

EXTRACT FROM A STUDY PANEL REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, MAY 2012

The full report which also deals with Marriage & Divorce can be found on www.freechurch.org

3.1.1 *“Same sex marriage” Sex researcher Dr Alfred C. Kinsey published research on the sexual behaviour of men and women in the 1940s and 1950s which claimed that 10% of males were more or less exclusively homosexual and around 5% of women. However, this has been extensively challenged in recent years. This is summarised by Peter Saunders and Rachael Pickering thus: “For decades, researchers adopted Kinsey’s reported figure of 10% for the general incidence of homosexuality. Kinsey’s study had been poorly designed, using a nonrandomly selected population, 25% of whom had been prisoners. The figures stood unchallenged until quashed by contemporary research; a figure of 1-2% is now generally quoted.”* ¹³ and The Guardian reported on 23 September 2010 “Just one in 100 people in the UK say they are gay or lesbian... A further one in every 200 people is bisexual, according to the data published by the Office for National Statistics.” So that’s around 1.5%. The gay lobby seems to have a disproportionate influence in the media and politics compared to their numbers.

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3.1.2 It is not only the incidence of homosexuality that is controversial; the causes of homosexuality are also

hugely controversial even among homosexuals themselves. Generally from the 1960s onwards society has moved

from a medical understanding of homosexuality as a perversion to an acceptance that this is natural for some people. Lady Gaga's song 'Born this way' is just one example from popular culture of the expression of this view: "No matter gay, straight or bi / Lesbian, transgendered life... / I was born this way".¹⁴ The song also implies that whatever we are, we are just the way God created us. Saunders comments: "Many people are sympathetic to persons with same-sex attraction demand for a 'right' to marry because they believe that such persons were 'born that way' and can't change; therefore, allowing them to call their relationships marriages gives such persons their only opportunity for a recognised relationship."¹⁵

3.1.3 What is the scientific evidence? In an extensive study in 1995, editors John DeCecco and David Parker concluded, "Current research into possible biological bases of sexual preference has failed to produce any conclusive evidence."¹⁶ Saunders adds, "And since 1995 no new scientific, replicated studies have even claimed to find abiological cause for same sex attraction."¹⁷

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3.1.4 If the evidence is lacking to support the view that there is some genetic or other biological cause of homosexuality, is there evidence for environmental factors being a cause – nurture, rather than nature? Again here the evidence is not clear. Saunders comments: “While there will always be those who support one sole model of causation, most concede that many factors are involved. Heredity, environment and personal choice all play a part. This should leave us with a humble and open attitude, willing to learn more from scientific research and the testimony of skilled counsellors and gay people.”¹⁸

3.1.5 However, all too often the role of personal choice is ignored. Saunders states: “We are not solely genetic machines anymore than we are blank slates on which experience writes. At some point, every practising homosexual makes a choice to indulge in homosexual fantasy or to have gay sex. However, we must not make the mistake of ignoring the role of nature and nurture in making those of homosexual orientation what they are.”

3.2.1 *What is the Bible’s teaching?* In the beginning God created a human pair who were equally human, but different and complementary. This is God’s pattern for human sexual love – “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Nothing is clearer in the Bible’s teaching on sexual love than this stress that it is God’s will that human sexuality should be expressed only in the one-man-one-woman lifelong relationship of marriage. God did not create several Eves for Adam, or several Adams for Eve. Nor did he create another Adam for Adam, or another Eve for Eve.

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3.2.2 *Homosexual orientation* As we have seen, many see nothing wrong with homosexuality. They argue that the true homosexual is only acting in accordance with his or her nature. They are just born that way. Or it is just the way they were brought up. They are homosexual not by choice, but as a result of genetic or environmental factors.

3.2.3 So, does this mean that there is nothing wrong with homosexuality? If that was the way a person was created, should we not just accept that this is God's will for them? But what do we mean when we say "This is the way God has made me"? We have moved a long way from the original perfect creation. We have to reckon with the Fall as well. The world is not now as it was originally created. The human race has rebelled and fallen into a state of sin and misery. We are born into an already fallen imperfect world and we bring an already corrupted human nature with us. Our personalities are complexes of all kinds of sinful desires. No aspect of our humanity escapes unscathed.

