

Homosexuality

Excerpt from *Ain't Nobody's Business If You Do: The Absurdity of Consensual Crimes in a Free Society* by Peter McWilliams. Los Angeles: Prelude Press, 1993.

One of Stephen's favorite theories was that lesbians and gay men were survivors of an alien spacelish, and that someday our kind would find us and get us the hell out of here.

Ordinary in the
BAY AREA REPORTER

CALL ME DIMWITTED, thickheaded, or just plain insensitive, but the consensual crimes that seem the silliest to me are the ones directed against homosexuality. Why should anyone care about whom other people love, feel affection for, date, live with, marry, or have sex with? I just don't get it.

I also don't understand the astonishing prejudice against gay people.⁴ The New York Times reported findings of the Governor's Task Force on Bias-Related Violence:

In one of the most alarming findings, the report found that while teenagers surveyed were reluctant to advocate open bias against racial and ethnic groups, they were emphatic about disliking homosexual men and women. They are perceived "as legitimate targets that can be openly attacked," the report said. . . . The feelings were as strong among twelve year olds as among seventeen-year olds. Many students added gratuitous vicious comments about homosexuals; that was not the case with other groups.

Gays seem to be at the bottom of the pecking order: no matter how far down the pecking order another group is, its members still feel superior to and have no problem picking on gays. It also seems that groups that hate each other and disagree on absolutely everything find one common point of agreement: homosexuality is bad, wrong, evil, wicked, and all the rest. Take, for example, Jerry Falwell and L. Ron Hubbard. One would think these two individuals were about

⁴As you may have noticed, I use the terms *homosexual* and *gay* almost interchangeably. Some gays (not *guy*, some prefer *homosexual*). One group (a minority, as of this writing) likes the word *queer*. When I use *guy* or *homosexual*, I automatically mean both men and women, so, if I say "gays" or "homosexuals," I mean "lesbians and homosexual men." If I offend anyone with my selection of words, I apologize. No disrespect is intended.



When Pat Buchanan thundered, and I quote, "We stand with George Bush against the amoral idea that gay and lesbian couples should have the same standing in law as married men and women," I wondered: Who is Pat Buchanan to pronounce anybody's love invalid?

BARBARA STRAISAND

as far apart as possible on any spectrum you'd care to name. The fact that one is dead and the other is not is just the beginning of their differences. Falwell dismisses Hubbard's creation, the Church of Scientology, as just another "satanic cult." On the subject of homosexuality, however, Falwell and Hubbard seem to find some common ground. We've already established how Falwell feels about "perverts." Here are some excerpts from L. Ron Hubbard's *Dianetics*, the "15 million copy bestseller":

The sexual pervert (and by this term Dianetics, to be brief, includes any and all forms of deviation . . . such as homosexuality, lesbianism . . .) is actually quite ill physically. . . . He is also so far from normal and so extremely dangerous to society that the tolerance of perversion is as thoroughly bad for society as punishment for it.

To make a pervert is, rather, something on the order of kicking a baby's head in, running over him with a steamroller, cutting him in half with a rusty knife, boiling him in Lyso!, and all the while with crazy people screaming the most horrifying and unprintable things at him.

As Dr. Edward W. Bauman, United Methodist pastor who for more than twenty years conducted a Bible class on television in the Washington, D.C., area, observed,

The thing that impressed me most, however, and moved me deeply was the discovery of the incredible amount of suffering experienced by homosexuals. For centuries the church refused to serve them Holy Communion. They were often stripped, castrated, marched through the streets, and executed. In Hitler's Germany they were exterminated by the thousands in the furnaces and gas chambers.

In our own country, gay persons are disowned by their families, ridiculed and rejected by society, made the object of cruel jokes, and forced to laugh at the jokes lest their "secret" be revealed.

They are barred from jobs and housing, often living in loneliness, seeking companionship in sordid places and in devious (and dangerous) ways. They have become the "lepers" of our society. How many young people are there who lie awake at night, terrified by these "feelings," with no one to talk to?

68 68 68

What causes such deep and unreasonable hatred? I've explored the question in some detail, and the answers I discovered were surprising. Before giving the reasons, allow me to give a little background.

