

Wesleyans and Homosexuality:

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We Wesleyans, with warmed hearts made about three sizes too big, have enjoyed a long history of running to help when almost any group has not been getting a fair shake. This was so in John Wesley and Adam Clarke in early Methodism; and with Northern Methodism, and the Oberlin wing of the Holiness Movement on this side of the Atlantic led by Charles Grandison Finney, the Billy Graham of the early-middle nineteenth century--with the addition of being a scholar. They were all strongly abolitionist; and although it here took the bloodiest war in our history to do it, in the 1860s we Wesleyan-Holiness people helped to cast it off, as Britain had already done in 1816.

The same is so with women. We know that they are said to be a husband's chattel right in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, just as his cattle and donkeys and physical possessions were. We know that Paul said that they are to keep silent in the churches and not to teach a man. But we don't like spot-checking in Scripture. We note that in the same epistle (see 1 Cor. 11:5; 14:34) Paul says that they are to keep their heads covered when they prophesy, i.e., preach. And we know that Joel 2:28 had said they would preach, and that Peter said according to Acts 2 that the Pentecost event

fulfilled Joel's prophecy. So we came running to ordain women, the first Christians (as far as I know) to do it. Wesley gave John Fletcher's wife and another woman encouragement as two of his preachers. And in 1853 Luther Lee of the 1843-founded Wesleyan Methodists ordained Oberlin graduate Antoinette Brown to preach with Galatians 3:28 as his text where Paul says that Jew and Gentile, bond and free, and women and men are all one in Christ--there being now some question about whether Brown was only installed as a pastor in part because Lee was not a bishop and in part because some local reports at the time seemed to indicate that she was only installed.

We have come running to help the poor; to help persons in debtor prisons; to help children indentured to coal mine owners because they were just the right size to dig coal out of those low-ceilinged coal veins; to help the two- and three-year olds who were used as chimney sweeps because they were just the right size to be let down through chimneys.

My question of the 2500-or-so members of the Wesleyan Theological Society, as a charter member, as we enter into the third millennium of our Christian Era, is whether we might be the ones whom God wants to come running to help again--to help the many millions of gay and lesbian persons born as gays in this country alone, who are our last large oppressed minority.

And in light of our theme this year, will we continue to be medieval, or Victorian, and not even modern on this issue, whether or not we are in some ways postmodern.

Homosexuality is Genetic

Born as gays? Yes. We used to suspect it. Now we know it most especially from a study of DNA strips, which courts have already respected sufficiently to free a number of persons on death row. Dean Hamer, Ph.D., a molecular geneticist associated with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, proved scientifically in the early 1990s that homosexuality is not due to choice, but that it has a genetic cause. In a two-year study funded by the federal government ('91-'93), helped along somewhat by the fact that he had the advantage of consulting with some of the other 3700 doctoral-level researchers at NIH, he found through DNA strips that same-sex proclivity in males is genetic, i.e., biological, a disposition which is a given.

Hamer did the research along two lines. One was a study which showed that gay brothers and gay identical twins have many more homosexuals in their family trees than heterosexual men have. Researchers could have done such a study as this earlier, but no one did. No one, that is, had done it with this degree of thoroughness.

The other line of research by Hamer was a purely scientific one, which could not have been done earlier because it was based on very recent scientific knowledge. Here, the scientific tools and techniques used were brand-new (Hamer, 21). Hamer writes, "We looked directly at gay men's genetic information--their DNA, the long threadlike molecule that contains both the blueprints of life and the instructions for carrying them out. Using an approach called DNA linkage analysis, we found that a small region of the X chromosome, Xq28, appeared to be the same in an exceptionally high proportion of gay brothers" (Hamer, 21). He adds, "This study provided the first concrete evidence

that 'gay genes' really do exist and narrowed the location of one of them to a few million out of the several billion bits of information that make us human" (Hamer, 21). He did not find as yet the specific gay gene, which will likely be found. He found "a marker, a strip of DNA, . . . rather than a single gene" (Hamer, 21).

This study by Hamer, proving "a genetic link to homosexuality" (Hamer, 17), was first reported on in July of 1993. It was published in Science, the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Hamer's six-page article was given front-page headlines in the world's leading newspapers. In the U.S., it appeared during the heat of discussion about gays in the military, one day after President Clinton's July 15 deadline for the Pentagon to announce its policy on homosexuality in the military--which turned out to be a mere "don't ask, don't tell" directive. A wide interest was piqued.

USA Today's headline read, "Is There a Gay Gene?" It was on the front page of Washington Post as "Study Links Genes to Homosexuality." Canada's Edmonton Journal's headline read, "Gays and DNA Link: Study Showing That Homosexuality May Run In the Family Sets Off Alarm Bells." The Ottawa Citizen said, "Gene Find Opens Pandora's Box of Ethical and Legal Issues."

Research by four Canadians published in Science magazine April 23, 1999, and commented on in newspapers including the Los Angeles Times, "paid for out of our own pockets," as they say, brings into some question whether the genetic proof of male homosexuality can be traced specifically to the Xq28 area. The researchers say that they only tested for that one microscopic area, and that, if they are correct, it does not mean

that the location of the gay gene is not somewhere else in the vast human genome. But Dean Hamer does not accept their research as valid especially because they did not carefully study the DNA of maternal-side persons to the gay male siblings. The researchers admit, "Maternal DNA was difficult to obtain" Science, April 23, 1999, Vol. 284, p. 666).

In many instances, fathers and mothers stopped blaming themselves for gayness in their children, for it had long been thought by many that the proclivity was due to bad parenting.

Actually, however, mothers are not altogether off the hook. Although their actions were not found to be its cause, when the family trees of gays were studied by Hamer, it was found that a predominant number of gays in the family tree were on the maternal side. Technically, this is what the "Xq28," on the X chromosome mentioned above relates to. It is why gays and lesbians were soon wearing t-shirts inscribed with a pithy summary of Hamer's findings" "Xq28--Thanks for the gene, Mom!"

If, indeed, as it seems to be, from other scientific studies besides Hamer's, that the proclivity is genetic, and if this fact can be promulgated sufficiently, surely it will be liberating for gay men and lesbians. Surely populations will not continue to allow overt discrimination against them in housing, in employment, in the military, in adoptions.

And USA Today reported March 3, 1998, on new research outlining "the first strong evidence of a physical difference between lesbians and straight women."

Discussing what appeared that day in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the USA Today item says, "The inner ears of gay women, like those of men, are

less sensitive than those of heterosexual women." It adds, "The discovery adds new support to the theory that sexual orientation may be predisposed before birth. Evidence suggests that biological differences in the womb govern sexual orientation in adulthood. For instance, previous research has found that two parts of the male brain are different in gay and heterosexual men and that some genes differ between gay and straight men." It goes on to say that "researchers at the University of Texas at Austin measured the function of the cochlea--the spiral-shaped part of the inner ear--of 200 adults and found that the inner ears of female homosexuals have undergone 'masculinization,' probably from hormone exposure before birth."

