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Biology and Morality — What If There Is a Biological Basis for Homosexuality?

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The Seattle Times weighed in on the homosexuality debate again on Sunday, with the paper's science reporter, Sandi Doughton, arguing that "a flock of sheep at Oregon State University may help answer a key question behind the controversy: Is homosexuality a matter of choice or biology?"

It seems that some scientists have identified a group of "male-oriented" male sheep, and now argue that the cause of this "orientation" must be biological. "Sheep aren't people," she helpfully acknowledges, "but the Oregon work adds to a growing body of research that bolsters biological explanations for sexual orientation across species — including humans." Watch where this is going: "Despite those scientific findings, some religious groups say homosexuality is a lifestyle that can be treated, if not prevented. One such group, the conservative Christian organization Focus on the Family, is sponsoring a one-day conference in Bothell Saturday." Further: "The social and political implications of the research are impossible to ignore, leading to unease on both sides of the gay-rights debate. If science proves homosexuality is innate, is there any basis to deny gays equal treatment — including the right to marry? But if scientists unravel the roots of sexual orientation, will it some day be possible to 'fix' people who don't fit the norms or abort fetuses likely to be born gay?" The central thrust of the article is that if homosexuality is somehow "proved" to have a biological basis, Christians must revise our understanding of the moral status of homosexuality itself.

This is not an uncommon assumption, even among some who should know better. This is where a theologically-defined worldview becomes most urgent. The biblical doctrine of sin should lead us to expect some biological impact from human sinfulness. The effects of the Fall were truly catastrophic, bringing devastating effects upon every aspect of creation. The first sin led to the judgment of death, and the human genetic code became encoded with death and decay. Biology does not trump morality.

Has a biological basis for homosexuality been proved? Not by a long shot. Much of the so-called research has been proved to be highly suspect and unverifiable. Claims lacking in scientific credibility are often presented in the media as evidence of what science has "proved." But remember this: If the scientific community does come to a sustainable and credible finding related to a biological basis, this doesn't change the moral status of homosexual behavior in any way. Such a finding would simply affirm what we should already know — that sin brings consequences; and those consequences may even be passed on from generation to generation. Such a finding might actually lead to a discovery of how to help homosexuals out of homosexuality. But that, of course, is exactly what some fear.

LINKS WITH NO BIOLOGICAL BASIS: Sandi Doughton, Born Gay? How Biology May Drive Orientation, The Seattle Times, Sunday, June 19, 2005. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Is Homosexuality in the Genes?, August 15, 2004, What About the 'Gay Gene?' An Honest Look at the Evidence, November 11, 2004, Then Again, Maybe Not: The Gay Gene Theory Takes a Hit.

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