Prior to the late 1800s, the concept of homosexuality did not exist. The idea that one would exclusively feel romantically and sexually drawn to a member of the same sex was not considered. Yes, there was certainly homosexual activity, but this had always existed. The Hebrews, for example, did not have a word for homosexuality. When they wanted to describe the forbidden activity, they had to say, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (Leviticus 18:22). Similarly, the Greeks had no word for homosexual. Paul had to explain: "Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another" (Romans 1:26-27). There was no word, then, for a man who only went to bed only with men or a woman who went to bed only with women.

To even ask the question never arose. It would be as unusual as asking today, "Are you a hot dog eater or a hamburger eater?" The idea that one preference would exclude the other made no sense. Even if one has not had a hot dog in twenty years, one would never think of defining oneself as a *hamburgerist* or, if a person had never had a hamburger in his or her life but adored hot dogs, we would not label such behavior as that of "a hotdogger."

In societies of ancient Greece and Rome, sexual activity with either sex was perfectly acceptable. To *exclusively* go to bed with one sex or the other, in fact, was considered a bit odd—something like eating nothing but raw vegetables might be considered today. In the ancient world, the distinction was: "Were you the *dominant* or the *passive* partner in the sex act?" In relationships between men, the dominant partner was praised, and the passive partner was condemned. Why? Because to play the passive partner meant a man *voluntarily* played the part of a woman.

We're back again to the anti-woman prejudice. Why would a man want to play the part of a woman? To do so was considered unnatural, self-deprecating, and perverse. If slaves or captives did it, well, that was acceptable: they had to. But for a man who had a choice to take the passive role in sex was considered personally degrading.

And therein lies the seed of the prejudice. It wasn't that homosexual activity was wrong; it was *playing the woman's role* in homosexual activity that was considered perverted.

Alexander the Great—whose masculinity was never in doubt—had as a primary sexual partner a castrated Persian boy. Alexander also had a wife. No one questioned the arrangement. Alexander played the dominant role in both relationships. He was a man. Both Alexander's wife and the Persian boy were treated

Athenians attributed the establishment of their democracy to a pair of gay lovers.

JOHN BOSWELL
Christianity, Social Tolerance,
and Homosexuality

Among the ancient Chinese the most popular literary expression for gay love was "the love of the cut sleeve," referring to the selfless devotion of the last emperor of the Han dynasty, Ai-Ti, who cut off his sleeve when called to an audience rather than walk his lover, Tung Hsien, who had fallen asleep across it.

JOHN BOSWELL

ments were abandoned a long time ago. And yet, the one against homosexuality remained because the bias against women remained. That's the first reason homosexuality has continued to be viewed in a negative light long after the practical reason (it doesn't propagate the species) no longer applied.

The second reason homosexuality is so feared and despised is that homosexuality is too close to home. It's fairly easy for, say, white people to become tolerant of black people because white people are not black. White people seldom think, "I think I'll have black skin for the next two hours." White people and black people are so fundamentally different—in terms of skin color—that white people almost never say, "I wonder if I'm really black?"

This security is not felt with homosexuality. On a purely sexual level, the human animal responds to lubricated friction. It doesn't much matter whether this lubricated friction is being applied by a man, a woman, a machine, or a well-trained dog; human sexual response on the biological level is automatic. (Yes, we are sexually turned on more when our psychological preferences in partners are met, but here, I'm referring only to the biological responses.)

It is also true that human beings can feel affection—even love—for members of their own sex. Affection is not a tidy emotion. It tends to dip—all by itself—into mental, emotional, physical, sensual, and even sexual levels of awareness and expression.

When one first realizes that he or she is actually capable of some kind of sexual and/or emotional response with a member of the same sex, panic ensues. Before children are even aware of their sexuality, they know that homosexuality is bad. Very bad. Among boys eight years or older, one of the most pejorative names they can call each other is, "faggot!" Later, when they become aware of their sexuality and find—even for a moment—that it flashes in the direction of the same sex, there's trouble in River City.

At this point, one has the choice to (a) confront one of the greatest and most pervasive taboos in our culture or (b) deny the inner reaction vehemently by supporting the taboo enthusiastically. Almost invariably, (b) is the choice. It's an old psychological truism: the more you want to taste of the forbidden fruit, the

with the respect due the ruler's favorites, but with little admiration.