Somewhat less scientific than Hamer's findings, and those of other earlier and later scientific researchers, and the 1998 findings on lesbianism, as proof that homosexuality is not chosen, but significant nonetheless, is the huge amount of psychological and sociological and personal-experience evidence. For example, John C. McNeill, forty years a gay Jesuit, speaks of "... new evidence, coming from biblical studies and from various empirical studies in the human sciences, especially psychology and sociology, that completely undermined the traditional understanding of homosexuality as a chosen and changeable state" (McNeill, p. xvii).

McNeill also says what is in agreement with my own intensive gay studies: "New insights ... leave no doubt that one has no choice about sexual orientation and that the only healthy reaction to being lesbian or gay is to accept it" (*Ibid.*). And he adds, "Above all else, there is the evidence that has come from the collective experience of lesbians

and gays" (*Ibid.*). That is, this is what their experience is: that they have always been gay--as far back as their sexual recollections go.

The authors of Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life refer approvingly, and also questioningly, to E. O. Wilson, On Human Nature (p. 149), as suggesting that "... we all have genes which specifically program either homosexuality or heterosexuality ..." (p. 126). They also say, "For example, another sociobiologist, James D. Weinrich, suggests that it might be appropriate to become homosexual if one's psychical condition precluded the likelihood of one's becoming a successful parent" (*Ibid.*). Based in part on an assumed inclination of homosexuals to work in the caring service areas, E. O. Wilson thinks that the homosexual might be the "genetic carrier of mankind's rare altruistic impulses" (p. 149). He says that their genes might even be carried through "collateral lines" as of nieces and nephews (p. 151). Wilson of course believes that homosexuality is not unnatural, since it is determined by genes. But even if it is natural, that does not in itself mean that its promiscuous practice is acceptable, even as heterosexuals do not copulate with the opposite sex without restrictions, the chief one being marriage.

Genes are likely more influential upon homosexuality than hormones are.

Hormones, androgen, estrogen, and testosterone, excreted from the endocrine glands, are present in different measures in all three sexes (if we can call homosexuality a third sex as some writers do). Yet some researchers have concluded that hormones are what cause homosexuality--which some of them have called "inversion." Even if both genes and hormones incline a person toward homosexual behavior, a person's free will is surely in play, else the behaviorists in psychology, such as B. F. Skinner, would be correct, and

many of us of course believe that they are not. Some have surmised that homosexuals have lower testosterone than do heteros; but when a study group was injected with testosterone, and with other masculinizing hormones, it only increased their sex drive, but did not change any of them into heteros.

Sexologist Havelock Ellis was quite early (1936) in propounding the theory that male homosexuality is genetic. He wrote of a case study which "clearly showed that the case [of homosexuality] was congenital and not acquired, so that it could not be termed a vice" (p. 222, Sexual Inversions).

Through our wide remembered past, before Hamer especially pretty much nailed it down scientifically as genetic, in DNA strips, the cause of homosexuality was viewed in a variety of ways. Aristotle thought it to be caused by some bodily defect--and he himself, along with his teacher Plato (who lived his 80 years as a bachelor), and Socrates are understood by many researchers to have been gay. Medieval theologian Albert the Great understood that it is caused by an unexplainable burning frenzy, to be exorcised--or, if that fails, burning at the stake, on the theory that everyone needs to believe and practice the right things to be admitted to heaven, and that heretics rob people of their souls and are thus worse than murderers. After Darwin (1859, his Origin of the Species), some said gayness is evolutionally regressive, and a threat to humans, as degenerative and not enhancing. Some have said it is caused by excessive masturbation.

Cures, failed so-called ones, have been as varied as have been the theories of its origin--hypnosis, exorcism, injections with male hormones, prayer and support groups, you name it.

Many, in the scientific world, as the new millennium begins, understand with Hamer and many other scientists that it is genetic, and that we are to flow with the flow, not trying to "cure" it, understanding, even, that it might have some redeeming uses: reducing the tendency to overpopulate ourselves; a programming of altruism; prevention from parenting for certain ones among gays who would not be good at it; producing a bonding between some gays who would be suitable as adoptive parents for children who need the higher incomes and caring and the higher educations among gays for their rearing, including their education.

After outlining a century of scientific studies into the cause or causes of homosexuality, the already-mentioned Simon LeVay, while admitting that there might be some nongenetic causes which contribute, concludes that much scientific evidence points to a genetic cause as the major determinant. LeVay says, "Although the sources of this diversity [in sexual inclination] are probably not all genetic, the molecular genetic approach offers by far the best prospect of understanding how sexual diversity arises. The simplest hypothesis is that genes, such as one at Xq28 [a reference to Dean Hamer's findings, which study LeVay applauds], are elements in the molecular cascade that controls the sexual differentiation in the brain" (*Queer Science*, p. 279).

One aspect of the problem is that, if there are nongenetic causes, such as environmental ones, no study as yet has shown precisely what they are. It used to be thought that a boy's father caused gayness, by being too firm, or too uncaring, or too this-or-that. Yet whole generations of African American boys, millions of them, have been reared in recent years without a father in the home, and this has not produced a

high incidence of gays in the African-American population. LeVay asks, "Where is the resulting explosion of homosexuality among black male teenagers?" (p. 279). He adds, "It has not happened" (Ibid.).

My own conclusion is that reference to Freud's views of several generations ago, on homosexuality; and even reference to nongenetic studies in recent decades--do not now greatly matter. Especially is this so, when one reviews the scientific study of Dean Hamer. While LeVay might be correct in understanding that unspecified nongenetic factors might have a place in homosexual orientation, since it has now been proven by Hamer's study that DNA strips indicate a genetic cause, then gays are simply born that way.

Of course, what is environmental further stamps a boy as gay. He has little interest in sports; he gets called a sissy because in some ways he acts as if he is a girl, and plays as if he is one. The DNA strips determined that initially; and then, as the boy grows up, his experiences, as of being called a sissy, begin to establish, in his conception of himself, that perhaps he is gay. The orientation begins with the DNA strips, and the boy's consciousness of being gay is a gradual dawning. Surely, the environment is not a cause of his being gay, but an outcome of his being gay-influenced genetically.

It has often been gay persons who have conducted scientific studies of the cause or causes of homosexuality. In many cases, these studies have supported a biological cause--not psychodynamic or environmental causes. Often this research has been questioned by the non-gay and the anti-gay community. It has been said that the

researchers were themselves gay persons, and that it gets them off the hook if the cause is biological.

I would observe, though, that these numerous studies have been done scientifically. That is, there have been "blind" control groups, the researcher not knowing ahead of time what type of person it was who was giving the information for the study. And it is only natural that gay persons would be existentially interested in doing such painstaking studies.

In my own case, I am a heterosexual who has been making a study of homosexuality, not to defend or protect a homosexual tendency in myself, but to speak up and speak out on behalf of people who are gay.

