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**A THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL
ASSESSMENT OF HOMOSEXUALITY
IN THE EAST AFRICAN CONTEXT:**

**A SEVENTH - DAY ADVENTIST
PERSPECTIVE**

BY

Pastor Matwetwe K.N. Nyarenchi.

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This research has been done with the earnest desire to help my Seventh Day Adventist Church administrators, pastors, my fellow believers and Christians of all faiths in East Africa to better understand the role of East African culture in evaluating homosexuality and what the Scriptures teach about homosexuality. At a time when humanistic ideologies are promoting Homosexuality, it is an imperative for Christians to resist these pressures by upholding the Scriptural principles which God has revealed for the well being of our homes, churches, and



the community. It is my fervent hope and desire that this dissertation will inspire such a commitment through a fuller understanding and acceptance of the Biblical teachings on homosexuality.

Matwetwe K.N.N

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SUMMARY

In the world in which we are living today many people, especially Christians, wonder why people should talk about homosexuality. For many past years, the Christian Church, especially in East Africa, considered herself more or less immune from many of the challenges, experienced by the rest of the world, particularly the Western world. However, as the church now continues to grow in numbers and expand its territories, these problems start to appear in the church also all over East Africa.

Increasingly the consciousness of the society is being raised concerning social-ethical issues such as women's rights, battered children, single parent families, teenage pregnancy, wife beating and of course homosexuality. As a result such issues are widely discussed within the church and outside, sometimes causing a rift within the church.

Such has been the case with homosexuality. Recently at a Seventh-day Adventist Church camp meeting in East Africa, a debate in a Bible study on the ethics of homosexuality as perceived by the Seventh-day Adventist Church paved the way for divisions in the church, which has left church members in four categories (groups) namely: culturalist, rejectionist, reinterpretationist and the reaffirmationist. Unfortunately the debate closed without a definite conclusion as to what should be the normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa. The issue was whether the Bible, culture or both the Bible and culture should be the

normative basis and also as to what theological ethical guidance does the Bible provide for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in the present-day context.

The dissertation surveys definitions and causes of sexuality, and traces some of the background from the pre-modern to the postmodern era reflecting on the definitions and causes of homosexuality, and it also traces some of the historical background regarding homosexual practices and views on homosexuality. It also discusses and assesses the Cultural beliefs on homosexuality in East Africa.

The study also looks at the Biblical texts that refer to or are thought to refer to homosexuality and “examines” the claims made in much of the “gays” literature with reference to these texts. Other texts used by over-zealous Christians bent on finding condemnation of homosexuality through Scripture.

During the East African pre modern era, sexuality, including homosexuality was not publicly discussed. The whole subject was encircled by a halo of secrecy and hedged around by innumerable East African taboos. When this silence is combined with the absence of written documentation on the cultures and histories of many parts of East Africa, the difficulties of accessing traditional understanding of homosexuality and sexuality become immense. One can conclude that it will be a serious mistake for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa to make East African culture normative in the ethical evaluation of homosexuality since: (i) Oral East African tradition does not really provide any moral view on homosexuality. To read into the silence on homosexuality the moral condemnation of homosexuality is not acceptable. (ii) Homosexual

practices, in a ritualized form, are not foreign to East African culture. (iii) The strong condemnation of homosexuality in East Africa is often politically and ideologically inspired.

This dissertation advocates the need for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa to use the Bible alone, Old and New Testament, being the written word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, as the infallible revelation of God's will. The Bible is the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and trustworthy record of God's acts in history and therefore is central in any formulation concerning homosexuality, whether theological or ethical evaluation and therefore should be used as the only normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality.



KEY TERMS

1. Homosexuality
2. Christian Ethics
3. Bible
4. East African Culture
5. Seventh-day Adventist Church
6. Old Testament
7. New Testament
8. Tradition
9. Theology
10. Greek Culture



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the world in which we are living today many people, especially Christians, wonder why they should talk about homosexuality and lesbianism. For many years past, the Christian Church, especially in East Africa, considered itself more or less immune from many of the problems experienced in the world, particularly the Western world. As the church now continues to grow in numbers and expand its territories, however, these problems start to appear in the church also all over East Africa.

Increasingly the consciousness of the society is being raised concerning social-ethical issues, such as women's rights, battered children, single-parent families, teenage pregnancy, wife beating and of course homosexuality and lesbianism. In turn, this frequently causes a corresponding rise in consciousness about these things. As a result these issues are widely discussed within the church and outside.

Such has been the case with homosexuality and lesbianism. In recent years the church has discovered that among its members there are a good number who claim a homosexual orientation. Parents find themselves confronted by a child who says he is homosexual. Children may learn that their father has declared himself homosexual. Sometimes a wife learns that her husband's preference is for another man, and as a result the family is broken up. Some of the people seek to lay blame, while other simply want answers to this seeming riddle. As "gays"

and "lesbians" seek in sophisticated ways to justify the homosexual lifestyle, questions naturally arise in the Christian Church. Church members and traditional members, particularly those who have come in contact with homosexuals, look for information and clarifications about this disturbing subject.

Questions arise about the origins of homosexuality, its historical background and its causes. There is also a keen interest in an understanding of what the culture of the people and the Bible has to say on the subject and whether this practice is ethical or not.

Those who have read much about homosexuality already know that it is a subject plagued by lack of clarity and wide differences of opinions. There is a disagreement not merely about what sort of condition it might be, but whether it is a pathological, biological, or even psychological condition at all. Therefore if the church is to gain a clear picture of homosexuals within the organisation and how to relate to them, much consideration should be given beyond this preliminary study in theology, ethics, culture, psychology, and sociology.

Psychological theories alone pertaining to a etiology of homosexuality fill many volumes. In addition to this, biological arguments concerning genes and hormones are brought to bear on the issue as well as sociological considerations. The vast majority of this material approaches the question of homosexuality from an amoral stance, concerning itself strictly with the issue of pathology.

Although such literature provides no answers about the morality or immorality of homosexuality, it is an indispensable part of the study. In it we discover that the term "homosexual" covers a number of conditions, situations and activities that are not morally equivalent. What is referred to as the actual "condition" of homosexuality, sometimes known as inversion, accounts for a portion of homosexual activity. Some authors suggest that the condition characterised by a desire for same sex love need not be criticised at all.

At present homosexuality is no longer something hidden from society to be discussed in privacy and never mentioned in polite company. Today it is openly discussed on radio, television, and in literature. In many cases it is advocated as a way of life fully as acceptable as heterosexuality and perhaps superior to it. Homosexual groups often are militant and ally themselves with other social activist groups such as civil rights and women's rights movements.

Much literature about homosexuality is written along Biblical or theological lines. It attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable differences between the Judeo-Christian view and those of the gay liberation groups. Some gays attempt to parallel the Scriptures with findings from modern science, as various gay rights groups understand them. Some Christians reply by invoking the authority of Scriptures above all scientific discoveries which seek to define homosexuality. The former view asserts that homosexual acts are legitimate, the latter that they are not. Both views tend to oversimplify homosexuality. To complicate matters

further, various views of Biblical authority are coupled with varying hermeneutical approaches.

1.1 Target Audience and the Research Problem

This dissertation is written first of all for Seventh-day Adventist Church lay-members, pastors, church administrators and the public at large in east Africa who are currently seeking for a fuller understanding of the teaching of Scripture regarding homosexuality.

The impetus for this investigation came from a Seventh-day Adventist Church camp meeting in East Africa where a debate in a Bible study on the ethics of homosexuality as perceived by the Seventh-day Adventist Church generated four positions (groups) on the issue namely: (1) the Culturist group (2) the Rejection group (3) the Reinterpretation group (4) the Reaffirmation group. Unfortunately the debate closed without a definite conclusion leaving the church divided. It was out of this situation that I decided to do research on homosexuality so as to contribute in informing and providing direction to the Seventh-day Adventist Church on homosexuality. A very brief description of each of these positions will offer the reader an overview of the problem.

Culturist Group

This group argues that, the Bible and Christianity originated from the West and that the missionaries, when they came to East Africa, tried by all means to change the ways of life of the people and in this way affected their cultural life adversely. And it is believed by many by assumption that homosexuality as well

originated from the West and that to accept it in the Church in East Africa will be completely destroying their image as people of East Africa where this practice never existed before. Therefore they should hold firm to their cultural standards, which are the only means of evaluating or defining the position of homosexuality in societies.

Rejection Group

The heart of their rejection is the authority or the applicability of the Scripture or both. While they continue to work with the Bible as a religious document, they reject the Bible as the only normative rule of faith and practice. They concede that Scripture condemns homosexuality, but they argue that there is no need to take such teaching seriously. Different authors and lay-members in discussion with them orally offer varying reasons for holding such a view. Biblical texts and teachings are regarded as time-bound, culturally conditioned etc. They employ the historical-critical method for determining which texts can be rightly used for developing a theology of homosexuality and which texts are unacceptable. In the final analysis, this group find their ultimate authority in their own interpretation rather than in the teachings of the Scripture. By so doing they themselves become victims of their own culturally conditioned interpretation.

Reinterpretation Group

This group, for the most part respect the authority of Scripture, but they protest against what they view as a misinterpretation of Bible texts by the

“Reaffirmation” group. They believe that the Bible does not really condemn homosexuality as such but the violation that may be involved, e.g. homosexual rape. For this group the true Biblical picture is that homosexual love is acceptable, they quote the case of Jonathan and David in 1 Samuel 18:1-2 and 1 Samuel 20:41 etc. So for them homosexuality is acceptable to God and the church should not be against it. To sustain this position, they reinterpret those texts that speak against homosexuality.

Reaffirmation Group

This group reaffirms the teachings of the Bible regarding homosexuality. They insist that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sin. The reasons for condemning homosexuality to them are not cultural or time-bound, but theological and timeless. They hold unto the view that, the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by Holy Spirit. In this word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures is the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.

In this dissertation I would like to contribute to this debate within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hopefully it will help to bring more clarity on some of the central issues that are at stake in the church debate on homosexuality. In my opinion the most central issue is on what the normative basis for the ethical

evaluation of homosexuality should be. The first part of the research problem that I am investigating in this dissertation, is therefore:

1. What should be the normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa? Should it be (a) the Bible, (b) culture or (c) both the Bible and culture?

I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church should make a *theological ethical* evaluation of homosexuality. Such an evaluation has to take the message of the Bible seriously. One of the central issues that are debated at present within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, is whether the Bible does provide clear ethical guidance for the evaluation of homosexuality, as it is understood today. The second part of the research problem that I am investigating in this dissertation is therefore:

2. What theological ethical guidance does the Bible provide for the evaluation of homosexuality in the present-day context?

This research project, I hope, begins to answer some of these questions. It surveys the definitions and causes of homosexuality and traces some of the historical background regarding homosexual practices and views of homosexuality. It looks briefly at the Biblical texts that refer to or are thought to refer to homosexuality and examines the claims made in much of the "gays" literature with reference to these texts. However, not all the texts examined are used to defend prohomophile positions: We therefore look also at others used by over-zealous Christians bent on finding condemnation of homosexuality through

Scripture. This research will also discuss and assess the cultural beliefs on homosexuality in East Africa.

1.2 The Hypotheses

The hypotheses that I want to prove in this dissertation are as follows:

- i. East African culture does not provide an adequate normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality.
- ii. The Bible should be regarded as the sole normative ethical basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality.
- iii. The Bible teaches that God condemns homosexual acts and practices, but loves the homosexual person, just as he condemns adulterous acts and practices, but loves the adulterer.

1.3 The Method, Objective and Overview.

Method. This research project is written from a Historical, Ethical, Cultural and Biblical perspective. I accept the Bible as normative for defining Christian beliefs and practices. Because the words of the Bible contain a divine message written by human authors who lived in specific historical situations, every effort must be made to understand their meaning in the historical context. My conviction is that an understanding of both the historical and literary context of relevant Biblical texts, is indispensable in establishing both their original meaning and their present relevance. This conviction has very much influenced my examination of the texts and the discussion of homosexuality. I will also deal with books on homosexuality by selected theologians, representing

distinctive positions in the interpretation of homosexuality in society today. Great emphasis will be placed on the African theologians and authors. These is because of the general demand that African theologians should do Biblical hermeneutical research and also do “restructuring” of the interpretation of the concept of homosexuality themselves.

Since I am concerned with the views and opinions of the people of East Africa regarding this subject and since most of them are not theologians and have not authored any book, questionnaires and interviews will be conducted with a representative(s) sample of them to obtain their ideas.

Objective. This research project has a general objective, which is to ascertain the Biblical understanding of homosexuality and the role that culture play in the evaluation of homosexuality.

Overview. Chapter two of this research will deal with the definitions of homosexuality whereas chapter three will consider the cultural/traditional views of the people of East Africa today concerning homosexuality. Then chapter four and five will make a survey on the Biblical position of the subject. CHAPTER 6 will carry a general summary of the researcher’s opinion and then the conclusion in chapter seven.

CHAPTER 2

What is Homosexuality?

2.1 Definitions of Homosexuality

The term "homosexuality can be used for a wide variety of human experiences. Simple definitions of this term have the disadvantage of distorting the concept by lumping all of them together. According to McCary this term "homosexuality" refers to "sexual activity between same-sex partners."¹

Some sexologists regard the homosexual experience as being so diverse, and the psychological, social, and sexual aspects so varied, that to use the words homosexual or homosexuality to describe anything more than the individual's sexual choice at a particular time is misleading and inexact.²

The language in this quotation is a loose paraphrase of A. Bell in his book *Homosexualities: A study of Diversity among Men and Women*. Bell, a researcher at the Kinsey Institute, juxtaposes the term "homosexualities" over against "heterosexualities" suggesting, it seems, that just as there are various kinds of heterosexuals so there are various kinds of homosexuals. Malloy maintains that Bell's use of this terminology suggests that only a small proportion of homosexuals are mentally ill, just as a small proportion of heterosexuals are mentally ill. Consequently, most homosexuals, apart from their sexuality, are normal.

¹ S.P McCary, *Human Sexuality*, Third Edition: (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1984), P. 246.

² Ibid P. 246; see also E. Hooker, *Homosexuality*: Rockville, MD: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1972, P.11.

Malloy's caveat is well taken. However, he himself admits, "the word "homosexual" will necessarily refer to a particular person only at some highly generalised level of their existence."³ Malloy's definition of a homosexual is "a person, male or female, who experiences in adult life a steady and nearly exclusive erotic attraction to members of the same sex and who is indifferent to sexual relations with the opposite sex."⁴

It will be useful to examine Malloy's definition. It is a more specific and carefully worded definition, of interest as much for what it excludes as for what it includes. First, for Malloy, true homosexuality is limited to "adult life" and to an adult who "experiences a steady and nearly exclusive erotic attraction to members of the same sex." This eliminates homosexuality as a spasmodic phase during adolescence from Malloy's genuine homosexual category. These teenage tendencies may be outgrown in adulthood where heterosexual attraction and activity are pursued exclusively.

According to Harvey, in some instances it may be uncertain whether an adolescent is homosexual and diagnosis cannot be made before the mid 20's. "To label every youth homosexual who has experienced some homosexual activity or who expresses ambiguous homosexual feelings, without further comment, is a

³ E.A. Malloy, *Homosexuality and the Christian Way of Life*: (Lanham, MD: University Press of America; 1981), P.11.

⁴ *Ibid*; PP. 11 – 12.

drastic mistake.”⁵ It may accomplish the thing most feared, that is, it may drive them into the homosexual subculture for support, sympathy and direction.

Another class excluded from genuine homosexuality by Malloy's definition are those who do not experience "a steady and nearly exclusive erotic attraction to members of the same sex." Individuals in this class of homosexuals are those referred to as "contingent homosexuals." They may include teenagers who experiment with homosexuality and outgrow it. Contingent homosexuals may also include adult heterosexuals who become bored with conventional sexual taboos and seeking variety, go out for a fling on the gay world hoping to accomplish their purpose without fear of scandal.

“By far the most numerous in this category however are those designated situational homosexuals”.⁶ These are men or women who are thrown together by circumstances and situations, who having no other sexual outlets, resort to homosexual outlets. Men or women in prison, military camps, boarding schools, seminaries, and other single sex environments are most often involved in situational homosexuality. Men or women in such situations would not consider themselves homosexuals, and return to heterosexual patterns once they are removed from the restrictive environment. "Forced homosexual rape in prison is more often the expression of a power relationship than sexual identity. It

⁵ J.F. Harvey, *Counseling the Homosexual*: (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Press; 1977), P. 188.

⁶ H.K. Jones, *A Christian understanding of the Homosexual*: (New York: Association Press, 1966), PP. 20 – 23.

becomes an instrument for establishing rank and status, validating masculinity and creating protective-dependent relationships."⁷

The remaining individuals involved in homosexual acts, those who do fit Malloy's precise definition are frequently referred to in literature as "constitutional homosexuals" or "inverts". Invert is a common term in current parlance. It originally referred to the true homosexual disposition of Malloy's definition, that is, an invert is a person whose sexual feelings are reversed or turned inside out. Bailey used the word over against "pervert" and thus gave it a moral, ethical significance, which it did not have before. A pervert, by his definition, is not a true homosexual but a heterosexual who engages in homosexual practices. An invert, however, is a true homosexual, a constitutional homosexual, someone whose homosexuality is a permanent part of his very constitution and not a transitory phase of life or merely an accommodation to situational pressure. Bailey introduces morality into the picture by claiming that the true invert is not responsible for his/her condition. He says:

The genuine homosexual condition or inversion, as it is often termed ... is something for which the subject can in no way be held responsible. In itself it is morally neutral — the pervert is not a genuine homosexual; rather, he is a heterosexual who engages in homosexual practices, or a homosexual who engages in heterosexual practices.⁸

⁷ A. Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality: A new View* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co; 1971), PP. 187 – 188.

⁸ D.S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*: (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press; 1975), P. 38.

Bailey's theologising about homosexuality is based upon this distinction. He is followed by numerous authors who presuppose the moral neutrality of the homosexual "condition" as it is sometimes called. Some authors make a distinction between the condition and the practice of homosexuality — "the former being morally neutral while the latter is culpable."⁹ This distinction seems to be the crux of the whole issue.

2.1.1 The Condition Separated from the Act

The drawing of a line between the "condition" for which the individual is not responsible, and the homosexual "acts", for which one is responsible is basically the position adopted by Kubo who makes the distinction between inversion and perversion. He sees "the New Testament as dealing with the issue, not with the inverts who do not participate in homosexual practices."¹⁰ Kubo does not see homosexual acts practised by the invert as morally neutral. Such a person's condition "does not give license to practise homosexual acts which violate Christian moral standards."¹¹

He concludes by saying "The homosexual may not be able to do anything about the attraction for his own sex, but by God's grace he can control his impulses".¹²

Although approaching the subject in a more equivocal manner, Thielicke takes essentially the same position."¹³ This view, in which the condition is neutral but

⁹ L.R. Buzzard, *Homosexuality and the Christian faith*: (Valley Forge, PA: Hudson Press, 1978), P. 49.

¹⁰ S. Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex*: (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), P. 49.

¹¹ *Ibid*: P. 83.

¹² *Ibid* P. 83.

¹³ H. Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*: (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press; 1978), PP. 282 – 283.

the acts are not, gives the homosexual the benefit of the doubt as it were. The homosexual condition is explained theologically as part of the post-fall evil of which mankind is heir and which causes numerous physical and mental aberrations for which individual victims are not directly responsible.

In the present situation where certainty about the cause of homosexuality is not possible this view presumes that the homosexual was not responsible for his condition. That is, he/she did not make a deliberate choice to become a homosexual/lesbian. It does assume, however, that the homosexual is responsible for any same-sex acts that he/she practises, which are therefore considered immoral. Consequently this view mandates celibacy for the confirmed or constitutional homosexual. By a large section of the homosexual community, this is rejected as a grossly unfair consequence of the condition.

Hatterer sums up the attitude of the homosexual community:

The majority believe either that they were born as homosexuals or that familial factors operating very early in their lives determine the outcome. In any case homosexuality is believed to be a fate over which they have no control and in which they have no choice.¹⁴

2.1.2 Homosexuality as Natural

The implication is that if the condition is inherent to a certain extent it must be natural. Therefore to fight against the same-sex drive he/she experiences is to

¹⁴ L.J. Hatterer, *Changing Homosexuality in the Male*: (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1979), P. 13.

fight against nature. Perry expresses himself along these lines saying, "I'm sure that homosexuality is preordained. I think a lot more work has to be done in this whole field, but I am firmly convinced that much of what we are comes to us through our genes."¹⁵

It is a short step from homosexuality as a part of nature's plan to homosexuality as a part of God's plan. R. Woods quotes an unnamed homosexual as follows:

I had no choice in being born gay or hetero; rather I was given my human nature and "beingness" from the being of all beings. I sincerely feel that we have to accept what and who we are, and accept it with our hearts — never feeling different from others, but rather as being part of Divine providence, the Divine plan."¹⁶

N. Pittenger constructs his theology on the premise that homosexuality, "as a state or habitual orientation, is fully "normal" and "natural" and is a viable moral choice for a Christian."¹⁷ He defines the homosexual in this manner:

The homosexual, then, is one who through no special choice — above all, no special fault of his own finds that he is sexually drawn to members of his own sex. For him it is entirely "natural" thus to be drawn, that is the way he is ... If the homosexual condition, whatever may be its etiology, is a given fact for homosexual persons about which they can do nothing and about which most of them wish (quite rightly) to do nothing, what about the overt expression of this condition in physical sexual acts?

¹⁵ T.D. Perry, *The Lord is my Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*: (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972), P. 10.

¹⁶ R. Woods, *Another Kind of Love: Homosexuality and Spirituality*: (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1977), PP. 38 – 39.

¹⁷ N. Pittenger, *A Christian's Approach to Homosexuality*: (London: SCM Press, 1976), PP. 31 – 32.

Right here there is a great disagreement in Christian circles as well as among those who look sympathetically enough at the "condition" but would raise questions about the "acts."¹⁸

McNeil finds glaring gaps in the Biblical material on homosexuality. He debunks the standard theological positions as lacking in comprehensiveness and outdated in contrast to recent scientific research. He makes a summary of his own stand as follows:

Given, as I believe, first, the uncertainty of clear scriptural prohibition, second, the questionable basis of the traditional condemnation in moral philosophy and moral theology, third, the emergence of new data which upset many traditional assumptions and fourth, controversies among psychologists and psychiatrists concerning theory, etiology, treatment, and so on, there obviously is a need to open up anew the question of the moral standing of homosexual activity and homosexual relationships for public debate — It would appear to follow that the same moral rules apply to homosexual as to heterosexual attitudes and behaviour. Those that are responsible, respectful, loving and truly promotive of the good of both parties are moral, those that are exploitative, irresponsible, disrespectful, or destructive of the true good of either party must be judged immoral.¹⁹

The underlying suggestions here are that current Biblical and theological interpretations of homosexuality are inconclusive and consequently, there is no ground for denying the basic moral and ethical equality of heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are therefore of equal worth in the natural order. Cory supports these ideas by saying that:

¹⁸ N.Pittenger, *The Homosexual Expression of Love, In Is Gay Good? Ethics, Theology and Homosexuality: Ethics, Theology and Homosexuality*: (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), P. 227.

¹⁹ J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual*: (Kansas City, MO: Sheed, Andrews & McMeel, 1976), PP. 20 – 21.

Their action is not only voluntary, but it is the natural calling of their temperaments, as these temperaments have evolved and developed as a result of various environmental conditions. In fact, no other course of action would be natural to them. Nothing would be so unnatural as to thwart and deny themselves.²⁰

Of course these arguments fly in the face of the conservative Christian view of Scripture. Invoking the authority of the Scripture, conservatives view the schema of Genesis as normative for all mankind, with anything contrary to it as "unnatural". Cory himself begs this question with his remark, "However, is it not, many will ask, contrary to nature? It would require a supernatural force to state what nature intended."²¹

Of course this is precisely what conservative Christians claim to have in the Bible. They believe that it states what "nature," that is, God, intended.

The views of Buzzard, Kubo, and Thielicke mentioned above are representatives of those prevailing in several major church bodies today. But this position is severely criticised again by Nelson on the basis of the naturalness of the homosexual's disposition.

It holds that while homosexuality as an orientation is contrary to God's created intention, the homosexual person ought not to be adversely judged or rejected by the church. Often this position carries the acknowledgement that sexual orientation is seldom if ever the result of voluntary choice and that constitutional homosexuality appears largely unsusceptible to psychotherapeutic reorientation. While some people see this as a more tolerant and compassionate view than outright condemnation, it places gay men and lesbians in at least two impossible binds.

²⁰ D.W. Cory, *The Homosexual In America*: (New York: Greenberg Publishing, 1951), P. 29.

²¹ *Ibid.*

One, of course, is the individual's recognition that her or his own sexual orientation is as natural and as fundamental to identity as is colour of the skin. It is both naive and cruel to tell a lesbian or gay man, "your sexual orientation is still unnatural and a perversion, but this is no judgment upon you as a person." The individual knows otherwise.

The other bind concerns churchly pressure towards celibacy. When the Church presumes to be non-judgmental toward orientation but then draws the line against genital expression, it is difficult to understand how a sense of guilt — even in the celibate — will be significantly alleviated.²²

Nelson finds both intellectual and psychological contradictions in any position which is based on what he refers to as an "outmoded version of natural law" or which seeks to make a fine distinction between orientation and genital expression."²³ Plainly speaking, the nub of the entire debate between homosexuals and conservative churches hangs on this point.

Thoughtful leaders in most churches are willing to concede that some individuals involved in homosexual acts act from a condition. These individuals who are not sexually attracted to females, but who for as long as they can remember have been attracted to males, are inverters through no fault of their own. Many Christian churches, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church in East Africa, insist, however, that homosexual acts are condemned as immoral in Scripture. Therefore they conclude that the homosexual condition is an aberration due to the fall of man and not something intended by God, and is to be counteracted and eliminated if at all possible. If this is not possible, the church still finds itself

²² J.B. Nelson, *Religious and Moral Issues In Working With Homosexual Clients*: New York: Haworth Press, 1982), PP. 168 – 169.

²³ *Ibid*; P. 169.

unable to condone homosexual acts because this would countermand the authority of Scripture, which condemns them as sin, no matter how strong the temptation might be to participate in them.

Homosexuals reply that Scripture does not condemn loving, wholesome, homosexual relations, but only rape, lust, exploitation and idolatry — whether heterosexual or homosexual. The homosexual condition and the acts, therefore are seen by them as natural, even as God-given.

2.1.3 The Psychological Thesis

In concluding this section, two other definitions must be looked at briefly. The first proposes that homosexuality is a psychological maladaptation — a failure in some sense or other to reach psychosocial maturity. Finally it is suggested by some that homosexuality is neither a pathological nor a psychological condition, but a series of sinful acts to which a person becomes habituated and of which they need to repent.

The most straightforward spokesman for the thesis that homosexuality is a psychological condition is Bergler. To him it is only "a therapeutically changeable subdivision of neuroses."²⁴ There is no healthy homosexual.

The entire personality structure of the homosexual is pervaded by the unconscious wish to suffer, this wish is gratified by self-created troublemaking. This "injustice-collecting" (technically called psychic masochism) is conveniently deposited in the external difficulties confronting the homosexual.²⁵

²⁴ E. Bergler, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1967), P. 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

"Homosexuals take flight to men because they fear and hate women", Bergler theorizes.²⁶ His view of homosexuals is largely negative. By his account they are very sick people trying to claim that they are well.

For Marmor the homosexual is not necessarily neurotic. He sets forth a psychodynamic definition of homosexuality that includes motivational and operational aspects of behaviour. He defines the clinical homosexual as "one who is motivated, in adult life, by definite preferential erotic attraction to members of the same sex and who usually (but not necessarily) engages in overt sexual relation with them."²⁷

Marmor limits his definition, much as does Malloy, to same-sex desires, which grow out of personality needs, not mere situational necessity. The homosexual is the person who preferentially seeks same-sex partners even when alternatives are present. Only these represent genuine homosexuality in motivational terms.

He summarises:

The clinicians represented in this volume present convincing evidence that homosexuality is a potentially reversible condition. There is little doubt that much of the recent success in the treatment of homosexuals stems from the growing recognition among psychoanalysts that homosexuality is a disorder of adaptation.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid; P. 16.

²⁷ J. Marmor, "Introduction", In *Sexual Inversion: The Multiple Roots of Homosexuality*; (New York: Basic Books, 1965), P. 4.

²⁸ Ibid; P. 21.

Bieber characterises homosexuality as "a disorder of adaptation, the result of hidden but incapacitating fears of the opposite sex, since the condition is basically an accommodation to unrealistic fears, it is necessarily pathological."²⁹

Barnhouse offers a definition much like that of Marmor. "I use the word homosexuality to refer to an adult adaptation characterised by preferential sexual behaviour between members of the same sex."³⁰ The word "preferential" or even "choice" is used to describe homosexual behaviour. Buzzard defines homosexuality as "including both personal choice and psychological damage because of conditions in the home."³¹

Woods concludes, "sexual orientation is not, however, a function of physiology, gender identification or role characteristics, sexual preference is learned."³²

Moberly prefers to see homosexuality best defined as one of ambivalence to the same sex. Having assessed the same evidence in Bieber, she concludes that it is hostility to the father that defines the true homosexual, not hatred of the mother or the opposite sex.³³ Her definition is based on this insight:

From amidst a welter of details, one constant underlying principle suggests itself that the homosexual — whether man or woman — has suffered from some deficit in the relationship with the parent of the same sex, and that there is a corresponding drive to make good this deficit through the medium of same-sex or "homosexual" relationships.

²⁹ I. Bieber, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study*: (New York: Basic Books, 1962), PP. 303 – 304.

³⁰ R.T. Barnhouse, *Homosexuality: A Symbolic Confusion*: (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), P. 22.

³¹ L.R. Buzzard; *How Gay is Gay?* "In *Homosexuality and the Christian Faith*: (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1978), P.48.

³² R. Woods, *Another Kind of Love: Homosexuality and Spirituality*: (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1977), P.23.

³³ E. Moberly, *The Early Development of Gender Identity*: (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd; 1983), PP.39, 44.

Moberly continues:

An attachment to the same sex is not wrong. Indeed it is precisely the right thing for meeting same-sex deficits. What is improper is the eroticization of the friendship. Such eroticization is secondary, and not essential to the relationship as such.³⁴

Those who see homosexuality as some kind of psychosocial maladaptation usually suggest that it is susceptible to treatment of some kind.

2.1.4 Homosexuality as a Chosen Sin

The final definition to be considered is that homosexuality is simply a sin. According to Adams "Homosexuality is the way in which some clients have attempted to solve the sexual difficulties of adolescence and later life."³⁵ He perceives such a person as generally having a grossly disturbed view of sex and other interpersonal relations. "Since homosexuals have to lead a double life, they carry a heavy load of fear and guilt."³⁶ He claims that his rationale is strictly

Biblical:

To call homosexuality a sickness, for example, does not raise the client's hope. But to call homosexuality sin as the Bible does, is to offer hope. Probably there is no more important factor in the work of helping homosexual sinners. Hope is desperately needed by them as much as anything else. It is essential to counteract every aspect of the hope destroying medical and/or genetic models of homosexuality.³⁷

³⁴ E.R. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A new Christian Ethic*: (Cambridge; MA: James Clarke, 1983), PP. 2, 20.

³⁵ J.E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Phillipburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), P.36.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid*; P.139.

Adams does not believe that one is a homosexual constitutionally; any more than one is an adulterer constitutionally. Therefore, he views homosexuality not as a condition but an act, a sinful practice, which has become a way of life. This has important ramifications. The homosexual act is the reason for calling one a homosexual just as the act of adultery is the reason for calling one an adulterer.

The homosexual may commit homosexual sins of the heart just as one may commit adultery in his/her heart. The homosexual may lust after another man as the adulterer lusts after another woman. For Adams the key point is that precisely because homosexuality, like adultery, is an act, it is learned behaviour into which men with sinful natures are prone to wander. "Homosexuality is a sin that can be forgiven by Christ."³⁸

2.1.5 Conclusion on the definition of homosexuality

I do agree with this definition of Adams that homosexuality is an act, a sinful practice which has become a way of life, it is a learned behaviour into which men with sinful nature are prone to wander.

The homosexual condition is part of the post-fall evil of which mankind is heir. It is however important to note that the homosexual is responsible for any same-sex acts that he practices which are therefore considered immoral. It is very true that to call homosexuality a condition that is separated from the act, that is

³⁸ Ibid; P.132 – 139.

natural, a sickness, or even a psychological issue, for example, does not really raise the homosexual's hope. But to call homosexuality sin as the Bible does, is to offer hope to the homosexual. Probably there is no more important factor in the work of helping homosexual sinners; hope is desperately needed by the homosexuals as much as anything else. It is essential to counteract the hope destroying medical and/or genetic models of homosexuality.

2.2 The causes of homosexuality

The causes of homosexuality are divided into three categories in recent literature, namely genetic factors, hormonal or endocrine influences, and psychosocial elements.

2.2.1 The genetic thesis

The theory that hereditary — genetic or chromosomal factors — cause homosexuality has been proposed by some researchers. It has been suggested by Lang that “Klinefelter syndrome, characterised by possession of an additional female chromosome, may predispose some individuals to homosexuality. Based on this assumption some have argued that homosexuals are females in male bodies.”³⁹ Lang's research has come under considerable scrutiny and been found inconclusive. West surveys the material and gives this summary, “one may safely conclude that the presently recognised sex chromosome and endocrine anomalies do not play a significant part in the cause of homosexuality.”⁴⁰

³⁹ T. Lang, *Studies In the Genetic Determination of Homosexuality*: (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1968), P.9.

⁴⁰ I. West. *Homosexuality*: (New York: Basic books, 1963) P.166.

Likewise, “Kallmann's studies with monozygotic (identical) homosexual twins, have not been verified by further studies.”⁴¹ “Not all pairs of identical twins are both homosexual as would be expected if it were a genetic condition. Genetic studies in general have not thrown much light on the causes of the homosexual phenomenon.”⁴²

2.2.2 Hormonal factors

Another influence on sex determination proposed as a cause of homosexuality involves hormone concentrations. During maturation the equality and concentration of hormones in the circulating blood has great influence on the growth and function of sex organs. Even persons with normal chromosomes rely upon the endocrine glands maturing at the right time and secreting into the blood the required amount of the right chemicals to promote normal sexual development. “A number of experiments have shown, however, that increase of testosterone for male homosexuals, far from producing a curative effect, simply increases desire for their accustomed sexual object”⁴³

Perloff reaches the same conclusions:

In our experiences, no patient, either male or female, has shown any consistent reversal of endocrine pattern to explain homosexual tendencies. We have never observed any correlation between the choice of sex object and level of hormonal excretion.⁴⁴

⁴¹ F.J. Kallmann, “Comparative twin Study of the Genetic Aspect of Male Homosexuality” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 115 (1952) PP. 283 – 298.

⁴² G.K. Klintworth, “A Pair of Male Monozygotic Twins Discordant for Homosexuality,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental disease* 135 (1962) PP.113 – 125.

⁴³ H.S. Barahal, “Testosterone in Psychotic Male Homosexuals,” *Psychiatric Quarterly* 14 (1940): PP. 319 – 329.

⁴⁴ W.. Perloff, *Hormones and Homosexuality*: (New York: Basic Books, 1965), P.57.

Some people, especially homosexuals themselves, find the biological theory appealing. In many cases it appears no less for genuinely scientific reasons than for the implication that sexually deviant individuals bear no personal responsibility for their condition and consequent acts, for they are biologically determined. Nevertheless, although there is a constant refrain in literature from Kinsey to Secor that we need a better knowledge of homosexuality, there is also a general consensus of opinion that the cause is not wholly biological. The Wolfenden Report states, "Biochemical and endocrine studies so far carried out in the field have, it appears, proved negative."⁴⁵ Speaking to Goldschmidt's theory of a biologically determined intersex, Kinsey remarks,

Those who have accepted this interpretation have assumed without asking for specific evidence that an individual's choice of sexual partner is affected by some basic biological capacity. No work that has been done on hormones or any other physiological capacities of the human animal justifies such a conclusion (Kinsey, 1941).⁴⁶

The committee responsible for the Presbyterian Blue Book reached the same conclusion after their study, writing, "However, psychosocial factors rather than biological factors appear so primarily determinative."⁴⁷

Many scientists involved in the study of homosexuality claim that sexual orientation arises from psychosocial factors related to development of gender

⁴⁵ The Wolfenden Report: Report of the Committee of Homosexual Offence and Prostitution, Authorized American Edition (New York: Stein & Day, 1963), P. 32.

⁴⁶ A.C. Kinsey, Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male: (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, Co., 1965), P.658 – 659.

⁴⁷ B.E. Shafer, The Church and Homosexuality: (New York: Julian Press, 1966), PP.63, 115 – 16.

identity and role with postnatal biological and endocrinological factors having perhaps some mediating influence in certain cases.

The general consensus is that transmission studies in single families have failed to indicate a clear genetic basis for homosexual preference. Likewise, postnatal endocrine studies have, for the most part, failed to establish a physiological basis for sexual behaviour. In particular, they have failed to shed light on homosexuality and choice of sexual objective in humans.

2.2.3 The Prenatal Thesis

During the past decade the major focus of the psycho-endocrine theories of sexual orientation has shifted from the hormone situation in adulthood to the role of prenatal hormones. As early as 1971 Fieldman and Macculloch theorised that “primary male homosexuals have sexually undifferentiated brains of a female pattern due to a lack of hypothalamic exposure to androgens during intrauterine life.”⁴⁸

In humans the embryonic process leads automatically to the production of females unless something is added to produce a male. In the absence of gonads or hormones the fetus differentiates autonomously as a female, it can only differentiate as male if something is added, that is, the secretions of the fetal testes. External morphologic sex changes which produce male physical characteristics are the final step in the embryonic development of sexual

⁴⁸ M.P. Feldman and M.J. Macculloch, *Homosexual behaviour*: (Oxford Pergamon Press), 1971.

morphology. Organisation of the brain as male or female occurs at about the same time in human fetal development that the hormones from the testes begin the development of male sexual morphology. In animals masculinisation of brain cells seems to occur in the small part of the brain called the hypothalamus. This segment of the brain is most immediately involved in the regulation of sexual activity and most sensitive to sex hormones. "It serves as a gate or funnel for eroticism and mating behaviour"⁴⁹ All later behaviour as male or female is determined by the presence or absence of male hormones during a critical brief period of prenatal life. "The exact mechanism is not known, but it seems to be the removal of chemical blocks that allow transmission of impulses from one cell to another."⁵⁰

The prenatal hormone theory was developed to explain the puzzling observations of male (human) homosexuals. Its pursuit in the laboratory naturally is heavily dependent on extensive animal studies on sexual dimorphism. The theory states that a hormone (androgen) deficiency during a critical period of prenatal life, that is, when sex differentiation occurs, results in an otherwise normal male developing a female differentiated brain. Dorner states the theory in terse language:

An absolute or relative androgen deficiency in the first hypothalamic organisation phase, that is intra-uterine, Leydig cell degeneration, results in a predominantly female brain differentiation. A normal or at least approximately normal

⁴⁹ J. Money, *Man and Woman, Boy and girl*: (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), P.238.

⁵⁰ F.A. Beach, "Experimental Studies of Mating Behaviour in Animals" in *Sex Research*: (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1965), P. 127.

androgen level during the second phase, that is, post-pubertal Leydig cell generation, then exerts a sex non-specific activating effect on the predominantly female differentiated brain. Thus a genetic as somatic phenotypic male with a predominantly female differentiated brain is primary sexually excited by another male.⁵¹

This theory suggests that a positive estrogens feedback effect, characteristic of normal females, should be present in primary (constitutional) homosexuals. Dorner's experiments demonstrated that in 13 out of 21 homosexuals this was the case. In contrast, "only two out of 25 secondary (non-constitutional) homosexuals showed this response."⁵² This suggests that secondary homosexuality may arise from psychosocial influences acting in accordance with learning theory.

The prenatal hormone theory also is subject to test by the study of human individuals with prenatal hormonal abnormalities such as prenatal hypoandrogenized males and hypoandrogenized females. "In these cases the individuals are found to be heterosexual to the sex of assignment and rearing."⁵³ "Homosexuals did not predominate among even the most extreme cases of women whose treatment did not start till adolescence or adulthood and who experienced pre and postnatal virilisation."⁵⁴

⁵¹ G. Dorner, W. Rhode et al., "A Neuroendocrine Predisposition for Homosexuality in Man" Archives of Sexual behaviour 4 (1975): 2.

⁵² Ibid; PP. 4 – 5.

⁵³ H.F.L. Meyer-Bahlberg "Effects of Prenatal Sex Hormones On Gender-Related Behaviour," Science 211 (1981): 1315.

⁵⁴ Ibid; P. 382.

This evidence from offspring of hormone treated pregnancies of human beings shows that prenatal hormones may contribute to but do not actually determine the development of sexual orientation. "None of the studies done so far allow one to exclude completely the fact that there may be a confounding of prenatal hormone influence with putative social factors."⁵⁵

Dorner's theory suggested also that "a positive estrogens feedback (luteinising hormone feedback, LH) would be present in homosexuals as in females."⁵⁶

Meyer-Bahlberg suggests two major problems with the research approach however. One is that it is unlikely that L.H. dynamics are necessarily correlated with sexual orientation. He point two studies of gonadally intact genetic males with a complete syndrome of androgen insensitivity who have an L.H. response that is typically masculine — "this despite the fact that these patients have a female gender identity and feminine heterosexual orientation toward males in direct contrast to their LH dynamics."⁵⁷

Despite these difficulties, the prenatal hormone theory is currently the dominant biological hypothesis. This is due to the fact that the anatomical structure of genitals and sex behaviour — related areas of the brain as well as the role of sex hormones are similar throughout the mammalian class. In addition, available information on patients with prenatal hormone abnormalities appears to implicate prenatal hormones as a contributing factor, although the exact

⁵⁵ Ibid; P. 386.

⁵⁶ Ibid; P. 389.

⁵⁷ Ibid; P. 389 – 390.

mechanisms are not known. But as Meyer-Bahlberg observes, "The larger number of hypothetical neuro-endocrine mechanisms that must be considered in the search for an explanation of homosexuality makes it unlikely that a single mechanism underlies all forms of homosexuality."⁵⁸ He suggests the inter-sex rationale applies at best only to a subgroup of homosexuals and that if valid for this subgroup, it is likely to be multi-factorial in itself."⁵⁹

The consensus appears to be that prenatal hormone conditions alone do not rigidly determine homosexuality. However, prenatal hormone influences have to be considered along with other factors as contributing to sex dimorphic behaviour. Evidence concerning the exact role of prenatal hormones and how they exert their influence is inconclusive at the present time.

2.2.4 Psychosocial Factors

Leaving biological factors aside, we turn our attention to researchers who focus on psychosocial evidence that may provide clues to the etiology of homosexuality. In the nature versus nurture debate over the origin of homosexuality, these investigators show a decided preference for the nurture theory. Because no consensus has been reached about what psychosocial factors are determinative, or how they are determinative, this does not mean that every theory mutually excludes the others.

We can agree with Secor that far too few data cards appear on the table of honest

⁵⁸ Ibid; P. 392.

