

# REASON & REVELATION

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## AN INVESTIGATION OF THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY

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Nothing less than “complete and total acceptance!” This often is the answer given when homosexual activists are asked what they are seeking from the public in general. Such activists equate acceptance with civil liberties and equality. They believe that those individuals who do not accept the homosexual “lifestyle” are committing the unpardonable sin—the sin of intolerance (see Bloom, 1987, p. 25). In fact, certain school systems today actively teach youngsters the idea that we must embrace every concept that society popularizes, else we will be unloving and intolerant. Thus, many children are quietly convinced from a very young age that if they do not give everyone “complete and total acceptance,” then they are bigoted and mean spirited.

Using books like *Heather Has Two Mommys* or *Daddy’s Roommate*, teachers have begun instructing that there are essentially no right or wrong actions when it comes to relationships and families. Anything goes, as long as “love” is the ultimate motivation. Consider the message that children receive when they sit in classrooms filled with pictures of family units composed of two female “parents” or two male “parents,” alongside a picture of a husband and wife. [James Dobson, of Focus on the Family, has suggested: “The number one issue for the family today is the homosexual activist agenda” (as quoted in Floyd, 2004, p. 49).] Homosexual activists argue that some homosexual couples show **more** love than heterosexual couples, so where is the harm? By focusing attention on love and acceptance, homosexual activists have

successfully taken the spotlight off of their immoral behavior and abnormal acts. Students are told that homosexual parents are “normal,” and that they should be “accepted.” If a student rejects that tact, then he or she is labeled as (gulp!) “intolerant.”

Those who actually graduate from the halls of academia, and yet still object to homosexuality, are castigated as “homophobes,” “hatemongers,” “bigots,” “sexists,” “puritanical fanatics,” “religious fundamentalists,” etc. Homosexuality no longer is referred to as sodomy (the longtime historical term for same-sex relations), but rather as an “alternative lifestyle.” The media do not view homosexuality as sin, but rather as a valuable contribution to “diversity.” Individuals (or organizations) who dare to speak out against homosexuality in order to expose it as an immoral practice, often are confronted by militant activists who work diligently to spin the issue back into a “civil rights” matter.

Unfortunately, the success of the homosexual movement in this area has resulted in numerous Christians remaining silent, for fear of being labeled as hatemongers—or worse. Some Christians seem to have forgotten the words of the Savior:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake (Matthew 5:10-11).

Yet, the homosexual’s quest for “complete and total acceptance” often goes unchallenged because the Scriptures have been

twisted and perverted to accept “alternative lifestyles,” while believers in Bible morality have been effectively silenced. That silence has allowed the social engineers of “political correctness” to achieve significant success in reversing the historically universal rejection by American civilization of the legality, political legitimacy, and social propriety of homosexuality, with the most recent being “gay marriages.”

Monday, May 17, 2004, was a day that will live in moral and spiritual infamy. Homosexual and lesbian couples were granted by the state of Massachusetts the right

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to marry—the first state in U.S. history to do so. On November 18, 2003, four activist justices of the Massachusetts Supreme Court paved the way for this occurrence by ruling that the Commonwealth must recognize the right of homosexual couples to marry (“Is Homosexual Marriage...?” 2003). Perhaps this should not be surprising, since only five months earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its historically and constitutionally unprecedented elimination of state sodomy laws (“Lawrence...,” 2003)—a reversal of the high court’s own 1986 decision that upheld state sodomy laws and reinforced the historic stance that homosexuality is not a constitutional right (“Bowers...,” 1986).

In the midst of this reshaping of societal sensibilities, some who wish to retain their affiliation with the Bible, but also maintain political correctness, insist that the Bible itself teaches that same-sex relations are not inherently sinful. They argue that the Bible, in fact, **condones** homosexuality in the same way, and to the same extent, that it approves of heterosexuality.

### CONFUSION EVEN WITHIN RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

As the militant pressures of homosexual activists penetrate various realms of society, homosexuality slowly but methodically has begun to spread into various denominations. Homosexual theologians and individuals with a specific agenda have been effective at obscuring the true

issues. For instance, Peter J. Gomes, a self-confessed homosexual—and a Baptist minister—alleges that the use of the Bible to condemn homosexuality is the end result of simplistic interpretative methods that reflect a failure to comprehend the context in which the Scriptures were written. Such proceduralism he calls “textual harassment.” These attacks flow easily, of course, from those who reject the plain testimony of God’s Word in the interest of their own personal agenda. For example, Gomes tries to create an artificial distinction in types of homosexual relationships. At first, he contends that Paul, in his various letters, merely was condemning the “debauched pagan expression” of homosexuality; later, he alleges that the apostle hardly can be faulted for his ignorance, since he knew nothing of “the concept of a homosexual nature” (1996, p. 158). He also suggests (p. 25) that there was a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan—a notion not even remotely reflected in the Old Testament narrative regarding these great men. Gomes obviously is desperate to find some semblance of support for his aberrant lifestyle.

