

SAME-SEX MATTERS: THE CHALLENGE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Edited By Christopher Wolfe (Spence Publishing, 2000)

Reviewed by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D.

This is the second of two volumes edited by Christopher Wolfe, the first volume being *Homosexuality and American Public Life*.

The purpose of this volume, Wolfe explains, is to "advance an understanding of the truth about homosexuality, so that we may respond intelligently, prudently, and compassionately to current efforts to legitimize homosexual acts."

The philosophical stance of both these volumes is essentially Catholic. That is, the authors take the position that same-sex attractions are fundamentally disordered, and that homosexual acts are intrinsically immoral. But more than a narrowly theological document, this is an important collection of the work of social scientists, religious leaders, educators, political analysts and cultural observers.

The book's contributors agree with Wolfe that we are in the midst of an enormous cultural struggle over homosexuality.

Arguments Support Intuitive Knowledge

Wolfe believes that while many Americans privately consider homosexuality a disorder, some for religious and some for intuitive reasons ("it just doesn't seem right"), still, relatively few of those individuals are actually able to defend their position. The book succeeds in providing arguments from a variety of perspectives.

For example, in the chapter, "A Rhetoric of Hope," Lawrence Burtoft offers a fascinating historical review of the media's inaccurate reporting of scientific evidence. In particular, he details the ongoing misreporting by the media and scientific distortion that have promoted the idea that homosexuality is biologically predetermined. The result, of course, is that most Americans have now accepted the myth advanced by gay activism that homosexuals are born that way and cannot change. This misinformation must be countered, Burtoft argues.



In its place must be the declaration that homosexuality is potentially preventable and also treatable, regardless of the factors which led the individual into it. Further, even in those cases where there may be biological factors creating a predisposition to gender-identity distortion, the moral status of homosexual activity would remain unchanged.

"Born that Way" Doesn't Mean "Designed that Way"

Similarly, we do not condone drinking by some people because they suffer with an alcoholism gene, or violence by people born with an aggression gene, or social withdrawal by people born with a shyness gene, or obesity for those born with a gene which makes weight loss unusu-

ally difficult.

Christopher Wolfe's book offers an impressive collection of essays that counter the misinformation promoted by the popular media, and it boldly confronts the most fundamental misunderstandings about the nature of homosexuality. It then proceeds to offer a reasoned societal response.

Film critic and author Michael Medved explains why we now have such a flood of gay material in the popular media. In Hollywood, he says, one is required to be gay approving or else be labeled homophobic, and the burden of proof that one is *not* homophobic rests with each individual, forcing producers to promote gay characters that are almost uniformly (and unrealistically) positive.

Medved has been able to identify three strategies of gay activism in the media:

- to desensitize the public and normalize homosexuality;
- to emphasize gay victim status, and
- to demonize defenders of the traditional family.

He offers an effective counter-strategy. "Can we win this argument?" he asks. The answer is yes, he assures us, by returning to our fundamental commitments to family and faith.

Ex-Gays Offer Powerful Testimony

Next, reviewing the pop-cultural landscape, Robert Knight concludes that the strongest threat to the gay-rights movement is the ex-gay movement. This movement directly confronts the untruth that "homosexuals are so different from the rest of us that they are exempt from natural law," (that is, designed differently by God), or the opposite distortion—that they are "so warped by sin that they are unqualified for salvation and spiritual renewal" (so that change is an impossibility).

Next, Robert Louis Wilkin takes apart the revisionist scholarship of the very influential homosexual apologist, the Rev. John Boswell. Wilkin argues effectively against Boswell's representations of Christian practice and history. Boswell's work has received lavish praise from many religious leaders and has been widely used as theological justification for the blessing of same-sex partnerships.

Judaism Does Not Recognize a "Gay Identity"

Rabbi Barry Freundel offers a brief but insightful review in his chapter on homosexuality and Judaism. "What is Judaism's view of the homosexual individual?" he asks. "I contend that the only appropriate answer to this question is that there is no such individual." Judaism rejects the idea that homosexuality is an acceptable alternative lifestyle, but rather sees the homosexually oriented person as someone who has not yet achieved his full potential as a human being.

"It is hard to imagine Jewish thought accepting the premise," he says, "that sexual desires and activities provide grounds by which to define an individual's place in the community...We are told in the Talmud that G-d does not play tricks on his creations, particularly in the area of sexuality. Therefore it would follow that G-d would provide some means to change, for those individuals who are motivated to do so."

Then, Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz presents homosexuality from the perspective of Catholic doctrine. Father John Harvey, founder of the Catholic ministry Courage, describes his work as head of the only orthodox Catholic outreach established for struggling men and women. Father Harvey, it should be noted, continues to face entrenched opposition to his ministry from many Catholic bishops in this country.

Jane Boyer tells us of her former lesbian life and her faith-based healing. "Lesbian love is a counterfeit, a lie," she says. "It never satisfied, it never filled. It only left me craving. The love of Jesus satisfies. This man Jesus I could trust."

Mary Beth Style, former Vice President of the National Council for adoption, says that adoption policy has been distorted by a focus on the desires of potential parents instead of prioritizing the rights of the child. She believes adoption policy should recognize that heterosexual marriage is the norm that best serves the child's interests.

Should Sexual Freedom Trump National Security?

Former Army Major Melissa Wells-Petry explains that the military has been weakened by a focus on radical sexual individualism. Military readiness is undermined when the individual's personal desires are placed above the military mission. We must recognize that the military is a unique society which is required to operate by relatively restrictive rules that can leave no room for sexual license.

In the book's afterword, editor Christopher Wolfe discusses the labels "bigotry" and "intolerance" and their deployment as rhetorical weapons. Gay activists have successfully promoted the idea that to oppose the normalization of homosexuality in society is to create an atmosphere of hatred and violence.

The contributors to *Same-Sex Matters* provide a compassionate but uncompromising reply to gay activism. ■