⁵⁹ Ibid; P. 393.

investigation. Secor's statement epitomises the views of this group. "The only fact that appears with some certainty is that homosexual identification and practice are learned in the human growth process, much the same way as are all personality identification and practices."⁶⁰

Money, one of the foremost experts in the field, agrees. Although Money's clinical studies were used to support experimental evidence linking prenatal hormonal influences on the fetal brain to subsequent masculine-feminine behaviour, Money and his co-workers, the Hampsons, emerge as the chief proponents of the nurture theory. Money concludes "that erotic outlook and orientation is an autonomous psychological phenomenon independent of genes and hormones and, moreover, a permanent and ineradicable one as well."⁶¹

The Hampsons agree with him:

The evidence militates too strongly against a theory of innate, pre-formed, and inherited behavioural imperatives, hormonal or otherwise — instead the evidence supports the view that psychologic sex is undifferentiated at birth, a sexual neutrality in the place of the Freudian bisexuality, and that the individual becomes differentiated as masculine or feminine, psychologically, in the course of the many experiences of growing up."⁶²

If the nature versus nurture debate appears inconclusive, an even more difficult feat is to determine the amount of conscious participation the person exerts in

⁶⁰ N.A. Secor, "A Brief for a New Homosexual Ethic" *The Same Sex: An Appraisal of Homosexuality*, (Philadelphia/Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1969), P.77.

⁶¹ J. Money, *Sex Hormones and Other Variables In Human Eroticism*: (Baltimore: Williams Wilkins Co., 1961), 2: 1397.

⁶² John Hampson, *The Ontogenesis of Sexual behavior in Man*: (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1961), 2:1413, 1428.

becoming homosexual. Some suggest that "a person is not conscious of the psychosocial factors which shape his/her sexual orientation. These processes, it is claimed, begins at such an early age that in essence sexual orientation cannot be said to be chosen."⁶³ Oberholtzer, however, presents the opposite view in a forceful manner and suggests that homosexuals are responsible for their lifestyle.

It is bad faith to pretend that homosexuality is necessary when it is in fact partly conscious and voluntary. Gay attractions are not sneakily created while Jack is out of the room. He becomes gay with his consent, although not without the consent of others — Gay persons remember only what happened. They forget what might have happened. Thus, instead of remembering the choice among possibilities that was actually experienced in the past, they fasten upon the single action chosen and baptize it as inevitable — an exercise in bad faith.⁶⁴

Weltge has commented also on the ambiguous stance taken by a number of homosexuals who claim that the condition is the result of a blind determinism ensuing in practices of a compulsive nature, in all of which they are innocent and powerless. At the same time they claim homosexuality is a responsible, morally good choice biologically and psychologically natural and normal. Weltge points out that these self deceptions become noticeable when the ideology transforms the homosexual into a veritable saint and claims fellatio as a sexual sacrament.

⁶³ B.E. Shafer and J.F. Harvey, *Pastoral Responses to Gay World Questions*, "is Gay Good? Ethics, Ethology and Homosexuality: (New York: Julian Press, 1966) P. 125.

⁶⁴ W.D. Oberholtzer, "Introduction: Subduing the Cyclops – A Giant Step Towards Ethics," *Is Gay Good? Ethics, Theology and Homosexuality*, P. 28.

He continues, "what reason is there to believe that homosexuals are necessarily more honest about themselves, or less prone to self justification, than other men?"⁶⁵ Other researchers do not see homosexuality as either a grim determinism or deliberate conscious choice.

This meditating position interprets the condition as a subconscious decision or maladaptation taking place during childhood. Harvey, discussing the guilt that many homosexuals experience, sees it as more than the guilt placed on the homosexual by the heterosexual society. He detects a deeper disorientation going back to the early years of life that may be the result of a skein of factors which is difficult to disentangle. "But no matter which factor is stressed, it is a disorder in the due psychological relationship of the child to some significant person or group."⁶⁶ Others agree that this is the most likely origin of homosexuality. Among them, Barnhouse, Moberly, Bierber, Joner, Marmor, Von Rohr, Shafer and others who believe that early psychosocial factors are predominant in the formation of homosexual orientation.

Kinsey's challenge to psychologists who posit a psychosocial origin still stands in many respects, for in his view it must account not merely for an all-or-none condition, as homosexuality once was thought to be but for a continuum found,

⁶⁵ R.W. Weltge, "The Paradox of Man and Woman," *The Same Sex: An Appraisal of Homosexuality*, P. 64.

⁶⁶ J.F. Harvey, "Pastoral Responses to Gay World Questions," *Is Gay Good? Ethics, Theology and Homosexuality*, P. 124.

ranging from those exclusively homosexual to those who are exclusively heterosexual.

Whatever factors are considered, it must not be forgotten that the basic phenomenon to be explained is an individual's preference for a partner of one sex, or for a partner of other sex, or his acceptance of partner of either sex. This problem is, after all, part of the broader problem of choices in general. The choice of the road that one takes, of the clothes that one wears, of the food that one eats, of the place in which one sleeps, and of the endless other things that one is constantly choosing.⁶⁷

From a layman's perspective, it seems that Morberly's work is doing much to answer these questions as she pulls together the various theories and observations into a more coherent picture.⁶⁸

Finally, if homosexuality is experientially determined, hence consists of learned behaviour, what chances are there of reversing the experience and unlearning the behaviour? According to most experts, the prognosis is not good for the essential adult homosexual with a great deal of homosexual experience. Bieber "reports on 72 exclusively homosexual patients who had undergone psychotherapy, and only 14 (19.44%) had become exclusive heterosexuals."⁶⁹ It was also reported that 42 (59.33%) had remained exclusively homosexual. Hatterer followed up 143 patients who had undergone psychotherapy. Of this number, "49 (34.27 percent) were said to have "recovered" and 76 (53.15 percent) to have remained

⁶⁷ A.C. Kinsey, W.B. Pomeroy, C.E. Martin, *Sexual behaviour in the human male*: (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders., Co., 1965), P. 661.

⁶⁸ Moberly, *Psychogenesis*. (Cambridge, MA: James Clarke, 1983), PP. 22.

⁶⁹ Bieber, P. 276.

homosexual."⁷⁰ The Wolfenden Report, however, concludes that "the outlook for adolescent and transitional homosexuals often is very good, and complete pessimism in all regards is justified only for long-term homosexuals."⁷¹

In order to make ethical or moral judgements on homosexuality, one would have to prove the existence of a man whose sexual condition or orientation is homosexual. At that point such a person would be in himself a deviation from the normal heterosexuality of most men, that is, to that extent abnormal. The questions are (1) Do such people really exist? (2) If so, is their condition morally reprehensible or is homosexuality of such a nature to be beyond the conscious control of the person so afflicted?

The answers seem to be (1) In a minority of homosexuals, sometimes referred to as essential homosexuals or inverts, the factors that make them homosexually orientated are subconscious and may be influenced by some biological factors.

Their homosexuality is caused by early environmental factors and influences outside the scope of conscious memory (2) Such persons cannot be held morally responsible for the condition, although they are accountable for their acts. Some who are unhappy with their orientation may be helped by psychotherapy.

Other homosexuals called perverts, acquired or situational homosexuals, are those in whom the tendency to commit homosexual acts is predominantly

⁷⁰ Hatterer, PP. 465 – 483.

⁷¹ The Wolfenden Report, P. 124.

determined by new factors arising late in life, that is later childhood, adolescence, or manhood. Their homosexual acts are not motivated so much by deep, subconscious personal needs. Some individuals in this category are not essential homosexuals in any sense of the word. Buckley points out that "at times it is extremely difficult to distinguish the "essential" from the "acquired"."⁷² A man in middle life who commits a homosexual offence for the first time initially might be thought to belong to the acquired group. Further investigation might show that he is actually an essential homosexual whose resistance and self-discipline only recently weakened. On the other hand, acquired or situational homosexuals with incidental homosexual experience frequently are simply labelled homosexuals.

Giving someone a negative identity like "homosexual" usually prepares him/her in our society for a destiny of dehumanisation. As we said at the beginning of the section on definitions, the word "homosexual" covers a wide variety of experiences. We need to be extremely careful that we define just what we mean by it.

The next chapter will address homosexuality in East Africa, analyzing its cultural practices and standards.

⁷² M.J. Buckley, *Morality and the Homosexual: A Catholic Approach to a Moral Problem*: (Westminister, MD: Newman Press, 1959), P. 17.

CHAPTER 3

EVALUATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN EAST AFRICAN CULTURES

In this Chapter I would like to reflect on the question of homosexuality in East Africa. The rationale for surveys, questionnaires, and interviews is given. First, the greatest need was to secure information from Adventist Christians in East Africa about homosexuality, whether it is new or not and as to what their normative basis is for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in their societies.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emphasizes morality in society as a core value. Through this core value, the church intends to nurture and unify its diverse membership and commit each believer to take God's word seriously as they demonstrate their love and compassionate service to the wider community in the world. According to Dudley and Cumming: "Churches will not help such people and grow numerically unless their members are nurtured in spiritual growth, preserved from apostasy, and incorporated as responsible members of the body of Christ who will gladly share their faith."¹

The questionnaires were strategically designed to discover how the SDA Church in East Africa relates to this core value stated above and homosexuality.

¹ Rodger, L. Dudley and Des Cummings, Jr., *Adventures in Church Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), P. 16.

3.1 The Field Surveys of Homosexuality in East Africa.

Findings from nine East African Seventh day Adventist churches randomly selected are presented with the data collected by means of the instrument (questionnaires). This survey on homosexuality in East Africa was targeted on Adventist members.

Methodologically, the survey research is descriptive, and the research instrument is questionnaires (close-ended questions). A sampling plan was utilized to select churches to be surveyed. The questionnaires were designed to gather information from individual church members and some selected leaders. After consultation with leaders of the East African Union of the SDA church in Kenya, the Ugandan Union in Uganda and Tanzanian Union in Tanzania, questionnaires were administered to nine selected churches from the forty two churches in the capital cities of East African countries.² Selection of churches to be surveyed was based on the location of the church and how well it represented different ethnic groups. The researcher carefully selected participants and the volunteers at a given midweek prayer service.

Random sampling resulted in 312 respondents. Out of 312 respondents 221 were analyzed and 91 were left out by the researcher since they did not address the questions.³ The questionnaires, which served as valuable instruments on the

² Due to time constraints, the researcher decided to analyze only six churches (two from each union). Out of the nine churches surveyed, the researcher left out three churches especially the ones that were in proximity to each other.

³ All the responses were checked for major errors and those that were improperly filled out were dropped, so as not to distort the result of the surveys.

study of homosexuality in East Africa, sought information on the following questions. An example of the questionnaire form used is attached in Appendix

A.

1. What is homosexuality?
2. Is homosexuality new in East Africa?
3. Was homosexuality practiced before the coming in of the missionaries?
4. What is the normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa? The Bible and/or culture?
5. What role should culture play in the evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa?
6. What role does the church play with regard to those who declare themselves homosexuals?

Of the 221 respondents who were analyzed in relation to question 1 above, 99 said homosexuality is immoral and shameful conduct of human beings of the same sex who have sexual intercourse with one another. 110 said homosexuality is anal intercourse between males, a practice which they think is a Western practice. And 12 said homosexuality is a sexual relation between people of the same sex and according to them they regard it as a part of the general evil which exists/existed since the fall of man.

Out of the 221 respondents that were analyzed, responding to question 2, 211 said homosexuality is new, pagan and foreign to them, 6 said it is a Western

practice; and only 4 thought it was part of the African culture during those old days before the arrival of the agents of modernity.

Responding to question 3 above, out of 221 respondents who were analyzed, 191 said homosexuality was never practiced in their societies in East Africa, it is only recently that they started hearing about it, and they believed that it was an immoral practice. 11 respondents, the majority being elderly people, said they used to hear of homosexuality practiced in specific cases such as bachelors who were attached to traditional courts or military camps and were allowed to marry young boys and treated them as their wives. The remaining 19 respondents said they did not know whether homosexuality was practiced in society or not.

Among the 221 respondents to question 4, 150 said Christians and the rest of the people of East Africa should use the Bible for ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa and the world as a whole. 10 said both the Bible and the cultural standards of East Africa should be used as the normative basis for the evaluation of homosexuality. And 61 thought that since they are Africans with their own culture, then East African cultures should be the only normative basis for the evaluation of homosexuality. They said “the Bible was introduced to them by the missionaries who tried to distort their African culture and therefore it is not a reliable tool to be used to evaluate homosexuality.”

Out of the 221 respondents to question 5 that were analyzed, 160 said East African cultures have no adequate role to play in the evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa. 61 strongly felt that to be fair to the people of East

Africa, cultural standards should play the major role in evaluating homosexuality in East Africa, failure to do so will be destroying the cultures of the people of East Africa, at the expense of the Bible and the Western culture.

Out of the 221 respondents to question 6, 191 felt that the Bible is definitive for what the church should think and do, because they take the Biblical standards as the objective revelation of Gods eternal will and therefore it is the work of the church to nurture its members spiritually and preserve them from apostasy and extend the service of love and kindness to the community at large with the intention of teaching them the truth of the Bible. The church must accept the individuals of homosexual orientation who need help and support and struggle against same sex tendencies. But those who insist on and promote the active homosexual life style as natural, normal or even superior to heterosexual relations by that very act disregard and undermine the sole authority upon which the church's very existence and mission is based, namely the Scriptures and therefore they should not be accepted by any Christian church as its members.

The remaining 30 addressing the above question felt that the Bible and the Christian church, being part of Western culture, should not play any role in the lifestyle of the homosexuals and therefore the church should leave them alone to do as they please.

3.2 The Silence and Secrecy Regarding Homosexuality in East Africa.

Sexuality in East Africa is one of the most difficult topics to tackle or discuss openly, because “traditionally except under ritually constrained circumstances, it

is not publicly discussed and this makes the whole subject to be encircled by a lot of secrecy and hedged around with many taboos.”⁴ When this silence on sexuality is combined with the absence of written materials on the cultures and histories of many people in many parts of East Africa as a whole, the difficulties of accessing traditional understanding of sexuality becomes very great and sometimes you wonder where those who argue that homosexuality was traditionally not a part of life in East Africa get their information from. Certainly, oral historians have made significant gains in advancing our understanding of various aspects of the past of non-literate societies, however one area which remains heavily under-researched, and on which no books are written is the area of sexuality. The question is how to deal with these silences in such a way that we can avoid being prevented from writing about sex and sexuality at all.

In this chapter I intend to argue for a connection between sex and other forms of cultural experiences in East African cultures and then attempt to show how that connection allows a discourse on East African sexuality to emerge. I would like to begin with the premise that the parameters which define the domain of desire are a silent commentary on the moral codes governing not only sexual practice, but also and perhaps more importantly, the nature of social identity. In other

⁴ Simon Ottenberg, *Boyhood Rituals in an African Society: An Interpretation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), P. 124 – 131.

words, the silences which mark the discourse on sex in East African cultures are socially linked to other aspects of experience and are thus an important part of the general cultural discourse. This means that a discussion of sexuality outside the bounds of the manner in which sex is made to articulate with the structure of social concern cannot tell us anything about the expression or regulation of desire in traditional Africa. The way sex is linked to other aspects of culture points to an important fact which has great bearing on how many Africans today think about homosexuality. In traditional communities matters of sex were never disembedded from culture; that is, the form and content of desire as well as the character of its manifestations were carried through publicly sanctioned rituals and symbols. Proper forms of sexual activities were those that conformed to those rituals and symbols. To speak of the latter as always publicly sanctioned is to recognize the extent to which the legitimacy of sexual activity depended not on individual choice (it was not a matter of individual conscience) but on a whole range of social prescriptions, which served to give sex itself social character. This presents something of a paradox. Sex and sexuality are maintained through a code of silence and secrecy but their meaning is mediated through institutional practices (like bride wealth, which are maintained publicly). May I therefore say that it is in the context of this seemingly paradoxical link between sex and culture, as distinct from individual choice, that we must place misunderstandings of homosexuality in East African cultures today. Claims that homosexuality did not exist in traditional East Africa can be seen, on this

account, to express a basic confusion between homosexuality as it is manifested in individuals today as an activity linked to choice and sex as an expression of culture. One characteristic of this confusion is that what is culturally recognized, is used ideologically to deny any other activity which, whether it actually occurs or not, is deemed 'perverse' by virtue of standing (or rather of being placed) outside the circle of the culturally acceptable. In other words, the problem of operating with notions of the 'culturally acceptable' is that such notions invariably confuse questions of morality with questions of acceptability. Something is not necessarily immoral because it is not culturally unacceptable, nor can the existence or non-existence of an activity in a certain culture simply be predicted upon what is considered publicly legitimate. This is an important point because those who argue that homosexuality is new in East Africa do so not in order to draw attention to a historical novelty but rather to condemn it as immoral.

Therefore, the assumption is that because Africans or East African traditions did not know the existence of homosexuality, the latter is therefore morally problematical. It is as if something being African is equivalent to its being morally legitimate. This is an obvious example of a category mistake in which East African tradition is the equivalent of moral outlook. Such an assumption involves a particular reading of the notion of East African cultures. At first it might seem that East African tradition is being used metonymically to represent that part of East African culture which is concerned with moral discourse on the

regulation of sexual matters. “A metonym is a word that carries a transferred sense by which it relates to another word, phrase or object through customary usage.”⁵ “The important thing about metonyms is that the sense which they convey depends on the relationships of substitution and transference which create the metonym in the first instance.”⁶ The elements involved in those relationships must be logically approximate to the meaning that words have when used in an ordinary sense.

Similarly, there is no customary usage to render the putative non-existence of homosexuality in East African culture as an approximate of anything immoral. This can be shown quite easily. The very denial that such a practice ever existed traditionally removes the possibility of any such metonymic approximation. African tradition cannot be used to judge a practice with which it was unfamiliar since to do so would imply either familiarity or the fact that East African culture is a moral category, one comprehensive enough to cover all unforeseen cases. But we know that African tradition, whatever else it may be, is not a moral category. “Yet those who employ it to proscribe homosexuality in its name are involved in an ideological move intended to secure some moral high ground against alleged perversion. The ideological character of this move can be brought out in several ways. First there is absolutisation of heterosexuality,

⁵ Jacques – Alain Miller, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III* (London: Routledge Publishing Association, 1993) PP. 214 – 230.

⁶ *Ibid*, P. 229.

which is read back into African identity.”⁷ Of course, the argument against homosexuality is made to take on a historical form which gives the appearance that culture has developed in such a way as to guarantee the moral uniqueness of heterosexual practices. Heterosexuality is then presented as historically or culturally valid while homosexuality is deprived of any historical validity. The ground of the authority of the argument against homosexuality is thus shifted from the realm of metonym to that of historical memory. This shift is made possible by the power of Africa as sign or name for tradition and moral authority.

Michael Riffatte has argued that “the description of dated activities is the more effective if the text is marker of fame ‘since in a time code fame is the equivalent of durability, and therefore a hyperbole of ancient if the time code is actualized in the past tense.”⁸ It is of course significant that the use of African tradition to negate the historical possibility of homosexuality is always actualised in the past tense. “The name achieves its power by being mortgaged to time which reduces history and truth to the same level.”⁹ A name as sign becomes the bearer of moral commandment.”¹⁰

But this is of no interest to those advancing the argument, since for them historical tradition and African tradition coincide in ways that make the authority

⁷ John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) P. 61.

⁸ Michael Riffatte, *Interpretation and Descriptive Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1981).

⁹ *Ibid.*, P. 110.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy* (New York: Zone Books, 1992) P. 57.

of metonymy depend on history. However, the shift is fraught with problems. If homosexuality did not exist in traditional consciousness we can safely take it that heterosexuality would have had nothing to say about it; it would, in other words, not have served as a basis for condemning any practice existing outside the purview of its consciousness. The fact that it is now being so used only indicates a reading back into the past of the pretended absoluteness of a historically determinate practice.

3.3 Selective Forms of (Homo-) sexuality Rejected in East Africa.

The second way in which the ‘Africanist’ argument against homosexuals is ideological is in its implicit rationalization and justification of a particular form of heterosexuality “(polygamy, the pledging of minor girls to much older men, and practice of inheriting the wife of a deceased sibling) in the absence of any recognition of their problematical nature, particularly in the experience of women.”¹¹ The point here is obviously not that an ideal form of heterosexuality would justify homophobia but rather that the ‘Africanists’ reduce the morality of heterosexuality to the sexual act. What their argument abhors is what they imagine to be the form of the sexual act between two people of the same sex. Conversely, “what justifies heterosexism is the false belief that two people of the

¹¹ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979) P. 58.

opposite sex can only have vaginal sex. In other words, it is anal sex which cause offence.”¹² It is this preoccupation with imagining the sexual act between same-sex persons which, as I shall show below, has led to a male-centered definition of homosexuality, one which has almost completely overlooked the existence of lesbians. Rejecting homosexuality in terms of anal sex shows the power of patriarchy to define sexuality. It also reveals a highly truncated imagination which can only think of sex in one-dimensional terms that is of sex as penetration.

Moreover, the result of this equation between anal sex and homosexuality is that the social and political problems inherent in certain forms of ‘African’ heterosexuality are glossed over since what matters is not the wider relationship between couples and the social context in which it unfolds but the physical way in which they express their desire. The irony, however, is that in practice this is not how those who condemn homosexuality in the name of Africanness consciously

evaluate relationships between men and women. In traditional culture sexuality, as I have indicated, is linked to other social practices which are not in themselves sexual. In fact, coitus was something rarely ever talked about openly, not even among men themselves.

Given this, it might seem strange to suggest that what worries the Africanist

¹² Joshua, Sempebwa, African Traditional Moral Norms and Their Implications for Christianity: A Case Study in Ganda Ethics (St. Augustine: Steyler Verlag, 1983), P. 93.

homophobes is the imagined nature of the sexual act between homosexuals. This impression might be reinforced by what appears to be arguments to the contrary, arguments which claim that homosexuality causes social disruption, family breakdown and corruption of the young. But we should not be misled by this appeal to the well-being of society, the family and the youth into thinking that African traditional societies were not prone to social disruption caused by various ways in which desire was regulated, e.g. practices such as clitoridectomy, pledging of young girls to older men, polygamy itself and the inheritance of wives.

The third sense in which explaining homosexuality away in the name of Africa identity is ideological can be seen in the partiality with which those who use Africanness for this purpose use tradition.¹³ It is tradition or rather the historical absence of a certain practice within tradition that is used to deny the cultural legitimacy of that practice. Historical absence, whether imagined or real, is then taken to be synonymous with ‘otherness’ or foreignness. Clearly, this is an imagined ‘other’ since its identity is nothing but the shadow of a reconstructed absence.¹⁴ Yet the rejection or critique of “otherness’ in this is highly selective. African homophobes do not reject everything foreign or everything they claim to be foreign. Let us take prostitution as an example. It has often been claimed that prostitution is just as foreign to Africa as homosexuality.¹⁵ If so, we should

¹³ John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), P. 66.

¹⁴ John Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), PP. 25-27.

¹⁵ John Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1970), P. 249.

expect to see the same kind of hysteria that has been expressed towards homosexuals applied to sex-workers. But what we see, instead, are some African business executives, politicians, intellectuals, priests and otherwise very ordinary African men hiring sex-workers (sometimes of either gender, though often they hire those of the opposite sex) for pleasure. Of course, from time to time the police are sent out to round up the sex-workers, who are either detained overnight or are made to pay a token fine. Indeed, governments spend millions of dollars in foreign currency on condoms to be handed out to 'prostitutes'. Yet there is no public outcry (in high or other places) of the sort applied to homosexuals, let alone of the kind that appeals to Africans.

My point here is neither to compare the nature of homosexuality with that of prostitution nor to condemn the latter. What is of interest, given the claim that both prostitution and homosexuality are foreign to Africa and the claim that both are socially disruptive, is the unevenhandedness or the partiality shown in the treatment of the two. How is this explained? Once again, the answer lies in what is perceived to be the nature of the sexual act itself between persons of the same sex. Perhaps the tolerance of female prostitution derives from its heterosexual character. But all this aside, why is it that the morality of marriage taught by the missionaries and the medical and educational practices introduced in the wake of colonialism are acceptable to most Africans, including those who condemn homosexuality, when those practices are clearly foreign themselves? It

is being assumed that all those practices existed in African culture or that they are fundamentally compatible with it?

I suggested earlier that the function of Africanness in the statements of those who would dispose of homosexuality in its name is metonymic; that is, the conviction that African tradition entails an ethical position which is capable of assessing the morality of homosexual practices is, as I have tried to show above, basically ideological. I have also argued that the authority of this metonymic substitution depends on the manner in which Africanness is read as both the history and tradition of heterosexual uniqueness. But this appeal to the past invites a historical analysis of the empirical feature that expresses the social patterns through which sexuality has traditionally been regulated in East Africa. We have seen that appealing to history or tradition to validate heterosexuality fails, because the social pattern through which this form of sexuality manifested itself were often unjust. The appeal to tradition by homophobes, however, causes a second problem. History and culture move through time; they change and are not fixed. Thus to use the past to deny the legitimacy of current practices on the grounds that such practices were not formerly known is to halt the movement of history by closing it to any possibility of change. African culture is then presented as fixed, closed and impervious to external factors – a culture that can somehow be imported from the past in its unadulterated form, to be lived in the present (without due regard to the ways which the present makes its own demands on the past in reshaping that past). But such a culture only exists

in the minds of those who want it. The reality is otherwise. Once we accept, as we must, the inevitability of historical change in all cultures, the question of the status of homosexuality in East Africa appears different. The question is no longer simply whether or not homosexuality existed in African cultures but also how, confronted by its existence in the present, African cultures are responding to it.

This entails two things. First, accepting the presence of homosexuality, and second, examining the forms of its present manifestations. To this task I now turn by looking at homosexuality in East Africa – in Kenya, to be more specific. In doing this I shall follow a twofold strategy. On the one hand I shall describe different forms of homosexuality in the country. Since it is from Kenya that the non-existence of homosexuality in East African culture has been claimed most vociferously, I shall, on the other hand, draw counter-examples of its existence in other parts of East Africa, thereby showing that the presumed universality of heterosexuality in East Africa and Africa as a whole entailed in that claim is false.

3.4 Homosexuality in East Africa (Kenya)

In Kenya, there are a number of current manifestations of homosexuality. I would like to distinguish and point out a number of different categories in the following manner: (1) homosexuality in prisons and other same-sex institutions, (2) gay and lesbian culture, (3) male prostitution and (4) homosexuality and ‘street children’. The order in which I present these categories is of no moral

significance. What is important is the fact that each of these categories represents an aspect of the reality of homosexuality in East Africa, particularly in Kenya. One mistake made by those contesting the right of homosexuality to exist in Kenya is to fail to distinguish between different aspects of its manifestations. The effect of this failure is to class together discrete sexual acts which are not bounded by meaningful relationships between people with acts so bounded. “The activity of a male prostitute or the prison rape of a 18 year-old are held to be of the same moral order as the sexual activity of a gay or lesbian couple of twenty years standing.”¹⁶ This is obviously done to deny all forms of homosexuality moral validity. Yet, as I indicated earlier, heterosexual activity is carefully differentiated: sex with a consenting adult of the opposite sex, sex between a married couple, rape of an adult, statutory rape, prostitution, polygamous unions and so on are each positively or negatively recognized. The point of my classification of homosexuality into different categories is to argue that no single judgment based on the analysis of a particular sexual act can serve as the yardstick for evaluating all sexual acts, including those which are falsely supposed to be ontologically different from ‘normal’ practice. Different forms of the expression of desire require different standards for judgment, and these standards derive not from the sexual act but from the overall social and political context in which human relationships are inevitably worked out. Thus

¹⁶ Ibid; P.178.

the transaction between a sex-worker and her client is predicted on a range of motives (personal as well as social) which surpasses the capacity of any single moral perspective to impose morally exhaustive limits on the content and experience of sexuality. Once we grasp that the sexual act always represents a complex ensemble of relationships which are criss-crossed by the social and political constraints of power, and is thus a site of struggle for the control of the self and its body, “we can appreciate not only that desire inhabits a multiplicity of differently gendered bodies but also that the multiplicity of sexed bodies in different social spaces attests to the need for an open-ended ethic of sexuality.”¹⁷ For like interpretation, desire is intractable, and like meaning, it refuses to be fixed. This is not to license all sexual activities but simply to acknowledge that area of experience in which a mature consciousness must distinguish between fantasy and reality.

No one can deny that in Africa ritual represents such an area. Indeed, “the imitation of the sexual act in many forms of African dance, apart from symbolizing the invigorating and creative power of sex and gender, is a public acknowledgement of the difference between fantasy and reality.”¹⁸ After all, the thrusting of the pelvis and the buttocks by the man and the responsive gyrating of the hips by the woman are merely choreographed signifiers of something else.

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1988).

¹⁸ Invigorating and creative because the sexual act is the means by which the community reproduces itself.

“These signifiers mark the borderlines of temptation and moral repression where desire threatens to strike but is kept in check by that ensemble of relationships which act as the force of taboo and prohibition.”¹⁹ Similarly, certain ritual occasions allow the transgression of those borderlines of temptation and repression. “Here anything goes, including things like homosexuality.”²⁰ To be sure, and we must be absolutely clear on this point, “this is not a case in every African community, perhaps not even in the majority of communities in East Africa.”²¹ But “homosexuality has been known to take place under certain ritual circumstances in certain communities in East Africa.”²² This should warn us against generalizing from the particular to the universal.

Those who deny that homosexuality existed in precolonial East Africa make precisely this mistake. They seem to think that the absence of homosexuality in one African culture Tanzania is a universal phenomenon. This clearly represents another sense in which the idea of Africa is used ideologically, African culture is defined as one single thing by all the inhabitants of the continent. But again, “this conceals social and cultural differences by reducing them to a pre-established homogeneous totality.”²³ Of course no such

¹⁹ Simon Ottenberg, *Boyhood Rituals in An African Society*.(Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989) P. 110.

²⁰ John Beattie and John Middleton, *Spirit Possession among the Lugbara*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), P. 224.

²¹ Arlene Swidler, *Homosexuality and World Religions* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Trinity Press, International, 1993), P. 21.

²² Renee Pittin, *House of Woman: A Focus on Alternative Life Style in Katsina City* (London; George Allen & Unwin, 1990), P. 280-285.

²³ Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, P. 64.

homogeneity exists, least of all in the area of sexuality. Baum has recently noted the existence of different forms of homosexuality in various parts of the continent. He discussed three forms: “egalitarian, transgenerational and transgenderal.”²⁴ The first of these he describes as natural and says it used to be prevalent during adolescence among the Luos, Nyakusa and the Kikuyus. Apparently, “Nyakusa society tolerates egalitarian same-sex intercourse among boys as well as girls until marriage. It is understood as a substitute for heterosexual pleasure. After marriage the practice is stigmatised.”²⁵ Although Baum calls this form of experience natural it clearly cannot be understood in terms of sexual orientation since it is used as surrogate for something else and, in any case, superseded by heterosexuality.

“On the other hand there seems to have been adult egalitarian lesbian activity among the Meru.”²⁶ It is true that the Meru stigmatized it and, like the Baganda, equated such behaviour with bestiality and witchcraft. “It was perhaps partly because of the stigma attached to lesbian conduct that nobles sometimes procured slave girls for their daughters to sleep with after painting and anointing them”.²⁷ As we have already hinted, lesbian relationships in Meru traditions have been explained as a function of large polygamous marriages in which certain wives were deprived of sex for long stretches of time because of lack of regular

²⁴ R. M Baum, *Homosexuality and Traditional Religions of the American and African*, P. 21.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 22-33.

²⁶ G. Kaunda, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Meru* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), P. 189-190.

²⁷ G. Kaunda, *Sexual Inversion among the Meru* (Kendu Bay Adventist Press, 1977), P. 178.

contact with their husbands. Perhaps the custom of the Masai and Kisii's, "whereby two women publicly entered into close and ritualized friendship with each other, was the basis of lesbian sex and also an expression of dissatisfaction with polygamy."²⁸ "Lesbian practices are not unique to the Meru. Boris de Rachewiltz mentions the presence of lesbians among the Nandi of Kenya, the Mbundu, Nama and Bobo. Bobo women who were barren and mature sometimes married young girls."²⁹

The other two forms of homosexuality discussed by Baum are transgenerational and transgenderal. Maybe the clearest example of transgenerational homosexuality in East Africa is that described by G. Kaunda in his famous paper, sexual inversion among the Meru. The Meru practiced what Evans-Pritchard has called 'boy marriage': bachelors attached to the traditional court or the military in Meruland married young boys and treated them as wives. Indeed, "bridewealth arrangements applied to these unions just as they did to heterosexual ones, thus guaranteeing public recognition of homosexuality."³⁰ It appears that there was similar practices in the Kisii society of Kenya, "where older men entered into Obosani or 'friendship marriage' with younger boys with whom they shared the same bed."³¹

Transgenderal experience, the final form of homosexuality mentioned by Baum,

²⁸ Ibid, P. 184.

²⁹ Ibid, PP. 184 – 185.

³⁰ Ibid, PP. 189 – 197.

³¹ Robert Mochache, *Homosexuality and the African Culture*. (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1998), P. 22-23.

is linked to traditional religion. I define transgender homosexuality as the temporal and symbolic transformation of human sexuality through the corporeal individuation of the sexual ontologies of spirit beings. It is manifested in certain outward forms such as cross-dressing and reversal of gender behavior and roles. In some East African traditional religions this is a state normally associated with diviners and other religious functionaries. Philip Peek has noted how throughout East Africa “female diviners possessed by male spirits often dress like men and behave like men, whereas men possessed by female spirits take on the appearance and roles of women.”³² “Such men are sometimes married by other men.”³³ In this way transgender sexuality serves as the basis for same-sex acts. But it must be remembered that such acts are always associated with the liminal or ritual status of the people engaging in them and that it is this symbolic element which makes transgenderal sexuality socially acceptable in some communities. Of course, we must be careful not to reduce the mechanism of this transformation to a one-dimensional structure concerned only with the displacement of gender by sexual activity of one biological gender by another. The point about transgenderal sexuality is that it symbolically reconstitutes the traditional biological division of sex into a dialectic of multiple genders which are rendered possible by the variability of the sexual ontology of spirit beings as sometimes male, sometimes female and at other times asexual.

³² Philip Mike, *African Divination Systems*. (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1995), P. 201.

³³ Robert Mochache, *Homosexuality and the African Culture* (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 2000), P. 29.

We can conclude from this that corporeality of the diviner is the site on which the multiplicity of desire grows since the same body is inhabited by different genders at different times or even simultaneously, depending on whether one is in a liminal state and also on the duration of that state. This is the basis on which I earlier suggested the notion of the multiplicity of sexed bodies. The idea of crossing the biological divide between men and women through the agency of spirits inserts into sexuality two distinct regions of possibility, that of ambiguity and that of plurality, as important parts of the elementary structure of desire. A male diviner who becomes possessed by a female spirit, and whose bodily characteristics are symbolically modified as a result so that he behaves like a woman, expresses the assimilation of a metaphorical gender through ritual displacement, and at the same time dialectically affirms his biological gender, thus inscribing both ambiguity and plurality at the heart of sexual experience. This is because of the co-extensive presence, in his physically gendered body of other structures of sexual identity. Thus in itself, corporeality is but one marker of sexuality. The point is that even in its biological element as male or female, the body of the diviner compromises its sexual individuality by being always ritually situated midway between masculine and feminine possibilities. The diviner is, to be sure, not androgynous. When he is liminally transformed into a woman, he is woman and will be treated as such. In sum, what ritual in different communities up and down the African continent allows and what it prohibits can

thus serve as metaphors for the multiplicity of sexed bodies (social and individual).

3.5 Homosexuality in East African Prisons

I have given in this chapter a considerable amount of attention to research done on traditional homosexual practices in East Africa. What is the situation with regard to homosexual practices in present East African societies? The problem is that tradition in the East Africa societies does not provide for an open discussion on the matters of sexuality. This makes research on the topic of homosexuality extremely challenging since volunteers would be hard to get. Therefore other alternative sources had to be looked for, one such alternative is/was the prisons. There are some of the points that make prisons to be a viable option for research especially in East Africa i.e. Kenya and Uganda:

- (I) The national and international media run stories on homosexuality revealing that these end up being court cases. Eventually the convicted end up in prisons throughout the countries of East Africa.
- (II) According to one senior prison officer (his name withheld) in Kamithi maximum prison in Kenya on a television interview by journalists made it clear that no prisoner in Kenyan prison could be allowed either to visit or be visited by a spouse or sexual partner for the purposes of conjugal rights. With this highly restrictive regulations, it is likely to put a lot of sexual pressure in the prisoner who may turn to homosexuality for sexual release or relief.

(III) Another senior prison officer in the same prison (his name also withheld) on a television interview by journalists made it clear that the provision for parole was not necessarily made to address the issue of conjugal rights since it depends on whether a prisoner is trusted or not. The majority of prisoners do not have the privilege to enjoy the parole status. This leaves them with shattered hopes of ever uniting with their sexual partners which they left at home. Naturally, prisons become a very good source for research on homosexuality.

With the information I had concerning the homosexuals and the rapists in East African prisons, I approached the prison authorities in Kenya and Uganda, after introducing myself as a minister of religion and doctoral student at the University of Pretoria in the department of theology pursuing research on homosexuality in East Africa. I told them that I needed their assistance in order for me to reach the goal. I got a list of the convicted homosexuals, convicted rapists and the attempted rapists and permission was granted to meet with some of these individuals. An example of the questions I used is attached in appendix B.

Several of the offenders I personally interviewed. The explanations some of them gave to me for their offences contained an indirect appeal to tradition in a way that implicitly suggests the historical location of homosexuality in traditional culture. It was claimed by one prisoner, for example, “that the reason he had had sex with a young man was because a traditional doctor had instructed

him, after communicating with the prisoner's ancestors, to do so in order to secure his position at work. The act involved rubbing a certain concoction of herbs on the forehead of the penis before penetration."³⁴ "Another prisoner said he was possessed by a spirit that urged him into homosexual activity: a claim which would suggest some form of transgenderal sexuality."³⁵

The fact that these explanations were offered by people who had served a large part of their sentences should warn us against dismissing them simply on the suspicion that those who offered them were trying to obtain pardon. It is possible that these explanations are an attempt to link aspects of tradition with modern experience and to use that link as the basis for founding new forms of the self. Whether or not such a link can be shown to be actually present is, however, in some ways irrelevant since the important point is that what was used to appropriate and justify new forms of sexual behaviour was the perception of its existence. Those offenders who were prepared to talk about their homosexual activities identified themselves as (homosexuals) and said they found this a satisfying way of expressing their sexual identities.

3.6 Homosexuality in East Africa and the Street Children

If we now turn to my second category through which homosexuality is manifested in modern-day Nairobi, that of street children and sexuality, we encounter a different set of issues. The overwhelming experience of sex among

³⁴ Name withheld, prisoner at Kamithi Maximum Prison in Kenya, Interviewed by the researcher, Nairobi, Kenya, 10 February 2002.

³⁵ John Juma, Prisoner at Kamithi Maximum prison in Kenya, Interviewed by author, Nairobi, Kenya.

these children is with people of the same gender (using gender here in the usual sense). Most of the children on the street, at least during the day, are male³⁶ ranging in age from 6 to 30 (or more) years.³⁷ Sexual activity among street people falls into three distinct areas. First, there is homosexuality among the 'street kids' themselves. It must be remembered that because the community of the street children is predominantly male, their first sexual experience tend to be with other males. Much of this is by consent and involves no outsiders from the group. This is similar to what Baum called egalitarian homosexuality. But sometimes the older boys take advantage of the younger ones (form of transgenerational homosexuality)? And even rape has been known to occur. Second, there is homosexuality with outsiders, the latter find street kids attractive, because they are not as expensive as the usual rent-boys. The problem here is that since not all street children are willing, some are tempted into it by the prospect of immediate financial reward. Some go on to become professional rent-boys. Others eventually opt for heterosexual relationships. Third, there is the phenomenon of male prostitution. This is depicted in a small group of mostly young adult men who offer sex for cash. Male prostitution in Nairobi is highly formalized and secretive and depends on a network of people who know each other. Some of these young men are kept by homosexual men who are established but have no courage to come out or associate themselves with an

³⁶ Females tend to come out at night to work as prostitutes.

³⁷ The use of the term "Street Kids" to cover such a wide range of ages is problematical and serves to show how society can sometimes trivialize marginalized people by according them the status of minors.

organization such as the Gay and Lesbian Association. These young male prostitutes are not necessarily gay but use homosexuality as a way of earning their livelihood.

The problem, however, is that the use of street children for sex by outsiders has been seized upon by homophobes as one reason for rejecting homosexuality and it is also partly this which, quite unjustifiably, has given the gay community in Kenya a bad name. Moreover, the image of the street kids has suffered as a result. Not only are they the focus of a host of usual social prejudices but they are now often associated with both homosexuality and male prostitution. Of course, what society fails to see is that even those who end up as rent-boys are very often forced into that circumstances by economic necessity. Society also fails to see that there is a huge difference between discreet homosexual acts and gay culture. In fact this is a distinction which makes no sense to many Kenyans, since for many it is the sexual act itself which defines a gay person and not the quality of the person's relationships. The truth is, though, contrary to what has been recently claimed, there is not only a gay culture in Kenya, which for political reasons has been forced to operate underground, but there also exist other forms of homosexuality which correspond to the grid of same-gender sexuality elsewhere in East Africa.

3.7 Morality in East Africa (Kenya)

Some might object that to focus on the realities of the present, as I have done, is to shift the basis of the discussion from history to practice at the expense of the

authority of memory. We have, however, seen that the memory to which the Africanist condemnation of homosexuality appeals is one of an alleged absence. And it requires no great imagination to realize that absence does not provide grounds for moral judgment one way or another. The distinction between history and practice implied in the use of tradition to deny the present (and, therefore, the presence of homosexuality) is concerned not with the recovery of memory but with the inscription of the ideology of the past into the present. This is done by projecting the alleged historical uniqueness of Africanness on to the sprawling canvas of sexuality as a basis for political control of morality. Thus, the separation of history from practice (tradition from the present) results in the unity of history and ideology. Politicians and representatives of the churches know that in East Africa, as elsewhere, political causes and moral causes can hardly be separated. And for once they are right. But what they do not realize is that this conjunction of courses, which of course is always an expression of the unity of human experience, is never innocent. For it is precisely in that nexus that ideology reaches its gestation. Here civil society and the state join hands to erase any possibility of transgressive difference which people who participate in sex with persons of their own gender are taken to represent.

Two points need to be made here. The first is that the policing of moral choices by the state involves a dialectic which politicises ethics while at the same time turning ethics into a political problem. The second point is that homosexuality

itself then becomes a political issue. With regard to the first point, the state is never concerned with moral issues disinterestedly or for their own sake. It is always motivated by the problem of the extent to which the legitimisation of its political status depends on the exigencies of civil society. When economic and social problems threaten the legitimacy of the state it is sometimes necessary for it to speak the language of morality in order to win the support of civil society. This is what has been seen in Uganda in the last few years. Thus it is that both church and state have found common cause against homosexuality. What is interesting here is that prior to the political intervention of the state in challenging homosexuality, the churches were silent. This is not because they were unaware of the existence of homosexuality. It is rather because they subscribe to a view of sex which silenced any discourse relating to it. This silencing of the voice of desire is, of course, quite consistent with the attitude of African traditional culture in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The decision of the churches to join in the condemnation of homosexuality raises the important question: What is the basis of that decision? Is it traditional culture or is it Christian morality?

