

Chrtc 390 Neuroscience, the Person and Christian Theology by Paul Flaman

Module 9: Class Slides, Notes and Questions on Sexual Orientation and Behavior

Some Discussion Questions for Module 9

1. How do you think biblical passages concerning homosexual genital acts should be interpreted and applied today?
2. What are some different conclusions and approaches of various Christian churches and theologians with regard to the morality of same-sex genital acts, ordaining gay or lesbian pastors and celebrating same-sex blessings or marriages?
3. Is it a violation of human rights for a traditional Christian organization to fire someone who openly advocates a gay lifestyle contrary to the institution's beliefs? What approach do you think is most faithful to following Jesus, to loving as he loves?
4. What do you think is the cause of the homosexual orientation?
 - biological: genetic and/or hormonal and/or neural and/or
 - environmental: related to a disorder in the relationship with one or both parents and or peers in early childhood, negative or positive sexual experiences, socialization and/or
 - a free choice?
5. Do you think a homosexual person *can* become heterosexual through therapy and / or God's healing power (or vice versa)? Should persons with homosexual inclinations accept themselves as they are, or should they seek to become heterosexual through therapy, prayer and/or some other means?
6. Should civil law provide for marriage, spousal benefits or other benefits for same-sex couples? Should a gay or lesbian couple be allowed to adopt children? Should a lesbian be able to be artificially inseminated? Should a gay man be able to have children with the help of a surrogate mother? Is it normally in the best interests of children to be raised within a loving committed heterosexual marriage, by both their mother and father together? Can science including neuroscience help society to answer such questions?
7. What do you agree with and/or disagree with in the related course readings and videos?
8. Is neuroscience relevant to theological understandings of gender and sexuality including homosexuality? *Should* scientific data influence our theological views on this topic, and vice versa? Is it possible that science could produce results that would exclude one or more theological views of human gender and sexuality including homosexuality?

Class Slides and Notes for Module 9 on Sexual Orientation and Behavior

Paul's Slides: Theology:

Slide 1: Sexual Orientation and Behavior

- **Christian views regarding homosexuality:**
 - **There is wide agreement that God loves all human persons** [whatever one's strengths and weaknesses, whatever one's sexual inclinations, and so forth, and God wants the true good, fulfillment and happiness of each of us] **and calls each of us to love** [care, respect, treat others the way we would like to be treated—consider the Golden Rule of Jesus] **all human persons** [whatever their sexual orientation—abusive treatment of homosexual persons is deplorable!] **who have equal dignity created in God's image** [cf. Gen 1:26-27]. **God's love casts out fear** [1 Jn 4 states that perfect love (agape) casts out fear] including **homophobia and requires everyone to be responsible, just, loving, virtuous, and holy, in all areas of one's life including the sexual.** On very controversial issues such as this, while acknowledging real differences of view, it is important to note what we agree on and what values we hold in common. This needs to be emphasized!!

- **Christian views regarding the morality of homosexual genital acts:**
(a factual summary of the three main views among Christians today follows)
 - **1) Fidelity to the traditional Christian view that choosing same-sex genital acts is always objectively wrong or sinful because this is contrary to God's plan and will regarding sex, marriage and the virtue of chastity. The culpability of a person committing sinful actions can vary. Many distinguish sexual orientation (inclinations) and actions.**

The Alberta Human Rights Commission defines “homosexual” as a person who is sexually attracted to persons of his or her own sex; “heterosexual” as a person who is sexually attracted only to persons of the opposite sex; and “bisexual” as a person who is sexually attracted to persons of both sexes. Many traditional Christians understand sexual orientation or attractions as something that happens to a person rather than voluntarily caused by them and thus not a moral issue per se. Morality concerns voluntarily chosen human actions (and omissions) including genital relations / actions.

- **Such acts are contrary to biblical teaching that approves sexual relations only within heterosexual marriage and explicitly speaks of same-sex sexual relations as an “abomination”(Lev 18:22), “unnatural” (Rm 1:26-7) ...**

See the related required reading by biblical scholar Robert Gagnon; cf. similar interpretations of the Bible and homosexuality by many evangelical and conservative Christians in various Christian denominations.

- **Catholic teaching also speaks of Christian tradition and natural moral law (reason): choosing such acts fails to show proper respect for the natural complementarity of the sexes, and both the inherent**

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procreative and total-self giving / marital / symbolic meanings of human sexuality; the “inclination” to such sinful acts is objectively disordered but not a sin per se. Homosexual persons like all persons are called to live the virtue of chastity, to fulfill God’s will in their lives including the sexual area.

See the related required readings from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], nn. 2357-59, and David Morrison’s short article, “Love that speaks its name.” This Catechism approved by Pope John Paul II speaks of the homosexual inclination as “objectively disordered” because it inclines a person to sinful actions. This does not make the person who experiences same-sex attractions a bad person. We all experience disordered inclinations to sinful actions—consider also, e.g., inclinations to pride, selfishness, heterosexual lust (most people experience these at times), and pedophile inclinations (experienced by a small minority of people—dictionary.com defines a pedophile as an adult who is sexually attracted to young children). Resisting disordered inclinations is pleasing to God. Catholic teaching notes that “responsibility for an action can be diminished or nullified by ignorance, duress, fear, and other psychological or social factors.” (CCC n. 1746) In an interview on 28 July 2013 Pope Francis’ saying, “If a person is gay and seeks the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge him (her)?,” has often been quoted. He says the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains this very beautifully.

Slide 2: Sexual Orientation and Behavior

- **Christian views regarding the morality of homosexual acts continued:**
 - **2) Some Christian ethicists (e.g., Keane, Kosnik, Cahill; and other Christians who agree with them) who are proportionalists** [they consider an action morally good if the values involved outweigh the disvalues] **argue that same-sex genital acts can be morally good if the disvalues involved in these actions within committed same-sex partnerships (i.e., they fall short of the ideal of heterosexual marriage and procreation) are outweighed by the values of helping the parties to grow in love and other Christian virtues.**

Lisa Sowle Cahill, e.g., considers heterosexual marriage to be the ideal context for sexual relations related to the complementarity of the sexes and the possibility of procreation. Nevertheless, she and some others who adopt proportionalism think that in some committed same-sex relationships the values of them having genital relations could outweigh the disvalues, e.g., if these helped them to grow in virtue. She realizes that certain passages in the Bible disapprove of same-sex genital relations but in her view such texts are not fully enlightened about homosexuality. Regarding the Bible she takes a “canon within the canon” approach arguing that certain biblical passages reflect the bias of the author / culture (cf. the Jewish Old Testament background and views of the Apostle Paul) rather than a fully enlightened view.

- **3) Some Christians (individuals and denominations) consider the homosexual orientation to be inherently good as part of God's good and diverse creation. While Christians generally disapprove of promiscuous sexual relations, they argue that Christians should celebrate committed gay and lesbian relationships and marriages and loving sexual relationships within these.**

Consider, e.g., the Metropolitan Community Churches and some other churches; and gay theology which interpret the Bible as censuring only exploitive / coercive sex and unnatural acts

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for heterosexuals. See the related required reading on “Homosexuality and the Bible” by Nathan Meckley. This is also official United Church of Canada policy although not all members of this denomination agree with this policy. Those who hold this view generally speak of homosexual genital activity as “natural” for homosexuals in a loving union. They note that some heterosexual genital acts are also non-procreative. Sex is also a gift from God to foster intimacy. This issue has become very divisive in a number of mainline Christian denominations such as the Anglican Church. One also finds revisionist theologians and others taking positions 2 or 3 above in the Catholic Church although official teaching is in line with 1 above.

