

Objections to Biblical and Church Teaching About Homosexuality

Note: The key points and supporting material in the outline below were taken from The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics, (Abingdon Press, 2001), by Robert A. J. Gagnon. The book presents the most thorough analysis that we have seen of the biblical texts relating to homosexuality. For additional and user-friendly material on homosexual and same-sex marriage issues, visit Dr. Gagnon's website: www.robgagnon.net

A) The Bible only knew of and therefore was only addressing exploitative, pederastic models of homosexuality.

Because contemporary expressions of homosexuality can be mutual, non-exploitative, and caring, no one can predict what the Bible would have said.

Response:

1. The bible never limits rejection of homosexual conduct to exploitative forms.
 - a. Prohibitions of Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 are unqualified
Leviticus 20 demands the death penalty. Wouldn't that be unjust to the exploited?
 - b. Romans 1:27
Equally absolute prohibition
The contrast is not between exploitative and non-exploitative homosexual behavior, but between heterosexual and homosexual behavior

B) The Bible primarily condemns homosexuality because of its threat to male dominance

Homosexual relations undermined the prevailing cultural pattern of male dominance in the ancient world

Biblical writers and Fathers absorbed these values

Response:

1. The key reason for rejecting homosexuality was based on "fittedness" of sexual organs.
 - a. Anatomical clues cannot be ignored.
 - b. "[Homosexual behavior] attempts a merger that nature never intended, that is, for which complimentary sexual organs were not provided. It amounts to a complaint against the 'gendered body that God/nature gave.'" ¹

C) Homosexuality has a genetic component that the writers of the Bible did not realize.

Homosexuality is genetically determined, and it is obvious that they are "born that way"

Response:

1. 1993 Dean Hamer study²
"We have not found the gene—which we don't think exists—for sexual orientation."³

“There will never be a test that will say for certain whether a child will be gay. We know that for certain.”⁴

2. A theory of genetically determined behavior does not coincide with scientific assessments of the role of genes: “Science has not yet discovered any genetically dictated behavior in humans.”⁵
3. There is no evidence that homosexuality is simply "genetic"--*and none of the research itself claims there is*. The majority of respected scientists now believe that homosexuality is attributable to a combination of **psychological, social, and biological factors**.⁶
 - a. "[M]any scientists share the view that orientation is shaped for most people at an early age through **complex interactions of biological, psychological and social factors**." American Psychological Association⁷
 - b. "At this point, the most widely held opinion [on causation of] homosexuality is that *multiple factors play a role*." "Gay Brain" Researcher Simon LeVay⁸
 - c. "Any human behavior is going to be the result of **complex intermingling of genetics and environment**. It would be *astonishing* if it were not true for homosexuality." Dennis McFadden, University of Texas neuroscientist⁹
 - d. "**I know of no one** in the field who argues that homosexuality can be explained without reference to environmental factors." Sociologist Steven Goldberg¹⁰

D) Isn't it cruel to require homosexuals not to act on their desire?

Response:

1. Everyone is called to chastity.
2. Heterosexuals must limit desire to one partner—some men insist this is impossible due to strong sexual desires. Is it cruel to expect monogamy from heterosexual men?
3. “The bottom line is no biblical writer regarded individual ‘self-realization,’ ‘self-fulfillment,’ or ‘self-gratification’ as a good that allows one to disregard clear norms for sexual behavior.”¹¹

E) There are only a few biblical texts which speak of homosexuality; therefore it is a marginal issue in the Bible.

Response:

1. Frequency does not determine the degree of importance.
2. Even so, the limited number of “texts are part of a much larger biblical worldview that consistently portrays one model for sexual relations, that between a man and a woman in lifelong partnership.”¹²
3. “To say that there are only a few texts in the Bible that do not condone homosexual conduct is a monumental understatement of the facts. The reverse is a more accurate statement: **there is not a single shred of evidence anywhere in the Bible that would even remotely suggest that same-sex unions are any more acceptable than extramarital or premarital intercourse, incest, or bestiality.**”¹³

F) We do not follow all of the injunctions in the Bible now, so why should those of homosexual conduct be binding?