Homosexuality in Animals

Recent scientific studies have also shown that numerous non-human animal species are characterized by homosexuality. Since individuals in many animal species are homosexual, it is only likely that certain individuals in the human species will be gay. Since some animals copulate with the same sex, and only with the same sex, the indication is that their homosexuality is an aspect of their DNA makeup.

To begin, let me quote from Simon LeVay's significant Queer Science where he says, "Animal studies have demonstrated that sexual acts between males or between females are common in a wide variety of species. Just among anthropoid primates (monkeys and great apes), homosexual behavior has been described in thirty-three species according to a recent review by Paul Vasey (see "Homosexual behavior in

primates: A review of evidence and theory," International Journal of Primatology 16:173-204, 1995).

Gay activist Larry Kramer says, "Studies by Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach . . . found . . . in 1957, that homosexuality exists in every species of every mammal . . ." (Kramer, 244).

Some male rats seem to be gay. Some of them had no interest in mounting an estrous female, but were unusually ready to mount, when paired with a stud male (see Journal of Steroid Biochemistry 12:337-346, 1980). In another study of 25 control rats (whose mothers had not been stressed during pregnancy), 6 of the 25 refused to mount females--and in these six, a certain sexually related area of the hypothalamus (in the brain) was only about half the size of this nucleus in the rats which did mount females (see Brain Research 581:244-251, 1992).

Some sheep seem to be homosexual. Every year, a sheep farmer found that about 10 percent of the rams he had raised to be studs failed to perform when paired with estrous female sheep. Study of the matter revealed that some of the studs were gay. The gay males copulated among themselves, pairing off, and taking turns in mounting each other and copulating anally (see Journal of Animal Science 70:1787-1794, 1992).

It was found that, whereas estrogen levels are about 4 times as high in rams as in ewes, the gay rams had an estrogen level about equal to that of ewes, and about a fourth of that in the heterosexual rams (see Hormones and Behavior 29:31-41, 1995).

More studies of animals need to be done. Some studies indicate that homosexuality in some of the non-human mammals might not be of a permanent cast, as it seems to be among humans.

One matter, though, is most clear, as relates to homosexuality in animals as it might relate to human same-sex proclivity: that perhaps same-sex attraction is not unnatural. If it obtains in animals, who make no moral decisions, but simply act according to their nature, perhaps acting on such interests, in humans, is natural, based on an orientation, and is not unnatural.

Another observation which might be made as relates to animal homosexual behavior is that homophobia has not been observed in the non-human world. When they copulate, other animals do not try to stop them, and such animals do not seem to be given a lower status than that enjoyed by the heterosexual ones.

This Orientation is Experienced

One of the ways in which we human beings decide on the validity of an opinion is: Does it meet the test of human experience? Is it what human beings actually experience? In philosophy, as we all know, this kind of proof, from experience, is called a posteriori (in distinction from a priori, deciding things prior to your experience and without taking experience into account). Deciding things based on experience is called empiricism. Two of its standout advocates were John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-76). The opposite type of philosophy is one in which things are decided by basing the decision on reason. It is called rationalism, and one of its standout high priests is Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hamer's scientific proof, through DNA

strips, that homosexuality is genetic, biological, approaches the cause of homosexuality rationally. Both approaches to the cause of homosexuality are recognized and valid approaches. Hamer's approach was discussed earlier. Here, I am attempting to suggest that a person's experience of being gay is another way of deciding matters regarding the cause of homosexuality--where it comes from.

Both of these approaches augur against the Religious Right's argument that its cause is a person's choosing to be gay--that it is based on preference, and not on biological, genetic orientation. Homosexuality is what many people say they experience.

No doubt the great early-modern literary genius, Michel DeMontaigne, is correct in saying that the experience of human beings has difference in it. DeMontaigne says, "Experience has just as many [shapes as reason has]. What we infer from the similarity of events is uncertain, because they are always dissimilar: there is no quality so universal here [in experience] as difference" (quoted in Andrew Sullivan, Virtually Normal, p. 168). And no doubt there are differences in the experiences of homosexuals; for example, some realize it much earlier than others do. Yet I have also found a commonality. Almost all of them say (as will be shown herein later), based on their experience of homosexuality, that they were evidently born with this same-sex proclivity.

Robert Warren Cromey says, "Homosexuality is not something about which people make a choice. They just are that way" (In God's Image, p. 33).

Greg Louganis, the Olympic diving gold medalist, who had contracted AIDS and who had a diving accident in his Olympics participation in which there was profuse

bleeding (because of which his participation was questioned by many) said in a June 21, 1997 interview on the Geraldo TV show, "I was born that way [gay]."

McNeill, the gay former Jesuit priest, says: "It should be stressed here . . . that human beings do not choose their sexual orientation; they discover it as something given" (p. 221). He continues by saying, "To pray for a change in one's sexual orientation is about as meaningless as to pray for a change in the color of one's eyes" (p. xvi).

LeVay, in Queer Science, perhaps next in significance as a book on gayness to Dean Hamer's Science of Desire, says, "Although there are exceptions, gay men in the United States today [1996] generally tend to claim that they were born gay. Ninety percent of gay men surveyed by the Advocate (a major gay magazine) in 1994, claim to have been born gay; only four percent believed that choice came into the equation at all" (p. 6). Of lesbians asked, 15 percent said that choice had something to do with it (Ibid.). On their believing that they were born gay, what is meant is that from as far back as they can remember, they (the gay males) felt themselves to be different from other boys, as in playing more or less as girls do. LeVay thinks that the few who say they had a choice in the matter in some cases might be saying that they finally chose to admit it to themselves and perhaps to selected other persons--and that they had been gay all along (see p. 6). LeVay's Queer Science "attempts to portray research into homosexuality in a social context" (p. 7). It is for this reason that I believe Hamer's Science of Desire, which found proof from DNA strips that homosexuality is inborn, is the more significant, of these two important studies of homosexuality.

Larry Kramer, one of the principal gay writers of our time, says, "Homosexuals are born, just as heterosexuals are born" (p. 245).

Gay writer Andrew Sullivan says that a homosexual is someone who "has had no fundamental choice in the matter" (p. 18).

Mel White, a former Fuller Theological Seminary teacher for 14 years, a writer for Billy Graham, for Religious Right leaders including Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and James D. Kennedy, reared in a devout Church of God Anderson home and attending their college in Oregon, says in his coming-out book Stranger at the Gate, "My sexual orientation, like everybody else's, is forever, and to ignore or deny that fact can be a fatal mistake" (p. 73).

Andrew Sullivan, in this connection, quotes Ludwig Wittgenstein, who says, "One can only describe here and say: this is what human life is like" (Virtually Normal, p. 3).

In a poetic statement of homosexuality's being what we basically experience, Andrew Sullivan says: "Thinking according to the analogy of the Theaetetus [a dialogue of Plato], the experience of homosexuality is a process of catching not wild birds outside, but tame birds already within the cage of the mind" (Ibid.).