- **Please watch the following videos** (or segments of them) as indicated: 1) Christian and Gay: Founder of Metropolitan Community Church 6:52 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fGpaNkxfgU>; and 2) Portraits of Courage, Part 1: Into the Light (from 2:30-11:27) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4RsNh3uv34>.
- **Everyone should honestly seek to understand the truth about reality including the complex reality of homosexuality and live according to it.**

Consider the proper formation of conscience and a person’s moral integrity—this is treated in some detail in Module 7 of this course under “The Objective / Subjective Distinction Regarding Morality”.

- **See the related discussion questions 1-3 above.**

Slide 3: Consider our ‘lenses’ or ‘filters’ of reality



These photos are taken of the same objects using different “filters” on a camera: normal; black and white; negative art, and solarise. Homosexuality is much more complex than apples and

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oranges. It is interesting how people including academics and other intelligent people can see / perceive / interpret the same reality very differently. What is one's own "lense" or "filter"? Consider how one's background, experiences, friends, reading, beliefs, world view ... affect one's interpretation or perception. It can be helpful to appreciate that other people can sincerely have different "lenses" or views.

Related to this consider the Golden Rule of Jesus, "Treat others the way you would like to be treated." E.g., if you are a heterosexual person consider how you would like to be treated if you experienced strong same-sex erotic attractions (these will be abbreviated as SSA in the following). Or, if you have pro-gay views consider how you would like to be treated if you were an evangelical Christian, a traditional Catholic, or someone who once identified as gay or lesbian and now sincerely no longer does. Again, this needs to be emphasized.

Fr. Jeffrey Keefe, a clinical psychologist who counselled many persons with SSA for more than 30 years, spoke at St. Joseph's College, the University of Alberta, on 1 Nov. 2004. Among other things, he said that it is difficult to say anything significant regarding homosexuality without getting somebody mad at you.

Science and Sexuality: Slide 1 (Dr. Heather Looy's slides adapted by Paul Flaman)

- **Science [that is, scientists] tells us whether, how, and to what degree humans vary with regard to measures of gender and sexuality.**

- **Science does not just present neutral "facts" but interprets them**

E.g., what data is considered significant or relevant.

- **focus on difference, not similarity**

Looy says it is harder to get something published if the focus is on similarities rather than differences (consider, e.g., LeVay's post-mortem brain study of presumed homosexuals and heterosexuals which focused on differences in a tiny part of the brain).

- **emphasis on categories, not continua (e.g., Kinsey and Spitzer's scales re: heterosexuality and homosexuality, 0-6 and 0-100 respectively)**

Categories include such as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, paedophile, asexual, transgender, etc. On Alfred Kinsey's scale 0 represents someone who is 100% heterosexual and 6 represents someone who is 100% homosexual with numbers 1-5 expressing variations in between. On Robert Spitzer's scale 0 represents someone who is 100% heterosexual and 100 represents someone who is 100% homosexual. Not everyone is exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual. Some people are also more or less asexual (not sexually attracted to anyone).

- **About 1.5% males and 1.1% females are exclusively homosexual**

According to Kinsey's reports in the late 1940's 4% of male human beings are exclusively homosexual and 10% were more homosexual than heterosexual. Kinsey, however, used a skewed sample—25% of his subjects were sexual criminals. Statistics Canada 2014 reports 1.3% of Canadians identified as homosexual and 1.1% identified as bisexual. Also up to 1 in 250 people identify as transgender or up to 0.4%. Although the LGBT+ population represents up to 3% of the population, about 97% of people are exclusively or predominately heterosexual. Whether or not a homosexual is 4-10% or 1.3% of the population, however, each individual's great dignity as a human person should always be respected according to both Christian teaching and the law in many places.

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- **worldview assumptions (e.g., essentialism, constructionism) are not always explicit**

These worldview assumptions of different people include different scientists including social scientists, philosophers, theologians and others. Essentialism relates to essences or natures of beings, e.g., male, female, heterosexual, homosexual “natures” which are understood as innate. Constructionism places more emphasis on human subjective and cultural reality being constructed. Some even deny such a thing as a human nature.

- **The data underdetermine the theories; re: a polarized issue science is often invoked to support both poles**

Media reports, e.g., are often not as nuanced as what the scientist has said. For instance Simon LeVay’s 1991 study has been interpreted by many including some liberal theologians to conclude that some people are “born gay.” Simon LeVay, however, in this study points out some shortcomings of his study and has stated that his study does not prove that anyone is born gay. Some “conservative” people, however, have also misinterpreted science, e.g., saying or giving the impression that anyone can easily change their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual with prayer and/or therapy.

- **Science cannot directly evaluate morality but can identify correlations, factors, causes and consequences, which may be relevant to moral discussions**

Science studies “what is” and tries to identify correlations (which do not necessarily equate to causes), factors and consequences, etc. Morality, however, focuses on what human persons “ought” to do or ought not to do. While scientific findings may have some relevance to moral discussions (e.g. some facts and consequences of actions are considered morally relevant), morality also considers morally relevant values which cannot be empirically verified although some philosophical ethicists affirm that they can be experienced phenomenologically, and some theologians affirm that God has revealed some moral truths.

Science and Sexuality: Slide 2 (Looy’s slides adapted by Flaman)

- **What is the cause of Same-sex attraction? Various theories include the following:**

- **Sigmund Freud: problems during early psychosexual development**

Freud lived from 1856-1939. He thought homosexuality was caused by the child’s problems with his/her father. Others thought it could also be related to problems with the mother and/or peers. This psychosexual development view was the common view among professionals for decades.

- **American Psychiatric Association in 1973: not a mental illness**

This position was influenced by a psychiatrist Robert Spitzer who listened to many people who identified as homosexual—he was convinced that many of them were not mentally ill.

- **Intrauterine hormones: Cf. LeVay and other brain node studies**

Researcher Simon LeVay in 1991 reported that in studying the brains of cadavers he found a small cluster of neurons in the hypothalamus (INAH3, about the size of a grain of wheat) section of the brain in gay men to be on average slightly smaller than in heterosexual men. One weakness of this study was that he did not verify the sexual orientations of the presumably “heterosexual” men in his sample even though a much higher percentage of them (37.5%) had died of AIDS than among the heterosexual male population as a whole. As a scientist he himself

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said his study did not prove that anyone is born gay although much of the public media presented his findings that way. A 2001 study by Byne, Tobit et al. was interpreted by some to replicate LeVay. They, however, acknowledged that the number of neurons in the INAH3 area of the brain was the same for both men with a heterosexual orientation and a homosexual orientation. Different experiences can cause more or less interconnections (dendrites) between neurons and affect the amount of related brain matter (cf. neuroplasticity). Thus any differences in size of the INAH3 area could be caused by different experiences including homosexual activity.