3.8 The Immorality of the Churches in East Africa

I want to argue here that churches' position is something of a knee-jerk reaction and, as such, is confused and not thought through. On the face of it, the support the churches have given to the cause against homosexuality might suggest that they share the basis on which that cause is founded. But this is only an

appearance. It will be recalled that homosexuality is rejected in the name of tradition and culture. The problem, however, is that the churches have, on the whole, a highly ambiguous view of traditional culture. Many of them still think of it (in terms of the old missionary ideology) as pagan and superstitious. Yet, ironically, it is this culture which is invoked to combat homosexuality. In the interview with the pastor for Mombasa Central S.D.A Church, the researcher was made aware that “the basis of their objection is not culture but Christian morality”³⁸ But this simply begs the question: whose Christianity? There are, even in East Africa, many Christians today, including clergy, who are gay and homosexuals. This is a reality with which African churches are simply out of touch. “There is not a single church in the country that has formulated a coherent sexual ethic of any kind.”³⁹ But this has not deterred churches from marching in the streets in support of the cause of the states against homosexuality. The point of my remarks is to argue that the relationship between morality and culture, on which the churches ought always to speak prophetically, is delivered over a reactionary political ideology which has arrogated to itself the position of moral leadership. By following that leadership the churches become voices of another master. The fact that sexuality has come to represent the arena within which that question is being fought out says something about the importance of the relationship between sexuality and social

³⁸Haron Nyamweya, Pastor of Mombasa Central S.D.A Church, Interviewed by the researcher, Mombasa, Kenya 12 February, 2002.

³⁹ Ibid.

identity. “In a society in which the regulation of kinship and lineage through reproduction fundamentally serves as source of the self, collective and individual, we can expect strong reaction to any form of sexuality that threatens to transgress usual ways of self-defining.”⁴⁰ This is so not only because kinship and lineage depend on the operation of rules which directly address sexual matters and patterns of marriage but also because by so doing, kinship rules mark out sexuality as one crucial locus of identity. In other words, the ways in which people understand themselves include their sexuality, and this is encoded in lineage and kinship rules. Participation in these rules are, therefore, a performance of the self on the stage of culture.⁴¹ Again, the innumerable rituals that attend marriage, the prescriptions that apply to when and where sex can or cannot be performed, and the training of girls for sex in marriage provide good examples of how identity is performed. It is played out in following the rules that enunciate the way relationships are ordered, at least at some levels, in terms of gender and sex roles. It is this performance of the self in many African cultures which has been historically interrupted by modernity.

What is sad in all this is the way in which the states in East Africa have not only co-opted the language of ethics but the way they have used that language to strip individuals of their moral rights. Equally worrying has been the way in which

⁴⁰Diana Jeater, *Marriage, Perversion and Power: The Construction of Moral Discourse in Southern Rhodesia 1894 – 1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), P. 26ff.

⁴¹The notion of performance of the self is meant to express the fact that in Africa, culture’s identity is not simply a state contributed by relationship between mind and body (the mind – body problem in philosophy) but a function of roles and rituals as themselves processes of identity formation.

the churches have remained silent when homosexuals have been called names, e.g. “dogs” and have had serious threats made against their lives in the name of traditional morality. But when homosexuals point out that this is not just a matter of morality or culture but one of rights, they are denounced both morally and politically as though politics have nothing to do with rights and morality. Here the states contradicts themselves or rather shows themselves to be quite prepared to have their own cake and eat it alone. And these are the states which claim to be democratic.

Conclusion

From what has been written in this chapter one can conclude that it would be a serious mistake for the SDA church to make East African culture normative in the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality since:

- i. Oral East African tradition does not really provide any *moral* view on homosexuality. To read into the silence on homosexuality the moral condemnation of homosexuality is not acceptable.
- ii. Homosexual practices, in a ritualized form, are not foreign to East African culture.
- iii. The strong condemnation of homosexuality in East Africa is often politically and ideologically inspired.

The question remains: if the East African cultures cannot provide us with an adequate normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality,

can the Bible do that? In the next chapter we will turn to an in depth discussion of the ethical guidance the Bible provides with regard to homosexuality.



APPENDIX A

FROM: PASTOR MATWETWE KNN
TO: SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBERS IN EAST AFRICA
DATE: FEBRUARY 1st to 28th, 2003
RE: RESEARCH ON HOMOSEXUALITY IN EAST AFRICAN
CONTEXT: A SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE.

I, the above mentioned, currently being a doctoral student at the University of Pretoria in South Africa in the department of Theology, am pursuing research on homosexuality in East African and I need your assistance on this issue in order for me to reach the goal.

I would like to assure you that whatever information you give will be confidential and you will not be held responsible for any information. Therefore it is not important to write your names on this questionnaire form.

Questionnaire

1. In your own understanding, what is homosexuality?

2. As far as you are concerned, has homosexuality always existed in East Africa or is it something new?

3. Where do you think homosexuality originate from?



4. (a) What do you think should be the normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa? the Bible and /or culture? Give reasons-----

- (b) In your personal opinion is homosexuality acceptable in East Africa?
Yes No
In your answer give reasons-----

5. What role should culture play in the evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa? -----

6. What role does the church play with regard to those who declare themselves homosexuals? -----

APPENDIX B

1. Are you a religious person?
2. If yes, what is your religion, or denomination?
3. If no, are you a traditionalist?
4. What do you understand homosexuality to be?
5. At what age did you first come to know about homosexuality?
6. At that time did you think homosexuality was an acceptable thing?
7. At the time of your engagement in homosexuality had your original perspective on homosexual changed? If yes, how?
8. What is your preference: homosexuality or heterosexuality?
9. What led you specifically to engage in that homosexual activity?
10. Do you consider yourself a homosexual or was it for that particular time?
11. Would you repeat the homosexual experience if you have the opportunity?

CHAPTER 4

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

4.1 The historical background

When looking at the literature assessing the Biblical attitude toward homosexuality we find differing estimates of its prevalence in ancient times. If it is difficult to determine the nature and extent of homosexuality at the present time, it is even more so in ancient times. Most of the surviving literature comes from professional literary hands and does not address homosexuality per se. Although incidental mention is not without historical value (some think it presents a less-biased picture), it limits the amount of material to work with and presents difficulties for interpretation. Therefore a survey of the historical background is helpful prior to interpreting the relevant Old Testament texts.

Leviticus 18:1-3, 24-30; 20:23-25 give the impression that the practices forbidden in the book of Leviticus also were known among the Egyptians and Canaanites, perhaps being customary or prevalent among these peoples. Some scholars agree with this estimate, stating that, "male homosexuality was rampant in Biblical times and has so remained in the Middle East down to the present day."¹ "It is possible the Mores of Sodom and Gibeah were not greatly different from those of other Canaanite and Israelite towns and villages."² Harrison agrees with this estimate also, writing, "Homosexuality was known and practised in the

¹ R. Patai, *Sex and family in the Bible and the Middle East* (New York: Doubleday & CO., 1959), P.169.

² Ibid.

Near East as a form of carnal indulgence from very early times".³ Moreover, he suggests that homosexual activity within the cultus predated the Israelite arrival in Caanan. "Sacro-homosexual practices and female prostitution within the context of the cultus was probably well established throughout the ancient Near East long before the Israelites occupied Caanan."⁴ Bailey, on the other hand, finds it impossible to confirm such a conclusion. From the available evidence. He states,

"Research fails to establish any satisfactory positive support for the allegation that homosexual practices were customary among the nations surrounding the Hebrews; rather, the Meager evidence suggests that such practices were variously regarded as criminal, sinful or personally degrading."⁵

From this perspective, he treats statements in Leviticus that attribute such practices to the nations around Israel as exaggeration, "simply a piece of rhetorical denigration - or at most, a polemical exaggeration of heathen vice - designed to intensify Israel's sense of national 'holiness' or separation as a peculiar people dedicated to Yahweh."⁶ Accordingly, "they are disregarded as accurate indications of contemporary Pagan Morals, they simply express the Israelite condemnation of the ethos of heathenism which Israel must renounce just as it renounces religious

³ R.K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*: (Downers Grove, IL; Inter-varsity Press, 1980), P.191.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ D.S. Bailey. *Homosexuality and the Western Christian tradition*. (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press 1975), P.59.

⁶ Ibid.

and cultural syncretism with surrounding nations practising idolatry".⁷ We will attempt to gauge the accuracy of the Biblical statements as a historically valid observation describing the surrounding nations. Clearly, if the statements in Leviticus are mere rhetorical flourish, much of the content of the book becomes bombast. The great seriousness and sternness of the book verges on farce if it is in fact set against a backdrop of non-existent internal or external dangers for Israel.

4.1.1 Egypt

The ideal family relationship in Egypt was for a young man to find himself a good wife and raise a fine family of children. "Since inheritance was through the female line, daughters were important. The young husband stood in close relationship with his maternal grandfather. He was the natural protector of the youth after marriage, more so than even his own father."⁸

Unconventional sexual practices are not well documented in ancient Egypt. "Herodotus, a Greek traveller and author who visited Egypt some time after 460 B.C, mentions bestiality and necrophilia."⁹ The Talmud states that "Potiphar bought Joseph for himself, suggesting a homosexual intention."¹⁰ From earlier Egyptian sources, Pritchard cites two statements, the first from the eighteenth dynasty (ca. 1550 B.C), which he categorises as Egyptian Social Law. Here a man asserts, "I have not had sexual relations with a boy." Another statement from the 125th chapter

⁷ Ibid; P.60.

⁸ M.S. Shaw, "Family Life in Ancient Egypt," *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society* 28 (1933): 37 – 40.

⁹ Herodotus 2.46.89.

¹⁰ Sot. 13b, see also I. Jakobovits, "Homosexuality," In *Encjud* 8 (1972): 961.

of The Book of the Dead reads, "O His face behind him, who comes forth from the Tep-het-djat, I have not been perverted; I have not had sexual relations with a boy."¹¹

The outstanding account of homosexuality in Egyptian literature is a story about the attempt of the god Seth to violate his younger brother. The myth, which deals with conflict between the gods Horus and Seth, presents a number of settings in which the struggle takes place. One of these is the homosexual rape of Horus. The homosexual interest of Seth is seen clearly in a papyrus fragment found in Kahun, where Seth shows a decided interest in the body of Horus, "the majesty of Seth said to the majesty of Horus: "How beautiful are thy buttocks."¹²

Papyrus Chester Beatty I, dated about 1160 B.C, records the homosexual act of Seth,

Thereupon Seth spake unto Horus: come let us pass a happy day in my house. Thereupon Horus said to him: I will do so, verily I will do so. And when it was eventide the bed was spread for them, and the twain lay down. And in the night Seth caused his member to become stiff, and made it go between the loins of Horus. Thereupon Horus put his hands between his loins, and he caught the seed of Seth."¹³

The conflict between Horus and Seth has been seen as having either a cosmological significance explaining the relationship of sun and moon or

¹¹ J.B. Pritchard, ed; ANET (1950). PP. 34 – 35.

¹² G.W. Griffith, ed., ed., The Petrie Papyri: Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob (Principally from the Middle Kingdom), 2nd ed. (London: B. Quaritchs, 1898), P.3, VI, 12, 1 – 29.

¹³ A.H. Gardiner, tr., ed., The Library of A. Chester Beatty: Description o a Hieratic Papyrus with a mythological Story, Love-songs, and other Miscellaneous Texts-chester Beatty Papyri, No. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), see Pect, 11, 2-4 and P. 21.

a political significance relating to some conquest of the past. Whatever the intent of the myth, what is the significance of the homosexuality in the two legends from Kahum and P. Chester Beatty? Griffiths finds more than the ignominy dealt by the conqueror to the conquered:

At first sight Seth's homosexual treatment of Horus seems to fall in better with the idea of the ignominy inflicted on an enemy. But Seth is not the ultimate conqueror, although he is represented as boasting of his deeds of war ... it is certainly looked upon as a mark of ignominy for the sufferer; but it is abominated not as an expression of triumph by the enemy so much as for the shame attached to the act itself, just as the eating of excrement is abominated.¹⁴

Westendorf points out that "the shame in homosexual intercourse belongs entirely to the underdog, whereas the act itself seems unimportant."¹⁵ Seth boasts of having performed the job of a man on Horus who is insulted and spit upon by the Ennead (P. Chester Beatty 1, 12, 3-4).

In Egyptian thinking the change of roles rendered the passive partner powerless. Even for the gods this was true. Westendorf observes, "Atum, has no power over NN; rather NN copulates in his anus." Coffin Texts VI, 258 f-g).¹⁶ This seems to imply that one rendered another completely powerless by violating him sexually and lends support to the view that the Egyptians had a custom of violating defeated enemies in this way.

¹⁴ J.G. Griffiths, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth from Egyptian and Classical Sources* (New York: Liverpool University Press, 1960), P.43.

¹⁵ W. Westendorf, "Homosexuality," *Lexikon der Agpytologie* 2, ed. (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1977): Col 1272.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

On this point Gardiner finds no evidence of such a practice, “Here, at all events, we have unmistakable evidence of the belief that such a practice existed, though of its actual performance there is no proof either in ancient Egypt, or as Prof. Seligman informs me, anywhere else in Africa.”¹⁷ Perhaps the significance of the homosexual act is to be found in the nature of Seth himself." Seth is scarcely a god of fertility, for in this myth his boundless energy is not productive. Isis had already warned Horus how to deal with Seth so that his seed would be wasted. In this myth his seed is feared not for its generative power, but as poison.¹⁸ Griffiths translates the Kahum account thus:

The majesty of Seth said to the majesty of Horus, how beautiful are thy buttocks! How flourishing (?)...The majesty of said, wait that I may tell it ... to their palace. Horus said to his mother Isis ... Seth desires (?) to have intercourse with me. And she said to him, take care, do not approach him for that; when he mentions it to thee a second time, say thou to him, it is altogether too difficult for me because of (my) nature (?), since thou art too heavy for me; my strength will not be equal to thine, thou shalt say to him. Then when he shall have given thee strength, do thou place thy fingers between thy buttocks, Lo it will give ... Lo, he will enjoy it exceedingly (?)... this seed which has come forth from his generative organ without letting the sun see it ... come thou. ¹⁹

Seth is fooled. He does not introduce his semen (poison) into Horus. Horus catches it and throws it into the water. Isis succeeds in impregnating Seth with

¹⁷ Gardiner, P.22, n.2

¹⁸ See Westendorf. The same Egyptian word serves for “semen” and poison.” Spells to Protect against poisoning by Semen were used in Egypt.

¹⁹ Griffiths. P.42 also H. Goedicke, “seth as fool, “Journal of Egyptian archaeology 47 (1961): 145, Seth is made of look a fool not only by acts like this but by the use of puns which he takes literally.

the seed of Horus by placing it on a lettuce leaf which Seth eats. In the context of the legend the dominance theme is unmistakable cloaked in sexual imagery.

H. Te Velde scrutinises Seth and sees him as the symbol of abnormal irregular sexuality, "Seth's homosexuality and the fact that he was credited with practices of abortion, demonstrate that Seth is a god of sexuality which is not canalised into fertility."²⁰ The sexuality of Seth is always irregular; he does not care whether women are married or not. The animal of Seth, the ass, was proverbial for its lasciviousness.

Seth is an enemy of boundaries; he does not respect the boundaries of sex and wants to have relations which are sometimes homosexual and sometimes heterosexual. He is the author of confusion, refusing to recognise the divinely ordained boundaries. "Seth does not respect existing boundaries. The frontier between the sexes, which was created by Atum, is ignored by Seth."²¹

This is significant in that Seth's immorality and homosexuality contravene the status quo created by the Egyptian god Atum. Seth would thus be considered as one not living, according to "wisdom," the social, moral, ethical and religious regulations instituted by the gods at creation."Seth was regarded by the Egyptians as lord of foreign peoples; of Libyans, Hittites and Semites. He is given two Syrian goddesses, Anat and Astarte, as wives."²² He rapes Anat.

²⁰ H. Te Velde, *Seth: God of Confusion*: (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), P.55.

²¹ *Ibid.*, P.59.

²² For the background, see R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*: (New York: Grove Press 1960), P.197ff.

But in the account in P. Chester Beatty VII, she is dressed like a man." The Egyptian word used is not that for human intercourse, even when one of the partners is an animal, but for intercourse between animals.²³ Seth seems to be practising his usual craft, with defloration as the result. Consistency in ancient legends was not an essential element. He is described as leaping upon the goddess as a ram. He deflowers her with a chisel and rapes her with fire. Anat is taken ill after the event.

Here again the dominance-poison motif appears. Stadelmann suggests that "here we have an Egyptian enactment of a Canaanite myth, the rape of Anat by Baal."²⁴ Syncretism of Canaanite and Egyptian religion was widespread during the Ramesside Period in Egypt. Albright speaks of it as the most cosmopolitan in the ancient world.

"In the capital itself the great Canaanite gods Baal and Horon, with the goddesses Anath and Astarte, were worshipped on a par with the native Egyptian deities Seth and Horus, Nephthys and Isis, with which they were identified. Egyptian adaptations of several Canaanite myths have been discovered."²⁵

According to Albright, Canaanite practices shockingly immoral to the Israelites were bound up with the introduction of the myths. This included rampant

²³ W.R. Dawson, "Observation On Passages in Chester Beatty Papyri VII, VIII and XII," JEA 22 (1936): 107.

²⁴ R. Stadelmann, *Syrisch-Palastinensische Gottheiten in Egypt*: (Leiden: E.J. Brill Publishers; 1967), PP. 130-133.

²⁵ W.F. Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), P. 16.

prostitution of both sexes. "The Cinaedus (homosexual) formed a recognised guild in Canaanite temples, and there were other groups which combined dancing and singing with divination in a peculiarly unholy union."²⁶

Due to the nature of the Egyptian religion, these rites had a direct influence on the people. Among the Egyptians there were no sacred books as such. "The divine life was dramatised in rites and festivals and it is through them that a man confirms his virtue and attains salvation. The actions of the gods as revealed in the cult dominated religious thought and life."²⁷ "Religious renewal is the magic effect of the rites performed during festivals."²⁸ The acts of the gods became important and the days on which they were enacted equally important and were sometimes observed as festivals. "The observation of days was the culmination of the tendency to count particular days of the year as specially lucky or unlucky, depending on what the gods had accomplished on those days."²⁹

The Egyptians, says Herodotus, "assign each month and each day to some god; they can tell what fortune and what end and what dispositions of a man shall have according to the day of his birth."³⁰ Thus, "although various rites enacted in the temple out of sight of the people, the festivals and myths were open to all."³¹

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ C.J. Bleeker, *Studies in the History of Religious*; (Leiden: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), P. 22.

²⁸ Ibid; P. 44.

²⁹ G. Steindorff, *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*. (New York: G.P. Putnam, s Sons, 1905), PP.111-113.

³⁰ Herodotus, 2.82.

³¹ C.J. Bleeker, "Hathor and Thoth: Two Key figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion," *Studies in the History of Religions* 26: (Leiden, 1973), PP. 73 – 76.

Therefore, the gods set the moral tone for the people. The worshippers of Seth would imitate his deeds although these acts might be considered an abomination by those devoted to other gods. The fact that negative assertions about homosexuality were contained in the Book of the Dead could mean that it was only before the judgment of the dead that public lewdness was being denied. Public homosexual activity in connection with a festival would not render one liable to judgment. However, if all the denials of wrong doing in the book are to be taken seriously as representing the character of the dead, then they would not have needed the magical charms and incantations of the book to see them through the hall of judgment.

The Book of the Dead mentions boys in both instances, which leads to the surmise that minors may have been protected but were nevertheless a source of temptation to some. Westendorf notes that Goedicke was convinced that homosexual intercourse with adults was not considered immoral in Egypt. He points to the "grave of the two friends" as perhaps a proof that an intimate relationship based on the grounds of mutual attraction could be maintained for eternity in Egyptian thinking without offence to the community.³²

We conclude therefore that homosexual relationships were known in Egypt. Negative assertions may be simply part of a magical formula in the Book of the

³² Helck, Col. 1273.

Dead. The common people enjoyed hearing about if not practising homosexuality. At least the homosexual legends of Seth were written in a style for purely popular consumption, such as might be related by a village storyteller. The passive partner seems to have been the only one scorned. Regarding homosexuality, the syncretism of West Canaanite and Egyptian religions in the delta resulted in a much more morally degrading outlook than Egyptian religion of past eras had produced.

4.1.2 Babylon and Assyria

Sexual potency in ancient times was regarded as a great generative force, both venerated and worshipped. If the deity worshipped was female and the attendants also female, men would visit the temple to have intercourse with the "deity", that is, the attendants. From their point of view the experience was a religious one and even homosexuality could appear in a "good" light rather than a bad one. It was seen as a natural form of indulgence for the active partner, and if condemned at all it was only in situations analogous to those in which one might condemn gluttony, drunkenness, and other excesses.

Furthermore, marriage was primarily an economic association, frequently impermanent in character and not the exclusive source of sexual gratification. Sometimes a female deity might be served by male as well as female attendants. Usually, perhaps invariably, such males wore female costume and were considered to have adopted the life of women. When men resorted to the temple to perform ritual intercourse with the deity, if the attendant was biologically a

male, the intercourse was technically homosexual. However, simply to speak of these people as prostitutes or homosexual prostitutes does not convey to the modern mind an accurate picture of the motives or practices of the people involved.

Perhaps a more accurate term would be ritual intercourse. Such rites, whether heterosexual or homosexual, contravened the moral codes of Israel though not the moral practices of a large part of Israel, who repeatedly fell prey to the enticing forms of pagan worship. The Old Testament condemns this type of practice by the Israelites (Deuteronomy 23:17; I Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 23:7).

Sumerian and Middle Assyrian laws have little to say about homosexuality as such. The laws of Hammurabi 142, allow redress to a woman whose husband is a gadabout. It is possible that this implies a male prostitute or perhaps a homosexual.³³ Middle Assyrian laws 19.20, deal with accusations of homosexuality against a man:

1. If a man has secretly defamed (?) his neighbour, saying: "He is a (common) catamite or has spoken to him in a quarrel in the presence of (other) people, saying: "Thou art being used as a catamite" and saying: I myself will charge thee, "
2. If a man has defiled his neighbour (and) charge (and) proof have been brought against him, he shall be defiled (and) made a eunuch.³⁴

³³ J.J. Finkelstein, "Sex offences in Sumerian Laws," JAOA 86 (1966): 366, n.34.

³⁴ G.R. Driver and J.C. Miles, The Assyrian Laws Edited with translation and Comentary. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), P.391.

Miles and Driver ask why sodomy is treated as an offence at all in Assyrian laws. It is treated so only when the victim is the "equal" of the offender. They conclude that "it may be that a slanderous charge of unnatural vice and the commission of the offence were only regarded as criminal when the victim stood in a specially close relationship to the offender, and were not punishable in other cases."³⁵

4.1.3 Cult Prostitution

Sexual intercourse in the service of a god or goddess was a common practice, which was not regarded as criminal, but a sign of dedication or devotion. Priestesses who followed the custom apparently were highly respected in some manner since even kings dedicated their daughters to the temple. "Money was paid into the temple treasury for the service despite the fact that it was an act of dedication in glorification of a goddess."³⁶ On the other hand, temple prostitutes were not recommended as wives even by Babylonian authors:

Do not marry a prostitute (*harimtu*) whose husbands are legion (literally 3600), a temple harlot (*istaritu*) who is dedicated to a god, a courtesan (*Kulmasitu*) whose favours are many.³⁷

The Males attached to the cult are sometimes considered to be eunuchs or homosexuals or both. "Some argue that the strong Biblical repudiation of

³⁵ Ibid; P.71.

³⁶ E.M. Yamauchi, *Cultic Prostitution – A Case Study in Cultural Diffusion*: (Neukirchen: Butzon and Bercker, 1973) P. 215.

³⁷ Ibid; P. 71.

homosexuality refers to homosexual service in a pagan temple."³⁸ The wages of a temple servant were not to be paid into the house of God for the payment of any vow (Deuteronomy 28:13; Judges 19:22). "An argument is advanced that homosexuality is not involved at all, only male prostitution with female worshippers."³⁹ Others agree that "homosexuality was involved but hold that the Bible does not condemn the homosexuality as such, only idolatry is condemned."⁴⁰

It is doubtful that the Israelites made the neat and rather modern distinction between sacred and secular. The cult of the covenant people and covenant morality were integrally bound together in Old Testament times. The Israelites were alone among the peoples of the ancient Near East in not separating the spheres of religion and morality. For the faithful Israelite a moral life was in itself a form of religious worship. Furthermore, Hebrews had been exposed to pagan cult and morality from the beginning of their history and had come to grips with the philosophy, theology, lifestyle, and world view involved in idolatry.

The translation of cuneiform inscriptions throughout recent decades has confirmed in substance the statements of Herodotus (1,182) and has made evident that the licentious rites of sympathetic magic described by various Greek historians, Strabo, Lucian, etc., were not confined to a late period in Syria, Asia Minor, or Greece, but that these ideas and practices may be found as early as the beginning of the historical period.⁴¹

³⁸ O.J. Baab, "Homosexuality," IDB 2(1962):639.

³⁹ Bailey, P.53. Homosexual relations would be Meaningless in a fertility Cult, he argues. But no more than absolute chastity of the Entu in Babylonian religion and cult.

⁴⁰ J.Z. Englington, Greek Love (London: Neville Spearman Publications 1971), P.51.

⁴¹ B.A. Brooks, "Fertility Cult functionaries in the Old Testament, JBL 60 (194): 232.

The basic idea behind ritual intercourse was the belief that greater productivity of fields and flocks and thus prosperity for the entire community could be brought about by the propagation of human life under certain conditions. This intercourse with the representative of a god was viewed as a way of controlling the universe by sympathetic magic.

Persons dedicated to the gods who were officials of the cult were sought, especially at festivals, by laity who sincerely believed that intercourse with these persons would cure sterility of human beings, of animals and of the land, and that by actual union with the human representatives of the deity one could assist the gods in bringing prosperity to mankind.⁴²

We may safely assume that the Israelites would reject as idolatry and practice which claimed to control God automatically. No doubt some of the functionaries involved in these services were men. It is also highly probable that a good number of them eunuch-priests. That a eunuch-priest should have a part in religious fertility cults seems at first sight inconsistent. However, eunuch-priests are well attested in India, Egypt, the Near East, Greece, and Africa. According to the belief of the times, "such persons were more fittingly prepared to represent the deity, to function in phallic worship, or to secure fertility for the fields. They were accustomed to wearing female dress."⁴³ Albright suggests that they wore female dress because they functioned as women."⁴⁴ Again, magical ideas were at

⁴² Ibid; P. 243.

⁴³ Ibid; PP.247-248, N.2.

⁴⁴ W.F. Albright, "Historical and Mythical Elements in the Story of Joseph," JBL 37 (1917): 116.

work which suggested "the apotropaic value of disguising sex."⁴⁵ Kramer reproduces a text which suggests a similar idea.

Babylon a ruin, he turned to Erech," the city of hierodules, courtesans, and sacred prostitutes to whom ishtar (the goddess of love) was husband and master", the city of eunuchs and sodomites, the merrymakers of Eanna (Ishtar's temple), whose maleness Ishtar had turned to femaleness, in order to terrify man."⁴⁶

In Mesopotamia as in Egypt it is the passive homosexual who is despised, especially one who is habitually passive. The Mesopotamians, however, seem to have made a virtue of necessity. The strange abnormality of the homosexual and the abhorrence felt toward the habitually passive homosexual were attributed to the power of the goddess Ishtar. It was she who had wrought this change in order to instil fear in man. Oddly enough the safest place for these individuals was under her protection.

This strange relationship is spelled out in detail by Bottéro and Petschow. They find ample evidence of homosexuality in Mesopotamia in figure drawings and treatises on divination by dreams, especially those dedicated to erotic dreams. They assume that homosexuality is normal practice without complications or condemnation.

Active homosexuality, if it is performed upon an individual of the same social level, does not constitute a crime except insofar as it involves force or violence; otherwise it seems perfectly permissible and outside of all legal restraint, and as we have

⁴⁵ Sir J.G Frazer, *Adonis Attis Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* 2 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1935): 257-264.

⁴⁶ S.N. Kramer, "Mythology of summer and Akkad," *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1961), PP. 130 – 131.

seen above,(par. 5) on the subject of C.T. 39,44, it is no more blameable or dishonouring than heterosexual love. On the other hand, passive homosexuality, whoever the "active" partners are, is degrading from the single fact that it is habitual, that it constitutes, after some fashion, a way of life. It will be noted in passing that the young age of the passive partners is mentioned nowhere in these texts.⁴⁷

Those who, despite their masculine sex, behaved voluntarily and habitually as passive lovers opposite partners of the same sex and took on feminine habits and a sort of feminine nature lost status in society. They ceased to be "the equal" of others and joined, whether willing or not, a group of men who may be designated professionals of passive homosexuality, the most famous of whom were the *assinnu*. For the majority of these individuals, their lives consisted of a career or an art which was the object of a contract of apprenticeship. They may have played a role in the liturgy by disguising and masking themselves and bearing the distaff. "They played music and sang and danced and perhaps interpreted plays or pantomimes. Most often they were connected with ceremonies in honour of Ishtar."⁴⁸ Due to the bisexual nature of the goddess, their role was necessarily ambiguous; but certain texts allow their erotic nature to appear, and they are found more than once associated with other courtesans of high quality whose vocation as prostitutes has never been doubted. "Some texts like the *Summa alu 15-32* explicitly denote that the *assinnu* subjected himself sexually to men."⁴⁹ Some of these prostitutes were eunuchs or castrati, but what

⁴⁷ J. Bottero, H. Petschow, "Homosexuality," RLA 4 (1975 - 1975): 1 - 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid; P.5.

⁴⁹ Ibid; P. 6.

characterised them more than real emasculation was their behaviour which is designated as *sinnisanu* ("effeminate") a synonym of *ur, sal,* and *assinnu*. "The Sumerogram *ul.sal/mi* is significant since it adds to the name "dog" (*ur*) which is used in Biblical texts (Deuteronomy 23:19), the word "woman" (*sal/mi*), and might be translated literally "female dog".⁵⁰

As individuals, however, they were rejected and were the object of scorn because they had deviated from their fundamental destiny and norm. Ishtar transformed them from "men into women". Because of this fact, their destiny is so aberrant and exceptional that in order to gladden the heart of the goddess whom they serve, "they engage in sacrilege." In other words, in practices normally forbidden to others ... because they are not like others. "This is the cause of the scorn which surround them."⁵¹ Contrary to some evaluations, Bottéro and Petschow emphasise the freedom allowed to practice homosexuality:

In itself, homosexuality was not at all condemned as profligacy, as immorality, as social disorder, or as transgressing any human or divine law: anyone could practise it freely, just as he could freely visit the (female) prostitutes, provided in both cases that it was without violence or force, and therefore preferably with "specialists" as passive partners. But the latter like the (female) prostitutes, were social outcasts and scorned (with a scorn that must of necessity have overflowed upon the "non professionals", as seen above (par. 8f), precisely because of the fact that they were beings to some extent mutilated, fallen from the primary destiny, and a-normal, in the etymological sense of this word.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid; P. 7.

⁵¹ Ibid; PP. 8 – 9.

⁵² Ibid; P. 9.

Individuals of the same sex could readily experience and express the same feelings for each other as individuals of the opposite sex without the opprobrium of society. The "Almanac of Incantations" consists of a series of prayers for assistance in love. First the love of a man for a woman, second the love of a woman for a man and third the love of a man for a man. The three prayers are on the same level, with the same verb "ramu" which marks a sincere and sentimental attachment to others. "Homosexuals in Mesopotamia felt free to turn to their gods for help with their homosexual love problems as heterosexuals did with theirs."⁵³

While in Babylonia and Assyria homosexuality was not illegal except as accompanied by force or was perpetrated upon an equal with coercion, it may have been forbidden with relatives or close kin. Those who adopted a permanent passive homosexual role usually became *hieroduloi* in the service of Ishtar, dressing and acting as women and performing homosexual and other services in the temple. These priests may have been eunuchs. They were scorned as deviates. Ishtar had changed their sex to put fear into man. Homosexuals felt free to petition the gods for help. The Egyptian grave of the two friends and the homosexual prayers in the "Almanac of Incantations" may mean that the ancients were not totally ignorant of homosexual types approximating what modern parlance call "inverts".

⁵³ Ibid; P. 10.

4.1.4 Canaan and Hittite

The situation with respect to homosexuality in Canaanite and Hittite society does not appear to be very different from the general picture in the ancient Near East. "Hittite law did not condemn homosexuality as such. The only instance of condemnation is that of a man with his own son, which is in the same law with the interdiction of heterosexual relationship between near kin."⁵⁴ In addition, among the Hittites bestiality, like homosexuality, was susceptible to regulation but not complete interdict. A man became guilty of *Hurkel* ("abomination") because his partner was his son, not because they were the same sex. Homosexuality then was not outlawed among the Hittites. The main version of the Hittite law comes from about 1650 B.C. In it *hurkel* (abomination) refers to an offence against the culprit's city. By perpetrating such an act he brought impurity upon his fellow townsmen and made them liable to divine wrath."⁵⁵ The regulations concerning bestiality may possibly throw light on the laws about homosexuality. "Sexual intercourse with sheep and cows was forbidden in Hittite law. Infractions incurred the death penalty."⁵⁶ "But intercourse with horses or mules incurred no punishment."⁵⁷ Phillips offers the suggestion that the animals in the first category were considered sacred animals and that

⁵⁴ E. Neufeld, *The Hittite Laws translated into English and Hebrew with Commentary*. (London: Luzac and Co., 1951), PP. 54 and 188.

⁵⁵ H.A. Hoffner, Jr., "Incest, Sodomy and Bestiality in the Ancient near East," (Neukirchen: Butzon & Berkcer, 1973): 85.

⁵⁶ Neufeld, P. 53, Laws 187, 188, Law 199 includes pigs and dogs in the interdict.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*; P. 57.

bestiality with them was an attempt at union with the deity through the sacred animal, after which the animal was sacrificed. Intercourse with these animals was in this case strictly limited to the cult."⁵⁸ Nevertheless, even the man who coupled with a horse or mule could not come before the king or become a priest (Hittite Laws 200A), although he was not guilty of abomination. "The man who had committed abomination was killed or banished, and the townsmen bathed themselves to remove the impurity."⁵⁹ It is possible that, although homosexuality did not incur abomination it may have restricted the individual in some other way.

4.1.5 Canaanite practice

In Canaanite religion and society the same elements prevailed as in other ancient societies of the Near East. "Among them were sacred prostitution, male and female as well as homosexual. Transvestite behaviour for magical purposes and even bestiality were part of the cult,"⁶⁰ "self-mutilation and child sacrifice also were known in the Canaanite religion."⁶¹ As with many other fertility cults, Canaanite ritual employed hosts of male and female prostitutes as an integral part of the temple personnel. These and other *hieroduloi* acted out the mythical

⁵⁸ A. Phillips, *Ancient Israel' criminal Law: A new Approach to the Decalogue*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), P. 121.

⁵⁹ Hoffner, "Incest, Sodomy and Bestiality....," P. 85.

⁶⁰ W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: Historical Analysis of two contrasting faiths*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1968), P. 128.

⁶¹ F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), P. 25.

stories that provided a rationale for the status quo. "The cultic rites sought to maintain the status quo by seeking magically to strengthen man's relationship with nature and the spirit world."⁶² The gods and goddesses of Israel's neighbours were organically related to nature. For the most part they appear in pairs and were depicted in myths and legends as creating the world by copulation. Cole surmises that their worship consisted of an imitation of their creative acts, "their worship apparently required a kind of imitative magic in which male and female devotees yoked their bodies sexually and spilled their seed upon the fields they desired to yield bounteous crops."⁶³ In the milieu of the Canaanite fertility cult, "the woman became a symbol for the ground which had to be ploughed and sowed, and an object of the lust and conquest of man."⁶⁴

Like Ishtar who changes men into women, the Canaanite Anath takes away men's bows. Hillers concludes that this means the same thing, that is, changing men into women. He quotes the Ishtar episode but also a Hittite prayer "Take from (their) men masculinity, prowess, robust health, and swords (?) battle axes, arrows, and dagger(s)! And bring them to Hatti! Place in their hand the spindle and mirror of a woman! Dress them as women."⁶⁵ Both the bow and the spindle are mentioned in Canaanite mythological contexts. Baal's only recorded use of

⁶² G.H. Livingston, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*: (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), PP. 130 – 131.

⁶³ W.G. Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), P. 181.

⁶⁴ T.C. Dekruif, *The Bible on Sexuality*, (De pere, WI: St. Norbert Abbey Press, 1966), P. 64.

⁶⁵ D.R. Hillers, "The blow of Aghat: The meaning of a Mythological Theme," *Orient and Occident Essays presented to Cyrus H. Gordon*, P. 74.

the bow results in an orgy in which he copulates with a heifer and sires a calf. Hoffner sees "unmistakable marks in style and content between Hittite and Canaanite texts whose symbols for male and female are used in major rituals, especially in cases of impotency."⁶⁶ The evidence points to the idea that symbols of masculinity and femininity, the wearing of clothes of the opposite sex and the carrying of implements associated with the opposite sex were used in Canaanite rituals, these activities again probably involving eunuch-priests clad in female garb as well as male and female prostitutes. "Homosexual activity and bestiality were considered ways of having intercourse with the gods and thus affecting the course of nature."⁶⁷ It is significant, therefore, that the Old Testament opposes all of these activities. Deuteronomy 22:5 reads: "The implement of a man shall not be borne by a woman, nor shall a man clothe himself in the attire of a woman, for whoever does this is an abomination to Yahweh your God." (Hoffner's translation) Deuteronomy 27:21, Exodus 22:19; and Leviticus 18:23 all forbid copulation with animals by men or women and Leviticus 18:24 states that the Canaanites did such things. In the light of the extant texts, there is no reason to doubt the Biblical records on these matters.

⁶⁶ H.A. Hoffner Jr. "Symbols for masculinity and femininity: Their use in Ancient near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals," JBL 85 (1966): 330.

⁶⁷ Ibid; PP. 332 – 333.

Conclusion of the Historical Background.

The evidence from the extant literature of the ancient Near East does not support the thesis that homosexuality was unknown among Israel's neighbours. On the contrary, it suggests that cultic homosexual practices were entirely legal. Furthermore, private homosexual practices were not forbidden but regulated by cultic and civil laws. Consequently the practice was regarded as criminal, sinful, or personally degrading only when it contravened these specific regulations; otherwise it seems to have been practised freely without hindrance. Israelite law is the exception in that it banned all homosexual practice and excluded anyone who practised it from participation in the cult of Yahweh.

4.2 The texts of the Old Testament

4.2.1 The Use of Scripture

For conservative Christians the Bible and the Bible alone is central in any formulation concerning homosexuality, whether theological or ethical. How one handles the scriptural material determines the answers received. In fact one's view of Scripture at the outset influences the questions asked. Although considerations of space require us to opt for a proof text approach in this book, the vital concerns dealt with here can be answered satisfactorily only by developing a coherent theology of sex. Scriptures set forth certain values as an integral part of the Christian's self-understanding. Love is a central value and virtue, for example, but it must be understood in the context of Biblical anthropology. "That is, love is not self-authenticating; love is not allowed to

discover or dictate its own standards or patterns of conduct."⁶⁸ Love, which is the fulfilling of the law, always has existed and operated in context of the revelation from God that concerns His will. Love is not its own law, nor is the renewed consciousness its own moral monitor. Homosexuality, therefore, cannot be rendered acceptable simply by labelling it "loving" any more than any other controversial activity could be condoned this way. On the other hand, the acceptance of scriptural authority on questions of ethics and morals does not mean the natural and social sciences may be ignored in favour of strict biblicism. Many specific contemporary ethical dilemmas were unknown or ignored in the ancient world. The modern phenomenon must be studied carefully before Biblical principles can be applied and judgment made. In recent years arguments have appeared all over attempting to negate Biblical authority in the discussion of homosexuality. "At times the Scriptures are looked upon merely as the word of humans, not as expressing the mind of God the creator of man, and are held to be no more authoritative than anyone else's "word"."⁶⁹

Others question their relevance for today. Homosexuality, it is argued, is not condemned as such. "It was condemned because of its association with idolatry. That is, it had a cultic or symbolic significance due to its use by pagans, which it

⁶⁸ J. Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*. (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdman's Publishing o., 1964), P. 24.

⁶⁹ R.L. Treese, "Homosexuality, A contemporary view of the Biblical perspective," *Loving Women/Longing Men: Gay Liberation and the Church*; (San Francisco: Glide Publications, 1974), P. 28.

does not now have."⁷⁰ Coupled with this argument, although sometimes found in isolation from it, is the contention that the Scriptures are historically conditioned, that the Biblical authors knew nothing about the condition of homosexuality. They knew nothing about the modern "invert". Furthermore, the contention is that in the Scriptures homosexuality is condemned as rape, perversion or exploitation. "The loving relation of two constitutional homosexuals is not condemned because such was not known in Biblical times or at least not understood."⁷¹

"Two main positions are present among these views; either that the Bible opposes homosexuality or that it does not. Scroggs has given a clear outline of these positions."⁷² To provide the substance of the main arguments pro and con, we give a condensation of his material.

4.2.2 The Bible as Opposed to Homosexuality

1. The Bible opposes homosexuality and is definitive for what the church should think and do about it. Here the Bible stands as the objective revelation of God's eternal will. God is completely opposed to homosexuality.
2. The Bible opposes homosexuality, but it is one sin among many.

⁷⁰ H.K. Jones, *Toward a Christian understanding of the Homosexual* (New York: Association Press, 1966), P. 69.

⁷¹ R. Woods. *Another kind of Love: Homosexuality and Spirituality* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1977), P. 103.

⁷² R. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), PP. 7 – 11.

There is no justification for singling it out as more serious than other sins castigated in the Bible. In this case homosexuality is a sin but not a unique sin - nor worse than that of liars, thieves, or drunkards.

3. The Bible opposes homosexuality, but specific injunctions must be placed in the larger Biblical context of the theology of creation, sin, judgement, and grace. Here we have in essence the "analogy of faith" argument. It goes something like this. The heart of the Bible is its central message. This central message becomes a principle to evaluate other less specific or less essential parts of Scripture. The actual application of the principle can take many directions since the interpreter decides what is central. Here homosexuality will be viewed in different lights depending on the central principle selected, for example, creation, love, justification or others.
3. The Bible opposes homosexuality but is so time and culture bound that its injunctions may and should be discarded if other considerations suggest better alternatives. Here contemporary biological, psychological, theological, or sociological considerations may outweigh the Biblical material as authority in forming a judgement about homosexuality.

4.2.3 The Bible as Condoning Homosexuality

Arguments which claim that the Bible does not oppose homosexuality are outlined by Scroggs as follows:⁷³

1. The Bible does not oppose homosexuality because it does not describe true or innate homosexuality, but homosexual acts by people who are not homosexuals. This is basically the "invert" versus "pervert" argument.
2. The Bible does not oppose homosexuality because the texts do not deal with homosexuality in general. Here the key phrase is in general. The Bible opposes prostitution and idolatry. In conjunction with homosexuality, not homosexuality, as such. Whenever the Bible appears to condemn homosexuality, related evils are really being condemned, not homosexuality.