On March 7, 2004, V. Gene Robinson—an open homosexual who has lived with his “partner” Mark Andrew—became the ninth bishop of New Hampshire for the Episcopal Church. During his investiture, he remarked: “Journeys of faith, you know, are a risky business. God is always calling us out of our comfort zone” (see Diocese of New Hampshire, 2004). At the conclu-

sion of that service, Robinson disclosed: “I’m just having the best time being your bishop. The rest of the world is watching us. This is going to be a great adventure.” Adventure indeed! Currently Michael W. Hopkins and Susan N. Blue, two priests who favor same-sex blessings, are leading an Episcopal diocesan task force to develop a same-sex “blessing ceremony” (Benson, 2004, p. 19). The Episcopal Church is struggling to prevent a major split in that denomination between those who disagree with Robinson’s appointment as bishop, and the new direction that the Episcopal Church is going. As Ronnie Floyd put it in his book, *The Gay Agenda*, when the decision to accept Robinson as a church bishop was made, “both rejoicing and lamentation broke out in that denomination as never before” (2004, p. 14).

This major news story fell on the heels of other denominations that already have begun to accept homosexual preachers or priests. In America, five of the major denominations openly “ordain” homosexuals as ministers, and recognize same-sex marriages (Floyd, p. 46). In Australia, the Uniting Church—the third largest church in the country—has become that country’s first mainstream denomination to accept homosexual priests (Little, 2003). The president of Australia’s Uniting church, Dean Drayton, said that the church had been living in what he referred to as “the messy middle” for six years, and thus has voted to formalize the unofficial tolerance and allow the ordination of openly gay ministers (Little, 2003).

The United Methodist Church (UMC) also is trying to maintain some sense of direction, having “been in turmoil over the issue for decades” (Floyd, p. 48). In fact, in early 2004, the UMC carried out an ecclesiastical trial (and subsequent exoneration!) of self-professed lesbian “minister” Karen Dammann. The Methodist *Book of Discipline* contains a number of clauses relating to homosexuality, such as, “Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals\* are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.” The asterisk (\*) by the word “homosexuals” refers to a footnote at the bottom of the page, which reads as follows: “‘Self-avowed practicing homosexual’ is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry or clergy session that the person is a practic-

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ing homosexual” (Par. 304.3). And yet, 13 ministers from Dammann’s own conference did not uphold these basic tenets. Her defense counsel, Robert Ward, observed that the Church should not elevate “a few, select paragraphs” of the *Discipline* above another passage that spoke in vague terms of “inclusiveness” (Vitagliano, 2004). Georgia Methodist bishops Michael Watson and Lindsey Davis protested vociferously:

[I]t is a clear sign of rebellion when a group chooses to flagrantly ignore [*The Book of Discipline*], substituting their own perspective for the corporate wisdom [of the church] (Vitagliano).

In many instances, the Bible has been completely discarded, as many denominations not only overlook the sin of homosexuality, but even embrace it. Groups such as “More Light” (a Presbyterian organization that is “seeking the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of faith in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church”) are becoming common within denominations that are trying to bolster their numbers. Church slogans with words like tolerance, inclusiveness, and love are now being touted, and are paraded on banners and in commercials—neglecting any precepts from the Word of God. Thus, religious groups all over the world are scrambling to determine on which side of the homosexual fence they want to be found.

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

### Homosexuality in the Patriarchal Period

What, precisely, is God’s will concerning human sexuality? That will was demonstrated originally in the creation of the first human beings: “Male and female created He them” (Genesis 1:27). God’s decision to create a female counterpart to the male was not coincidental. The female uniquely met three essential criteria: (1) “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18); (2) a helper, **suitable** to him, was needed (Genesis 2:18,20); and (3) the human race was to be perpetuated through sexual union (Genesis 1:28). Both Jesus and Paul reiterated this same understanding (Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:2). So the woman was: (a) the divine antidote to Adam’s loneliness; (b) a helper **fit** for him; and (c) the means of the propagation of the human race. Here, we see the divine arrangement for the human species.

