

[send this](#)[bookmark](#)[print](#)[close](#)

The Parish Paper

OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol.33 No.44

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

09/22/02

Foundations of Sand and Shadows of Love (Part VII)

This is the final article in this series entitled Foundations of Sand and Shadows of Love, although it may not be the last time I address the subject. We must all watch and see what happens to this issue from now until the Diocesan Convention, and from then until the General Convention.

My argument has been theological. There have been other arguments put forward, (both in the Church and in our culture) to explain the causes of homosexual practice, causes which may or may not support the idea of same-sex unions. In the last article I looked briefly at theories of biological causation. I want now to consider briefly the psychological and existential positions, and then offer a pastoral word.

The psychological or sociological theories of homosexual practice are as diverse as the biological ones. In these theories, homosexual practice is not caused through an inherent biological anomaly, but rather by a deficient psychological development, or an overwhelming cultural influence.

Theories of psychological development cover a broad range of ideas about how a failure of proper psychological growth arises in a child's relation to his parents, which has ramifications for sexual preference and practice.

Theories of social and cultural influence suggest a gradual acceptance of homosexual identity, and finally a commitment to its lifestyle. This kind of social and cultural influence is understood to be very persuasive and sometimes even predatory.

Those who believe that homosexuality is an abnormal development offer various psychological therapies. Those who think that homosexual behavior is learned offer behavioral strategies to counteract the lifestyle. And thus different views of causation lead to different therapies. It may be that not just one of these theories is true, but that a combination of them, or a combination of these along with a biological orientation, is the actual cause.

Regardless of what the cause actually is, given the very broad disagreement in the scientific community concerning the causation and cure of homosexual practice, it is truly remarkable that a Diocese of the Church of Canada, or indeed that any responsible Christian body anywhere, could move toward the notion of a sacramental union of

persons of the same sex. Add to this that there is no theological justification for same-sex unions within the authority of Scripture and the wisdom of tradition, and the decisions of the Diocese of New Westminster amount to a thoughtless but determined action of a politicized convention.

There is one notion of causation for homosexual practice that remains, however, which I have saved for the end, which I would prefer to call the existential view. It is simply the view that the primary cause for homosexual practice is that people choose it.

I believe that there are probably other contributory causes of homosexuality, perhaps genetic orientations, perhaps psychological development, or sociological influence, or perhaps a combination of these. We are fallen creatures in many ways. But the existential view says, regardless of other causes, "This is what I want to be. This is what I love." Indeed, there are some committed homosexuals who resent the notion that there is anything at all that causes their activity other than their own free will. The existential view does not really concern itself with the question "Why?". For this position, the matter centers simply in what a person wants and does.

By design, I have not used the word love until this point in my discussion. I have referred to friendship, and compassion, and the totality of

human life. I have left the word love until now in order to bring its powerful but vague meaning into focus.

What the existential view of homosexual activity means by love is the sum of sexual appetite and friendship, the desire for beauty and pleasure, and the delight of shared experience. As I said at the beginning of these articles, this is often an inconstant feeling that moves promiscuously from one partner to another. And sometimes, rarely, homosexuals are more committed in their partnership. Whichever form the relationship takes, the primary motive often claimed is this sense of love.

And this is where the Christian tradition can speak with profound authority. In Christian Theology, love is the possession of the good. In created life the good takes many forms. And so there is a hierarchy of goods, beginning with God and moving from Him to His creation of man, His design for man, His long-suffering with man, and His redemption of man. At each stage, man is happy when he possesses the good as God intends.

The existential cause of homosexual practice seeks freely to possess the good of love, but is mistaken in its pursuit. It is true that other people are God's gifts of love to us, and that they are goods for us to embrace. But when it comes to sexual activity and marriage, the good has a distinct form. The good is given in nature as the means not just for pleasure but even more importantly as the means to procreate. And beyond procreation, the sacramental grace of marriage works as a remedy for lust and an opportunity to grow in holiness.

It is true that marriage is not for everyone. But that does not mean that we should elevate mistaken human relationships that focus their identity on sexual pleasure to the level of marriage. That would be to

put a lower and mistaken good over a true and higher good. Similarly, we cannot take the loves of adolescents, or those of adulterers, and exalt them to the status of marriage.

Homosexual activity is not simple wicked-ness. It is the choice of a perceived good over the real good, which is what sin is. In the final analysis, if we are to grow in the reality of love, it must be as Christ has shown us. He has told us that we must die to ourselves, and reorder our loves in the goodness of His Father's love. And God's love is revealed both in the concrete gift of our original nature as male and female, and with the fall of that nature, in the gifts of redeeming grace. And so the cross is ours to bear. And His grace is sufficient to our every need of love.

Let me give a final pastoral word. My argument over the past number of weeks will not please some of you. For some I am wrong or misinformed. For others I am not strong enough in my condemnation of homosexual activity. I have not tried to steer a middle course. I have simply restated the Christian position from what I hope is a thoughtful and compassionate point of view.

I believe the Scripture is clear and the Christian tradition wise. Both hold homosexual activity to be sinful. And both declare that, as with other sins, a determined habit of homosexual activity places the soul in spiritual danger and under judgment. Those who practice homosexual lifestyles should repent.

There is no place in the Church for the sanction of same-sex unions, or for the ordination of practicing homosexuals. Indeed, with respect to same-sex unions, the Diocese of New Westminster is sowing seeds of great destruction. We must side courageously and compassionately with those parishes who have opposed the actions of their Convention.

Marriage is a magnificent gift of nature and of grace. Our focus should return to an exalted understanding of Holy Matrimony. But we should also always remember that all have sinned and fall short, infinitely short, of the glory of God. We, therefore, welcome every sinner, heterosexual and homosexual, who seeks repentance and the grace of our heavenly Father, into St. John's Church.

The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker

[send this](#)

[bookmark](#)

[print](#)

[close](#)

[Report Errors](#) | [Comments](#)

Copyright 2003 - 2004 St. John's Episcopal Church in Savannah, GA. All rights reserved.