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1-800-611-8080 / www.cgom.org
 PO Box 54621, Tulsa, OK 74155-0621

The Mystery of Human Sexuality

It's all in the genes. No, it's a lifestyle choice. Who's right?

by James McBride

How we live out our sexual lives increasingly preoccupies not just the media but also the armed forces, governments - and even the church. Once upon a time an individual's sex style was personal. And if "aberrant" was swept into the closet.

Not any more. A debate now [2003] rages within the worldwide Anglican communion as to whether it is appropriate to appoint homosexual priests to the office of Bishop. A homosexual priest was recently approved for Bishop in New Hampshire. The Australian Uniting Church have voted to permit the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

We humans are intensely sexual - our survival depends on it! Whatever comparative statistical analysis may say about 'then and now', sex and all its beauty and all its abuse is now paraded in bold headlines.

Sexual Decay

A century ago statistics on marriage and divorce were not headline news. Or the level of sexually transmitted disease. Or the number of child abductions, cases of child abuse, rape, pornography. Such are now flaunted as if sex were a new discovery. Television is barely watchable, eyes are averted at the news-stands, certain newspapers avoided - at least by so-called 'moral prudes'. And hopefully by those who wish to follow the precepts of Jesus Christ.

The openness, however, certainly hasn't stemmed the tide of what used to be termed immorality and its sickening consequences. Britain, according to a Parliamentary Committee, is in the middle of a 'sexual health crisis'. Rates of gonorrhea and chlamydia have doubled in six years, syphilis has soared almost 500%. Over a million are being treated by sexual disease clinics. 'Sex' pervades our culture. What was once 'evil' is now 'good', and 'darkness' has become 'light' - just as the Old Testament prophets predicted (Isaiah 5:20).

Because of the abuse of human sexuality, sexually transmitted disease is almost epidemic, resulting in snowballing widespread infertility. (Health professionals firmly link much infertility with promiscuity - especially in the teen years.) AIDS is destroying millions worldwide, as is the vile practice of abortion. Immature kids ignore or don't realize that sex

leads to unwanted pregnancy with consequent burdens on themselves, families and society. And, encouraged by government and the media, the building block of a stable society, marriage, is in process of decay.

Sexual faithfulness excludes much heart-break. Infertility often results from 'sleeping around', especially among children - one in seven underage girls are infected with chlamydia ('the silent disease'). A new case every ten minutes! Disregard of this divine principle has serious consequences. Yet government agencies actively promote teen 'sexperimentation'.

Yet 'alternative lifestyles' are promoted as of equal value. The British Government has recently put forward a consultation paper proposing homosexual and lesbian liaisons should receive the full package of benefits available to married couples.

Age-old Problem

Undoubtedly sexual dysfunction has plagued mankind since we were evicted from Paradise. There always was violent rape, infants were incinerated (not in a hospital as today, but inside an idol as a burnt offering), adultery, f o r n i c a t i o n , homosexuality. It was all there.

But it was in Eden that the guidelines for human sexuality were first set before mankind. By our Creator. And perfectly tailored to the beings He had just created to perfection. Any

deviation from the divine guidelines for human sexuality will inevitably end in tears! We function best when we stick to those ground rules. Imagine a world where infidelity is unknown: no adultery or 'shacking up' or promiscuity. And no foul sexual disease, no divorce (or need for divorce lawyers), no pornography, no paedophiles.

Principles of Life

In respect of our sexuality God revealed vital fundamental principles, based on a single male-female partnership committed for life.

A man and a woman are to stay in partnership for life. Think of the grief avoided by this act of mutual self-discipline. Properly tended, a marriage can last until death, and can be joyous. But the widespread notion that marriage is just a temporary convenience leads to easy divorce with consequent 'serial marriage'.

In homosexual relationships, however, 'monogamy' is rare. While a few such long-term partnerships exist, yet over forty percent of homosexual men have as many as five hundred partners during their - shortened - lifespan. Most such liaisons don't last longer than two years.

Covenant-bound couples were created to produce offspring. God issued the self-limiting instruction: *'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth'*. The trauma and expense endured by naturally infertile married couples witnesses to this human desire to procreate.

(Jesus recognized, of course, that some few individuals would correctly choose to remain single and celibate.) Same-sex liaisons no matter how loving or long-lasting frustrate this divine instruction. If homosexuality were

universal - and an estimated one percent only of mankind is homosexual - it would end the human race in a generation.

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The Mystery of Human Sexuality

Divine Image

Only heterosexual relationships align with the divine plan for mankind. Our physical time-limited human condition is merely the 'clay model' which the Creator is shaping into His divine image - individuals who will live forever as a part of the divine Family. God reveals Himself as 'Father'. Jesus is His first-born Son. Men and women can become His children, brothers and sisters of Jesus and joint-heirs with him of the created universe.