Not long after God set into motion the created order—which He had pronounced as “very good” (Genesis 1:31)—man began to tamper with the divine will, and altered God’s original intentions concerning human sexuality. Lamech—not God—introduced **polygamy** into the world (Genesis 4:19). God could have created two women for Adam, but He did not. Rather, He made **one man for one woman for life**. That is the divine will—“male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27; cf. Matthew 19:1-9). Genesis 19:1-11 now comes into view.

Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.” So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, “Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.” And they said, “Stand back!” Then they said, “This one came in to sojourn, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door (vss. 4-11).

Defenders of homosexuality who seek justification for their viewpoint from the Bible have pursued a revisionist interpretation of the account of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (along with Admah and Zeboiim, Deuteronomy 29:23). This passage has traditionally been understood to be a denunciation of homosexuality. This understanding has been so universal that the word “sodomy” was incorporated into English vernacular as referring to “any of various forms of sexual intercourse held to be unnatural or abnormal, especially anal intercourse or bestiality” (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000, p. 1651). How may the account of Sodom be reinterpreted to place same-sex relationships in a favorable light? Two explanations have been offered in an effort to promote the biblical legitimacy of homosexuality.

### (1) *Inhospitality or Homosexuality?*

The first claim maintains that the men of Sodom simply were guilty of inhospitality. The text says that the men of Sodom insisted on Lot bringing the angelic visitors out to them, “that we may know them” (Genesis 19:5). It thus is argued that “know” refers to their intention to meet, greet, get to know, or become acquainted with the visitors. However, contextual indicators exclude the feasibility of this interpretation.

First, while the Hebrew verb translated “know” (*yada*) has a wide range of meanings, including “to get to know” or “to become acquainted” (for the most part, the nuances of the Hebrew verb parallel the corresponding English verb), Hebrew, in common with other ancient languages, also used “know” as a euphemism for sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1; 19:8). Other Semitic euphemisms similarly used include “lie with” (2 Samuel 11:4), “uncover the nakedness of” (Leviticus 18), “go in unto” (Genesis 16:2; 38:2), and “touch” (Genesis 20:6; Proverbs 6:29; 1 Corinthians 7:1). Ancient languages that shared this figurative use of “know” included Egyptian, Akkadian, and Ugaritic (Botterweck, 1986, pp. 455-456,460), as well as Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Greek (Gesenius, 1979, p. 334). When Hebrew scholars define “know,” as used in Genesis 19:5, they use terminology like “sexual perversion” (Harris, et al., 1980, 1:366), “homosexual intercourse” (Botterweck, 1986, 5:464), and “crimes against nature” (Gesenius, p. 334).

Second, if “know” simply means “to get acquainted,” why did the Bible writers repeatedly use forms of the word “wicked” to refer to the actions of the Sodomites? Lot pleaded, “Do not do so wickedly!” (Genesis 19:7). Moses, by inspiration, already had given God’s assessment in the words, “But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (Genesis 13:13); “their sin is very grievous” (Genesis 18:20). Peter referred to the “filthy conduct of the wicked” sodomites and their “lawless deeds” (2 Peter 2:7-8). But “getting acquainted” is not “wicked”! In fact, if the men of Sodom were nothing more than a group of friendly, civic-minded neighbors who sought to make the visitors welcome to their city, God surely would have **commended** them—not **condemned** them!

Third, if “know” simply means “to get to know,” then why did Lot offer his virgin daughters to the men? He would not have offered his daughters for the purpose of the men “getting to know” or “becoming acquainted” with them. The daughters were

already residents of Sodom, and would have been known to the men. Lot was offering his daughters to the men as **sexual alternatives**. Lot specifically said: "I have two daughters **who have not known a man**" (Genesis 19:8, emp. added). "Known" is another reference to sexual intercourse. Lot referred to their sexual status for the very reason that these men were interested in sexual impropriety. As astonishing and objectionable to us as it may seem for a father to sacrifice his own daughters in such a fashion, it verifies the fact that the unnatural lust of homosexuality was considered far more repugnant than even illicit heterosexuality. Scholars have further noted that in antiquity, a host was to protect his guests at the cost of his own life (Whitelaw, 1950, 1:253).

