

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Issues: Clinical & Biblical Perspectives

Controversy abounds about homosexuality, especially in recent days, given the pronouncements of certain societal leaders, media practitioners, clinicians and clergypersons.

In some countries (notably Europe and the USA) the matter has gone through debate to legal decision that homosexuality is a legitimate lifestyle option and increasingly same-sex marriage is a legal spin-off of the legalization of homosexuality.

The controversy no doubt will continue on both the moral and the clinical fronts but there are some non-controversial realities concerning homosexuality and these need to be more widely known and appreciated especially by governmental authorities who struggle with legislation on the issue and also by religious persons who seek to be involved in a ministry to persons of the LGBT orientation. At times one may read or hear about the LGBTQ or LGBTQI orientation where the Q (=queer or questioning) and I (=intersex) are species or subsets of Trans-gender.

All who desire to minister to any group of persons should begin with an examination of attitude towards that group. Do you see them as “persons for whom Christ died” or do you look down on them as if they are sub-persons or non-persons?

Honestly, do you register the sentiment that all homosexuals should be killed or imprisoned for life? If so, flush your attitude and sentiment because they are not of God, confess them as sinful and repent.

Since we are dealing with things sexual, one could make a strong pronouncement. If you have never felt a pull to sexual immorality, you are too old, too young or just “too lie” or untruthful.

The intention here is to explore, in the first place, aspects of human sexuality along with a look at some current clinical realities on homosexuality. The second thing is to take a look at the Bible’s view of homosexuality.

‘**Current** clinical realities’ is said because material will be drawn, in large measure, from the most comprehensive, multi-disciplinary and recent scientific survey of research on homosexuality published in August 2016 in **The New Atlantis**, a Journal of Technology and Society as a special report on “Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences”.¹ I want to emphasize ‘scientific **survey of research** on homosexuality’, so the authors have combed the research literature on homosexuality.

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Now then, let us begin with an understanding of human sexuality. Here we are trying to simplify a complex reality.

Human sexuality involves three basic components and can be seen as the sum of these three basic components: Sexual Identity, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation or Preference. But what exactly is involved in these three components?

Sexual identity has to do with your genetic makeup, the particular combination of X- and Y-chromosomes that makes you who you are, basically. The genes of your being and your hormones determine how you **look physically, biologically**, in terms of being male or female and they also influence the intensity of your sexual desire. Sexual identity then is an objective, biological reality.

Gender identity has to do with **your inner sense, your picture of yourself** as male or female. This is largely influenced by social and psychological forces and is formed during infancy and childhood. Gender identity then is a subjective, psychological reality. Before explaining the third component we mention a crucial fact about sexual identity and gender identity.

¹ See a negative perspective on the report in recommended resources!

Sexual identity and gender identity can clash. Your inner picture of yourself (your gender identity) can be different from your outer biological or physical look (your sexual identity) and change of one of the identities may be deemed necessary.

This clash of identities happens with some people who are biologically ‘normal’, by that is meant people who are, by virtue of chromosomes, either XX and thus female or XY and thus male. The clash of identities can be even more pronounced for people who have rare combinations of X- and Y-chromosomes (like XXY or XYY), as well as for those who have the normal combinations but suffer from some hormonal abnormality.

When the identities clash someone may seek to become a **transvestite**. Take the ‘vest’ in transvestite to represent one’s normal ‘vest’ or clothing and ‘trans’ to mean ‘beyond’. Transvestites then, seek to go beyond or alter their outer ‘vest’ or clothing to look like the opposite sex (consistent with their inner feel).

There is another option when the identities clash. Someone may seek to become a **transsexual**, seeking surgery to alter the physical appearance to match the inner picture of the self.

The third component of sexuality is sexual orientation or preference. These two words are not really identical even though they both have to do with whom, gender wise, or with what you normally desire to have sex. Orientation is generally the preferred term because preference has an element of choice implied in it.

The New Atlantis report has some clarifying even startling comments on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Concerning Sexual orientation the report says

“The understanding of sexual orientation as an innate, biologically fixed property of human beings — the idea that people are “born that way” — is not supported by scientific evidence...The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex — that a person might be “a man trapped in a woman’s body” or “a woman trapped in a man’s body” — is not supported by scientific evidence.” (p. 8)²

As well in the Atlantis report,

² Similarly, in Neil & Briar Whitehead, *My Genes made Me Do It*, printed online edition, 2014, pp. 60-91, Also *ibid*, chapter 12, ‘Can Sexual Orientation Change?’ pp. 224-265. There is a fairly widespread phenomenon in colleges in the USA called LUG, lesbian until graduation and GUG gay until graduation.

