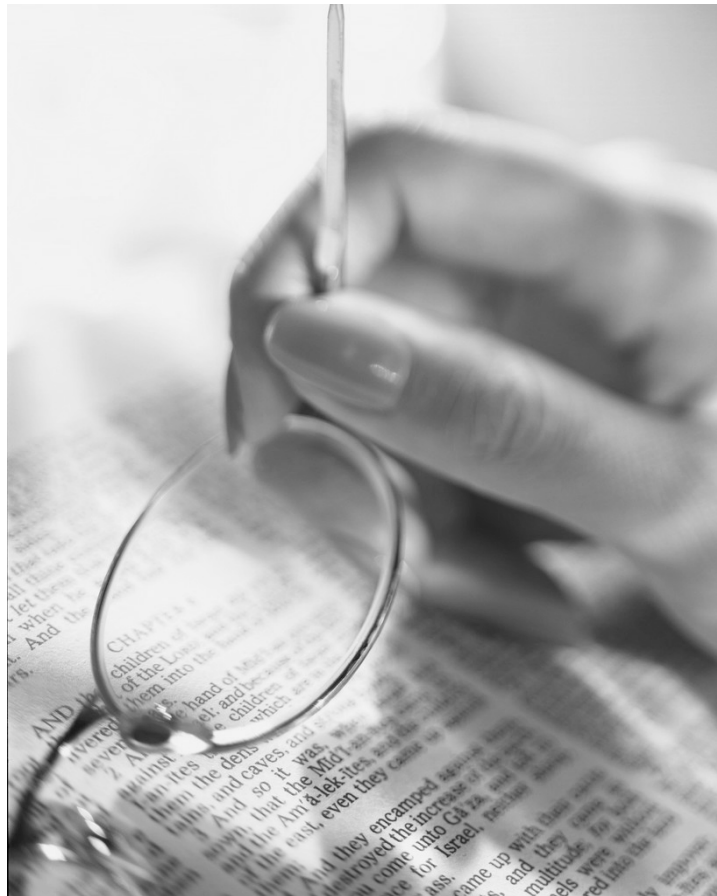


A Report on the Work of the
DIOCESAN DIALOGUE TASK FORCE
ON
HUMAN SEXUALITY

The Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee



January – October 2004

Co-Chairs: The Rev. Thomas Papazoglakis & Claudia Bartz, Ph.D.

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1. Introduction

The occasion for this dialogue was the consecration of V. Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, with the consent of the General Convention of 2003. Closely related was the acknowledgment by the same General Convention that blessings of same-gender unions were being done in some dioceses of the Episcopal Church. These events have occasioned a crisis in the Episcopal Church and in the Anglican Communion since many sincere Christian believers regard these actions as contrary to the revealed will of God. Consequently, they do not think that they can stay in communion with the Episcopal Church.

There is disagreement and tension within the Diocese of Milwaukee about this whole situation as became evident at the Diocesan Convention of November 2003. At that time, at Bishop Miller's request, the resolutions demanding action were tabled with a view to allowing a year for prayer, reflection, dialogue, and discernment.

The Bishop proposed the following three questions for the people of our diocese to consider:

1. What does it mean to be created for loving relationship?
2. Is our sexuality of the Creation or of the Fall?
3. What does it mean to be faithful sexual beings?

1.1 The Task Force

The Bishop announced at the November, 2003 Diocesan Convention the appointment of a Diocesan Dialogue Task Force on Human Sexuality, composed of both lay and clergy members of the diocese with differing views on the disputed issue. They were asked to meet regularly over a period of several months, in order to learn how to conduct a dialogue with one another that would be characterized by mutual respect, openness, honesty, and Christian love for one another. There was no expectation that they would necessarily reach agreement. The task force appreciated the freedom to dialogue and to draw its own conclusions.

The meetings began in January of 2004 at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Pewaukee. The co-chairs of the task force were The Rev. Tom Papazoglakis and Claudia Bartz, Ph.D. The two theologians who alternated in leading the discussions were The Rev. Tom Holtzen, Ph.D. and The Rev. Wayne Fehr, Ph.D. The remaining members of the task force were Dr. Kirk Davis, The Very Rev. George Hillman, John Jackson, Ph.D., The Rev. Chris Keough, D.Min., The Rev. Gary Lambert, Ms. Valerie McAuliffe, Ms. Carol Milanich, Ms. Ellie Moseley, Ms. Nina Radcliffe, The Rev. D. Scott Stoner, D.Min., and Ms. Peggy Worzalla. Two persons originally appointed decided, after the first meeting, not to continue (The Rev. Rachel Wenner and The Rev. Chris Young). Two others withdrew from the task force for personal reasons before the series was completed (The Rev. Chris Keough, D.Min. and Dr. Kirk Davis).

1.2 The Meetings (January—September, 2004)

The schedule of topics was agreed upon at the first meeting and was as follows.

- #1 Jan. 14 Meet and discuss course of action.
- #2 Jan. 20 Study a view in favor of the full inclusion of non-celibate gay and lesbian members in the life of the Church.
- #3 Feb. 24 Study a view opposing the full inclusion of non-celibate gay and lesbian members in the life of the Church.
- #4 Mar. 2 What is the significance of human sexuality as created by God and what is its purpose?
- #5 Mar. 16 What is fallen and sinful sexual activity?
- #6 Mar. 30 How is human sexuality redeemed by Jesus Christ?
- #7 Apr. 20 A) How is human sexuality part of life in the Holy Spirit?
B) Presentation from representatives of Milwaukee Anglican Council
- # 8 May 25 A) What is our understanding of the nature of Sacred Scripture (the origin and characteristics of diverse writings) and what is our understanding of inspiration as applied to the production of the texts of Sacred Scripture? B) Presentation from representatives of the liberal/emerging view
- #9 Jun. 11 What does Scripture say about human sexuality and about same-gender sexual intimacy?
- #10 Jul. 20 What guidance does Tradition give us about human sexuality and about same-gender sexual intimacy?
- #11 Aug. 10 What guidance does Reason give us about human sexuality and about same-gender sexual intimacy?
- #12/13 Sep. 7 What are the implications of the current debate about same-gender sexual intimacy for our parishes, our diocese, and our communion?
Conclusion: The drafting of a statement. What are points of agreement and disagreement?
- #14 Sep. 14 Approve final statement in preparation for presentation to Diocesan Convention.

Diocesan Convention 10.22/23.04

1.3 References

Each meeting had assigned readings from the two references below, and a moderator and a facilitator were assigned. In addition, task force members read a wide variety of additional publications related to the topics of the meetings. We recognize that biology and genetics of sexuality were not included as topics in our discussion sessions.

Via, Dan O. and Gagnon, Robert A. J. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Issues in Human Sexuality: A Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991.

1.4 Task Force Products

Regular reports on the meetings of the task force were published in *The Covenant* to keep members of the diocese informed of the deliberations on the scheduled topics.

Task force members met with each of the four convocations to describe the schedule and process of the meetings. Publications related to the topic of human sexuality were also provided with a number of the reports (Appendix A).

Parishes were encouraged to have their own group discussions on the topic of human sexuality. The task force received three written reports of parish deliberations. Task force members also invited and received presentations from representatives of the Milwaukee Anglican Council and from representatives of the liberal/emerging viewpoint.

2. The Experience of Dialogue

At the beginning we did not all know one another, and it took a couple of meetings for us to learn each other's names and backgrounds and to begin to feel comfortable talking to one another. Gradually we got to the point where each of us could articulate our understanding of the issues we were considering. A sense of community grew. We came to respect and like one another even though we were often in disagreement. We came to feel like an "us," rather than just separate individuals with differing views. It was important that our meetings always began and ended with prayer.