What McNeill says about his ten years as counselor to gays, for thousands of hours, following 40 years in the Jesuit priesthood, is this: "The claim of certain groups to be able to change homosexuals has been shown to be spurious and frequently based on homophobia" (p. xvi).

A similar observation has been made by Richard A. Isay, after counseling gays for many years. He writes, "My clinical work and the empirical studies done by others . . .

suggests that, like heterosexuality, homosexuality is constitutional in origin" (Being Homosexual, p. 42).

For many generations it was understood, even by professionals, that homosexuality occurs as a disease. But this became gradually so unconvincing that in 1975 the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove it from its list of diseases in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Yet many people, especially of the Evangelical Right, still consider it as at least not normal for anyone. It might be observed that if it is truly pathological, as prohibitionists have often said, then its victims need help instead of ridicule and unsympathetic bashings.

Writing in the early '90s, Mel White says that he had spent thousands of dollars on psychiatric counseling because he hoped for a metamorphosis in himself whereby he would become a heterosexual. He cooperated with his professional counselors until he was driven to attempt suicide. He says in his Stranger at the Gate that after all this psychiatric counseling he was the same loathsome gay scholar and writer and professor and preacher--the same gay person, although married for many years--that he had known himself to be from at least age 12.

The Religious Right's View

Typical of the Religious Right's views on the cause or causes of homosexuality is the view of Dr. James Dobson in his Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions. In it, my former Sunday school teacher (during my 1970-71 sabbatical year in Pasadena, California) does not include a biological, genetic cause as even one of them; and he gives

no credence to the understanding that it is their basic experience. He says, "Homosexuality has many causes, in the same way that a fever may occur from different sources. However, as a generalization it can be said that homosexuality often seems to result from an unhappy home life, usually involving confusion in social identity" (p. 451). Then he discusses the kind of "home environment" which causes it, saying it is sometimes due to a "dominating . . . mother" (p. 454), or "the father" who is "rejecting and ridiculing of the child" (p. 451). He adds, still faulting the parents, "If parents will provide a healthy, stable home environment, . . . homosexuality is highly unlikely to occur in the younger set" (p. 452). This was published in 1982, so he could not have had the advantage of what I consider the single most significant publication, Dean Hamer's Science of Desire of 1994. Yet numerous other scientific studies had already been issued, which had indicated a biological, genetic cause (see discussion of perhaps a dozen or more of such studies in Simon LeVay's Queer Science, many of which were out long before 1982).

In the book just referred to, p. 453, Dobson also says, "Some of my colleagues report better than a 70 percent 'cure' rate." And he adds, "This condition can be treated successfully, when the individual wants to be helped, and when a knowledgeable professional is dedicated to the same goal" (Ibid.).

The Religious Right leaders, in recent attacks against homosexuals, in general do not seem to be aware of the scientific studies tracing the tendency to a biological, genetic source. This includes Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and James D. Kennedy. Even Billy Graham does not seem to be aware of such studies. In late 1997, in a visit to San

Francisco, when asked about homosexuality, he simply said that the Bible calls it a sin, and he added that there are worse sins.

Dobson, James D. Kennedy, Pat Robertson, and other leaders of the Religious Right, all seem to think that homosexuality can be "cured," and that it often is.

McNeill says that such so-called cures do not actually occur. What seems to happen is that the gay persons believe they should change, pray, and believe that God has transformed them. Then they give testimony that change has occurred, and the Religious Right chalks them up as more persons, in the 70 percent or so of gays for whom they "secure" a transformation into heterosexuals.

Something similar occurred November 28, 1997, when a therapist stated to Jane Pauley on the Date Line TV program that he had got one man changed from a homosexual into a heterosexual. And what was the proof of this "change," that he gave? The proof he gave was: "He's married and has three children." But this proves nothing at all. Surely we all know gays who have married heterosexuals and have begotten and reared families. The gays I know, and gays I have known of, are in many instances simply gay persons who are trying to align themselves with the expectations of the church and synagogue, and of our society generally. As regards this therapist's report, he said, according to the TV program, that he did not want any of his "changed" patients to be interviewed on the Date Line TV program. Wise therapist. Prudent, at least.

Michael Bussee, the founder of Exit and who helped to found Exodus, who manned an ex-gay hotline for years and for years gave testimonials in churches about the program of helping gays to change, could not himself change. He came to realize that

enticing gays to change is futile. He is witness to the failure of such attempts. Bussee says, "I was so sincere, I tried hard, but I wasted years of my life misleading myself and misleading others" (urged to write a book and quoted in Stranger at the Gate, p. 272).

In this book White also mentions the story of Enrico S. Appearing at Bussee's office one morning, Enrico said he had hurt himself, lowered his pants, and showing dozens of marks revealing that he had cut his organ and scrotum repeatedly, trying to eradicate his gay feelings, but failing (p. 273).

What the Orientation is Like

To be gay is feeling fear on top of fear on top of fear.

To be gay is like being Jewish and being hated by your parents for being Jewish.

It is being human and being hated, discriminated against, maligned, marginalized, because you are human.

It is like having blue eyes and being hated because your eyes are blue.

It is like being heterosexual and being discriminated against for being attracted to the opposite sex.

It is like being lefthanded when the tools are made with righthanded people in mind.

It is knowing that you are more likely to contract the virus which causes AIDS than heteros are.

It is like taking a walk on a street at midnight in a megapolis's most crime-infested area.

It is fearing as to how passionate a kiss can be without a bit of blood being transferred to your own just-brushed, bleeding gums--in case the other person has the virus.

It is the fear of not knowing for sure if you have the virus, even if it does not show up on the humanly-devised test you took, since you think it could have been contracted several years earlier and still not register itself.

It is not being altogether sure you are safe in shaking hands heartily with an HIV-positive gay man, since a small amount of his blood might get into a tiny break in your skin, allowing that person's microscopic virus to enter into your circulatory system--but of shaking hands heartily anyway.

It is wishing, if you carry the virus, that it had been contracted through a blood transfusion, instead of through carelessness that could have been avoided.

It is having more friends who are HIV positive than heteros have, and realizing that some of your gay friends have likely been infected. And it is being mad about this whole thing of the AIDS epidemic.

It is comforting a friend who is dying of AIDS, and finally helping him to take the hemlock potion and lying with him, at his side, as he dies, and not calling the police or other helpers such as firemen for at least an hour so that they do not try to resuscitate him, which would be against his wishes. Mel White tells about doing this.

It is being married to a woman because that is what society and the church wanted, but yearning in your fibers to be with a person of the same sex--one who

befriended you and whose muscles and manliness generally are so deliriously attractive to you.

It is being an elementary school teacher, which is fulfilling to you, and wearing a wedding ring although you are single, because you know that in that particular school you would be out of there pronto if the parents or the administrators knew you are gay. Trumped charges along some other line.

It is making sure you wear that ring even when you are interviewed for the position.

