

**Lutheran Church of Australia:
Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions**

HOMOSEXUALITY

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Definition

Homosexuality is a sexual propensity for a person or persons of one's own sex. In this statement a distinction will be drawn between *propensity*, an inclination or leaning toward, over which the individual has no control, and *behaviour*, acts over which the individual is regarded as having control. The existence of a homosexual propensity does not necessarily lead to homosexual behaviour. The term 'homosexual' is used in two ways, corresponding to the difference between propensity and behaviour. The context in all cases will make clear which particular meaning is intended or predominant.

Homosexuals differ from one another in the extent to which they are aware of the homosexual propensity within themselves. There are cases of complete unawareness of the propensity, and the discovery of this propensity can come as a deep shock to the individual concerned.

Because homosexuality is so difficult to define, Kinsey has developed a seven-point rating scale, by which the varying degrees of propensity can be rated from exclusive heterosexuality through bisexuality and on to exclusive homosexuality.

Causation

The factors which cause homosexual propensity are not well known. There is little or no evidence that it is an inherited condition, or that endocrine abnormalities are a decisive causative factor.

Most evidence points to factors in the early development of the personality as the critical and determining cause for it, especially the interaction between parents and child in the first few years of the child's life.

It is not believed that seduction by other homosexuals is a cause of homosexual propensity. Those who are bisexual are equally stimulated by members of both sexes and may seek sexual gratification from males and females. Homosexuality which manifests itself when people are deprived of members of the opposite sex (as in prisons or during wars) usually ceases when the circumstances alter.

Treatment

Skilled counselling may be helpful, particularly to the young (under 35 years of age) and those who may have doubts about their sexual identity, because of passing homosexual feelings. There is little effective treatment for those who would be designated as exclusive homosexuals. Hormone treatment will not change the direction of the sexual drive, although it may lessen its intensity.

Punishment does not result in change of propensity, although it may restrict overt behaviour. As cooperation and motivation are needed for any change by therapeutic processes, legal sanctions are questionable, as they may be on other grounds. Offences against minors call for similar legal restrictions as heterosexual offences against minors.

Problems of the Homosexual

Due to social ignorance, the prevailing attitude toward homosexuality is negative. Many regard the individual having homosexual propensity as having made a deliberate choice in the matter. This results in social isolation and rejection.

Those known or suspected of committing homosexual acts are liable to blackmail. This applies particularly to the male homosexual, and in many places there is legal discrimination. Accordingly, the homosexual quickly learns secrecy, shame, fear, guilt, and loneliness. If his homosexuality becomes known, he may be made to feel the hostile rejection of family and friends, employers, and even the church. The alienation of the homosexual from society may cause him/her to seek friendship and sexual gratification with other homosexuals, and may result in short-term or promiscuous relationships.

The Church and Homosexuality

In its assessment of, and attitude toward, homosexuality and homosexual behaviour, the church must, as in all matters, be guided by holy Scripture. The available medical and psychological evidence must guide the church in this assessment as it seeks to know God's will in his word.

God's word is silent about homosexuality as a propensity. In view of this and in the light of medical and psychological evidence, the church may not condemn or judge homosexual propensity.

Homosexuality is part of the mysterious disturbance and distortion that has entered God's creation and his created social structures. Like disease, it must be seen in the context of the Fall and the resultant intrusion of disruptive and abnormal forces which have upset and perverted God's original design.

God's word regards this disruption and perversion as a judgment of God on the whole of humanity so that in this sense all people are somehow involved.

The Church and the Homosexual

As in the case of pain and disease, the Christian homosexual should accept his homosexual propensity in obedience to God, bear his cross bravely, seek all possible professional help and pastoral aid, and in faith resist the strong temptation of rebelling and murmuring against God or of dismissing his life as pointless or senseless.

God's will as expressed in his word is, however, clear in regard to homosexual behaviour. Such behaviour is against the will of God (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10), and hence it is sin.

This imposes on the homosexual an extraordinary burden; as a Christian he must strive to practise abstinence.

However, he should remember that he shares his own burden with the similar burden of many others who for a variety of reasons are unable to marry and find sexual gratification; and he shares it with that of all Christians, for they all must strive to fulfil the divine commandment to lead a chaste and decent life.

The homosexual should therefore not cease to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit who alone can empower us to do what is right and to refuse the wrong; what choice to make and what choice to reject. And he should pray for strength of will and an enlightened mind, so that by the sanctifying power of the Spirit he may in faith follow the right way to the end.

Pastoral Directive

The church, while rejecting the movement which claims tolerance of homosexual behaviour in the name of freedom of the individual and of moral progress, must also resist the popular reaction of persecution and ostracism. The church must exhibit understanding and sympathy for the homosexual, show love and pastoral concern, being ready to give help and encouragement in whatever way possible. It must proclaim to homosexuals, as it does to all people, the judgment of God against sin, above all the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake, and the possibility of a new life through the power of the Holy Spirit, and must assure them of complete acceptance into the people of God.