3. The Questions

On the one hand, we were aware of the crisis of impending disunity in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. This was a concern for all of us. On the other hand, we knew we had to direct our attention to the issue that had occasioned the crisis. Perhaps the issue could best be put this way: What is the moral status of committed same-sex relationships in light of Scripture, Christian tradition, and reason? Are such relationships sinful or not? This seems to be the heart of the matter. How these questions are answered determines where an individual or faith community stands in relation to our present controversy.

4. Areas of Agreement

After all these months of dialogue, we can now see fairly clearly where we agree and where we disagree. Below are listed areas about which we were able to agree.

4.1 The cultural mind-set of the biblical writings sees male-female union as the norm for human sexual activity. Marriage between a man and a woman is viewed as the ideal (although polygamy was certainly practiced during part of the history of Israel). There is no concept of a legitimate sexual union of two people of the same gender. Within the canon of Scripture there are several passages that explicitly condemn same-gender sexual intimacy (i.e., Gen 19:1-24; Lev 18:22, 20:13; Judg 19:1-20; Rom 1:8-32; 1 Cor 6:9-20; 1 Tim 1:8-11). For many scholars, Mark 7:21-23/Matt 15:19 implicitly condemn same-gender sexual intimacy (see Section 6.6 below). These passages, along with the whole of Scripture, must be taken seriously in any discussion of the issue.

4.2 The tradition of the Church upholds the ideal of marriage between a man and a woman as the only context in which human sexual activity finds its proper meaning.

4.3 There is a growing body of scientific evidence that supports the concept of homosexual orientation. The concept of a homosexual orientation is validated by the major mental health organizations in the U.S.¹

4.4 The action of General Convention 2003 in consenting to the consecration of V. Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire has proved to be divisive to the Diocese of Milwaukee, to the Episcopal Church USA, to the Anglican Communion, and to the universal church (the world-wide Christian community). Some have felt betrayed while others have been encouraged by this action.

4.5 Further actions in ordaining non-celibate homosexuals to the episcopacy, priesthood or diaconate, or the blessing of same-sex unions would at this time be divisive for the Body of Christ.

5. Areas of Disagreement

After months of dialogue, there are still areas of sincere disagreement. They are as follows.

5.1 The principal point of disagreement among the members of the dialogue task force was whether or not the agreed-upon data of Scripture and the tenets of Church tradition settle definitively the question of the moral status of committed same-gender sexual relationships. The difference in judgment on this matter seems to us to involve several considerations:

1. How are the nature and authority of Sacred Scripture to be understood?
2. How are the nature and authority of Church tradition to be understood?
3. What is to be learned about human sexuality from present-day experience and rational reflection?

5.2 A second point of disagreement was whether or not some people are constituted with an unchangeable homosexual orientation.

5.3 A third point of disagreement was about what pastoral advice to give to Church members with homosexual orientations who are seeking a way to live their sexuality ethically and responsibly.

6. The Classic Point of View

This is a summary of the line of thought presented over the course of the meetings to support the view that any same-gender sexual intimacy is contrary to human nature as created by God, is always morally wrong, and is a matter of serious sin.

6.1 Anglicans have traditionally appealed to the threefold hermeneutic of Scripture, tradition, and reason in settling controversies of faith. Yet in this appeal, Scripture has been understood to have primacy over tradition and reason. As Richard Hooker states in

¹ Brief for the Petitioners as *Amici Curiae*, *Geddes and Garner v. United States*, No. 02-102, United States Supreme Court, January 2003.

his *Laws*, “What Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto, is what any man can necessarily conclude by the force of Reason; after these, the voice of the Church succedeth.”² Scripture remains the ultimate rule and standard of faith for Anglicans. As the Articles point out, while the “Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith . . . it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.”³ Even the Catholic Creeds are to be believed because “they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.”⁴ Likewise the “Moscow Agreed Statement” asserts the primacy of Scripture and its correlative nature with tradition saying, “we affirm . . . that Scripture is the main criterion whereby the Church tests traditions to determine whether they are truly part of Holy Tradition or not” and that “Holy Tradition completes Holy Scripture in the sense that safeguards the integrity of the biblical message.”⁵ Finally, the primacy of Scripture was affirmed in regard to the issue of non-celibate homosexuality when the 1998 Lambeth Conference declared that it, “in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage” and proclaimed that it was “rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture.”⁶

6.2 Scripture. Human sexuality is grounded in the order of creation. Humankind is created in the image of God as male and female for one another in the covenant of marriage: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). This teaching of sexual complementarity as found in the Genesis narratives is cited by Jesus (Matt 19:3//Mark 10:2–16) and is appealed to by St. Paul (Rom 1:23–32) as the norm of all human sexual activity. Humankind is created as male and female in the image of God for one another in the covenant of marriage. As the Prayer Book says, “The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation.”⁷

6.3 Since this teaching of sexual complementarity is grounded in the order of creation, it is applicable to all people at all times and places. The Old Testament clearly forbids homosexual behavior (Gen 19:1–24; Lev 18:22, 20:13; Judg 19:1–20:12). While the Old Testament Law is no longer binding on Christians, “No Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.”⁸ We recognize that, because our human nature is fallen (Gen 3; Rom 3:23), some people experience

² Richard Hooker, *The Works of the Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton*, ed. the Rev. John Keble, 3 vols., reprint, 1888 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 5.8.2. Hooker elsewhere puts down another rule of literal interpretation when he says, “I hold it for a most infallible rule in exposition of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst.” See *Laws*, 5.59.2.

³ Article 20, BCP 871.

⁴ Article 8, BCP 869.

⁵ *Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 51.

⁶ *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1999), 381.

⁷ BCP 423.

⁸ Article 7, BCP 869.

themselves as having a homosexual orientation and do not experience themselves as created for sexual complementarity. We, nonetheless, believe that in the Scriptures God has said that all sexual activity outside of the man-woman marriage covenant is sinful.

6.4 The New Testament also explicitly condemns gay and lesbian activity as “contrary to nature” (*para physin*) and contrary to God’s creative intention and will in Rom 1:26. In Rom 1:26–27 St. Paul states, “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.” Again, in 1 Cor 6:9 St. Paul says that, “Neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes (*malakoi*), nor sodomites (*arsenokoitai*), nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.” Here the term *arsenokoitēs* refers to non-celibate homosexuals and the term *malakos* refers to the passive partner in a homosexual relationship.⁹ Again, in 1 Tim 1:8–11 “sodomites” (*arsenokoitais*) are described with others as “lawless and disobedient,” “ungodly and sinners,” “unholy and profane” who are “contrary to sound doctrine in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.” There is clear evidence in the mind of scholars that these passages refer to non-celibate homosexuality and not exclusively to abusive pederastic relationships.¹⁰

6.5 Homosexual behavior is contrary to the Christian moral life of holiness. A fundamental principle in the theology of St. Paul is that Christians are to live “according to the Spirit” (*katá pneúma*) and not “according to the flesh” (*katá sarká*), (Rom 8:2–9, Rom 8:10–14, Gal 5:16–17).¹¹ St. Paul calls this the “law of the Spirit” (Rom 8:2). Christians according to St. Paul are to be “spiritual men” (*pneumatikoi*) as opposed to those who are “natural” (*physikoi*) and who are “men of flesh” (*sarkikoi*), (1 Cor 2:14, 15, 3:1, 3:3).¹² In 1 Cor 6:9–20 and 1 Tim 1:8–11 homosexual behavior is listed among those things belonging to life according to the flesh. Homosexual behavior thus denies the redemptive grace of God and life according to the Spirit of grace.