“While the general public may be under the impression that there are widely accepted scientific definitions of terms such as “sexual orientation,” in fact, there are not. [Lisa] Diamond’s assessment of the situation in 2003 is still true today, that ‘there is currently no scientific or popular consensus on the exact constellation of experiences that definitively ‘qualify’ an individual as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.’” (pages 24-25)

Concerning Gender Identity the report says

“Biological sex (the binary categories of male and female) is a fixed aspect of human nature, even though some individuals affected by disorders of sex development may exhibit ambiguous sex characteristics. By contrast, gender identity is a social and psychological concept that is not well defined, and there is little scientific evidence that it is an innate, fixed biological property.” (p. 11)

Ponder now the Jamaica Gleaner letter of the day of May 11, 2016, [by Rev. Clinton Chisholm] captioned ‘Identity: Gender, Sex, Genus’.

“While I am aware that how a person feels about self is hugely important psychologically, it seems to us that in light of psychological maladies such as delusion, psychosis, neurosis, etc. a responsible community cannot, without more (as the lawyers would say) give practical and legal preference to ‘how one feels’ over against ‘how/who one is’.

So one is, by standard scientific criteria based on chromosomes, etc., male (sexual identity) but feels (psychologically) female (gender identity). Which identity should society take as the given?

If one feels like a fried egg (sunny side up) nobody indulges that delusion by making a large plate and allowing the person to sit in it with or without bread beside him. God, no, if we care enough we provide therapy because the person is not well.

Might we in modern society be too indulgent by allowing transgendered persons (an incontestable psychological designation) to use the restroom of their choice based on how they feel about themselves? And we pass laws justifying this?

How is a transgendered person discriminated against if required to use the restroom of that one’s gender or sex at birth?

As a thought experiment, what if a person (thus incontestably of the genus/species homo sapiens) decides to argue for the designation of being trans genus (a weird

coinage, admittedly) because he feels more canine than human. What then?

Is modern man degenerating from homo sapiens to homo saps (a non-Latin coinage, again in folly)?”

To recap then, sexuality is sexual identity + gender identity + sexual orientation. Put differently, and less precisely, your sexuality relates to who **you are** sexually, whom you **feel like** sexually and whom/what you **feel for** sexually.

What may sound counter-intuitive from the Atlantis report is the summary comment made after an exhaustive examination of the research literature on the studies of twins. Here the report advises,

“Summarizing the studies of twins, we can say that there is no reliable scientific evidence that sexual orientation is determined by a person’s genes. But there is evidence that genes play a role in influencing sexual orientation. So the question ‘Are gay people born that way?’ requires clarification. ***There is virtually no evidence that anyone, gay or straight, is “born that way” if that means their sexual orientation was genetically determined.*** But there is some evidence from the twin studies that certain genetic profiles probably increase the likelihood the person later identifies as gay or engages in same-sex sexual behavior.” (p. 31, my emphasis)

In case you are psycho-spiritually troubled by the implication of the statement that none of us is born gay or straight, it would seem that as normal human beings we have the capacity to feel a desire for sexual intimacy but how we give expression to that desire flows out of the complexities of our earliest and later sexual experiences.

Let us now look briefly at the basic sexual orientations.

The first and seemingly the most widespread sexual orientation is heterosexuality. The prefix ‘hetero’ is derived from the Greek word *heteros* meaning ‘another of a different kind’, so heterosexuality is an orientation for male-female sexual intercourse.

Another orientation and our focus here is homosexuality. The prefix ‘homo’ is not derived from Latin meaning ‘man’ but is from the Greek word *homoiōs* meaning ‘same’, so homosexuality is an orientation for ‘same sex’ sexual intercourse, that is male to male or female to female.³ Indeed, some clinicians use the expression ‘same sex attraction’ as

³ “...their similarities notwithstanding, male and female homosexuality are probably different conditions that arise from a different combination of influences.” Jeffrey Satinover, “The Biology of

an alternative to homosexuality.

A third orientation is bisexuality and the prefix ‘bi’ is from Latin meaning ‘two’. Bisexuality is an orientation for sexual intercourse with *both* male and female.

The fourth orientation, spelt b-e-s-t-i-a-l-i-t-y is pronounced beeshialitee. This orientation is for sexual intercourse with a lower animal or beast.

The final orientation, if we can call it that, is asexuality. Asexuals lack a desire for sexual intercourse.

What those who seek to minister to persons of the LGBTQI orientation must prayerfully ponder and lovingly seek to get across to these persons is the current scientific research that says that sexual orientation and desires are quite fluid and thus change is possible.