In the pagan temples, the male, and female sacred prostitutes were nearly interchangeable. One would be more likely to request a certain type than gender. One would have a preference for, say, blonds, not for either men or women. For a male to serve as a temple prostitute was acceptable because, after all, he was in service to a god. As we have seen, any number of prohibitions in both the Old and New Testa-

more you condemn it. Shakespeare realized this, and assumed his audience understood the concept so well that he made it a joke: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks."* That line has been met by the laughter of recognition for almost four hundred years.

By soundly condemning homosexuality outwardly, one avoids facing even the possibility that one might—just maybe—feel love for or be capable of responding sexually to a member of one's own sex.

Those are the two fundamental reasons I've found for the longevity, depth, and breadth of the anti-gay prejudice in this country. To keep that prejudice in place, however, requires more than just a handful of false assumptions, taboos, gross exaggerations, and outright lies. Let's call them myths.

Hating gays seems to be the only fashionable prejudice left. Maybe that's why it's dying so hard—some people just can't stand to be without at least one unjustifiable hatred. Some stores sell t-shirts with sayings such as "Homophobic and Proud of It" and "Club Faggots, Not Seals." What other minority is subjected to such unchallenged, violent hatred? As with most prejudices, the hatred of gays is based on a series of misconceptions. Our culture seems to have more myths about gays than most. Let's see if we can shine a little light on a few of them.

♫ ♫ ♫

Myth #1: Homosexuality is unnatural. In order to see what is natural, we must look to nature. In nature, every mammal has been observed in the wild taking part in same-sex activities, affection, and bonding. In some animals, homosexuality increases during times of overpopulation—sort of nature's birth control. In nature, by the way, what is decidedly not natural is monogamy—especially for life. The only mammals who even sometimes mate for life are foxes, wolves, gibbons, beavers, dik-diks, coyotes, the elephant shrew and, perhaps, geese. (Pairs of female geese and gulls, however, have been observed in bonded partnerships. They sit on the eggs, raise the young, and go about life's activities as a couple. Ganders are required only once per mating season, and any gander seems to do.) Some animals mate for a season; most animals mate and move on.**

*I stuck to mammals for this example because the lower forms of life—while natural—are positively inhuman. You could say, for example, that the praying mantis "mates for life," only because, while the male shudders in orgasm, the female bites his head off. Then she eats him. The male praying mantis is an animal that comes and goes at the same time. Maybe that's why he's always praying. Sexually faithful until death? Undeniably. We all know how the black widow spider becomes a widow and why there is no such thing as a black widower (some animals just eat on the spot).

*Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2, Line 242.

**I stuck to mammals for this example because the lower forms of life—while natural—are positively inhuman. You could say, for example, that the praying mantis "mates for life," only because, while the male shudders in orgasm, the female bites his head off. Then she eats him. The male praying mantis is an animal that comes and goes at the same time. Maybe that's why he's always praying. Sexually faithful until death? Undeniably. We all know how the black widow spider becomes a widow and why there is no such thing as a black widower (some animals just eat on the spot).

Homosexual activity occurs under some circumstances in probably all known human cultures and all mammalian species for which it has been studied.

WARREN J. GADPALLER, M.D.
Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry

From a purely human point of view, homosexual behavior has been recorded in every culture that kept detailed enough records. Sociologists and anthropologists have documented homosexual behavior in every country on earth—including in tribes that have had no contact with any outside human beings until the arrival of the anthropologists. Any behavior observed among all races, all peoples, all cultures, and in all countries must certainly be considered natural for humans.

Myth #2: People are either homosexual or heterosexual. Not true. People do tend to specialize—partially because people are conditioned to think they *should* specialize. Sexual behavior is a continuum with exclusive heterosexuality on one end and exclusive homosexuality on the other. People, however, can be found at any point along that spectrum. A corollary to Myth #2 is:

Myth #3: Homosexuality is contagious. The myth goes something like this: If you try a homosexual experience and find it even marginally enjoyable, a seed (more like a virus) has been planted, and, eventually, you will wind up a full-fledged, card-carrying, flag-waving homosexual. This is simply not the case. You can't "catch" homosexuality any more than you can "catch" heterosexuality (although the latter myth is supported by the concept that "the love of a good woman" will "cure" a gay man). In either case, even a successful liaison with the gender one is not naturally drawn to will have little, if any, lasting effect.