1. Divorce: trajectory for change revealed in Bible itself:
 - a. Matthew 5:32, 19:19: exception with sexual immorality
 - b. I Corinthians 7:12: believers who were married to unbelievers could divorce
 - c. few in the church today “celebrate” divorce as a positive good; it is rather the lesser of two evils
 - d. Divorce is not normally a recurring or repetitive action, unlike homosexuality.
2. Slavery: a poor analogy

“The New Testament never affirms slavery as an institution; the best that can be said is that it tolerates slavery and regulates it even in Christian households.”¹⁴

G) Look at all the mutually loving, monogamous relationships

Response:

1. Monogamous relationships are the exception, not the rule
 - a. Survey of 2,500 men¹⁵:
 - 2% had sex with one male partner
 - 57% had sex with more than 30 male partners
 - 35% had sex with more than 100 male partners
 - b. Study done by a gay couple of the pattern of “stable gay couples”¹⁶

Out of 156 couples, only 7 had remained monogamous within the first six years of the relationship

“Consensus among the couples interviewed was that the heterosexual model of monogamy did not work for gay relationships.”
4. Comments on monogamy by leading gay advocates
 - a. “To adapt heterosexual relations [to homosexual ones] is ... an act of oppression.”¹⁷

- b. “[M]arriage should be made available to everyone...But within this model there is plenty of scope for cultural differences. There is something baleful about the attempts of some gay conservatives to educate homosexuals and lesbians into an uncritical acceptance of a stifling model of heterosexual normality.”¹⁸

H) Since we are all sinners anyway, why single out the sin of same-sex intercourse?

1. The logic of this argument would have the church never taking a stand against sin and evil. Essentially promoting toleration of sin.¹⁹
2. Selective toleration: who among those tolerant of homosexual sex would advocate for pedophilia, incest, polygamy, spousal abuse, racism, etc.?²⁰
3. I Corinthians 5
 - One of the believers sleeping with his stepmother
 - Some ‘enlightened’ Corinthians expressed support for this conduct
 - Paul’s advice: expel the member from the Church for two reasons:
 - a. So the Church would not take a lax attitude towards sin
 - b. So the offender might repent and be saved from judgment
4. Negative effects of societal endorsement of homosexuality
 - c. “Will lead to an increase in the incidence of homosexuality and bisexuality, which in turn will lead to a larger number of people afflicted with serious health problems and shortened life expectancy.”²¹
 - d. Health data: new AIDS cases between 1981-1999²²
 - Homosexual males are 2% of the population, but have accounted for about 60% of all adult/adolescent AIDS cases, and 84% of those are due to sexual activity.²³
 - e. What explains this high percentage for homosexual men?
 - The **nature** of homosexual sex is inherently unhealthy, e.g., anal sex.
 - The **frequency** of sexual encounters.
5. “Homosexuals experience significantly higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse, major depression, and thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts.”²⁴
 - a. Societal rejection of homosexuals is a factor.
 - b. Yet the “significantly higher rates of substance abuse documented for homosexuals in San Francisco (as compared to heterosexuals in San Francisco) suggests that pinning the lion’s share of the blame on societal homophobia is unfair.”²⁵
 - c. Alternative reasons:²⁶
 - Related to the compulsive, obsessive or addictive needs for self-soothing that made same-sex intercourse an appealing form of sexual expression in the first place.