⁹ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 135a and 613b respectively.

¹⁰ None of the major commentaries support the understanding that Paul has in mind exclusively pederastic relationships. For example, in stating that homosexual behavior is against nature (*para physis*) in Rom 1:26, Paul is referring to the created order of male and female, and does not have in mind a homosexual acting against his orientation or even pederastic behavior. The Greek terms cannot be so narrowly defined. On **Rom 1:8–32** see Barrett, *Blacks*, 39; Barth, *Romans*, 52–53; Byrne, *Sacra Pagina*, 77; Cranfield, *ICC*, 125–127; Dunn, *Word*, 73–76; Fitzmyer, *Anchor*, 284–290; Murray, *NICNT*, 47–49. On **1 Cor 6:9** see Barrett, *Black’s*, 140; Betz, *Hermeneia*, 106; Collins, *Sacra Pagina*, 236; Fee, *NICNT*, 243ff.; Hays, *Interpretation*, 97; Plummer and Robertson, *ICC*, 117ff.; Thiselton, *NIGTC*, 449ff. On **1 Tim 1:10** see L. T. Johnson, *Anchor*, 170; Kelly, *Black’s*, 50; Knight, *NICGNT*, 85–86; Marshall, *ICC*, 377–380; Mounce, *Word*, 38–40; Oden, *Interpretation*, 39–40.

¹¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament Theology*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951–55), 1:236–46.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:158.

6.6 Jesus also teaches holiness. Jesus explicitly commands us not to be “sexually immoral” (*porneia*) in Mark 7:21//Matt 15:19. And since, “Later Judaism shows how the use of *porneia* broadens out to include not only fornication or adultery but incest, sodomy, unlawful marriage, and sexual intercourse,”¹³ it can be concluded that even Jesus implicitly taught that non-celibate homosexuality is sinful.

6.7 The refusal to repent of grave sin in the New Testament can put the human soul in peril of God’s eternal judgment. St. Paul states that this is the case with non-celibate homosexuality. St. Paul warns that those who continue to practice homosexuality place their souls in eternal peril (1 Cor 6:10, Rom 1:27, 32; cf. Lev 18:22, 20:13).

6.8 In this manner, non-celibate homosexuality denies the regenerating grace of God in the life of the Christian. Immediately after St. Paul condemns homosexuality as sinful in 1 Cor 6:9–10 he goes on to say in v. 11, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” Again, after an explicit condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Tim 1:8–10, St. Paul states, “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (1 Tim 1:15–16). In short, the continuance of grave sin in the life of a Christian breaks the relationship with God, denies the sacrificial redemptive efficacy of the cross of Christ to blot out sin, and denies the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit to lead a new life.

6.9 Tradition. Tradition is not simply the process of handing on the teaching of the Church, but the very content of that teaching itself. As Jaroslav Pelikan notes, “Tradition means the handing down of Christian teaching during the course of the history of the church, but it also means that which was handed down.”¹⁴ The Church handed down a way of being in Christ, i.e., the Faith, and not simply a set of logical propositions about Christ known in summary form as the rule of faith (*regula fidei*). The rule of faith, also called the canon of truth, included the teaching of the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous in its various formulations in the Early Church.¹⁵ There is, therefore, to be no separation of *kerygma* from morality in the life of the Christian.¹⁶

6.10 Since the earliest of times, the Church tradition has been unequivocal in its understanding of homosexual behavior as sinful. The Church has historically made a

¹³ G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., G. W. Bromiley, trans., *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Theology: Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), 919.

¹⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–89), 1:7.

¹⁵ So Ireneaus’ canon of truth, *Against the Heresies*, 1.10.1; and Tertullian’s rule of faith, *The Prescription Against the Heretics*, 13.

¹⁶ There is no wall of separation between *kerygma* and *didache*, doctrine and deed, in the Early Church as assumed in the Righer trial (section B of the judgment). An integral part of the *kerygma* (or more properly *kerygmata*) is life in the Spirit. So James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity of the New Testament: An Inquiry Into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 30.

knowing distinction between pederastic behavior and homosexual behavior. Pederastic behavior is considered sinful by the Early Church.¹⁷ Likewise, homosexual behavior is also considered sinful in the Early Church.¹⁸ As a general rule, homosexual behavior is considered by the Early Church to be “contrary to nature.”¹⁹ This position prevails to this very day in the universal Church.

6.11 The test of any new teaching in the Church is its Catholicity. Catholicity was admirably defined by St. Vincent of Lerins when he said, “Now in the Catholic Church itself we take the greatest care to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.” St. Vincent explains that any ecclesial action must meet the three criteria of universality, antiquity, and consent. He goes on to say, “We shall follow universality if we acknowledge that one Faith to be true which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is clear that our ancestors and fathers proclaimed; consent, if in antiquity itself we keep following the definitions and opinions of all, or certainly nearly all, bishops and doctors alike.”²⁰

6.12 The Episcopal Church USA cannot claim that its action in consenting to the consecration of V. Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire is in any sense of the word “Catholic.” This action is not supported by universality, antiquity, or consent of the Anglican Communion or of Catholic Christendom. By ordaining a non-celibate homosexual as the Bishop of New Hampshire the Episcopal Church has departed from “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and has broken fellowship with its own members, its sister Churches of the Anglican Communion, and with the universal Church.

6.13 Consent to the consecration of V. Gene Robinson has caused serious division within this diocese, the Episcopal Church USA, and the Anglican Communion. The Diocese of Milwaukee has already experienced schism and a loss of membership. Nationally, parishes are departing the Episcopal Church USA for other jurisdictions. Internationally, the Episcopal Church USA is currently in a state of impaired or broken communion with about three-quarters of the Anglican Communion and almost one-half of its provinces as demonstrated in the “Statement of the Global South Primates.”²¹

6.14 Reason. The ancient Greeks knew something akin to what we call homosexual orientation. Plato thought in his *Symposium* that homosexuality could be attributed to nature. He says that Aristophanes held to the myth that homosexuals were originally

¹⁷ *Didache*, 2; *Ep. Barnabas*, 19; *Theophilus*, 2; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 3.8.

¹⁸ *Ep. of Polycarp*, 5; Aristides, *Apology*, 8, 17; Athenagoras, *A Plea*, 34; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 3.4; Tertullian, *Apology*, 46, *On Idolatry*, 16, *Against the Valentinians*, 11; Origen, *Comm. on Matthew*, 10; *Apostolic Constitutions*, 6.28.

¹⁹ *Clement of Alexandria, Paedagogus*, 3.4; *Apostolic Constitutions*, 6.28. For a list of quotations see *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David W. Bercot (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), 347.

²⁰ Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 92.

²¹ For this statement see ACNS 3829. This statement was made by 18 of the 38 Provinces of the Anglican Communion representing 55 million Anglican Christians.

created “binary beings”, male-male, female-female, male-female whom Zeus cut in half and so they long for the other.²² Aristotle thought homosexuality resulted from nature or from habitual behavior of those who were abused as small boys.²³ Hippocrates thought that homosexuality resulted from a mix up of male and female elements within male sperm and female sperm.²⁴ These same-gender relationships were often between faithful consenting adults, and not solely abusive pederastic relationships.²⁵ Given this fact, it is likely that St. Paul, who betrays Hellenistic (i.e., Stoic) influence upon his thought, was aware of these quasi-genetic theories of homosexual orientation. Further, both St. Paul in Rom 1:26 and Aristotle held that non-celibate homosexuality was *para physin* or “contrary to nature” and a defect.²⁶ Nonetheless, St. Paul condemns homosexual activity as sinful (Rom 1:8–32; 1 Cor 6:9–20; 1 Tim 1:8–11).