God, in other words, is a Family. This relationship is reflected in His church, which is 'the Bride of Christ' (Ephesians 5:25-32). We were created 'male and female' - perfectly designed physically and emotionally only for a heterosexual relationship. The divine instruction was that each pair is to 'cleave to one another', partners - male and female - contributing to a unified whole, and neither complete without the other.

Battling Bishops

Debate over homosexuality has raged within the Anglican community worldwide for over a decade. A 1991 confusing statement made a distinction between homosexual practice in the general church populace and among the 'clergy'. It was deemed okay for the former, wrong for the latter. A line was drawn: homosexuality is acceptable but its practice is sin - if you are a bishop.

Sparked by the proposed appointment of an openly homosexual priest as a bishop, big clerical guns have been placed in battle order to defend both abstinence (evangelicals) and practice (the 'liberal wing' of the church). Schism has been threatened, especially from overseas bishops (Nigeria, West Indies, Indian Ocean). Both claim Biblical authority for their position! A surface unity evolved only when the homosexual candidate for Bishop withdrew in the English church.

The House of Bishops in the United States have now 'set the cat among the pigeons' by appointing an active homosexual priest as Bishop of New Hampshire. As of writing, the prospect of schism hovers.

But Is It Sin?

However Paul's words (Romans 1:26-32) are interpreted by those who seek solace in an interpretation contrary to their face value, there can be no doubt about the original divine

instruction in the Old Testament. Said God: "When a man lies with a male as with a woman, both have committed something perverse; they will certainly be put to death" (Leviticus 20:13). As Paul tells us: "The wages of sin is death".

(Remember - the only 'Bible' known to Paul and the first Christians was what we know as the *Old Testament*. The New Testament was yet to be written.)

mankind is perfectly designed only for a heterosexual relationship

Indeed the foul diseases and curtailed lifespan (up to twenty years below average) of practicing homosexuals bears witness to the destructive perverseness of the practice.

Hence Paul's urgent warnings that Christians must avoid such relationships - their eternal salvation is at stake (I Corinthians 6:9 *KJV*).

Male and female homosexuality is 'contrary to nature', Paul asserts (Romans 1:26), and an 'error' (v.27). It is not in our genetic inheritance, in other words, but is an acquired mind-set. It is a thought pattern that becomes fixed habit, spilling over into practice. It is - like adultery - learned behaviour and equally sinful. Says James: "Each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own lusts. Then, when the passion has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it reaches maturity produces death" (ch 1:13-15).

Homosexuality is, in the divine perspective, *sinful*. It is *not* to be contrasted with heterosexual behaviour but with defects in the latter - as, for example paedophilia, bestiality, narcissism, transvestism or promiscuity in and out of marriage. All are perversions of divinely intended sexual behaviour. There may well be some individual predisposition to any of these - but whatever it is has to be overcome. And there is victory through the power of God's Spirit.

But that is why Jesus Christ came, that our sin, whether it is envy or greed or adultery or promiscuity - or homosexuality - can be repented of and forgiven through the love that God has for us - expressed in the awesome sacrifice of His Son.

With the indwelling Spirit of God to strengthen us, a new pattern of behaviour can take hold. Wrote the apostle John: "If we confess our sins he is so faithful and just as to forgive us our sins - and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:8-10). There is hope for all sinners!

All of us have character defects. In general, homosexuals have since childhood unfulfilled emotional needs, and life's circumstances may for some have shaped an irrational detachment from and distaste for the opposite sex. Jesus addressed in principle the heart of the issue of human sexuality: even harbouring *the thought* of adultery is sinful, he says Matthew 5:27-30). That's a principle that applies, too, to homosexuality and all other human frailty.

Homosexual thought and practice can be - and has been - overcome. As with all sin, it can be forsaken and forgiven. There is hope.

Hope!

To enter that Family relationship with God is a matter of choice. God calls on all of mankind to choose the way of life He has revealed. It's time to resolve mankind's sexual enigma by a return to the basic principles of human relationships which are the foundation for life - for now, and for the endless ages of eternity.

But God requires holiness of life. Wrote the apostle Paul: "Be not misled; neither profligates, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor partakers in homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the avaricious, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor robbers shall inherit God's Kingdom" (I Corinthians 6:9-10).

The apostle doesn't stop there. He continues: "And some of you were just that [including, he says, homosexuals]; but you were washed and you were made holy and you were made righteous by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (v.11).

Virtually *all* sin can - upon repentance - be forgiven through Jesus Christ. To make sense of this life and to live forever everyone must forsake what God says is sinful, and turn to what is pure and holy.

There's no other way to become part of the eternal Family of God.

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