Fourth, the men of Sodom threatened Lot with the words, "we will deal worse with you than with them" (Genesis 19:9). If their intention was simply to "get to know" the male visitors, what would "dealing worse" with Lot entail? Perhaps it would have entailed their becoming so thoroughly "acquainted" with Lot that they would perpetually remain in his presence and make a pest of themselves? Maybe they intended to impose on Lot's hospitality to the point that they would monopolize his living room couch, consume all of his snack foods, and refuse to vacate his home at a courteous hour?

In a further effort to achieve sanction for homosexuality, attention has been directed to the words of Jesus in His commissioning of the Seventy. He instructed them, in their evangelistic travels, to enter into those cities that would receive them and to feel free to partake of their hospitality (Luke 10:7-8). However, should a city fail to receive them, they were to shake the dust off their feet against the city (Luke 10:10-11). Jesus then declared: "It will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city" (Luke 10:12). Defenders and practitioners of same-sex relations claim that Jesus was drawing a comparison between the inhospitality of Sodom and the cities that the disciples would encounter. They claim that the inhospitality of a city that would reject Christ's emissaries would be a greater evil than Sodom's inhospitable treatment of the angelic visitors.

However, if "hospitality" was the issue at stake in Sodom, the Sodomites should have been commended, since they only wanted to "get to know" and be hospitable to the visitors. In fact, Lot should have been the one condemned, since he attempted to deter the hospitable overtures of the "Wel-

come Wagon." In reality, the words of Jesus in Luke 10 were not directed against the cities' refusal to be hospitable toward the disciples. Rather, He condemned them for their refusal to accept the teaching of the disciples. Jesus pinpointed their task when He warned: "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). Jesus placed Sodom at the top of the list of the most notoriously wicked cities of antiquity. He stressed the fact that to reject Christ and the Gospel would be a far greater offense than what the most wicked city in human history ever did. What the inhabitants of Sodom did was repulsive, repugnant, disgusting, and incredibly depraved. But to reject the antidote to sin is the **ultimate** insult and the final infraction against God!

Yet another argument marshaled in an effort to justify homosexuality concerns the allusions in the prophets to Sodom. Isaiah (3:9), Jeremiah (23:14), and Ezekiel (16:49) all refer to the sinfulness of Sodom, but none explicitly mentioned homosexuality as the problem. In fact, Ezekiel pinpointed the specific sins of "pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness," as well as her unwillingness to aid the poor and needy. In response, we should not be surprised that a city that was guilty of sexual perversion also would be guilty of additional violations of God's will.

Isaiah, in his discussion of Sodom, did not specify a particular sin, but merely noted how brazen and open the Sodomites were with their sin: "The look on their countenance witnesses against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it." Interestingly, this depiction is very apropos of the "in-your-face" attitude of those who seek to advance the homosexual agenda in our day. Jeremiah made essentially the same point in his comparison between Judah and Sodom when he wrote that "no one turns back from his wickedness." He, too, was noting the sodomites' blatant, unbending, determined intention to proceed with their sin. Ezekiel, though mentioning the additional sins that we have listed above, nevertheless referred repeatedly to Sodom's "abomination" (16:50; cf., vs. 43, 47, 51, 52, 58). Moses also linked "abomination" with homosexual activity (Leviticus 18:22).

## (2) *Homosexual Rape?*

The second explanation offered to justify homosexual relations is that the men of Sodom were not condemned for their homosexuality, but for their inhospitable intention to engage in homosexual rape.

Rape, some suggest (whether homosexual or heterosexual), being nonconsensual, is wrong, and is worthy of condemnation. However, this extension of the inhospitality quibble is likewise contextually indefensible. First, if gang rape was the issue, why did Lot offer his daughters in exchange for the visitors? Rape would have been at issue in both cases. Lot's offer of his daughters indicated his clear concern over gender and same-sex relations. Second, the men of Sodom were declared wicked and guilty of "very grievous" sin before the visitors ever came to town (Genesis 18:20).

