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A Worldview Perspective on Homosexuality

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One of the front and center topics in the culture war now churning in America has to do with the issue of homosexuality. There was a time when homosexual behavior was actually criminalized, and those who participated in that behavior could be put in jail. Gradually that began to change, and while many of the sodomy laws stayed on the books for an extended period of time, they were simply not enforced. As the country's mindset continued to change, the next stage was the effort to actually make homosexual behavior no longer illegal, and to remove the social stigma. Following that push came the effort to change the laws in ways that actually legalized homosexual marriage. The movement today is to take it one step further and stigmatize those who disagree with homosexuality – and in some cases even make disagreement illegal.

As this social change progressed, there was relatively little overt public push-back. There were and are, of course, a few very vocal opponents, but most people seem to be content just to live and let live. It seems to me, however, that with the increasing effort to coerce people into accepting homosexual behavior as normal, a push back is beginning to build. It is one thing to legalize it, but another thing altogether to force people to personally approve of something that they consider immoral.

The reason homosexual behavior was made a criminal offense in the first place was that it was considered by most people in society to be an immoral practice – and immoral activity of any variety, if it is considered grave enough, is often criminalized. That is why even adultery used to be

considered a crime, and why sex with a minor even now is considered criminal.

The culture war struggle in modern day America regarding this topic is primarily, though not exclusively, between Christian Theists who believe homosexuality is immoral because it goes against what is taught in the Bible, and Naturalists who believe there is nothing inherently wrong with it because there is no such thing as an objectively true moral standard. But Theists and Naturalists are not the only faith groups that have an opinion on homosexuality. People who adhere to the other worldview systems also have a view.

Worldview Implications Concerning Homosexuality

At this point, it is important to understand that there are people, and even entire movements, within every worldview category that find homosexuality acceptable. Even when the basic worldview beliefs people hold are not consistent with an acceptance of homosexuality, there are still people who are able to hybridize their beliefs in a way that allows them to accept it. We find this to be true among self professed Christians, as well. To get a firm grasp on this, let's begin by looking at the actual implications of the various worldview beliefs themselves as it relates to homosexuality.

Naturalism

Naturalism is the belief that the natural universe is the only thing that exists. There is no God or any transcendent reality. When it comes to evaluating homosexuality, Naturalism has a serious internal contradiction that cannot be easily reconciled.

When it comes to how naturalism views life, naturalistic evolution is the point of view it promotes. It asserts

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the belief that life has arisen based completely on natural processes, and that the development of life to increasingly complex forms is based on an evolutionary process that promotes the survival of the species. That is, the variations that happen within all life forms do so in order for them to adapt and survive. Human beings, based on this understanding, are nothing more than natural animals with a highly evolved brain. When it comes to whether or not homosexuality should be considered a good thing, however, there is a problem. Obviously, one important part of survivability is reproduction, and there is no hope of reproduction among homosexuals. Thus, this practice actually works against the beliefs of Naturalism, and because of that would normally be considered immoral.

When it comes to defining morality in modern times, however, a very large percentage of people who claim to be Naturalists are accepting of homosexual behavior. Since Naturalists acknowledge no objective source for moral standards, creatures that have a moral sense (human beings alone) must make up their own rules. Thus, moral relativism becomes the underlying principle for defining morality. With this as a starting point, there is no objective basis for calling any particular kind of behavior immoral – even behavior that does not contribute to survival.

However, based on their belief in naturalistic evolution, moral rules must also somehow contribute to the survival of the species. Generally in Naturalism, the purpose of moral rules is understood to be a means for maintaining order in society in order to enhance survivability. The question then becomes: Who gets to decide what the rules should be? Ultimately it is the person or

group that has the power to enforce their desires upon the rest of society.

What we end up with, then, is an internal contradiction that works against the viability of a naturalistic worldview. Physically, homosexuality is an anomaly that works against the survival of the species. At the same time there is no objective moral reason to label the behavior immoral. Thus, if the most powerful influencers in society accept it as okay, it can be acceptable.

Animism

An animistic worldview understands there to be both natural and transcendent parts of reality, with the two parts working together in a symbiotic relationship – what happens in one part directly affects what happens in the other part. The way it is conceived, however, is not based so much on philosophical speculation as it is on an observation of what actually happens in the material universe. There is a speculative part of animistic belief that comes into play, however, as various groups attempt to make a connection between what actually happens in the world they live in and how it affects the beings in the spirit world.

Overall, Animists look at human sexuality as binary (there are two sexes – male and female). This is based purely on what they observe as the natural order of things out in the world. They then make assumptions about the nature of gods and spirits based on this binary worldview belief. They recognize, for instance, that the reproduction of human beings requires the sexual relations that occur between a man and a woman. They project this into the spirit world by assigning sexual connections in that arena to gods and goddesses who act in ways that produce fertility in various parts of the material world. They believe that these gods and goddesses are, in turn, responsible for the fertility of their crops and animals, and it somehow relates to their sexual expressions. Since ho-

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homosexual activity does not reflect the natural order of things able to promote fertility, homosexual relations are not naturally a part of animistic beliefs.

As far as whether or not homosexuality would be considered moral, there could be different reasoning depending on the beliefs of specific groups – there is no generic belief that applies to every animistic group. There may be some groups that concretely consider it immoral since it goes against the fertility needs of the group. Others might consider it a non-important issue, as it only affects the individuals participating in the activity.