On both sides of the issue arguments surface to cast doubt on the authority, historicity, inspiration and relevance of the Scriptures to the homosexual question. Some propose that the time conditioned statements of Scriptures with phenomena that no longer exist or are based on obscure and uninformed views of homosexuality. This disqualifies them from current debate. To a great extent the way the Biblical exegete relates to homosexuality depends upon how he or she relates to these arguments. The researcher position on the inspiration and

⁷³ Ibid; PP. 11 – 16.

authority of the Scripture would result in a position similar to the first cited in the previous section. It might be necessary to ask, however, what is meant by "God is completely opposed to homosexuality." Is the Bible opposed to the condition, the acts, or both? Is God opposed to any individual who has a homosexual orientation? If not, under what circumstances can one say that God is "completely opposed to homosexuality? The answers to these and other questions will emerge as we proceed to analyse our subject more fully.

4.3 Old Testament Texts Cited With Reference to Homosexuality

As Smedes has observed, "for many thoughtful Christian believers how to feel about sexuality is part of a larger question, that is, how to feel about creation."⁷⁴

If our sexuality is part of creation, our feelings about it can reflect God's feeling about what He made.

Writers who begin a discussion of homosexuality with Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are not necessarily adopting the "analogy of faith" argument. These chapters are not seen as the primary revelation in Scripture by which all else is to be scrutinised, but as the essential starting point in any scriptural discussion of sex. Both Jesus and Paul discuss sexual relationships in the light of Genesis (Matthew 19:7-10; Mark 10:2-9; and Romans 1: 18-25), making it a reference point and even more critical for the Christian interpreter.

Genesis 1:27. So God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.

⁷⁴ L.B. Smedes, *Sex for Christians, the limits and liberties of sexual living* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), P. 26.

Genesis asserts that God created them male and female. Therefore sexual distinction is created. As Von Rad comments, "By God's will man was not created alone but designated for the thou of the other sex."⁷⁵ "The passage, when properly understood, makes each partner the complement of the other, enjoying spiritual equality."⁷⁶ There is no suggestion in Genesis of any division of a bisexual or sexually undifferentiated creature into two different sexes. Sex is not deified but neither is it denied. It is firmly rooted within the good creative purposes of God. "The essential need of male and female for each other is recognised and underlined. Together they form the unity which is mankind."⁷⁷ The much debated "image of God" in this verse has been explained by Barth as "consisting in man's being in fellowship."⁷⁸ Kubo also finds the male-female duality essential to a complete understanding of the image of God in man:

What the verse primarily means is that not mankind as male but male and female together make up the image of God. It must denote more than the fact both male and female have the image of God. While that fact is true, it is also true that one sex alone does not constitute the image of God in its totality. The sexual duality of male and female is necessary for our full understanding of the image of God.⁷⁹

To reflect fully the image of God, man and woman not only stand in relation to each other but to God. As Smedes puts it, "personal communion is what the

⁷⁵ G. Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, tr J.H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), P. 58.

⁷⁶ D. Kidner, *Genesis: A Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL; Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), P. 52.

⁷⁷ R. Davidson, *Genesis 1 – 11 Commentary* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 25 – 26.

⁷⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 111, 4, tr, A.T. Mackay, et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T Clark, 1978), 117.

⁷⁹ S. Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), P. 24.

image of God is about."⁸⁰ "The primal form of humanity is the fellowship of man and woman."⁸¹ "To be human is to share humanity with the opposite sex."⁸² But we are not necessarily speaking about marriage. The blessing of procreation is quite distinct from being male in the image of God as male and female, as our next text illustrates.

Genesis 2:18,24. Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."... Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.

God made "a helper fit for him", literally " a help as opposite him," that is corresponding to him."⁸³ "Mankind as male and female are not created simply for the purpose of procreation."⁸⁴ Procreative ability is carefully removed from God's image and shifted to a special word of blessing. "Consequently, sexual ability is not an emanation or manifestation of the divine image as in the fertility cults."⁸⁵ "Sexuality as such does not intrude into man's relationship with God."⁸⁶ "Man and woman become one flesh, one personality, for flesh here means more than the physical side of life, it is the medium through which the whole personality communicates."⁸⁷ Williams sums up the Genesis material in the same

⁸⁰ Smedes, P. 33.

⁸¹ P.K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A study in Sexual relationships from a Theological point of view* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), P. 36.

⁸² D. Williams, *The Bond that Breaks: Will Homosexuality Split the Church?* (Bim, 1978), P. 53.

⁸³ Kidner, PP. 65 – 66.

⁸⁴ McNeill, P. 60.

⁸⁵ Van Rad, PP. 58 – 59.

⁸⁶ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament 1* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967): 128.

⁸⁷ Davidson, P. 38.

way, contending that male or female alone does not adequately represent the divine image.

Here we come to see that man is created in the image and likeness of God as male and female. Male alone does not fully represent the divine image. Female alone does not fully represent the divine image. A community of simply one sex does not reflect God's intention for us or His character in the world.⁸⁸

Therefore the actual manner in which man exists in the image of God is as male and female together. This line of reasoning, particularly as presented by Barth and Thielicke, has been rejected by many other scholars. Thielicke sees the differentiation of the sexes as so constitutive of humanity that it appears in Genesis as a primal order which endures as a constant despite human deprivation in the fall. Others do not believe the text teaches an ontological unity of biological sex difference and psychosexual expressions. Such unity is not inherent in creation, they say; and therefore, does not define man as made in the image of God. This means that:

Male and female at birth may be no more than a physical differentiation ...The potentiality for sexual expression may simply be an undifferentiated potential at birth, and the direction which the sex drive takes in seeking expression ... the choice of another human being to which the drive shall ultimately be attached – may be truly conditioned learning.⁸⁹

Humanity has no choice but to be "fellow-human" in relation to "fellow-human."

"The question is, but must the fellow-human be in relationship to a "fellow-

⁸⁸ Williams, PP. 56 – 57.

⁸⁹ Treese, P. 47.

human of the opposite sex."⁹⁰ These considerations raise serious questions. What about biological sex distinction and psychological sex identity – how are they related? Can a male be a whole person without a personal relationship with a female, and vice versa? This suggestion that there is a kind of dualism between the obvious physical sex and the psychosocial expression of it emanating from the inner being needs to be measured against Biblical anthropology.

Biblical anthropology tends to be holistic. It allows for a dialectic between inner and outer man but hardly a dualism between sexual morphology and sexual expression. Such a dualism may occur in Scripture as an aberration due to the fall of man, but not as the intent of the creator. It would be extremely useful if the dynamics of sexuality and personality were spelled out from the Biblical perspective. Such a study would supply a fitting background for these remarks and provide a necessary context for them. However the brief remarks above must suffice and we must turn now to the most discussed passage in Scripture with respect to homosexuality.

4.3.1 The Case of Sodom

Genesis 19:4-10

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as

⁹⁰ Ibid; P. 48.

you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "These fellows came to sojourn, and we would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door. But the men put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door.⁹¹

Throughout the history of the Church this passage has been used to show God's displeasure with homosexuals.

In this instance, it was claimed, homosexuality caused the destruction of the cities in the plain. In 1975 the first extensive and radically new interpretation of this passage was published by D.S. Bailey, whose ideas have been repeated in numerous books. Bailey is an Anglican clergyman who was a member of an informal group of Anglican clergy and physicians that produced a report called "The Problem of Homosexuality", published by the Church of England Welfare Council. Bailey, the main lecturer for the council, later published his own book, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*. Bailey was also instrumental in inaugurating a government committee to investigate law and practice relating to homosexual offences. This report, the Wolfendon Report, named after the Committee Chairman, recommended that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private no longer be considered a criminal offence in England. The recommendation of the committee was adopted legally by Parliament in 1967. Crucial to their decision was Bailey's thesis that Christian tradition has misread the account of the judgement of Sodom in Genesis 19. This

⁹¹ Bible, The King James Version: Genesis 19: 4 – 10.

undercut the notion that toleration of homosexual behaviour is a sign of national decay and paved the way for relaxing legal sanctions.

Bailey, considered by many the high priest of pro-homosexual interpretation of Scripture, raises numerous questions about this passage. "What ground is there", he asks, "for the persistent belief that the inhabitants of the city were addicted to male homosexual practices, and punished accordingly?"⁹² He finds little evidence. Beginning with verse 5, "Bring them out to us, that we may know them", he suggests that the word "know" (*yada*) occurs some 943 times in the Old Testament; but in only twelve instances, without qualification does it mean coitus. On the basis of these statistics, he adopts Barton's⁹³ view that there is no actual necessity to interpret "know" in Genesis 19:5 as equivalent to "have coitus with" and that it may mean no more than "get acquainted with".

"Few Biblical scholars agree with this restricted interpretation of (*yada*)."⁹⁴ Many point to verse 8 which is manifestly sexual in connotation. "Even McNeill, a Catholic Priest who advocates responsible homosexual behaviour, admits that the case has been overstated here."⁹⁵ However, many scholars who admit that this interpretation is weak still point out that it is clearly violent homosexual rape that is intended and which is being condemned here. Therefore if this text does

⁹² D.S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (Hemden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1975), P. 1.

⁹³ G.A. Barton, "Sodomy," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings (New York, 1928), 672.

⁹⁴ J.P. Lewis, "Yadha" *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed, Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1981): 366 – 367.

⁹⁵ McNeill, P. 47

not speak negatively about a loving homosexual relation between consenting adults, it cannot be used to condemn it, they claim. Those who accept this new interpretation, however, have to explain why the mere request to get acquainted with the visitors is made in such a violent manner. The suggested answer proposes that Lot was a sojourner (*ger*), and as a resident alien, he did not have the right to bring other aliens into his house, especially those whose credentials were unknown to the citizens. Furthermore, he was unpopular. The citizens of the place might be accused of boorish inhospitality, but there is no evidence that homosexual vice was prevalent there.

In trying to explain why, under these circumstances, Lot offered his virgin daughters to the citizenry to do as they pleased with them, Bailey's argument is at its weakest.

He suggests, "that it was simply the most tempting bribe that Lot could offer on the spur of the moment to appease the hostile crowd."⁹⁶ This assumes that the crowd was bent on violence, perhaps rape. But Bailey has assured us already that they are just concerned citizens who want to clarify the status of Lot's visitors. If this is so, Lot's offer of his daughters is most incongruous and calculated to heighten the suspicions of the citizens about his visitors. If "know" in verse 5 simply means "get acquainted with", Lot grossly misunderstood the citizens. His best course of action would have been to acquaint them with the visitors. In

⁹⁶ Bailey, P. 6.

addition, this interpretation finds the Biblical account to be influenced by later legends dealing with punishment for inhospitality. But this entire reconstruction throws a serious question on the justice of God, for we are presented with God destroying the city by fire for their lack of hospitality, first and foremost, as well as undefined general wickedness. Bailey points out that no Old Testament citation of this passage explicitly identifies the sin of Sodom as homosexuality. (See Genesis 13:13; 18:20; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49,50). It is only in the post-canonical literature relating to Hellenism that these passages are interpreted of homosexuality, he suggests, and in the New Testament books influenced by Hellenistic literature and pseudepigrapha – 2 Peter and Jude.

The Old Testament depicts the people of Sodom as a symbol of utter wickedness and grievous sin, who committed adultery, walked in lies, were haughty, and committed abomination. Sodom was also a symbol of complete destruction (See Isaiah 1:9; 13:19; Jeremiah 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zachariah 2:9). True, there is no explicit mention of homosexuality here. The further claim is made that this witness, that is, that Sodom was destroyed for inhospitality, folly, and pride, is continued in the apocrypha. Especially quoted are Wisdom 10:8 and 19:8 and Ecclesiastics 16:8.

In Wisdom 19:13,14 (Bailey cites Wisdom 19:8 but quotes 19:14) neither the words of "Sodom nor "Egyptians" appear in the text though they are implied. The Egyptians are being compared with Sodom and seem to be declared the more wicked. In Wisdom the Egyptians are accused of "hatred of strangers"

(*Misozenia*, verse 13); and this is construed, along with verse 14, as a testimony to inhospitability.

This particular argument has not reckoned with the fact that in the Hellenistic world *Misozenia* was a loaded word. As Radin points out, it had within its broad range of meaning not only inhospitability and a social behaviour but also abuse of strangers and, in extreme cases even cannibalism."⁹⁷ This particular passage does not support the new thesis as thoroughly after careful inspection. We can agree with those who contend that it is nonsense to assume that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed solely because of homosexuality. The Old Testament clearly states that the sins of the cities were many and grievous. On the other hand, we cannot agree with attempts to exclude homosexuality as one of these sins. Therefore, we conclude that Genesis 19 is clearly a reference to an attempted homosexual rape of Lot's visitors. The question of whether this text condemns all homosexual activity does not seem to be answered here but perhaps comes within the scope of the next reference.

4.3.2 The Mosaic Laws

Leviticus 18:22. You shall not lie with a male as with a woman, it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13. If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.

⁹⁷ M. Radin, *The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1915), P. 186.

These texts unquestionably prohibit and condemn male homosexual genital activity. But a number of reasons are put forth to negate their impact. They are seen by some as part of a cultic taboo in primitive Judaism. Homosexuality is condemned, it is claimed, because of its association with the religious practices and licentious behaviour of the gentile idolaters. Others think "these laws applied only to priests at any rate and none of them applies to Christians since the early church had been released from the necessity of keeping the Levitical laws."⁹⁸

McNeill finds an interesting social reason for these laws, that is, it was necessary for Israel to increase her population, therefore homosexuality was discouraged. A more cogent reason for McNeill, however, is the connection between idolatry and homosexuality. As he states, "whenever homosexual activity is mentioned in the Old Testament, the author usually has in mind the use of male worshippers made of male prostitutes provided by the temple authorities."⁹⁹ Others find little homosexuality among Israel's neighbours and none in pagan temples. For them "homosexual acts are an abomination, not because of pagan cults, but because they reverse the natural order of sexuality, which in doing they show the spirit of idolatry."¹⁰⁰ Homosexuality itself is a fundamental subversion of the true order of things. This is a creation order of things, as Bailey implies by following up this argument with an examination of Romans 1.

⁹⁸ M. Olson, *Untangling the web: A Look at what Scripture does and does not say about Homosexual behaviour*, *Other side* (April 1984), P. 25.

⁹⁹ McNeill, PP. 57 – 58.

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, . 60.

To be properly appreciated, the Levitical laws need to be seen in the context of chapters 18-20. They were not merely for the priests but for all the people of Israel (Leviticus 18:1). Israel was to live according to God's laws to show contemporary Near Eastern nations the true nature of holiness.

A special responsibility lay on the priests. "Not merely are the priests to observe the cultic regulations for ceremonial holiness, but they are required to live lives of moral purity and spiritual dedication, so that they will be examples to Israel of divine holiness."¹⁰¹

Chapters 18-20 deal with various laws and punishments. In 18, various sexual relationships are predominant: incest, adultery, and homosexuality, as well as child sacrifice and bestiality. Few Christians would be prepared to say that all of these are now acceptable because the early church was freed from the Levitical law, or that if it is done in loving relationships, it is not to be condemned.

But what about commands such as in Leviticus 19:19 – "you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall there come upon you a garment of cloth made of two kinds of stuff". Surely this places these laws in the cultic taboo category. Not necessarily. As the covenant people of God, the Israelites were expected to maintain ceremonial and moral holiness. "The book of Leviticus is a compendium of both ritual and moral enactments, an ideal manual for the purpose. Whether certain enactments were moral or ritual it is sometimes

¹⁰¹ R.K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), P. 27.

difficult to tell. The Presbyterian Blue Book"¹⁰² "here relies heavily on Mary Douglas' "Purity and Danger,"¹⁰³ in which the criteria cited for holiness are (1) Holiness is a whole body (2) Holiness is internal peace and social order (3) Holiness is unmixed classes and categories of creation. Homosexuality is condemned on this thesis because it violates the integrity of primary categories of creation.

As to seeds and cloth, this text is difficult to interpret at best. We do not really know what is meant here. But to throw out all of chapters 18 and 19 on the basis of one verse is surely throwing out the baby with the bath water. Leviticus 19:18 reads "you shall love your neighbour as yourself". The application of the all or nothing principle in relation to the Levitical laws was not applied by Jesus in His ministry.

The great majority of Christians have always recognised the continual ethical significance of much of the material in Exodus 20-40 and Leviticus. The practices listed in chapter 18 have been considered particularly abhorrent to Christians throughout the ages. In addition, the New Testament reiterates the negative attitude toward homosexual acts found in Leviticus. This endorsement by the New Testament is perhaps the best criterion we have at present that any

¹⁰² B.E. Shafer, Blue Book 1, "The Church and Homosexuality" (San Diego: 190th General Assembly(1978), OO. D-39-D-43.

¹⁰³ M. Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1978).

particular part of the Levitical law is still an element of God's will for His people.

4.3.3 The Idolatry Thesis

The most repeated argument attempting to negate the force of the Levitical statements is that homosexuality is condemned here because of its relation to idolatry. A man is condemned as an idolater, not as a homosexual. The unstated assumption implies that a homosexual who is not an idolater would not be condemned. Dr. John Boswell, a homosexual and professor at Yale University, argues that "the Hebrew word to *‘ebah* ("abomination") as in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 does not usually signify something intrinsically evil, such as rape or theft, but something ritually unclean."¹⁰⁴ The point is frequently emphasised that the prohibition of homosexual acts follows immediately upon a prohibition of idolatrous sexuality. "And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech" (Leviticus 18:21, KJV). The implication here is that the Molech text and the text following homosexuality are both ritual in nature, not ethical or moral.

Although both chapters 18 and 20 contain prohibitions against incest and adultery that might stem from moral absolutes, some contend that their function in Leviticus 18 and 20 is to serve as symbols of Jewish distinctiveness. What appears to clinch this argument is the claim that the Septuagint, a Greek

¹⁰⁴ J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in western Europe from the beginning of the Christian Era to the fourteenth century.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), PP. 100 – 101.

translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, draws the distinction between intrinsic wrong and ritual impurity by translating *‘ebah* sometimes as *anomia* (violation of law and justice) and sometimes as *bdelugma* (infringements of ritual purity or monotheistic worship). In the Septuagint homosexuality is characterised as *bdelugma* in both texts.

The conclusion drawn here, apparently, is that homosexuality was not considered a violation of law and justice, or itself intrinsically wrong, but rather was a matter of ritual purity and monotheistic worship, that is, idolatrous. It was related to Jewish cult and culture but was not something immoral or unethical. This argument is more subtle, but it contains the same kind of logic as Bailey's statistical reasoning concerning *yada*^c ("know").

It is true that in the majority of instances, to *‘ebah* refers to ritual infringements of the law. "But just as *yada*^c is sometimes used in a sexual sense meaning coitus, so to *‘ebah* is occasionally used in an ethical sense concerning truth and justice (Deuteronomy 25:16; Proverbs 8:7; 16:12; 29:27; Jeremiah 16:15)."¹⁰⁵

Although there is a tendency in the Septuagint to ethicize *‘ebah* as do the prophets and Proverbs, the Septuagint is not consistent in its treatment of *‘ebah*. Deuteronomy 25:16, a clearly ethical statement, is described as *bdelugma* in the Septuagint. "Fundamental to this issue is the fact that God has a contrary mind to the practice involved and rejects it."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ See F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, A.

¹⁰⁶ W. Foerster, "Bdelussomai, bdelugma, bdeluktos" in TDNT 1 (1968): 598 – 599.

Furthermore, the ancients were not in the habit of dividing their thought and action into the neat modern categories of sacred and secular. For Jew and pagan alike the sacred covered all of life, as the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy testify. This means that some ideas and activities of their pagan neighbours were acceptable to the Jews. In significant aspects the cult and literature of Israel and its neighbours were similar, with Israel clearly the borrower.

It is not enough, therefore, to state that homosexuality was condemned merely because it was a product of pagan society and a part of pagan cult. "The reasons why Israel borrowed ideas and practices from pagan neighbours, which she did, are more complex than this simple formula suggests."¹⁰⁷ Consequently, when she did not borrow or even forbade the assimilation of pagan thought and practice, the reasons are likewise more complex than the abhorrence of idolatry. Idolatry, the bowing down to images or performing certain cult acts, was simply a part of an entire lifestyle, philosophy, theology, and cosmology fundamentally inimical to Israel's self-understanding as proclaimed to them by God in covenant relationship with Him.

"Separation from pagans involved more than mere avoidance of idolatry. Israel mediated the presence of the divine to her neighbours."¹⁰⁸ Hence the outward form of Israel's life was not a matter of indifference. The visible community was

¹⁰⁷ J. Jensen, *The Relevance of the Old Testament 1: A Different 'Methodological Approach' Dimensions of Human Sexuality*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1979), P. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Elchrodt, P. 404.

to be clearly distinguishable from the surrounding nations, their pagan gods and immoral practices.

The fact that idolatry and homosexual practice were found together in pagan religion does not mean that they are one and the same thing. In our texts we have a simple prohibition against homosexual acts. "The fact that those acts were sometimes practised in pagan rituals also compounded the abomination rather than detracting from it. Some commentaries, however, see idolatry as the main problem."¹⁰⁹

One Old Testament commentary concludes that the "ban on homosexuality is merely cultic by interpreting Leviticus 18:22 in the light of the previous verse (18:21, devoting children to Molech)."¹¹⁰ It observes that "by fire" is not in the Hebrew text. This law then is not dealing with child sacrifice by fire to Molech, but in fact prohibits giving children to Molech as temple prostitutes. Then it interprets verse 21 and 22 both as reflecting cultic sexual violation. Therefore homosexuality is condemned because of its association with idolatry. There are a number of problems with this interpretation. First, if any verse is out of context in chapter 18, it is verse 21 concerning Molech. "All other salient verses clearly refer to sexual practices; it does not. Noth speaks of the Molech law as "striking" since it is out of context."¹¹¹ He suggests that "it was only the key word 'seed'

¹⁰⁹ S.H. Kellogg, "The Book of Leviticus," *The expositor's Bible 1*. (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1943): 334.

¹¹⁰ N.H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1977), PP. 125 – 126.

¹¹¹ M. Nott, *Leviticus: A commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), P. 136.

[children', RSV] which brought this verse into the present context." Furthermore, giving children to Molech does not necessarily imply sexual or homosexual behaviour on their part. Finally, in the light of clear Biblical reference to human sacrifices to Molech (2 Kings 23:10; 1 Chronicles 28:3; Jeremiah 7:31), the observation of Noth that verse 21 is out of context is preferred. The verse does not have to mean devotion to Molech as a prostitute or as a sacrifice but may mean that the child was dedicated to the cult as Samuel was to the temple.

Sapp concludes that "the laws against bestiality and homosexuality were based on three major concerns."¹¹² First, that such relations were "simply unnatural". Moral law and natural law – both products of the one God could not conflict. Thus to defy nature's law is to violate the revealed law of morality. What nature abhors the law prohibits."¹¹³ Second, and integrally related to the first, is the concern for wasted seed. Finally, the Israelites saw a link between these types of sexual misconduct and idolatry.

Homosexuality was not a widespread problem in Israel and these laws were promulgated to assure that it could not be. At the very least, these laws are the best available evidence for determining the established Jewish legal position on homosexual activity between men. Presumably the attitude of Jesus and the early church toward it was the same.

¹¹² Sapp, P. 31.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Homosexuality was not a major problem among Jews in Christ's time, and His silence on the subject can also be construed this way: It simply was not an issue. The Talmud considered the laws prohibiting copulation with beasts and sodomy to be universal in nature and part of the seven moral laws applicable to Noahides as well as Jews. Epstein notes that "in talmudic as well as in Biblical times, the heathen was held under suspicion of committing this crime when the opportunity was afforded him."¹¹⁴ In addition, "Jews are above suspicion of committing sodomy. If the law prohibits an unmarried man to be a teacher of boys, it is because of the visits of their mothers to the school house, not because of his association with the boys themselves."¹¹⁵ The plain meaning of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is a prohibition of male genital homosexual acts. Since no provisional or exception clauses are included, as is the case with some of the laws, we can only conclude that they prohibit and condemn such acts. At least the onus or burden of proof is on those who would interpret these texts to mean something else. We cannot accept the premise that morality was not an issue here, although we recognise that other factors were linked to the prohibition.

Deuteronomy 23:17-18. There shall be no cult prostitute of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a cult prostitute of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot, or the wages of a dog, into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ L.M. Epstein, *Sex laws and customs in Judaism* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1967), pp. 134 – 136.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*; P. 137.

¹¹⁶ Bible, The King James Version: Deuteronomy 23:17 – 18.

1 Kings 14:23-24. For they also built for themselves high places, and pillars, and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree; and there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.¹¹⁷

In the Deuteronomy passages the key phrases in these texts "cult prostitutes of the sons of Israel", "a dog", and "male cult prostitutes. Some readers claim "that in 1611 "sodomy" was not restricted to sexual intercourse with the same sex and with beasts, but was applied to intercourse between unmarried human being also."¹¹⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary, however, clearly shows that the meaning of this word was reserved for homosexual intercourse; for example, 1601 – "which if he wanted he would hire a boy sodomitically to use," 1677 – "two noble youths being sodomitically abused by this infernal goat." The dictionary presents examples ranging in date from 1300 to 1705 which are references to same-sex relations."¹¹⁹ The text reading "whore" in the AV for "sodomites" in the margin is the only evidence favouring the above argument. Others find the influence of the vulgate at work here. Sometimes *qadesh* is translated with the Latin *scortator* ("fornicator") and sometimes *effeminatus* a synonym of *pathiaus* which denotes the male homosexual prostitute, especially one who plays the passive role in sodomy by permitting anal intromission. Such authors reject the vulgate translation because supposedly it does not express the

¹¹⁷ Bible, The King James Version: 1 Kings 14:23 – 24.

¹¹⁸ Barton, P. 672.

¹¹⁹ Oxford English Dictionary 9 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933): 366.

sense of the Hebrew. Neither, it is claimed, do the five words used in the Septuagint (LXX) strictly translate the Hebrew. For example, in Deuteronomy 23:17 the Septuagint translates *qadesh* with a participle meaning to prostitute.

I Kings 14:24 translates the Hebrew as *sundesmos*, a noun meaning to bind together. The word originally had no sexual meaning. In 1Kings 15:12 *qadesh* is translated as *telete*, meaning an "initiate" or a *hierodulos* ("temple-servant"). In 2 Kings 23:7 the term is simply transliterated into Greek. Finally, 1 Kings 22:46 reads *endiellagmenos*, a derivative of *allasso*, meaning to alter or change. Some suggest "the expression may mean one who has changed his nature by becoming a homosexual or one who has become an apostate by leaving the religion of Yahweh."¹²⁰ In fact any reading which implies homosexuality is immediately rejected by some.

Consequently, in this text certain readers find nothing but ritual prostitution between male and female. For them the "hire of a harlot" or "wages of a dog" refer to the same thing, the "harlot" (Hebrew, *zonah*) who cohabited with males in the temple and the "dog" (Hebrew, *keleb*) being those who had intercourse with women devotees. In this interpretation the term "dog" or "servant" simply refers to the male who served as a temple prostitute. Bailey, who finds no reference to homosexuality in these texts, finally comments "Homosexual coitus

¹²⁰ Bailey, PP. 50 – 51.

would be meaningless in the ritual of a fertility cult, with its exclusively heterosexual rationale."¹²¹

Although the term "dog" could be used as equivalent to the word "servant", as found in Aramaic inscriptions, "who is your servant (if not) a dog", ¹²² we have suggested earlier that "dog" implies more than simply a cult servant or " a cultic functionary dressed like a dog", ¹²³ but rather a group of eunuchs (Deuteronomy 23:17) or effeminate, who dressed like women (cf. Deuteronomy. 22:5 and subjected themselves sexually to other men.

Since many gods or goddesses were considered bisexual and were involved in such activities themselves, this would not be an unusual practice in a fertility religion. "These types were well known in Assyria and in Syria, as in Lucian's description of the priests of Cybele,"¹²⁴ and they are not unknown in the modern world."¹²⁵ Concerning these texts we lean to the view that homosexual activity was sometimes involved in the meaning of the words *qadesh* ("cult prostitute"), or *keleb* ("dog") and cannot be entirely ruled out as a part of their meaning.

4.3.4 The Outrage in Gibeah

Judges 19:22-25. As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, base fellows, beset the house round about, beating on the door; and they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." And the man, the

¹²¹ Ibid; PP. 52 – 53.

¹²² H. Donner, W. Rolling, *Kanaanaische Und Aramaische Inschriften*, BD. 1., Text. Pto Harrassowitz Wiesbaden, 1979), PP. 190 – 1991.

¹²³ M.H. Pope, "Homosexuality" IDB Supp (1976): 417.

¹²⁴ Lucian, *The Goddesses of Syria*, P. 15.

¹²⁵ J.G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* 2 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1935): 253 – 264.

master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren, do not act so wickedly; seeing that this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do with them what seems good to you; but against this man do not do so vile a thing." But them men would not listen to him. So the men seized his concubine and put her out to them; and they knew her, and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.¹²⁶

The story related in Judges, chapters 19-21 is from the period of the tribal leagues in Israel, that is, twelfth to eleventh century BC. The events took place before the days of Samuel or Saul. The story is about a Levite sojourning in the country of Ephraim.

He has a concubine who becomes angry with him and leaves him, returning to her father in Bethlehem. After four months the Levite journeys to Bethlehem seeking his concubine. He is well received by his father-in-law who wines and dines with him and begs him to extend his visit. The Levite finally decides to leave, taking his concubine with him. They get a late start and it begins to get dark so they looked for a safe city to stay in for the night. The narrator points out that they bypassed Jerusalem, which was at that time a Canaanite city, and pass on to Gibeah or Ramah, an Israelite city. Here, apparently, they expected hospitality but received none.

After sitting in the open square of the city for some time, a resident alien, an old man from Ephraim, spots them as he is returning from a day in the fields and

¹²⁶ Bible, The King James Version; Judges 19:22 – 25.

extends hospitality to them. While the old man is entertaining his guests, the men of the city, Benjaminites, beat on the door and demanded to "know" the man. The conclusion of the story, following our text, is that the Levite's concubine dies, which becomes the immediate cause of a war between the tribes of Israel and the Benjaminites, with dire consequences for the latter. The Book of Judges, as well as this episode, concludes with the line, "In these days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Similarities between Genesis 19 and Judges 19 are obvious. Many commentators assume one of the authors heard about or was looking at the other author's work. The Sodom and Gomorrah story usually is considered older. In that case possibly we have a commentary on the sin of Sodom.

Looking at the text under discussion, the base fellows (literary, sons of belial), a term for worthless scoundrels, beat (knock) upon the door. They demand to "know" the man who is the guest (*yada^c*). But Bailey insists that even here the word *yada^c* means simply "get acquainted with", despite the fact that the text states concerning the Levite's concubine that "they knew (*yada^c*) her, and abused her all night." He says,

As in the case of Sodom the story, the view that the Gibeathites were prone to homosexual practices and desired the Levite for the satisfaction of their unnatural lusts is nothing more than an inference from the words: "Bring forth the man... that we may know him" - the verb *yada^c* ("to know") being again construed in a coital sense.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Bailey, P. 54.

Commenting on the same word in our text, "*yada*^c a recent commentator observes that *yada*^c is never used unambiguously of homosexual intercourse."¹²⁸ Here the author sees the first use of *yada*^c as deliberately ambiguous, but with the offer of the young women, the ambiguity disappears. We may agree with the commentator that here, as in Genesis 19, the initial and determinative offence is a violation of the law of hospitality. But homosexual overtures played a clear part in it. It is scarcely possible for *yada*^c to be used twice in such close proximity in the same context and to be completely unambiguous in one instance and completely unambiguous in the next. For in this case the first use of *yada*^c never means homosexual intercourse. If it means that the second use of *yada*^c takes away the ambiguity of the first occurrence in the context, his point makes better hermeneutical sense. As it is, the comment itself is rather ambiguous and may be interpreted either way.

"The host at Gibeah implores them not to do this "foolish" thing (*nebalah*)."Cundall, makes two pertinent comments on this situation. First he notices that no attempt was made by the rulers of Gibeah to punish the offenders or to repudiate their actions. So it appears that the men of the city generally were involved, not just a lewd minority. Second, his study of the word *nebalah* leads him to conclude that the interpretation "foolish" is not strong enough here. The word denotes "an insensibility to the claims of God or man." Better translations

¹²⁸ R.G. Boiling Judges: Introduction, Translation and Commentary. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1969) P. 276.

would be "impiety" or "wantonness". These men were not about to recognise any moral or religious claims upon them."¹²⁹

"Bailey is aware of the thrust and import of *nebalah* but brushes it aside as an editorial addition introduced to bring this story into line with the Sodom story."¹³⁰ The word has other meanings, he suggests, such as inhospitable, churlishness, and need be seen as nothing more than "a rhetorical addition designed to emphasise the deplorable lack of courtesy shown by the Gibeathites towards the visitor." Currie, however, following Noth and Von Rad, see the word as a technical term involving a violation of covenant obligations. "But all uses thus listed clearly point at a violation of covenant obligations to the Lord and especially to wanton sexual conduct out of keeping with allegiance to YHWH."¹³¹ Collins also sees human sexuality in the Old Testament as lying in the sphere of human responsibility, a sphere in which man has dominion but within covenant obligations to Yahweh.

Human sexuality was indeed a dimension of human experience which fell within the parameters of Yahweh's hegemony and the covenant relationship. The presence of "Thou shalt not commit adultery" within the covenant clauses of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18) serves as a clear reminder that the fashion in which man lived his sexuality was not independent of his relationship to Yahweh, God of His people. Similarly, the different outcomes of the encounter between Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39) and that between David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11)

¹²⁹ A.E. Cundall, *Judges: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-varsity Press, 1973), pp. 196 – 197.

¹³⁰ Bailey, p. 55.

¹³¹ S.D. Currie, "Biblical Studies for a Seminar on sexuality and the human community," *Austin Seminary Bulletin* 87 (1971): 19.

indicate well that human sexuality is not an awesome force over which man has no control. These stories, told so often in Jewish tradition, clearly proclaim that man is responsible for the way in which he uses his sexuality, that God-given gift over which he exercise dominion in Yahweh's name and by Yahweh's power.¹³²

Bailey's interpretations have been extremely influential, being repeated in much of the pro-homophile literature despite the fact that most Biblical commentators do not agree with him. His interpretations do not do justice to the context and do not place the same gravity on the recorded events that the narrators themselves sense. Consequently, Bartlett's criticism seems fair when he says, "it takes special imaginative power to believe, as Bailey does, "that what the men of the city of Gibeah were after was the acquaintance of the visiting man, or that the old man of Gibeah offered his virgin daughter and the other's concubine only to protect his rights of hospitality."¹³³

The idea that the accepted codes of hospitality allowed a man to sacrifice women instead of guests is far removed from modern western concepts of behaviour and ethics. "But womanhood was lightly esteemed by some in the ancient world, as evidenced by the action of the Levite whose greater concern was to save his own skin."¹³⁴

As in Genesis 19, so also in Judges 19, it would be over - simplification to say that the sin of Gibeah was homosexuality alone. The wrong doing of the

¹³² R. Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality," BTB 7 (1977): 158.

¹³³ D.L. Bartlett, "A Biblical Perspective on Homosexuality," Homosexuality and the Christian faith: A Symposium, ed. H.L. Twiss (Valley Forge, PA, Judson Press, 1978), P. 25.

¹³⁴ Cundall, P. 197.

Gibeathites, as with the inhabitants of Sodom, was far more than homosexuality. In our view, however, one goes too far to claim that the Sodomites and Gibeathites had no proclivity to homosexuality. In this passage there is a clear reference to attempted homosexual rape, actual heterosexual gang rape, and murder.

As in the Genesis account, so also here we cannot agree with Bailey that this is merely a gentlemanly disagreement and inhospitality. The text and context suggest far more than that. Furthermore, none-of this is connected with idolatry or pagan ritual; and it took place in an Israelite city in a period of general anarchy of which it serves as an example.

4.4 Secondary Old Testament Texts Cited With Reference to Homosexuality

Other texts are cited as records of homosexual conduct in the Old Testament. All of them will not be dealt with in detail here since, in our opinion, there is insufficient evidence that they contain homosexual overtones at all. "Narratives alleged to recount homosexual experiences are said to be those about David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1; 19:1; 20:30; 2 Samuel 1:26), Ham and Noah (Genesis 9:21-27, Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 21:9), Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16,17), Joseph and Potiphar (Genesis 39)."¹³⁵ Some claim that Nebuchadnezzar kept Daniel for homosexual purposes. We will consider the cases of David and Jonathan, Ham and Noah, and Ruth and Naomi.

4.4.1 The case of Jonathan and David.

1 Samuel 18:1. When he had finished speaking to Saul, the son of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

1 Samuel 19:1. And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David.

2 Samuel 1:26. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

The episode most frequently mentioned as homosexual love affair in the Old Testament is the relationship of David and Jonathan. T.M. Homer speaks of it as "the only example of and unabashed homosexual love of one well known character for another."¹³⁶ He quotes 1 Samuel 18:1-3 where Jonathan makes a covenant with David, strips off his clothes and gives him his armour. He also makes reference to 1 Samuel 20:30 where Saul berates Jonathan for having chosen to be his own shame and the shame of his mother's nakedness. In 1 Samuel 20:41 he points out that David and Jonathan kiss one another and weep with one another. Then in 2 Samuel 1:26 David tells how he valued the love of Jonathan. Homer concludes that "they must have been bisexual since they both married and had children."¹³⁷ Homer does not find it surprising at all "that homosexuality existed in Israel, for the influence of all the nations around them,

¹³⁵ J. Brim, *Medicine in the Bible*. (New York: Froben Press, 1936), P. 362.

¹³⁶ T.M. Homer, *Sex in the Bible*: (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1974), P. 85.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*; P. 87.

particularly the Philistines, was bound to have been felt,"¹³⁸ Other factors that point to a homosexual relation are the aristocratic, heroic station of Jonathan and the later heroic stature of David himself, "the two heroes gravitated toward each other."¹³⁹ Could the two men be friends without raising the issue of homosexuality? Homer answers:

Yes, they can. But when the two men come from a society that for two hundred years had lived in the shadow of the Philistine culture, which accepted homosexuality; when they find themselves in a social context that was thoroughly military in the eastern sense, when one of them, who was the social superior of the two, make a public display of his love; when they meet secretly and kiss each other and shed copious tears at parting; when one of them proclaims that his love for the other surpassed his love for women — and all this is present in the David Jonathan liaison — we have every reason to believe that a homosexual relationship existed.¹⁴⁰

Dr. G.W. Henry, a psychiatrist of some 30 years' experience, examined the story of David and Jonathan. He found that the influence of women on David seems negligible. David's name is not even associated with women until after the slaying of Goliath when Saul presents him with a wife. However, by this time he had developed a strong friendship with Jonathan. In this friendship Jonathan was the aggressor and David unreservedly responsive. "David's homosexuality is looked upon as a passing in the young lad's experience."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ T. Homer, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in the Biblical Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), PP. 20 – 21.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*; P. 29.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*; P. 27 – 28.

¹⁴¹ G.W. Henry, *All the sexes: A study of Masculinity and Femininity* (New York: Rhinehart and Co., 1955), 498.

Quite a different interpretation emerges from the text as Johnson reads it, for he advances the theory that David was a constitutional homosexual who only consorted with women under pressure.

King Saul persecuted his very own son, referring to Jonathan's love for David as a perversion. He screamed, "you are an intimate lover to that son of Jesse." Jonathan made a beautiful love covenant with David, promising undying devotion. In 1 Samuel 18:3 these two young men took the Bereeth love oath, used in ancient marriage vows. (Malachi 2:14). These two lovers secretly met in the bushes, kissed, embraced and performed *gadal* (sexual intercourse). They were even married to each other (*laeuach*, 1 Samuel 19:2). David publicly declared: Jonathan, beloved and lovely, very pleasant have you been to me, your love to me was very wonderful, passing the love of women. (2 Samuel 1:23). This statement is exactly the definition of a homosexual according to Sigmund Freud. David also lead [sic] the young men in dancing naked and after Jonathan's death developed a love relationship with Jonathan's only son.¹⁴²

The key words in the story are "love (*ahab*)" "covenant" (*berith*), and sexual intercourse(?) (*gadal*). Of course the words cannot be taken in isolation since they are an integral part of a context. The verses cited at the beginning of this section as well as those mentioned since must also be interpreted in their respective contexts, not independently.

1Samuel 18:1 states that "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." The verb "was knit" or "bound" also

¹⁴² P. Johnson, *The Gay Experience* (Lambdas, 1978); P. 7 Quoted in P.R. Johnson, T.F. Eaves sr., *Gays and the new Right* (Los Angeles: P.R. Johnson, 1982), P. 107.

meaning "to league together" has no sexual connotation in the Old Testament. The verb *qashar* ("to knit", "bind") carries more the meaning of treason or conspiracy than "love affair."¹⁴³ The verb "love" (*ahab*) has a wide range of meanings referring to affection between members of the opposite sex (Genesis 24:67), sexual intercourse (Hosea 3:1), and affection between mother and child (Genesis 25:28). "It refers to affection between adults of the same sex (Ruth 4:15; 1 Samuel 16:21), and between teacher and student (Proverbs 9:8), servant and master (Exodus 21:5), and between a whole people and a military leader (1 Samuel 18:16,22)."¹⁴⁴ When referring to sexual love it refers to the marital relationship as something given at creation in a positive sense. For the act of sexual intercourse a different root *yada'* (to know) is used. Thus emphasis suggested by the word '*ahab*' "is not really on sexual love but more on experiencing and desiring love."¹⁴⁵ By observing only a verse here and there, it is possible to emphasise the personal dimension of the "love" between David and Jonathan. The inclusion of the wider context of 1 and 2 Samuel, however, draws attention to what may be called the political overtones of the world. The word may be used in a political sense, as seen by the reference to 1 Kings 5:1 — "Now Hiram King of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him King in place of his father; for Hiram always loved David." David and Hiram were involved in diplomatic and commercial arrangements for a

¹⁴³ CF Genesis 44:30 – 31.

¹⁴⁴ J. Begman, A.O. Haldar, G. Wallis "ahabh" in TDOT 1 (1974): 104.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid; P. 107.

number of years. The word "love" here describes the political amity between the states.

Thompson has suggested that "another context where the political meaning of the word is found are David-Jonathan narratives in 1 Samuel."¹⁴⁶ The word describes the various covenants and friendships which David made en route to the throne. Saul "loved" David greatly, made him his amour bearer and even gave him his armour (1 Samuel 16:21; 17:38,39). Here the narrator is preparing his readers for the later political use of the term. Jonathan did a similar thing after the battle with Goliath (1 Samuel 18:4). The passing of arms and armour from the lesser to the greater seems to have had political implications in the ancient Near East. Jonathan seems well aware that David will inevitably become king (1 Samuel 20:13-16), and makes David swear by his "love" for him (1 Samuel 20:17). Saul was also aware of the popularity of David with the people and himself declared, "what more can he have but the kingdom?" (1 Samuel 18:8).

It must have been clear to Saul and Jonathan that "all Israel and Judah loved David; for he went out and came in before them" (1 Samuel 18:16). Thompson remarks, "In this context, the verb love expresses more than natural affection. It denotes rather the kind of attachment people had to a king who would fight their battles for them."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ J.A. Thompson, "The significance of the verb Love in David-Jonathan narratives in I Samuel," VI 24 (1974): 334 – 335.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid; P. 337.

A similar connotation may be seen in the message Saul sends to David, "Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you"(1Samuel 18:22). David is offered Saul's daughter in marriage but he refuses on the grounds that he is poor and cannot afford the bride price. Saul asks for one hundred foreskins of the Philistines as the bride price and David brings two hundred. Saul realises "that the Lord was with David, and that all Israel loved him" (1 Samuel 18:28).