It is being a dentist and knowing that most of your clients would not be seeing you if they barely suspected that you are gay. Blood all the time of people in those chairs, possibly mixing with that of the dentist.

It is still attending the church of your childhood, and realizing that some people there are wondering if you are gay because you are not married and do not even court a woman. It is sometimes seeming to court a woman.

It is wondering, sometimes, if the majority hetero church membership might be right, and wondering if God really does love you.

To be gay is realizing that your neighbors are no doubt suspecting that you are gay and might be feeling that you and your same-sex partner taint the neighborhood.

To be gay is realizing that even in a business office you will likely not be respected as much if your gayness is known.

To be gay is realizing that if you and all the others, all at once, would come out of the closet, you would have power; and that you will never have that power, that voice, if you remain closeted.

It is wishing that you could march with the other gays in the New York City Gay Pride Day each June, and realizing that if you did march with them, it would be seen by society that Wall Street slick dressers are also gay, and that you and all the other high-salaried gays, coming out of the closet all at once, would cause the city, including the media people, to see that many of you live respectable, responsible, caring lives, backed up by graduate education and middle class at least.

It is to be in the closet because you know that fall-out in many directions would happen in your case if your gayness were known, and fearing that someone will "out" you because outing gays is what he or she does from what seems to be a life-calling.

To be gay is sometimes to wish that one given country, your country, were made up of gay people altogether so that there would not be a different majority which at the best slights you and at its worst hates your innards and in some cases perpetrates violence against you.

This is the orientation. This is the experience of being gay. Chosen? A preference to being a heterosexual person? Are you kidding, you Religious Right person or Religious Right-influenced person? They are not that dumb. That insane. That non-economical. They find themselves to be gay; they often try to change. They often pay professional counselors to help them to change, only to find that, with all their following of the advice, they are the same gay persons as before.

I often mean "gay men and lesbians" when I say "gays." But the lesbian homosexuals come off with at least a mite less discrimination, in our culture. They are equally as likely not to have spousal benefits, e.g. But their kind of sex is not nearly as distasteful to us heteros as is the anal sex of gay men. The anus itself is the one most disrespected part of our bodies as heteros, and vulgar people are forever slighting it. Even in naming it, they make it synonymous with the whole person. I myself must confess, as a hetero researcher and writer, that in my imagination I tend to think favorably of two lesbians having oral sex. I know that the clitoris gets stimulated by the mouth much more felicitously than by thrusts of the penis in hetero sex. Its location favors oral sex. But in gay male anal sex one partner is always passive. And to me as a hetero, that whole scenario is distasteful, distasteful, distasteful. Yet since it seems to be their orientation; who they are genetically and perhaps somewhat by their hormones; who they are emotionally; who they are naturally, as gay individuals are among all mammals-- it seems to me that they should not be held as strangers at the gate, and without their own place at the table. And it seems to me that we of the church, who have long interpreted the Jewish-Christian Bible as proscribing it, might need to check carefully to see if we have been interpreting that Holy Book correctly--to which careful study we now turn, with the profound belief that even as the God of the Bible always comes running to help people who are marginalized for no fault of their own, He is likely going to be infinitely caring and understanding of this natural minority also.

Scripture and Homosexuality

It will readily be seen that in this paper I have been using reason and experience, often used by Mr. John Wesley, as two supports for beliefs and practices. As we turn to Scripture, we will be using a third of his sources of support--realizing that, although the word "homosexuality" was not used in English until 1892, still, same-sex attraction does not seem to have been viewed as an important matter by the practical-divinity-interested Wesley. In his Notes on the New Testament, in comments on the three N.T. homosexuality passages, he makes no observation which shows that he is clearly aware of homosexuality as a problem. On "sodomites" in 1 Tim. 1:10 he mentions that word, but makes no comment on it but comments on the next word, "menstealers." Of "effeminate" in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, he misses what it refers to, commenting, "Who live in an easy, indolent way; taking no cross, enduring no hardship." On "sodomites" here he says that they are seriously in sin but does not indicate what the sin is. On the Rom. 1:26-27 passage he is vague, speaking of "that unnatural lust."

In this area, I wish to make a number of observations--not conclusions. I do so remembering that Mr. Wesley, who taught logic and argumentation at Oxford, whose most distinguishing teaching had to do with the importance of our experience, would go to Scripture again to see if he had interpreted it correctly if it seemed to counter reason or experience or tradition.

One observation I would make about Scripture and homosexuality is that the three references to it in the Old Testament and the three in the New Testament do not seem to suggest that the writers knew anything about homosexuality as an orientation.

And I ask if we should hold them to that standard when we ourselves did not know for sure that it is a biological disposition until 1993. Do the Bible's writers know that the world is round, or that the earth spins one round each day, or that it circles the sun every year? Did they need to know such facts of science in order to direct us, as Wesley says they do, on how to make it to the celestial city?

Another observation I would make, this one a detailed discussion, relates to Sodom, which is the source of the chief single biblical opposition to same-sex relations, and the basis for homosexuality's being named sodomy. For one thing, the people of Sodom were evidently not gay, but that the belief that they were has no doubt had a profound influence on subsequent opinion, including even recent homophobia. Whatever they were, the men of Sodom were that way "to a man" (NRSV), where the NIV reads, "all the men of every part of the city of Sodom--both young and old--surrounded the house" (Gen. 19:4). It would be unlikely that every man in the city was gay.

The principal supposed Old Testament proscription of homosexual relations is the Genesis 19 account of what occurred at Sodom when Lot sheltered two men, called angels, in his home. Interestingly, the Hebrew verb for "to know," contrary to popular opinion, "is very rarely used in a sexual sense in the Bible: in only ten of its 943 occurrences in the Old Testament does it have the sense of carnal knowledge" (John Boswell, 94).

And while Sodom and its sin, its destruction, the judgment upon it, is mentioned later in the Bible 27 times, and Sodomites once (1 Kn. 22:46), according to the New

American Standard Bible--Sodom is not once associated with homosexuality, even by implication, unless such possibly obtains in Jude v. 7.

It is to be noted that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, of about two centuries B.C., the word for "to know," where "all the men" of Sodom wanted "to know" the angel men in Lot's house, is sungenometha autois; and it carries no carnal knowledge meaning whatever--simply being a request to "make the acquaintance of" or "to become familiar with" the strangers receiving Lot's hospitality. But the Greek words regarding Lot's offer of his daughters to the men of Sodom are egnosan and Chresasthe, and these words "clearly refer to sexual behavior" (for all this see John Boswell, 94).

Of course, there is no word for "homosexuality" or "homosexual" in the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek languages of Bible times and no such word in any ancient languages. Even now, no such word exists in either Hebrew or Arabic or modern Greek. The nearest word, in Latin, dating to the Middle Ages, is sodomita which, obviously, was coined due to interpreting Sodom's sin as that of homosexuality. Even in the English, homosexual first appeared as recently as 1892.

