

Sexual Morality

On no issue is the authority of scripture attacked or defended today with more emotion than on the issue of sexual morality, particularly with respect to homosexual acts. The authority of Holy Scripture has been established, and therefore homosexual acts cannot be declared permissible. The attack on literal interpretation of the Bible's condemnation of homosexual acts is based on cultural relativism.

We have always had homosexual people in society and the church. The reason homosexuality is an issue today is because activists are demanding acceptance of homosexual acts as being "good", and demanding leadership roles in institutions where values are being taught. For this reason, the church cannot deal with a homosexual activist pastorally.

Lest we become too smug because we are talking about someone else's sin, recall humbly that we have enough of our own. The church, however, must not bless or condone what God intends to redeem. The church is not to be a clubhouse for saints (here meaning "people who are perfect") [guaranteed to be vacuous], but rather a hospital for sinners. The role of tolerance, the prime value of secular society today, in the church should be "I'm forgiven, you're forgiven", not "I'm okay, you're okay". Our role is to instruct and encourage each other in the ways of holiness and righteousness, not to cheer each other on in our sins. When someone is proud of their sin and demands others to accept it as "good", that person must be excluded from fellowship. Some sins are grievous to such an extent that a repentant person who has committed those must not be permitted to serve in a leadership position, even though they may be permitted as members of the fellowship. Homosexual sex, adultery, divorce, and theft are examples.

While labels are useful for categorizing, they can also be destructive to individuals and society when inappropriately applied. When a person is tempted to steal, we do not call that person a "thief" until he has actually committed the act. Further, we do not label a child who steals as being a "thief" unless that child appears out of control and continues that behavior, unrestrained by punishment.

Pr 20:11 Even a child makes himself known by his acts, whether what he does is pure and right.

We teach that child that stealing is sinful. We do not accept that behavior, and we restrain the child from joining gangs that attempt to recruit him to continue stealing. Being tempted is not sufficient to classify a person with those who have already committed the act. A person who habitually steals as a child, or steals after reaching the age of reason, is properly called a "thief". We ostracize such people to keep them from recruiting others to do the same.

Similarly, we should not use the label "homosexual" to identify any person who has not actually engaged willingly in homosexual copulation. We should not enable homosexuals to recruit new members by preying upon children who are still forming their sexual identity. We certainly should not be tolerant of proclaiming homosexual sex as wholesome or good, and we should not allow a person to accept the label "homosexual" who merely has feelings, but has not committed homosexual sex.

There does come a point when a person becomes what they do, and should be known by their actions. Accurate labels are appropriate.

The Bible on Sodomy

Genesis 18:16-19:29. This is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Homosexual activists claim that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was that of inhospitality, not of sodomy. They are wrong.

Leviticus 18:22. “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”

Leviticus 20:13, 15. “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.”

Deuteronomy 22:5. “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.”

Judges 19:22-30. This is the story of Gibeah. A man traveling from Bethlehem to the remote parts of Ephraim needed a night’s rest. The local Benjamites wanted to have homosexual sex with the visitor, as was done in Sodom. The host said no, and gave the crowd his concubine. This started a civil war by the rest of Israel against the tribe of Benjamin.

Romans 1:18-32. The relevant short excerpt from the longer context is: “God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”

Jude 4, 7, 18. “For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” “Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.”

Ancient Fathers on Sodomy

The Ancient Fathers also decried homosexual sex.

Ignatius: “Inculcation of Various Moral Duties”:¹

Let no one addicted to idleness eat, lest he become a wanderer about, and a whoremonger. Let drunkenness, anger, envy, reviling, clamor, and blasphemy “be not so much as named among you.” Let not the widows live a life of pleasure, lest they wax wanton against the word. Be subject to Caesar in everything in which subjection implies no [spiritual] danger. Provoke not those that rule over you to wrath, that you may give no occasion against yourselves to those that seek for it. But as to the practice of magic, or the impure love of boys, or murder, it is superfluous to write to you, since such vices are forbidden to be committed even by the Gentiles. I do not issue commands on these points as if I were an apostle; but, as your fellow-servant, I put you in mind of them.

¹ Ignatius (lived 30 – 107 A.D.), “Inculcation of Various Moral Duties”, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, Chapter 11, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, A. Cleveland Coxe, D.D. (editor) (1885), in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers. The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Volume 1, Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D. and James Donaldson, LL.D. (editors), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997)

Justin Martyr: “Guilt of Exposing Children”:²

But as for us, we have been taught that to expose newly-born children is the part of wicked men; and this we have been taught lest we should do any one an injury, and lest we should sin against God, first, because we see that almost all so exposed (not only the girls, but also the males) are brought up to prostitution. And as the ancients are said to have reared herds of oxen, or goats, or sheep, or grazing horses, so now we see you rear children only for this shameful use; and for this pollution a multitude of females and hermaphrodites, and those who commit unmentionable iniquities, are found in every nation. And you receive the hire of these, and duty and taxes from them, whom you ought to exterminate from your realm. And any one who uses such persons, besides the godless and infamous and impure intercourse, may possibly be having intercourse with his own child, or relative, or brother. And there are some who prostitute even their own children and wives, and some are openly mutilated for the purpose of sodomy; and they refer these mysteries to the mother of the gods, and along with each of those whom you esteem gods there is painted a serpent, a great symbol and mystery. Indeed, the things which you do openly and with applause, as if the divine light were overturned and extinguished, these you lay to our charge; which, in truth, does no harm to us who shrink from doing any such things, but only to those who do them and bear false witness against us.