Third, Jude cinched the matter in his discussion of the sin of Sodom. He wrote that Sodom and her sister cities had "given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh" (Jude 7). "Given themselves over to sexual immorality" is a translation of the compound word *ekporneusasai*, which combines the verb *porneuo* (to commit illicit sexual intercourse) with the preposition *ek* (out of). The attachment of the prepositional prefix indicates intensification, i.e., that the men of Sodom possessed "a lust that gluts itself" (Thayer, 1977, p. 199). Their sexual appetites took them beyond the range of normal sexual activity. The idea of force or coercion is not in the meaning of the word. "Strange" refers to "one not of the same nature, form, class, kind" (Thayer, p. 254), and so pertains to the indulgence of passions that are "contrary to nature" (Barnes, 1949, p. 392)—"a departure from the laws of nature in the impurities practiced" (Salmond, 1950, 22:7). The frequent allusion to "nature" by scholars is interesting, in view of the fact that Scripture elsewhere links same-sex relations with that which is "against nature" (Romans 1:26-27) or unnatural, i.e., out of harmony with God's original arrangement of nature (e.g., Genesis 1:27; 2:22; Matthew 19:4-6). Summarizing, Jude asserted that the sin of Sodom was homosexual **relations**—not homosexual **rape**.

Fourth, homosexuality itself is specifically condemned in Scripture. Under the Law of Moses, God made homosexuality a capital crime, and stipulated that **both** participants in the illicit sexual activity were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:13). God would not have required the innocent victim of homosexual rape to be executed along with the rapist.

American culture may well reach the point where the majority approves of homosexuality as acceptable behavior. And those who disapprove may well be accused of being "politically incorrect," intolerant,

and “homophobic.” It surely is reminiscent of our day to observe that when Lot urged the sodomites not to do “so wickedly,” the men accused Lot of **being judgmental** (Genesis 19:9; cf. Deuteronomy 23:17-18). Nevertheless, the objective, unbiased reader of the Bible is forced to conclude that God destroyed the men of Sodom on account of their sinful practice of homosexuality.

### Homosexuality in the Mosaic Period

In addition to the pre-Mosaic, Patriarchal Period of history, God made clear His will on this matter when He handed down the Law of Moses to the Israelite nation. In a chapter dealing almost exclusively with sexual regulations, His words are explicit and unmistakable.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.... Do not defile yourselves with any of these things,...lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you (Leviticus 18:22-30).

If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them (Leviticus 20:13).

We suggest that a reader would need help to misunderstand these injunctions.

Another graphic account is presented during the period of the judges, which was a time of spiritual and moral depravity and decay—the “Dark Ages” of Jewish history. Judges 19 records that “sons of Belial” (i.e., wicked scoundrels) surrounded a house where travelers had taken refuge for the night. As in Sodom, they desired to “know” the male guests (vs. 22). The host, like Lot, knew exactly what they meant, as is evident from the fact that, like Lot, he offered them a sexual alternative (which, of course, God did not approve). Their sexual desire was labeled as “wickedness,” “outrage,” “vileness,” “lewdness,” and “evil” (Judges 19:23-24; 20:3,6,10,12,13). The rest of the Old Testament corroborates this judgment of same-sex relations. For example, during the period of the kings, Josiah instituted sweeping moral and religious reforms, including tearing down the homes of the Sodomites (2 Kings 23:7).

### Homosexuality in the New Testament Period

The New Testament is equally definitive in its uncompromising and unquestioned condemnation of illicit sexual activity. Paul

summarized the “unrighteous” and “ungodly” behavior of the Gentile nations, and declared:

For this reason God gave them up to **vile passions**. For even their women **exchanged the natural use for what is against nature**. Likewise also the men, **leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful**, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a **debased mind**, to do those things which are not fitting. ...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:26-32, emp. added).

Observe that “God gave them up” to “vile passions.” Other renderings include “lusts of dishonor” (Bengel, 1971, 2:26), “passions of dishonor” (Lenski, 1951, p. 113), and “passions which bring dishonour” (Cranfield, 1985, p. 125). The passions to which the heathen nations were given are declared to be vile and debased. Barrett observed: “No feature of pagan society filled the Jew with greater loathing than the toleration, or rather admiration, of homosexual practices” (1967, p. 39). In fact, Melina noted that homosexuality is the sin that lies at the heart of idolatry. Therefore the Jews despised this practice that defiled both the soul as well as the body (1998, 25:57-68). The “women” and “men” (i.e., the “females” and “males” of verse 26) had descended “to the brutish level of being nothing but creatures of sex” (Lenski, p. 113; Bengel, 2:26).

The contrast between the “natural” and the “unnatural” shows that the Gentiles had “left aside and thus discarded” the **natural form of intercourse between a man and his wife** (Lenski, p. 113). The fact that this exchange involved sexual intercourse is well established (Bauer, 1979, p. 886; Cranfield, p. 125). And Lenski adds, “It was bad enough to sin with males, vastly worse and the very limit of vice to sin as they did” (p. 114). Kent Hughes observed that Paul singled out homosexuality “because it is obviously unnatural and therefore underlines the extent to which sin takes mankind” (1991, p. 43). Indeed, same-sex relations were “quite prevalent in the Greco-Roman society in which he [Paul] lived” (Fitzmyer, 1993, p. 275).