I'm amazed at the power those who propound the you-can-catch-homosexuality theory give to homosexuality. How could it be so powerful that, with only a small dose, it would suddenly take over an otherwise robust heterosexual? This myth probably springs from observing some individuals who had severely suppressed their homosexuality, but once they got one foot out the closet door, there was no stopping them. ("I am not just out of the closet," the greeting card reads, "I am sitting in the living room with my feet propped up watching television.") We pretty much are what we are, and neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality can be "caught." The next myth seems to contradict this myth but, like different aspects of a used-car salesman's pitch, they don't have to support each other for sex). Here's how Phyllis Lindstrom explained the birds and the bees—well, at least the bees—on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show": "Did you know the male bee is nothing but the slave of the queen? And once the male bee has, how should I say, serviced the queen, the male dies. All in all, not a bad system." Earthworms have male sexual organs on one end and female sexual organs on the other. They cannot, however, fertilize themselves. To mate, earthworms lie next to each other—how can I say this without becoming numerical?—head-to-toe and simultaneously and mutually play both male and female. Amoebas seem to have the best idea—the simplest, anyway: when they've had enough of themselves, they just divide. When one discusses what's natural, then, one has quite a range of behaviors to choose from.

people to believe them. "The American public," said Pat Robertson, "has a very short memory." And this is a man who knows.

Myth #4: Homosexuality is a choice. It has been established for some time that one's sexual orientation is part of the basic personality and formed before the age of two. The most recent studies, however, both behavioral and biological, indicate one's sexual orientation is genetic, something one is born with. Whether it happens before birth or it happens by age two, the determination of sexual preference can hardly be considered a choice. One can, of course, choose not to follow one's preference, but this is not the sort of choice the proponents of this myth mean. They mean that gay people choose to be gay in the same way that they might sit down and choose which program to watch on television, which team to bet on in the Super Bowl, or whether or not they want pepperoni on their pizza.

The idea behind this myth is: a perfectly normal, well-adjusted heterosexual is sitting around one day and just decides to go gay, as one might decide to move to Antarctica or try to flush hockey pucks down the toilet. It is truly aberrant behavior, but it is his or her choice. Implied in this choice, of course, is a certain hostility to God, parents, society, and the American way. It's as though being gay is an act of rebellion: by a rebel with lots of flaws.

Gays don't choose to be gay; they discover they're gay. Like heterosexuals, they find themselves increasingly attracted (romantically as well as sexually) to one gender or the other. The bisexuals find themselves attracted to both. (Even though, as Woody Allen says, "Bisexuality immediately doubles your chances for a date on Saturday night," discovering one's bisexuality must be more confusing than discovering one is primarily gay or straight.)

Like being left- or right-handed, there is little "choice" to one's sexual preference. Allow me to give you an example. Clasp your hands together by interlocking your fingers. Is your right thumb on top or your left? Now switch your clasp, so that the other thumb is on top. Feel unnatural? Well, for half the population, this way is natural—it's the way they formed their clasp when first asked. Although one feels normal to you and one does not, when did you choose which was which? At what age? Who offered you the choice? The answer to these questions is also the answer to the question, "When did gays choose to be gay?"

To discover one is (or might be) gay can—considering the many cultural prejudices—be traumatic, and one can be in denial for quite some time. With society screaming, "Stay in the closet!" and nature pleading, "Get out! Get out!" one does have the choice of which voice one listens to. In this way—and in this way only—is homosexuality a choice.

My lesbianism is an act of Christian charity. All those women out there are praying for a man, and I'm giving them my share.

RITA MAE BROWN

As a mother,
I know that homosexuals
cannot biologically reproduce
children; therefore, they must
recruit our children.

ANITA BRYANT

Myth #5: Homosexuals recruit others.
This is a myth that grew out of the evangelical camp where proselytizing, testifying, missionizing, and converting are basic tenets of the faith. Evangelicals somehow feel that gays have the same zeal to spread a gay-spell that they have to spread a God-spell. It's a simple matter of the evangelicals projecting their tactics on the gays. As with most projections, the image is distorted—and very wrong.

Gays have no desire to "recruit" heterosexuals into becoming homosexual. A gay person may, individually, want to have sex with a heterosexual of the same sex whom he or she finds attractive; the gay person may even make a pass. This gay person is making a personal statement of desire and not fulfilling a recruitment quota. ("If you recruit ten heterosexuals this month, you get this beautiful 26-piece set of Tupperware!") Additionally, gays who are out of the closet may offer support and encouragement to gays who are miserably in the closet, but that's about as far as it goes. Besides, the whole idea of recruitment rests on the concept that homosexuality is a choice, and every homosexual knows that just ain't so.

