

defend homosexual partnerships. John Stott's exposition of these arguments is so cogent that it deserves extensive quotation. Stott writes:

1. The argument about Scripture and culture. Traditionally, it has been assumed that the Bible condemns all homosexual acts. But are the biblical writers reliable guides in this matter? Were their horizons not bounded by their own experience and culture? The cultural argument usually takes one of two forms.

First, the biblical authors were addressing themselves to questions relevant to their own circumstances, and these were very different from ours. In the Sodom and Gibeah stories they were preoccupied either with conventions of hospitality in the Ancient Near East which are now obsolete or (if the sin was sexual at all) with the extremely unusual phenomenon of homosexual gang rape. In the Levitical laws the concern was with antiquated fertility rituals, while Paul was addressing himself to the particular sexual preferences of Greek pederasts. It is all so antiquarian. The biblical authors' imprisonment in their own cultures renders their teaching on this topic irrelevant.

The second and complementary problem is that these writers were not addressing themselves to our questions. Paul and the Old Testament authors had never heard of "the homosexual condition" of post-Freudian psychology; they knew only about certain practices. The difference between "inversion" and "perversion" would have been incomprehensible to them. The very notion that two men or two women could fall in love and develop a deeply loving, stable relationship comparable to marriage simply never entered their heads. So then, just as slaves, blacks and women have been liberated, "gay liberation" is long overdue.

If the only biblical teaching on this topic were to be found in the prohibition texts, it might be difficult to answer these objections. But once those texts are seen in relation to the divine institution of marriage, we are in possession of a principle of divine revelation which is universally applicable. It was applicable to the cultural situations of both the Ancient Near East and the first-century Greco-Roman world, and it is equally applicable to modern sexual questions of which the ancients were quite ignorant. The reason for the prohibitions is the same reason why loving homosexual partnerships must also be condemned, namely, that they are incompatible with God's created order. And since that order (heterosexual monogamy) was established by creation, not culture, its validity is both permanent and universal. There can be no "liberation" from God's created norms; true liberation is found only in accepting them.

2. The argument about creation and nature. I have sometimes read or heard this kind of statement: "I'm gay because God made me that way. So gay must be good." Norman Pittenger was quite outspoken in his use of this argument a couple of decades ago. A homosexual person, he wrote, is "not an 'abnormal' person with 'unnatural' desires and habits." On the contrary, "a heterosexually oriented person acts 'naturally' when he acts heterosexually, while a homosexually oriented person acts equally 'naturally' when he acts in accordance with his basic, inbuilt homosexual desire and drive." Others argue that homosexual behavior is "natural" (a) because in