Theophilus of Antioch [Bishop of Antioch, 168-188 AD]: “Other Opinions of the Philosophers”:³

*And regarding lawless conduct, those who have blindly wandered into the choir of philosophy have, almost to a man, spoken with one voice. Certainly Plato, to mention him first who seems to have been the most respectable philosopher among them, expressly, as it were, legislates in his first book, entitled *The Republic*, that the wives of all be common, using the precedent of the son of Jupiter and the lawgiver of the Cretans, in order that under this pretext there might be an abundant offspring from the best persons, and that those who were worn with toil might be comforted by such intercourse. And Epicurus himself, too, as well as teaching atheism, teaches along with it incest with mothers and sisters, and this in transgression of the laws which forbid it; for Solon distinctly legislated regarding this, in order that from a married parent children might lawfully spring, that they might not be born of adultery, so that no one should honor as his father him who was not his father, or dishonor him who was really his father, through ignorance that he was so. And these things the other laws of the Romans and Greeks also prohibit. Why, then, do Epicurus and the Stoics teach incest and sodomy, with which doctrines they have filled libraries, so that from boyhood this lawless intercourse is learned? And why should I further spend time on them, since even of those they call gods they relate similar things?*

Origen Adamantinus (185-254 AD), *Origen Against Celsus*:⁴

² Justin Martyr (lived 114-165 A.D.), “Guilt of Exposing Children”, *First Apology of Justin Martyr*, Chapter 27, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, A. Cleveland Coxe, D.D. (editor) (1885), in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Volume 1, Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D. and James Donaldson, LL.D. (editors), The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997)

³ Theophilus of Antioch (about 168-188 AD), “Other Opinions of the Philosophers”, *Theophilus of Antioch*, Book 3, Chapter 6, Rev. Marcus Dods, A.M. (translator), in “Fathers of the Second Century”, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Volume 2, The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

What I have now said, then, is offered not for the purpose of caviling with any right opinions or sound doctrines held even by Greeks, but with the desire of showing that the same things, and indeed much better and diviner things than these, have been said by those divine men, the prophets of God and the apostles of Jesus. These truths are fully investigated by all who wish to attain a perfect knowledge of Christianity, and who know that "the mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment; the law of his God is in his heart." But even in regard to those who, either from deficiency or knowledge or want of inclination, or from not having Jesus to lead them to a rational view of religion, have not gone into these deep questions, we find that they believe in the Most High God, and in His Only-begotten Son, the Word and God, and that they often exhibit in their character a high degree of gravity, of purity, and integrity; while those who call themselves wise have despised these virtues, and have wallowed in the filth of sodomy, in lawless lust, "men with men working that which is unseemly."

Note. Origen was repudiated in his career, but not for the above writing. He was censored because of his speculations about the pre-existence of souls and universal salvation.

The Canons of the Council of Ancyra (314 AD). Canon 16.⁵

Let those who have been or who are guilty of bestial lusts, if they have sinned while under twenty years of age, be prostrators fifteen years, and afterwards communicate in prayers; then, having passed five years in this communion, let them have a share in the oblation. But let their life as prostrators be examined, and so let them receive indulgence; and if any have been insatiable in their crimes, then let their time of prostration be prolonged. And if any who have passed this age and had wives, have fallen into this sin, let them be prostrators twenty-five years, and then communicate in prayers; and, after they have been five years in the communion of prayers, let them share the oblation. And if any married men of more than fifty years of age have so sinned, let them be admitted to communion only at the point of death.

A significant amount of attention is given by the Ancient Fathers to cases of sexual sin. Writings on sodomy constitute a miniscule portion of the total number of writings dealing with sexual sin. This does not mean sodomy is less of a sin or is unimportant. It is more reflective that it was commonly understood by Christians of their day that sodomy is sinful, and thus it did not occur among Christians nearly as often as other forms of sexual sin. Therefore, the need to address the problem was less demanding. To help understand this point more clearly, I did not see a single writing by the Ancient Fathers to discipline a Christian for cannibalism, yet Holy Scripture is very silent on that sin. This is so widely recognized as sinful that Christian people do not do it. (Biting your own fingernails does not qualify as cannibalism, even if is considered bad manners.)

⁴ Origen Adamantinus (185-254 AD), *Origen Against Celsus*, Book 7, Chapter 49, in Origen, Rev. Frederick Crombie, D.D. (translator), in "Fathers of the Third Century", in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, Volume 4, Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D. and James Donaldson, LL.D. (editors), in The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

⁵ "The Canons of the Council of Ancyra, A.D. 314", Canon 16, in *The First Ecumenical Council*, in "The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church, Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, Together with the Canons of all the Local Synods which have Received Ecumenical Acceptance", Henry R. Percival, M.A., D.D., in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 14, Philip Schaff (editor), in The Master Christian Library, Version 5, AGES Software (1997).

Conclusion on Christian Teaching About on Sodomy

Both Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Ancient Fathers are clear that sodomy is a sin. We are not to teach that sin is “good”, and we are not to have leaders who advocate accepting this sin as “good”.

1. The counsel of reason also is contrary to the acceptance of sodomy. The clergy crime data shows that homosexual sex is a major component of clergy crime against teenagers. Natural Law also speaks against sodomy; the human body was not designed for that function. The spread of HIV/AIDS is closely linked with sodomy as an easily controllable disease vector..