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political realities of our lands, in understanding the violation of human rights and religious freedom and in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in the several ministries to which the Church is called. We will support the Christian education programmes of our churches and agencies and those theological associations committed to evangelism, social service and to socio-political [p. 273](#) justice. We will seek to evaluate the means we use to bring about social change in the light of the Word of God and we will reject using resources that have been accumulated unjustly or that have led to increasing suffering of the poor through economic power structures.

We will support the programmes of local churches both rural and urban that seek to develop training programmes in vocational skills, trades and farming in order to alleviate unemployment, to restore human dignity and to create true community and interdependence. We will support comprehensive development programmes that effectively relate evangelism, social service and the use of appropriate technology in development and that result in justice in society. We are encouraged and challenged by models of such programmes in Chaco, Argentina and Chhatarpur, India that were described to us. We will explore new programmes, such as providing legal aid to protect the poor and powerless against the misuse of law by unjust and corrupt men. We will encourage those whom the Lord is calling to exercise political power to do so in dependence on God and in ways that do not lead to a loss of spiritual vision and power.

Above all we declare our intention to be subject to one another in the bonds of love, to be motivated by the glory of God alone and in love and holiness to proclaim and live the Gospel and in every project and programme to look to the Spirit of God for guidance and power to persevere to the end ever looking for the coming of the Lord. [p. 274](#)

Christian Response to Gay Liberation

A Statement by the Evangelical Alliance, Victoria, Australia

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The pastoral concern of this issue of the Review is the restoration of homosexuals to the will of God for their lives. The statement of the Evangelical Alliance and the concerns of the group of students call for clarity on the scriptural teaching on human sexuality, courage to resist pressure groups in the church and in society and compassionate counselling for those enslaved by sin and guilt. In the next issue we will make available information on counselling services and literature.

Editor

The rise of "gay liberation", by which the right is claimed to practise and propagate homosexuality as a legitimate life-style, represents a serious challenge to Christian faith and morality. Of particular concern is the development of "community churches" catering largely for practising homosexuals (both male and female). The first such "church" was formed in Los Angeles in 1968. Subsequently more than one hundred have been formed

in seven countries including several in Australia. Such disturbing developments call for both clarity and courage on the part of Christians.

Some confusion arises because the term “homosexual” is used loosely and with differing connotations. Originally it denoted those who had an unnatural attraction to those of the same sex. In current parlance the word may cover the whole range of those who find pleasure in the company of their own sex to people who practise homosexual acts. What Scripture condemns is the practice of homosexual acts; while it commends loving relationships like those of Naomi and Ruth, and David and Jonathan.

What we need to ask is: “What does the Bible say about the practice of homosexual acts?”, “How does this relate to the Biblical revelation as a whole?”, and “How may we better live to convey God’s way for His people with love and effect?” We ask these questions not to denounce as persons those who practise homosexual acts or to single out their sin for particular condemnation. Indeed we deplore the ridicule often displayed towards homosexuals. But to take seriously the Biblical call to holiness of life and faithful and obedient discipleship demands that the claims of “gay liberation” be answered and its incompatibility with the Christian life demonstrated. p. 275

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING

The following passages should be carefully studied in context and in the light of overall Biblical truth:

1. [GENESIS 18:20, 19:1–13](#) (the sin of Sodom)
 - i. Lot regarded the proposed action of the Sodomites as “wicked” (v.[7](#)). What was the proposed action?
 - ii. It is clear (v.[8](#)) that their wickedness included the sexual abuse of men and women. It is true that in pursuit of the men who had come to Lot’s house the Sodomites were ignoring the eastern custom of courtesy and hospitality towards strangers but that sin was incidental in this case.
2. [LEVITICUS 18:22, 20:11–16](#)
 - i. Homosexual practice is specifically prohibited ([18:22](#)).
 - ii. The penalty for such practice is death, the same penalty being prescribed for adultery and incest. All such behaviour was taken extremely seriously because God regarded these acts as high treason against the continuing life of His people.
3. [ROMANS 1:18–32](#)
 - i. This passage tells of the idolatry, lust and sensuality of men and women in defiance of the revelation of God in creation. Both male and female homosexual practices are specifically denounced in verses [26](#) and [27](#). Those who engage in such practices identify with the completely degenerate (verses [28–31](#)).
 - ii. If even natural revelation should make people aware of a higher call than sensuality, how much more should the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ? The New Testament letters abound in exhortations calling Christians away from pagan practices so destructive to God’s plan for them ([Galatians 5:16–26](#)), [Colossians 3:5–11](#) etc.).
4. [1 CORINTHIANS 6:9–11](#)
 - i. Note the obvious sinfulness of the matters in this list, which includes homosexual practice, and the loss of inheritance in the Kingdom of God for those who persist in these sins.

