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HOMOSEXUALITY

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SEX II

By D.B. KNOX

THE PROTESTANT FAITH

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The subject of homosexuals is not one that we like to reflect on normally, but we cannot as Christians avoid thinking of what the Bible says on the subject if we are to do our duty as Christians in the community, because the subject of homosexuality is being widely discussed at present. Books are being written and voices are being raised not only to change the law, but also to introduce Christian services for homosexuals as though homosexuality was a perfectly permissible form of behaviour. So we must address our minds to the problem and first see what the Bible, as God's Word, has to say.

The Bible is very clear and explicit in its total condemnation of all homosexual behaviour. It does not deal with homosexual disposition nor temptation, but speaks firmly about homosexual behaviour. One of the problems of discussing the subject is that the word 'homosexual' can refer to a disposition or it may refer to the overt actions. We are all tempted in the sphere of sex to think things and to do things which transgress the law of God; and some will find these temptations more pressing than others. But it is the outward expression and action to which I refer when using the word 'homosexuality'. On this the Bible is very clear.

In the Old Testament there are not many offences punishable by death but homosexuality is amongst them (Jer. 21:13; cf. Lev. 18:22). This activity is condemned in several places in the Old Testament. The same condemnation is clearly repeated in the New (Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9,10; 1 Tim. 1:9,10); and homosexuality is listed by St. Paul among the actions which evoke the wrath of God. We conclude then that Christians who believe the Bible to be the Word of God can have no doubt whatever that homosexuality is against the mind of God and temptations to its expression are to be resisted, and those who engage in homosexual practices cannot please God.

The reason for this clear and severe condemnation of homosexuality in holy scripture is not difficult to find. Homosexual behaviour can only be justified on the ground that

sex does not belong to the realm of morality, but is a free action, just like going for a swim is a free action, to be followed according to one's own discretion, without rules; so that choosing one form of sex or another is then like choosing what vegetable you have with your meal. It is without any moral significance. The homosexual can find no principle to guide his sexual actions other than the principle of wishing to engage in them. For example, the concept of fidelity to a partner is not a principle which the homosexual feels obliged to consider in his sexual life. It is true that he may prefer to continue with one partner, but it is not a principle. He will feel free to go off with someone else even while he has a customary sexual relationship with one particular person. Since the principle of fidelity in sex cannot be applied to homosexuality, no more can the concept of continence. For continence is a concept that derives from fidelity. Normal sexual morality expects that the principle of fidelity will be expressed in the concept of continence. For example, if a husband or wife are temporarily separated they are not free to indulge in sexual relationships with anyone whom they may meet. Fidelity aims to support fellowship and is in reality a consideration of the other partner, as all true sex is. The homosexual, however, can make no sense of this concept of continence, for homosexual sex is essentially egocentric.

Homosexuality can only be justified if there are no principles or rules to govern the expression of sex, apart from the rules which govern all our actions, such as not injuring other people. If on the other hand sex has a purpose beyond pleasure, that is an object to be achieved through sex, then sex will have rules to ensure the achieving of this purpose. For example, if the rule which governs expression of sex is fidelity, homosexuality is excluded, for homosexuality can find no basis for this requirement of fidelity. The basis of homosexual sex is pleasure, and consequently the partnerships which may be formed are egocentric. They are not normally exclusive or permanent.



You will see then what I mean by the statement that if homosexuality is approved it can only be approved on the principle that sex does not, in itself, belong to the area of morality, but it is an indifferent thing just like going for a swim, or any other pleasurable activity. If, on the other hand, sex expression is to be governed by morality and if fidelity within sexual relationships, with the concomitant concept of continence when it is not possible to experience sex within these relationships, is the true principle for sexual expression, then homosexuality must be condemned root and branch. It is not surprising, therefore, that God's Word guides us unerringly to this conclusion.

Homosexuality (and bestiality) are the ultimate expressions of the view that sex is only for pleasurable experiences and that there are no rules to apply to sexual behaviour to restrict our sexual actions other than the general rules which govern all our actions, such as not hurting other people.

If homosexual behaviour is morally permissible, it is a contradiction to suggest that children should be protected.

Homosexual behaviour cannot be condoned without destroying the basis of sexual morality in toto. Reflect for a moment on what would follow from this. It would mean the abolition of marriage (as we know it) and with this the abolition of the home and of the life-long companionship which is based on the principle of fidelity, for (even though this principle may be transgressed) without this principle it is impossible to maintain a life-long relationship. The joys of married life and the pleasures of married life (including the sexual pleasures) grow with the growing together of the personalities. This growth in fellowship and so in pleasure would be impossible if sexual behaviour is not rooted in moral principles. No wonder God's Word warns us against homosexuality which if indulged in would destroy all the blessings which God has for us through sex.

Fellowship between persons, men, women and God, is the purpose of this life and of eternity! Fellowship and self-

centredness are contradictions. Sex is for fellowship and fidelity in sex is essential if sex is to serve this purpose of fellowship. This means that sex must be exercised within rules which aim to serve this purpose. That is, sex has its own morality and is not outside morality (or non-moral) as the homosexuals must maintain.

Fidelity is the principle which should govern sexual behaviour. Right at the beginning of the Bible God makes this clear. The married man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they are to become one. As I have said, fidelity carries with it the concomitant principle of continence in certain circumstances. If fidelity is the principle on which sex is to be based, the procreation of children is the specific purpose of sex. This is clear not only by the way our bodies are formed but also from the Word of God. But it is not the only or indeed the ultimate purpose, for again at the beginning of scripture we learn that marriage is instituted for companionship (Gen. 2:18). Companionship springs out of fidelity and sexual relations both deepen and express companionship. But it is the companionship of one man and one woman for a life time. This is the Christian doctrine of marriage, based on the moral principles expressed in scripture. Human marriage is modelled on, and expresses, God's relationship to His people in Christ. Here again the principle of relationship is fidelity; God is faithful and we are to be faithful to Him.

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16/72. 9/7/72

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