Myth #6: You can spot a gay a mile away. In 1985, when Rock Hudson publicly admitted his homosexuality, I was visiting two gay friends in Maine. Both men were in their eighties and had been lovers in 1925. In this rather remote region of Maine (is there any other kind of region in Maine?) the people did not have what you would exactly call a cosmopolitan view of life. They had somehow heard about Rock Hudson (an issue of *People* must have washed ashore in a bottle). They were shocked, stunned, numb. Not since the news of Kennedy's assassination (which they found out about in 1971) had the people of this town been so in shock. "Rock Hudson?" "No." "He couldn't be." "He doesn't look . . ." "Rock Hudson was such a man." My two friends and I were visiting the general store (yes, it was called the general store) and that's all anyone could talk about. I wondered what this group of shoppers would say if I told them that the dear, sweet, elderly men they were expressing their astonishment to had been lovers in Paris sixty years before, and that they regularly had dinner with Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas—two lesbians. But I figured, no, one Rock crumbling that week was enough. Besides, they'd probably think a lesbian was someone from Lesbania.

Some gay men are effeminate; most are not. Some straight men are effeminate; most are not. Some lesbians are masculine; most are not. Some heterosexual women are masculine; most are not. According to the organization that considers itself an expert on homosexuality, the Pentagon, "feminized males make up only a small proportion of homosexuals, perhaps 10 percent. Thus 90 percent . . . display

no overt behavioral stigmata." (Oooo. "Behavioral stigmata." The Pentagon uses such macho terms.) Regarding effeminacy in men, remember the most notorious ladies' man in history, Casanova, could probably not walk into a pool hall today and order a *creme de menthe* without being beaten silly with pool cues. Casanova was—like many men of his era—foppish. It was something men strived for. It indicated refinement, discernment, taste. All those King Louises of France wore wigs that even Dolly Parton would find too elaborate. And let's not forget our own founding fathers: satin pants, powdered wigs, make-up and all.

Linking effeminacy with homosexuality is primarily an American assumption. In the 1880s, Oscar Wilde toured America and lectured widely on aesthetics. He carried a lily on stage and was as much an aesthete as an Irishman could possibly be. The press ridiculed him, he ridiculed America, his lectures sold out, and everybody loved it. "A man in Leadville, Colorado," Wilde would say, "sued the railroad company because the reproduction of the Venus deMillo he ordered arrived without arms." Wilde would pause for dramatic effect while breathing in the fragrance of his lily. "The man collected on his claim." At the time he was touring the United States, Wilde was a married man with two children. No one linked his studied effeminacy with sexual preference any more than they linked it to Ireland, lecturers, or playwrights. In 1895, however, when Wilde was found guilty of being a "sodomite" and, in 1897, when Havelock Ellis used the word *homosexuality* in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Americans linked the two: "So, there are homosexuals, Oscar Wilde is a homosexual, so that's what they're like." Ironically, had America used as a stereotype one of its homegrown homosexuals of that era—such as the rough and rugged Walt Whitman—we might all have a very different view of how to "spot" homosexuals. It would be just as inaccurate, but different.

Myth #7: There aren't enough gays to really worry about. The percentage of primarily homosexual people in this country is estimated at from one to ten percent. One percent seems low—if it were one percent, that would mean more than half the nation's gay population traveled to the capital for the 1993 March on Washington. This is unlikely.* But the number of gays is unimportant. As the *Los Angeles Times* editorialized on April 25, 1993,

Can it matter where or
in whom you put it?

ANTONY

What does all this mean in regard to current debates about the place of homosexuals in American society? It means exactly nothing.

Whether homosexuals are 1% of the population or 10% or some figure in

*There is a rumor that 1,000,000 gays did not show up—that only 247 gays came, and the rest were Jerry Falwell's camera crews.

In my very rare homosexual moments I often glance through the pages of Vogue, where the other day I saw a picture of you.
ALFRED HITCHCOCK
in a letter to Joan Crawford

between, they are beyond any argument or cavil 100% entitled to the same protection under the law and the enjoyment of the same rights that everyone else is guaranteed. That specifically includes the right to be free from discrimination and intimidation in employment, housing and schooling. It means the right to be protected from hate-inspired physical assaults. It means the right to privacy as that right applies to everyone else.