- **Genetic: Cf. Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard's and other twins studies**

Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard in 1991 reported their findings concerning brothers: with identical twins if one had a homosexual orientation 52 % of the time the other did too; with fraternal twins if one had a homosexual orientation 22 % of the time the other did too; with non-twin brothers if one had a homosexual orientation 9 % of the time the other did too; with adopted brothers if one had a homosexual orientation 11 % of the time the other did too. Related to their findings they acknowledged that a homosexual orientation was not solely due to genetics; at least some other factors must also be involved. Their study did not involve a random population sample but involved those who responded to an advertisement in a gay magazine.

Neal Whitehead reports (retrieved from narth.com in 2015) on findings related to a large population study which found that with identical twins raised together for adult males if one had a homosexual orientation 11 % of the time the other did, and for adult females if one had a homosexual orientation 14 % of the time the other did. One of his conclusions was that when one identical twin had a homosexual orientation and the other did not that there were often unique experiences of one of the twins such as one being sexually abused or initiated into same-sex genital relations at a young age and the other was not.

A study by Eckert, Bouchard, Bohlen and Henton, "Homosexuality in monozygotic twins reared apart," *British Journal of Psychiatry* (1986) 148, found that when one identical twin had a homosexual orientation only 3 % of the time the other did. Note: identical twins share the same chromosomal DNA and basically the same uterine environment (cf. possible hormonal influences) during gestation.

- **Wilson and Rahman (2005): 30% genetic; 70% hormonal**

and 0% environmental, as stated in their book *Born Gay*.

- **Francis Collins: genes represent predispositions not predeterminations**

Collins was head of the human genome project. He comes to the above conclusion on the basis of identical twin studies pointing out that if one male identical twin is gay about 20% of the time the other will also be gay (note that almost always identical twins are raised together). Some things are genetically determined like hair and skin colour (these will always be the same for identical twins) whereas some other things are genetically influenced but not predetermined such as predispositions to certain illnesses (environmental factors and behaviour can also influence such illnesses).

- **Neal Whitehead's critique of Wilson and Rahman (www.narth.com)**

In a review of their book (see 2 bullets above) Whitehead points out that they merely affirm the 70% hormonal without giving numerical supporting evidence. He says their case collapses on the basis of twin studies.

- **Looy says bio-psychological research continues to suggest that:**

- **the strongest predictor of a non-heterosexual orientation remains**

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gender atypical behaviour in childhood

E.g., a boy that likes playing with dolls has a higher chance than average of becoming homosexual but not all boys who like playing with dolls become homosexual.

- **no single biological variation is reliably observed across variations in sexual orientation**

Some biological variations mentioned are relative finger lengths, left-handedness, body shape, and boys who are emotionally sensitive or who have poor hand-eye coordination. Some of these such as the latter two are correlated with a higher than the average of 1.3% who are gay but again many with these biological predispositions do not develop a homosexual orientation.

Science and Sexuality: Slide 3 (Looy's slides adapted by Flaman)

Sexual Orientation's Cause(s): Theories Continued

- **H. Looy: Since biological aspects do not account for everything, environmental / relational / psychological factors must also be present. Suggested factors include:**
 - **Early pleasurable homoerotic experiences**

Compare conditioning—if one does something that is experienced as pleasurable one is likely to repeat this behaviour whereas if one does something that is experienced as painful one is less likely to do it again.

- **Early negative hetero-erotic experiences including sexual abuse**

Consider, e.g., a girl who is sexually abused by her father and as a result she does not trust male love.

- **Negative relationship with / rejection of same-sex parent / overly close emotional relationship with opposite-sex parent ...**
- **Ridicule by and / or lack of bonding with same-sex peers in childhood**
- **Weak masculine or feminine identity / poor body image**

The stories of many men and women who experience same-sex attraction include one or more of the above—see, e.g., the sharing of psychiatrist Richard Fitzgibbons who has counselled many men and women with same-sex attraction in the video clip below. Related to this it seems that the “path” to experiencing same-sex attraction varies and is not exactly the same for all. It also needs to be pointed out that not everyone who has one or more such experiences develops same-sex attraction. Reality including the development of same-sex attractions is generally complex.

Please watch the video: Portraits of Courage, Part 2: The Cry of the Faithful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4RsNh3uv34> (only 2:29-5:20 re genetics and psychiatrist Richard Fitzgibbons).

- **Psychiatrist and Neuroscientist Jeffrey Satinover speaks of a soft consensus among therapists: although there may be a biological predisposition (which, however, is less than for alcoholism) it seems that the development of SSA is predominately related to various “psychic” traumas (which are not the same for all with SSA)**

See Satinover's book, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* for a fuller discussion of factors related to SSA. Satinover at the time was a Professor at Yale University. Satinover concludes

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that the inner subjective experience of certain psychic traumas is more significant than any related external environmental factors. He also notes that some adults who experience SSA may no longer consciously remember such experiences. Such subjective experiences are harder to measure empirically than external environmental factors. With regard to the comparison with alcoholism, if a person has a biological predisposition to become highly stressed out when facing a crisis they are more likely to find relief from drinking alcohol and become an alcoholic than a person who has a biological predisposition to face life's crises more calmly. Note though that being easily stressed out does not "determine" anyone to become an alcoholic.

- **e.g., an innate tendency to prefer gender atypical behaviour / activities (e.g., an emotionally sensitive boy with an aversion to rough boy play) sets the stage for parental / peer rejection and / or identification with other-sex persons; leading to attraction to same-sex persons to either "heal" hurt parental relationships, meet unmet needs (this is the view of Andrew Comiskey who once identified as gay) and/or because the same-sex is perceived as "other."**

These are examples of theories related to the cause(s) of the development of SSA. Note, however, that not all boys who are emotionally sensitive and have an aversion to rough boy play develop SSA. Someone such as Satinover would say that if a boy with such a disposition has a good relationship and experiences healthy affection and bonding with his father and at least some same-sex peers (e.g., the boy may not bond with other boys playing football but may bond with a few boys in a musical band), then he is likely to develop a healthy masculine identity and unlikely to develop SSA. Dr. Jeffrey Keefe, a psychologist, states: "The general opinion among scientists, who consolidate the various studies is that genetic, hormonal, and constitutional factors may predispose to sexual orientation, but it is postnatal environmental and psycho-social history which are its predetermining factors..." ("Homosexuality, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. 2003, vol. 7, p. 68)

Science and Sexuality: Slide 4 (Looy's slides adapted by Flaman)

- **Some other research suggests:**
 - **sexual desires / attractions are integrated into a person's identity via a complex process (e.g., self-labelling as gay or straight; or ex-gay (lesbian)).**

See, e.g., *Sexual Identity Synthesis* by Mark Yarhouse, a clinical psychologist and professor. The public media often feature those who identify as gay, lesbian, transgender, etc. (LGBTQ+) but not those who identify as ex-gay or ex-lesbian (these latter terms mean those who once identified as gay or lesbian and now no longer do so—these may not be the best terms; it is probably better to simply say that some people who once identified as gay, lesbian, etc., now no longer do so—see the Courage videos referred to in these notes) or who regret transitioning as transgender and who may later do what they can to transition back and now identify with their sex at birth (see, e.g., the second video below by Walt Heyer). Yarhouse points out that for some people with SSA their religious identity is more important to them than their sexual desires.