The Atlantis report advises,

“Advocates of the ‘born that way’ hypothesis, as mentioned earlier, sometimes argue that a person is not only born with a sexual orientation but that that orientation is immutable; it is fixed for life. There is now considerable scientific evidence that sexual desires, attractions, behaviors, and even identities can, and sometimes do, change over time. For findings in this area we can turn to the most comprehensive study of sexuality to date, the 1992 National Health and Social Life Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (NORC).” (p. 50)

Slightly later,

“Moreover, other population-based surveys suggest that sexual desire may be fluid for a considerable number of individuals, especially among adolescents as they mature through the early stages of adult development. In this regard, opposite-sex attraction and identity seem to be more stable than same-sex or bisexual attraction and identity. This is suggested by data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (the “Add Health” study discussed earlier). This prospective longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of U.S. adolescents starting in grades 7 – 12 began during the 1994 – 1995 school year, and followed the cohort into young adulthood, with four follow-up interviews (referred to as Waves I, II, III, IV in the literature). The most recent was in 2007 – 2008, when the sample was aged 24 – 32.” (p. 51)

The findings from these waves are simply stunning. The authors inform thus,

“Same-sex or both-sex romantic attractions were quite prevalent in the study’s first wave, with rates of approximately 7% for the males and 5% for the females. However, 80% of the adolescent males who had reported same-sex attractions at Wave I later identified themselves as exclusively heterosexual as young adults at Wave IV. Similarly, for adolescent males who, at Wave I, reported romantic attraction to both sexes, over 80% of them reported no same-sex romantic attraction at Wave III. The data for the females surveyed were similar but less striking: for adolescent females who had both-sex attractions at Wave I, more than half reported exclusive attraction to males at Wave III.” (51).

For change in the scientific literature as well see E. Mansell Pattison and Myrna Loy Pattison, “Ex-Gays: Religiously Mediated Change in Homosexuals,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137 (1980), 12 and Mark F. Schwartz and William H. Masters, “The Masters and Johnson Treatment Program for Dissatisfied Homosexual Men,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 141 (1984), 173-81.

Much tact, empathy and prayer will have to accompany the sharing of this kind of information with persons who all along have been sold the notion that they cannot change because that’s who/how they are because that’s how they were born.

Ponder now the July 27, 2013 Jamaica Observer column titled ‘Unchangeable Behaviour: A Challenge For Psychiatry?’ [by Rev. Clinton Chisholm]

“It is said that fools rush in where angels fear to tread so pardon my folly. In fact it may be worse, I may be about to take my life into my own hands but then I believe in resurrection.

Reparative therapy (behavior change) for homosexuals is seen by many therapists, gay and straight alike, as ‘clinical crap’ (my obnoxious words not theirs) because it not only does not work but, for many if not most or all, **it cannot work**. The confessions and apologies of Alan Chambers former head of the now closed Exodus International (a ministry for persons with unwanted same-sex attractions and activity) seem to corroborate this view. But this raises some awkward questions for Psychiatry and related disciplines.

What is it about homosexuality that makes it so resistant to psychotherapy and clinical behavior modification interventions? I gather from friends in the field of Psychology that

behaviours that are usually associated with personality disorders are often difficult to treat and so are behaviours resulting from bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Psychiatrists should do us the favour of explaining why it is clinically pointless to attempt behaviour change even in a person who does not want to continue in a same-sex liaison.

Is it because this relates to sexual intercourse? Might it also then be clinically pointless to attempt behavior change in any person who desires to give up fornication, adultery, bestiality, incest or any other sexual attraction and practice? We need to know, help us please.

What then is the future of the now popular reparative justice programmes where behavior change is emphasized over and even replaces imprisonment? Money well-spent or wasted on a futile venture? Just asking.

Then, since I have already put my life in my hand indulge me a bit further. Neurosurgeons treat brain-related maladies. What exactly do Psychiatrists and Psychologists treat within humans since the psyche (whether, soul, self or mind) is immaterial and invisible? Just asking especially of those who are hard-nosed materialists and/or atheists.

Is my problem too much time as an unemployed person or have I fallen in love with a coffin?"

Drawing from the Atlantis report plus then, we learn a few crucial clinical facts:-

- 1. *There is virtually no evidence that anyone, gay or straight, is "born that way" if that means their sexual orientation was genetically determined.***
- 2. The transgender notion that a person might be "a man trapped in a woman's body" or "a woman trapped in a man's body" — has no scientific support.⁴**
- 3. There is now considerable scientific evidence that sexual desires, attractions, behaviours, and even identities can, and sometimes do, change over time. Change is in fact a scientifically verified reality.⁵**

⁴ See the Gleaner Letter of the Day, 'Identity: Gender, Sex, Genus', May 11, 2016, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/letters/20160511/letter-day-identity-gender-sex-genus>.