In the 27 references to Sodom and its sin, or sins, after Genesis 19, the sin is usually said to be inhospitality (as it clearly was, which was a big sin in those areas at that time); or it was said to be "greed," or "pride" (see Dt. 29:23; 32:32; Is. 1:9, 1:10, 13:19; Jer. 23:14, 49:18, 50:40; La. 4:6; Ezk. 16:46, 48, 49, 53, 55, 56; Am. 4:11; Zph. 2:9; Mt. 10:15, 11:23, 24; Lu. 10:12, 17:29; Ro. 9:29; 2 Pe. 2:6; Jude 1:7; Rev. 11:8).

Out of all these 27 passages, the one which comes the closest, especially for homophobics, to associating Sodom's sin with homosexuality is Jude v. 7. Yet it does not do so clearly. This passage has in it a word usually translated "fornication" (as in the KJV); and "sexual immorality" (NASB, NIV, NKJV). It is the word exporneusasai. It also contains the words apelthusai (going away), opiso (after), sarkos (flesh), eteros (other). It is this latter part, "going away after different flesh," that some have thought refers to homosexuality. Yet the other flesh here, or different flesh, might refer to the fact that the two men in Lot's house were angels. And the passage clearly says that their sin was fornication, i.e., opposite gender sex before engagement or marriage. And that does not seem to be happening at Lot's house, except for Lot's offer of it with his daughters.

It is an interesting fact that a quite similar incident is recorded in Judges 19:1-29; and people have not interpreted it as referring to homosexual behavior. A man traveling with his concubine and a servant was extended hospitality at Gibeah by an old man who was a farmer. Then "some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house . . . they shouted, to the old man . . . 'Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him.' The old man said to them, 'No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this disgraceful thing. Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish'" (vv. 22-24 NIV). Then the concubine was sent outside, and "they raped her and abused her through the night" (v. 25). Here, in what is similar to Genesis 19, it would have been "disgraceful" for men to have sex with men; but it was evidently

not disgraceful for them to rape the concubine. And the old man had offered the men his virgin daughter, even as Lot had offered both of his virgin daughters. Yet even homophobics do not in general interpret Judges 19 in the way they interpret Genesis 19. A much more evil event took place at Gibeah than took place at Sodom. It must be kept in mind that God had decided to destroy Sodom before the so-called homosexual event took place, for its pride and greed and inhospitality—not because of an invented sodomy.

And while Isaiah (1:9, 1:10, 3:9, 13:19), Jeremiah (23:14, 49:18, 50:40), Ezekiel (16:46,48; 16:49,53,55,56), Amos 4:11, and Zephaniah 2:9—all mention Sodom, not one of them relates Sodom's (or Gomorrah's) sin to homosexual orientation or behavior. Their sins were said or implied to be inhospitality, greed, pride. And God had already decided to judge them prior to their requesting that Lot bring out to them the two visiting strangers, referred to as angels. And it is strange that Lot is so unbelievably righteous, because he offered these men of Sodom his two virgin daughters, to do with them sexually whatever they wished. Besides all this, the New Testament refers to Sodom five times (Mt. 10:15, Lu. 17:29, Rom. 9:29, 2 Pe. 2:6, Jude 7), and it contains no suggestion that the city's sin was homosexual behavior.

Another observation I would make is that the two proscriptions of it in Leviticus (18:22; 20:12) come in the midst of a holiness code's numerous prohibitions which we do not now hold ourselves to: no sex in marriage during the wife's menstrual cycle, not wearing any clothing made of two kinds of cloth, not eating shellfish, the list is lengthy.

Another observation is that although Jesus refers to Sodom, He never once even obliquely referred to homosexuality--and He was a teacher, an ethicist, and got right down to specific tacks in outlining, as in the Sermon on the Mount, what our behavior is to be like.

Still another observation is that the three references to homosexuality in the New Testament, all by one writer, Paul, in Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9, and 1 Tim. 1:10, connect it with gross sins which these particular sexual acts were related to: "unchastity, violence, moral corruption, and idolatry" (Prank, Against Nature, p. 279). This being so, it's proscriptions might not apply if none of such as that is going on. When a person such as Rev. Dr. Mel White falls in love with a same-sex person, and makes a mutual commitment of fidelity with him, as a Christian, not given to violence or idolatry, or any other proscribed actions--that same-sex act might not be what the few Scripture proscriptions refer to. Paul would have been aware of man-boy sex. And he seems to know that sometimes heterosexuals have same-sex relations, because he is talking in Romans 1:26-27 about unnatural, opposed-to-nature sex. Or, he does not know about homosexual orientations--which genetic dispositions would not be transgressed by same-sex relations. He assumes that everyone is heterosexual, and that it would be against nature, para phusin and not kata phusin.

Still another observation is that Paul is proscribing in Romans 1:26-27 what is unnatural, which, if same-sex interest is natural as Hamer shows it to be, would mean that, for Paul, "unnatural" would be for heteros to have same-sex experience--as, actually, was widely practiced in Greece at the time, when hetero men had sex with boys. And he

clearly here connects it with idolatry, knowing that it was practiced in connection with idol worship at temples. Actually in the two Leviticus passages same-sex relations is called an "abomination" and "despicable" in the NASB, "destable" in both NIV texts, and "idol worship" by some versions and by various scholars.

Yet another observation is that we Christians have not followed numerous biblical enjoinders; and assuming that Paul, e.g., does have saintly Christians such as Dr. Mel White in mind (which I do not believe), there are numerous teachings, with all our sola scriptura as Protestants, which we do not follow, anyway--and some of them are on significant matters. A small matter is that Paul's commanding the holy kiss three times is seldom followed today--especially not in the U.S. We do not even know what it consisted of, as New Testament scholar Dr. Alex R. G. Deasley tells me. On this light level also, right now, with the studies suggesting heart benefits from a little wine daily, most of us Wesleyan-Holiness Christians do not abide by Paul's enjoinder to Timothy to drink a little wine medicinally. But there are big matters in any listing of our non-compliances with Bible teachings.

One of them has to do with the Bible's opposition to greed, and the opulence it makes possible. Greed, with inhospitality, is the big sin of Sodom, and it is a big sin for the prophets, for Jesus, for James, others. Yet the Religious Right gay-bashers, in general, entice people to seed-give, assuring them that they will probably get back much more money, from unexpected sources, than they gave--Oral Roberts in 1947 being the first to "see" prosperity in Scripture, where 3 John v. 2, in its wish that friend Gaius will "prosper," is taken not as simply the greeting which it was, but as a wish that Gaius would

gain material wealth. With Roberts's lead, A. A. Allen soon got into the prosperity emphasis, as did Kenneth Hagen, who influenced Kenneth and Gloria Copeland to do the same. And Paul Crouch, as head of the over-600-TV-stations Trinity Broadcasting Network, is right in the middle of all this. And the likeable and soft-spoken Benny Hinn is immersed in it, traveling on the Concord and enjoying expensive hotels--and refusing to state in an interview (see CNN report, July 27, 1997) what his salary is, but implying that his self-appointed board gives him what is at least less than \$1,000,000 a year.