6.15 Because something is natural does not make it morally right. Death is a natural part of human life in one sense, and yet according to St. Paul, death is a result of sin (Rom 6:23, 5:12ff.). Likewise, the modern science of genetics teaches that disease can be embedded in our genetic make-up. Indeed the Anglican doctrine of original sin understands sin to be rooted in our human nature.²⁷ It is, therefore, logical for homosexual or bisexual orientation to have a bodily cause. Such orientation is not necessarily good just because it exists bodily.

6.16 Yet, there is a growing body of statistical evidence from a number of scientific studies to suggest that some people experience themselves as exclusively homosexual in orientation, slightly over 1%.²⁸ Exclusive homosexual orientation is sexual attraction for someone of the same sex, with no heterosexual feelings. Other people experience

²² Plato, *Symposium*, 189–193.

²³ “. . . and in addition to these paederasty; for these arise in some by nature and in others, as in those who have been victims of lust from childhood, from habit.” So Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1148b.

²⁴ So Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 353–54, 384, and notes.

²⁵ “Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature; any one may recognize the pure enthusiasts in the very character of their attachments. For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow. And in choosing young men to be their companions, they mean to be faithful to them, and pass their whole life in company with them, not to take them in their inexperience, and deceive them, and play the fool with them, or run away from one another of them. But the love of young boys should be forbidden by law, because their future is uncertain. . .” Plato, *Symposium*, 181.

²⁶ Cf. Aristotle, *Problems*, 4.26; with Rom 1:26.

²⁷ “Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man.” Article 9, BCP 869.

²⁸ 0.14%–1.15% according to Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *The Use of Scientific Research in the Church’s Moral Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 42–43.

themselves as bisexual in orientation.²⁹ Studies consistently show that there is a spectrum of sexual orientation among people.³⁰

6.17 Change in sexual orientation happens. For example, this is the case with V. Gene Robinson, the Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire. He is a father of two children from a heterosexual marriage. He has not, therefore, always and exclusively experienced himself as a homosexual. His orientation has changed from that of heterosexual orientation to that of homosexual orientation.

6.18 Such change in orientation, from heterosexual to homosexual (or vice versa) is problematic for those who view sexual orientation as unchangeable for the very reason that sexual orientations do change. It is equally problematic for those who feel that sexual orientation must be acted upon for authentic human existence, granting that those relationships are monogamous and built upon mutual respect and trust. One who is bisexual in orientation cannot, by definition, be monogamous but is polygamous. Further, in the case of someone who switches sexual orientation, it will always be the case that the commitment of one relationship and orientation is exchanged for that of another. Assuming that a person is in a civil union (either gay or straight) and experiences a change in sexual orientation, divorce would be necessary for authentic human existence.

6.19 If the Church understands actively living out one's own sexual orientation is determinative for sexual fulfillment and authentic human existence, then the Church is teaching that divorce is a necessary evil to reach authentic human existence and sexual fulfillment for those who experience a change in sexual orientation during their lifetime. This is problematic for the Church's traditional moral teachings or for anyone who states that life-long commitment should be a norm.

6.20 Reparative therapies have shown some success when used with caution.³¹ Generally, the success of reparative therapies for homosexuals is similar to that of alcoholics, about 30%.³² This cannot be summarily dismissed.

²⁹ The National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs) found 1.4% of female identified themselves as lesbian or bisexual as did 2.8% of males. Only .3% of females claimed to be exclusively homosexual and 2% of males claimed to be exclusively homosexual. It should also be noted that of these people 0.5% of females and 0.8% of males identified themselves as bisexual in orientation. See Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 418.

³⁰ This spectrum of orientation is shown on the Kinsey Rating with 0 = exclusively heterosexual, 1 = almost exclusively heterosexual, 2 = more heterosexual than homosexual, 3 = equally heterosexual and homosexual, 4 = more homosexual than heterosexual, 5 = almost entirely homosexual, 6 = exclusively homosexual. So Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 421.

³¹ One study examined 855 non-celibate homosexual persons who had changed or who were seeking such change. Before treatment 37% reported they were exclusively homosexual. After therapy 18% reported that they were almost exclusively heterosexual, 20% more heterosexual than homosexual, 11% equally oriented and 8% exclusively homosexual. See Jones and Yarhouse, *The Use of Scientific Research*, 139. Other studies have likewise, shown that positive outcomes can range anywhere from 23%–67%, so Jones and Yarhouse, *The Use of Scientific Research*, 123, 131.

³² Jones and Yarhouse, *The Use of Scientific Research*, 123; Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 473 n. 209.

6.21 In conclusion, non-celibate homosexuality cannot be justified on the grounds of Scripture, tradition, or reason. Non-celibate homosexuality is contrary to both the orders of creation and redemption. It is a grave sin that needs to be forgiven by Jesus Christ. To deny this is to deny the saving efficacy of the cross of Christ and to depart from “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Non-celibate homosexuality is contrary to the explicit teaching of the Lambeth Conference, does not have the consent of Catholicity and it has been divisive in the Diocese of Milwaukee, the Episcopal Church USA, the Anglican Communion and the universal church. In short, the weight of all reasonable evidence is against it.

7. An Emerging Point of View

This is a summary of the line of thought which gradually emerged, over the course of the meetings, to give a theological rationale from the viewpoint of Christian faith for recognizing the legitimacy of committed same-gender sexual relationships.

7.1 First of all, any Christian theological argument for the legitimacy of committed same-gender sexual relationships must take into account the data of Scripture. As we have seen, there is no basis in Scripture for judging any kind of same-gender sexual intimacy to be legitimate.

We who, nevertheless, are still open to the possibility of legitimate same-gender intimacy in a committed, faithful, life-long relationship are obliged to make clear what view we hold of the nature and authority of the biblical writings that allows us to relativize the force of the biblical data.

As we do this, we will be articulating a view of the Bible that is markedly different from that of some other Christian believers. How we are to understand the nature and authority of the Bible is the issue that actually underlies current disagreements about sexual morality. We do not expect that all fellow-Christians will agree with what follows, but we offer it as our present understanding of the issue.

7.2 On the one hand, the Scriptures are thoroughly human, showing the cultural assumptions and thought-forms of the people who wrote them. On the other hand, faith recognizes God as the ultimate Author of the religious truth expressed in them. In order to attend to this divinely given truth, however, we need to appreciate and take into account the humanness of the writings.

As Reginald Fuller, an Anglican scripture scholar, notes: “. . .the Bible is . . . the work of many human authors over a period of a thousand years or more, and all of them conditioned by the cultural assumptions of their age. Biblical criticism has further shown that the Bible is a highly pluralistic work, containing the personal views of many different writers, views that are shaped by the particular situations in which they were written.”³³

In this view, the “Word of God” cannot be equated in a simple way with every part of every text in the Bible. The truth and holiness of God do shine through these writings in their entirety. But to hear faithfully the word that God is speaking, one should look to the overarching themes and principles that run through the varied writings.

³³ R. Fuller. *The Study of Anglicanism*. Stephen Sykes & John Booty (Ed.), 1988, pp. 79-80.

Particular texts are to be interpreted in the context of the larger whole, and full account is to be taken of the cultural limitations of some passages.