⁵ See the Observer column of July 27, 2013 'Unchangeable Behaviour: A challenge for Psychiatry?' http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/results/Unchangeable-behaviour--A-challenge-for-psychiatry-_14761350. Also see E. Mansell Pattison and Myrna Loy Pattison, "Ex-Gays: Religiously Mediated Change in Homosexuals," American Journal of Psychiatry, 137 (1980), 12 and Mark F. Schwartz and William H. Masters, "The Masters and Johnson Treatment Program for Dissatisfied Homosexual Men," American Journal of Psychiatry, 141 (1984), 173-81.

What has been shared so far is all that you need **from a clinical perspective** to minister and appeal to the mind and life needs of LGBTQI persons.

But to increase your sense of empathy with and sympathy for persons of the LGBTQI orientation do bear in mind that one incontestable hallmark of the homosexual lifestyle is sexual promiscuity, admitted even by homosexual researchers and by sympathizers with the homosexual cause. A few indicative quotations should convey the picture.

Promiscuity among homosexuals is well known...Promiscuity is much more prevalent among male homosexuals than female homosexuals, but even female homosexuals tend to be promiscuous by heterosexual standards.

(Frank du Mas, cited in Grant & Horne, *Legislating Immorality*, 1993, 34)

Anonymous, promiscuous sex is a hallmark of homosexuality, and this can be true even in what are called 'monogamous' relationships. *New York* magazine lamented the case of one AIDS sufferer who had had, ironically, a rather stable sex life, staying with the same lover for more than ten years—*except for one night a week*. That makes at the very least, over fifty partners a year, and possibly five hundred!

(David Chilton, *National Review*, November 1, 1985)

Homosexual men have been attracted to the toilets at the University of Florida from as far as forty miles away. This university, as well as Dartmouth, Georgetown, and the University of California at San Diego, have been forced to install stainless steel panels between toilet stalls to prevent the drilling of holes in the walls for homosexual activity.

(Thomas Sowell, cited in Grant & Horne, *Legislating Immorality*, 1993, 37)

The homosexual lifestyle is not only marked by promiscuity but by abnormal and downright unhealthy even pathological behaviours, especially as practiced by male homosexuals (e.g. fisting, felching, golden showers, etc.).

Professor Brendan Bain former head of the UWI's Regional Coordinating Unit of the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Regional Training (CHART) Initiative in his written expert testimony to the Belize Supreme Court in the now famous Caleb Orozco case said

“A variety of other actions have been reported in some cases of male-male sexual contact; these include mouth-anal contact, and golden showers (urination on another person). In a small proportion of reported cases, there is scat (defecation on another person) and in a few cases, felching (sucking or eating semen out of someone’s anus).” Here Prof. Bain cites a study reported in the *British Journal of Venereology* in 1981.

In part 2 of the Atlantis report the authors make this summary introductory point, “Compared to the general population, non-heterosexual and transgender subpopulations have higher rates of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and suicide, as well as behavioral and social problems such as substance abuse and intimate partner violence.” (p.59)

The research leading to this point has been done in countries where homosexuality is lawful as well as those in which it is still unlawful so the influence of stigma and discrimination is accounted for.⁶ See for example Theo G.M. Sandfort, et al, “Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders: Findings from the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study (NEMHSIS)”, *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 58 (2001), 85-87, and David M. Fergusson et al, “Is Sexual Orientation Related to Mental Health Problems in Suicidality in Young People? *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 56 (1999), 883.

Plus the shortened life spans arising from diseases contracted via anonymous, promiscuous and unprotected anal sex. A study published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* found that the life expectancy for Canadian gay and bisexual men has been reduced to the life expectancy experienced by all men in the year 1871.⁷ The study was by Robert S. Hogg, et al., “Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men”, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 26 (1997), 657

The international reliance on human rights as a sufficient justification for the legitimization of homosexuality must be examined briefly.

Far too many invoke the epithet ‘human rights’ to justify all manner of strange demands

⁶ Theo G.M. Sandfort, et al, “Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders: Findings from the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study (NEMHSIS)”, *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 58 (2001), 85-87, cited in Mathew D. Staver, *Same-Sex Marriage: Putting Every Household at Risk*, 2004, 12.