In this context, "it is not out of place to suggest that the word love has political rather than sexual overtones."¹⁴⁸ "The transferring of clothes from Jonathan to David has royal overtones suggesting a legal symbolism relegating the privilege of succession willingly to David."¹⁴⁹ In this setting "Jonathan moves beyond personal feelings of a friendly disposition and makes a solemn "covenant" concluded under the eyes of Yahweh in a fixed cultic form."¹⁵⁰ We also see in this passage that covenant, league, agreement (*berith*) is not necessarily a marriage covenant but simply a pact or agreement between the two men, each protecting the life of the other. Jonathan protected David from his father whereas David protected Jonathan, or rather, his descendants, as he had promised. "Due to the changing political fortunes of both men, the solemn vow was a necessary assurance for both of them."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ P.K. McCarter Jr., I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and commentary, AB 8 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1980), P. 305.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ H.W. Hertzberg, I and II Samuel: A commentary. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), PP. 154 – 155.

¹⁵¹ Josephus, Ant. VI. 229-231, Interprets the entire episode in a clearly political light.

Finally, the claim that David and Jonathan has sexual intercourse (*gadal*) appears to be more an assertion than an interpretation. 1 Samuel 20:14b reads, "and they kissed one another, and wept with one another, until David recovered himself." The expression "recovered himself" is a translation of the hiphil perfect of *gadal*. It is an obscure expression at best as evidenced by the various translations of it — recovered, exceeded, etc. "The lexicons do not give a sexual meaning for this verb. Holladay gives the translation, "take courage."¹⁵² Gesenius, followed by Brown, Driver and Briggs sees an ellipsis with an implied infinitive and translates. "they both wept — until David wept most violently" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, "wept greatly")."¹⁵³ The Septuagint translates into Greek with a similar idea using the word "*sunteleia*"¹⁵⁴ which Delling interprets in this context as "satiety."¹⁵⁵ Based on this interpretation the text means that David wept violently or until he could weep no more. There is neither philological nor contextual warrant for the translation of *gadal* as "sexual intercourse."

The larger context supports a socio-political interpretation of the particular verses involved, rather than personal or sexual. Upon examination we conclude that the homosexual interpretation of David and Jonathan's relationship is read

¹⁵² W.L. holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Leiden: E.J. Brill Publications; 1971), P. 56.

¹⁵³ W. Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures tr. S.P. Tregelles (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdman Publishing Co., 1964), P. 159.

¹⁵⁴ A. Rashfs, ed. Septuaginta I (Stuttgart: Wurtembergische Biblelandstatt, 1962), P. 544.

¹⁵⁵ G. Delling, "Sunteleia," TDNT 8 (1977):65.

into the text rather than out of it. There simply is no warrant for the assumption that David and Jonathan had a homosexual love affair. Consequently, neither is there evidence inferring that, since this alleged homosexual affair stands uncondemned in the Bible, all loving homosexual relationships can be justified on the basis of the Scripture.

4.4.2 The Case of Noah and Ham

Genesis 9:20-24. Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, ...¹⁵⁶

Bruns interprets this event "in the light of the contendings of Horus and Seth."¹⁵⁷ Parts of that story already have been narrated. The essence of the Seth-Horus story, as Bruns interprets it, is that while Horus slept, Seth commits an act of sodomy upon him. Subsequently in the council of the gods, he claims superiority over Horus due to his "doughty deeds of war" against Horus. According to Bruns,

It would seem that the original story of Noah and Ham followed the same lines. By committing sodomy upon his

¹⁵⁶ Bible: The King James Version. (Genesis 9:20 – 24).

¹⁵⁷ J. Edgar Bruns, "Old Testament History and the Development of Sexual Ethics," *The New Morality: Continuity and Discontinuity*, ed. W. Dunphy (New York: Herder, 1967), P. 75.

father — who was the ancestor of all men after the flood — Ham (Egypt) could also claim the right to dominate all mankind. Both Ham and Seth take advantage of the unconscious condition of their victim.¹⁵⁸

He thinks the Biblical editor's revision of the story omits explicit mention of a sexual act and makes Canaan rather than Ham the recipient of Noah's curse. This was done because "the Canaanites were the most immediate threat to Israel's political and religious survival. Ham, however, was retained as the sexual aggressor because the editor realised that the Canaanites never had been a real threat to Israel."¹⁵⁹

Although, as Bruns concedes, there is no explicit mention of a sexual act here, is such an act implicit in the narrative, as some seem to think? The story relates how Noah became intoxicated and lay "uncovered" (*galah*) in his tent. Here the verb is in the hithpael imperfect form; that is, Noah exposed himself. Although the verb *galah* can be a euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf. Leviticus 18:7), it must be in the Hebrew piel construction to have this meaning. Even in the piel to "uncover the nakedness" of someone, is not necessarily to have intercourse with them. This was especially true where the other person was also male. In this case the Levitical code is careful to explain what is meant, meaning to "uncover the nakedness" of a male was to have intercourse with his spouse. For example we read:

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid; P. 76.

Leviticus 18:7. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness.

Leviticus 18:14. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife, she is your aunt.

The Law in Leviticus 18:7 is rephrased in Deuteronomy 27:20, cursed be he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered her who is his father's¹⁶⁰

Here the verbs "lies with" and "uncovered" both are euphemisms for sexual intercourse. The verb "uncovered" is not used in the Old Testament to describe sexual intercourse with males; for this the terms "lie with" and "know" are employed. These observations raise the possibility that Ham had intercourse with his mother; which in the technical language of Leviticus would be termed "uncovering the nakedness" of his father, the text says, however, that Ham saw the nakedness of his father, an expression used only once in the Old Testament for sexual intercourse in Leviticus 20:17, that being with one's sister.

Some have suggested that Ham's sin was the invasion of the privacy of his father while he was having intercourse, that is, he watched them during the act. If so, there is no suggestion of that in this particular word. The clear meaning of *galal* here is that Noah exposed himself in his tent. Even here, some read "her tent", assuming that Noah was about to or more likely had just completed intercourse with his wife and fallen asleep. In antiquity it was possible for wealthy wives to

¹⁶⁰ Lev. 18:7, 18:14, Deuteronomy 27:20, cf Lev. 20:11, 20.

own their personal tent. However, the reading "her tent" rather than "his tent" requires a change in the vowel pointing of the Masoretic text. The story continues by relating that "Ham the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside." "To see the nakedness of another was a great humiliation to the one seen."¹⁶¹ The nakedness (*'erwah*) of Noah was seen by Ham. Wood comments:

Uncovering the nakedness usually meant displaying the genitals and was almost akin to sexual intercourse, and therefore where a parent or relative was concerned, to incest. Ham, it will be remembered, was cursed for seeing the genitals of his father when the latter was drunk.¹⁶²

In Leviticus 20:17, the expression "to see the nakedness of" appears to be synonymous with the phrase "to uncover the nakedness of", in which case it means sexual intercourse.

If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a shameful thing, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people; he has uncovered his sister's nakedness, he shall bear his iniquity.¹⁶³

Ryle suggests "a want of delicacy and uncalled-for levity on the part of Ham who had no regard for his father's honour."¹⁶⁴ He emphasises the carefulness and modesty of the two brothers as contrasted with immodesty of the young son and

¹⁶¹ It was customary for ancient conquerors to humiliate their captives by marching them naked into exile. See Isaiah 20:4; 47:2 – 3; Jeremiah 13:22, 26 and Ezekiel 23:29.

¹⁶² L.R. Wood, "Sex life in Ancient Civilizations." In the Encyclopedia of sexual behaviour 1 ed. (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), P. 127.

¹⁶³ G. Von Rad, Genesis: A commentary, tr, J.H. Marks, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), P. 133.

¹⁶⁴ H.E. Ryle, The book of Genesis: With Introduction and notes. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1921), P. 127.

adds, "possibly the narrator suppressed something even more repulsive than mere looking (cf. verse 24: 'what his youngest son had done to him')"¹⁶⁵

If the expression, "saw the nakedness of his father" is used in Genesis 9:22 as a euphemism for sexual intercourse, it would be the only such instance in Scripture where this term is used for male-with-male intercourse. However, it cannot be absolutely ruled out as a possibility on that account alone. Consequently, this text could be interpreted to mean that Ham made a homosexual assault on his father. On the other hand Ham may have seen his father lying uncovered in the tent and instead of discreetly covering up his exposed body, took his garment so that he was left naked. The text may suggest this by saying, "Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward;" here the passage refers to something specific, in this case the garment that Ham took from his father as evidence that he had seen the nakedness of his father with all that it implied. Whatever Ham did to his father, whether he only saw him and made light of the matter or whether he physically assaulted him, it is difficult to see how this text could be seen as condoning homosexual acts in any way. The withering curse of Noah against Canaan scarcely commends the act. That the curse is directed against Canaan, a descendant of Ham (Genesis 10:6) suggests that "Noah saw this act as marring the inheritance of Ham. This flagrantly unfilial act is the obverse of the fifth

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

commandment; which makes the national destiny pivot on the same point"¹⁶⁶

Although there may be a hint of homosexual conduct in the Ham-Noah account the entire episode is denounced and the perpetrator severely cursed as one who has dishonoured a parent. Contrary to condoning homosexual acts this suggests instead a strong condemnation of them, especially here where a father/son relation is also involved.

4.4.3 The Case of Ruth and Naomi

Ruth 1:16-18.

But Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you or return from following you; for where you go I will go and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you." And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.¹⁶⁷

Johnson, referring to this passage, comments: "The most beautiful love song ever written was composed by one woman to another and is still sung at weddings (Ruth 1:16)."¹⁶⁸ Foster refers to the account as a great short story, a masterpiece of a narrative act. Concerning the details of the story she says, "the author, however, was ... seemingly blind to their full significance, of an attachment which, however innocent, is nevertheless still basically variant."¹⁶⁹ The story, she believes, must be read against the background of a primitive tribal custom.

¹⁶⁶ D. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), P. 103.

¹⁶⁷ The Bible King James Version (Ruth 1:16 – 18).

¹⁶⁸ P.R. Johnson, T.F. Eaves Sr., P. 107.

¹⁶⁹ J. Foster, *Sex variant women in Literature*: (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975), P. 22.

Ruth was willing to abandon not only her native soil, her own family and burial with her ancestors, but even her god. Alongside these considerations, the emotional force of the story is clarified by three other factors. First of all Ruth had been married about ten years at the time of her widowhood and must have been in her mid-twenties. Consequently, her clinging to Naomi,

Cannot be counted as clinging of a bereaved adolescent to the bridegroom's mother. Furthermore, it was Naomi who schemed to get Ruth married to Boaz at which time the woman said to Naomi, "...he shall be unto thee a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for thy daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him" (Ruth 4:14,15).¹⁷⁰

Finally, Orpah, who remained in Moab apparently had every prospect of finding a second husband there. Foster summarises the narrative as follows:

Viewed without prejudice, this is a masterly portrait of a somewhat passive young woman, twice playing the heterosexual role with success, but dominated by another love at least as compelling as that for the men she successively married.¹⁷¹

Homer finds it impossible to demonstrate a relationship of physical love between them, but "all the right words are there" he says. "Certainly no other sexual relationship was possible for either of them at the time these words were expressed."¹⁷²

The difficulty with this interpretation is that any similar close relationship would allow some speculations about a homosexual bond. Close friendships, however,

¹⁷⁰ The Bible King James Version (Ruth 4: 14, 15).

¹⁷¹ Foster, *sex variant women in Literature* (Baltimore: Diana press, 1975), P. 22.

¹⁷² Homer, *Jonathan Loved David*, P. 20.

need not be necessarily homosexual. Furthermore, the difficulty is compounded by Foster's suggestion that "the author was seemingly blind to the full significance of the events related."¹⁷³ Indeed, not only did the Bible writer miss the deviant significance, but almost everyone else since has missed it also. The homosexual interpretation appears to be a speculation read into the text rather than an interpretation arising from or suggested by the text and context of the book itself. This is even more apparent when the passage is placed in context and the purpose of the author taken into consideration.

In part, the aim of the author was to portray the idyllic scene of a God-fearing pastoral community. The main character stands out against this background. Further points the author was trying to make were, "(1) the fact that a Moabite woman could be a pattern of the highest virtues and faithful to the laws and customs of her adopted country; (2) that marriage within kin was a commendable piety; (3) that Ruth became the grandmother of the great King David himself."¹⁷⁴ It seems that the last thing the author would wish to do here is to introduce a foreign person whose character could be questioned in any way in the light of Jewish morality.

The theological context of the narrative portrays the activity of God not by intervention, "but by a lightly exercised providential control."¹⁷⁵ There is also an

¹⁷³ V.L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History* (New York: John Willey & Sons, 1976), P. 86.

¹⁷⁴ G.A. Cooke, *The book of Ruth* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1918), P. XII.

¹⁷⁵ E.F. Campbell, Jr., *Ruth: A new Translation with Introduction notes and commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1975), P. 29.

emphasis on *chesed* living. *Chesed* living meant a life lived in the light of God's covenant loyalty by the individual. This lifestyle of caring responsibility appears not as a forgone conclusion among God's people but something to be strived after. "Living out a righteous and responsible lifestyle is a matter of determination to do so."¹⁷⁶ The story of Ruth is the quiet commendation of a lifestyle that can be blessed by God. It is especially effective because it is not preached but lived out by the characters in the story. Campell argues that the narrative portrays covenant life as applied to a particular social situation in a way that custom is adapted and given new applications to meet arising needs. However, "All of the decisions to be made and acts to be taken are governed by the overarching commitments of honouring God by caring for neighbours."¹⁷⁷

The immediate context of our passage becomes clearer when seen against the purpose and context of the book, Naomi has lost her status as a wife and mother of sons. In itself this was a serious, devastating turn of events for an older woman in the ancient Near East. She was forced to return to her home bereft of almost everything, reduced to the position of a beggar. Ruth's presence with her meant that at least the two destitute women could look after each other. "In the narrative Naomi well understands the difficulties Ruth will face in a strange land

¹⁷⁶ Ibid; P. 30.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid; p. 31.

and discourages her from following. This lead into the famous passage quoted above. It is unfortunate, however, that the context frequently is ignored."¹⁷⁸

Although the passage is a perfect expression of human devotion, it also exemplifies *chesed* and covenant loyalty. Ruth determines to go, that is, to leave her nation and country. She determines to stay in her newly adopted country. The change is permanent. She will become totally identified with a new people and a new God. "It is notable that Ruth does not say '*Elohim* (God), as a foreigner might, but Yahweh. Thus the author emphasises that the foreigner is a follower of the true God."¹⁷⁹

Proselytism and conversion are not obvious in the narrative, "although Ruth's pledge to become one people with Naomi and to accept one God cannot be ignored."¹⁸⁰ Human devotion and religious fervour combine in the moving statement made by Ruth. No injustice is done to Scripture by the conclusion that Ruth's statement, seen against the background of the book as a whole and in its immediate context, does not require a homosexual interpretation. Indeed we found sincere human devotion informed by covenant loyalty and religious fervour, the idea of *chesed* in practice.

Conclusion

As we have seen, if the Old Testament Scriptures are to be treated as an accurate

¹⁷⁸ W.F. Fuerst, *The books of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs, Lamentations* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1975); P. 14.

¹⁷⁹ L.P. Smith, J.T. Cleland, "The book of Ruth," *IB* 2 (1953): 837.

¹⁸⁰ Except in the Targum, which reads like a catechism on verses 16 and 17.

historical record of God's dealings with His people in the past, and if they are considered to be a reliable guide in morals and ethics, then homosexual acts stand condemned in them both directly and by implication. The primary Testament texts, those that describe or imply homosexual acts, never condone those acts but condemn them as an infringement of covenant morality. Nevertheless the Old Testament does not present homosexual acts as the sole mark of decadence and iniquity that merits the direct punishment of God. Sodom witnessed many grievous sins besides the attempted homosexual acts in Genesis 19. Homosexual acts in antiquity frequently were connected with exploitation, violence, or idolatry, but such circumstances only compounded the problem. Secondary Old Testament texts are those where homosexual acts are possible but not probable. As we interpret them their nature neither condemns nor condones homosexuality, since the presumed acts for the most part are read into the texts. The sole text in this category where a homosexual act may have occurred contains a terrible curse against the perpetrator of the act.

By ignoring the larger context and historical background of some of these passages, some cite isolated texts which can be interpreted to condone loving homosexual relationships. Similarly, others isolate a few texts out of context in an effort to show that God destroyed nations because of homosexual acts. In the Old Testament, although God does not countenance homosexual acts, neither does He make them the only reason for pouring out His judgments on humanity.



Chapter five of this research will discuss homosexuality in detail, focusing on new testament and its texts.

CHAPTER 5

NEW TESTAMENT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

5.1 Historical Background - The Classical Setting

5.1.1 Classical Greece

We are not certain when homosexual practices first appeared in Greek history. Some authors trace homosexuality back to the Mycenaean Civilisation (fl. 1400B.C). "This thesis stems from an interpretation of various passages in Homer (ca 850 B.C) as clearly homosexual, although homosexuality as such is not mentioned in Homer."¹ Others find the Dorian invasion (ca 1100 B.C) "as the decisive event that introduced homosexuality into Greece civilisation."² The Spartan lifestyle and the social pattern of the descendants of the Dorian invaders came to manifest itself in the exclusive and dominant male warrior class. "Whatever its origin in Greece, there is no reason to doubt Dover's suggestion that it was widespread by the sixth century B.C."³

5.1.2 Lesbianism in Greece

Perhaps the best known name in Greek antiquity to be connected with homosexual activity is that of Sappho from the island of Lesbos. Sappho was a poetess from Mitylene. After a childhood exile in Sicily, she returned to Mytelene where, some scholars believe, she functioned in some manner in a

¹ D.N. Robinson, E.J. Fluck, A study of the Greek Love-names, including a Discussion of Paederasty Prosographia. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1937), PP. 18 – 19.

² R. Flaceliere, Love in Ancient Greece, tr. J. Cleugh (New York: Crown Publications: 1962), P. 64.

³ K.J. Dover, Greek Homosexuality (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), P. 1.

school for girls which honoured Aphrodite and the Muses. She was married and had a child named Cleis. In a powerful and direct manner she writes candid accounts of her feelings for the girls in her circle of companions and their feelings for each other. She was a woman ahead of her time. She wrote contemptuously to an uneducated woman in a day when most were uneducated (frag.55). She wrote a poem with great feeling and intimacy to an unnamed girl, a poem some think was inspired as Sappho witnessed the girl's wedding and saw her standing by the bridegroom (frag.. 31). The possibility is strengthened by the fact that Sappho wrote a number of poems to her girls in celebration of their weddings.

Sappho writes in the vernacular dialect to Lesbos: her language is bold and straightforward but never coarse or erotic. Over the years Sappho and her "school" have become a symbol and name for homosexual activity among women — "lesbianism", being taken from the name of the island Lesbos. Thus "lesbian" in modern parlance and popular literature, almost invariably is not the name given to an inhabitant of Lesbos but the name given to a homosexual woman. Scholarly opinion, however, is neither certain nor unanimous about the matter. Some writers hold that "Sappho's relationship with the girls of her group was similar to that of Socrates and his companions."⁴ In this case the word *hetaera* should be translated as "companion" rather than "harlot" or "prostitute."

⁴ B.Saklatvala, Sappho of Lesbos: Her works restored. (London: C.Skilton Ltd; 1968), PP. 11 – 13, 15.

Homosexuality here, it seems, was of the refined "spiritual" nature found in Plato, which later became sullied by Sappho's detractors. Other writers see "a gradual development of a certain degree of abloquy in connection with her name beginning about three centuries after her death."⁵ This gathered force until the genius of Sappho was subverted, her name coming to connote decadence and depravity.

For at least two hundred years after her death she was praised as the queen of beautiful song. The first burst of calumny against her came from the Athenian comic dramatists, which in turn stigmatised her in the minds of later Latin poets. "The rapturous lines in Sappho's poems are explained by one writer as innocent "crushes" existing in that young lady's seminary as they do in many girls' schools today."⁶ Sappho's love of beauty of person in man or woman was purely aesthetic. She loved her disciples as Socrates did his; fondling the curly locks of Phaedo as he leaned against his knee. Robinson maintains that the moral purity of Sappho shines in its own light.

A woman of bad character and certainly a woman of such a variety of bad character as scandal has attributed to Sappho might express herself passionately and might run on indefinitely with erotic imagery. But Sappho is never erotic. There is no language found in her song which a pure woman might not use.⁷

⁵ E.M. Cox, *The poems of Sappho: With Historical and critical notes, Translations, and a Bibliography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1924), P. 19.

⁶ M.M. Miller and D.M. Robinson, *The song of Sappho: Including the Recent Egyptian Discoveries.* (Lexington, KY: Maxwellton Co., 1925), PP. 78 – 79.

⁷ D.M. Robinson, *Sappho and Her Influence.* (New York: Cooper Square Publications; 1963), PP. 43 – 44.

According to Robinson the Renaissance revival of Sappho was unfavourable to her, as was her popularity among the Romans. "The fifteenth century witnessed discovery of what was dubbed "Ovid's perverse epistle" which from that time forward biased all Sapphic literature."⁸

The great German classical scholar, Ulrich Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, likewise argued that "love of maidens does not necessarily translate into Lesbianism, in the modern sense of the word."⁹ Page, on the other hand, finds precious little evidence for the interpretation of Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. "The latter theorised that Sappho was the leader of a formal cult-association and that her companions were pupils. To them she gave lessons on moral, social, and literary topics. She was, therefore, a highly respected member of a society, a lady of official capacity and unblemished character."¹⁰

But Page rightly argues that the evidence for a cult association is non-existent. He, like Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, rejects "the gossip of comedians, rakes, pedants and bigots" who smear the name of Sappho; yet he recognises at the same time that the problem of the nature of Sappho's relation with her girl-companions cannot be ignored. So little is known, and that little is, as he describes it "confused with mythology and turbid with the scandal of comic

⁸ Ibid; PP. 136 – 137.

⁹ U. Von Wilamowitz – Moellendorf, *Sappho Und Simonides Untersuchungen Uber Griechische Lyriker*. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1966), PP. 17 – 78 especially PP. 72 – 73.

¹⁰ D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus: A Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), P. 32. nn. 2, 11, 111.

poets."¹¹ The fact remains, however, that any evidence for Sappho's amorous converse with men is scant. Although many of her poems discovered later reveal a different mood and do not display the high flame of passion of the earlier works, the earlier works cannot be ignored. Of the longer pieces, number 31 is the only one that seems to come from the heart without reserve and speaks of an overwhelming passion for a girl-companion. But as Page notes, "It is a lover's passion, not sisterly affection or maternal benevolence which Sappho describes in 31, the overwhelming emotion of intensest love."¹² For Page this statement does not necessarily imply that Sappho and her companions were involved in homosexual practices, although for him poem 31 clearly suggests she had homosexual inclinations.

Such was the nature of Sappho, not to be altered. To the further question — so often propounded, so seldom considered without prejudice whether evidence for practice as well as inclination is to be found in the fragments of Sappho's poetry, a negative answer must be returned. It is at least probable that Lesbos in her lifetime was notorious for the perverse practices of its women: but in all that remains of Sappho's poetry there is not a word which connects itself or her companions with them, and at most a half word which reveals her awareness of their existence. The question then is not one which can be discussed at all on the basis of reliable evidence. I therefore take my leave of it.¹³

The newer Egyptian discoveries fail to dampen speculation on this matter. The biographer in P. Oxyrynchus states that Sappho was "accused by some of being

¹¹ Ibid; P. 142.

¹² Ibid; P. 143.

¹³ Ibid; PP. 144 – 145.

disorderly and a lover of women."¹⁴ Page comments, "I find it remarkable that this biographer should say 'she is accused by some', if the fact were manifestly proved in her works which were abundantly preserved into the biographer's era."¹⁵ On the other hand, Page suggests in another footnote that although there is no reliable evidence in the fragments of Sappho for any impropriety in the conduct of herself or her companions, new evidence suggests that "the story might be different if the bulk of the Alexandrian collection of Sappho's poems had survived intact. At least there would be much more to say on the topic."¹⁶ As it is, the claim of the practice or non-practice of homosexual relations by Sappho is clearly in the realm of speculation. "Whatever the intimacies of her private life, it is clear that in Lesbos in her own day, her repute was unblemished."¹⁷

Although today's lesbianism is connected with Sappho and her school and she is offered as an example of homosexual practice in ancient Greece, evidence is almost non-existent. Earlier scholars of modern times defended Sappho's morality. They suggest that the Greek comic poets read into her writings the upper class morality and practices of their own society and time. The only evidence subject to interpretation as same-sex desire are a half dozen or so lines in poem 31 of the other writings. The tendency among scholars is to interpret

¹⁴ XV, 1800, fr 1, cd. 1. 16f.

¹⁵ Ibid; P. 142, n. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid; P. 144, n. 1.

¹⁷ J.B. Burry, *Greek Literature for the Eight Century to the Persian War*, (Cambridge University Press, 1939), 498.

these lines as love of women, but in the sense of the so-called elevated pederasty of the academy. Here, ethical restraint and consideration of the welfare of the object of desire played a part in the relationship. Page, the most recent scholar to assess Sappho's writings, suggests that poem 31 shows an inclination on the part of Sappho to "love of women", but declines to comment on her practice of lesbianism due to lack of evidence.

5.1.3 The Development of Pederasty in Classical Greece

The most common form of homosexuality among Greek males was pederasty. This term refers to a plan of education for boys in which they were placed by their fathers under the care of another man to be trained. As a feature of the system the boy, could be expected at times to provide his mentor, with homosexual favours. The Greeks themselves were divided in their understanding of the origin of pederasty among them. Herodotus, a widely travelled Greek historian and lecturer born about 484 B.C, assumed that "the Persians had learned it from the Greeks, whereas Plutarch of Chaeronea, a philosopher and bibliographer writing in the Hellenistic period (ca. A.D 120), traces the practice to Persia."¹⁸ It is possible these two authors are referring to quite different things under the same name.

In Athens pederasty already was deeply imbedded in the social structure by Solon's time (fl. 600B.C). Generally it was felt to be an honourable institution.

¹⁸ Herodotus, 1, 135. Plutarch, on the Malice of Herodotus, 13.

"The regulations of the legislation produced by Solon show that by that time boy-love was something customary for an Athenian."¹⁹ Solon, an Athenian statesman and poet, was himself of noble descent. But in his reform of the Athenian constitution he substituted wealth for birth as the principal criterion for political privilege. By this means he was able to mute the discontent of the unprivileged classes which had risen to a dangerous level because of their exploitation by the nobility.

The more one learns of classical Greek pederasty, however, the clearer it becomes that early Greek homosexuality was considered a strictly controlled convention rather than a "natural" and uncontrollable condition. Legal regulations stipulated that slaves could not traffic with freeborn, nor could a young man sell himself for money. This was no great barrier to the practice of homosexuality since it was generally accepted that anything mutually agreeable was excusable. Also, as time passed, this law fell into a dormant state. Foreigners and slave were not affected by this law, but no freeborn Athenian or Athenian citizen was to sell himself. Those who made a living from homosexual prostitution would be predominantly non-Athenians since foreigners were considered to be of less worth than citizens.

The adult Greek male who indulged in a homosexual relationship was expected to have that relationship with a young boy up to the age of puberty. The boy was not expected to enjoy the erotic aspect of the relationship, but merely endure it

¹⁹ Robinson and Fluck, P. 24.

for the sake of, and out of respect for, the older male. "If the boy sought bodily pleasure from the experience, he incurred disapproval as a prostitute or as perverted."²⁰

What the older male hoped to engender in the boy was not love primarily in a physical sense (eros) but a kind of love inspired by admiration and gratitude toward the older male philia. Such gratitude coupled with compassion would induce the boy to grant "favours" and perform the "services" which the older male desired. In public the behaviour of the two was expected to be decorous and circumspect. "Consequently, except for the boy and older male any homosexual activity between them remained to others a matter of conjecture."²¹

Ideally such a relationship was conducted in a most responsible manner and discussed only with the reticence and decorum if at all.

The gymnasium, a centre for the training of youth in academic, physical, and military discipline became famous (or infamous, depending on the point of view) for pederasty. "Here young men came to exercise in the nude and older men came to look at them and sometimes to seduce them."²² But society frowned upon this ogling and peeping at boys merely with a view to seducing them. The true erastes had the boy's physical and mental welfare in mind as well as the emotional and erotic aspects of the relationship. Once the young lad had come of

²⁰ Ibid; P. 52.

²¹ Ibid; PP. 53 – 54.

²² This situation as well as homosexuality in general is frequently the subject of ribald comedy in Aristophanes; see Peace, P. 762; and Birds, PP. 139 – 142.

age, he was not to submit himself homosexually to any man as a passive partner. If a young Greek citizen did so, he made himself liable to charges of homosexual submission.

5.1.4 Charges of Homosexuality as Political Handicap

Laws against selling oneself for homosexual acts could be revived if necessary to embarrass a political enemy. Precisely such an occurrence appears in the controversy between Aischines and Timarchos (fl. 350 B.C). These two men were orators (lawyers) and statesmen in Athens. Timarchos was a political ally of the great orator Demosthenes in his persistent opposition to the attempts of the Philip of Macedon to control Greece. Hence Demosthenes and Timarchos were the political enemies of Aischines, who sought to reconcile Athens to the Macedonian proposals. It was Timarchos who began prosecution of Aischines for his part in the peace negotiations. Aischines replied by charging Timarchos with a breach of law that forbade those guilty of notorious conduct from addressing the assembly where Demosthenes and Aischines were members. These disagreements between Demosthenes and "Aischines led to sixteen years of enmity between two men. Aischines sought to advance his case against Timarchos by citing law against Timarchos, who, he claimed, had sold himself as a prostitute for the sake of homosexual intercourse."²³ Perhaps encouraged by his earlier success against Timarchos, Aischines tried to prevent Demosthenes

²³ Dover, PP. 20 – 21.

from receiving a crown from the city by levelling similar charges against him.

The story is this: Demosthenes is about to be honoured for his service to the city by being awarded a crown in the theatre during the festival known as Dionysia.

"Aischines charges Demosthenes with homosexual submission."²⁴ In the clash he attempts to show that Demosthenes is unworthy of the crown. Demosthenes replies in a speech, ("concerning the crown") with all the power and devastating effect which his great rhetorical gifts could command, and he then wins the case.

The extraordinary effort by Demosthenes indicates the seriousness of the charge in the minds of Athenians. The idea that the younger partner would seek to initiate a homosexual act for his own sake was not a possibility allowed by any Greek enthusiast or apologist for homosexual *eros*.

5.1.5 Plato and Pederasty

Plato (429-347 B.C), a disciple and student of the great Socrates, gives the rules for the relationship.

When *erastes* and *eromenos* meet, each observing a rule, the *erastes* (sc. Rule) that it would be right for him to subordinate himself in any way to an *eromenos* who has granted him favors, and the *eromenos* (sc. The rule) that it would be right for him to perform any service for one who improves him in mind and character (lit; "who makes him *sophos* and *agathos*") ... then...in these circumstances alone, and in no others, it is creditable for an *eromenos* to grant favors to an *erastes*.²⁵

²⁴ Dover, P. 75.

²⁵ Plato, Symposium, 184 (I have followed Dover's translation).

Consequently, according to Plato, "It is creditable to grant any favor in any circumstances for the sake of becoming a better person (lit. for the sake of goodness)."²⁶ It is clear that in Athens at the time of Aischines, "whoever had sold his body while a boy or prostituted it, either unwillingly, by force or wantonly, lost his citizenship rights; he could not be one of the nine archons, neither could he be a priest. He could not be a herald, an ambassador, an orator, nor could he wear a crown."²⁷

The Greeks were not entirely consistent in their attitude to pederasty. A law of Solon forbade adult men entrance to the arena for exercise connected with gymnasium. "But before the end of the fifth century this law had fallen out of use or was no longer enforced. Plato could speak approvingly of pederasty in the symposium"²⁸ yet suggests in *The Republic* that there could be laws against it. Indeed, in *Republic III*, 403, he suggests that there should be "a law to the effect that a friend should use no other familiarity to his love than a father would use to his son." This ambiguity may stem from the difference between a rigidly controlled and sublimated boy-love emphasizing physical and intellectual development and, in contrast, what was considered a degenerate sort of relation formed simply for erotic satisfaction. Karlen sees the chief justification of

²⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, 185 (Dover's tr).

²⁷ Robinson and Fluck, P. 42.

²⁸ In *symposium* 181, Plato, perhaps with tongue in cheek, had state that there should be a law against pederasty because of the waste of Zeal and effort on an object so uncertain as youth. He attributes the uncertainty to the impossibility of predicting whether a youth would end in vice or virtue of mind and body. Even in his praise of pederasty the erotic element is not paramount in Plato's thinking.

pederasty as being of the higher sort, as Cretan and Dorian homosexuality. Here the relationship between a man and a boy was supposed to be pedagogic, the interesting to produce brave men and good citizens. He concludes,

Now, if the relationship continued, it was the man's job to mold the boy into a good citizen and brave warrior. Here as in Sparta, says Plutarch, it was considered shameful for a wellborn boy of twelve or thirteen not to have a lover. The phrase "wellborn", like the assumption of having city and country homes and time for a long honeymoon, indicates an upper class phenomenon.²⁹

Karlen's negative judgement results partly from his conviction that intellectual Athenian homosexuals attempted to justify homosexuality by rewriting myth and history to produce homosexual gods and heroes in abundance. He finds the culmination of this tendency in Plato's symposium where the author attributes everything virtuous and desirable to homosexuality.

Although there may be some truth in Karlen's thesis, he overstates the case. "There can be no doubt that intelligent Greeks attempted to sublimate and elevate the conventional boy – older male relationship to a high ethical plane which few men reached in actual practice."³⁰ In the story of Socrates and his young student, Alcibiades, we have the student attempting repeatedly to seduce the teacher but without success. Clearly, the nature of the boy – older male relationship and the amount of erotic invested in it would depend heavily on the nature and character of the individuals involved. Some argue that "the love of

²⁹ A. Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality: A new view.* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971), P. 26.

³⁰ J. Ferguson, *Moral Values in the Ancient World.* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), P. 89.

men for boys was never quite sanctioned by society, consequently both laws and parents united in their efforts to check and control it."³¹ From this perspective the very institution of the *paedagogos* (a guardian or custodian who protected the boy) is proof enough of the attitude of the parents toward *paederastia*.

Bryant also takes a different view of the symposium of Plato. True, Plato's work is a beautiful defense of love between men, but Plato also distinguishes two orders of love. First, the love manifested in the senses and second, the love of the soul. He places *paederastia* in the latter. Here the ideal as the perfect philosopher friend, "we cannot deny that, as he refines it, the relation approaches that perfect friendship which has been the dream of so many philosophers."³² According to Plato "about all the care and attention some boys' education received was derived from the interest of their older male in getting the best for them."³³ Many a lad grew to manhood watched over and guided by mature wisdom and looked upon with admiration and respect by his older males. This at least was the ideal, though not all relationships kept to this high a plane. As Bryant concludes, not all reached the high ideal, but not all abused the convention either.

Even the temperate and high-minded Socrates requires all his iron will at times to banish unholy desires, as he confesses himself, with humility. To too many *erastae* the paramount interest was the body and not the soul of the boys for whose favour they sued. For such a relation even Plato has nothing to say, though he admits its prevalence, at least outside of Athens. It is easy, of course, to overdraw the part which abuse of the relation played in the community life; just as it is idle

³¹ A.A. Bryant, "Boyhood in Athens," *Harvard studies in classical Philology* 18 (1907): 101 – 102.

³² *Ibid*; P. 105.

³³ Plato, *Alcibiades* 1, 103, 135: *Symposium*, 213, 215 – 216.

to deny that its influence was on the whole bad. And yet those who threw away all restraint must have been in the minority.³⁴

Again, it probably is true that "the Greeks never 'canonised' the physical act of sodomy. They always kept up the fiction of 'educational paederasty."³⁵ But to be fair to the sons of Hellas, however, "we need to add that homosexual practice was largely the result of an approving social convention and the weakness of human nature on the part of most Greeks rather than deliberate plan or personal decision."³⁶ It is possible to see many of the Greeks as being, from Paul's point of view, ignorantly well intentioned. Their times of ignorance god winked at. Devereux adds the insight that "pre-Platonic homosexuality, while behaviourally real, was psychologically spurious."³⁷ What he is saying is that the Greeks were not "perverts" (a word which actually appears to mean in his article what we have described as "invert"). He explains,

A contemporary adolescent, courted by adult men, taught to glory in such attentions, and subjected to homosexual practices, would, in most cases, become a genuine and permanent pervert (i.e. invert?); in the rest of the cases he would become a neurotic. The Greek adolescent, however, ended up as a non-neurotic, completely (or predominantly) heterosexual adult.³⁸

Devereux concludes that the Greeks saw the boys experience as a stage in the

³⁴ Bryant, PP. 106 – 107.

³⁵ Karlen, P. 33.

³⁶ J.J. Chapman, Lucian, Plato and Greek morals. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), P. 132.

³⁷ G. Devereux, "Greek Pseudo-Homosexuality and the Greek Miracle," *Symbolae Osloensis* 42 (1967): 69.

³⁸ *Ibid*; P. 70.

child's development toward masculinity and, although it may not have been the best way, it was encouraged by inadequate fathering. "The Greeks, consequently, were not inverts in the sense we have described, involved in homosexuality from deep personal need or even underlying perverted fanatics. Neither was there an anti-hedonistic aggressivity involved. For Devereux the average Greek was not an invert."³⁹ Rather in the typical youth culture in classical Greece, homosexuality was but one way to prolong youth and keeping touch with the privileged, admired, and irresponsible world of adolescence. This produced a strange convention where another man brought up and educated one's sons. We read:

The Greek father usually failed to counsel his son; instead he counselled another man's son, in whom he was erotically interested. As for the boy, who needed an effective father to model himself upon, he had to rely on his erastes, who also served as a father surrogate.⁴⁰

In Sparta the older male was responsible even for the misconduct of the boys; the father having no responsibility. "The expectation for the Greek youth after the boys stage, however, was that he would marry and rear a family."⁴¹ Although he might have a boy himself, he would by no means subject himself passively to another man without receiving scorn. Whatever the origin of this convention in which a stranger raised and educated the sons of another's family, receiving as

³⁹ Ibid; PP. 71 – 73.

⁴⁰ Ibid; P. 78; Plato, Laches, 179 – 180.

⁴¹ W. Churchill, Homosexual behaviour among Males: A Cross Cultural and Cross Species Investigation. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), PP. 140 – 141.

his fee certain sexual favours from the youth and association with him, certain classes of Greeks countenanced the practice for some time. However, the presence of a privileged and powerful oligarchy in Greece unwittingly fostered a double standard in pederasty; one for the nobles and citizens where youths were protected by ethical, social and political considerations; another for enfranchised Greeks and foreigners where lust was the only limit. In time the latter tended to overshadow the former.

As we have seen, Greek society appears to have had an ambivalent attitude to pederasty. Citizens were protected from homosexual exploitation. Any man who had submitted himself to another merely for gain was scorned and his reputation sullied. Any youth tutored by an older man was expected to allow him sexual favors, but the boy was not indulge in it for enjoyment or gain, but out of respect for the older man. In intellectual circles there was a tendency to elevate and ethicize the relationship so that it became a "platonic" friendship. This was not always successful. Even Plato recognized that outside the academy the practice of boy-love degenerated to licentiousness.

5.1.6 Plato's Defense of Pederasty versus Sensualism and Licentiousness

Whatever high spiritual ideals may have been attached originally to the practice of pederasty, its tacit licensing of erotic expression as a reward for services offered damaged the social fabric. No matter how charming, innocent and quietly intimate it may have been at first; it did not take long for less sensitive

souls to legitimate their lustful and sometimes violent activities as pederasty. Those who did not believe, like Plato, that the unseen soul and ideas were the only reality quickly gravitated to an intense and exclusive preoccupation with outward physical beauty. This development of pederasty in two directions is summarized nicely by Robinson and Fluck:

To sum up, then, the path of development which pederasty had taken, I quote John Addington Symonds: "We find two separate forms of masculine passion clearly marked in early Hellas - a noble and a base, a spiritual and a sensual." As Maximum Tyrius says: "The one is Greek, the other barbarous; the one is virile, the other effeminate." The mixed form (*poikilos*) on which the Greeks prided themselves and on which Plato was decisive, was a passionate and enthusiastic attachment between man and youth, recognized by society and protected by opinion. Though it was not free from sensuality, it did not degenerate into mere licentiousness.⁴²

This dual tradition of boy-love coupled with the Greek appreciation of attractive physical form was easily misunderstood and perverted by those who followed the practice. Even in the Academy the overemphasis on outward form and beauty meant that the gangling Athenian youths with acne had less chance of receiving a good education than his comely counterpart, at least with an older male.

Plato attempted to uphold an idealistic pederasty governed by ethical self-control. "Socrates' advice to Hippothales is reported in Plato's *Lysis* 222. Plato recognizes that there are many more non-lovers than lovers."⁴³ It is not only the

⁴² Robinson and Fluck, P. 42.

⁴³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 231 – 232.

lover who can be a firm friend. Indeed, true love does not seek the effeminate and submissive youth. Plato even describes the older male as wolf who forces his attention upon the younger man, not with real kindness but because he has an appetite and wants to feed on the youth."⁴⁴

How then can Plato defend this relationship at all? "He defends it philosophically (theologically) on the basis of divine madness (*manike*), the immorality and transmigration of the soul, recollection, and idealism."⁴⁵

Plato's dualism always leaves an element of doubt or ambiguity about bodily pleasure. "At times he seems to spiritualize the entire relationship while on other occasions it becomes physical."⁴⁶ In the Symposium, Plato considers pederasty the greatest of blessings: "For I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved youth."⁴⁷ Plato then makes clear the far-reaching ethical and social ramifications of this ideal relationship:

And I say that a lover who is detected in doing any dishonorable act or submitting through cowardice when any dishonor is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father or by his companions, or by anyone else. The beloved, too, when he is found in any disgraceful situation has the same feeling about his lover. And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army should be made up of lovers and their loves, they would be the very best governors of their

⁴⁴ Ibid; 240 – 241.

⁴⁵ Ibid; 244 – 256.

⁴⁶ Ibid; 255 – 256.

⁴⁷ Plato, Symposium, 178. Quotations from the symposium are from Jowett's translation, B. Jowett, the Dialogues of Plato: Translated into English with Analyses and Introduction (London: oxford university press, 1924).

own city, abstaining from all dishonor, and emulating one another in honor; and when fighting at each other's side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world. For what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger? The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest at such a time; love would inspire him. That courage which, as Homer says, the god breathes in the souls of some heroes, love of his own nature infuses into the hero.⁴⁸

At this point Plato begins to enumerate Homeric heroes who were inspired with this love, a process that Karlen calls a rewriting of history to glorify homosexuality. Plato distinguishes between the heavenly Aphrodite and the common or earthly Aphrodite. The love of youth comes from the heavenly Aphrodite. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, inspired love in human beings. Normally it was male for female and vice-versa. Plato, however, in his typical dualistic pattern divides Aphrodite into a heavenly Aphrodite and an earthly Aphrodite. For Plato only the heavenly ideas were reality. Matter was transient, deceptive, evil. He subsumes heterosexual relations under the earthly Aphrodite.