In this view, inspiration is understood as the influence of the Holy Spirit upon human beings that enabled them to express new God-given insights into the mystery of God and the God-human relationship. But they did this in the words and thought-categories of their own culture. From our present perspective, some of their taken-for-granted assumptions and categories of thought can be recognized as mistaken or no longer adequate without qualification. The authentic “Word of God” is to be discerned in and through the very human words of the writers.

7.3 From this point of view, what is to be said about the Bible’s relevance to the question we are struggling with? First of all, we need to recognize that the question itself has arisen only because of the new and perhaps unprecedented idea that there could be a legitimate sexual union of two committed persons of the same gender. This idea is now widespread in Western culture, though not affirmed by all. In contrast, the idea is unknown and unthinkable in Africa and other non-Western cultures. It is also alien to the cultural contexts out of which the biblical writings came. A legitimate, same-gender sexual relationship is nowhere envisaged in the Bible, not even as something to be condemned.

Does this mean that the Bible is irrelevant to the question under discussion? By no means. Its positive relevance will be examined below. But for the moment, we can at least relativize the biblical prohibitions that otherwise seem to settle the question so decisively.

7.4 What about Church tradition? As we have seen, there is no basis in tradition for judging any kind of same-gender sexual intimacy to be legitimate. We who, nevertheless, are still open to the possibility of legitimate same-gender sexual intimacy in a committed, faithful, life-long relationship are obliged to make clear what view of the nature and authority of Church tradition we hold that allows us to be open to a possibility that is nowhere recognized by the tradition of the Church.

We understand tradition (in the context of Church life) as “the continuous stream of explanation and elucidation of the primitive faith, illustrating the way in which Christianity has been presented and understood in past ages.”³⁴ But tradition in the Church also sometimes “means simply customs and ideas which have grown up imperceptibly and been accepted more or less uncritically.”³⁵

In either sense of the word, tradition is a major factor in Church life. It is precious but also ambiguous. It always needs to be tested critically to see “(1) whether it is in accordance with the principles embodied in divine revelation, and (2) whether it can be justified by right reason.”³⁶ The Church can come to a judgment that some particular feature of the tradition needs to be modified in accordance with these criteria.

Tradition, in its Christian meaning, is best understood as the process by which the Church keeps its sense of identity by remembering and staying in continuity with its beginnings in faithfulness to the New Testament writings while changing and developing

³⁴ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., p. 1388.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

in its understanding and living out of the faith. This has involved and still involves much more than compiling collections of teachings from past ages of the Church.

The Church itself could be regarded as a living tradition that is able to persist and continue only by creatively re-appropriating its heritage in response to the ever-changing cultures in which it exists. This sometimes involves the re-thinking of its basic beliefs and doctrines as well as the creation of new forms of Church life.

A helpful formulation of the Anglican understanding of tradition is found in the 1998 Virginia Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission: "Tradition refers to the ongoing Spirit-guided life of the Church which receives, and in receiving, interprets afresh God's abiding message. . . . Tradition is not to be understood as an accumulation of formulae and texts but as the living mind, the nerve centre of the Church. Anglican appeal to tradition is the appeal to this mind of the Church carried by the worship, teaching and the Spirit-filled life of the Church."³⁷

7.5 But what is to be done when sincere Christian believers disagree about what the mind of the Church is on some disputed question? This has happened, of course, more than once in the history of the Church, and it has often taken many years for the final resolution of an issue.

In order to recognize a valid development of the living tradition, the Church must always practice spiritual discernment. As Christian believers explore an issue, they seek to recognize the authentic leading of the Holy Spirit by staying together in prayer, Scripture study, and mutual charity. This requires patience and genuine openness to the insights and convictions of one another.

The current controversy about sexuality is a case in point. The Church is presently faced with a cultural situation altogether different from anything envisioned in the cultures that produced the biblical writings or in the cultures through which the Church has moved thus far. From this angle, the question would be whether the Church might come to a point where it could affirm a positive ethic for homosexual persons—as a legitimate further development of the Church's living tradition.

7.6 Thus far we have been talking about Scripture and tradition, in order to argue that the agreed-upon data of these important sources of Christian thought do not necessarily settle definitively the question of the moral status of committed same-gender relationships. While continuing to attend to both Scripture and tradition, we need now to consider the present-day experience of human sexuality in our culture as it raises new questions for the Church.

The traditional doctrine of the Church affirms that it is only in marriage between a man and a woman that sexual intimacy finds its proper place. In recent years, however, the public has become aware that there are people in our midst whose sexual attraction is for someone of the same gender. Many of these people say that their sexual orientation is not something that they choose, but rather is a given, like the color of their eyes. If this is true, the Church is confronted with a significant new pastoral issue: how to minister to

³⁷ *Some Issues in Human Sexuality -- A Working Party of the House of Bishops*. London: Church House Publishing, 2003, p. 51.

such people in a faithful way, and what kind of guidelines to give them for responsible sexual behavior.

The Church has never had to face the reality of homosexuality until perhaps the past thirty years or so, when homosexual men and women began to insist upon recognition and equal rights. Prior to that, sexual contact between people of the same gender had simply been regarded as a perversion of normal human sexuality, that is, as sinful behavior.

If it is granted, however, that some human beings simply are homosexual quite prior to any choice, then the Church needs to consider what, for such people, is a responsible way of living their sexuality. What kind of sexual morality is appropriate for them?

Until now, the Church has simply affirmed the traditional sexual morality as it applies to heterosexual people. Consequently, homosexual people are, in effect, told by the Church never to act on any of their sexual impulses with another person. They are expected to be celibate in the sense of repressing their sexuality altogether.

Many in our Church are now questioning whether that is reasonable and sound pastoral advice. If not, then does the Church need to re-think its traditional norms of sexual morality in order to be more realistic? Does the Church need to work out a sexual morality for homosexual people that would uphold strict standards of moral behavior for this population and that would be analogous to the standards upheld by the Church for heterosexual people?

Any effort to formulate a sexual ethic for homosexually oriented persons would have to draw upon the wisdom of Sacred Scripture and be consonant with the main tradition of the Church on sexual morality. In what follows, we attempt to meet this expectation.

7.7 We begin with the affirmation that human sexuality is good, as part of the order created by God, but that it is distorted by human sinfulness. In this view, human sexuality as such is not the result of the Fall, but the way in which we experience human sexuality is to a greater or lesser extent affected by the Fall.

What does sinful, unredeemed human sexuality look like? In general, it is self-oriented, that is, concerned only or mainly with one's own intense pleasure. It tends to be merely physical without personal involvement or commitment. It could be labeled cold-hearted. It often takes the form of exploitation of another person for one's own gratification. It can be an expression of the dominance of one person over another. It can take perverse forms of sadism/masochism. It can even find expression in bestiality.

What does human sexuality look like when it is restored by the grace of Christ to its natural goodness as intended by God? It is oriented toward the other person in appreciation and delight. It desires to give pleasure to the other person as well as receive pleasure from her/him. It is the expression of a deep and permanent commitment to the other person in faithful love.

But Grace goes beyond restoring the order of creation; it brings about a new creation in which the power of the Paschal Mystery transforms all aspects of human life in accord with the reality of Christ. What is the "more" to which human sexuality is elevated by the transforming grace of Christ? Perhaps it is the dimension of self-sacrificing love, without which no lasting commitment to another person can endure. In

Scripture, the quality of love that a husband should have for his wife is compared to the love with which Christ laid down his life for the Church. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word . . .” (Ephesians 5:25-26).

The ideal of redeemed sexuality, as sketched above, is realized, if at all, only after much experience and learning. The grace of God is at work in every person’s life, drawing him or her toward the fullness of redeemed human existence, which includes sexuality. But the achievement is never perfect.