- **sexual orientation is not a categorical state but is more complex**

Some years ago I turned on the television and Oprah was interviewing a few women who once understood themselves as heterosexual and at least one of them had been in a heterosexual

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marriage for several years. They, however, through various circumstances experienced a lesbian relationship and came to now identify as lesbian. The conclusion of Oprah and these guests was that sexual attraction is not necessarily fixed but is more fluid than we thought. I found it interesting that Oprah would feature a few women who transitioned from heterosexual to homosexual but not the other way around—she certainly could have found people who report such experiences such as in the Courage videos.

- **sexual orientations and identities can and do shift; reasons and mechanisms are not fully understood; this may depend on the original causal pathway which is not the same for all.**

Gay activists are generally very critical of those who report a shift in identity and orientation from homosexual to heterosexual and any forms of therapy that address and try to help those who experience unwanted same-sex attraction. What is often pejoratively called “conversion” therapy is even banned in some places, at least for legal minors. Such critics in our culture often deny that anyone can experience a real change of sexual orientation, that such therapy is harmful and does not last. Consider, however, the experiences reported in the following videos.

Please watch the following videos: and 1) Portraits of Courage, Part 2: The Cry of the Faithful (10:20-21:20) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsDH4FoVu4w> (10:20-21:20) regarding Richard and Joe’s reported healings, and parents with a gay son; and 2) Walt Heyer Used to be Trans: What he Wants Everyone to Know, 13:47: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlRkLtKqSrY>.

Note: This module focuses on homosexuality. Gender dysphoria and transgenderism are important issues to consider too but due to the time limits of this course we only incidentally consider them.

- **An American Psychiatric Association (2000) statement supports research to study reparative therapy’s risks and benefits**

That the APA supported such research may be a surprise to some.

- **Robert Spitzer (2003) became convinced that some exclusively / predominately homosexuals can become predominately / exclusively heterosexuals; he supports informed consent.**

This is the same Spitzer involved with the decision to remove homosexuality from the DSM (see under the second slide of Looy adapted by Flaman above). In Oct. 2003 his study was published in *Archives of Sexuality*. It involved in-depth interviews of 200 men and women who reported being exclusively or predominantly homosexual before therapy and who became predominantly or exclusively heterosexual at least in part with the help of therapy. 11 % of the males and 37 % of the females reported complete change from exclusive SSA to exclusive heterosexual attraction. Individuals who had been at the extreme on homosexual measures had a prevalence similar to the entire sample regarding an outcome of good heterosexual functioning at post-61% (p. 411) and have remained so for more than five years. Spitzer concludes, for many reasons, that “the participants’ self-reports were by-and-large credible. Thus, there is evidence that change in sexual orientation following some form of reparative therapy does occur in some gay men and lesbians.”(p. 403) Many of these people were now in normal healthy heterosexual marriages (he used the Spanier 1976 Dyadic Adjustment Scale, a validated instrument). There was no evidence

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of harm of the therapy for any of the participants who often reported other benefits as well including feeling more masculine (males) or more feminine (females) 87% and developing intimate nonsexual relations with the same sex 93% (p. 412). He refers to the 2000 Position Statement of the American Psychiatric Association which supports research to study reparative therapy's risks versus benefits. Spitzer supports further research into the efficacy of sexual reorientation therapy and among other things concludes, "Many patients, provided with informed consent about the possibility that they will be disappointed if the therapy does not succeed, can make a rational choice to work toward developing their heterosexual potential and minimizing their unwanted homosexual attractions. In fact, the ability to make such a choice should be considered fundamental to client autonomy and self-determination."(414)

- **The Catholic Medical Association (2003; www.cathmed.org) referring to a number of studies of treatment reports about 30% experience freedom from same-sex symptoms and another 30% experience improvement (as successful as for similar psychological problems)**

The Catholic Medical Association's 2003 report is called "Homosexuality and Hope." These results were confirmed by Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse's longitudinal study (2007). They published the results in their book *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*, which they say is the most rigorous scientific study of this type at the time. They found basically the same rates of change as reported by the Catholic Medical Association. They also found no evidence of harm of such Christian ministries for the participants including those who continued to identify as gay and lesbian and/or to engage in same-sex genital relations. They too support free and informed consent concerning such ministries and therapy (that is, no one should be pressured to take such an approach but it should be available for those experiencing unwanted SSA). It should be noted that many persons who experience SSA do not want their sexual orientation to change.

- **Some (e.g., Maria Valdes, Richard Fitzgibbons, Jeffrey Satinover) report higher rates when combined with spirituality (God's love, forgiveness ...)**

Psychiatrist Fitzgibbons says his goal as a therapist is not to change anyone but to help people with SSA address their emotional pain. In his experience he says, for those who are committed to the process, the recovery from emotional pain and subsequent homosexual behaviour approaches 100 percent. Psychologist Jeffrey Keefe also reports that 40 percent stop such therapy, and that change is more difficult the earlier and deeper the psychic traumas, and the more SSA has been confirmed by acting on these inclinations. Andrew Comiskey who once identified exclusively as a gay man reports experiencing much healing and now being in a happy heterosexual marriage for more than 20 years with children. He developed the healing ministry called Living Waters (about 10% of those who take part are same-sex attracted whereas 90% of those who take part are heterosexual people seeking healing of their sexual and relational brokenness). Comiskey believes that God wants to heal all of us to be able to have healthier relationships with people of both sexes (not necessarily to be able to enter a heterosexual marriage—one should not try such unless they are probably capable of such a marriage). With regard to forgiveness some therapists point out that holding on to resentments even if unconsciously is a major barrier to psychological and spiritual healing. Forgiving those who have hurt one, with the help of the love of God, who is always ready to forgive, is very important in one's journey to true freedom and love.

- **For more information see, e.g., www.narth.com,**

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This was the website of the National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality which was founded in 1992 and quickly grew to more than 1500 professional members. The name of this has been changed to The Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity. Some related resources can be found under “Professional Divisions—Research.”

Paul’s Theology Slides continued

Slide 4: Sexual Orientation and Behavior

- **Homosexuality is controversial in many arenas: science, therapy, churches, civil rights and laws . . .**
- **What can the Christian vision and theology contribute to understanding this issue, to the growth of persons and to building true communion with people and God?**
 - **In the light of the mystery of creation each of us (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, intersexual...) is created in God’s image and has great and equal fundamental dignity as a human being/person. We, including our being male and female, and procreation are part of God’s very good creation (Gen 1).**

Gen 1:27 affirms that God created human beings, male and female, in his image and likeness. Following the creation of human beings Gen 1:31 affirms that, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”(NRSV)

- **In the light of sin (original and personal) each one of us is profoundly wounded (broken),also with regard to our sexuality.**

Sin involves human beings choosing and acting in ways that fail to love properly—God, others and oneself. Both the sin of the very first human being(s) (original sin) and the sins of human beings including ourselves since have resulted in certain negative consequences—alienation between humans and God, alienation between human beings, alienation or disorder within the individual human being, and alienation between human beings and the rest of God’s creation. The disorder or wounding within the individual person also affects one’s sexuality. For example, not all of our inclinations related to sex are in line with loving other persons, oneself and God properly.