- ii. But Christ is able to save from all these, as indeed some of the Corinthian Christians had personally experienced. p. 276 Now they must not be enticed back to their former state.
- 5. [I TIMOTHY 1:3-11](#)
 - i. Note the warning against false teachers who do not use the law lawfully but who speculate from the Bible in order to pander to human pride, and whose teaching does not foster love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and a genuine faith.
 - ii. One purpose of the Biblical law is plainly stated to be for the rebuke of sinners. A long list is given which includes those who practise homosexual acts. All these offenders are to be rebuked as their practices are contrary to sound teaching.
- 6. [II PETER 2](#)

This passage leaves no doubt about the character of the sin of Sodom. There is also warning against the false teachers who lead professing Christians into various forms of corruption.

THE BIBLICAL TEACHING QUESTIONED

The Biblical teaching is clear and consistent, yet there are professing Christians who seriously qualify or even reject this teaching. Following are grounds most commonly put forward:

(a) That Biblical cultural backgrounds were different from ours and that Biblical teaching on a particular subject is not necessarily applicable to us. Whatever differences there may have been, the cultures of first century Rome and Greece appear to have been like our own in terms of sexual immorality, including both male and female homosexual practice. Further, the sexual sins are as old as humanity almost regardless of culture. Differences of culture cannot be put forward as an excuse for denying basic elements of Biblical teaching on sexual morality.

(b) That Biblical writers were in error in condemning the practices of male and female homosexuals because they did not understand the problems these people face. Homosexual orientation appears to be caused more by parental and community failure accentuated by false “Christian” teaching and a general permissiveness than by genetically determined inclination. Indeed Dr. John Court (Department of Psychology, Flinders University, South Australia) affirms, “There is no longer any scientific support for the concept that sexual deviations p. 277 and especially homosexuality are genetically determined; there is now overwhelming evidence that sexual behaviour is learned.” The problems faced by homosexuals still call for care and understanding on our part, but not to the extent of denying God’s best for all His people.

(c) That strict Biblical laws on sexual morality should be set aside in face of the overall Biblical law of love and the forgiveness of God. This follows the so-called “new morality” view that regards the love of God as permissive. The “new morality” wrongfully denies that a holy and loving God would plainly indicate what are the actions that belie His love and alienate His people from Himself. In stressing the forgiveness which God extends freely through Christ, which is effective for those who believe in Him, it is necessary to affirm that forgiveness presupposes a recognition that people need forgiving. To receive forgiveness is to acknowledge sin. All sin is to be shunned by the Christian.

(d) That Biblical injunctions against homosexual practice do not apply to all homosexual relationships but only to those involving idolatrous worship or deviation by heterosexuals. The analogy sometimes suggested between Christian marriage and “committed and

exclusive” homosexual relationships is false in that marriage is plainly commended in the Bible (e.g. [Genesis 2:24](#), [Matthew 19:3–9](#), [Ephesians 5:21–32](#)) whereas the practice of homosexual acts is mentioned only to be condemned in the plainest terms.

A LARGER PROBLEM

We live in an unnatural society; a society in which humanity is debased by the use of the physical and material in an idolatrous and self-willed manner; a society in which sexuality and concerns about sex are artificially stimulated and exploited from base motives; a society in which there are strong pressures for “sexual liberation”. It is understandable then that some will say, “All right, but we’ll do it OUR way”. And the way homosexuals do it is not in every respect more sinful than other sexual sins such as fornication, adultery, rape or incest. The homosexual problem is thus part of the total problem of a sexually sick society.