Our sexuality is not immune. We may inherit various tendencies to rebel against God's order of things and we may respond in a sinful way to various evil influences we experience.

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3.2.4 Does this mean that we are absolved of all personal responsibility for any departure from the pattern laid down by God in our sexuality? No, no more than it does in the area of any of the other commandments of God – respect for life, property and our neighbour's reputation. When we have said all that can be said by way of understanding the causes of homosexuality, we have only explained some of the reasons for homosexual temptation, or orientation. We have done no more than what we could do in the case of heterosexual sin. We have not proved that homosexual acts ought to be excluded from the Biblical category of sin.

3.2.5 However, it is important that the distinction be made between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity. We cannot blame a person for being tempted in a particular direction, otherwise we could blame Jesus, because he was tempted in all points as we are. Yet it is made clear that he was without sin. Normally, the individual is not responsible for his temptation. But he is responsible for his response to it, and to avoid situations in which he may expect to be tempted.

3.2.6 *Homosexual activity* What has the Bible to say specifically about homosexual activity? In both Old Testament and New Testament homosexual acts are described as sins. Michael Vasey, in his influential book *Strangers and Friends*, looks at various biblical texts in his attempt to show that the Bible does not condemn homosexual activity as such. We will look at the main texts.

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3.2.7 *Leviticus 18:22, 20:13* “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable” (Leviticus 18:22).

“If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable” (Leviticus 20:13)

There is little dispute as to what these laws mean. Vasey agrees that 'these verses prohibit sexual intercourse between men.'

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However, there is no indication in the text that this is limited to anal intercourse, as Vasey suggests. It is simply homosexual sexual activity as such that is indicated - one man acting erotically with another. Where there is more serious divergence of views, however, is concerning the question of whether this prohibition still applies. Vasey argues: 'Firstly, it can be seen simply as part of an arbitrary purity code abrogated with the coming of Christ... Secondly, it can be viewed as a witness to an unchanging creation pattern for human genital acts. Thirdly, it can be regarded as some sort of combination of the two.'

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Vasey opts for the third, but does not make clear how the two can be reconciled. What is clear is that some aspects of the law are abrogated by Christ. Jesus abrogates the death penalty for sexual sin (not only in John 8:11, but also in his replacement of the death penalty for adultery with divorce, Matthew 19:9). In addition, he shows that the regulations concerning a woman's 'uncleanness' (Leviticus 18:19) are no longer valid, as he does not regard himself as contaminated by the touch of the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34). But neither the Lord nor his apostles indicate that homosexual acts are to be excluded from the category of sinful behaviour (any more than child-sacrifice and bestiality, Leviticus 18:21,23, are to be excluded.) Instead, there are clear statements in the New Testament to the contrary - homosexual sex is still regarded as sinful. Any approach which appeals to the New Testament's abrogation of any Old Testament command must be on the sure ground of being able to show that the command is specifically abrogated or fulfilled, or belongs to a class of commands (such as ceremonial or judicial) which is generally abrogated or fulfilled. This cannot be shown in the instance of the commands against homosexual sin.

3.2.8 *Romans 1.25-27* 'Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also

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abandoned natural relations with woman and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty of their perversion.'

Vasey attempts to lessen the impact of these verses by arguing that they are the culturally conditioned views of the Roman world by a Jew and that they are not referring to loving homosexual relationships. 21 Thi

s comes across as very special pleading. Romans 1-3 is a unit. Here Paul is showing that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). Paul shows the development of sin from the Fall and included in this development is homosexual behaviour. What is clear is that Paul is clearly describing as sinful, the abandoning by men of sexual intercourse with women, in favour of sexual intercourse with other men. It is this, together with his use of the expressions 'inflamed with lust' and 'committed indecent acts', that demonstrates that homosexual sexual activity is sinful. This ought not to be considered a culturally conditioned view, any more than the position that greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice and gossip are also regarded as sinful (Romans 1:29).