- **In the light of the Incarnation and Redemption God wants to heal our brokenness and offers us the Holy Spirit and grace to enable us to grow in understanding the truth / God’s plan and moral law (including regarding sexuality) and to grow in loving God, others and oneself properly, as Jesus loves. Fr. John Harvey distinguishes spiritual and psychological healing. Our healing in this life is incomplete. Forgiving others is necessary for our own healing (cf. Jeffrey Satinover and Richrd Fitzgibbons).**

God becoming a human being in Jesus Christ is called the Incarnation in Christian theology. Redemption or salvation involves God’s plan to liberate us human beings from human sin and all of its negative consequences. The Gospel according to John presents Jesus as promising his disciples to send them the Holy Spirit who would lead them into the complete truth (16:13). In Luke 11:13 Jesus teaches that our Father (God) in heaven will “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” In Romans 5:5 the Apostle Paul tells Christians that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy spirit that has been given to us.”(NRSV) The Holy Spirit enables us to grow in loving God, others and oneself properly, as Jesus loves and commands his followers

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to love one another as he loves them (see Jn 13:34-35 and 15:12-13). This loving as God (as Jesus) loves includes the whole area of human sexuality and all of our relationships.

Fr. John Harvey, the founding director of Courage over several decades encountered many people with same-sex attraction (SSA) who experienced healing. He distinguishes spiritual healing, which helps a person including a person experiencing SSA to live the virtue of chastity, and psychological healing, a diminishment of SSA and a development of one's heterosexual potential. In his view a person who has experienced SSA should not enter a heterosexual marriage unless they have experienced enough psychological healing to enable them to have a successful heterosexual marriage. For those not capable of this, spiritual healing helps the celibate person with SSA to live at peace. Satinover and Fitzgibbons are psychiatrists and Christians who understand persons with SSA to have experienced certain psychic traumas or emotional suffering / conflicts often related to mistreatment by others. As for any person, holding resentments against those who have hurt us is an obstacle to one's own inner freedom and capacity to love fully. Jesus taught us to be ready to forgive those who have hurt us without limit. This is both good psychology and good spirituality, whatever one's sexual inclinations. While forgiving those who have hurt one deeply at times may seem humanly impossible, Jesus taught that with God (with his grace and love) all things are possible. While the journey of healing for each of us is meant to begin in this life, it should be noted that this journey will only be fully complete in the next life with our enjoying full union with God and others who have also opened themselves up to God's love, and with the resurrection of our bodies at the Second Coming of Jesus.

Slide 5: Sexual Orientation and Behavior

Former Gay Men, authors David Morrison and Andy Comiskey



David Morrison shares a bit about his experience on the second Courage video and wrote *Beyond Gay* in which he shares his life journey in considerable detail (see also the short required reading, "Love that Speaks its Name." David lives celibately but has remained in a deep friendship with his former gay partner. Andrew Comiskey, who once identified as gay and engaged in same-sex

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genital relations, reports experiencing much inner healing. He has been in a heterosexual marriage for more than 20 years and has founded Living Waters, a Christian program of healing sexual and relationship brokenness for both those experiencing SSA and those experiencing heterosexual attractions. He has published several books including *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness: How Jesus Heals the Homosexual* and *In Weakness Strength*.

Slide 6: Sexual Orientation and Behavior

- **In Christian theology regarding homosexuality one of the central areas of controversy concerns the morality of homosexual (genital) activity.**

See my first two slides above near the beginning of this module with regard to three different views on homosexuality by different Christian theologians, denominations and others.

- **Before reconsidering the different conclusions let us consider some widely accepted Christian meanings and values regarding human sexuality.**
- **All Christian morality including sexual morality is related to loving God, others and oneself as Jesus loves.**

In Mt 22:37-40 Jesus teaches that the greatest commandment of the law (God's moral law) is to love God with all one's heart, soul and mind, and the second greatest is to love one's neighbor as oneself. He adds that all of the law and the prophets (that is all of the specific biblical teaching on morality) hang on (depend on, are related to) these two commandments. John 13 and 15 present Jesus calling his disciples to love one another as he loves them, as God the Father loves him. There is no more positive way for any of us to live than by trying to love in this way.

- **The virtue (Christian virtues are Christ-like dispositions or habits) of chastity (often discussed under temperance—self-control regarding bodily desires) does not involve arbitrary restrictions but simply means the behavior, choices and attitudes (no more and no less) required in the whole area of human sexuality by:**
 - **Loving God (seeking to please God) includes respecting God's will, design and purposes for sex. Many speak of human sexuality's inherent unitive / total-giving / marital meaning (Gen 2:24 speaks of a man and his wife becoming "one flesh" in marriage); and its procreative / life-giving meaning (Gen 1:26-31 speaks of man and woman created in God's "image," "blessed" and commissioned by God to "be fruitful and multiply"). Loving God also includes loving people as God's beloved children; and**

Human sexuality's inherent meanings can be known by human experience, correct human reasoning and by God's revelation to us human beings. After one of my former students became a father he shared with me how powerfully it hit him that sex is indeed designed for procreation. From a Christian perspective procreation involves the wonderful gift of a man and a woman collaborating with God the Creator to create a new human person who is meant to experience God's eternal life and happiness. The "many" speaking of these two basic meanings and God's purposes for human sexuality include recent Catholic popes, Catholic theologians who fully agree with Catholic teaching on human sexuality and marriage (e.g., William E. May, John Harvey), some theologians in the Catholic Church who disagree with some aspects of Catholic teaching including its teaching on homosexuality (e.g., Lisa Sowle Cahill), and some prominent

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Protestant Christian theologians such as the Lutheran Helmut Thielicke and the Methodist Paul Ramsey.

Slide 7: Sexual Orientation and Behavior

- **The virtue of chastity also includes:**
 - **Loving people which includes respecting human goods / values that are relevant to human sexuality and fulfillment, i.e., the dignity and integrity of persons including their bodies, self-giving love, truth (including the language of the body), marriage (many consider heterosexual marriage to be generally good for men and women, children and the wider society) including marital friendship and fidelity, fairness, life including its transmission, health...**

With regard to the language of the body, some including Pope John Paul II have pointed out how the complementary nature of man and woman is experienced in heterosexual genital relations and human procreation. Also, that the total physical giving and receiving in heterosexual intercourse naturally symbolizes the total giving of the persons of a man and a woman to each other. Thus sex basically means what heterosexual marriage means which involves a man and a woman giving themselves to each other for life without reservation. A number of moral theologians / Christian ethicists including William May and Dietrich von Hildebrand speak of these various human goods / morally relevant values related to human sexuality. With regard to heterosexual marriage being generally good for men and women and the wider society consider, e.g., The Marriage Movement which supports heterosexual marriages in various ways. This Movement includes not only heterosexual persons. Among other things this Movement points out that the divorce and single-parent revolutions have led to an increase of poverty as well as the “feminization” of poverty since more single parents are women.

- **Note: such goods are rooted in God; true union with God and human persons requires respecting them.**

The great Christian ethicist Dietrich von Hildebrand develops these points in his *Christian Ethics* and other works on ethics. These human goods / morally relevant values are rooted in God’s nature (God is infinite truth, life, justice, goodness and love, completely faithful, and the source of human persons, life and self-giving love...) and our human nature created in God’s image and likeness. If we fail to respect properly such morally relevant values in any situation or human relationship we necessarily fail to respect God properly. In the New Testament 1 Jn 3 says we are already the children of God but that what we will be has not been fully revealed. It says that we do know, however, that when God is revealed we will be like him and see God as he is, and that all who have this hope in God purify themselves just as God is pure.

