

Homosexuality and the bible

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The issue of homosexuality in the church has long been an incredibly explosive one, provoking immensely strong opinions on both sides of the issue. While it will certainly be a very, very long time before these arguments are resolved in any particular direction, there is a robust theological discussion, as well there should be. There were two particular kinds of arguments that surprised me and challenged my own previously held views about homosexuality. I have long believed that homosexuality is a sin as discussed in biblical teachings, and that barring rare instances of people with the physical characteristics of both sexes homosexuality should not be practiced. The two arguments that challenged my views were reinterpretations of biblical texts that I had thought were conclusively against homosexuality, and an appeal to the evolving message of god which can take the form of experience and communal consciousness. I am not sure that these arguments have convinced me that I am wrong, but they at very least have made me look at things differently. One of the most striking arguments I read for this assignment was the two different interpretations of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah presented in the Johns article. In this biblical section it is clear that God hold the actions of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah to be morally reprehensible – the language is explicit and the punishment very, very clear. But I had never previously considered exactly what aspect of the passage was morally reprehensible – to me it had always been about homosexuality and nothing else. But there are, upon reading the Johns article, a wide variety of ways to interpret this text. Here the sexual relationship is not a loving and committed one, but an incredibly violent one, and I hope that if the group was coming to gang-rape a woman the reaction of god and the bible would be just as negative. What is somewhat troubling

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about this passage is that Lot, who is held in this to be moral, being saved by God, offered his own daughters for the gang-rape, but this seems to be upheld by the biblical text. This has demonstrated to me that all biblical texts can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways, This section of the text also ties in interestingly to the next argument, those based on lived experiences and adoption of a communal conscience, and made me recall the other things I know about Lot. Lot not only offers his own daughters, virgins who had never had sex, up to the gang to be abused in the place of angels, but also had a drunken incestuous relationship with those two daughters. Yet he is the person that God chooses to save from Sodom. This just showed to me that what is held up as morally acceptable in the bible may not be how we in a society today view morality – anyone in any church would condemn someone offering their children up for gang-rape, or having sex with their own daughters, regardless of the circumstances, even though the bible tacitly condones this behaviour throughout its text. The Johnson article extends this communal conscience to a more fully developed and robust argument. One of his central points is that the bible, though an important resource, cannot be adhered to dogmatically at every point throughout – if one did so they would, as he said, “ stone physicists and adulterers,” as the bible (Johnson). His argument that today’s arguments about homosexuality have some similarity to the arguments about the abolishment of slavery during the 19th century and before. Slavery, as Johnson says, is something that is held as okay throughout the text – many people who are supposed to be morally good and supported by God hold slaves, and no one, not even Jesus, specifically condemns the practice. But throughout the history of the world, people began to see the horrors of

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slavery, the damage it does to individual people, and have decided that it is something that needs to be banned, that cannot be a part of Christian life. If this process can happen, where a communal conscience develops to decide that something is not okay in Christian society, could it be possible for the reverse of that process to happen? Could society observe the practice of gays and lesbians in our community, see people who are living in loving and committed partnerships in conformance with how a Christian marriage should be led, and decide that despite biblical evidence this is something we can support? The final argument that challenged me was the idea that there is probably simply too much focus being put on this. The vast majority of Christians are straight, not homosexual, and thus the vast majority of sexually improper practices are done by straight people (Johns). Perhaps given the state of immorality that many Christians are living in – heterosexual premarital sex, heterosexual extramarital affairs and so on, more energy should be spent on those issues and less on homosexuality. The arguments in these articles was fairly compelling and challenged many of my preconceived notions about homosexuality and the Christian Church. It has shown me that biblical passages are perhaps not so easy to interpret as I had thought, and can be interpreted differently than I had, and that there is a source of morality outside the bible that must be considered during these discussions. Works Cited Johns, Lauren L. " Explicit and Implicit References to Homosexuality in the Bible." AMBS. Web. 23 Oct. 2011. . Johnson, Luke T., and Eve Thushnet. " Homosexuality & the Church | Commonweal Magazine." Homepage | Commonweal Magazine. Web. 23 Oct. 2011. . Stassen, Glen Harold, and David P. Gushee. Kingdom Ethics: following Jesus in Contemporary Context. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003. Print. <https://assignbuster.com/homosexuality-and-the-bible/>