⁷ Robert S. Hogg, et al., “Modeling the Impact of HIV Disease on Mortality in Gay and Bisexual Men”, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 26 (1997), 657, cited in Staver, *op cit.*, 127.

or wishes but folk rarely appreciate the fundamental two-fold problem concerning human rights which lawyer and theologian Prof. John Warwick Montgomery describes as 1) defining human rights and 2) justifying human rights (see his 1986 book **Human Rights & Human Dignity**, pages 63-103).

Philosophers Antony Flew and Alan Gewirth also wrestled somewhat with this two-fold problem in the *Georgia Law Review* 13:4, 1979. In his essay ‘The Basis and Content of Human Rights’ Gewirth says, “If, for example, we know that for one person A to have a right to something X is for A to be entitled to X and also for some other person or persons to have a correlative duty to provide X for A as his due...still this does not tell us whether or why A is entitled to X...” (p.1143)

Flew in his essay ‘What is a Right?’ contends on p. 1122, “The first conceptual truth about rights is that they are entitlements which must possess some kind of objectivity. The second is that they are entitlements which have to be grounded in — which is not to say deduced from — some fact or facts about their bearers...”

Despite the ongoing controversy within the various philosophical schools of thought about what ‘human rights’ really are it may be said minimally, if a tad simplistically, that rights are justiciable entitlements. By justiciable is meant if breached redress concerning your rights can be sought in a court of law.

The traditional three generations of human rights as categorized by French jurist Karel Vasak are, civil and political freedoms (1st generation), economic, social, and cultural rights (2nd generation) and the more nebulous ‘solidarity or global village’ rights (3rd generation) like the right to humanitarian disaster relief and the right to benefit from the ‘common heritage of mankind’ (see Montgomery, pages 26-28)

With that backdrop, even as a thought experiment it is difficult to see how anyone could seriously argue for any species of sex act as a human right. Worse, how anyone could argue for risky, unhealthy sexual behaviour — behaviour that is conducive to the spread of deadly diseases and the shortening of life-spans because potentially or inherently unhealthy — as a human right.

Under which of the traditional three generations of human rights would the claimed right to [risky] sexual behaviour fall?

All members of the genus and species called *homo sapiens sapiens* have bona fide human rights owing to their **essential being** as humans but none of us has any unquestionable right to risky and unhealthy sexual **behaviour which is itself changeable**.

The conclusions of the New Atlantis journal that gender identity and sexual orientation are *not innate* or biologically/genetically determined have demolished the fundamental scientific plank of the human rights defence of homosexuality.

We wind off with a few pointers on the Biblical perspective on homosexuality. The ministering Christian should be sensitive to when these pointers will help or hinder dialogue.

But as a kind of preface it should be known that one prominent aspect of ancient Greek culture was that an older married man was expected to have a young boy as a lover. He would share sexually with the boy and would assist in finding him a wife when he was of marriageable age. Interestingly, the Greeks, though comfortable with homosexuality between a mature man and a boy, frowned on homosexuality between adult men because it was degrading for a mature man to be 'receptive' in the sex act.

For an insightful overview of Greek literature on homosexuality by a modern legal luminary see the Gleaner article 'Legal Philosopher John Finnis on Homosexuality', [by Rev. Clinton Chisholm] published 16/12/15.

Patterns similar to the Greeks have been found in ancient China, Japan, medieval Persia, the Sudan, etc.

The Bible's perspective on homosexuality, relates not to the orientation (which is not dealt with in scripture, explicitly) but the practice.

Mind you, if the homosexual orientation finds expression in lustful desire which is a kind of 'having sex in the mind', then that comes under the judgement of the New Testament passages against unwholesome desires, especially our Lord's words in Matthew 5.27-28, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (NASB)

There is no equivocation or lack of clarity in the Bible about the moral wrongness of homosexual practices. There is a unanimous witness in both the Old and the New Testament. Homosexuality is understandably textually taboo in Judaism but as well in Islam (see Surah 26:165-166 of the Qur'an).

Traditional African religions too are against homosexuality though the essentially oral nature of these religions defy proof from texts.

The textual picture within religions that originated in India (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism) and East Asia (e.g. Taoism [sound=dowism] and Confucianism) is unclear as one finds sentiments running across the spectrum of what is taboo to what is not taboo.

If you need a readable, succinct but informative treatment of some of the key biblical texts on homosexuality, procure Greg Koukl's booklet, "*Setting the Record Straight: The Bible & Homosexuality*" available from the organization, Stand to Reason, on the web at www.str.org or you could phone them at 1-800-2-REASON.

Two outstanding books dealing comprehensively and in a scholarly way with the textual issues are *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*, 2001 by Robert Gagnon and *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law*, 2000, by James DeYoung.