But the offspring of the heavenly Aphrodite is derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part; she is from the male only; this is the love which is of youths, and the goddess being older, there is nothing of wantonness in her. Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature; anyone may recognize the pure enthusiasts in the very character of their attachments. For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow. And in choosing

⁴⁸ Ibid; 178 – 179.

young men to be their companions, they mean to be faithful to them, and pass their whole life in company with them, not to take them in their inexperience, and deceive them, and play the fool with them, or run away from one to another of them.⁴⁹

In contrast, followers of the earthly Aphrodite, whether in love of woman or youths, are the foolish and ignoble who do good and evil indiscriminately. Plato's statement, already quoted, suggests that boy-love should be outlawed since it is uncertain how their souls will turn out and much noble enthusiasm may be wasted on them. The statement itself testifies to a male dominant culture and in general displays almost a misogynist attitude.

Plato was well aware that pederasty was practised by two very different groups of people for whom he tries to present a rationale. He recognizes that not all parents approve of the relationship and place their children under a tutor's care. Plato insists, however, that such practices are honorable if followed honorably. "Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, inasmuch as he is not even stable, because he loves a thing which is in itself unstable."⁵⁰ For Plato "the attachment must be voluntary and impart virtue."⁵¹

5.1.7 The Androgynous Myth

Plato's dualism and divine madness did not account for the attraction of men to youths, not even to Plato himself, "so he goes into great detail on the

⁴⁹ Ibid; 181.

⁵⁰ Ibid; 183.

⁵¹ Ibid; 184.

androgynous Man-Woman Myth to explain it."⁵²

In this myth Plato explains that primal man was dual. He had four hands, four feet, two faces and two privy parts, that is, like two people back to back - the faces opposite directions. Some of these dual, primal creatures were male in both parts; others were female in both parts and yet other (a third sex) part male and part female. These primal creatures were so strong that they became insolent, attacking the gods. Because of their continued insolence, Zeus divided these dual four-legged creatures into two-legged creatures. A dual male became two males; a dual female two females and the male-female (androgynous) became a male and a female. On this basis he accounts for the differing sexual desires apparent in society, for each creature searches out its own or opposite kind, according to its original orientation. When dual parts encounter each other they fall in love. "By the creation of this myth Plato attempts to explain the attraction some men and women have for persons of the same sex."⁵³

However, dualism has the last word. Those pregnant in the body only betake themselves to women and beget children, whereas pregnant souls wonder about seeking beauty in souls. Those having an affinity of soul have a closer union and friendship than those who beget mortal children. Hence beauty of soul is more important than beauty of form. Taken at face value there is a defensible element here; but for Plato the immortally invisible soul (idea) is the only reality. In the

⁵² Symposium, 189 – 192.

⁵³ Ibid; 189 – 192. Plato tries to clinch his argument with the example of Socrates and Alcibiades, 217 – 219.

Republic Plato "would have no more familiarity between older boys and young boys than between father and son, and in the laws he recommends the death penalty for violence done to a free woman or a youth."⁵⁴

Plato himself was aware that the controlled aesthetic pederasty he advocated was not followed by the majority. Therefore he goes to great lengths to show that this type of love and this alone is the one which is philosophically (theologically) defensible. For Plato this kind of pederasty is "natural" since he defends it with a myth of origins and from a philosophical — theological perspective. Aristotle, a student of Plato, also "recognized that pederasty may be practical for various reasons — either from custom, habit or nature."⁵⁵

5.1.8 Homosexuality in Greek Drama

A brief word is appropriate about the use of Attic Comedy as historical evidence in a serious and accurate account of homosexuality. The idea that drama always represent reality is a misleading notion. Poets in ancient Greece pictured the gods as enjoying sodomy, masturbation and fellatio. A first glance at old attic comedy might lead one to believe that "the Greeks lived in a rosy haze of uninhibited sexuality."⁵⁶ There is reason to believe that the Greeks themselves, at least Athenian audiences did not suppose that the figures in tragedy represented normal human beings in normal family circumstances. "On the other hand

⁵⁴ Plato, Republic, III 403; Laws IX 874. Symonds, P. 52.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics VII 5.

⁵⁶ K.J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the time of Plato and Aristotle. (Oxford: Basil, Blackwell, 1974), P. 205.

comedy generally dealt with normal people in comic situations.⁵⁷ Ehrenburg demonstrates that "old Attic comedy is truthful about all real facts, especially those relating to the general conditions of life."⁵⁸ He takes the comedies to be a good source of reality; "reality in essence here meaning the everyday life occurrences which are not displaced in comedy (as in tragedy), by myth."⁵⁹ Men of all classes are attacked and ridiculed in Old Attic comedy. "Comedy pictures the reality of everyday life as background, for the average spectator of comedy must have familiar ground to stand on if the dramatist is to make his point."⁶⁰ David shows that political satire, likewise, was not simply the dramatist's personal response to a political treatise or philosophical arguments. Authors dealt with subjects familiar to the populace and popular subjects of discussion.⁶¹ Sexual matters were unduly prominent in comedy and the outstanding quality that characterized noblemen was the practice of pederasty.

It was one of the most favored (and most exaggerated) themes of comedy... There were, of course, very different types of pederasty, from fashionable liaisons down to venal love; but from comedy one gets the impression that the differences had almost disappeared. The comic writers again and again sneer at the members of the aristocratic circle as paederasts.⁶²

Though this bias of comedy concerning aristocracy and pederasty should not be

⁵⁷ W.K. Lacey, *The family in classical Greece* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), P. 10.

⁵⁸ V. Ehrenburg, *The people of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1943), P. 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*; P. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*!; PP. 19, 26 – 27.

⁶¹ E. David, *Aristophanes and Athenian Society of the Early fourth century B.C.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), PP. 21,27.

⁶² Ehrenburg, P. 77.

construed as a moral judgment per se, it is hard to escape the idea that even here the attitude of comedy echoes a feeling held by many. In comedy a slave is never the object of homosexual love. All those ridiculed for practicing it come from the upper classes. "Both pederasty and misogyny are attacked in comedy; treated as upper class practices which went hand in hand but did not represent urban and rural middle-class views."⁶³ In poor and middle-class families there was much more opportunity for boys and girls to get acquainted with each other and carry on love affairs. "The upper classes, on the other hand, made it extremely difficult for a young man to establish contact with the daughter of another citizen. Even if he managed to do so, he might place himself in considerable danger."⁶⁴ Furthermore, pederasty was expensive, which also tended to limit its practice to the upper classes and wealthy. At least in comedy, it was the practice of aristocrats and those who cared to imitate them. Consequently, it was held suspect by the common people and at times became a means of arousing prejudice in legal cases, as we have seen. In comedy, then, we find a tendency to exaggerate sexual (particularly homosexual) matters. In addition it gives evidence for a degree of class bias including, to a certain extent, bias against homosexuality itself. This needs to be kept in mind as we approach the texts. Aeschylus, the prolific Greek playwright of about 500 B.C, in *Seven Against Dover*, speaks of "man, woman — or some despicable thing halfway twixt them

⁶³ Ibid; PP. 133, 143. There is no mention of Spartan homosexuality involving all of society.

⁶⁴ Dover, PP. 209 – 211.

both.”⁶⁵ A reference to the effeminate male Aristophanes, the great poet of old attic comedy (born ca 457 B.C), speaks derisively of the effeminate, "O thou young shaver of the hot-souled rump, with such a beard, thou monkey, dost thou come tricked out amongst us in a eunuch's disguise?" Here of course, is a reference to the youth who remains passive after puberty and shaves his buttocks to retain the appearance of pre-pubertal youth. Another reference in the same work describes such a character as,

The little fop we all despise, the young Cratinus neatly shorn
with single razor wanton — wise, that Artemon — engineer
of ill, whose father sprang from an old he-goat, and father and
son, as ye all may note, are rank with its fragrance still.⁶⁶

In *The Knights* Aristophanes pronounces what may have been only too true of homosexual relations outside the Academy, that is, purely erotic and indiscriminate, "you yourself, excuse me sir, are like boys with lovers. The honest gentleman you won't accept, yet give yourself to lantern-selling chaps, to sinew-stitchers, cobblers, aye and tanners."⁶⁷ He also speaks of boy-love as associated with "vile degrading crimes."⁶⁸ He portrays the obviously low-class sausage-seller in *The Knights* as having "sold sausages... and myself."⁶⁹ Toward the end of *The Knights* is a play on words and possible jibe at what we have described as situational homosexuality, "First, when the sailors from my ships of

⁶⁵ Ibid. P. 226.

⁶⁶ Aristophanes, *The Archarnians*, 123 – 125; 153 – 159.

⁶⁷ Aristophanes, *The Knights*, 696 – 699.

⁶⁸ Ibid; 883 – 886.

⁶⁹ Ibid; 1250 – 1252.

war come home, I'll pay them all arrears in full," To which the sausage-seller answers, For that, full many a well-worn rump will bless you."⁷⁰ Of course, this could mean that their sailor's posterior was tired from rowing, but the double-entendre is clear.

"Aristophanes contains references to the beardless boys in the agora whom he identifies with the striplings in the perfume mart,"⁷¹ and in the clouds he "bemoans the loss of the good old days of the mainly aesthetic pederasty of the gymnasium, which has degenerated into effete customs and practices."⁷² The former seems to have been held in a certain amount of respect by some Greeks, whereas the latter was generally despised. Of these two classes it was unfortunately also the latter, featuring effeminacy and prostitution, that was predominantly received by the Hellenistic world as the legacy of classical Greece.

Briefly, pederasty developed along two lines. First, a more refined version practised among intellectuals in which affection for boys led older men to care for and train them. Sometimes this involved a sensual element but it was supposed to be a controlled and elevated relationship that took the boys' interests into consideration. Some ancient critics claimed that this was not always the case, which probably is correct.

⁷⁰ Ibid; 1364 – 1368.

⁷¹ Ibid; 1373 – 1376.

⁷² Aristophanes, *The clouds*, 965 – 1018.

The second direction in which pederasty went was toward sensualism, licentiousness, exploitation, and prostitution. Since all men had sexual drive but not all had the education, philosophy and bent of those who attended the academies, such an outcome was inevitable. Aside from the androgynous myth, Plato's defense of "ethical" pederasty is based on an anthropology that is fundamentally a metaphysical dualism. This entire philosophical premise now is widely recognized as alien to the Biblical understanding of the nature of man. For the Christian, therefore, the practice of pederasty as explained by Plato is founded on an erroneous concept of the nature of homosexuality or an accurate statement of its origins because of his immortal soul doctrine does not give an accurate picture of the nature of man and on that premise alone it is unacceptable. Plato does not present an accurate picture of the nature of man. Although they exaggerate and are biased, the dramatists provide some clues to social life in Athens with respect to homosexuality. We cannot conclude that homosexuality existed only among the noble and intellectual classes, but it was common enough among them that jibes were well understood. Any indiscretion in this direction also was eagerly picked up and used as a political tool against them by their peers. At any rate the dramatists show us that pederasty was not limited to the refined type described, defined, and defended by Plato.

5.2 New Testament Historical Background - The Hellenistic World

5.2.1 Pederasty and Prostitution in Later Greek Practice

No major change in attitude or activity concerning homosexuality stands between the earlier Greek and Hellenistic periods. Pausanius, a character in Plato's dialogue, *Symposium* 182, observes that in Greece as well as abroad there were cities that frowned on homosexuality and others whose laws favoured it. This was increasingly true following the fourth century B.C when Alexander carried Greek influence to many new regions, beginning what is called the Hellenistic era. Cities with large Jewish populations frequently were anti-homosexual. Although during the Hellenistic era even Jewish mores eroded considerably in some areas, there is no evidence of general Jewish acceptance of this practice. The manly ideal of pederasty continued in the gymnasias of the Hellenistic world with their all-male emphasis, military training, sports and nudity for exercises. In some of the countries and cities where gymnasias were established, however, there already existed a tradition of effeminate homosexuality. Further, the status of women in many countries occupied by the Greeks was higher than that of Greek women. "Consequently, the invading Greeks and their descendants who remained on foreign soil were required to deal with women whose status was equal or almost equal to their own."⁷³

⁷³ R.E. White, "Women in Ptolemaic Egypt," *JHS* 18 (1898): 238-266, C.C. Edgar, "A women's club in Alexandria," *JEA* 4 (1917): 253-254.

"The effeminate actor-dancer also was well-known outside of Greece."⁷⁴ In short, both the high status of women and practice of effeminate homosexuality outside Greece were serious factors to contend with when Greeks ventured abroad. The result was development of both the female and effeminate erotic elements in the Hellenistic life.

As Licht observes,

The more the foreign element penetrates the Greek spirit the more pederasty retires into the background; the female element begins to occupy more space when, especially in the large cities, the intercourse of young men with hetaerae increased.⁷⁵

As a result the meaning of homosexuality in the Hellenistic world broadened to include everything from the sublimated educational process between older male and young boys to extremes of rape and prostitution of adult effeminate. The manly and academic ideal still was held in the theory, but probably was practised in the breach rather than as the rule. In Hellenistic times a debate developed that compared the virtues and vices of pederasty vis-à-vis sexual relations with women. Scroggs has described the homosexual scene in the Hellenistic era as "composed of sublimated pederasty, slave prostitution and the effeminate call-boy. All of this met stern opposition from Judaism, particularly Diaspora Judaism."⁷⁶ Sublimated pederasty in the Hellenistic milieu was similar to the

⁷⁴ C.C. Edgar, "Records of a village club," *pulicazioni di Aegyptus-Serie Scientifica 3, Raccolta di Scritti in Onore di Ciriaco Lumbroso 1844-1825* (Milan, 1925): 369-76.

⁷⁵ H.Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1952), P. 438.

⁷⁶ R. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress press, 1983), PP. 29-98.

Greek phenomenon. Hellenistic epigrams in the Greek anthology show that the same concerns, emotions, and social conventions continued into later times. "Perhaps one new twist is that of a *hetaira* dressing up as a boy to attract the young *ephibes* in the gymnasium."⁷⁷ In a unique way it demonstrates that in that bastion of Greek culture, the gymnasium, pederasty was in vogue. Here also "we find the typical Greek defence of homosexual love,"⁷⁸ as well as a poem to "a boy whose charms are beginning to fade."⁷⁹ Callimachus produces a series of epigrams on *eromenoi*⁸⁰ and Rhianus on the diverse charms of different boys.⁸¹ Even the large number of anonymous epigrams dwell on homosexuality and the relation between older male and young boys.⁸² In them we find scarcely anything but the transference of the Greek pederastic tradition to foreign soil. Slave prostitution was practised in Greece, and it acquired an effeminate nature in the expanded Greek Empire. Young slave boys often were castrated before or after puberty in order to prolong their youthful appearance and subsequently their usefulness for homosexual activities. "This clearly was not a part of the old Greek ideal although increasingly it became characteristic of the Hellenistic age."⁸³ "These pathics or effeminates were sometimes used commercially in

⁷⁷ Asclepiades, XX. The epigrams are found in A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology, Hellenistic Epigrams*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

⁷⁸ Asclepiades, XXXVII.

⁷⁹ Asclepiades, XLVI.

⁸⁰ Callimachus, V-XI.

⁸¹ Rhianus, III.

⁸² Anonymous, VIII-XXIII.

⁸³ T. Hopfner, *Das Sexualleben der Griechen Und Romer Von den Anfängen bis Ins 6. Jahrhundert nach Christus* (New York: Ams Press, 1975), PP. 418-420.

brothels or as household servants for wealthy men to whom they provided sexual favours.”⁸⁴ The servants of wealthy men frequently acted as procurers of beautiful boys and girls for the sexual indulgence of their masters. The beauty of Aristobulus, the young son of Herod the Great was reported to Mark Antony by his servant who hoped to procure the lad and his sister for the sexual satisfaction of his master. The Jewish historian, Josephus, writing about A.D 93, reports that Herod,

Decided that it would not be safe for him to send Aristobulus, who was the most handsome — being just sixteen — of a distinguished family, to Antony, who was more powerful than any Roman of his time, and was ready to use him for erotic purposes and was able to indulge in undisguised pleasure because of his power.⁸⁵

Unbridled lust may not have been more prevalent in Hellenistic times than in the early Greek experiences, but it was written about more, and in extremely frank, vulgar, and sometimes obscene language. The treatment of sex and homosexuality in Roman authors such as Lucilius, Horace, Persius, Petronius, Juvenal, Catallus, and Ovid leaves little to the imagination. Seemingly unobtainable objects of lust could be obtained by stealth and trickery by means of a procurer or procureress for the right sum of money. "Sometimes it was done with the connivance and co-operation of personnel in a temple under the guise of religious ritual."⁸⁶ Although worship in many pagan temples was not necessarily

⁸⁴ Petronius, *Satyricon*, II, 79f; Lucian, *Timon*, 22; Seneca, *Epistle*, XLVII 7, Suetonius, *Nero*, XXVIII.

⁸⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* XV. 26-30.

⁸⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII. 65-80.

a sex act, "it was customary to use temples in search of love-adventures with men or women."⁸⁷ Roman homosexuality usually was connected with the baths. In addition, actors and mimes were expected to have a homosexual disposition. A prolific literature grew up "describing various sexual experiences, saturated with salacious puns. The result is an extensive Roman sexual vocabulary."⁸⁸ However, although adultery and homosexuality are mentioned in the literature without censure, Veyene observes that "the interested parties would be discreet enough to admit nothing, and pretend to know nothing."⁸⁹ Satire and literary invective frequently employed sexual imagery and obscenity became an art form, asserting the claims of nature against convention. "In such works men and women were reduced not merely to sex objects but to sex organs."⁹⁰

In Roman literature sexual and homosexual activity appears at times as sheer voluptuousness, degenerating on occasion to sadomasochism. It involved the exploitation of slaves and other defenceless persons. Emperors such as Nero and Caligula led the way. Nero castrated a youth named Sporus and married him, declaring the boy to be his "empress." Churchill contrasts this effeminacy with the Greek masculine ideal:

While the Greeks were charmed by the masculinity of their favourites and looked upon their passion as an opportunity to better the condition of the beloved, it was necessary for Nero to remove the clearest evidence of masculinity in Sporus, to

⁸⁷ O. Kiefer, *Sexual life in Ancient Rome*. (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1934), P. 129.

⁸⁸ J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). P. 13.

⁸⁹ P. Veyne, *Homosexuality in Ancient Rome*, "Western Sexuality Practice and Precept in past and present times; (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), P. 32.

⁹⁰ L.C. Curran, "Nature, Convention and Obscenity in Horace's Satires," *Arion* 9 (1970): 221, 235.

feminize him and to degrade rather than elevate him. Such cruel and eccentric acts were not at all uncommon among the Romans, but had virtually no precedent in the history of the Greeks.⁹¹

Karlen suggests that "this came about by the Roman mind's equating eunuchism and homosexuality with eastern religious cults, particularly that of Cybele and the eunuch priests, the Galli."⁹² In his *Metamorphoses* Apulleius describes the eunuch-priests of Cybele as passive homosexuals with insatiable appetites for sexual gratification, who rape a dinner guest. This is significant in itself, for Roman invective assumed that there was only one main kind of male homosexual, that is, pathic (those who were anally penetrated). These are frequently identified as *effeminatus*. If the Romans wished to hint at underlying sexual profligacy or perversion, they had a full vocabulary at their command to do so. "Besides speaking of a man as pathicus or effimatus, he might be called *mollis* ("soft"), or any of a dozen or more adjectives connoting weakness or delicacy."⁹³

One of the most common accusations in graffiti, political slanging matches, political lampoons, and courtroom attacks is "pathic". Usually it designated three kinds of behaviour: (1) having been the boy of some older man previously; (2) as an adult, continuing to enjoy being penetrated anally by other men; and (3)

⁹¹ W. Churchill, *Homosexual Behaviour Among Males: A cross-cultural and cross-species investigation*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), P. 61.

⁹² A. Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality. A New View* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971), P> 61.

⁹³ A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), PP. IX, 92.

enjoying fellatio. In Rome as in Greece, a man seeking to discredit another could do so by claiming that he had been or still was sexually passive. Sexual intercourse with young slave boys was regarded not only socially acceptable but also normal, whereas sexual intercourse with free-born boys was shameful and illegal, no doubt out of consideration for the boy's pride and future reputation.

The aggressive position carried no stigma; what bothered the Romans most in male homosexual behaviour was assumption of the female role. It was disgraceful for a Roman citizen to act as the passive instrument for another's pleasure.

Artemidorus (Second Century AD) travelled widely in the ancient Near East in a study of dreams. Eventually he wrote a treatise on the interpretation of dreams. This man, a good representative of the majority opinion, described intercourse with his wife, mistress, male or female slave as normal behaviour. But he stopped short of accepting the passive role; "to let oneself be buggered by one's own slave is not right. It is an assault on one's person and leads to one being despised by one's slave."⁹⁴ "It was the Sodomite (*cinaedus*) held up to ridicule in Petronius, a Roman novelist of the First Century AD."⁹⁵ Often these were pathics who danced and cut lewd capers at banquets. Often they were freeborn youths or men who sold their services to individuals for sexual gratification.

⁹⁴ Ibid; PP. 220-221, 225.

⁹⁵ Petronius, Satyricon, II, 21; or passive boys, II, 81.

Cicero informs us that "Mark Antony of Antony and Cleopatra fame, played this role as a youth."⁹⁶ He asserts that Antony played the passive role and was basically the harlot "mistress" of another man to whom he functioned as a wife. Such practices often could be quite remunerative. If youths remained indefinitely in such a role, they emphasised their effeminate position by imitating the toilette of women. "They mimicked feminine hair styles, make up, depletion of masculine body hair and sometimes feminine attire."⁹⁷ Scroggs notes that "among several words used to refer to such persons was *malakos*, a Greek word meaning "soft" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10), that Paul uses to refer to this specific category of person."⁹⁸ He continues by surveying the Hellenistic arguments for and against pederasty."⁹⁹ The debate in Hellenistic times survives today in two authors — Plutarch of Chaeronea (ca. AD 50-120), and Lucian of Samosata, from the late Second Century AD. Arguments for pederasty included the platonic ideal of a non-sexual relationship, illustrated in ancient times by the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, and a second view that allowed sexual gratification in the pursuit of wisdom. Pederasty, it was thought, contributed in some way to the growing wisdom of the youth involved in it. Thus "Protogenes in Plutarch's *Erotikos* speaks of the love of women as an effeminate and bastard love, but true love brings young and talented souls to virtue, that is,

⁹⁶ Cicero, Philippics II, 44-45.

⁹⁷ Ibid. P. 45.

⁹⁸ Scroggs, P. 42.

⁹⁹ Ibid; PP. 44-65.

boy-love."¹⁰⁰ Pederasty clearly is touted as more masculine than heterosexuality and worthier, since men are worthier than women. Protegenes appears not merely as a pederast but as a misogynist.

Daphnaeus advances arguments against pederasty. He argues for what to us seems obvious, "that intercourse between men and women is natural and conducive to friendship,"¹⁰¹ that the love of men and the love of women is of the same sort. If anything, male effeminacy is an affront to Aphrodite. Daphnaeus rejects Plato's heavenly Aphrodite versus earthly Aphrodite dichotomy. So did Philo of Alexandria, who thought of the idea as humorous."¹⁰² Boy-love can be thought of as the late born son of an old man who tries to disinherit true love. He comes slinking into the gymnasium to corrupt the boys there. Plutarch exposes academic pederasty as a sham:

It plays the highbrow and publicly proclaims that it is a philosopher and disciplined on the outside — because of the law. But when the night comes and all is quiet, "sweet is the harvest when the guard's away."¹⁰³

Protegenes counters these arguments by arguing that "the young man must be ruled by someone during his youth, who better than his older male? Were not the heroes of old susceptible to this kind of love and does not the true lover use the beautiful body simply as an instrument to memory?"¹⁰⁴ Of course these are

¹⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Erotikos*, 750c – 751a.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*; 751c.

¹⁰² *Ibid*; 751d; cf. Philo, *The Contemplative life*, 59-62.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*; 751;752a.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*; 758b; 761d, 766a.

Platonic arguments posited to counter the picture of pederasty as a lascivious assault

"that is why we class those who enjoy the passive part as belonging to the lowest depth of vice and allow them not the least degree of confidence or respect or friendship."¹⁰⁵

The arguments alternate between the two antagonists, but Plutarch ends the debate with an endorsement of heterosexuality.

There are very few examples of a durable relationship among boy lovers, but countless numbers of successful unions with women may be enumerated, distinguished from beginning to end by every sort of fidelity and zealous loyalty.¹⁰⁶

Lucian, a later writer, favours pederasty. Lucian admits that "some men give the appearance of devotion to physical training in the wrestling schools while their real interest is boy-love."¹⁰⁷ He grants that Aphrodite made men for women and vice versa. He despises "eunuchism for homosexuality and espouses the ideal concept of pederasty."¹⁰⁸ His misogynist leanings surface in the following statement: "And how much better that a woman should invade the provinces of male wantonness than that the nobility of the male sex should become effeminate and play the part of a woman."¹⁰⁹

Lucian concedes that marriage is necessary for the perpetuity of the race that is why boy-love did not appear in earlier times. But with leisure came the pursuit

¹⁰⁵ Ibid; 768e.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; 770c.

¹⁰⁷ Lucian, *Erotos*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid; 19-20.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; 28.

of wisdom and knowledge and men have found boy-love to be the stablest of loves.¹¹⁰ "Lucian considers idealistic pederasty to be bred into people from childhood and enacted by divine laws."¹¹¹ This is of interest since most Hellenistic writers considered it contrary to nature. Lucian's view of pederasty is summed up in one of his concluding statements

Marriage is a boon and blessing to men when it meets with good fortune, while the love of boys, that pays court to the hallowed due of friendship, I consider to be the privilege only of philosophy. Therefore, all men should marry, but let only the wise be permitted to love boys, for perfect virtue grows least of all among women. And you must not be angry charicles, if Corinth yields to Athens.¹¹²

Of course, Corinth was notorious for its female prostitutes whereas Athens was the centre of academic pederasty. In brief, the basic arguments against pederasty were that law and public opinion opposed it, that philosophy was a sham cover-up for erotic escapades, that it encouraged boys to become effeminate, that the relationships were brief, that it fostered jealousy in the youth and that it was contrary to nature.

Throughout the Hellenistic period the idea of sublimated pederasty continued, especially in the gymnasia, the centres of Greek culture and influence. Outside these areas homosexuality combined with eunuchism and effeminacy frequently degenerated into unbridled lust with elements of sadomasochism. Homosexuals prostituted themselves publicly and privately. The activity became so

¹¹⁰ Ibid; 33-36.

¹¹¹ Ibid; 48.

¹¹² Ibid; 51.

widespread that even the most eminent men in society prostituted themselves and sought to use others. Eventually pagan authors debated the wisdom of the entire practice of pederasty. Some defended it while admitting abuses, others found no value in it at all.

5.2.2 The Reaction of Hellenistic Judaism

1. Palestine

Palestinian Judaism consistently rejected homosexuality. From legal injunctions of the Torah to the Targums, translations of the Torah, we meet general opposition. The Neofiti text and Targum Jonathan, for example, "interpret Genesis 19 as a homosexual rape and Deuteronomy 23:18 as prohibiting male homosexual prostitution outside any cultic setting."¹¹³ In Rabbinic literature, the Mishnah summarises and explains pentateuchal law. "In this document homosexuality is one of the crimes punishable by death."¹¹⁴ To the rabbis homosexuality was a Gentile sin and Jews were not under suspicion of it, although certain precautions were made to avoid temptation or the appearance of evil. "Only one clear mention of Jewish homosexuality occurs in the rabbinic literature."¹¹⁵

Palestinian literature discusses homosexuality in terms of homosexual acts, not other facets such as intention or motive.

¹¹³ Scroggs, PP. 75-77.

¹¹⁴ Mishnah, Sanhedrin 7,4.

¹¹⁵ Sanhedrin 23c, 4.

2. The Diaspora

The best known document from Judaism outside Palestine during the Hellenistic period is the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, from the period 300 - 100 BC. Scroggs believes that the language of Septuagint in Leviticus influenced Paul's terminology. It reads, "with a male (*arsen*) you shall not lie the intercourse (*koite*: lit 'bed') of a woman" (Leviticus 18:22). Also, "And whoever lies with a male (*arsen*) the intercourse (*koite*) of a woman, both have done an abomination; they shall be put to death, they are guilty" (Leviticus 20:13). Scroggs believes "this juxtaposition of the two words, *arsen* and *koite*, reached a semi-technical status among the rabbis in the expression *mishkav zakur* ("lying with a male") and *arsenokoites* (1 Corinthians 6:9), an almost exact Greek parallel to the Hebrew."¹¹⁶ Deuteronomy 23:17-18 is translated in the Septuagint in such a way to oppose male homosexuality more clearly than the Masoretic text does.

Philo, a Jewish writer and philosopher of Alexandria (fl. AD40), "rejects homosexuality. He especially abhors the effeminate male."¹¹⁷ Philo accuses both active and passive partners of acting against nature, pursuing unnatural pleasure. For Philo "the greatest sin is the channelling of semen away from the natural, divinely intended purpose of procreation. Such a man is an enemy of nature."¹¹⁸ Philo applies Deuteronomy 23:1 to the effeminate castrated male, attacking this

¹¹⁶ Scroggs, P. 86.

¹¹⁷ Philo, Special Laws, III,37.

¹¹⁸ Ibid; 36.

form of homosexuality at every opportunity.¹¹⁹ He also "attacks the ancient Sodomites and accuses them of homosexual practices."¹²⁰ Josephus, another Jewish Hellenistic author originally from Palestine but later a pensioner in Rome (fl. AD 70), cites the pride, arrogance, and wealth of Sodom as the reason for God's destruction of the city. "He turns the account of the two angels into one of intended pederastic rape, speaking of the angels as two "young" men."¹²¹

Apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphal literature is mixed in its interpretation of homosexual episodes in the Old Testament. The book of Jubilees assumed to be written by a Pharisee between 135 and 105 BC, "mentions the destruction of Sodom but attributes it to general wickedness, fornication and uncleanness."¹²²

The letter of Aristeas, which purports to give a firsthand account of the translation of the Septuagint about 270 BC, "depicts homosexuality as a Gentile vice from which the Jews have been kept by their adherence to the law of Moses."¹²³ The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, another Pharisaic work dated 109 - 106 BC, mentions Sodom in a context of idolatry but also in a context of creation.

The Gentiles went astray, and forsook the Lord, and changed their order, and obeyed stocks and stones, and spirits of deceit. But ye shall not be so, my children, recognising in the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created

¹¹⁹ Philo, *Special Laws*, I, 325.

¹²⁰ Philo, on Abraham, 133-141; *Questions on Genesis*, IV, 37.

¹²¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 1. 194-204.

¹²² Jubilees, 16, 5. Edition cited or Consulted in this section, R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

¹²³ Letter of Aristeas, 152.

things, the Lord who made all things, that ye became not a Sodom, which changed the order of nature.¹²⁴

The last statement here is likely a reference to the homosexual episode of Genesis 19. The Sibylline Oracles, a collection of prophecies begun by Jews and later added to by Christian writers, "speak of an empire that follows the Greeks (Rome), characterised as allowing male to draw near to male and they shall set their children in ill-famed houses."¹²⁵ In another passage the oracle prophesies that a holy race of men will appear who are not given to idolatry,

nor do they hold unholy intercourse with boys as do the Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Latins and spacious Hellas and many nations of other men, Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing the holy law of the immortal God which he ordained.¹²⁶

To the oracle the transgression of God's law by idolatry and pederasty precipitates woes and calamities. Men should shun "adultery and confused intercourse with males, "for this brings the wrath of God."¹²⁷ Rome in particular is condemned. "Adulteries are with thee and unlawful intercourse with boys, effeminate and unjust, thou wicked city, most ill-starred of all."¹²⁸ "Rome is castigated repeatedly for abuse of boys, harlotry, irregular unions within the degrees of consanguinity, fellatio and bestiality."¹²⁹ Sometimes these evils are

¹²⁴ Testament of Naphtali, 3:1-5.

¹²⁵ Sibylline Oracles, III, 185.

¹²⁶ Ibid; 584-606; 596-600 cited.

¹²⁷ Ibid; 722-766.

¹²⁸ Sibylline Oracles, V, 166-167.

¹²⁹ Ibid; 386-393, 428-430.

connected with idolatry, sometimes not. The oracles describe Rome as full of the basest evils of which idolatry and various sexual crimes seem to be the worst.

The Apocryphal book of Wisdom, produced in Egypt about 116 - 50 BC by a conservative Jewish author, "makes idolatry the beginning and cause of every evil, including what the RSV translates as "sex perversion."¹³⁰ This is a "translation of the obscure expression *geneseos enallage*, which translates literally as "changing of order" or "changing of kind." It is similar to the expression "changed the order of nature" in the Testament of Naphtali,¹³¹ and it is difficult to see what else it could refer to except the change of sex role in homosexuality.

In brief, the judgement against homosexual acts in Judaism is so universal and deeply rooted that arguments against it seem to have been considered superfluous. Judaism excluded homosexuality by definition; therefore, it was non-Jewish authors who brought detailed arguments against it in the Hellenistic period.

5.3 The New Testament and Homosexuality

5.3.1 The Social Background of Early Christianity: Form and Context of Anti-Homosexual References

Outside Palestine Christianity took root first in provincial towns and cities of the Roman Empire. For the most part the Apostle Paul walked Roman roads and sailed Roman trade routes. The aim of Roman policy was to unify and

¹³⁰ Wisdom, PP. 14, 26.

¹³¹ The verbal form of *enallage* is used in T. Naphtali, 3, 4.

acculturate the provinces to Roman ideas. In pursuit of these goals Rome worked in alliance with Greek civilisations, especially in the heavily populated eastern provinces. As Ramsey observes, "the Greek influence was, on the whole, European and Western in character; and opposed to the oriental stagnation which resisted Roman educative efforts."¹³² Christianity was doubtless envisaged by many in the east as a force in a social life arrayed on the side of imperial policy. The new religion worked against ignorance, stagnation, social anarchy, and enslavement of the people to priests. At the same time, "it stood for universal citizenship, universal equality of rights, universal religion and a universal church. Almost all of these concepts already were developing slowly in one way or another within the empire."¹³³

Paul took advantage of elements in Greek education. The best in Greek ethics, learning, and forms of polished courteous address he did not disdain. In his speeches at Lystra and Athens there was nothing overtly Jewish or Christian. Paul could speak as a Jew and a Christian; also he could express the truths of Scripture in the language and ideas of educated Romans.

The first churches were in cities and towns, and the first Christians urban dwellers. "Cities were small by modern standards, however population density in

¹³² W.M. Ramsey, *St. Paul the traveller and Roman citizen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), P.

131.

¹³³ *Ibid*; P. 138.

many cities rivalled that of modern city slums."¹³⁴ Under such circumstances privacy was rare; no social group could remain anonymous.

So it is not surprising that Christians in the larger cities were extremely sensitive to public opinions. Their safety as Christian groups depended to a certain degree on their religious activities largely escaping public attention. Abnormal behaviour in the community of believers would encourage circulation of rumours to the discredit of the entire community. As Judge indicates, "The basic problem for Christians was thus not their relations with the government, but with the communities within which they lived."¹³⁵ Early Christian writers responded more to social criticism than questions about the legality of the Christian's status or actions in relation to the state.

"It is a mistaken judgment to consider the triumph of Christianity as tantamount to the triumph of the lower classes, or "proletariat", as some Marxist exegetes prefer to say, over the upper classes."¹³⁶ Early Christian churches represented a cross section of society. If anything, "the small intense clusters of Christian communities were largely middle class in origin."¹³⁷ "The triumph of Christianity in a hierarchically organised society necessarily took place from the top down."¹³⁸

¹³⁴ W.A. Meeks, *The first urban Christians, the social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), P. 28.

¹³⁵ E.A. Judge, *The social pattern of the Christian Groups in the first century* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), PP. 71, 73.

¹³⁶ K. Kautsky, *The foundation of Christianity*, tr H.F. Mins (New York: S.A. Russell, 1953).

¹³⁷ R.M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publications: 1977), P. 11.

¹³⁸ *Ibid* p. 11

5.3.2 Christians and Social Structure

The form which the early Christian communities assumed was present already in the environment. The early Church did not build structures especially for its own religious activities. The meeting places of a great number of Paul's converts in the diaspora were the private houses. Several times Paul mentions Christian assemblies in connection with a specific household. The conversion of a person with "all his/her household is mentioned several times in Acts also. In New Testament times the term "household" meant more than in modern western societies. "It included not just immediate relatives but slaves, freedmen, hired hands, even partners in crafts or trades, and could be extended to include virtually anyone who depended on the group for livelihood and sustenance."¹³⁹

The household was a basic political unit whose loyalties could rival those toward the Roman republic. The head of the household had a certain amount of legal responsibility for his/her charges. But as Malherbe points out, the solidarity of such groups, "was based more on economic, and especially psychological, social and religious factors."¹⁴⁰ New Christian groups were thus superimposed upon an already existing network of relationships.

The household, probably 30 -50 persons at the most, afforded privacy, intimacy, and stability of place for early Christian communities. However, when several

¹³⁹ Meeks, p. 75-76.

¹⁴⁰ A.J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), P. 69

households existed in one community, a potential for factions existed. Households were hierarchical. The head of the household, who was legally responsible, no doubt also exercised certain political and moral influence over the group. Paul seems to take this for granted in his epistle to Philemon. Household factions also may be the source of the trouble in 1 Corinthians 1 - 4. It was not unusual for households to be the centre of a cult or society under the patronage of the head of the household. Under these circumstances the solidarity of Christian groups as a whole is indeed remarkable and points to other inner cohesive factors at work beyond the exclusivity of the household.

Social intercourse with those outside the Christian group was not discouraged, but a clear line of demarcation was drawn between the ethical-moral behaviour expected of those outside and that expected of those inside the group (1 Corinthians 5:9 - 13). Paul also discouraged any activity that might involve participation in another cult (1 Corinthians 8 and 10).

It is clear from the advice that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians Chapters 5 and 6, that he considered the Christian community a pure and holy place over against the impure and profane world outside. Christians were to avoid the abhorrent sexual practices and other vices practised in the pagan world.

The house rules in Ephesians 4:17 and onward state (in the positive) what is expected of Christian communities (cf. Col 3:12ff). These regulations were essential to the solidarity and cohesiveness of Christianity as a whole (1

Corinthians 1:2). They also highlight Paul's conviction that the purity of the community "is contaminated only from within, not by contact with outsiders, even though the latter are considered typically immoral."¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the house rules were composed with an eye toward how outsiders perceived the community (Col. 4:5).

5.3.3 New Testament Vice Lists: Christian and non-Christian

Regulations for Christian ethical behaviour also are stated negatively in the New Testament. "This was achieved by listing vices that Christians were exhorted to avoid."¹⁴² "It is possible that such lists were used in catechetical instruction beginning at a very early period."¹⁴³ These lists existed in the popular moral teaching of the period, and parallels among stoics are unmistakable.

"The cataloguing of virtues and vices in such lists is familiar enough in classical, Hellenistic, and early Christian Literature."¹⁴⁴ Of course this is not to say that Paul took his ideas directly from the teachings of the great classical schools of philosophy studied by privileged elite with the requisite time and inclination. A careful analysis shows that Paul has "much in common with philosophical though in general but not with any regular system of thought."¹⁴⁵ Judge proposes

¹⁴¹ Meeks, P. 105.

¹⁴² New Testament vice lists include: Matt 15:19, Mark 7:21-22, Romans 1:18-32, 13:13; I Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:19,21; Eph 4:31; 5:3,7; Col 3:5,9; I Tim 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 2 Tim 3:2,5; Titus 3:3; I Peter 2:11; 4:3-4; Jude 8:16; Rev 9:20-21; 22:15.

¹⁴³ C.H. Dodd, "The Ethics of the New Testament," *Moral Principles of Action – Man's Ethical Imperative*. (New York: Harper Bros. 1952), PP. 544-545.

¹⁴⁴ E.N. O'Neal, *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978); 309.

¹⁴⁵ Judge, *St. Paul and Classical Society* (New York: G.H. Doran Co., 192), P. 32.

another approach to illuminate how the niche Paul filled related to popular ethics. This is not a system of ethics as such, he says, "but the way in which a loose body of general principles for life develops among thoughtful people in a community."¹⁴⁶ This "body of general principles" is not directly subject to the discipline of the schools, although it may draw from them and feed into their systems. Christians also found precedent for ethical lists in the Hellenistic Jewish Literature. They are abundant in Philo, and an excellent example of a vice list is found in Wisdom 14:25 - 26: "Blood and murder, theft and fraud, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, troubling of good, unthankfulness for benefits, defilement of souls, confusion of sex, disorder in marriage, adultery and wantonnes's. Easton observes that "in accord with Jewish custom action rather than thoughts are enumerated here."¹⁴⁷ In contrast, "a stoic list would centre on sins of disposition. Likewise, Wisdom's characteristically Jewish emphasis on idolatry as the cardinal defect differs from Greek and Roman moralists who would choose ignorance."¹⁴⁸

Paul's line of thought in Romans 1:26 - 31 parallels much of Wisdom's thesis and language. Yet this longest of the New Testament catalogues of vices does not simply repeat the list in Wisdom. "Of the 15 terms in Wisdom and 21 in Romans

¹⁴⁶ Ibid; P. 33.

¹⁴⁷ B.S. Easton, New Testament Ethical lists, JBL 51 (1932):2.

¹⁴⁸ Marcus Aurelius, Meditations II, I. Say to thyself at daybreak: I shall come across the busy-body, the thankless, the overbearing, the treacherous, the envious, the envious, the unneighborly, all this has befallen them because they no not good from Evil.

only 2 (two) — murder and deceit — are common to both lists."¹⁴⁹ Indeed most of the lists are conventional and the particular sins listed have little to do with the immediate context. Non-Jewish precedent, particularly Stoic, as well as Jewish precedent inform most lists. Easton "postulates non-Jewish precedent for Romans 1:29 - 31 and somewhat less so for 2 Timothy 3:2 - 4."¹⁵⁰ Other lists probably have Jewish-Greek influence in the immediate background. McEleney finds no pattern of terms followed in the vice lists of the pastoral epistles. He concludes,

Thus the vice lists of the pastorals have been influenced by more or less of these elements:

- (1) Reference to the Decalogue or other commands of the law;
- (2) Polemic against immoral pagan idolaters;
- (3) Hellenistic conceptions of virtue and vice as qualifications of a man;
- (4) Moral dualism due to various inclinations of spirits in a man causing him to walk in one of two ways
- (5) The theme of eschatological punishment.¹⁵¹

Here again the Stoic and Jewish background stand out. The similarities with stoicism, however, should not be over emphasized. The pagan concept of love for mankind, while present in Wisdom is notably absent in the New Testament. The Christian concept of patience, on the other hand, is absent in stoicism, and qualities such as mercy and humility are Christian virtues but stoic vices.

¹⁴⁹ Easton, P.3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid; P. 8.

¹⁵¹ N.J. McEleney, "The vice lists of the Pastoral Epistles," CBQ 36 (1974): 218.

