

many primitive societies it is fairly acceptable, (b) because in some advanced civilizations (ancient Greece, for example) it was even idealized, and (c) because it is quite widespread in animals.

But these arguments express an extremely subjective view of what is "natural" and "normal." We should not accept Pittenger's statement that there are "no external standards of normality or naturalness." Nor can we agree that animal behavior sets standards for human behavior! God has established a norm for sex and marriage by creation. This was already recognized in the Old Testament era. Thus sexual relations with an animal were forbidden because "that is a perversion" (Lev. 18:23) -- in other words, a violation or confusion of nature, which indicates an "embryonic sense of natural law."

The same concept was clearly in Paul's mind in Romans 1. When he wrote of women who had "exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones," and of men who had "abandoned natural relations," he meant by "nature" (phusis) the natural order of things which God has established (as in 2:14, 27 and 11:24). What Paul was condemning, therefore, was not the perverted behavior of heterosexual people who were acting against their nature, but any human behavior which is against "Nature," that is, against God's created order.

3. the argument about quality of relationships. The Gay Christian Movement borrows from Scripture the truth that love is the greatest thing in the world (which it is) and from the "new morality" or "situation ethics" of the 1960s the notion that love is an adequate criterion by which to judge every relationship (which it is not). This view is gaining ground today.

In his Time for Consent Norman Pittenger lists six characteristics of a truly loving relationship. They are (1) commitment, (2) mutuality in giving and receiving, (3) tenderness (no coercion or cruelty), (4) faithfulness (the intention of a lifelong relationship), (5) hopefulness (each serving the other's maturity) and (6) desire for union.

If then a homosexual relationship, whether between two men or two women, is characterized by these qualities of love, surely (the argument runs) it must be affirmed as good and not rejected as evil. It rescues people from loneliness, selfishness and promiscuity. It can be just as rich and responsible, as liberating and fulfilling, as a heterosexual marriage.

But the biblical Christian cannot accept the basic promise on which this case rests, namely, that love is the only absolute, that beside it all moral law has been abolished, and that whatever seems to be compatible with love is ipso facto good, irrespective of all other considerations. This cannot be so. For love needs law to guide it. In emphasizing love for God and neighbor as the two great commandments, Jesus and his apostles did not discard all other commandments. On the contrary, Jesus said, "if you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15) and Paul wrote "love is the fulfilling [not the abrogating] of the law" (Rom 13:8-10).

On several different occasions a married man has told me that he has fallen in love with another woman. When I have reminded him that he already has a wife and family, he has responded in words like these: "But this new relationship is the real thing. We were made for each other. Our love for each other has a quality and depth we have never known before. It must be right." But no, I