3.2.9 *1 Corinthians 6:9,10 'Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.'*

This passage particularly shows that God declares homosexual acts to be sinful. They are contrary to God's will and, along with all other sins, exclude the unrepentant sinner from the kingdom of God. It is argued by Vasey and others, however, that this, along with other passages in the Bible that appear to be talking about homosexuality are in fact not talking about stable, loving homosexual relationships, but about homosexual rape, religious male prostitution and pederasty. However, the key passages quoted above are quite clear. They use very plain language. They talk about lying with a man as one lies with a woman. In fact it appears that in 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul possibly invented a compound Greek word for homosexual (*arsenokoites*

), meaning precisely one who lies sexually with a man or one who beds a man when there were various other Greek words he could have used if he wanted to refer to homosexual rape, male prostitution or pederasty. Paul, or someone else before him, probably derived the term *arsenokoites*

from the Greek Septuagint version of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 where the terms

arsen

(male) and

koite

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(bed) are used.

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Paul's use of this word, linked with the clear command in Leviticus, makes it abundantly plain that it is all homoerotic behaviour that is prohibited. It is not just homosexual rape, male prostitution or pederasty that is wrong. It is homosexual sexual activity as such that is wrong. All attempts to avoid the plain meaning of the words appear as very weak special pleading.

3.2.10 So, on the basis of Scripture the Christian cannot accept that homosexuality is natural in the sense of being in line with God's will for us. The Bible teaches that a man and a woman are designed for each other sexually – they, and they alone, become one flesh. By contrast, both Old Testament and New confirm that homosexual sexual activity is included in the category of sin, along with the heterosexual sins of adultery and fornication. Vasey seems constantly to miss the point. He seems to think that the Bible, for cultural reasons, condemns certain sexual practices, such as anal intercourse, irrespective of the sex of those involved.²³ What the Bible makes clear is that homosexual sex of any kind is included in the category of sin, along with the heterosexual sins of adultery and fornication. The Bible recognises only one sexual relationship which has God's approval – that is, marriage.

3.2.11 *One sin among many* However, it must always be remembered that homosexual activity is only one sin among many. Yes, homosexual acts are among the sins that, if persisted in, exclude from the kingdom of God, but equally so do promiscuous heterosexual acts, theft, drunkenness and slander (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). There is nothing in the Bible that would single out homosexuals as worse sinners than any other sinners. Even if we accept that homosexual sex was one of the sins of Sodom we must remember what Jesus said to the city of Capernaum

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that refused to repent – ‘it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement than for you’ (Matthew 11:24).

3.2.12 Homosexual sex is sin, and as sin it brings its own judgement, even in this life. ‘Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion’ (Romans 1:27). Sin brings misery. Whatever a man sows that he shall also reap. But the Lord Jesus helped people with all kinds of diseases and troubles and sins without respect to how these may have been caused, and he resisted the judgemental attitude so prevalent in the society of his time (Luke 13:1-5, John 9:1-3).

3.2.13 The terms “homophobia” and “homophobic” tend to be used of anyone who dares to question the present politically correct views on homosexuality and same sex marriage. Homophobia comes directly from Greek and literally means “fear of the same” (cf. arachnophobia, fear of spiders), but has come to mean hatred of homosexuals. As Christians we are neither to fear nor hate anyone, but follow our Lord in his loving attitude to all kinds of sinners. Of course there is a certain irony in the use of the term homophobia. If it is indeed a condition, perhaps the “homophobe” was born that way, or his environment has caused his homophobia – he has not chosen it!

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3.2.14 *Good news for homosexuals* Homosexual sexual activity is sinful. But the Bible's emphasis on sin is not meant to drive us away from God to destruction and despair, but to show us our desperate need of the redemption accomplished by Christ and to call us to faith in him. After all, the Christian message is one of forgiveness and only a person who has done wrong can be forgiven. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, after listing the lifestyles, including homosexual ones, which exclude one from the kingdom of God, Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God".

3.2.15 Corinth was a notorious centre of all kinds of vice in the ancient world and some of the Christians had been converted out of such a vicious background. There were Christians who had been male prostitutes and homosexual offenders, but they had been transformed by the grace of God. They were freed from the vices that had once enslaved them. The gospel is a message of hope and the church is a community of hope. The church of Jesus Christ is made up one hundred per cent of moral failures. But they are moral failures who have been given a new life and a new lifestyle. All Christians, whatever their sexual orientation, are called to live a celibate life while single and to exclusive faithfulness within marriage.