Paul’s observation that homosexual activity goes “against nature” harks back to the Creation model when God created the

first human beings (Genesis 1:26). Homosexual practices go against the natural pattern established by God when He created “male and female” (Deyoung, 1988, pp. 429-441). Such behavior is “contrary to the intention of the Creator” (Cranfield, p. 123). Therefore, homosexuality goes against the natural order of **marriage**, not of Jews or Gentiles; the marriage bed should be undefiled in **all** nationalities and cultures.

The males mentioned in verse 27 are equally as debased as their previously discussed female counterparts. Being “set on fire” with lust for each other, one must realize that “[t]he moment God is taken out of the control in men’s life, the stench of sex aberration is bound to arise. It is so in the world to this day. Without God sex runs wild” (Lenski, p. 115). One of the consequences that follows for those who engage in homosexual relations is that they receive “in themselves the penalty of their error which was due”—“the vicious effect of the unnatural sexual vices upon men’s own bodies and their minds, corruption, destroying, disintegrating” (p. 116).

Such forthright words—“set on fire”—from an inspired apostle are set against a specific social and cultural milieu. In his survey of homosexuality in Western Europe from the beginning of the Christian era to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, John Boswell depicted how Rome had a severe problem with homosexuality, contributing significantly to the glorification and proliferation of homosexual activity. He noted that 14 out of the first 15 Roman emperors were homosexuals, and spent 25 pages detailing facts that prove Rome to have been a hotbed of homosexual activity. For example, during the Augustan reign, the government not only allowed male homosexual prostitutes to operate on her streets, but also taxed them and gave them a national day off work (1980, p. 70). The Emperor Hadrian, called by some “the most outstanding of the ‘five good emperors,’ ” according to Boswell, “appears to have been exclusively gay” (p. 84). Dupont adds that “it was said of Caesar that he was the ‘husband of all women and the wife of all husbands,’ ” identifying his bisexual nature (1993, p. 117). One needs only peruse any reputable historical account of the life and times of the average Roman citizen to see that homosexual activity played a major role in the politics, recreations, and commerce of the first century. It is no surprise then that the apostle Paul spoke so stringently on such practices.

Those who attempt to soften or contradict the clear teaching of Paul in Romans 1 regarding the sinfulness of homosexuality sometimes attempt to sidestep the clear import of the passage by insisting that it applied only to its original recipients. Boswell claimed that the idea of the passage is not to “stigmatize sexual behavior but to condemn Gentiles for their general infidelity” (p. 108). Martin has suggested that Paul referred to the Gentile culture, not the “universal human condition” (1995, p. 338). But is Romans 1:26-27 a “cultural chastisement,” or a universal condemnation? The immediate context (1:18-3:20) consists of God’s pronouncement that **all** humans in **every** culture and nation are under sin—“all the world” (3:19). In fact, the entire book of Romans is the New Testament’s flagship declaration of the means of justification for all persons—“everyone” (Romans 1:16). Hence, the condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1 is parallel to its like condemnation of murder, deceit, covetousness, and all the other sins itemized by Paul.

One final observation regarding Romans 1 is noteworthy. Not only is God displeased with those who participate in homosexual behavior, but Paul indicates that He is equally displeased with those who are **supportive** of such conduct—even if they do not engage in the activity themselves. The wording is: “[T]hose who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but **also approve of those who practice them**” (vs. 32). On this count alone, many have earned the disapproval of God.

Compare Paul’s remarks to the church at Rome with the question he posed to the Corinthian church:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor homosexuals, nor sodomites**, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, emp. added).

The Greek word translated “homosexual” in this passage is a metaphorical use of a term that literally means “soft,” and when referring to people, refers to males allowing themselves to be used sexually by other males. Again, lexicographers apply the term to the person who is a “catamite,” i.e., a male who submits his body to another male for unnatural lewdness—i.e., homosexually (Thayer, p. 387; Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 489).