Gays have been—and continue to be—hidden from view in the media, except in the form of (a) psychotic killers, or (b) effeminate jokes. The first time the word *homosexual* was uttered in a film was 1961. When plays and novels featuring gay characters were made into movies, those characters turned into heterosexuals who were simply “too sensitive.” Film biographies completely expunged any mention of a gay hero’s true sexual preference. For example, when the story of Lorenz Hart’s life was filmed as *Words and Music*, the movie had him overcoming people’s prejudice against him for “being too short.” The oddest example was probably *Night and Day*, in which Cary Grant, a bisexual, played Cole Porter, a homosexual, as a heterosexual. Even today, “sophisticated” films avoid homosexuality. Peter Biskind reported in *Premiere* that in the novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*, “the two main characters engage in a robust lesbian relationship. Where was the lesbianism when the novel was adapted for the screen?”

Myth #8: God is opposed to homosexuality Oh dear, haven’t we done enough Bible study for one book? We have covered most of the condemnations of homosexual acts in the Bible and, as I trust was clear, the context in which those condemnations were given include activities that most people now do every day. To select homosexual behavior out of those and pretend that God still hates that, but has come to accept and, in some cases, even encourage the rest of them is indefensible. As John Boswell points out in his book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*,

The very same Christian Scriptures which are thought to condemn homosexual acts condemn hypocrisy in the most strident terms, and on greater authority: And yet Western society did not create any social taboos against hypocrisy, did not claim that hypocrites were “unnatural,” did not segregate them into an oppressed minority, did not enact laws punishing their sin with castration or death. No Christian state, in fact, has passed laws against hypocrisy *per se*, despite its continual and explicit condemnation by Jesus and the church.

There is one Bible story, however, we have not told: Sodom and Gomorrah. The “sin of Sodom” was apparently so bad that they named a consensual crime

after it.

Sodomy has become synonymous with homosexual anal sex, perversion, and degeneracy too despicable to mention. Sodomy, in fact, is a grab-bag legal term that encompasses anything the legislative moral fathers of a given state find personally disgusting. It can include anal sex between men or between men and women (including married couples); oral sex between men, between women, men and women (including married couples); and sex between humans and animals.

In August 1982, a Mr. Hardwick was in his bedroom engaging in an act of sodomy with another consenting adult male. Sodomy is defined in Georgia (the state where this took place) as when one “performs or submits to any sexual act involving the sex organs of one person and the mouth or anus of another.” In this case, it was Mr. Hardwick’s mouth and the other man’s sex organ. A police officer came in and, without a warrant, arrested them both. Mr. Hardwick took the case as far as the Supreme Court. What did the Supreme Court have to say? “The Constitution does not confer a fundamental right upon homosexuals to engage in sodomy.” Mr. Hardwick is currently in prison—for life.

One wants to play the Supremes to the Supremes: “Stop! In the Name of Love.”

But what is the sin of sodomy? (And what ever happened to Gomorrah?)

Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord. (Genesis 13:13)

We gather they must have been doing something not very nice. But what was it? Five chapters later we find:

Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” (Genesis 18:20–21)

But what is the sin? We still have not been told. In the next chapter, we finally get to the meat of the story:

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. “My lords,” he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.”

“No,” they answered, “we will spend the night in the square.” But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He pre-

We need laws that protect everyone.
Men and women,
straights and gays,
regardless of sexual perversion
... ah, persuasion.
BELLA ABZUG

The New Testament takes no demonstrable position on homosexuality. To suggest that Paul's references to excesses of sexual indulgence involving homosexual behavior are indicative of a general position in opposition to same-sex eroticism is as unfounded as arguing that his condemnation of drunkenness implies opposition to the drinking of wine.

JOHN BOSWELL

pared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate.

Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." (Genesis 19:1-5)

Now, is the sin sodomy—as in consensual anal or oral intercourse—or is it something else? Obviously the sin is rape, not consensual sodomy. Further, the sin is inhospitality. In desert regions, not being hospitable—that is, denying a traveler essential food and water; or, worse, taking advantage of a traveler in some way—was a sin second only to murder. Certainly, if travelers come out of the desert looking for water and get raped instead, that's pretty sinful—whether the travelers are men, women, or, in this case, angels. We'll get to other comments made about what the sin of Sodom was in a moment, but let's continue with our story. These are the parts the televangelists never get around to reading on television:

Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof." (Genesis 19:6-8)

I don't want to sound like a *prude*, but isn't Lot supposed to be the hero of this piece? And here he is offering this rowdy crowd his two virgin daughters so that the crowd might "do what you like with them." If Lot had offered himself, that might be noble. "Take me, but leave my guests and daughters alone." Frankly, in comparing the sins of raping two strangers and offering your two virgin daughters to an unruly mob, I think the latter is worse. Maybe I'm just too old-fashioned for the Old Testament.

