something developmentally deficient or “unnatural” about a person being erotically attracted to the body parts shared in common with another of the same sex, about someone seeking a complementary sexual relationship from a person who in terms of sex is non-complementary, a sexual “same.” It is no more wise, or loving, to promote such unions than it is to promote adult, committed incestuous unions.

Q: We live in an age of “tolerance.” What does the Bible say about how we should treat homosexuals? And how can Christians oppose homosexuality in the public square without falling into extremism?

We should love all people, regardless of whether they engage in immoral activity or not. Love is a much better, and far more scriptural, concept than tolerance.

Jesus lifted up the command to “love one’s neighbor” in Leviticus 19:18—a command in the Holiness Code—as the second great command. We often miss the intertextual echo to Leviticus 19:17, which not only says that we should not hate, take revenge, or hold a grudge against our neighbor but also says that we should “reprove” our neighbor “and so not incur guilt because of him.”

If we really love somebody, we will not provide approval, let alone cultural incentives, for forms of behavior that are self-destructive and other-destructive. Jesus combined an intensification of God’s ethical demand in the areas of sex and money with an active and loving outreach to sexual sinners and economic exploiters. We should do the same: love the sinner, hate the sin.

Concretely, this means abhorring demeaning descriptions of homosexuals as “fags,” “queers,” and the like. It means supporting fair and equal prosecution of violence done to homosexuals. It might even mean—consistent with Jesus’ actions toward the adulterous woman—decriminalization of homosexual behavior. It certainly means making friends with homosexuals and helping AIDS sufferers. It means making a distinction between people who experience homoerotic impulses and people who act on them.

It does not mean, however, embracing “sexual orientation” along with race and gender as a specially protected legal classification. The unfortunate effect of such legislation is: (a) to provide cultural and legal incentives for the behavior in question; (b) to send the wrong message that homosexual behavior is as morally neutral as race and gender; (c) to marginalize and intimidate legally those who adopt a critical view of homosexual

practice; and (d) to establish the legal basis for indoctrinating our children and for mandating state-sponsored homosexual marriage.

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