Many of the opulence practitioners are among the Religious Right's gay bashers.

Another way in which we do not follow the Bible's enjoinders is in its proscription of interest or money loans, often in Bible times called usury.

For one thing, God's people were not to charge any interest of another Israelite: "Do not charge your brother interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest" (Deut. 23:19). We also read, "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, . . . charge him no interest" (Deut. 23:25). This is in a context of what is utterly serious because three verses later we read, "Do not blaspheme God." Of a poor countryman, they are told, to help him but, also, "You must not lend him money at interest" (Lev. 25:37). Without its being restricted to Israelites, the righteous person is described in Psalm 15:5 as one "who lends his money without usury"; and translating this word for usury as simply interest, the NASB, always careful to be literal if possible, reads: "He does not put out his money at interest." Again, in Proverbs 28:8, whereas the NIV has "exorbitant interest," the NASB reads that a "wicked" person is "he who increases his wealth by interest and usury."

Again, in an "Arminian" chapter, two millennia before Arminius (1558 or 1560-1609) on individual righteousness, Ezekiel 18, interest is forbidden three times, in verses 8, 13, and 17. The NASB reads, "if he does not lend money on interest" (v. 8), but the NIV reads "at usury or takes excessive interest." And whereas the NASB reads in v. 13 that the wicked person "lends money on interest," the NIV reads: "He lends at usury and takes excessive interest." Also, in v. 17, these versions read differently. The NASB has "does not take interest or increase," and the NIV reads: "He withholds his hand from sin and takes no usury or excessive interest." Again, in Ezekiel 22:12 the accusation in the NASB is that they "have taken interest and profits," and the NIV reads that "you take usury and excessive interest." This difference might suggest that some of us had high-table friends in banking.

And Jesus expected His followers to lend money without interest and even without repayment. He said, "And if you loan to them from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you?" (Lu. 6:34).

In general, of course, we do not follow the Bible's Old Testament economics, for it had, e.g., a year of jubilee when all debts were to be erased. And it contains a number of cautions about charging interest which I have not here mentioned. And the two proscriptions of homosexuality in Leviticus (18:22; 20:13) are widely used as supports for homophobia, yet they are found not in places such as where we find interest proscriptions, but in the holiness code (in which God's people were taught to indicate their difference from others by numerous ritual observances).

Charging interest on money loans is historically what is usury--not charging exorbitant interest, as the word usually means today.

Albertus Magnus (thirteenth century) and other medieval theologians in general opposed interest on money loans. The great Nicea General Council did, and the First and Second Lateran councils did.

The ancients, and medieval canon law commentators, said that to charge any interest at all is basically unnatural--and they all wanted people to follow what is natural. They said that if your money can grow without your doing anything, it is an unnatural growth of money. They knew of God's concern that the poor be respected, and they declared that it is wrong to charge the poor for loaning them money. This proscription largely held until the fourteenth century, when banking developed in such a way that Christian theologians felt themselves outmoded with their proscription of interest. By Martin Luther's time (1483-1546), Fuggers had become a strong banking firm, and John Tetzel sold indulgences in Germany, half of which money went to repay, with interest, its loan of 12,000 ducats for a very devout person to buy his archbishop's office (of Brandenburg).

Although charging interest on money was frequently opposed in Scripture, and although the ancients, including Cicero and medieval theologians including Thomas Aquinas, opposed it vigorously, the church is not even interested in the matter today. It is not an issue. The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) has 1204 two-column pages and 1200 entries, but not one on usury or interest. The

Beacon Dictionary of Theology, with 555 two-column pages, has 954 entries, but not one on usury or interest.

Besides all this, although opponents of homosexual behavior frequently use the two Leviticus holiness-code proscriptions of homosexuality (18:22; 20:12), it is known by all Bible students that the Old Testament, outside its ritual directives in Leviticus, condones and even encourages bigamy.

Jews are told by God that as they do battle with distant "enemies," they are to "put to the sword all the men," and take "the women" as "plunder the Lord your God gives you" and "use the plunder . . . your God gives you" (Deut. 20:10-15). In the next chapter, they are told, similarly, "If you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife. Bring her into your home." The Lord says that after she "has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife" (Deut. 21:10-14).

All Bible students know that Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, got her sister Leah instead as a trick, and then worked for their father another seven years for Rachel--and the great patriarch lived as a bigamist without the Lord's disfavor. At least, not for that.

Abraham had Hagar as his concubine, while Sarah was his wife--and he is one of the persons perfect in faith according to Hebrews 11 (and Romans 4 and Galatians 4). Other bigamists, and even polygamists, are mentioned without reprisals--although, in the Ten Commandments, adultery is a no-no.

These observations are not conclusions. In them I am raising questions, in the hopes that we Wesleyan scholars might take another look at Scripture, in light of recent DNA findings that homosexuality is genetic. Are we going to be like Martin Luther, Phillip Melancton, and John Calvin, who all opposed Copernicus for his findings about the sun and the earth? Or like the pope later, in 1632, in condemning Galileo, a popular professor in science and mathematics, to house arrest for the remainder of his life, no papal apology being forthcoming until Pope John Paul II did so in 1992?

It is not only our religious community that is slow to accept new sciences; the scientific world is also slow to accept changes. Charles Darwin got scientists to believing that life as we know it evolved naturalistically from less complex forms of life--and that, earlier, the living cell, with all its complexity, evolved without an intelligent agent.

Right now, Darwin is being put to a test.

Phillip E. Johnson, a University of California (Berkeley) law professor, considered the leader of the "design movement," published in 1991 a seminal volume Darwin on Trial (Washington, D.C.: Regency Gateway). Johnson's book supports the view of a designer in nature so convincingly that even leading evolutionists such as Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard are openly and vigorously debating the matter.

Added to Johnson's work has been a popularizing one by Michael Behe (pronounced bee-hee) titled Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution.

These two books seriously threaten the Darwinian theory in a basic way (see Behe, Darwin's Black Box, N.Y., Free Press, 1996, by early 1997 already in its eighth printing).

Behe shows that, e.g., in a mousetrap, all its parts must be in place before it can catch a mouse--and that a designer must have made the living cell, since a cell cannot work unless all its parts are present all-at-once. A mousetrap needs a platform, a spring, a hammer, etc., all at the same time. A platform will not catch a few mice, a spring a few more, and a hammer more still.

He says there is an "irreducible complexity" which is necessary for a mousetrap or a cell to work--and that an intelligent agent must have designed it. Just so, biological nature did not evolve into its complexity without a designer.

The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, and several of the world's leading scientific journals, are reporting "strange tremors in the world of evolutionary biology" (Christianity Today, April 28, 1997, p. 15).

Darwin admitted in his well-researched and seminal-influential The Origin of Species that if it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, his theory would absolutely break down.

In our science of molecular biology, we now know that in the cell there is an irreducible complexity, Behe says--the cell having been a "black box" to Darwin.