In approaching the biblical texts some non-Christians and even some Christians as well, begin with two strikes against the Bible: 1) They argue that the Bible is too old a collection of documents to be taken seriously in this modern age and 2) They contend that it is unreasonable and perhaps even clinically unhealthy to forbid persons with homosexual impulses from ever acting on their urges.

These two strikes lack cogency. How does the age of a document necessarily negate the wisdom or value of the document's content? What would such critics say about the almost universal millennia-old taboo on murder, adultery and stealing in every culture studied in antiquity and the abiding negative sentiments and legal sanctions (excepting for adultery) on those practices today?

Should we by this age-based reasoning trash all literature from antiquity, including the revered pieces of Egyptian literature for some critics and the equally revered pieces of Greek or Roman literature for other critics?

A comparative survey of Ancient Near Eastern law codes is quite instructive: the old Hittite laws of 1650-1500 BC; the 1800 BC Babylonian code of Hammurabi or the oldest

Egyptian law all have taboos that have modern legal descendants of a kind.

The terribly misunderstood biblical legal principle of the *Lex talionis* ‘an eye for an eye...’ (c. 1500 BC) is, in modern jurisprudence, a valuable legal **principle** = the punishment should fit the crime, so if someone tailgates you and damages the rear bumper of your Honda Fit motor car don’t try to make a claim for a BMW X6!! The claimed whatever must be comparable to the damaged whatever.

Indeed, the Bible’s millennia-old aversion to homosexual practices may have a more plausible explanation. As Robert Gagnon says, “...the antiquity and durability of a given prohibition against immoral conduct often indicates its workability, effectiveness, and elasticity as a cultural model rather than its contemporary irrelevance.” (*The Bible & Homosexual Practice*, 29)

Strike 2 concerning the need to act out one’s impulses or urges has to be counterbalanced by the known reality that no sensible person expects paedophiles or adulterers and other such persons to act on their urges. We often or sometimes expect from them self-control/restraint, despite even strong urges and impulses.

Though we propose to explore only a few seminal biblical texts dealing with homosexual practices it may be useful to mention why the Bible has this consistent aversion to homosexual practices.

From the very beginning of the Bible and of human existence as depicted in Genesis 1 and 2, the implied divine norm for human psychosexual relationship is a male with a female. God fashioned humankind in the divine image as male and female (Gen. 1.27-28). In Gen. 2.18-24, the woman is created from and for the man as one, suitable or appropriate for him. The language of the text is beautiful in its imagery of equality, complementarity and sexual differentiation.

As Stanley Grenz suggests, “...the creation of humankind as male and female is central to the outlook toward human sexuality found within the entire biblical story. This broader creation-based understanding, in turn, lies behind the biblical injunctions that depict homosexual intercourse as ‘unnatural’ and hence unethical.” (In his *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*, 1998, 103)

It is appreciation of and respect for the divine norm of male-female sexual relationships

why Jesus mentions the male-female one flesh concept found in Genesis 2.24, in his teaching on divorce in the gospels (Mt. 19.1-12; Mk. 10.1-12).

Now to the texts dealing with homosexuality. There is no uncertainty about the biblical texts in their condemnation of homosexual acts. In fact, as deYoung, Gagnon and others have noted the Bible is unique in its condemnation of all homosexual acts, whether one is penetrating or being penetrated, whether the act is consensual or happens as a result of rape, whether it involves a minor or two adults.⁸

One key text that has attracted varied interpretations is that pertaining to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18.16 to 19.29. The central portion that suggests homosexuality is Gen. 19.4-13. The context? Two angels are visiting Lot in Sodom, and their presence in the city is known.

Contrary to the traditional view that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, depicted so graphically in the passage, is homosexuality, some scholars have argued that what prompted the divine judgement was not homosexuality but *inhospitality*. Social worker and human rights activist Jamaican Horace Levy tried to instruct churches on this text in the Gleaner recently (see his letter of the day, Wednesday, September 14, 2016, captioned 'Sodom Propaganda').

We use the words of John Boswell in his 1980 book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* as representative of this view. Boswell informs,

Lot was violating the custom of Sodom...by entertaining unknown guests within the city walls at night without obtaining the permission of the elders of the city. When the men of Sodom gathered around to demand that the strangers be brought out to them, "that they might *know* them," they meant no more than to "know" who they were, and the city was consequently destroyed not for sexual immorality, but for the sin of inhospitality to strangers. (p. 93)

Boswell also argues that only 10 of the 943 occurrences of 'to know' (*yada* in Hebrew) clearly have the sense of sexual knowledge.