We have to recognize how much sexuality is bound up with a person’s sense of identity. Physical intimacy between two persons involves each one in an experience of their own deepest selfhood in interaction with the deepest selfhood of the other. There is mutual vulnerability, and the possibility of mutual cherishing and mutual delight.

Sexuality is very powerful—for good or for evil. It can take demonic forms when it is detached from personal relationship. It can also break a person out of isolation and self-preoccupation.

For heterosexuals, sexuality finds its proper and full expression in a life-long commitment to another person in marriage. But it is obvious that it takes most people a lot of time and experience before they can reach that fullness of integration. So, we tend to judge heterosexual behavior in terms of its relationship to commitment. There is bound to be experimentation that falls far short of that. We need to look at sexual experimentation from a human development perspective rather than simply a moral perspective, in which a commandment of God has been violated. And we need to judge immoral any kind of coercion, violence, exploitation, or similar behavior.

7.8 What about persons who find themselves to be homosexually oriented? Can we say anything about what a reasonable sexual ethic for them would be? Could we develop an argument that starts from the analogy of heterosexual relationships? In these, as noted, the norm is a committed, life-long relationship with a partner (marriage). Short of that, sexual interaction is always somewhat distorted and insufficiently human.

Could something analogous be said about homosexual relationships? That is, could we posit as the ideal a committed, lifelong relationship with another person of the same gender? Is that a realistic ideal? If it is, then all forms of sexual interaction between homosexual people that fall short of that ideal are not morally adequate. But here, too, one has to see sexual behavior from a developmental perspective. And here, too, one must condemn all forms of exploitation, domination, and violence.

7.9 Is there any basis for this ideal in Sacred Scripture? If we look to the canon of Scripture as a whole, we discover the mystery of God as committed, self-giving, sacrificial Love. If that is the central reality revealed to us by God’s presence and action in Jesus, why couldn’t it be recognized that same-gender couples are called to embody that in their own way, just as heterosexual people do in marriage?

Here is a relevant passage from *Issues in Human Sexuality*, written about heterosexual marriage. It could also be applied, we suggest, to a permanent, committed same-gender union.

“...fulfillment, both of the individual partners and of their partnership, will not come without cost, hard work and self-denial. A true marriage reflects Christ’s own love for us all. He too gave himself to others ‘for better, for worse, till death.’ In it we learn to break down our pride and self-concern, to be open to our partner as he or she really is, to treasure what is good and forgive faults, to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the other, to be loyal whatever the price. In these ways marriage becomes a means of grace, making us more like Christ both in ourselves and in our dealings with the world around us.”³⁸

7.10 Can we find in Church tradition any point of contact for developing a responsible sexual ethic for homosexually oriented persons? The document cited above (*Issues in Human Sexuality*) presents a thoroughly positive and balanced expression of the Christian ideal for human sexuality as it is to be lived out in marriage between a man and a woman.³⁹ Following this, in Section 3.2, there is a significant formulation of a principle or guideline for judging matters of sexual morality.

“Because of this affirmation of the body, one basic principle is definitely implicit in Christian thinking about sexual relations. It may be put this way: *the greater the degree of personal intimacy, the greater should be the degree of personal commitment.*” [emphasis added]

Further in the same section, we read the following paragraph.

“For Christian tradition this has been, as it were, codified in the principle that full sexual intercourse requires total commitment, that is, in the words of the marriage service, ‘faithful’ and ‘forsaking all others,’ ‘to have and to hold ... for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.’”

This account of the Church’s tradition is helpful because it formulates sexual morality in terms of commitment. We suggest that this principle might be applied to a same-gender relationship as well as a male-female relationship. The common denominator is the proportion between physical intimacy and commitment.

7.11 We can and should recognize that the male-female polarity is basic to human nature and that heterosexual marriage is the norm for the vast majority of the population. This arrangement may be viewed as founded in the created order of things willed by God. At the same time we can recognize that a small percentage of the population lives with a homosexual orientation without trying to settle the vexing question of the causes of that orientation.

This raises some questions, however. Should homosexual orientation be regarded as a legitimate and natural variation of human sexuality? Should it be regarded also as part of the created order willed by God?

³⁸ *Issues in Human Sexuality: A Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, December 1991, Section 3.3, pp. 20-21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Sec.3.1, p.19.

If one answers both these question in the affirmative, a further question arises. Should the Church then recognize the legitimacy of such persons making a permanent sexual commitment to each other as life-partners?

7.12 We recognize that an affirmative answer to this last question would lead toward a development of the Church's living tradition that is not yet acceptable to the vast majority of Christian believers. But we believe that the possibility needs to be examined thoughtfully, in prayerful discernment.

New knowledge and new social realities play a big part in this kind of discernment. The role of reason in theology is legitimate and necessary, as Anglicans have always recognized. When reasonable people consider the new insights into human life that have become available through science and through experience, they rightly try to re-think Church positions that are affected by this new knowledge. Not to do so would be to place revealed truth in opposition to the truth discovered by natural reason. And this would lead to an ultimately irrational form of faith-life that does not engage the culture of the time.

8. The Teaching of The Lambeth Conference

While the teachings of The Lambeth Conference are not canonically binding, they do carry the weight of consent of the Anglican Communion. The teaching of Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1.10 on homosexuality is as follows.⁴⁰

This Conference:

- (a) commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- (b) in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a women in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- (c) recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for living of their lives and the ordering of their relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- (d) while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- (e) cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
- (f) requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;

⁴⁰ *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1999), 381–2.

(g) notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

9. Implications of the Dispute about Sexuality for the Unity of the Church

Are the two contrasting views of homosexuality so basic to Christian faith that they are church-dividing? Does this difference of judgment about homosexuality necessarily lead to schism and disunion among sincere Christian believers?

9.1 The Classic View For some the answer is clearly, “Yes.” This issue goes to the essence of the faith. Non-celibate homosexuality is contrary to the doctrines of creation, divine revelation and salvation. God created human beings in his image as male and female. To deny this complementarity of the created order is idolatry as St. Paul says in Rom 1:23. God has consistently said that non-celibate homosexuality is sinful (i.e., Gen 19:1-24; Lev 18:22, 20:13; Judg 19:1-20; Mark 7:21-23/Matt 15:19; Rom 1:8-32; 1 Cor 6:9-20; 1 Tim 1:8-11). To deny that non-celibate homosexuality is sinful is to put human beings in the place of God in defining that which is sin. Again, this is idolatrous. God has promised to save us from our sins if we turn to him as the comfortable words remind us (BCP 332). To deny this is to “crucify the Son of God on [our] own account and hold him up to contempt” (Heb 6:5). In short, to say that non-celibate homosexuality is morally neutral or good is apostasy, and therefore separation is ultimately inevitable.

9.2 An Emerging View The answer really depends upon how one understands the nature and authority of Scripture. The emerging position takes into account the handful of texts that condemn homosexual behavior, but relativizes them by 1) putting them into the cultural context in which they were written, which is very different from present North American culture, and 2) by looking at the overarching themes that run through Scripture for guidance on this issue.

Hence, those people with an emerging view do not regard themselves as rejecting the authority of Scripture or the revelation of God. They do not consider their stand to be church-dividing since for them it is not a matter of some essential point of the core doctrine of the Church. They believe that common ground can be found.

There are those in the Church, including some members of the task force, who hold the emerging view of Scripture and tradition and yet are opposed to the consecration and ordination of non-celibate homosexuals and the blessing of same-gender sexual relationships at this time. These actions are opposed because they threaten to break ECUSA’s relationship with the Anglican Communion and because they irreparably harm the communion within the Episcopal Church in the United States.