“Sodomites” (“abusers of themselves with mankind” in the KJV) is a translation of the term *arsenokoitai*. It derives from two words: *arsein* (a male) and *koitei* (a bed), and refers to one who engages in sex with a male as with a female (Thayer, p. 75). Paul used the same term when he wrote to Timothy to discuss certain behaviors that are both “contrary to sound doctrine” and characteristic of the one who is not “a righteous man” (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

As D. Gene West correctly observed regarding Paul’s letter to Timothy:

We can see from the context that homosexual activities are classed with such sins as patricide, matricide, homicide, kidnapping, and perjury. If we accept that any of these things are sins, we must accept that all are sins. If it is a sin to be a whoremonger, to pursue a lascivious life with prostitutes, then it is likewise a sin to engage in homosexual acts. There is no way to escape that conclusion. If it is a sin to murder one’s father, or mother, or some other human being, then it is a sin for both males and females to “co-habitate” (2004).

When Paul said to the Christians at Corinth, “such **were** some of you,” he proved not only that homosexuals may be forgiven, but that they can **cease** such sinful activity. Here we have a clear biblical indication that someone can change their sexual orientation, and can be forgiven of a past immoral lifestyle. We are forced to conclude that sexual activity between persons of the same sex is **not a matter of genetics**; but is a **behavioral** phenomenon associated largely with environmental factors (see the August 2004 issue of *Reason and Revelation*).

## CONCLUSION

**H**omosexuality is only one of many departures from God’s will for human morality and sexuality that society is facing. The Greek term for fornication, *porneia*, is a broad term that covers **every form of illicit sexual intercourse**, including adultery, incest, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, bisexuality, homosexuality, pedophilia, necrophilia, and more. Our sex-crazed society is so promiscuous, and so estranged from God’s view of human sexuality, that our public schools consider it appropriate to teach children to simply “take precautions” when they engage in sexual escapades outside of marriage. But God **never** encouraged people to practice that kind of “safe sex.” The Bible definition of “safe sex” is sex that is confined to a divinely authorized, scriptural marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). God insists that people can, and must, exercise self-control, self-discipline, and moral responsibility. The Bible teaches that we are not to be self-indulgent. We are to put restraints on ourselves, controlling our sexual urges in accordance with God’s teachings.

Encouraging young people simply to “take precautions” only encourages additional illicit behavior. It encourages more promiscuity. It contributes to an increase—not a decrease—in the number of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Despite several decades of having inundated

## SPEAKING SCHEDULES

### Dr. Bert Thompson

September 17-19	Clovis, NM	(505) 769-2331
September 24-26	Vidor, TX	(409) 769-3592

### Dr. Brad Harrub

September 12	Mt. Pleasant, TN	(931) 379-4420
September 25-26	Searcy, AR	(501) 268-9934

### Dr. Dave Miller

September 12-16	Mabelton, GA	(770) 948-5119
September 17-19	Waco, TX	(254) 752-0543

### Kyle Butt

October 3-6	Luverne, AL	(334) 335-5089
October 8-10	Soddy Daisy, TN	(423) 842-1044

### Eric Lyons

September 10-12	Mablevale, AR	(501) 455-2548
September 25-26	Searcy, AR	(501) 268-9934

our schools with sex education and the promotion of so-called “safe sex,” the statisticians inform us that **in the next thirty days alone, 83,850 unwed girls will be come pregnant** in this country (“Teens in Crisis,” 2001, p. 1). The liberals’ “solution” has not worked. In fact, the problem has greatly worsened.

The depths to which our country has slumped morally is evinced by the **legality** of the distribution birth control devices to students, and the **illegality** to distribute Bibles or to teach Bible principles. The time has come for our nation to wake up, and for all citizens to understand that **freedom requires restraint**. Rights require personal responsibility. People must take responsibility for their personal choices, and accept the consequences of their own actions. Paul declared: “flee fornication” (1 Corinthians 6:18). He did not write, “engage in ‘safe’ fornication”! There is no such thing as “safe” sin or “safe” immorality, because all sin is damning (James 1:15). God said a person must run away from it, resist it, and reject it (2 Corinthians 6:18). To a youth, Paul said: “Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22). The writer of Hebrews insisted that the marriage bed is to be kept “undefiled.” “[F]ornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). There should not be so much as a hint of sexual immorality among Christians (Ephesians 5:3).

Please understand: God loves **all** sinners—regardless of the specific sins they have committed. But it is imperative that we be about the business of alerting those who are engaged in sexual sin regarding God’s will, in an effort to “snatch them out of the fire” (Jude 23), and to “save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). One day it will be too late for both those who “not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Romans 1:32). Indeed, the “sexually immoral...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8).