The angels blind the nasty mob, pull Lot into the house to safety, send Lot and his family on their way, and destroy Sodom and Gomorrah; Lot's wife turns to look back and becomes a pillar of salt; and then the story gets exciting again: Lot's daughters show that kinkiness runs in the family:

He and his two daughters lived in a cave. One day the older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man around here to lie with us, as is the custom all over the earth. Let's get our father to drink wine and then lie with him and preserve our family line through our father."

That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and lay with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or

when she got up. (Genesis 19:30-33)

That must have been some wine.

The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Last night I lay with my father. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and lie with him so we can preserve our family line through our father." So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went and lay with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up. So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. (Genesis 19:34-36)

Okay, enough peeking into the caves of the morally upright. Let's return to defining the sin of Sodom. Nowhere in the remainder of the Bible—Old or New Testament—is the sin of Sodom defined as sex between consenting male adults. Here are the sins of Sodom (this is God speaking, by the way):

Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She was once full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them. (Isaiah 1:10, 17, 21-23)

This sounds more like Washington, D.C., than West Hollywood to me. Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

"Arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty . . ." Sounds more like a couple of televangelists I could name. Note, there is still no specific mention of same-sex activities. Each time Jesus mentions Sodom and Gomorrah, he does so in connection with inhospitality:

If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be that town. (Matthew 10:14-15)

"POLICE SQUAD!"

VICTIM'S GRIEVING WIDOW:
Do you know what it's like to be married to a wonderful man for fourteen years?
DETECTIVE DREBIN:
No, I can't say that I do. I did . . . uh . . . live with a guy once, though, but that was just for a couple of years. The usual slurs, rumors, innuendoes—people didn't understand.

People should not be surprised when a morally offensive lifestyle is physically attacked.

THE WATTICAN

Or, perhaps, ingratitude (or just plain stupidity):

And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. (Matthew 11:23-24)

The only Biblical passage that even mentions sexual behavior that might apply to homosexuality is this from Jude:

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. (Jude 7-8)

As we previously explored, "sexual immorality" and "perversion" refer to violent practices of idolatry—including human sacrifice—and not what goes on between consenting adults in their own bedrooms.

According to Methodist pastor Dr. Edward Bauman,

The real irony is that homosexuals have been the victim of inhospitality for thousands of years in the Christian nations of the world. Condemned by the church and the state, they have been ridiculed, rejected, persecuted, and even executed. In the name of an erroneous interpretation of the crime of Sodom, the true crime of Sodom has been continuously perpetrated to our own day.

In his book, *Can Homophobia Be Cured?*, Bruce Hilton presents an amusing reversal on the role of gays in the church:

WHY HETEROSEXUAL MEN SHOULD NOT BE ORDAINED

1. According to divorce statistics, fewer than half of them are able to maintain a long-term relationship.
2. The literature is full of tales of clergymen becoming sexually involved with women of the congregation.
3. Three out of four straight males in the United States admit to being unfaithful to their long-term partners.
4. Thousands of straight men are in jail for molesting little girls. A shocking percentage of these victims were their own daughters.

5. Straight males are the driving force behind the declaration of wars—the only other activity described in the Social Principles as "incompatible with

Christian teaching."

6. Jesus saved his harshest words for the self-righteousness of groups like the Pharisees and Sadducees—which, if they lived according to the code they promoted, were made up of straight males.

♫ ♫ ♫

As an intermission from debunking negative images, let's have some positive Biblical images of male affection:

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt. (1 Samuel 18:1-4)

After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most. Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" (1 Samuel 20:41-42)

"Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." (2 Samuel 1:23)

"I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women." (2 Samuel 1:26)

♫ ♫ ♫

Myth #9: God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Yes, God did make Adam and Steve, as well as Adam and Eve, and Eve and Genevieve—some people just don't like it that way.