Appealing to frequency of occurrence of a word is useful only when the contextual use of the word is unclear. In the text under consideration 'to know' is, contextually, sexual,

⁸ Gagnon, 56 and deYoung, 14.

when used concerning the visitors (v.5) and also when Lot used it concerning his daughters who, “have not known a man” (v.8)

To appreciate the weakness or nonsense of Boswell’s interpretation of ‘to know’ as ‘to interview or interrogate’ try substituting that expression for ‘to know’ in vv. 5-9. On Boswell’s view those verses would read, using the KJV text as our base,

⁵ And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may **interview them.**"

⁶ So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him,

⁷ and said, "Please, my brethren, do not **do so wickedly!**

⁸ "See now, I have two daughters who have not **interviewed** a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

⁹ And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay *here*, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will **deal worse with you** than with them."

Right after the men of Sodom express their intention to know the visitors, Lot begs them not to act wickedly. Is Lot silly to regard a mere interview as wicked? And why offer his daughters to the men of Sodom when they really needed to know, according to Boswell, who **the strangers** were? And what worse were they planning for Lot than what they had in mind for the visitors? An interview mixed with severe physical blows?

It is beyond controversy that hospitality is an issue in the narrative. But it is also beyond controversy that inhospitality was not the central sin of the men in Sodom. Their central sin was homosexuality or attempted homosexual gang rape of Lot’s male guests.

One cannot overlook the point that **before** the alleged ‘inhospitality’ incident in Gen. 19, it was God’s expressed intention in Gen. 18.20ff to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their **grave sin**. Of course this could be ongoing and aggravated inhospitality or ongoing and aggravated homosexuality. Of those two live options, only homosexuality is regarded as a capital offence in the Old Testament.

But what of support for the inhospitality thesis argued for from Ez. 26:49? The text from the New King James Version reads, ⁴⁹“Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

Appealing to this text must be seen for what it really is, a desperate clutching at an exegetical straw which disregards the context of the text in light of the writer's literary/theological intent.

Neither Ezekiel nor the God whom he claims has revealed this proclaimed woe on Jerusalem is building a comprehensive listing of the sins of Sodom. One cannot overlook as well that v.50 describes Sodom [and her daughters] as having committed abomination (Heb. root is *toevah*) prompting their destruction (reminiscent of Gen.19:24-25?)!

The testimony concerning Sodom and Gomorrah elsewhere in the Bible suggests they were guilty of several offences but the most consistent witness re these cities in the New Testament has to do with sexual immorality.

Jude v. 7 says, "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."

2 Pet. 2. 7, 8 and 10 say of Lot in Sodom, "[He] was oppressed by the **sensual conduct** of unprincipled men...by what he **saw and heard that** righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds)..."

Whatever other sin is involved in the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative in Genesis, homosexuality heads the list.

Leviticus 18.22 and 20.13, denounce 'lying with a man as one lies with a woman' as an abomination punishable by death. Why would anyone therefore be in doubt about the wrongness of homosexual sex in light of these passages?

Well some scholars argue that the key word which reflects the Bible's view of homosexual acts, in these passages, is the word 'abomination' (*toevah* in Hebrew). Ponder John Boswell yet again.

The Hebrew word *toevah*, here translated 'abomination', does not usually signify something intrinsically evil, like rape or theft...but something which is ritually unclean for Jews, like eating pork or engaging in intercourse during menstruation, both of which are prohibited in these same chapters. It is used throughout the Old Testament to designate those Jewish sins which involve ethnic contamination or idolatry...the Levitical enactments against homosexual behaviour characterize it

unequivocally as ceremonially unclean rather than inherently evil. (in his *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 1980, 100-102)

Boswell's comment is a mixed bag of the accurate and the inaccurate. It is true that *toevah*, in its approximately 117 appearances in the Old Testament, is at times used of acts that are ceremonially unclean. Boswell would attract little or no criticism if he had stopped at the statement that *toevah* does not *usually* signify something intrinsically evil, because then he would be implying that at times it *does* signify something intrinsically evil.

Boswell exceeds himself and is wrong when he rules out the possibility of a nuance of 'the inherently evil' in the use of *toevah*. Note that *he* regards rape and theft as inherently evil. Well, *toevah* is used of cheating with false balances, robbery, extortion and charging interest to Israelites (all species of theft) in Prov. 11.1; 20.10, 23; Ez. 18.7-8, 10-13, 16-17; and 22.12, 29. Of course *toevah* is used with reference to murder in Ez. 22.2 and 6 and one is sure that even Boswell would say murder is evil.