Behe says it does not matter that there are usually in-between-species gaps in the fossils. Even if all the gaps could be found, it would not matter. Why? Because in the

"Lilliputian" details of the molecules of cells, which Darwin did not consider because microscopes were not available to him as they are to us, there is such irreducible complexity, and it is so ramified, that an intelligent designer would have had to be at work--instead of simply natural evolutionary processes, as Darwin thought. For molecules in cells to work together as machines to produce life itself, and the capabilities of animal life such as vision, there had to be a designer.

Behe says, "Until recently . . . evolutionary biologists could be unconcerned with the molecular details of life because so little was known about them" (p. 22). Now the black box [what was mystery earlier] of the cell has been opened, and the infinitesimal world that stands revealed must be explained (p. 23). Behe hesitates to say that God created the intricate mechanism of molecules and cells, but says that an intelligent designer had to be back of such irreducible complexities--instead of natural evolutionary processes.

Behe also says, "Yet for the Darwinian theory of evolution to be true, it has to account for the molecular structure of life. It is the purpose of this book to show that it does not" (p. 25).

It is possible that a breakthrough is happening, or has happened, which is epochal; that indeed, Darwin's "theory" breaks down "absolutely." If so, this would surely be similar to when Copernicus began to teach the world that the sun, and not the earth, is the center of our heavenly system.

Let's keep checking to learn if the scientific community will throw Darwin out. A century after Copernicus hesitatingly gave us the heliocentric theory, Galileo, a scientist,

hesitatingly accepted it, then officially recanted under papal pressure, and finally recanted his recantation.

Is it now going to be hundreds of years before the church believes Dean Hamer's scientific finding of a DNA linkage to male same-sex tendency, and the 1998 finding that lesbianism is also genetic?

Surely, it is much less likely that a sheep could be cloned through use of a living sheep's DNA than that same-sex proclivity is genetic. After all, it is well known that homosexuality exists in all mammals. Why should it not exist in the most highly-developed of the mammals, in humans?

The Bible says that the sun was commanded to stop, not the earth (Josh. 10:13). Martin Luther used this passage to oppose Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) as an "upstart astrologer" and a "fool." Melanchthon used Ecclesiastes 1:4-5, about the sun rising and going down, to oppose him. John Calvin opposed him with Psalm 93 where it is said that the earth cannot be moved--so that it is stationary. And in 1632, roughly a century later, when Galileo, who had earlier taught the Ptolemaic geocentric theory, sided with Copernicus, the pope condemned him to house arrest for the last ten years of his life. Copernicus, a never-ordained canon of a cathedral, refused for a time to publish his hypothesis that the sun, and not the earth, is the center of our heavenly system, because he realized that it would be opposed on the basis of Bible passages (see R. Hutchins, ed., "Great Books of the Western World," On the Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies, by Nicolaus Copernicus, vol. 16, pp. 505 ff; T. Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution, pp. 191-2; and White, Stranger at the Gate, pp. 238-9).

But the Bible is a book of religion and ethics, not a book of science as such. It is altogether trustworthy on beliefs and practices, but only if you interpret it according to its times and according to our times. True, it seemed to Luther and others that the sun was traveling around the earth each day. In Bible times, what we now know about heliocentricity was not known. Ptolemy (c. A.D. 100-c. 178) soon advanced the geocentric view, still held to in Reformation times. In Almagest, Ptolemy theorized that the earth is spherical, but that it is stationary, and that the heavens revolve around it, which is "in the middle of the heavens" (Almagest, p. 9, Hutchins, ed., "Great Books").

Do the Bible writers need to know what we now know in order to point us to Christ for our redemption, and finally to heaven?

The Bible had said in the holiness code in Leviticus that males who practice same-sex relations should be put to death. So it was believed that homosexuals should be put to death. So-called sodomy laws were created in medieval and modern Europe, and in the U.S.A., through which homosexuals were to be put to death. In the U.S.A., 48 states had anti-sodomy laws; but in the late 1990s, that has been at least reduced to only 24 states.

Rev. Dr. Mel White was being interviewed for the media by a Religious Right pastor who said that according to Leviticus you should be put to death. On Mel's asking who should kill him, the pastor said it should be the state and not the church.

No matter that DNA strips and inner-ear studies now scientifically prove it to be genetic, and not chosen as a preference. No matter that its practice might be altogether consensual, in both parties, and not man-boy. No matter that it might be based on love,

and on lifelong commitment to each other as in hetero marriage. No matter that in early 1998 the U.S. Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, recognized male and female homosexuality by ruling that same-sex harassment is illegal (see USA Today, March 5, 1998). If it is male with male, or female with female, it is ipso facto wrong, and that is that.

Two articles on gayness have appeared rather recently in the Preacher's Magazine, issued officially for five of our Wesleyan-Holiness denominations. One was from a Religious Right perspective. The other was by a frequent writer for the magazine, Pastor Grant Swank, Jr. (see issue of Sept.-Nov., '97), one of my former students. Swank feared that it was professionally risky for him even to make overtures to the homosexuals by inviting them to his Nazarene church with the hope of making good old heteros out of them, showing them, as he says, "another way."

What are we Wesleyan-Holiness scholars going to teach about homosexuality, especially in view of Hamer's recent findings? And in view of the 1998 findings that lesbianism is genetic?

What should we teach? What should I teach? What should you teach?

The United Church of Christ voted even to ordain practicing gays, but in 1997 found themselves in some controversy over the issue.

The head bishop of the Episcopal Church, elected in 1997, is pro-gay, and it is the most controversial issue being faced by that denomination since, largely, they have given rights to women. It is without question the most controverted issue in United Methodism.

It is not even really controverted in our Wesleyan-Holiness denominations. And I realize that I, as one who has an image of leaning toward conservative directions in theology, could suffer professionally because I feel I need to raise questions seriously about whether or not, in the plight of gay men and lesbians today, we should do at least a little to help them, of what we have done especially for slaves, women, the poor, and children.

And in light of this meeting's theme, if we know about the scientific DNA linkage of homosexuality to a biological cause of the proclivity, and still do nothing, or agree with the Southern Baptists and others in even denying their partner rights (after gays have become much less promiscuous than they tended to be prior to AIDS)--are we still medieval, or Victorian, because of three Old Testament passages and three New Testament references to the same-gender matter--interpreted, still, as negative to gayness, long after we came to disregard the clear teachings opposed to such matters as to receiving money on interest loans, the abolition of slavery, and the ordination of women?

*This article was prepared to be given at the March 5-6, 1999 Wesleyan Theological Society meeting. But I asked not to, so as not to be an embarrassment to my university, Olivet Nazarene, where I am retained as distinguished visiting professor of religion and where they were to inaugurate, less than a month later, an annual Holiness lectureship in my name. Yet because of certain developments, I have initiated its publication in 2000. I am confident that, although some complaints may come in from so conservative a constituency, ONU will in the main greatly benefit from this research.

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