Myth #10: Homosexuals are promiscuous. Some are; most are not. The same can be said of heterosexuals. In fact, almost anything—good or bad—that can be said about homosexuals can also be said of heterosexuals. Homosexuals are indistinguishable from heterosexuals except in whom they love and whom they go to bed with.

Myth #11: Homosexuals can't control their sex drives. When you consider how well most homosexuals have controlled not just their sex drives, but their conver-

We have read the Navy report on Tailhook yet we have concluded that it would be wrong—fundamentally wrong—to ban heterosexuals from serving in the military.

REPRESENTATIVE
GERRY STUDDS

The grounds for this membership revocation are the standards for leadership established by the Boy Scouts of America, which specifically forbid membership to homosexuals.

LETTER TO EAGLE SCOUT
JAMES DALE
August 10, 1991

sations, their innuendoes and even their inferences for so many years, it seems as though homosexuals have remarkable control. If closeted gays have been able to keep their homosexuality secret from friends and co-workers, obviously they can keep their sexual urges under control should they happen to stumble out of the closet.

The idea that gays have no sexual control is brought up repeatedly during discussions on whether or not gays are fit to serve in the military. All the reasons why gays

shouldn't serve boil down to one: the excessive prejudice of the heterosexuals against homosexuality would make the heterosexuals somehow unfit for combat. The pro-prejudice group argues, "Wouldn't you be uncomfortable if some gay guy kept trying to hit on you?"

What the heterosexuals in the military are obviously afraid of is that the gays in the military—should they be allowed to come out—would start hitting on the heterosexuals with the same levels of determination and deception that the heterosexual men use to hit upon women. *The heterosexual men, then, are afraid to be treated the way they treat women.* Well, who can blame them? That gay men will behave as disreputably as straight men is an unfair projection on the part of straight men. Give the gays a chance. If the gays do treat the straights the way the straights treat women, one can only quote the phrase from the street: "What goes around, comes around."

As to women in the military, here's this herstorical tidbit from the June 21, 1993, issue of *Newsweek*:

General Dwight D. Eisenhower received some unsettling news while he was in occupied Germany after World War II. There were, he was told, a significant number of lesbians in his Women's Army Corps (WAC) command. He called in Sgt. Johnnie Phelps and ordered her to get a list of all the lesbians in the battalion. "We've got to get rid of them," he barked. Phelps said she'd check into it. But, she told the general, "when you get the list back, my name's going to be first." Eisenhower's secretary then interrupted. "Sir, if the general pleases, Sergeant Phelps will have to be second on the list, because mine will be first." Dumbfounded, Ike realized he'd lose many of his key personnel if he persisted. "Forget that order," he told Phelps.

Myth #12: Homosexuals spread AIDS. AIDS is a disease spread by unsafe sexual contact (primarily intercourse) and dirty hypodermic needles. Gays have taken great care to educate their community, practice safe sex, and take care of those unfortunate enough to have caught the disease. The way caring individuals—gays, straights, it doesn't matter—rose and continue to rise in service to their

fellow humans brings tears to my eyes. Because most gays have changed their sexual activities and are now practicing safe sex, new infections in the gay community have leveled off. Meanwhile, infections are on the rise in the heterosexual community. The myth "If you don't go to bed with someone gay you won't get AIDS" is hurting the heterosexual community far more severely than it's hurting the homosexual community.

One-third of all teenage suicides are gays and lesbians.

US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Worldwide, AIDS is primarily a heterosexual, not homosexual, disease. It is a sexually transmitted disease that—whatever reason—entered the gay community in the United States and stayed fairly contained there for a number of years. It is now spreading through the heterosexual community, and will continue to do so until the heterosexual community realizes that AIDS is not a "gay disease" and that any sexually active person—male, female, gay, straight—can get it. *If you have sex, use a condom.* There's hardly a gay person in this country who does not know the rule of safe sex. Can the same be said of heterosexuals?

Myth #13: AIDS is God's curse upon homosexuals. Crises bring out the best in people—and the worst. They also bring out the best people—and the worst. I do not believe that God curses anyone. I do believe, however, that God challenges. One of the biggest challenges in my life right now is how to deal with ignorant, arrogant, politically active people who say things like, "AIDS is God's curse upon homosexuals." I can remember the words of Jesus, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do," but then I remember Jesus said that moments after he was nailed to the cross.