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Homosexuality and the Bible -Twisting the Truth

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Different approaches are taken toward this end. For some, an outright rejection of biblical authority is explicit. With astounding candor, William M. Kent, at one time a member of a committee assigned by United Methodists to study homosexuality, declared that “the scriptural texts in the Old and New Testaments condemning homosexual practice are neither inspired by God nor otherwise of enduring Christian value. Considered in the light of the best biblical, theological, scientific, and social knowledge, the biblical condemnation of homosexual practice is better understood as representing time and place bound cultural prejudice.” This approach is the most honest as found among the revisionists. These persons do not deny that the Bible expressly forbids homosexual practices—they acknowledge that the Bible does just that. Their answer is straightforward; we must abandon the Bible in light of modern knowledge and sensitivities.

The next step taken by those who follow this approach is to suggest that it is not sufficient for the authority of the Bible to be denied—the Bible must be opposed. Gary David Comstock, Protestant chaplain at Wesleyan University charges: “Not to recognize, critique, and condemn Paul’s equation of godlessness with homosexuality is dangerous. To remain within our respective Christian traditions and not challenge those passages that degrade and destroy us is to contribute to our own oppression.” Further, Comstock argues, “These passages will be brought up and used against us again and again until Christians demand their removal from the biblical canon, or, at the very least, formally discredit their authority to prescribe behavior.”

A second approach taken by the revisionists is to suggest that the human authors of Scripture were limited by the scientific immaturity of their age. If they knew what we now know, these revisionists claim, the human authors of Scripture would never have been so closed-minded. Victor Paul Furnish makes this case: “Not only the terms, but the concepts ‘homosexual’ and ‘homosexuality’ were unknown in Paul’s day. These terms like ‘heterosexual,’ ‘heterosexuality,’ ‘bisexual,’ and ‘bisexuality’ presuppose an understanding of human sexuality that was possible only with the advent of modern psychology and sociological analysis. The ancient writers were operating without the vaguest idea of what we have learned to call ‘sexual orientation’.”

Indeed, Paul and the other apostles seem completely ignorant of modern secular understandings of sexual identity and orientation—and this truth is fundamentally irrelevant. Modern notions of sexual orientation must be brought to answer to Scripture—not vice versa. Scripture must not be called upon to defend itself in light of modern notions. Paul will not apologize to Sigmund Freud or the American Psychological Association, and the faithful church must call this approach what it is—a blatant effort to subvert the authority of Scripture and to replace biblical authority with the false authority of modern secular ideologies.

A third approach taken by the revisionists is to deny that biblical passages actually refer to homosexuality at all, or to argue that the passages refer to specific and ‘oppressive’ homosexual acts. For instance, some argue that Paul’s references to homosexuality are actually references to pederasty [the sexual abuse of young boys], to homosexual rape, or to “non-

committed” homosexual relationships. The same is argued concerning passages such as Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, and Leviticus 20:13. Yet, in order to make this case, the revisionists must deny the obvious—and argue the ridiculous.

Likewise, some argue that the sin of Sodom was not homosexuality, but inhospitality. John J. McNeill takes this line, arguing that the church oppressively shifted the understanding of the sin of Sodom from inhospitality to homosexuality. The text, however, cannot be made to play this game. The context indicates that the sin of Sodom is clearly homosexuality—and without this meaning, the passage makes no sense. The language and the structure of the text are clear. Beyond this, Jude, verse 7, self-evidently links the sin of Sodom with sexual perversion and immorality, stating, “Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

This verse is sufficient to indicate the severity of the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 speaks of male homosexuality as an ‘abomination’—the strongest word used of God’s judgment against a human act.

The most extensive argument against homosexuality is not found in the Old Testament, however, but in Romans 1:22-27, a passage which is found within Paul’s lengthy introduction to his Roman letter.

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions; for the women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

As Romans 1 makes absolutely clear, homosexuality is fundamentally an act of unbelief. As Paul writes, the wrath of God is revealed against all those “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” God the Creator has implanted in all humanity a knowledge of Himself, and all are without excuse. This is the context of Paul’s explicit statements on homosexuality.

Homosexual acts and homosexual desire, states Paul, are a rebellion against God’s sovereign intention in creation and a gross perversion of God’s good and perfect plan for His created order. Paul makes clear that homosexuality—among both males and females—is a dramatic sign of rebellion against God and His intention in creation. Those about whom Paul writes have worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. Thus, men and women have forfeited the natural complementarity of God’s intention for heterosexual marriage and have turned to members of their own sex, burning with an illicit desire which is in itself both degrading and dishonorable.

This is a very strong and clear message. The logical progression in Romans 1 is undeniable. Paul shifts immediately from his description of rebellion against God as Creator to an identification of homosexuality—among both men and women—as the first and most evident sign of a society upon which God has turned His judgment. Essential to understanding this reality in theological perspective is a recognition of homosexuality as an assault upon the integrity of creation and God’s intention in creating human beings in two distinct and complementary genders. This text may be dismissed and ignored by those who reject its message, but it cannot be neutralized.