10. Response to Bishop Steven Miller’s Questions

Bishop Miller asked the Dialogue Task Force to respond to three questions. Bishop Miller’s questions and the responses to those questions follow.

10.1 Question 1: What does it mean to be created for loving relationship? Bishop Miller’s original formulation of this question began with a reference to the Church’s

doctrine of the Holy Trinity. He wrote: “The God we know in Jesus is the God who is relationship and relating. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God in three persons. This relating God we know as the God of Love. . . . So if God is love – relating, giving love – and we are made in the image of God, then we are made for loving relationship. What does that mean?”

10.1a The Classic View

To be created for loving relationship means being created for the capacity to share love with God and neighbor. Each person, insofar as it lies within, has been created for loving relationship with God and his or her neighbor. It is not a necessity that such love entails sexual expression as is the case with friendship and celibacy (1 Cor 7:7–9; cf. Matt 19:9). Yet such love can be physically expressed in the covenant of marriage. The image of loving relationship given in Scripture is that of marriage between Christ and the Church (Eph 5:21–33). This image of love is one of complementarity. Christ the bridegroom is different from his bride the Church. The loving relationship between Christ and the Church is also a non-sexual relationship. The nature of this love for the Christian is “abiding in Christ” by keeping his commandments (John 15:1–11). As Jesus has said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Christian love desires to obey God. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

10.1b An Emerging View

To be created for loving relationship means that we are beings who cannot reach the fullness of our potential except by relating to one another in the stance we call love. The highest degree of love is revealed to us in the total self-giving of Jesus for the life of the world. The essence of love seems to be the self-forgetful, self-giving affirmation of the other person’s value and goodness. This can take many forms, of course, and does not always involve sexual intimacy.

10.2. Question 2: Is our sexuality of the Creation or of the Fall? Bishop Miller’s original formulation of the question included this explanation: “Is our sexuality a part of the creation that God blessed and saw was good, intended by God for joy – or is it a product of the fall?”

10.2a The Classic View

Human sexuality belongs to the order of creation. This is the clear testimony of Scripture (Gen 1:27–28, 2:24; Matt 19:3//Mark 10:2–16), the Church throughout history, and it is the teaching of the Prayer Book (BCP 423). However, not all human sexual activity is morally equal. There are instances of sinful sexual behavior between consenting adults, e.g., adultery, fornication, incest, polygamy, and abusive sexual relationships.

10.2b An Emerging View

We agree with the classic point of view here, affirming that human sexuality is part of the created order, not the result of sin. We agree also that not all human sexual

activity is morally equal. Some forms of sexual behavior must be judged morally wrong and sinful.

10.3. Question 3: Based on how we answer questions 1 and 2, what does it mean to be faithful sexual beings?

10.3a The Classic View

To be faithful sexual beings means to live out the human sexual relationship in the context of the male-female covenant of marriage as governed by the commandments of God. Scripture is clear that all sexual relations outside of the covenant of marriage are sinful (Mark 7:21–23//Matt 15:19; Rom 1:22–32; 1 Cor 5:10–11, 6:9–20; Gal 5:19–21; Col 3:5, 8; 1 Tim 1:8–11).

10.3b An Emerging View

Sexuality is fundamental to one's bodily existence and sense of self. The full expression of one's sexuality through intercourse with another person is legitimate, meaningful, and good only when it occurs in a fully committed personal relationship. "One basic principle is definitely implicit in Christian thinking about sexual relations. It may be put this way: the greater the degree of personal intimacy, the greater should be the degree of personal commitment. . . . For Christian tradition this has been, as it were, codified in the principle that full sexual intercourse requires total commitment, that is, in the words of the marriage service, 'faithful' and 'forsaking all others,' 'to have and to hold . . . for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.'"⁴¹

Therefore, to be a faithful sexual being involves personal relationship, commitment, and fidelity to the other person. For heterosexual persons, this is undertaken through the covenant of marriage. For homosexual persons, there is as yet no comparable institution recognized by society. Nevertheless, we recognize the possibility and need of homosexual persons to undertake the same kind of total commitment to one another in a permanent relationship of mutual love.

11. Response to Resolutions from the November 2003 Diocesan Convention

Bishop Miller also asked the Dialogue Task Force to respond to the pertinent resolutions of the November 2003 Diocesan Convention. The responses of the Dialogue Task Force follow.

11.1 Resolution IA For Unity, Faith and Prayer in Response to General Convention Actions. The Diocesan Dialogue Task Force on Human Sexuality has prayed, studied and discussed human sexuality from an array of approaches including perspectives from Scripture, tradition, science, history, philosophy and liturgy. Task force members agree on the importance of retaining full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion. Task force members also agree that the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee, in accordance with its constitution, shall remain faithful to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church (ECUSA). Within this context, the diocese shall continue to respect the guidance and leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

⁴¹ *Issues in Human Sexuality*, Section 3.2, p. 20.

**11.2 Resolution IC Disapproval of Two Actions of the 74th General Convention;
Resolution ID Proposed Non-recognition of Episcopal Election in Diocese of New
Hampshire; Resolution IE National Church Assessment**

The task force recommends that the diocese and the ECUSA respond to the findings and recommendations of The Lambeth Commission on Communion (Eames Commission) with the actions necessary to remaining in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion.

12. Recommendations

12.1 Further actions in ordaining non-celibate homosexuals to the episcopacy, priesthood or diaconate, or the blessing of same-gender unions would at this time be divisive for the Body of Christ (From Section 4.5).

12.2 There has not been sufficient dialogue in the Milwaukee Diocese to change current practice with respect to the ordination of non-celibate homosexual deacons and priests and with respect to blessing same-gender unions. Our community needs to continue to work toward unity over divisiveness.

12.3 All task force members have learned much through the nine months of dialogue and would recommend this process be replicated by other groups in the diocese. Clergy and lay persons should be trained to facilitate these discussions. The discussions should include representatives of all those people particularly affected by the issues of human sexuality.

12.4 The task force recommends that the diocesan discussions be widened in scope to include the areas of the biology of sexual orientation, the effects on children of same-gender unions, the pain and problems experienced at the family and community level due to issues of human sexuality, and the nature-nurture context for human sexuality. The state of the science of changeability of sexual orientation and the efficacy of reparative therapy should also be further explored.

APPENDIX A

Annotated Bibliography on Human Sexuality

Introductory Studies

Gibson, Paul. (2000). *Discerning the Word: The Bible and Homosexuality in Anglican Debate*.

Toronto: Anglican Book Centre. 95pp.

Just 95 pages long, this book is a highly readable, clearly written critique of how the Bible has been used in the debate over homosexuality. Can the church accept homosexual relationships? Can the church ordain homosexual people? Did Lambeth 1998 amend a traditional Anglican understanding of the Bible? In this compelling and finely honed discussion, Paul Gibson focuses on the 1998 Lambeth Conference resolutions on Scripture and sexuality, and examines the way cultural norms influence our understanding of biblical authority. He issues a challenge to the church and proposes a way forward that honors Scripture, tradition, and our evolving culture. The author is a priest of the Anglican Church of Canada, married with two grown children and three granddaughters.

Via, Dan O. & Gagnon, Robert. (2003). *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 117pp.

This book is an excellent introduction to the debate about homosexuality and the Bible. This book clearly presents both sides of the debate. First, a view in favor of non-celibate homosexual behavior is given by Via. Gagnon then presents a view that opposes non-celibate homosexual behavior. Finally, a short response by each scholar to the other is provided. One of the surprising points of agreement between both scholars is that non-celibate homosexual behavior is prohibited in the Bible. Gagnon takes Scripture as “the primary authority for faith and practice” (p. 42) whereas Via believes that Scripture is informative, and that God has given us a “new ‘revelation’” (p.38). The difference between the two views lies therein.