- **Human wants, desires, choices and actions including seeking pleasures related to sex are to be subordinated to a properly ordered love of God and people. Christians generally do not see hedonism (pleasure, subjective satisfaction, is the end rather than the person) as compatible with following Jesus, who considered God and people most important.**

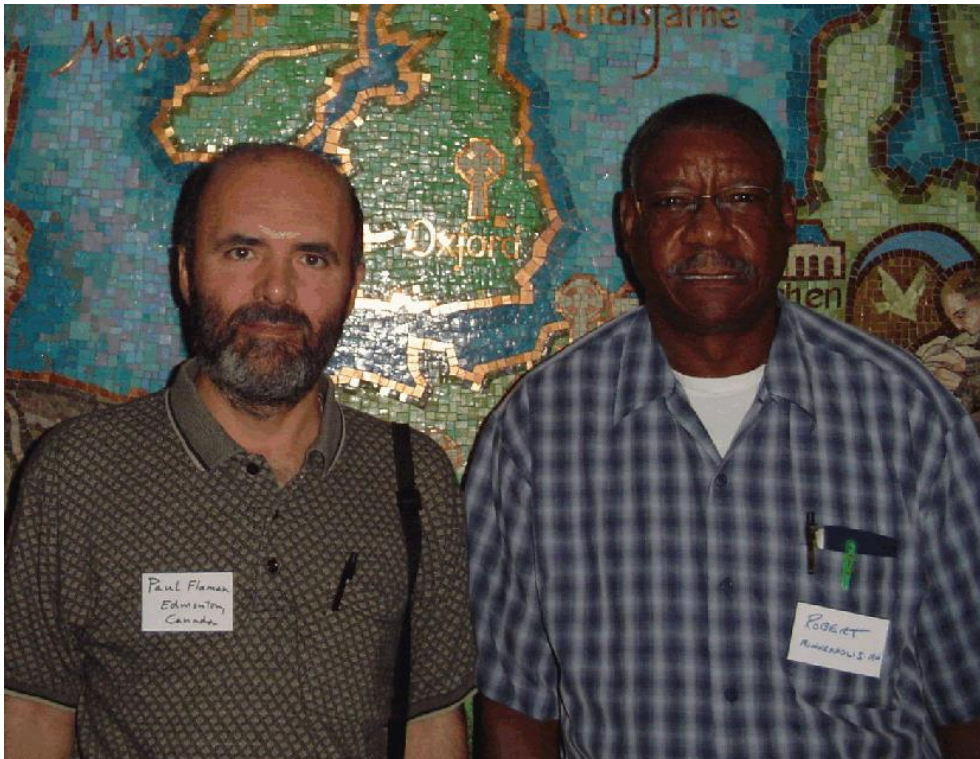
If pleasure is the end, then the human person is treated as a means to pleasure, as an

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object (including a sexual object) rather than properly appreciated, respected and loved as a person.

- **Loving people also involves responding to the real needs of people and their legitimate (not sinful) wants and preferences.**
- **In general, there is wide agreement among Christian theologians regarding the basic meanings of human sexuality and related values. There is more controversy regarding specific issues such as contraception vs. natural family planning within marriage and whether or not homosexual (genital) acts are or can be moral.**

Slide 8: Robert and Me in 2005



I shared a room with Robert, a black man in his 60s, at the international Courage conference in 2005. As a man with SSA, Robert had been sexually promiscuous earlier in his life. At the time he described himself as a long-term survivor of AIDS and at peace living celibately.

Slide 9: Same-Sex Attraction and Behavior: How Should Christians Respond?

Under the first two slides of this module we considered three different ways that various Christian denominations, theologians and others typically respond to homosexuality. After considering some related human experiences and empirical studies, and some background to Christian morality and the virtue of chastity, we can proceed to ask, how “should” Christians Respond? Do you agree with the points made under each of the following questions? How would you answer these questions?

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■ What does it mean to follow Jesus in this area?

My published book, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*, addresses this question in much more detail than is possible here. Jesus taught the Golden Rule, “Treat others the way you would like others to treat you,” and that the greatest commandments are to love God with one’s entire being and to love one’s neighbour as oneself. Loving one’s neighbour means responding to his or her real needs but not to his or her sinful wants which would be “enabling.” One with SSA is not forbidden but commanded to love properly. Such love and loving as Jesus loves (his new commandment) includes self-denial and taking up one’s cross (related to this the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2358-9, says in part that homosexual tendencies constitute “for most ... [people who experience them] a trial These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition By ... self-mastery ..., by prayer and sacramental grace they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection”).

Jesus also endorsed heterosexual marriage as well as celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Jesus set an example of reaching out to the marginalized and some other despised persons (lepers, prostitutes, those who collected taxes for the Roman Empire). To a sexual sinner, the woman caught committing adultery, Jesus saved her from the condemnation of others, did not condemn her, but told her not to sin again. In Mark 7 Jesus includes *porneia* (sexual immorality) among behaviours which defile a person. Biblical scholar Robert Gagnon notes that while the recorded teaching of Jesus does not explicitly mention homosexuality, it also does not mention bestiality or incest. All of these behaviors are presented as contrary to God’s will in the Jewish scriptures. Gagnon argues that Jesus did not need to address these behaviours since they were unanimously disapproved of by the Jews of Jesus’ time. On the other hand, Jesus addressed divorce and remarriage because there were different views on it at the time. Gagnon argues that *porneia* includes homosexual genital acts (see the related reading in the course pack).

■ What does the virtue of chastity require?

As we considered under my slides 6 and 7 above in this module, the Christian virtue of chastity means no more and no less than what loving God, oneself, and others properly means in the area of sexuality. What does respecting God’s design for human sexuality and purposes (marital / total-giving / unitive and procreative meanings), and values relevant to human fulfillment such as the dignity of persons, truth, fairness, marriage, friendship, health and the transmission of life mean with regard to homosexuality? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* briefly summarizes an official Catholic answer to this question: “Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity (... Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:10; 1 Tim 1:10), tradition has always declared that ‘homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.’ (CDF, PH, n. 8) They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.” (n. 2357) While Catholic teaching considers homosexual acts as objectively immoral it also appreciates that a person’s culpability can be diminished (perhaps even eliminated) by factors which diminish a person’s moral awareness or their freedom (see “The Objective / Subjective Distinction Regarding Morality,” treated under Module 7 of this course.

What do you think?

■ Consider also personal integration, and the unity and communion of persons

Justin Richardson, a psychiatrist and openly gay man, does not see a boy “feeling unmasculine

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and being detached from one's same-sex parent and boyhood peers" as "problematic." He sees gender itself as a matter of indifference and that "indifference to gender distinction is a mark of intellectual superiority." There are other therapists, however, "who believe that healthy development requires that a person's interior sense of gender identity and his biology must correspond. Mind, body, and spirit must work together in harmony. The gender-nonconforming boy might be artistic, creative, and relational, but in order to grow into his potential, he must also be confident that he belongs to the world of men." Psychoanalyst Elaine Siegel, Ph.D., author of *Female Homosexuality*, and psychologist Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., "are in agreement that the primary therapeutic task is the need for both lesbians and homosexual men to "claim" their female or male bodies, from which they have become emotionally detached, as part of their fundamental self."(Joseph and Linda Nicolosi 2002, 52-53 and 153) The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2333, states: "Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*. Physical, moral, and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life." Pope Francis also affirms:

... [V]aluing one's own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek "to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it.(Encyclical *Laudato Si'* Care for our Common Home, 2015, n. 155)

In this Encyclical Pope Francis provides a very holistic comprehensive view of Ecology calling all of us to respect the integrity of nature not only outside of human persons but also to respect the integrity of the nature human persons and their bodies. Can this quotation and theme be related also to the issue of Gender identity and dysphoria and transgenderism?