Inherent deficiencies in same-sex unions:

Endemic dearth of long-term, monogamous relationships

An inability to procreate with one's same-sex partner

Dismal association of same-sex intercourse with debilitating, sometimes terminal, sexually transmitted diseases

Shame and guilt over one's abnormal and unnatural sexual practice (from realization of visible evidence of same-sex discomplementarity)

I) If homosexuals are willing to take such risks, why should heterosexuals care?²⁷

1. Hardly a compassionate response on the part of society to ignore the obvious health risks, let alone laud participation in same-sex intercourse by those with a homosexual orientation
2. Enormous health costs generated by same-sex activity are borne by the whole society, not by the homosexual community alone.
3. Ignoring the health risks of same-sex intercourse mistakenly assumes a rigid dividing wall preventing any sexual contact between homosexuals and heterosexuals.
4. Far-reaching effects of societal approval
 - a. Societal approval of same-sex intercourse will probably increase both the number of homosexuals and the incidence of same-sex intercourse in the population. This in turn will lead to an inevitable exposure of larger segments of the population to serious health risks.
 - b. Societal approval will lead to greater permissiveness as regards sexual promiscuity. Homosexual expression is harmful to sexual mores and the maintenance of stable families in a heterosexual society.

Typical homosexual behavior undermines society's standards for sexual fidelity

Acceptance of homosexuality by the wider society seems to require acceptance of patterns of irresponsible and unstable sexual behavior prevailing among homosexuals.

Continued and increased argument that the heterosexual norm of monogamy is an unfair imposition upon the homosexual community

Lower standard of sexual fidelity for both heterosexuals and homosexuals detrimental to the institutions of marriage and family life.
 - c. Total annihilation of societal gender norms.

An explicit goal of many homosexual activist organizations.

Can only increase sexual confusion among the young.

- d. Public marginalization of those who in good conscience regard homosexual intercourse as sin.

Today, “homophobia” = “racism”

Laws making it illegal to publicly speak against homosexuality or to maintain traditional mores opposed to it

Bill C-250 in Canada: sexual orientation now legally an “identifiable group” equivalent to race

Page numbers cited in endnotes reference The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics, Robert A. J. Gagnon, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2001
www.abingdonpress.com

¹ P. 367.

² “Linkage Between Sexual Orientation and Chromosome Xq28 in Males but not in Females,” “Nature Genetics” 11 (1995): 248

³ Hamer, cf. Whitehead, “Gene,” 135, 146-147

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ p. 401.

⁶ *The quotations in this point were taken from an article adapted from two sources: a paper entitled, “The Gay Gene?” by Jeffrey Satinover, M.D., in The Journal of Human Sexuality, 1996, available by calling (972) 713-7130; and past issues of the National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) Bulletin. For an in-depth discussion of and genetics, consult Dr. Satinover’s 1996 book, Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth, published by Hamewith/Baker Books. Copyright © NARTH. All Rights Reserved.*

⁷ “Answers to Your Questions About Orientation and Homosexuality.” Pamphlet of The American Psychological Association.

⁸ LeVay, Simon. 1996. *Science*, MIT Press.

⁹ “Scientists Challenge Notion that Homosexuality is a Matter of Choice.” The Charlotte Observer, August 9, 1998.

¹⁰ Goldberg, Steven. 1994. *When Wish Replaces Thought: Why So Much of What You Believe is False*. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books.

¹¹ P. 432.

¹² P. 437.

¹³ P. 439.

¹⁴ P. 443.

¹⁵ The Advocate. “The 1994 Advocate Survey of Sexuality and Relationships: The Men: Sexual Relations.” (August 23, 1994): 16-24.

¹⁶ McWhirter and Mattison Study. “The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop.” (Eaglewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 1984.

¹⁷ Sadowich, D. 1994. “Genre” magazine. April 1994.

¹⁸ Sullivan, A. 1996. Virtually Normal: An Argument about Homosexuality ([New York: Vintage Books, Random House. 200-20).

¹⁹ P. 469.

²⁰ P. 470.

²¹ P. 471.

²² www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv_aids

²³ Ibid. Statistics of adult/adolescent cases of AIDS where exposure categories are known:

52%: men who have sex with men.

7%: IV drug users and men who have sex with men

28% IV drug users

11% heterosexual contact

²⁴ Gagnon. For more detail, see also: Whitehead, N. "Homosexuality and Mental Health Problems."
www.narh.com/docs/whitehead.html

²⁵ P. 475.

²⁶ P. 476.

²⁷ P. 478-484.