FULFILLING GOD’S WILL

God reveals His will to us and offers us His mercy and grace. He calls for a courageous response in terms of faithfulness and obedience to His will. In the face of moral permissiveness in our society, Christians **P. 278** are called to affirm the sanctity of marriage and the institution of the family as special God-given relationships. The gift of full sexual expression belongs only within marriage which is the God-given setting for its discipline, its joy, its creativity and its place in the building up, rather than the breaking down of community. This relationship is the context in which the human race is propagated and children find the experience of loving community. Further, parents are meant to raise their children in such a way that they understand clearly what it means to be a boy or a girl. Thus understood, marriage plays a vital rôle in the nurture and building up of the people of God and society as a whole.

But what of the unmarried? Throughout the Biblical period, it was anticipated that people would normally find their vocation in marriage. Nevertheless the Bible recognizes that for various good reasons some people do not marry. The Bible does not say it is abnormal to be single. Our Lord Jesus Christ was no less a man because He did not marry. So Christians should be careful not to suggest that those who remain unmarried are in any way inferior, unfulfilled or morally culpable. The cause of our Lord owes a great deal to those who have been free from personal responsibilities and so able to devote themselves entirely to the work of God. Not all have remained celibate because of any specific call to deny themselves marriage. For many marriage simply has little attraction and there is a preference to develop friendships at a different level, while for others, the opportunity to marry never materializes.

The call or decision of a Christian to be celibate need not involve living alone. Celibacy, as marriage, has to be seen within the context of the Christian fellowship. Extended families and celibate households and communities may form part of the fellowship of the Church and should be encouraged. Such make for a deeper togetherness and a more effective witness in a lonely and divided world where sexual perversity is too often the resort of those seeking a substitute for genuine belonging. With regard to homosexuals, there are resources in saving grace and the fellowship of Christians which, combined with sensitive and skilled counselling, offer them an authentic and truly liberating life-style. This we believe to be God’s plan.

Faithfulness within marriage and continence outside marriage are essential bulwarks against permissive trends in any age. It is only as Christians maintain such high ideals that

we can have the moral right to challenge the pagan concepts of sex which abound in our society and unrestricted so readily permeate the lives of some professing Christians, as was also the case in the first century. p. 279

CLARITY AND COURAGE

The Church needs clarity concerning what the will of God is, and concerning the life, purpose and belonging that He offers us in Jesus Christ. We need such a clarity so that we are not prepared to approve for ourselves or for others anything less than God's best.

The Church also needs courage; courage "to speak the truth in love". It is easy to profess a love or a compassion that obscures truth. Love like that is not love at all for it unjustly denies the truth that sets men free. The love of God does not condone sin yet is so great that it brought His Son to die for our sins. His love saves us from death and brings us to life. The love we profess has to be of that quality. This is the love of God we owe to homosexuals and, more urgently, to those who profess to be Christian.

God makes His way clear. May He grant us grace to accept His way in our own lives and courage to point others away from conformity with this world to a transformation by the renewal of their minds, that they with us may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). p. 280

Counselling the Homosexual

Students at Talbot Seminary

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A wide spectrum of opinions exist concerning the homosexual in our society. In the past a homosexual had basically two choices in which to live. He could hide in a closet and live in loneliness and in fear of rejection and discovery, or he could come out of the closet and join in a gay group. Today, with the liberal attitudes of the late 1960s and 70s and with the popularity of minority groups fighting for rights, the homosexual has come out into the public. With the increasing power of gay activist groups has come increasing acceptance and rights in our society. In some religious circles, homosexuality is no longer considered to be a moral disease.

An important aspect of counselling a homosexual is to understand the view he has of himself. Until recently the homosexual viewed himself as abnormal, different, or less of a human being in comparison to heterosexuals. Today, the trend is toward self-acceptance. The slogan "self-acceptance is the first step to happiness" appeared in a homophile publication a few years ago. The slogan captures the current attempt of not only the acceptance of oneself, but his acceptance in the community. No longer do homosexuals want to remain feeling inferior.

How does a Christian who has a homosexual orientation view himself? A Christian's view will depend greatly on what he believes to be the cause of his homosexuality and on how he interprets Scripture. A person who believes that his homosexuality is genetically