What do you think?

■ What moral approach should Christians take?

Under the first two slides of this module above, we considered three different moral approaches that various people and ethicists identifying as "Christian" take. Here we ask what moral approach "should" Christians take? Is there one correct answer? Related to this Fr. John Harvey, the founding director of Courage and a Catholic moral theologian, notes that some see same-sex genital acts, i.e., anal intercourse, oral sex, mutual masturbation or massage, as not real "unitive" actions like heterosexual intercourse. While some others hold that for the sake of psychic intimacy "one may violate the physical structures [and inherent meanings] of heterosexual intercourse, as it is meant to be, a physical union of man and woman, through penetration of the vagina by the penis, and the pouring in of the seed of the man This is *dualism*, i.e., the failure to recognize the essentially composite structure of the human person which makes the psychic and the physical inseparable."(*The Truth About Homosexuality* 1996, 104) What do you think?

■ What pastoral approach should Christians take?

A good pastoral approach is in line with the requirements of both truth and Christian love. Becoming better informed of the experiences of people with SSA can help one to avoid certain mistakes and to learn what has helped some people. Consider, e.g., the experience of David Morrison as described in his book *Beyond Gay*. David was a gay activist, had a same-sex partner and a successful career. When he mentioned to a friend that he lacked deep meaning in his life,

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the friend suggested David try prayer. David did not even know if God existed. He, however, prayed that if there is a God who can help him he (David) is open. David experienced that God loved him very much. He started going to an Anglican church—he found the community there of men and women and children of various ages to be a much richer human community than the gay community. David initially turned to gay theology to continue to justify his sexual relations with his partner. Before admitting David to Baptism and the Eucharist, the Anglican pastor said he would do this if David sincerely surrendered his whole life including the sexual area to God in Jesus Christ. Since David trusted that God loved him and wanted what was really best for him, he was able to take this step. Soon afterwards he came across the book *The Cost of Discipleship* by the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In reading this book David came to understand gay theology as a theology of “cheap grace,” wanting the comfort of religion but without really following Jesus, taking up one’s cross and loving as Jesus loves. In examining his life in this light, David came to realize that although he and his partner had called their sexual relations “making love,” that they were really using each other. He asked his partner that they stop having sex. To the surprise of themselves and some of their friends this led to their friendship for each other improving. David says that when he was a gay activist he was not persuaded by Christians arguing with him using verses from the Bible. His experience reveals rather that what worked for him were suggestions to pray, to surrender his whole life including the sexual area to God, and trying to love as Jesus loves. These helped him to understand through his own experience what he should do. Later he came to understand better related biblical teaching. What do you think?

Note: Fr. John Harvey, e.g., who walked with and counseled many men and women with SSA for more than 30 years also wrote much relevant to homosexuality and a Christian pastoral approach. See also the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons” (1986).

■ Do science and experience exclude some views? Can they promote a genuine theological development?

Related to these questions see also the above slides by Heather Looy adapted by me including the points that the data often underdetermines the theory, and that empirical science which studies “what is” cannot determine morality which is not only about consequences of actions but also asks what one should or should not do in the light of morally relevant values including the dignity of persons, the truth, faithful and self-giving love, fairness and the sanctity of life, which are not empirically verifiable but which some philosophers think we can discern by means of a correct understanding of human experience and which many including many Christians believe God has revealed to us human beings.

Human experience including empirical science in the whole complex area of homosexuality does seem to exclude the views of some though such as that in general sexual orientation is merely a matter of choice or that it is genetically determined, or that a person with deep-seated same-sex attractions can always be immediately healed if one has enough faith. In general the latter is not the experience of those who had deep-seated same-sex attractions and who have reported significant diminishment of same-sex attractions and a development of their heterosexual potential—these reports generally describe a journey often over considerable time of growing in understanding the psychic traumas or conflicts underlying their same-sex attraction, having certain unmet needs for same-sex affection and bonding met through healthier relationships, coming to forgive all those who have hurt one, and gradually becoming more open

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to God's grace and healing power (consider, e.g., the experiences shared by Richard and Joe in the second Courage video).

Listening to the experiences of both gays and lesbians, as well as those who once identified this way and no longer do so can help one gain a fuller understanding of the complexity of homosexuality. This along with good empirical science such as identical twin studies can help one avoid simplistic and erroneous views. This can also help inform a good balanced pastoral practice of Christians and others, to better respond to the needs of men and women who experience SSA. The journeys of healing of many men and women in this area do not involve "magical" or "quick fix" solutions. Listening or reading about such journeys (also the healing journeys of heterosexual persons) can help one to appreciate better the Good News of God's healing love and grace.

■ With regard to this very divisive issue how can each of us contribute to building unity among Christians and others?

The issue of homosexuality is perhaps the most divisive one among Christians today. Jesus prayed that his followers may be one as He and the Father are one, so that the world may believe that the Father sent him into the world (see Jn 17). In 1 Cor 9:19-23 the Apostle Paul says he made himself one with all people (he made himself weak with the weak, a Jew with the Jews, etc.), in order to save some for the sake of the Gospel. In the Incarnation, motivated by love for us, God made himself one with us human beings in all things except sin. Living the new commandment of Jesus, to love one another as he (as God) loves us, requires that we should try to make ourselves one with others in all things except sin. This includes praying for each other, asking forgiveness and forgiving others, and seeking to be reconciled in humility, as Christians should. It also includes respectful honest dialogue including listening to others, really trying to understand them, and sharing the truth as one understands it. If we try to live Jesus' new commandment with each other, we also "meet in his name" and welcome Jesus to be in our midst (see Mt 18:20). As the light of the world Jesus can enlighten us and show us how to proceed.

■ What humans rights' positions should Christians take?

○ There should be no unfair discrimination simply due to orientation

Whatever the cause of SSA, it seems that most people who experience this do not choose it. One with SSA has the same dignity as any other human person, and he or she is entitled to the same basic human rights. This needs to be emphasized, but also understood properly.

○ Religious groups can hire and fire according to their faith (cf. the Canadian Charter or Rights and Freedoms ...)

○ Is it ever fair to discriminate re: same-sex genital behavior and employment (e.g., teachers), housing...?

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, n. 29, states that religious schools can select teachers and students according to their religious faith. The King's University (associated with the Christian Reform Church) in Edmonton several years ago first continued to accept Delwin Vriend, a laboratory instructor, when he was open about his homosexual orientation. When he shared, however, that he was in a same-sex sexual partnership and he began promoting this at the university, he was fired. Although Vriend went to the Supreme Court and the gay rights movement treated him as a hero, The King's University was never required to hire him back or pay any compensation. In another case, a woman teaching at a Catholic school in Hinton,

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Alberta, became pregnant out of wedlock. The school authorities talked with her and allowed her to continue teaching provided she no longer lived a lifestyle contrary to Catholic teaching. When she became pregnant a second time out of wedlock she was fired.