The differences are determined by different views of man, his nature, and purpose in life. The Christian concept of human relationship with God is determinative in Christian lists. Therefore it is vital to understand the conceptual framework in which the terms are used in the New Testament also to recognise that these terms are not used in that framework outside of it. As Easton has noted, "Avoidance of the sins catalogued in these lists is never identified with Christian morality. Life as a Christian hardly begins until such temptations have been put to death."¹⁵² It is most significant, therefore, that all major references to homosexuality in the New Testament occur in vice lists. In creating vice lists the Stoics tried to demonstrate that one is not controlled by the logos — the universal world soul — and which are therefore improper or unethical for the man of reason of philosophy. Avoiding them produces an ethical man of logos. For Christians, however, mere avoidance of vice is not the essence of an ethical or moral person. Morality and ethics cannot begin until these acts are removed from the lifestyle. Christian ethics and morality involve the doing of positive things, not merely removal of negatives. Homosexual activity never appears in any positive list in the New Testament, although numerous other activities are listed. When homosexuality is mentioned it is always included in the negative vice lists. This fact cannot be ignored by those who claim that loving homosexual relations are condoned in Scripture. Nowhere does Paul issue instructions for the homosexual couple or tell how they are to be integrated into

¹⁵² Easton, P. 8.

the church. He does this for slaves, for families where only one spouse is a believer, for those coming from pagan cults and worldly associations, for those who are virgins and those who are not, and for Jews and/or Pharisees with all their religious and cultural baggage. But homosexual acts are listed as one of the lifestyles left behind, discontinued upon acceptance of Christ.

5.4 Primary New Testament Texts Cited with Reference to Homosexuality

Romans 1:26 - 28. For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and improper conduct.¹⁵³

These verses are followed immediately by the longest vice list in the New Testament (Romans 1:29 - 32). It includes no sexual sins. Apparently Paul was satisfied with his treatment of them in verses 24 - 28, the whole of which (verses 24 - 32) may be seen as an extended vice list. Numerous interpreters of these verses see homosexual acts totally condemned in them, others find only a certain kind of exploitative homosexual practice condemned here. Among the latter by far the most prevalent view is that which sees Paul opposed to homosexual lust but not homosexual acts per se. The text, "they claim, could not have been written against the "natural" or permanent homosexual because Paul was

¹⁵³ Bible, New International Version Romans 1:26-26.

ignorant of the distinction between the primary or constitutional homosexual and other perverted forms of homosexual activity."¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, Paul is concerned with exploitation, prostitution, and unbridled homosexual lust. In fact he must refer to those who are not permanent homosexuals, because the text states that those involved do so against their nature. It would not violate the nature of a constitutional homosexual to indulge in homosexual activity, but it would be against the nature of a heterosexual to do so. Therefore, Bailey interprets this text to speak about perverted heterosexuals who indulge in homosexual acts for kicks out of lust. Consequently, "it cannot refer to the loving homosexual relationship of the constitutional homosexual where affection and responsibility are the marked criteria and not unbridled lust."¹⁵⁵ Another common interpretation, sometimes held in conjunction with Bailey's view, is that Paul here is condemning those who were idolaters, not homosexual activity as such. "Paul is speaking out against those who were idolaters — and — homosexuals, not against those who were homosexuals but not idolaters."¹⁵⁶ Various assumptions are involved here. Among them, that homosexuality was practised in conjunction with idolatry in Paul's day and was, therefore, "a conscious voluntary choice, or that homosexuality is in some way the result of idolatry or

¹⁵⁴ D.S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press 1975), pp. 38, 157.

¹⁵⁵ H.K. Jones, *Toward a Christian understanding of the Homosexual* (New York: Association Press, 1966), p. 70.

¹⁵⁶ R.W. Wood, "Homosexual behaviour in the Bible, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1976), p. 82.

that it is God's punishment for idolatry."¹⁵⁷ Other interpreters zero in on the word "nature". "They reject the idea that Paul's use of the word is held in some way to Greek philosophical usage."¹⁵⁸ Others read it to mean simply "convention", the generally accepted practice in a particular time and place. These frequently quote 1 Corinthians 11:14 where Paul says, "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him?" Here Paul uses the word "nature" in what is considered a conventional sense.

In the Graeco-Roman Culture, it was generally accepted practice for men to have short hair and be close to shaven. However, among the Jews the practice was quite different. Longer hair and beards, cropped or uncropped, were not considered degrading. "Nature" here seems to mean the nature of the situation in a particular time and place. Neither long hair nor short hair was wrong per se, its appropriateness depended on a particular time and place. "The implication is, of course, that the homosexual acts that Paul says are "against nature" are practices simply not accepted in some societies but accepted in others, and this is what he means here."¹⁵⁹ He is not saying that God condemns homosexual acts but simply that homosexuality is a behaviour contrary to Jewish culture and practice. Finally, some adduce an argument more theological than historical, lexical, or

¹⁵⁷ Jones, D.L. Bartlett, *A Biblical Perspective on Homosexuality*. "Homosexuality and the Christian Faith." (Valley Forge, P.A. Judson Press 1978), PP. 30-31.

¹⁵⁸ L. Scanzioni and V.R. Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual my Neighbour: Another Christian View* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publications: 1980), P. 65.

¹⁵⁹ J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality. Gay People in Western Europe from the beginning of the Christian Era to the fourth century*: (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) PP. 110-111.

philological. For them some forms of homosexual behaviour are legitimate. Romans 1 is seen as incidental to the book and even incidental to Paul's attack on false righteousness in Romans 2, especially among Jews who believed they kept the law.

According to this interpretation Paul adopts a Jewish list of vices from apocryphal literature, but he does not seriously endorse all of it. He can point out the same sins among contemporary Jews. Homosexuals are not the only ones under criticism since Paul speaks of covetousness, malice, envy, deceit, gossip, and so forth. All men are sinners, and Paul is not isolating one group for special condemnation. All sinners can be saved by Christ, and there is no Biblical basis for singling out homosexuals more than gossips and fornicators. Since fornicators, adulterers, and thieves are accepted into the church fellowship, why not homosexuals? One cannot always be certain whether Paul addresses the condition or the acts. Some would include both others would not. This interpretation is summed up in Bartlett's paraphrase of Galatians 5:6: "In Christ Jesus, neither heterosexuality, nor homosexuality — in themselves — are of any avail, but faith working through love."¹⁶⁰

If the above interpretations are accepted those who believe Paul is condemning all forms of homosexual activity will find their position difficult to defend. Perhaps it is wise to look at the entire context in which Paul is speaking, better to

¹⁶⁰ Barlett, P. 39.

determine just what he is or is not saying. Those with even a scanty knowledge of Romans know that here Paul deals in considerable detail with the doctrine of justification by faith. The theme of the book, as announced in Romans 1:16 -17, is that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel about His Son Jesus Christ. Then Paul illustrates the need for this righteousness by showing that sin carries a retribution in life and eventually culminates in death. The arena where sin operates is universal. Those who drank the dregs of pagan vice and crime as well as those pagan moralists who consider themselves superior to the outcasts of society needed righteousness. Even the Jews, the chosen people of God who considered themselves supremely enlightened in contrast to the rest of mankind, fell under the stern judgment of God. In short, all mankind stands wanting and guilty before God. None has reason for complacency and congratulatory self-righteousness.

Paul's aim is to show that the whole of humanity is morally bankrupt, ... He begins with an area of human life whose moral bankruptcy was a matter of general agreement among moralists of the day — the great mass of contemporary paganism.¹⁶¹

But in placing both pagan and moralists and Jews in the same category with the pagan masses Paul is not claiming that moralists and Jews practised the same forms of immorality. What he is saying is that even the most degraded pagan can know enough from creation itself to avoid confusing the creator with the

¹⁶¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1969), pp. 81-82.

creatures (including man as creature). If, however, they deliberately confused the two, inevitably they fell into errors of thought and action. Paul is not suggesting that the pagan masses or any other group were not intelligent enough to understand, but that by resolute moral obduracy they failed to do that which they knew to be right.

As a group the Jews demonstrated that the essential problem was not ignorance but something quite different. The Jews are under the judgment of God, because, exactly as they boasted, they are supremely enlightened. Consequently, they should have done that much better than those not so advantaged. But they failed to do so. Privilege brings responsibility and they failed in the latter when God provided the former. Righteousness, or a right relationship and standing before the Holy God, was not to be found in the actions of the pagan masses, among the moralists, or even among the Jews; for all showed the same fundamental failure, a stubborn disobedience to what they already knew to be right. It is here that Paul introduces the new principle of the gospel (Romans 3:21 - 5:21). God does not expect man to become righteous before He declares him such. Such a requirement would pose a hopeless situation. Rather God gives right status, or declares a person righteous, initiates a right relationship, then helps him to grow up to its full potential. For Paul freedom from a system of law or religious activity to set oneself right with God and freedom from death (Romans 7:1 - 8:39) come before freedom from sin (Romans 6:1 - 23). He vigorously opposes the idea that the outpouring of God's grace means a life contained in sin. In

baptism we die to sin, and changing the analogy to the slave market he sees the Christian as a redeemed slave working for a new master — God, not the old master sin.

Paul's remarks encompass all humanity. It is not against merely a Jewish or Greek background that he writes, but against a cosmic background. He deals with the broad canvas of creation, sin, fall, and redemption. For Paul, Adam was a historical person involved in the process (Romans Chapter 5). Since all have sinned and come short of God's original glorious intention for man, God offers to all the opportunity to come into right relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. The relationship is to be maintained thereafter to the best of one's ability in co-operation with God, in good faith. The ultimate aim is that man will be restored to God's image as He intended in creation. In the section under consideration (Romans 1:24 - 32) Paul is showing how far mankind has fallen from this ideal or original state. In verse 24 he first uses the words, "God gave them up." We doubt that these words, repeated in verses 26 and 28, imply that the abandonment of the heathen to the dominion of sin represents a punitive act inflicted by God."¹⁶² If God withdraws the restraints of His providence and grace from the wicked He may be described in Biblical terminology as giving them over to sin. But "the permission to sin is not necessarily a judicial or punitive act."¹⁶³ The sin of Adam was permitted, but scarcely as a judgment or penalty for

¹⁶² C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), P. 40.

¹⁶³ W.G.T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), P. 25.

sin. The issue here is one of free relationship between God and humans. God allows the wicked to "enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and (they) are therefore, self-enslaved."¹⁶⁴ To some extent sin is exposed and punished by its own results, but this is because God has so constituted natural process that wrong inevitably gravitates to wretchedness. "God leaves men where they place themselves — in the fatal region of self-will and self-indulgence."¹⁶⁵ "There is a moral law in life that men are left to the consequences of their own freely chosen course of action; and unless this tendency is reversed by divine grace, their situation will go from bad to worse."¹⁶⁶ It is not helpful then to consider homosexuality a punishment for sin. Such an opinion may lead to judgmental questions as asked by the disciples, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). As with blindness, so with the homosexual condition the answer may be "neither, but that the glory of God might be revealed in him."

There is no doubt that in verse 25 Paul sees the vices of paganism as the product of idolatry. This was commonplace in Jewish apologetic of the time (See Wisdom of Solomon 12 -14: the epistle of Aristeas). For him the vices of paganism with their inevitable results are in themselves retribution for the fundamental error of taking up an irreligious attitude to life — that is, of placing the reason and will of the creature at the forefront in spite of the knowledge of

¹⁶⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The problem of plain* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1961), PP. 115ff.

¹⁶⁵ H.C.G. Moule, *The Epistle to Romans* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1925), P. 49.

¹⁶⁶ Bruce, P. 81.

God native to the human mind. Idolatry cannot be reduced in this context simply to pagan practices and cultic life. In essence it is an attitude toward God that places human will above His will, human authority above His sovereignty (Romans 1:28,32).

To say that homosexuality is a result of idolatry is to say, therefore, in the wider sense of the word that it is the result of the sinful human condition in which we all live, to which any specific individual may or may not contribute by his/her actions. In verse 26 Paul specifies some of the things that result from and contribute to the fallen existence common to man. God gives man up to the dishonourable passions that spring from his attitude towards God. Specifically, Paul mentions homosexuality as a dishonourable passion. It needs not be the only one. The fact that men may believe they serve God by indulging in these passions is part of the ultimate irony in idolatry — the ultimate foolishness of those who claim to be wise (verse 19). Paul begins with women, or "females" as he designates them, who exchange natural relations for unnatural. The meaning of this brief verse is clarified by the next (verse 27). Men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another: men (actually "males") committing shameless acts with men.

5.4.1 Natural versus Unnatural

The two terms in these verses are the expressions "natural" and "unnatural" and much depends upon what Paul meant here. The crux of the issue turns on why Paul concludes that homosexuality is unnatural. Paul uses the term *para phusin*

("against", "beside", or "contrary to") nature and *kata phusin* ("according to") nature. (cf. Expressions in Romans 11:24).

There is no doubt that these terms are common Greek usage and that they are used at times to express an ethical judgement on homosexuality. This is true in Plato (Laws I,636; VIII,836 - 841), who repeatedly uses the term "natural" to describe heterosexual intercourse, and "unnatural" homosexual intercourse. Plato attempts a reason why it is unnatural, that is, because men cannot fall below the level of the animal world where homosexuality does not take place (Laws VIII,841). These expressions are common in the Hellenistic period, as we see in Diodorus Siculus (ca. 49 BC). In his History 32, 10, 8 - 11, he uses the term *kata phusin* of natural intercourse with a woman. However, in a case where the woman was in reality a man, he speaks of the intercourse as having taken place "as with a man" and the marriage as "against nature" (*para phusin gamou*). In any event the woman (in reality a man) had to submit to "unnatural embraces" (*para phusin homilian*).

Mosonius Rufus, a Roman stoic philosopher sometimes referred to as the Roman Socrates, was Paul's contemporary (ca. AD 30 - 102). "His works show the typical characteristics of the popularised philosophical treatise."¹⁶⁷ He is one of the few real supporters in antiquity of equal standing for women. For Mosonius, life in accordance with nature is life in accordance with virtue. Mosonius

¹⁶⁷ A.C. Geytenbeck; Musonius Rufus and Greek Diatribes. (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co., 1963), P. 13.

identifies *kata phusin zen* ("to live according to nature") with *en arete zen* ("to live according to virtue"). Because men and women may have equal virtue they should have equal training. It is not surprising then that Musonius sees marriage as the most venerable relationship. One of Musonius' arguments is that marriage is *kata phusin*. "In the later stoic marriage is always said to be *kata phusin*"¹⁶⁸ He allows for sexual intercourse only within marriage and then only for procreation. "All other instances are "indecent relationships", adultery because it is unlawful and other unmarried relations as being unlawfully dissolute. Also when he speaks on sexual relationships, he refers to pederasty as *para phusin tolmema* ("an outrage against nature")."¹⁶⁹

Another contemporary of Paul, the Jewish historian Josephus (ca. AD 37 - 97), "speaks of sodomy as "unnatural vice" (*para phusin*) and "unnatural pleasure" (*para phusin*)"¹⁷⁰ Examples of such vices spoken of as *para phusin* occur also in Plutarch and other Hellenistic writers but none of them attempts to define what they mean by these expressions. After reading them all, we still do not really understand what they meant. Under these circumstances, it might be easier to determine what Paul did not mean by these expressions and to clarify the ideas that separate him from the late stoics who also used the same terms.

Paul's God was transcendent, wholly above and beyond the world, as was

¹⁶⁸ Ibid; P. 68.

¹⁶⁹ C.E. Lutz. The Greek Text with Translation and Introduction (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1947).

¹⁷⁰ Josephus, Against Apion, II 273, 275.

Aristotle's. Like Plato's God, however, Paul's was also the creator of nature, nevertheless separate from the natural world. On the other hand the stoics believed that God was immanent in ways that Paul could not at all agree with. For them, not only was the world controlled by God, but in the last resort, it was God. For the stoics, existence goes on forever in endlessly recurring cycles following a fixed "law" or "formula" (logos). This law is fate or providence ordained by God.

The stoics thought that the logos is God or the mind of God, the universal world soul. The stoic system, therefore, was basically determinist. Cicero, the Roman orator, statesman, and stoic philosopher (106 - 43 BC), claimed that according to Zeno "the law of nature is divine," that Clenthes held that "the world itself is god", and that Chrysippus said that "the divine power resides in reason and in the soul and mind of the universe."¹⁷¹ "There is little doubt that the late stoics deified "nature."¹⁷² Marcus Aurelius spoke of nature as "the eldest of the deities."¹⁷³ It is clear that Paul uses stoic philosophical terms in Romans 1 and 2. But "it is equally clear that Paul does not simply repeat the terms and concepts of the stoa with the same meanings they had in stoicism or even in Hellenism."¹⁷⁴ It is probable that for Paul the word "nature" "meant the providential ordering of the

¹⁷¹ Cicero, of the nature of the Gods, 1, 14, 15. On Stoic determination see, E. Bevan, *Stoic and Skeptics* (New York: Avno Press, 1979), P. 53.

¹⁷² C.S. Lewis, *Studies in words* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University press, 1975), P. 41.

¹⁷³ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations IX*, 1.

¹⁷⁴ A.J. Malherbe, "The Apologetic Theology of the Preaching of Peter," *Restoration Quarterly* 13 (1970): 211.

natural world, as with the stoics.”¹⁷⁵ Apart from this agreement, however, the term has a completely different function for Paul. The meaning of the term in Romans comes from a stoic-Jewish storehouse. The direct influence of non-Jewish Hellenistic thought upon Paul has been exaggerated. His main background is Jewish, or better, that of Hellenistic Judaism. Paul, writing as a moralist and having occasion to deal with vices, ordinarily follows the classification used by popular moralists of the time. Customarily "they were classified as sensual and anti- social. Many of the vice lists in Paul's epistles demonstrate that he was familiar with this mode of classification.”¹⁷⁶

Paul's God, however, was not nature, but the supremely transcendent one, the creator who formed the earth and made man in perfection, whose work was blighted subsequently by the entrance of sin. Consequently, for Paul nature at present does not represent humanity's true nature. In a fallen world an appeal to nature to determine what humans should do or be is at best relative and at worst useless. In the context of fallen nature only relative distinctions can be made between the natural and the unnatural. For the Christian contemporary natural life is prelude to life with Christ, and it is validated as natural only because Christ Himself entered into the fallen natural life through incarnation.

Through the fall the "creature" becomes "nature". The direct dependence of the creature on God is replaced by the relative freedom of natural life. Within this freedom there are

¹⁷⁵ A.J. Herschbell, *Plutarch's Ethical Writing's and Early Christian Literature*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), P. 167.

¹⁷⁶ C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Harper and Row Publications: 1932), PP. XXXII, 26-27.

differences between the true and the mistaken use of freedom, and there is therefore the difference between natural and the unnatural. In other words there is relative openness and relative closeness for Christ.¹⁷⁷

The natural, from this point of view, is recognised as the form of life preserved by God in the fallen world. It is that life directed toward justification, redemption, and renewal through Christ. "Reason itself is embedded in the natural; reason then is nothing more than the conscious perception of the content of the natural in the world. Thus reason, after the fall, has not ceased to be reason, but is now fallen."¹⁷⁸

From this there follows a conclusion that is of crucial importance, namely, that the natural can never be something that is determined by any single part of any single authority within the fallen world. And indeed whatever is set up in this arbitrary manner by an individual, a society or an institution will necessarily collapse and destroy itself in the encounter with the natural which is already established. Whoever does injury to the natural will suffer for it.¹⁷⁹

Here we see that the natural, even in the form preserved by God after the fall, is a given. In the fallen world nature reflects the splendour of the glory of God's creation and points forward to the restitution of all things. But Paul's perspective in the passage under consideration is not limited to the relative distinctions between natural and unnatural in the fallen world. Only God's original intention for humans can be considered determinative for human essence, and this is revealed as His will in Scripture.

¹⁷⁷ D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*. New York: (Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968), P. 145.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*; P. 146.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*; P. 147.

It is difficult to see what else Paul could mean by "nature" in our text if not the world and man as intended and as created by God. The "unnatural" comes as consequence of the fall and, therefore, not God's original intention and will for man.

The cosmic context of Romans 1:18 - 32 is generally recognised. Scroggs even suggests "that in these verses the universal fall is under discussion, which includes Jews as well as Gentile."¹⁸⁰ For these reasons "homosexuality is not treated here merely as an expression of cultic idolatry, rather both practices are traced to the bad exchange that man made in departing from the creator's original design."¹⁸¹

As Field observes,

In writing about "natural relations", Paul is not referring to individual men and women as they are. His canvas is much broader. He is taking the argument back, far more radically, to man and woman as God created them. By "unnatural" he means "unnatural to mankind in God's creation pattern." And that pattern he clearly understands to be heterosexual. So the distinction between pervert and invert (which Paul could have hardly made anyway) is undercut.¹⁸²

Paul has in mind not only the casual and capricious sex swapping of the pervert, driven by lust and desire for flesh stimulation, but the basic divergence from God's original creation scheme which all homosexual behaviour represents. "The invert or constitutional homosexual may be seen as an aberration of God's

¹⁸⁰ Scroggs; P. 110.

¹⁸¹ D.H. Field, "Homosexuality," *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 2, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publications: 1980): 657.

¹⁸² D. Field. *The Homosexual Way-A Christian option?* (Grove Books; Brom cote Notts 1980), P. 16.

original creation. He may be considered depraved (as all are to some extent) in the theological sense but not in a moral sense."¹⁸³ The constitutional homosexual who has physical and emotional attraction to other males may be less culpable morally than the lustful heterosexual who constantly fantasises adulterous relationships. Neither may act out their inner drives. The excessive sexual drive of the heterosexual may be due to some physical predisposition, but it is a perversion of God's intention and design. Both are culpable if the drives are acted out. The nymphomaniac whose impulses cannot be sexually satisfied by one man falls into the same category. Paul uses the homosexual practices of his day to illustrate the depravity that follows departure from God's will. "If homosexual acts could gain divine approval in any sense, surely Paul would have indicated how and drawn the distinction."¹⁸⁴

Paul must have known the distinction between the homosexual relationships in Plato, Sparta, prostitution, pederasty, and so forth, as well as adult relationships of a more permanent kind. For example the Roman emperor Galba (AD 68 -69), considered a conservative and supported by many of the stoic leaders, is described by the Roman historian, Suetonius:

A homosexual invert, he showed a preference for mature and sturdy men. It is said that when Icelus, one of his old-time bed fellows, brought the news of Nero's death, Galba openly showered him with kisses and begged him to get ready and have intercourse with him without delay.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ H. Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*. (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1978), P. 282.

¹⁸⁴ G.L. Bahsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical view* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), P. 50.

¹⁸⁵ Suetonius, *Galba*, 21., tr. Robert Graves. *The Twelve Caesars*, rev. with and introduction by M. Grant (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1979) P. 258.

In a day when homosexual acts were commonly practised and widely known, Paul could hardly have been ignorant of the variety of relationships existing in the first century Hellenistic world. An interpretation of his words that allows homosexual activity would have to allow also any sin in the list of vices which follows.

We need to emphasise, however, that Paul is speaking of homosexual acts, not temptations to homosexuality or disposition to homosexuality of whatever intensity. Paul concludes verse 27 by observing that those who practise such acts, "receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error." The apostle may refer to spiritual moral erosions in the life of the physical deterioration that results from a dissolute life or both. At the end of the vice list (verse 32) he notes finally that "they do not only do them but approve those who practise them." We must keep in mind that in Paul's day male-with-male sexual relationships not only went largely uncondemned but were sometimes glorified as a stage of love higher than that between man and woman."¹⁸⁶ Paul came from a Semitic culture that held marriage and family in high esteem for centuries and homosexual acts were condemned. For him and many early Jewish Christians, homosexual acts produced revulsion. It is understandable to find him reacting as he does, Lovelace observes: "Paul's target in Romans 1:26 and 27 is, therefore, not a few dissolute heterosexual experimenters, but the Gentile culture whose male

¹⁸⁶ E. Best, *The letter of Paul to the Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1967), P. 23.

aristocrats could use women as chattel and child rearers but reserve their most refined erotic passion for other males."¹⁸⁷ One might argue that as a conservative Jew Paul was merely reacting to the Gentile culture around him in typical Jewish fashion. But Paul was the most liberated of the apostles. He was most open and accepting of the Gentile and willing to reject Jewish tradition where he saw it in conflict with the will of God. Other reasons have to be found for Paul's rejection of homosexuality. He was no conservative reactionary. Based on evidence, there is no "Pauline privilege" for homosexual activity in Romans 1:26 - 28.

1 Corinthians 6:9,10. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, no adulterers, nor (homosexuals), nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God.¹⁸⁸

The old city of Corinth was destroyed in 146 BC by the Roman Consul L. Mummius. "A hundred years later Julius Caesar rebuilt it and established a Roman colony there. Both old and new cities had one thing in common; they were notorious for their depravity and immorality."¹⁸⁹ From this city Paul wrote his vivid description of the moral corruption of the pagan world, (Romans 1:18 - 23). "Nearly every religious cult and rite of the Mediterranean region was practised and excavations have uncovered the sacred objects of Greeks, Romans, Orientals, Anatolians, and Egyptians."¹⁹⁰ Corinthians depravity was paralleled, if

¹⁸⁷ Lovelace, P. 92.

¹⁸⁸ Bible, King James Version; I Corinthians 6:9, 10.

¹⁸⁹ Strabo, VIII, 6, 20; Hovace, epistle, 1, 17, 36.

¹⁹⁰ D.E. Smith, "The Egyptian Cults at Corinth," HTR 70 (1977): 201-231.

not surpassed by the social polarisation in the city. The most abject poverty stood adjacent to immense wealth and extravagant luxury (1 Corinthians 11:17 - 34).

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, written from Ephesus about AD 57, Paul attempts to correct a number of abuses in the church. He must deal with factions in the church (1 Corinthians 1:10 -4:21), with moral abuses (5:1 - 6:20), and in the last part of the epistle, with various questions and problems raised by members there. Our passage falls within the section 6:1-11 where Paul is remonstrating with the Corinthians for their litigation before pagan law courts. Both the Greeks and the Romans prided themselves in litigation. Many reputations were made at court and fortunes won or lost at the bar. Paul censures the church members for entering this arena. Matters between the brethren should be settled amicably within the confines of the church. In addition, the attitude manifest in litigation for trivial causes did not exhibit the mind of Christ in the believers. Christ would rather allow Himself to be deprived or wronged.

The Corinthian believers, on the other hand, were still manifesting the character of their previous way of life in this matter. Rather than patiently enduring a wrong as Christ would, they were doing wrong. The apostle censures them sternly because they know better than this: "Do you not know" (verse 2) and "Do you not know" (verse 3) and again "Do you not know" (verse 9). "This expression is used often by Paul when he wants to bring to mind some important

truth his readers knew but disregarded."¹⁹¹ Looking at the passage in greater detail, we see that Paul picks up the word "unrighteous" (*adikoi*, verse 9) from the previous verse, "But you yourselves wrong (*adiko*) and defraud." The Corinthians treated standing up for one's rights, even in trivial matters, as an assertion of Christian freedom. It was likely the wealthy who went to court with high confidence of winning because they could afford the costs. The poor would have neither the bribes, lawyers' fees, nor court fees necessary for a successful suit in those days. What Paul labours to point out here is that unrighteousness in all its forms is a survival from the wretched past all Corinthians ought to have left behind them. So he says plainly, evil-doers such as you were cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Pagan religions tended to divorce religion from morality. One could be a devotee of many gods and goddesses and scrupulously perform many religious rites without changing lifestyle. Some converts may have been prone to look upon Christianity as just another religion. "The closest to what we call religious conversion among ancient pagans was joining a philosophical sect where ethical and moral demands were made on the person."¹⁹² Using the vice list format, Paul begins to enumerate the evils that should belong to the past of any Christian. It is possible that some in the Corinthian Church were advocating the idea that the

¹⁹¹ C. Hodge, *Commentary on the first Epistle to the Corinthians*. (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), P. 94.

¹⁹² A.D. Nock, *Conversion, the Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

deeds of the body were irrelevant to salvation. Paul warns them, "Do not be deceived," there was danger that some were being deceived or led astray by a form of gnostic teaching that considered the body intrinsically evil and not subject, therefore, to redemption. Again, this view may have appealed to the few aristocratic families in Corinth since it allowed them to justify their customary lifestyle, one they enjoyed and could well afford. Such people would have taught that faith in the heavenly Christ and knowledge of the true nature of the things were sufficient for salvation.

Paul enumerates ten kinds of offenders. They represent sins no doubt prevalent at Corinth, but the list is largely conventional. Of the first five, three (or four) are sins against purity. Fornicators or immoral persons, adulterers, and homosexuals are the first three in some versions. Idolaters usually are mentioned separately and second in the list. "Homosexuals" is in some ways a misleading translation. As the RSV footnote points out, the word is a translation of two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. "The translation and meaning of these two words is vigorously debated. The primary meaning of *malakos* is "soft"¹⁹³ The word is used to describe fabrics (Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25), skin and many other items. It can be used of persons in the sense of "soft of nature", "delicate", or "tender". "In a more derogatory sense the word means "effeminate" or

¹⁹³ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek Lexicon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), PP. 1076-1077.

"voluptuous". Moffat translates the term separately as catamite and sodomite."¹⁹⁴

Catamite is usually defined as a boy used for pederasty.

Other translators see no connection at all with homosexual acts and suggest that "the word means loose, morally weak, or lacking in self-control."¹⁹⁵ These non-

homosexual translations are usually picked up by the prohomophile literature.

The idea at work here is that if the word *malakos* (soft) is not a reference to homosexual activity, then such acts are not a form of iniquity that prevents entrance to the Kingdom of God.

Many of commentators and lexicographers of the New Testament, however, "see this as a reference to passive homosexuals, that is those who yield themselves to be used for homosexual purposes."¹⁹⁶ Some quote Papyrus Hibeh 54, "And send

us also Zenobius the effeminate with tabret, and cymbals, and rattles."

"Effeminate" here equates to *malakos*. On this papyrus Dessmann comments,

"The word is no doubt used in its secondary (obscene) sense as by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians VI, 9. It is an allusion to the foul practices by which the musician eked out his earnings."¹⁹⁷ The fact that *malakoi* are mentioned between two other

sexual sins in our text lends weight to the argument that "softness" here is not

¹⁹⁴ J. Moffat, *A new Translation of the Bible* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935).

¹⁹⁵ J.J. McNeill, *The Church and the homosexual* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1976), P. 52.

¹⁹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), P. 61.

¹⁹⁷ Deissmann, P. 164, n. 4.

merely self-indulgence in general but, as the lexicographers, Arndt and Gingrich suggest, "males who allowed themselves to be used homosexually."¹⁹⁸

Finally, the point is sometimes argued that "if we were to take this catalogue of vices seriously, non of us would enter the Kingdom of God because we are all guilty, for example, covetous."¹⁹⁹ This conclusion completely overlooks the Biblical distinction between repentant believers prone to sin but striving against the inner and outer expression of it (see 1 John 1:6 - 10) "and unrepentant sinners, on the other hand, who follow a steady largely unresisted programme of deliberate disobedience (see 1 John 2:4; 3:6 - 9)"²⁰⁰ The constitutional homosexual is not barred from the kingdom of God any more than the inveterate adulter or the kleptomaniac. All, however, must resist the temptation to act out their impulses. As Paul says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Such reasoning would undermine any attempt at repentance or reformation in the church by arguing that "we are all sinners."

5.4.2 Meeting the Gnostic Approach

1 Timothy 1:8 -10. Now we know that the law is good, if anyone uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man

¹⁹⁸ Atkinson, P. 61. Also P.M. Ukleja, "Homosexuality in the New Testament," Bsc 140 (1983): 350-351.

¹⁹⁹ Mollenkott and Sconzoni, P. 70.

²⁰⁰ Lovelace, P. 96.

slayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.²⁰¹

Readers who accept the authenticity of the first epistle to Timothy usually date it about AD 63 -65. They believe that Paul dispatched it while staying in Macedonia shortly after a visit to Ephesus — in other words that Paul wrote the epistle between his first and second Roman imprisonments. A quick reading of the epistle shows that it is primarily concerned with the issues of the heresy and church order. The heresy seems to have been a form of Judaizing Agnosticism based on metaphysical dualism. Matter was held to be essentially evil, and God is the supreme good. Therefore God could have no direct contact with matter. A series of emanations was posited between man and God.

The danger of Gnosticism was not simply theological: it also had serious moral and ethical consequences. If matter is essentially flawed and evil and spirit/soul is good, then physical bodies are essentially evil. In ethical belief and conduct, this produced two results. First, if the body is evil it must be subjugated, thwarted, held down. This type of Gnosticism ended in rigid asceticism. But the same basic assumption, the evil nature of the body, could result in exactly the opposite ethical belief. If the body is evil then it does not really matter what one does with it. The body is unimportant; all that really matters is spirit. Therefore, a person may indulge his body in the most gluttonous, licentious, and uninhibited manner possible, and it makes no difference to salvation. If the body

²⁰¹ Bible. The New International Version, I Timothy 1:8-10.

will not be resurrected (2 Timothy 2:18), the deeds done in the body become irrelevant to the hereafter.

It is not hard to imagine the impact on the law of two such approaches. One group desired to be teachers of the law but understood neither what they were saying nor what they affirmed (1 Timothy 1:7).

Some of the false teachers evidently assumed that the law was designed for the righteous man and "urged their interpretations of it as necessary appendices to the gospel."²⁰² These false teachers forbade marriage and ordered abstinence from certain foods (1 Timothy 4:1,5). On the other hand, Paul finds it necessary to warn Timothy about those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, that is, "those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:4 -7). These men also opposed the truth, they are "men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith" (2 Timothy 3:8).

Against such a background, Paul affirms that the primary purpose of the law is to condemn sin. The law is good (Romans 7:16) if it is used properly, and its purpose for Paul in this context is to reveal and restrain evil. In this sense the law is good (*kalos*). In an ideal world there would be no need for law other than the

²⁰² A.E. Humphreys, ed. *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1925), P. 85.

love of God in the heart. But the present state of affairs calls for something quite different.

Paul then presents "a catalogue of sins which the law must identify and condemn."²⁰³ In keeping with the context, the list of sins enumerated here follows the pattern of the Decalogue in that they move from general to specific. First he addresses the "lawless and disobedient, or those who refuse to obey any law. Next are the ungodly and sinners or those who refuse to obey the law of God, followed by the unholy and profane who transgress specific requirements of the law."²⁰⁴ These relate to the first four commandments of the Decalogue. "Murderers of fathers and mother correlate to the fifth commandment, representing an extreme violation of it."²⁰⁵ "Man slayers represent the sixth commandment whereas immoral persons and sodomites apparently are cited as extreme examples of the commandment not to commit adultery."²⁰⁶ So the list continues; men stealers (kidnappers, RSV), the grossest kind of theft representing the eighth precept, liars and perjurers the ninth, and so forth. The key word in the passage is "sodomites" which is a translation of *arsenokoitai*. Most exegetes agree that this word refers to homosexual behaviour. It is not a question of disposition or temptation. We can make a

²⁰³ W. Barclay, *The letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon: With Introductions and Interpretations.* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), P. 42.

²⁰⁴ W. Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistle* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons 1924). P. 12.

²⁰⁵ D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), P. 61.

²⁰⁶ F.D. Gealy and M.P. Noyes, *I Timothy*: IB II (1955): 387.

number of significant observations about the vice list in 1 Timothy. First, the list deals with deeds: "only those sins have been enumerated of which the human law can take cognizance."²⁰⁷ The tenth commandment warning against covetousness is covered by the final words in the list "and whatever else" and probably reflects Paul's disinterest at this point in sins of the mind and heart.

Pornos, translated "immoral persons." Is a generic term in the New Testament for one acting against the virtue of chastity. Paul, however, specifies sodomite to be in the same category. Field remarks, "as an interpretation of the seventh commandment the parallel is striking. The implication is that homosexual conduct infringes the demands of the Decalogue as certainly as heterosexual adultery."²⁰⁸ We also observe that Paul never connects homosexual acts with cultic or ceremonial law, or prohibitions against idolatry as such. In this context we see Paul attaching to his prohibition the kind of normative authority assigned to the Decalogue. If this is so, there can be no doubt that Paul regarded homosexual acts as sin and a perversion of the order of human existence as willed by God." Even though within this catalogue of vices it is not accented as being especially horrible, as many moral theologies would make it appear."²⁰⁹

Scroggs suggest that 1 Timothy is not a condemnation of homosexuality generally or even pederasty as such but of that specific form of pederasty that involved enslaving boys or youths for sexual purposes and the use of these boys

²⁰⁷ J.H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1906), P. 28.

²⁰⁸ Field; P. 17.

²⁰⁹ Thielicke, P. 278.

by adult males. In this way this text is read to condemn only certain kinds of homosexual practices.

Although a scenario such as that describes was common enough in Paul's day, it does not follow that Paul is discussing it here. The context of 1 Timothy 1:8 - 11 is the use and abuse of the law. The general consensus of opinion among commentators is that this list is modelled on the Decalogue. For Paul there was a time and a place for the preaching of the law, and its precepts were to be set forth as "a means of awakening in human hearts the conscious need for salvation."²¹⁰

The law is basically for criminals and rebellious offenders. Christians, however, who enjoy the liberty of love and grace in Christ Jesus must never forget that liberty is not license. Paul makes this point in his remarks at the end of verse 10, "and whatever else is against sound doctrine." These words come as a surprise after a list of criminal offenders against the law. "Sound doctrine" (*hugiainouse didaskalia*), are words found more frequently in the pastoral epistles than anywhere else in the New Testament. This could be expected since the pastorals are filled with instruction. In this context, however, they show that for Paul the law was not merely for criminals but contained teaching intended for the normal rule of life. Thus the description "sound doctrine" denotes "wholesomeness or healthiness of true Christian doctrine."²¹¹

²¹⁰ C.R. Eerdman, *The Pastoral Epistle* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1923), P. 24.

²¹¹ Guthrie, P. 62.

The implication is that sound Christian teaching will not run contrary to the law of God. If it does, the law serves as a corrective showing that the moral nature is in violation of and in opposition to God's will. A person who thinks he is healthy may be shown by X-ray to be in mortal danger from disease. Likewise the law can point out sin and by so doing show man his need of righteousness, but law has no power to make him so. That is accomplished by the gospel.

As Quinn notes,

The upright believer is, on the other hand, not antinomian, anymore than he is a liar or a murderer (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9b). He does not reject all laws, divine and human. The point of the contrast here is that the law is "superfluous" for the believer who in virtue of the spirit and faith in Christ (cf. Galatians 5:22 - 23) already does and more than does what the law can only command.²¹²

The law and the gospel cannot be played off one against the other. Furthermore, scholars have shown that "the Decalogue has its theological and ethical foundation established firmly on the bedrock of the creation teaching of Genesis."²¹³ In other words, the appeal of the Decalogue is for men and women to live the lifestyle the creator intended for his creation. "And in that creation scheme, for Paul at least, homosexuality has no place."²¹⁴

We see that the three major references of homosexuality in the New Testament clearly condemn homosexual acts. Romans 1, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy,

²¹² J.D. Quinn, "The Pastoral Epistle on Righteousness," (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1982), P. 237.

²¹³ C.F. Henry, Christian Personal Ethics (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing C., 1957), PP. 27ff.

²¹⁴ Field, The Homosexual way, P. 17.

male with male sexual acts are considered immoral. In Romans Paul illustrates the depravity of the pagan world by reference to such acts. At the same time the context in which it is discussed and the words used to describe this activity demonstrate that for Paul it was an aberration in human sexual conduct, the result of the entrance of sin. Homosexuality was not a part of God's plan for the sexes. To say that "natural" refers to what appears to be natural to fallen humanity today is to miss the cosmic perspective of creation against which Paul writes. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to activities, which although part of the individual's past, now are to be given up as the Christ-like lifestyle takes command. Among them is the practice of homosexuality. Attempts to free the Greek words *malakos* and *arsenokoites* from the homosexual connotations are not convincing. The evidence is too strong that homosexuality is indicated by these words. We can only conclude from this text that the homosexual lifestyle lies outside Christian sanctification. This understanding is reinforced by the second mention of *arsenokoites* in 1 Timothy. Here the basic principles of the Decalogue are expanded and illustrated by listing various activities that the law forbids. The arrangement implies that the mentioned activities are forbidden, with the authority of the Decalogue standing behind the ban. This means that homosexual acts are forbidden by the same authority that prohibits adultery. Once more, attempts to limit the word *arsenokoites* to certain limited kinds of exploitative prostitution by linking the words *pornos* and *andrapodistes* with

arsenokoites are possible only if we dislodge the words from the context and consider them independently or in a compromising historical context.

Although there are only three major references in the New Testament relating to homosexuality, their meaning is clear. Homosexual acts are not a part of God's plan for the sexes. Neither are they a part of Christian sanctification which culminates with entrance into the kingdom of God. They are forbidden by the same authority that prohibits murder and adultery.

5.5 Secondary New Testament Texts and Homosexuality

Of the many texts in the New Testament interpreted as pro or anti homosexual statements, on closer inspection, most are not really relevant at all. As examples we will examine two or three of these borderline reference. Two texts in 2 Peter and Jude are virtually parallels, although one throws some light on the other.

2 Peter 2:6 -10. If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes He condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; and if he rescued the righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked (for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day, with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.²¹⁵

The second chapter of 2 Peter is essentially a warning against false teachers.

Verses 1 to 3 describe these false teachers and their heresies. The succeeding

²¹⁵ Bible, The King James Version, 2 Peter 2:6-10.

verses through verse 10 assure readers that ultimate damnation and punishment of the false teachers is certain. Three examples of previous punishment of the wicked and deliverance of the righteous are cited to confirm such assurance. First, the angels who sinned were consigned to pits of darkness to be kept until the judgment day. Second, Noah was rescued from the flood that destroyed the ungodly. Finally, according to our text, verses 6 - 10, Lot was rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah before the wicked cities were reduced to ashes. Lot does not appear in the Old Testament as a particularly righteous man. However, based on Abraham's pleading in Genesis 18:23 -33, we must conclude that Lot was one of the righteous whom God would not destroy with the wicked.

According to 2 Peter, Lot was wearied by the licentious behaviour of the wicked, therefore he was rescued by God from Sodom. The expression "licentious behaviour of the wicked" is a translation of three Greek words: "*aseligia* meaning "outrageous licentiousness" and "lasciviousness"; *anastrophe* which means "mode of life" or "conduct"; and *athesmos*, translated "wicked". *Athesmos* literally means "lawless" but differs from *anomos* which also means "lawless". *Thesmos* (here, from *athemos*) implies a divine ordinance or a fundamental law."²¹⁶

The point is that the wicked in their unbridled licence insolently disregard the most basic divine precepts. In verse 8 Peter repeats the theme that Lot suffered in

²¹⁶ J.B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. Jude and Second Epistle of St. Peter: Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Comments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), P. 125.

Sodom and heightens it with stronger language. What Lot saw and heard as he lived among them on a day-to-day basis tortured his righteous soul. The lawless deeds here are the deeds elsewhere described in Scripture as deeds of persons not subject to law, that is, of Gentiles (Acts 2:23; 1 Corinthians 9:21) or of law breakers and malefactors (Luke 22:37). Only verse 10 points up the same kind of licentiousness Jude emphasised in describing the sin of the "sons of God" and of Sodom as typical of the sin of the Libertines. In verse 10 we read that God is able to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, especially those who indulge in the "lust of defiling passion." Lust of defiling passion is variously translated as "lust of defilement", "lust of pollution or polluting desire". All are translations of *epithumia miasmou*. Alford comments, "Here, all following after unlawful carnal lusts is meant ... hankering after unlawful and polluting use of the flesh."²¹⁷ It seems that those troubling those who worshipped God did so not only with false doctrines but also gross immorality.