Sexual sin undoubtedly will go down in history as one of the major contributors to the moral and spiritual deterioration, decline, and downfall of American society. Homosexuality is one more glaring proof of the sexual anarchy that prevails in American civilization. One wonders how much longer such widespread unchastity can continue in our land before God will “visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants” (Leviticus 18:25). We know today that homosexuality is not caused by

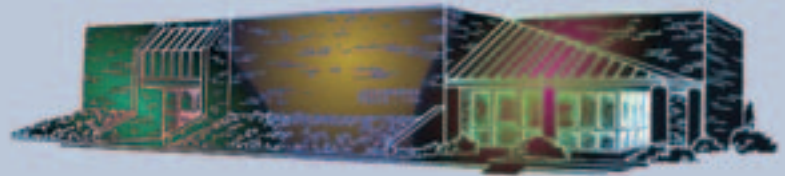
genetics (see Harrub, et al., 2004). It is not “nature,” but “nurture” that is responsible. It is not a life “style,” but rather a life “choice.” And it is wrong.

Every society in human history that has followed a course of moral and spiritual depravity has either been destroyed by God or has imploded from within. Like these previous civilized nations, our society will not be permitted to survive indefinitely into the future—unless, of course, God is prepared to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.

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## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



### INTRODUCING OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS: MARK DENNING

**The growth at Apologetics Press never stops!** In my January 2004 “Note from the Editor,” I discussed with you the fact that this year we are celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary. In the April issue, I told you about our hiring of Tommy Hatfield as our new general manager. In June, I announced that we had hired Moisés Pinedo as the first of our two Spanish translators. In August, I announced the hiring of Michael Cortez as our second Spanish translator. And now, as proof of my point that the growth at A.P. never stops, it is my distinct pleasure to announce the hiring of our newest employee—Mark Denning.

But before I officially introduce Mark to you, permit me a word of explanation. Since the inception of this work twenty-five years ago, I have been the de facto fund raiser—a position I neither sought nor desired, but simply “inherited” as the work began, early on, to grow so rapidly. Every time we went to print a new item, produce a new video or audio tape, or offer a new service, I was the one who ultimately was responsible for raising the funds necessary to make that possible. And every time we hired a new person, I was the one who had to raise the funds required to pay the salary. [I frequently tell my staff—only half jokingly—that if I had known in graduate school that I was going to have to spend so much of my time in fund raising, I would have taken one less course in microbiology, and would have happily replaced it with “Elementary Fund Raising 101”!]

**But, the growth at Apologetics Press never stops!** And, to be quite honest, I simply cannot keep up with it any longer—and still carry out the work schedule that I am required to maintain. I travel between 35 and 40 weekends each year on speaking assignments, oversee a staff of 16, serve as a mentor to our summer interns, edit or oversee two journals, write books, make videos, produce articles for our Web site, etc. And, on top of that, I have to raise the monies that keep A.P. going on a daily basis.

Eventually, it just got to be “too much.” I finally had to admit to myself that: (a) I’m not getting any younger (ouch!); and (b) I needed help. There simply was no way that I could raise the funds necessary to sustain the level of growth that Apologetics Press is experiencing. And so, I set out to find “just the right person” to assist me in this important task. And I did.

Enter Mark Denning. Mark, who is 36 years old, was working for the American Heart Association in Tennessee as a fund-raising manager in their Southeast Affiliate (in fact, he was responsible for an annual fund-raising campaign that had as its goal raising almost \$3,000,000 in contributions!). I came to know Mark through Thomas Tarpley, the young man who works for A.P. as our scientific illustrator. He and Mark had been good friends for a number of years, so when Thomas recommended Mark to me, I listened. And am I glad I did! Mark is incredibly talented. Plus, he is personable, knowledgeable, and well organized. I honestly do not think I could have found anyone who was better suited to the position that we needed to fill—or the job that we needed carried out—than Mark. He and his wife Amanda are faithful Christians, and believe in our work wholeheartedly.



Several weeks ago, I invited Mark to come to Montgomery for an interview, and ended up offering him a job shortly thereafter. As our new Director of Public Relations, Mark is responsible for, among other things: (1) assisting me in fund raising; and (2) working with book distributors, book stores, etc. to get our products into the marketplace so that more people will have access to them. There is no doubt in my mind that Mark is perfectly capable of doing both jobs—brilliantly! He is a tireless worker who is both dedicated and determined. He understands what we require, and is working diligently to provide it. Join me in welcoming him, won’t you?

**Bert Thompson**