It is significant, as deYoung and Gagnon point out, that though *toevah* occurs six times in Leviticus (all in chapters 18 and 20) in *summary statements* concerning certain acts, ***only homosexuality specifically attracts the description toevah*** in 18.22 and 20.13.⁹

The point being made here is not that the Genesis or Leviticus texts, as such, are necessarily applicable today, but that there was in the Old Testament a consistent taboo on homosexual conduct. We hope to show now that in the New Testament documents the taboo is expressly reiterated.

The watershed text is Rom. 1.18-32, and the critical verses in that block are 26 and 27. They read in the New American Standard Bible,

²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

²⁷ 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.

It is instructive to modify this reading slightly to reflect more accurately that the original

⁹ See Gagnon, 118 and deYoung, 49.

Greek uses *female* rather than woman and *male* rather than man. What's the big difference you ask? Hang in there a moment.

The reading would now be,

²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their **females** exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

²⁷ and in the same way also the **males** abandoned the natural function of the **female** and burned in their desire toward one another, **males** with **males** committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

So what's the big point or difference in this latter reading? It makes clearer the link between this passage and Gen. 1.27 which states God's norm and ideal, "male and female he created them". It also reflects and expands on the homosexual taboo in Lev. 18 and 20: a male must not lie with a male as with a female neither should a female lie with a female as with a male.

This reading also brings out the element of sexual distinctiveness and the perversity that homosexuality is because it confuses the genders and their natural sexual function **based on the Maker's norm and ideal.**

On the surface then, this seems to be a strong clear passage showing the abnormal or unnatural and sinful nature of both kinds of homosexuality (male to male and female to female). Not so for some scholars, like John Boswell, Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Mollenkott, who argue that Paul's use of the Greek word for 'nature' (*physis*) means "what is natural to me". The line of reasoning is that Paul is outlawing homosexuality done by people who are not homosexual *by natural orientation!*

Beyond the definitional challenges to 'orientation' posed by the Atlantis report, not one of the scholars who take this line of reasoning has been able to provide one clear example of this nuance of *physis*, in either Greek literature in general or in the Bible.

This nuance of 'what is natural for me' is fatally flawed in the context of vv. 26-27 where Paul, while making a generalized argument against homosexuality, says the females exchanged the **natural function** for the unnatural **and likewise** the males having abandoned **the natural function of the female** ended up with flaming passions for each other, males with males, doing **indecent** acts! There is not even elbow room for

uncertainty here. The passage denounces homosexuality as unnatural and sinful.

There are other passages that could be explored to show the consistent taboo on homosexuality in the New Testament, like 1 Cor. 6.9-11 and I Tim. 1. 8-11. It should be noted too that there are several terms in the New Testament, used of sexual sins in general, that would include homosexuality, like *porneia* (sexual immorality), *aselgeia* (licentiousness or indecent sexual conduct)¹⁰.

Homosexuality, like every sex act outside of the context of marital, male-female sex, is consistently treated in the Bible as sinful.

The Bible has good news for everyone who struggles with any sin, sexual, social or ritual. That good news says divine help is available and adequate for the confessedly needy soul. 1 John 1 assures that if we confess our sins, that is acknowledge our sins as sins, God will forgive and cleanse us.

Whatever your need is, whether it be strength to exercise self-control/restraint over inner homosexual desire or inclination or to cease homosexual practice, remember the virtual blank cheque in Eph. 3. 20 reminding us that God “is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us”.

After the questions below for reflection/discussion, pastoral perspectives will follow.

¹⁰ In the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (Vol. 1) by Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida, 2nd edition, 1989, under the sub-domain Sexual Misbehavior, it says in part, p. 771, “behavior completely lacking in moral restraint usually with the implication of sexual licentiousness ...in some languages the equivalent of ‘licentious behavior’ would be ‘to live like a dog’ or ‘to act like a goat’ ...in each instance pertaining to promiscuous sexual behavior.”

Recommended Resources

<http://www.mygenes.co.nz/download.html>

<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/preface-sexuality-and-gender>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/debunking-the-new-atlantis-article_us_58d5242ee4b0f633072b36a4

Clinton Chisholm, *Homosexuality: Clinical & Biblical Perspectives* (CD, at JBU Bookstore)

Mathew D. Staver, *Same-Sex Marriage: Putting Every Household at Risk*, 2004.

For Reflection/Discussion

1. This has been quite a mouthful, but so far what exactly has touched you emotionally, mentally or spiritually and why?

2. Is there any section of the material concerning which you need greater clarity or more information and why?

3. How might aspects of the material be used in your church or community (to educate) and in your church's outreach ministry?