The mention of Sodom and the strong language used in a number of these verses has led some commentators to think the apostle has in view here "the darker forms of impurity which were common throughout the Roman Empire (Romans 1:24 - 28),"²¹⁸ that is, homosexual lust. Peter's descriptions, however, are general and quite diffuse. It is possible that since he mentions Sodom and puts emphasis

²¹⁷ H. Alford, *The Greek Testament 4*, ed. Chicago: (Moody Press, 1968): 406.

²¹⁸ E.H. Plumtre, *The General Epistle of St. Peter and St. Jude: with notes and Introduction*. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1926), P. 181.

several times on sexual sins, he intends to include homosexual acts also, but we are not justified in singling out homosexual acts as alone intended by these verses. All sexual sins are included as well as the other lawless deeds of the people among whom Lot chose to live.

Jude 7, 8. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these men in their dreams defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones.²¹⁹

It is generally accepted that the Jude who wrote this epistle is probably Jude the brother of Jesus, but it is not clear to whom the epistle is addressed. It is concerned with disruptive elements in the church, mostly a form of gnosticism, as in 2 Peter. Hints of gnostic heresies appear in Colossians, the pastoral epistle, and Revelation. This kind of heresy was spreading through the churches of Asia Minor, and this epistle may have been sent to one or more of the churches there.

The writer begins what looks like a regular epistle intended to confirm the faith of the believers. Then he urges them to defend the faith against certain intruders and begins to expose the nature of these culprits by showing how they parallel earlier rebels against divine authority in Old Testament times. He assures the faithful that a similar fate awaits these contemporary rebels.

Concerning the parallel passages in 2 Peter and Jude. It is not possible to determine whether 2 Peter used Jude or vice versa. Our text is one of the parallel

²¹⁹ Bible, New International Version. Jude Chapter 7 and 8.

passages where Jude, like Peter, is explaining how sinners and rebels against God in antiquity were duly punished. The two lists are clearly related - both mention the fallen angels reserved unto judgement. Jude does not mention Noah and the antediluvian world but moves to Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, five in all: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zoboim and finally Zoar, which was spared due to Lot's pleading (Deuteronomy 29:23; Genesis 19:19 - 30). Lot himself is mentioned in Jude. These cities "acted immorally" (*ekporneusasai*) a term encompassing all kinds of immorality. The intensive use of the preposition *ek* suggests that immorality was practised "to its fulfilment, thoroughly, without reserve."²²⁰ Then, we are told, they "indulged in unnatural lust." This seems related to Paul's use of "unnatural", giving appearance of being a statement about homosexual acts. The original text, however, does not lend itself to this interpretation. It reads literally, "They went after other flesh", "other flesh" meaning flesh of a different kind (*heteros*). The two interpretations of this phrase are possible, both appearing in different translations of Jude 7:

Remember Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring towns; like the angels, they committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts [NEB].

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion [NIV].

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust [RSV].²²¹

²²⁰ Alford, P. 532.

²²¹ Bible, New International Version, Jude Chapter 7.

The NEB and RSV translations tell us that the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah paralleled the behaviour of the angels mentioned in the previous verse. But that previous verse does not say specifically what the angels did; it says, "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him ... in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day" (verse 6).

Many commentators, however, relate verse 7 to Genesis 6:1 - 14 especially verse 4, which reads, "The Nephelim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown" (RSV). Here the "sons of God" who "came in to the daughters of men" are interpreted as angelic beings who have intercourse with human beings. This assumption is carried to Jude's statement as well. Interpreters often assume that Jude is dependent on the non-canonical 1 Enoch for its ideas here. Clearly, Jude is familiar with pseudepigraphical works. He refers to the Jewish literary work, Assumption of Moses in verse 9 and actually quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in verse 14. First Enoch 6 is a tale of the fall of the angels based on Genesis 6: 1 - 4, passages in 1 Enoch read as follows:

1 Enoch 6:1,2. In those days, when the children of man had multiplied it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said

to one another, "come let us choose wives for ourselves from among the daughters of men and beget us children."²²²

1 Enoch 7:1,2. And they took wives unto themselves, and everyone (respectively) chose one woman for himself, and they began to go unto them. And they taught them magical medicine, incantations, the cutting of roots, and taught them about plants. And the women became pregnant and gave birth to great giants whose heights were three hundred cubits.²²³

If Jude simply follow these stories and claims that the sodomites followed in the same manner as the angels, then, it is argued, he is not talking about homosexuality. "Thus the "other flesh" the sodomites went after was that of the angels, just as the angels in 1 Enoch went after the "other flesh", that is, woman."²²⁴ According to this account impurity as well as pride was involved in the fall of the angels, and Sodom represents an identical reverse repetition of their fall.

Another interpretation proposes that Jude refers to the apocalypse of Enoch without intending an exact comparison with it in every detail. Following this interpretation, the experience at Sodom was similar in certain ways to that in 1 Enoch. The angels went after that which was not divinely intended for them, and the men of Sodom did likewise. Unquestionably Jude uses the legend of fallen angels in 1 Enoch as some sort of analogy to Sodom and Gomorrah. His allusion

²²² E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubledau

²²³ *Ibid*; P. 16.

²²⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistle of Peter and Jude* (New York: Harper and Row Publications: 1969), PP. 258-259.

to the story illustrates parenthetically the similarity between the judgment of the angels and that of Sodom.

This interpretation gains certain credence by the fact that there are basic differences in the two accounts. In Genesis 19 the men of Sodom apparently were unaware that Lot's visitors were angels and could not be accused of knowingly desiring celestial beings. But they did perceive of them as men and could be accused of desiring them as such. On the other hand, the angels in the 1 Enoch account of Genesis 6 knew that they were desiring and cohabiting with human beings. This aspect is neither accidental nor incidental in the 1 Enoch story. The NIV translation, "In a similar way," points to the affinity between the events of Genesis 19 and the 1 Enoch story without requiring an exact correspondence.

In the case of the angels the forbidden flesh (lit. "other than that appointed by God) refers to the intercourse with women; in the case of Sodom to the departure from the natural use (Romans 1:27).²²⁵

This interpretation of Jude assumes that he is using the 1 Enoch legend as an illustration or analogy to the Sodom experience. It need not be considered Jude's own interpretation of Genesis 6, in which it has at least two considerations in its favour.

First, it avoids interpreting Genesis 6:1 - 4 in a way that many readers of the Bible would find incomprehensible. The straightforward interpretation of

²²⁵ Mayor, P. 32.

Genesis suggests "cohabitation between human beings."²²⁶ Second, it forestalls a flat contradiction between Genesis 6:4 and the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:30, "for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." So it is not necessary to translate "Sons of God" in Genesis 6:4 as angels, but simply as men. For Jude the 1 Enoch legend was an apt illustration of the Sodom event.

Finally, with another "likewise" or "in like manner" statement Jude addresses his own day and those troubling the Church. Just as the men of Sodom could be compared with the angel legend in Enoch, so the heretics of Jude's day have parallels with the men of Sodom. "These men are dreamers of visionaries (*enupniazomenoi*). Not that they experience visions or dreams while asleep,"²²⁷ "rather here is a metaphorical depiction of liberties as having a "nocturnal blindness" to the true faith."²²⁸ Perhaps this is an illusion to the blind Sodomites groping for the door. They are the children of the night, mere dreamers. These men live as if they were in a dream. The word "dream", therefore, is connected with all three words that follow and not simply with "defile the flesh". The Greek construction does not support the KJV reading, "filthy dreamers." These men live in an unreal world. The result is an impurity not unlike that of Sodom,

²²⁶ See Nichol, P. 251, on the Misunderstanding of the word Nephilim, Mistakenly translated "giants" in the Septuagint(LXX).

²²⁷ See Moulton and Milligan, PP. 219, 229.

²²⁸ H. Balz, "Hupnos, etc" in TDNT 8 (1977): 553-554.

in a rejection of authority and in the reviling (lit. "blaspheming") of glorious ones (cf. 2 Peter 2:10).

The expression "defile the flesh" is too general to allow application to homosexual acts alone. In the New Testament *miaino* usually defilement, sexual immorality in general."²²⁹ Once more it is clear that writer is not singling out homosexual acts in these verses.

On the other hand, they cannot be entirely excluded. The reference to Sodom and to sexual irregularities calls to the minds of the readers the type of misbehaviour for which the city had become proverbial. "We must conclude, therefore, that in 2 Peter and Jude the full range of forbidden sexual relations is addressed and there is no scriptural basis for reading these texts as references to homosexual acts alone."²³⁰

Revelation 22:14,15. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.²³¹

In this final chapter of the New Testament, John the Revelator is describing the new earth and its inhabitants. He reminds them of the types of people who will be received into the new earth and the holy city and of those rejected, who remain outside.

²²⁹ R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1963), P. 110.

²³⁰ Coleman, P. 111.

²³¹ Bible, The King James Version . Revelation 22:14,15.

"Outside" does not mean that evil doers will be forever clamouring at the gates of the city, vainly seeking admission, but is akin to the "outer darkness" in Matthew 24, implying eternal destruction. "This thesis is strengthened in Revelation 21:8 where five of the six character traits mentioned are consigned to the lake of fire ("dog" is the only additional epithet in 22:15). "Outside" involves eternal destruction in the lake of fire."²³²

Among those outside is a group described as "dogs" (lit. "the dogs"), *hoi kunnes*. The word is sometimes regarded as an exclusive reference to homosexuals, or sodomites. This has been discussed from an Old Testament perspective, where we suggested that the word refers to a male cult functionary who may have been involved in heterosexual and/or homosexual acts.

"But it is unlikely that this is a cult functioning neither is it a special reference to the Sodomites."²³³ The word is more general here than in Deuteronomy 23:17,18 where it appears as a quasi-technical term for male cult prostitutes. In the Revelation text the general characteristics of the undomesticated pack-hound come more to mind. Such animals were pariahs and scavengers of almost anything. Such wild dogs ate the body of Jezebel (2 Kings 10:33 - 37) and befouled the streets and walls of the city. They licked the sores of beggars (Luke 16:21) and even worse (1 Kings 21:19; 22:38; Proverbs 26:11).

²³² R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), P. 394.

²³³ Diesterdieck, *A Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1887), P. 491.

In the Jewish culture of the First Century A.D Palestine, the term "dog" became an epithet for anyone morally and ethically disgusting. "The word appears in Scripture for various kinds of impure and malicious persons. It was used by the Jews in reference to the heathen (Matthew 15:22ff), to the godless in general,"²³⁴ and expressed utmost contempt. Barclay quotes a rabbinic saying: "whoever eats with an idolater is the same as he would eat with a dog."²³⁵ Among the Jews "dog" was a symbol of all that was disgusting and unclean. A comparison with Deuteronomy cannot be entirely ignored in connection with this text, however.²³⁶ From Jewish point of view, it refers to a thoroughly immoral, unethical person; and those who persisted in the practice of homosexual activity would fall within the prophet's purview. But John's vision is wider than that of Judaism.

As Beasley-Murray comments:

It is evident that for John the term relates not to the heathen over against the Jews, but to the godless of any nations in contrast to the men of all nations who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb (7:14 and 22:14).²³⁷

It is not correct, therefore, to apply this text exclusively to homosexuals. Just as the word *porne* once meant a cult prostitute but was widened in the Hellenistic world to include all kinds of fornication, so the term "dog" assumed a much

²³⁴ Sotah, 9:15.

²³⁵ W. Barclay, *The Revelation of John 2* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960): 290.

²³⁶ J. Moffatt, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," *In the expositor's Greek Testament 5*, ed. (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967): 491.

²³⁷ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, New Century Bible Series (Greenwood, SC: Attic press, 1974), P. 341.

wider meaning than a (possibly homosexual) cult prostitute and refers to a generally immoral person. Anyone tempted to feel smug at the thought that those who practise homosexual acts or are immoral and outside the city should read on, because sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, idolaters, and everyone loving and practising falsehood are also found outside. Impudent persistence in such activities confirms a rebellious attitude toward God.

We will not discuss numerous other texts quoted as evidence of gay lifestyle, sometimes to claim New Testament approval. Neither will we dignify with an answer the assertion that Jesus himself was a homosexual who:

Went around kissing, embracing and living only with men, who loved a younger man in a very special way, even allowing him to lay on his lap in public, who advocated pacifism, never legally married, wore a dress and longer hair, used expensive perfume, stayed up all night, was very close to his mother, advocated decriminalisation of non-violent sex crimes, often had clashes with the Law and the Church, and even spoke up for all kinds of eunuchs, "Canaanite dogs" and gay rulers.²³⁸

Hebrews 13:4 is sometimes cited as further evidence for the approval of a gay lifestyle: "Let marriage be held in honour among all." The emphasis is placed on "all" and interpreted to include homosexuals.

Mathew 5:23 is interpreted to mean, anyone who calls his brother a "queer" is in danger of hell. The man who assisted Jesus in the preparation of the last supper was a homosexual (Mark 14:13) for by custom only women carried water jars. Jesus approved of the homosexual centurion's relationship by healing his young

²³⁸ P.R. Johnson and T.F. Eaves, *Gays and the New Light*, (Los Angeles: P.R. Johnson, 1982), P. 93.

male companion (Matthew 8:5 - 13). The Greek word *pais* used in the text is used to describe a same sex relationship. It is claimed that any Greek male in that culture would use the word to refer to his young lover. Some theologians suggest that Jesus had a sinful human nature just like ours (Heb. 2:14, RSV), that he was tempted in every respect as we are (Heb. 4:15,RSV). If Jesus is to understand us in our sinful condition and if we can overcome as he did, then Jesus must have been tempted homosexually. That is to say, he must have had a genuine homosexual inclination.

Conclusion

We conclude that the secondary references to homosexuality in the New Testament do not refer specifically to homosexuality at all. The three references examined are general, vague, and diffuse and none of them is a genuine reference solely to homosexual activity. Therefore any attempt to isolate homosexuality as the sin condemned in these verses is an inaccurate and misleading use of Scripture. Though homosexuality may be included within the context suggested by these writers, so are many other sins, both sexual and non-sexual.

The following chapter of this research will focus on the analysis and conclusion of this topic of homosexuality in East African culture and the Bible.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCHER'S ANALYSIS

In this chapter I intend to make a few observations as a summary of the research on homosexuality in the East African cultures and the Bible. I will start with the East African cultures by explaining a particular manner of evaluating homosexuality in the name of Africanness. I wish to propose that it is in the context of this seemingly paradoxical link between sex and culture, as distinct from individual choice, that we must place misunderstandings of homosexuality in East African cultures today.

The view of most people in East Africa, including conservative Christians, that there was no homosexuality in pre-colonial African culture is sustained by the assumption that if it can be shown that no homosexuality existed in East Africa prior to the coming in of the Western cultures, then it should be proscribed and any person who happens to practice it can be easily labeled a deviant. Also a different view is possible: If it can be demonstrated that there were such practices in East African traditional societies, any evidence of homophobia, whether cultural or political, can be shown to be capricious and baseless. These two views are united in the assumption that the legitimacy of sexual desire is derived from its location within culture.

The two views mentioned above cannot, of course, be disposed of in purely theoretical terms. The denial that there was any homosexuality in the traditional societies in East Africa takes place in the face of the continuing experiences of

social and religious conversions to which the people of East Africa have been subjected since the arrival of the agents of modernity. One of these has been a whole new way of thinking about the morality of sexual activity, which missionary Christianity introduced into Africa. I hope that this statement will not be seen to suggest that Christianity has been responsible for the introduction of homosexuality. The point is rather that in making its own ethical orientation on sexuality explicit, it allowed the possibility of talking about sex openly in cultures where moral codes on the subject were very largely worked out in silence. Once the silence had been broken, it was not difficult to begin to envisage other kinds of discourses which were not necessarily part of the Christian outlook. These new discursive opportunities opened the way for more than just a religious understanding of morality. To the extent that Christianity facilitated the establishment of Western modes of thought and behavior, it also paved the way for the introduction of social and cultural practices which were in many respects unknown in Africa.

This can be seen in the ways in which the effects of Western culture have become inscribed in different aspects of African reality: politics, economics, culture, language, religion and morality.

The advent of modernity in East Africa thus represents, at least initially, a moment of uncertainty, which is then precipitated into a cultural crisis by the shocking recognition of its largely disruptive effects. I would like to suggest that within such a context African people were obliged to make certain choices

regarding social and moral matters in order to find refuge from the anomie inflicted on it by modernity. The statement that homosexuality is new (foreign) to Africa, whether true or not can thus be understood as the moral cry of disoriented egos. For is it not the case that that which is alien, particularly if it is both linked to something familiar (such as homosexuality to sexuality) and plays such a fundamental role in the organization of social structure (as sex undoubtedly does in African society – witness the system of bridewealth), always brings about uncertainty and disorientation?

The claims that many have advanced that homosexuality never existed in traditional East Africa can be seen, on this account, to express a basic confusion between homosexuality as it is manifest in individuals today as an activity linked to choice and sex as an expression of culture. One characteristic of this confusion is that what is culturally recognized is used ideologically to deny any other activity which, whether it actually occurs or not, is deemed ‘perverse’ by virtue of standing (or rather of being placed) outside the circle of the culturally acceptable. This is simply to suggest that something is not necessarily immoral because it is culturally unacceptable nor can the existence or non-existence of an activity in a certain culture simply be predicted upon what is considered publicly legitimate. The assumption then is that because Africans did not know the existence of homosexuality, it is therefore morally problematical. And vice versa: something being African is equivalent to it being morally legitimate.

After going through this study, one can conclude that there is no customary usage to render the putative non-existence of homosexuality in African culture as an approximate of anything immoral. This can be shown quite clearly. The very denial that such a practice ever existed traditionally removes the possibility of any such metonymic approximation. Therefore African cultures/traditions cannot be used to judge a practice with which it was unfamiliar with since to do so would imply either familiarity or the fact that African traditions/cultures is a moral category, one comprehensive enough to cover all unforeseen cases. But we know that African cultures, whatever else it may be, is not a moral category. Yet those who employ it to proscribe homosexuality in its name are involved in an ideological move which is intended to secure some moral high ground against alleged perversion. The ideological character of this move can be brought out in several ways.

I. There is the absolutisation of heterosexuality, which is read back into African identity. The argument against homosexuality is made to take on a historical form which gives the appearance that culture has developed in such a way as to guarantee the moral uniqueness of heterosexual practices. Heterosexuality is then presented as historically or culturally valid while homosexuality is deprived of any historical validity.

II. The way in which the Africans argue against homosexuals is ideological is in its implicit rationalization and justification of particular forms of heterosexuality (polygamy, the pledging of minor girls to much older men, and the practice of

inheriting the wife of a deceased sibling) in the absence of any recognition of the problematical nature, particularly in the experience of women. The point here is obviously not that an ideal form of heterosexuality would justify homophobia but rather that the 'Africanists' reduce the morality of heterosexuality to the sexual act.

III. The third sense in which explaining homosexuality away in the name of African identity is ideological can be seen in the partiality with which those who use Africanness for this purpose use tradition. It is tradition, or rather the historical absence of a certain practice within tradition, that is used to deny the cultural legitimacy of that practice. Historical absence, whether imagined or real, is then taken to be synonymous with 'otherness' or foreignness. Clearly this is an imagined 'other' since its identity is nothing but the shadow of a reconstructed absence, yet the rejection or critique of 'otherness' in this is highly selective. African homophobes do not reject everything foreign or everything they claim to be foreign. And this make many fail to understand the fairness of those who condemn homosexuality in the name of Africanness.

As a result of the failure of East African culture to provide an adequate basis for the evaluation of homosexuality, the question remains whether the Bible can provide such a basis.

Going back to the Bible you will notice that, homosexual practices were well known in antiquity. In nations contiguous to Israel, they were known and practiced with few restrictions, as was bestiality. Extant literature provides

evidence that homosexual acts played a part in some religious cults in the ancient Near East. Female dress, eunuchism, and the accoutrements of women often were employed as well. For these reasons Israelite warnings and restrictions about male and female dress, homosexual acts and bestiality were not a figment of national imagination but addressed the situation at hand.

The Old Testament presents the male/female relationship as reflecting the full image of God in man. Marriage and sexual relationships take place within this male/female bonding as described in Genesis. For Jesus and Paul Genesis constitutes the normative, natural, and God intended pattern for sexual relations. The Old Testament's negative judgment on homosexual acts is consistent with this position. Both Genesis Chapter 19 and Judges Chapter 9 condemn more than homosexual acts, however. Other sin accompanied with violence also led to the judgements described in these passages. Homosexual acts cannot be isolated as the sole cause. But I disagree with any conclusion that dismisses homosexual acts from the sin of Sodom and Gibeah.

The prohibition in Leviticus clearly opposes same-sex acts. Arguments that try to connect it exclusively with idolatrous homosexuality are not convincing. Neither are arguments that limit the texts to demands for ritual purity rather than moral purity. We cannot relegate these prohibitions to Levitical purity laws disregarded by early Christians as not morally binding. Translation of the *‘ebah* with the Greek *bdelugma* ("abomination") in the Septuagint supports placing homosexuality in the ethical moral category, not merely the cultic. And the claim

that *yada*^c ("know") means "get acquainted with" rather than "sexual intercourse" in the Genesis Chapter 19 account of Sodom does not stand. On the basis of the historical background, "cult prostitutes" and "dog" in the Old Testament are seen as having a probable homosexual connotation. The possibility of cultic homosexual elements cannot be completely eliminated from these words in their Old Testament context and historical setting. Other texts that purportedly represent homosexual relationships in the Old Testament are less clear upon close examination. The David and Jonathan and Ruth and Naomi experiences, when studied in context, do not really support a homosexual interpretation, as is claimed by some. A brief exegesis of these passages shows that not only is a homosexual interpretation not required, it is not the one most compatible with the context. The one story in the Old Testament where a homosexual interpretation may be correct is the case of Ham and Noah. But this is scarcely cast in a good light by the Biblical narrative.

In moving from East to West we find that in ancient Greece homosexual activity was a convention regulated by certain laws and traditions. Probably it came to the Greek mainland from Crete via Sparta, where it was connected with military training and comrades in arms. In later Greek and Hellenistic times military training of the young took place in the gymnasium and pederasty became the inheritance of the gymnasium. In some of these academic relationships the erotic element may have been sublimated and the improvement of the youth by the

elder male purely an intellectual and spiritual exercise. At its best the relationship may have been "platonic" in the modern sense of the word.

However, the tradition in which another man educated one's sons and was repaid by sexual submission of the son to him if he so desired carried the potential for much mischief. For those not guided by the philosophical-theological ideals of Plato, it degenerated into preoccupation with physical beauty and sexual excitement.

In the Hellenistic world, both the manly pederastic ideal of the West and the effeminate cultic homosexuality of the East existed side by side. The Romans tended to identify homosexuality predominantly with the latter, and the worst forms of homosexual violence and exploitation are documented for this period. The pagan moralists themselves entered into a debate about its good or evil aspects. A great many Hellenistic writers, especially Stoics, considered all such acts unnatural. Others defended the more refined forms of homosexual activity. Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity both condemned homosexual acts, also speaking of them as unnatural, but from a Biblical, theocentric creation rather than from the logos-based ethical doctrines of the Stoics.

The core of Paul's condemnation of homosexual acts in Romans is that they are unnatural. They cannot be understood as a part of God's providential ordering of nature in creation. Elsewhere Paul refers to homosexual acts as sin, and as we have pointed out, it is significant that the context of homosexual acts in the New Testament is the vice list. Such lists consist of qualities and activities not to be

found in Christians. Although people cite numerous texts to condone or condemn homosexual acts most of them do not apply. Although homosexual acts may be included within some of the references, their limitation to homosexual acts alone is unwarranted.

In this dissertation you will notice that a high view of Scripture is assumed, approached from a conservative protestant exegesis and hermeneutic.

Regarding homosexuality itself, I personally would like to point out that, after taking into consideration all the arguments put forth, it is very clear that no one really fully understands its causes, whether it is a physical, mental, or psychosocial phenomenon. Indeed, it may be a combination of all three.

From an ethical, moral standpoint conservative theologians see it either as an aberration or a condition that fits into one of the following categories: as I would discuss them here below.

First, there is a group that agrees that such a thing as a homosexual "condition" exists. According to them, this condition is part of the general evil which has existed since the fall of man. It falls in the same category as chronic diseases such as diabetes or arthritis and therefore a person is not responsible for a chronic disease, and often its causes are unknown. Only when a person deliberately aggravates the disease can he/she be held responsible for the consequences. If the disease itself provokes some kind of mental impairment, even this responsibility may be disqualified. As a result many East African and theologians, separate the so-called "homosexual condition", sometimes called

inversion or constitutional homosexuality, from the homosexual acts themselves. The condition, possibly multi-factorial in origin and of unknown cause, must not be considered the direct responsibility of the individual. Consequently, the homosexual who has the condition but who does not act out his/her impulses is not to be condemned in any way. For these theologians, then, not only should the person not be condemned, the non-practicing primary homosexual should be welcomed into the church as a Christian brother enjoying all the rights and privileges with the other members. "Such an individual struggles against sinful desires as do other church members and is not to be treated as a second class citizen."¹ Nor is such a person considered sick in the radical sense of the word, at least no more than a controlled epileptic, diabetic, or haemophiliac. Such a person struggles with a special problem, with which he/she learns to live, work and give a Christian witness. Naturally the analogy between the chronically ill and homosexuality is not complete. Most of the chronically ill can be diagnosed and receive therapeutic care to control a definite pathological condition. The homosexual generally has no recognized pathology or treatment. He/she must control desires for the same sex by choice and with the help of God. Apart from this attraction to the same sex, the homosexual may be as healthy or healthier than the next person.

Because the homosexual does not seem to be "ill", and because the question seems a matter of choice, homosexuals usually do not receive much sympathy.

¹ K.S. Kantzer, "Homosexuality in the church," Christianity today (April 22, 1993), PP. 8-9.

What I want to say at this point is that the attraction and desire may stem from a very early age. Once the person reaches the age of accountability, however, he/she is responsible for how he/she expresses or controls those desires.

Second is a group of people holding that homosexuals are sick. Possibly it stems from psychological factors or some early psychological maladaptation. Many theories are propounded about the exact mechanism or mechanisms. But these theories are not mutually exclusive, for there is a core of consensus. Many modern homosexuals object to this estimate of their condition. They claim that such findings are based on visits of disturbed homosexuals to psychiatrists. In general, the population of homosexuals, they say, is no sicker than the general population of heterosexuals. If all heterosexuals were judged by those who visit psychiatrists, the heterosexual population would be deemed sick too. The main difference between this position and the first is that here the sickness or deviance is thought to be treatable. For the most part, the treatment consists of various kinds of psychotherapy.

Third, another group denies that homosexuality is a psychological or pathological condition at all. To them, what predisposes a person to same sex attraction is only the persistence of a sinful habit stemming from uninhibited sexual fantasies, both of which need to be repented of and abandoned. This group sees great danger in confusing sin with pathology, especially if the pathology becomes an excuse for sin. For them, to postulate a pathology behind kleptomania, nymphomania, or inveterate adultery as excuse for those and other

evils opens the field to a wide range of evils justified under the guise of illness or diminished capacity.

Again, these remarks are aimed at homosexual acts. The proponents of this view make it quite clear that temptation to adultery does not make an adulterer; the act does so. Likewise, temptation to homosexuality does not define a homosexual, rather the act. This view utterly rejects the idea of a homosexual condition or that it is an illness.

It is quite clear that two of these views, the first and the third, consider same sex acts on the part of adults to be sin.² As a result, both of these views require a Christian homosexual, namely one having the condition, to live a lifestyle without same sex genital acts. For the primary homosexual who is not at all attracted to the opposite sex, this is tantamount to requiring a celibate lifestyle. As a minister of the gospel who believes that the Bible and the Bible alone should be the normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality I do favor the first and third views which almost mean the same thing. I do accept the idea that there maybe a mechanism – as yet unknown – which predisposes some individuals to homosexual attraction, but it is also clear that many are predisposed to same sex attraction because of their persistence in a sinful habit stemming from uninhibited sexual fantasies. The individual must not be held responsible for the condition or for early psychosocial factors that may

² Others argue that homosexuality is normal and therefore partially acceptable if done in a responsible manner, or fully acceptable in the context of “Love.”

strengthen the tendency. The individual is responsible, however, for same sex acts after the age of accountability. The condition may lie outside the individual's choice but the acts do not.

The fact is that this condition is a part of the general evil which has existed since the fall of man. Whereas the homosexual is not to be condemned and welcomed into the Christian church as a Christian brother enjoying all the rights and privileges with the other members, on the other hand, he should by all means struggle against sinful desires, repent and abandon them as do other church members. He must struggle to control desires for the same-sex by choice and with the help of God's power, he will overcome. Honestly there is a great danger in confusing sin with pathology, especially if the pathology becomes an excuse for sin. To inveterate adultery as excuse for those and other evils open the field to a wide range of evils justified under the guise of illness or diminished capacity and therefore the idea that homosexuals are sick should be ignored and rejected as confusing and misleading.

To argue that the acts are likewise determined and inevitable is to reduce the homosexual to the instinctive reflexive mating behavior of animals, which is unacceptable. Homosexually oriented individuals are human beings with the power of choice over their drives and desires. Since on Biblical grounds homosexuality is not a part of God's plan and intention for the sexes, the power of the will and the power of the choice must be exerted to inhibit such desires, not to enhance them. Although the causes of homosexuality are ill-defined, the

argument that homosexuality is due to some genetic or chromosomal defect has little support. The existence of identical twins, in homosexual the other not, keeps this thesis from gaining much credence.³ Post-natal hormone changes likewise have not shown much promise. The quantity of hormones in the bloodstream seems not to affect choice of sex partner, although it may strengthen the same sex drive.

All that we can say at the moment about the cause or causes of homosexual inversion is that in some homosexuals there may be an elemental and subtle biological factor predisposing to homosexual orientation. In itself, however, this apparently is not the sole cause of homosexuality. Subsequently social environment may enhance or discourage the tendency, but again the relevant psychosocial factors are not known. It is unlikely that a single mechanism underlies all forms of homosexuality. The biological rationale applies at best to a subgroup of homosexuals, and even if valid for this subgroup it is likely to be multifactorial. Homosexual inversion then appears to arise from multiple etiology — some homosexuals having more of one factor than another and vice versa.

Not all who practice homosexual activity have an overwhelming predisposition for the same sex. Some heterosexuals turn to homosexual practice for a "safe" sexual outlet. For other heterosexuals it provides thrills and variety. Others have

³ However, a higher degree of concordance (that is the appearance of homosexuality in both twins) has been found in identical twins than in non-identical twins (see Marmor, P. 5.)

a homosexual predisposition that vary in intensity and length of homosexual experience, in accordance with deep felt personality needs.

At the moment the most confusing aspect of the homosexual scene deals with claims and counter claims concerning the possibility of change in lifestyle and the reversal of homosexual inversion. People on both sides are equally convinced, earnest and zealous for their positions, either that change can take place — some testifying to changes in their own lives — or that change is all but impossible. The latter is of the opinion that those who claim to be changed, were never inverts in the first place. Clinical evidence indicates that older homosexuals with long experience are not good prospects for change.

The more liberal view, arguing that change is impossible, has been in the ascendancy for some time now. In a lecture before the Royal Society of Health Dr. Elizabeth R. Moberly suggested three reasons for this development.⁴ First is the growth of modern knowledge, second, the civil rights issue, and the third, "the relatively limited success of traditional attempts to cure or change homosexuals." For her, the third argument favors the liberal case and is entirely valid. She is convinced that there are genuine grounds for therapeutic pessimism with respect to homosexuality. She attributes this pessimism to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of homosexuality. She defines the homosexual conditions as one of same-sex ambivalence; a disruption in attachment to the

⁴ E.R. Moberly, "New Perspectives on Homosexuality," *Journal of the Royal Society of Health* (Dec 1985), PP. 206-210.

parent of the same sex. For her the classic "mother fixation" of many homosexuals is an effect rather than a cause. Therefore increased contact with the opposite sex is seen as irrelevant to solving the condition. What is needed, she maintains, is remedying of same-sex developmental deficits. Because the deficits stem from pre-adult development, the drive should be fulfilled non-sexually. "Some sex relationships are valid and legitimate, on a developmental perspective but it is not appropriate to express them sexually, again precisely because of their developmental character."⁵ She asserts that in the homosexual condition pre-adult psychological needs are being confused with adult psychological desires. The answer is not, therefore, merely abstinence from sexual activity; for sexual activity is only an inappropriate way of meeting a legitimate need for same-sex love. Dr. Moberly continues, "it is misleading to assume that the homosexual condition is essentially sexual, and to evaluate it as such. "The homosexual condition — although often an occasion for sexual expression — is in itself a state of unfulfilled developmental needs."⁶ Therefore the conservative demand that the developmental needs of the homosexual should not be fulfilled sexually should never be mistaken for a denial of the legitimacy of the developmental needs themselves. Pessimism about a change of orientation on the part of homosexuals, Dr. Moberly maintains, is due to a totally wrong approach to the condition. A different therapeutic approach might

⁵ Ibid, P. 208.

⁶ Ibid, P. 209.

produce quite different results. Total pessimism is not warranted, especially for young and relatively inexperienced homosexuals whose prospects for change are much more encouraging, even with current methods of therapy.

We must distinguish also between change of orientation and change of lifestyle. The homosexual should not be led to believe that all desire for and temptation toward same-sex acts will be quickly removed. Just as heterosexuals are subject to lustful thoughts and inordinate desires, so the homosexual may be also.

As Christians, however, we believe that the Lord can change what the world cannot, both for the homosexual and the heterosexual. This change will not take place until there is a reformation in both camps. Homosexuals who insist on and even glorify an active homosexual lifestyle need to rethink that position with respect to Christianity. The idea that all can be forgiven while the practice willfully continues is a cheap grace the church cannot accept. It becomes "the grace which amounts to the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs."⁷ Cheap grace is in this case powerless grace. It accepts justification, acceptance by God on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness. But it totally severs forgiveness from sanctification, the working out of righteousness in the actual behavior of the believer through the power of the word and spirit. Such a dichotomy creates a situation ethic that is inevitably antinomian. It is not surprising, therefore, to find some Christian oriented

⁷ D. Bonhoeffer, "The Cost of Discipleship" (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1959), P. 36.

homosexuals accepting an open-ended existentialist ethic in which the real value of man is unknown and yet to be discovered.

If the church accepts the idea of powerless grace it nullifies its evangelistic mission in the world. The gospel is no longer the "power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," and as Lovelace points out about such a church,

It should logically be prepared to tolerate many other forms of sin within the church which might cause neuroses if repressed. Compulsive adultery and fornication, compulsive racism and other forms of hatred acted out in physical hostility, compulsive disobedience to authority, compulsive theft and so on. The argument that sexual control is impossible for most homosexuals because they do not have the gift of continence leads necessarily to the church's encouraging premarital and extramarital sex among single persons, the divorced and the widowed. Neither the Bible nor the common convictions of Christians support the implication, and we must conclude that where there is responsibility to the continent God will supply the gift.⁸

The pro homophile literature written in a Christian context over-emphasises love and the Spirit at the expense of the Word. It is true that without these the church is a dry, lifeless husk. But it is equally true that the church without the objective word of God is a ship without a rudder. It simply rides out the swells of world events, facts, and opinions with all the other flotsam and jetsam until it is beached or smashed on the rocks. Uncontrolled and drifting, it has no means of directing its course.

For the church to try to function ethically without objective information from God concerning His will means it is dead in the water without chart, compass, or

⁸ R.F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality and the Church* (Ols Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1978), P. 75.

any real way of steering itself or anyone else. With both Spirit and the Word, the church has power, a means of direction, and can safely find a passage between subjective antinomianism and the rocks of legalism. Homosexuals need to reconsider the cultural, ethical, and scriptural passages in both Old and New Testaments that relate to homosexual behaviour. Exegetical and hermeneutical attempts to displace the plain meaning of these passages and a too simple reliance on the exegesis and arguments of scholars who support their opinions will not help. Rather than make other human beings masters of their consciences, homosexuals in the Christian context need to study the Scriptures for themselves. Then they will recognise that many pro-homophile arguments are "strained, speculative and implausible, the product of wishful thinking and special pleading."⁹ Not all reforms, however, need to be made in the Christian-oriented homosexual community. Straight heterosexual members of the church need to take a good look at their attitudes as well. The heterosexual church needs to set its own house in order as far as sexual mores are concerned. The dizzying pace of marriage, divorce and re-marriage, the increase of one-parent families due to pre-marital sexual activity and other liberalizing tendencies in the sexual lifestyle of heterosexuals place the church in a poor position to preach to gays/lesbians.

Many homosexuals are convinced that increasingly permissive sexual attitudes in the Church will in time lead to acceptance of their sexual behaviour. It is

⁹ Ibid, P. 133.

difficult for many Christian gays/lesbians to understand why they are scapegoats for sexual sins in the church. Is adultery or fornication less culpable than homosexuality? The church must become serious about all sexual immorality or it has a weak case against the homosexual and stands accused of rank hypocrisy. On the other hand homosexuals need to realise that two wrongs never make a right.

Secondly, the church needs to come to terms with homophobia and some of its ultra-conservative Knee-Jerk reactions even to the mention of homosexuality. Homophobia is a fear and hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality. As with most phobias, it is unreasoned and unreasoning. As with race prejudice, homophobia is often a transferred hostility. The homosexual becomes a convenient whipping boy on whom old fears, hurts and anger may be safely focused. Hatred of homosexuals may mask insecurity about one's own sexual identity. Christian concern is missing.

Whatever its cause, church members need to rise above it and to foster an attitude of compassionate concern for homosexuals while at the same time they strongly disapprove of the active homosexual lifestyle. Many who lack a conviction of sin in their own lives and their need of the Grace of Christ for daily strength will find it difficult to do this. Christians who understand human frailty and know the power of sin will be able to empathize with the pain, hopelessness, and guilt, the loneliness and rejection felt by many exclusive homosexuals. They will understand also that for many homosexuals the condition is not the result of

voluntary choice and will begin to appreciate why numerous homosexuals from a religious background sink in despair to the verge of suicide and sometimes complete the act.

All of this does not suggest that Biblical and theological arguments put forward by homophile advocates should persuade the church to change its position on the subject. On the contrary, how the church relates to homosexuality may determine how it relates to all other questions of morality. As a prominent Jewish author put it this way,

When religion begins to adapt its norms to current practice, it succeeds in becoming "popular religion" of the kind the Bible fought against through all antiquity. It then surrenders its right to speak in the name of a higher calling. Moral law must apply even — especially — in the face of popular neglect. Religion must teach society; it must hold up for its moral ideals for which to strive, ethical and spiritual norms the neglect of which will give men a bad conscience. The direction some churches are taking today threatens to leave the majority religion in our countries shorn of its ideals, its challenge, its role as conscience and its courage. I fear that, in some measure, contemporary Christianity is reverting to its pre-Judaic roots by institutionalising the sanction of popular immorality.¹⁰

This statement also is a challenge to all Christian Churches in East Africa, especially the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The church cannot condone homosexual activity without betraying its moral, ethical, Biblical, historical, cultural and spiritual heritage. Its conscious acceptance of the authority and inspiration of Scripture would need to undergo such a radical, liberalizing

¹⁰ N. Lamm, "The New Dispensation on Homosexuality: A Jewish Reaction to a Developing attitude, Jewish Currents (January – February 1968), PP. 15 – 16.

change that the fundamental teachings of the Church would be left without foundation.

The consequences of such change with its ramifications for theological, ethical, and moral teaching might be labelled by some as progressive, calculated to enlighten the church and produce a more compassionate laity accommodated to the modern society in which it lives. But in reality such a move would be a giant step toward re-paganisation of the church. The resulting religion would not be a Bible religion or that of the prophets, the Lord or the apostles, and not Christianity except in name. The church must accept the individual of homosexual orientation who needs help and support and struggles against same-sex tendencies. But those who insist on and promote the active homosexual lifestyle as natural, normal, or even superior to heterosexual relations by that very act disregard and undermine the sole authority upon which the church's very existence and mission is based, namely the Scriptures. They therefore should not be accepted by any Christian Church as its members.

Having gone through the discussion of homosexuality in East Africa and the Bible I now turn to the conclusion of the research on what should be the normative basis for evaluating homosexuality in East Africa.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

At a Seventh-day Adventist Church camp meeting in East Africa a debate in a Bible study on the ethics of homosexuality as perceived by the Seventh-day Adventist Church generated four positions on the issue namely: the culturalist, rejectionist, reinterpretationist and the reaffirmationist. Unfortunately the debate closed without a definite conclusion as to what should be the normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality by the SDA Church in East Africa, whether the Bible, culture or both the Bible and culture and as to what theological ethical guidance does the Bible provides for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in the present-day context. Consequently leaving the church divided.

In the introduction of this dissertation I formulated the following hypotheses, which I set out to prove:

- i. East African cultures do not provide an adequate normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality.
- ii. The Bible should be regarded as the sole normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality.
- iii. The Bible teaches that God condemns homosexual acts and practices, but loves the homosexual person, as much as He condemns adulterous acts and practices but loves the adulterous individual.

Looking at the research problem as to “what should be the normative basis for the Theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa?” I would like to suggest that the combination of silence on homosexuality and sexuality in East Africa cultures before the arrival of the agents of modernity as discussed in this research together with the absence of written material (documentation) on the cultures and histories of the societies of East Africa and the continent as a whole, make it very difficult to access the traditional understanding of sexuality. Those who argue that homosexuality never existed in East Africa and that its cultures have always been against it base their arguments on assumption and not facts.

With all the arguments set forth, I find it reasonable to conclude that there is no adequate basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality at all in the cultures of East Africa. Therefore any argument that its cultures ethically condemns homosexuality should be ignored and rejected as baseless.

My conviction, after examining the Biblical arguments for and against homosexuality, is that: (i) The Bible opposes homosexuality and is definitive for what the church should think and do about it. Here the Bible stands as the objective revelation of God’s eternal will. God distinctly forbids homosexuality. (ii) The Bible opposes homosexuality, but it is one sin among many. There is no justification for singling it out as more serious than other sins castigated in the Bible. In this case homosexuality is a sin but not a unique sin – no worse than that of liars, thieves and drunkards and adulterers. (iii) The Bible opposes

homosexuality but specific injunctions must be placed in the larger Biblical context of the theology of creation, sin, judgment and grace. The heart of the Bible is its central message. This central message becomes a principle to evaluate other less specific or less essential parts of Scripture. In my opinion, the central message of the Bible, including the “good news” about God’s grace in Christ, does not imply that we should condone homosexual actions. It does expect us Christians to love and respect the homosexual as a person and fully accept and accommodate him/her as a fellow member of the church, struggling to be faithful to the ethical message of the Bible.

In my opinion all my hypotheses have been proved right in the dissertation. There is therefore also no reason to take leave of my conviction that the Bible, Old and New Testament, being the written word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, is the infallible revelation of God’s will. The Bible is the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history and therefore is central in any formulation concerning homosexuality, whether theological or ethical and therefore should be used as the only normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa. I therefore support the reaffirmation group in their argument that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sin and reject the rejectionist’s group who argues that the Bible is not the only normative rule, because the problem with them is that though they recognize the Holy Scripture

they freely subject it to unlimited human reasoning, making their interpretation highly subjective. This will be tantamount to re-writing the Bible not only on the subject of homosexuality but also on any other subject.

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