Far Eastern Thought

The Far Eastern Thought worldview is an expression of pantheism in which the natural universe is understood to be an illusory expression of ultimate reality (a transcendent immaterial, impersonal life force). The belief is that parts of the transcendent life force have spun off of the main body and moved far enough away that they have taken on a completely different form and character (material and personal). It is believed that these separated parts of the life force are in the process of working their way back to rejoin the main body. This is done through a nearly endless succession of reincarnation events. In this process, the life force progresses through increasingly higher material life forms until it is finally able to achieve a jumping off place where it is able to rejoin the main body of the transcendent life force. The power that moves this process along is karma.

As can be seen, new material life forms are necessary at every transition for the pieces of the life force to make progress on their journey to rejoin the transcendent body. Obviously, homosexual behavior does not allow for the procreation of new life

forms. As such, it does not serve as a natural part of the order of reality. In Far Eastern Thought, this could be, and often is, interpreted as immoral behavior.

Theism

Theism is the belief that a transcendent creator God exists, and has revealed to mankind what is moral and what is not moral. A generic answer cannot be given as it relates to particular moral questions, as each theistic belief system has its own understanding of the nature of God and his purposes – as well as its own authority source revelation.

When it comes to questions of sexuality, again, it is necessary to consult each theistic belief system individually. However, there is one particular generalization we can make regarding this. Most theistic belief systems assume homosexual behavior to be sinful. This emerges out of the belief that God created mankind male and female, and that one of the main purposes of this arrangement was to allow for procreation. As homosexual behavior does not fit within this plan of God for mankind, it is generally observed to be deviant, immoral behavior.

Biblical Theism

Biblical Theism (more commonly referred to as Christianity) is a particular theistic belief system. It is the belief that the creator God who exists is the one revealed in the Bible. It is the teachings about morality that are revealed in the Bible that are recognized to reflect actual reality.

Christians believe that homosexuality is a sin because it circumvents the moral order that God has revealed to be true. Sex for human beings is not seen to be simply an expression of animal instincts as it is with other animal creatures. God designed things, of course, so that human beings could reproduce as is true with

other animal creatures. And if human beings were, as the Naturalists believe, purely animal creatures, there would be no moral issue.

However, according to the Bible, human beings are more than merely natural animal creatures. We are persons created in the image of God with a moral sense, and have been given a purpose that involves living within a relationship with him. To fulfill that purpose, it is necessary to openly receive the revelation he has given us about morality, and to live within it. This is not to say that living a moral life is the key to a relationship with God. It is not! Rather, entering a relationship with him creates a transformation within the individual that causes us to desire living according to the morality he has revealed – the morality that corresponds with the reality he has created.

The material reality he has created involves sexual activity for human beings, but it operates within a particular framework. God created humans male and female. Not only are there physical differences between the two sexes, there are spiritual differences, as well. And God established the institution of marriage as a means for men and women to complete one another – the two become one flesh. This is not merely a physical union, but also a spiritual one. Homosexual relationships do not fit within that paradigm. Based on Christian beliefs, gay marriage is not marriage – by definition.

Just to be clear, heterosexual relationships outside of marriage also do not fit within the moral paradigm God created. Thus, homosexuality is a sin in the same way that heterosexual relationships outside of marriage are a sin. For human beings, any sexual relations outside of marriage as expressed in the Bible goes against the reality that God created in the natural world.

Drawing a Conclusion

While the topic of this article relates specifically to homosexuality, it is really aimed at highlighting a larger picture. People's view of this topic is not based on what is actually good or bad, right or wrong, but on the worldview beliefs that underlie their evaluation of morality. It is a moral judgment based on the religious presuppositions individuals bring to the table. Thus, to really get at the morality of homosexual practice, one must first determine the truth of the worldview beliefs that the moral decision is based upon.

It is not the purpose of this article to delve into why Biblical Theism is true and why every other belief system is not true. That has been done extensively in various resources that have been produced by MarketFaith Ministries (www.marketfaith.org). The purpose here is simply to explain the reasoning of the various worldview systems as it relates to homosexual behavior.

That said, the biblical teaching is the truth about reality. People who evaluate and live out their sexuality based on other worldview assumptions miss the boat in numerous ways. Physically, they don't live in a way that corresponds with the natural order that exists in the physical world. Emotionally, they are not in a position to connect with another person the way God designed human beings to connect. And spiritually, they are not able to become one with another person in the way the God created us to do.

This is not meant, in any way, to put down the dignity and personhood of those who consider themselves homosexual. Every person in the world, including homosexuals, are persons created in the image of God, and are deeply loved by him. Christians, for their part, should love and accept everyone the same way God does. This does not mean, however, that sinful behavior should be accepted as normative. Reality is reality, and we must learn to recognize it and to live in it. The Christian's responsibility is to lovingly share the love of Christ with those who don't know him, and allow God to change their lives.

Individuals, as they live life, make choices about many different matters that affect what happens in their lives – economic choices, vocational choices, entertainment choices, educational choices, and, of course, spiritual choices. Those who make choices that go against the created order and the morality that God has revealed to be true will experience less fulfillment in every part of life, and ultimately suffer the eternal consequences of those choices. Those who make choices that draw them close to God will experience the fullness of life that comes with living in reality.

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