ELCA. (2003). *Journey Together Faithfully, Part Two: The Church and Homosexuality*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers. 49pp.

This is an excellent study guide created by the Lutheran Church (ELCA) in 2003. It is specifically created for use in parish discussion groups. This 44-page guide is divided into six chapters, each about eight pages long. The design is for a discussion group to address one chapter each week. Questions are provided at the end of each chapter. The guide discusses homosexuality as it relates to Scripture, tradition and reason. All sides of the issue are presented in a very balanced way. A small portion of the guide deals with explicit Lutheran theological issues and so is not quite as applicable for Episcopal churches (although reading these sections gives the added benefit of helping us to understand how Lutheran brothers and sisters think theologically). I talked with several ELCA pastors who gave very positive reports on using this guide in their own parishes. Each of these pastors followed the suggestion of the study guide and joined with at least one other parish (and sometimes two or three) to form their discussion groups. This was reported to be a more enriching and rewarding experience. The study guide can be purchased for \$1.50 each or it can be downloaded for free. To purchase and/or download, go to www.elca.org/faithfuljourney

Stott, John. (1996). *Same-Sex Partnerships?: A Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 93pp.

John Stott, a celibate Anglican priest and rector emeritus of All Soul's Church, London, offers a brief and very readable discussion of homosexuality from a Christian perspective. Stott begins by examining what the Scriptures say about homosexual activity. From there, he moves to a discussion of marriage, then contemporary arguments for and against homosexual activity, and finally to a discussion of the AIDS epidemic. Stott concludes with a challenge to those who are homosexual to live a celibate life governed by faith in God's word, hope of healing, and a life lived in Christian love. Stott's discussion is marked by great compassion and love, and is grounded in the belief that God's grace is sufficient for even the most complex issues, like homosexuality, that the Christian may face.

Alexander, Neil. (2003). *This Far By Grace: A Bishop's Journey through Questions about Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications. 85pp. This is a personal, autobiographical account of one churchman's development in thinking through the issues involved in the Episcopal Church's current debate about homosexuality. The style of writing is informal and conversational, with moments of humor, but the

author's pastoral and theological concerns are serious. As he recounts the story of his own spiritual and theological "journey," he provides some helpful insights into the issues themselves. Although he comes down on the "liberal" side of the controversy, he shows sensitivity and respect for the opposing view. The tone of the book is pastoral and irenic, rather than polemical. He seems to be sincerely concerned to maintain the unity of the Church in the one faith, while at the same time being open to new understandings of human sexuality and new interpretations of Sacred Scripture. And he is hopeful that the faith-communities of the Episcopal Church will be able "to live together in commitment to the Lord of the Church, in spite of being in quite different places on these matters."

Grenz, Stanley J. (1998). *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 157 pp.

Grenz's book sets forth a logical explanation of exactly what his title says. While he discusses various points of view, he ultimately explains why he believes homosexual relationships cannot be sanctioned or blessed. Homosexuals are to be celibate if they cannot change their orientation in order to live on "God's terms." They should not be ordained because they cannot be proper examples as God intended them to be. However, he does suggest celibate or "changed" homosexuals are to be welcomed but not affirmed within the Christian community.

Scholarly Works

Gagnon, Robert. (2001). *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 502pp.

This is the most scholarly and exhaustive study of the Bible and homosexual practice that exists to date. It embraces higher-critical methodology in its examination of biblical texts referencing homosexuality. It gives in great detail a comprehensive examination of the Old and New Testament texts dealing with homosexual practice. Besides the Levitical laws against non-celibate homosexual behavior, the story of Noah and Ham is examined and the presence of homosexual cult prostitution in Israel. In addition, the teachings of Jesus on sexual complementarity and his call for repentance is examined followed by the Pauline teaching found in Roman 1 and 1 Corinthians 6. After an exhaustive analysis of some three-hundred pages dealing with the biblical text, Gagnon goes on in chapter five (pp. 395-486) to a complete overview and assessment of current social and scientific studies dealing with homosexual practice. Here, there is an especially important statistical analysis of non-celibate homosexual conduct (i.e., elasticity of behavior, lack of monogamy, reparative therapies) and associated health risks (i.e., medical diseases and greatly decreased life-span).

John Boswell. (1980). *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. The book describes a cultural history of human sexuality in the Christian and secular worlds, using the Bible and diverse literature of the various periods to exemplify beliefs, values and attitudes toward sex and homosexuality. It is certain that same-gender physical arrangements or relationships have always been present in society from the time of Christ through the 14th century. The book may be of interest to clergy or laypersons delving deeply into the history of human sexuality. It would require a serious time and study commitment to read through. It would not be helpful to parishes seeking useful, readable material to support their discussions of human sexuality and the two most visible, contentious issues before us: that of ordination of non-celibate homosexuals and the blessing of same sex unions.

Countryman, William. (1988). *Dirt, Greed, & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 290 pp.

The "Dirt" is the uncleanness as defined in the purity codes of the Jewish people; the "Greed" is the property understandings; and the "Sex" is that in light of the purity codes and property rules defined in scripture. Countryman examines the ancient codes of purity and property in the Old and New Testaments to develop "Generative Principles." These principles can then be used to begin the conversation about the issues of human sexuality in our society as Christians.

Jones, Stanton L. & Yarhouse, Mark A. (2000). *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 189pp.

Jones, provost and professor of psychology at Wheaton College, and Yarhouse, clinical psychologist and assistant professor of psychology at Regent College, address the interplay of scientific research on homosexuality with the teachings and doctrines of the church. They begin with a discussion of the need for dialogue on the topic and the necessity of Christians to consider science in this debate, as science and religious faith both deal with reality. The first chapter also introduces some definitions of Scriptural stances on the issue and explanation of different scientific disciplines, and delves into some of the difficulties encountered in much of the research to date. The next four chapters address four questions commonly discussed in this debate and their relevance to the church's stance on homosexuality: *How prevalent is homosexuality? What causes homosexuality? Is homosexuality a psychopathology? and Can homosexuality be changed?* These chapters dispel some of the myths about what science has proven on either side of the issue, and point out where the studies have been less than rigorous and scientific, while documenting the information that is known and well-founded. The final chapter presents the authors' perspective on what a Christian approach to human sexuality should be. Whether or not one agrees with the moral conclusions of the authors, their treatment of the scientific work in the field is a valuable resource: authors on homosexuality and the church as well as each of us in our own conversations inadequately portray the scientific data. Jones and Yarhouse systematically review the field for us.

Bradshaw, Timothy (Ed.). (2003). *The Way Forward?: Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 230pp.

The St. Andrew's Day Statement (1995) was an attempt by a group of theologians to frame the discussion over homosexuality in the Church of England into a more rational and open debate, by stating the theological principles and faith background that we all share. This should then allow a more constructive dialogue than the current struggle for rhetorical dominance that characterizes discussions on the subject. The statement's authors invited commentary by a number of leading commentators on the subject, and their essays and the St. Andrew's Day Statement comprise *The Way Forward?* While this collection of essays is not easily deciphered by someone who is not versed in the prevailing arguments on this subject, and though the theology is sometimes thick, it is a valuable work if approached as a second or third source on issues of homosexuality in the church. The book has particular worth in the value that it attributes to open dialogue (otherwise often lacking in this debate) and the focus that many authors place on the need we all have for redemption in Christ.