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3.3.1 *Same Sex Marriage?* The sections on marriage from the Universal Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights are often referred to in this discussion. The relevant sections are as follows:

Universal Convention on Human Rights, Article 16

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family...

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

European Convention on Human Rights, Article 12 Right to marry

Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family, according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right.

3.3.2 Professor Hugh McLachlan argues as follows: *“What this says is that the rights pertaining to marriage of men and women should be the same. It does not say that men should marry only women or that women should marry only men.”*

This is really reading back into the text one’s own ideas. If that was really what they meant they would have said human beings (not men and women), and they would have said “without limitation due to race, nationality, religion or sex”.

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3.3.3 *Right to same sex marriage?* There are some things that we all have equal rights to – equality before the law, right to life, right to property etc. But we don't have rights to everything. You don't have a right to be a ballerina, or an opera singer, or a brain surgeon. Only those appropriately equipped, physically or mentally, can become one of those. A man does not have the right to bear and give birth to a baby – he is not physically (or psychologically) equipped for it.

3.3.4 Similarly, two people of the same sex have no right to marriage – because marriage is for a man and a woman. It is not just that this is the teaching of the Bible; it is the practice of the human race from time immemorial. Do we think that we can simply overturn the wisdom of the human race over thousands of years, and for there not to be destructive consequences?

3.3.5 It is generally recognised that our human rights are restricted by the rights of others. For

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instance, I have a right to freedom of speech. But my freedom of speech is restricted by the right of my neighbour not to be slandered.

3.3.6 Similarly with regard to marriage. If it is argued that we have a right to marry, that right may be restricted by the rights of others – for instance the right of a child to have a father and mother. This is something that is hardly ever considered. But a mother and father provide different kinds of love and care to a child, and people of the same sex simply cannot provide this.

3.3.7 However, in relation to single parent families, the question is not what may happen in life – children may be deprived of a parent by death, or by marriage breakdown, or by teenage pregnancy. But that is a different matter altogether from the State actually legitimising and encouraging the existence of fatherless or motherless children.

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3.3.8 The pressure from the gay lobby for same sex marriage and adoption of children comes because homosexuality is a biological dead end. Same sex couples are physically incapable of procreation. But they want to bring up children in order that their own values are passed on to a new generation. And of course by getting the right to marry, they get more respectability for bringing up children (they already have the right to foster and adopt). This is a huge social experiment, in which the guinea pigs are children. That is not fair or just to children and does not safeguard their rights.

3.3.9 In addition, the civil rights of homosexuals are already safeguarded through civil partnerships, so there is no real need for same sex marriage. It is really being pushed in a doctrinaire way by the gay lobby, without any consideration of the harm that it will do to marriage.

3.3.10 The whole idea of the State or Government redefining marriage is wrong-headed, if not oppressive. Sir William Scott said that marriage "is the parent, not the child of civil society."²⁴ Marriage existed long before the idea of the modern State. It does not belong to us as political animals; it belongs to us as human beings made in the image of God. We redefine it at our peril.

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END NOTES

14 <http://www.ladygaga.com/lyrics/default.aspx?tid=23592566>

15 <http://pjsaunders.blogspot.com/search/label/Sexuality>

16 *The Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol 28, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 1995, republished under the title *Sex, Cells, and*

Same-Sex Desire: The Biology of Sexual Preference, quoted by Peter Saunders,

<http://pjsaunders.blogspot.com/search/label/Sexuality>

17 <http://pjsaunders.blogspot.com/search/label/Sexuality>

18 <http://www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=article&id=630>

19 Michael Vasey, *Strangers and Friends*, Hodder, 1995, p.126ff

20 Vasey, p.127

21 Vasey, p.129ff

22 David Wright, *Sexuality and the Church*, ed. Tony Highton, ABWON, 1987, p.41, and *Homos*

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exuals or

Prostitutes?, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 38 (1984), ps.123-53

23 Vasey, p.139

24 Dalrymple v. Dalrymple, 1811. For the original record from the Consistory Court, 2 Hag Con 54, p.669, see

<http://www.uniset.ca/other/th/161ER665.html>