Should Christians who think that same-sex genital relations are sinful, e.g., and who run a bed and breakfast be obliged to take in a gay or lesbian couple? Should such a Christian who is a Justice of the Peace be required to officiate at a gay or lesbian civil marriage?

When same-sex civil marriage was legalized in Canada, the Catholic bishop of Calgary Fred Henry wrote a letter explaining the official Catholic position on marriage and asked that it be read from the pulpits of the churches in his diocese. Two people filed complaints against him to the Alberta Human Rights Commission. There was no real case against him according to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, however, and the case against him was eventually dropped.

What do you think about these and other human rights issues concerning homosexuality?

- **Controversy regarding “civil marriages” and adoption/parenting**

Consider the following slides and related course readings.

Slide 10: Same-Sex Attraction and Behavior



Gay couple, Steve Lofton and Robert Croteau, and five foster children. The state of Florida allowed them to foster these children but banned gay adoption.

Slide 11: Same-Sex Marriages and Adoption

According to a 2014 Statistics Canada report in 2011, 30.3 percent of Canadians who identified as homosexuals were in a same-sex couple relationship. Of these, 32.5 percent were in a same-

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sex marriage. There were about 9,600 children (24 and under) living with same-sex parents. This is 0.96 children per 1,000 of all children (about 10,000,000) under the age of 24 in Canada.

■ **Some arguments for same-sex civil “marriages” / adoption**

- **These are necessary for the full equality of gays and lesbians** [they should have access to all of society’s institutions including marriage; it is argued that allowing those gays and lesbians who want to get married to get married does not harm anyone else]; **separation of the state and religion** [religious groups that do not agree with same-sex marriage are not forced to celebrate them in their churches, etc.]; **more committed same-sex unions would lessen same-sex promiscuity and STDs** [Brent Hartinger, e.g., makes this argument]; **children mainly need loving parents ...**

Charlotte Patterson, a psychologist and lesbian, summarizes twenty years of studies and concludes, “There is no evidence to suggest that lesbians and gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial [including sexual] development among children of gay men or lesbians is compromised in any respect relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents”

Theologians Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler in their *The Sexual Person* also refer to some other research and state: “It is not the sexual orientation of gay and lesbian parents that produces negative outcomes in their children but the social discrimination toward them generated by myths propagated about their parents.”

- **Consider, e.g., a few Canadian judges and the federal bill which redefined civil “marriage” to include same-sex marriage; some Christians including the Metropolitan Community Church support same-sex marriages; American Psychological Association (www.apa.org) summaries.**

■ **Some arguments against same-sex civil “marriages”/ adoption**

- **It is not unfair to discriminate regarding different realities which are not equal** [the Canadian Catholic bishops in their “Marriage in the Present Day” (2003) say this]; **same-sex partnerships generally involve much more sexual infidelity than heterosexual marriages**

In 1994 Laumann et al. found that in the U.S.A., since the age of 18 homosexual men report having had an average of 44.3 partners, whereas heterosexual men report having had an average of 6 partners; lesbians report having had an average of 19 sexual partners, whereas heterosexual women report having had an average of 4 sexual partners. Almost all gay (men) relationships are not sexually exclusive after several years—many value emotional fidelity but are willing to compromise concerning sexual encounters outside their partnership. On the other hand 77 percent of husbands and 88 percent of wives report having always been sexually faithful.

- **they lack the full natural complementarity of the sexes; heterosexual marriages deserve special civil protections since they normally lead to procreation and are the best environment for the healthy development of children who have a right to experience both a father and a mother; it is one thing not to criminalize certain immoral behaviours but society should not approve immoral behaviour; the needs and legitimate rights of homosexuals can be met in other ways**

Since 2003 the province of Alberta, e.g., has had an Adult Interdependent Relationship Act—this allowed one to use one’s work health benefits, e.g., for another adult who was dependent on one;

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this could be used for a homosexual partner but also for someone, e.g., providing for a disabled brother or sister.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2003) argues against homosexual couples parenting children saying: "As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children." With regard to children being raised in gay or lesbian relationships, Dr. Timothy Dailey, e.g., points out serious deficiencies of the studies referred to by Patterson (see above) including "reliance upon inadequate sample size, lack of random sampling, lack of anonymity of research participants, and self-presentation bias." In 2012 sociologist Mark Regnerus published some findings of a large random sampling of American young adults who were raised in eight different types of family arrangements. The study which is better than earlier studies in a number of ways "clearly reveals that children appear most apt to succeed well as adults—on multiple counts and across a variety of domains—when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father, and especially when the parents remain married to the present day." Children whose mother had a lesbian relationship or whose father had a gay relationship in general did significantly less well on a number of measures even after controlling for factors such as the extent that the environment in which they were raised was gay friendly or not. Regnerus concludes in part that "the empirical claim that no notable differences exist must go."

Well known bioethicist and health lawyer, who was at McGill University in Canada for quite a few years, Margaret Somerville thinks that creating a child (e.g., by artificial insemination or with a surrogate mother) for a same-sex couple is not the best thing for the child. "Not because the people are gay, (but) because I think you need a mother and a father. I think you need a role model of each sex. I think you need the intangible difference between those two sexes. I think you need those complementary roles and role models in your life." (*Edmonton Journal*, 26 Oct. 2000) Some others (e.g., Robert Knight and Daniel Garcia, "Homosexual Parenting," and Dr. Joseph and Linda Nicolosi, *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*, speak of the importance of a child of either sex having a good relationship with both a father and a mother for their healthy psychosexual development. A child having a good relationship with his/her same-sex parent helps the child to develop a healthy identity as a boy/man or girl/woman. A child having a good relationship with his/her opposite sex parent helps the child to learn to trust opposite sex love. Children who witness their father and mother having a good relationship / marriage with each other also have this good example from which to learn. For children lacking these, such as children raised by a single parent, many recognize the importance of having someone else, e.g., from the extended family or a "big brother" or "big sister," to fill in any missing role models. See also the international Humanum Conference hosted by the Vatican, 17-29 Nov. 2014, which included a number of talks on the complementarity of man and woman. In a short statement to the conference Pope Francis said in part: "although the human race has come to understand the need to address conditions that menace our natural environments, we have been slower to recognize that our fragile social environments are under threat as well, slower in our culture, and also in our Catholic Church. It is therefore essential that we foster a new human ecology."

- **Consider, e.g., the Family Research Council (www.frc.org) articles re: homosexual parenting; the Catholic and many other Christian churches and other religions (CP 213)**

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The above present only some of the main arguments related to the controversial questions of same-sex marriage and parenting (by adoption or having children by the means of artificial insemination or surrogate mothers). Related to the legalization of same-sex marriage, e.g., some wonder if replacing the traditional definition of marriage between one man and one woman (consider various human cultures and religions for thousands of years, although polygamy was accepted and still is in some cultures) may lead to redefining marriage further to again allow marriages of more than 2 persons, or marriage to oneself, or marriage to an animal (these are not merely hypothetical since some individuals have actually argued for such or “celebrated” such), and so forth.

What do you think about the arguments in favour of same-sex marriage and adoption / parenting and the arguments against these?