

The Contemporary Debate on Homosexual Clergy

A Theological Discussion in the Formerly
Lutheran State Churches in Germany

By Armin Wenz
Translated by Holger Sonntag



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Life Together

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FOREWORD

Dr. Armin Wenz, a pastor in the SELK, the sister church of the LCMS in Germany, has rendered an important service in addressing exegetical, theological, and ethical issues raised by revisionists who would abandon the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the universal Church on homosexuality in the name of an imaginary, inclusive “gospel” of love and tolerance rather than the forgiveness of sins, which carries with it both freedom from guilt and power for the renewal of life. While Wenz focuses on developments in Germany, the parallels in North American Lutheranism are unmistakably clear. Like their counterparts in Germany, there are American Lutheran theologians claiming that the Church has adopted an “excessively physicalist approach to homosexuality,”¹ and that ethics should focus on the quality of relationships rather than creational realities. Others, such as Martha Ellen Stortz, argue that sexual identity is overcome by Baptism; thus Baptism is severed from repentance and faith and is used for the justification of the sin, rather than the sinner.² In contrast to these American theologians and to certain German thinkers critiqued by Wenz, Wolfhart Pannenberg asserts: “If a church were to let itself be pushed to the point where it ceased to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step would cease to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.”³ Such are the stakes in this issue that has come to the forefront at the inter-Lutheran intersection in both American and global Lutheranism in our day.

As Wenz points out, the theological debate over the blessing of same-sex unions, and the inclusion of homosexuals in the pastoral

¹ Paul Jersild, *Spirit Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 139.

² Martha Ellen Stortz, “Rethinking Christian Sexuality: Baptized into the Body of Christ” in *Faithful Conversation: Christian Perspectives on Homosexuality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 59-79.

³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Revelation and Homosexual Experience,” *Christianity Today* (Nov. 11, 1996): 37.

office, are far more profound than academic readings of a few isolated texts. A revision of the biblical strictures against homosexual behavior strikes at the heart of the doctrines of creation and sin, indeed at the doctrine of God. Homosexual activity is, in fact, the bodily enactment of idolatry. Using **ROM. 1:18-32** as a key text, Wenz carefully demonstrates how Paul sees homosexual behavior as part and parcel of a threefold exchange centered in the abandonment of God's truth and the embrace of the satanic lie. The essay concludes with some suggestions for pastoral care of homosexual persons, centered in Confession and Absolution. Finally, the Church has something far greater to offer to sinners than tolerance and acceptance. It is the Absolution that carries with it the promise of the resurrection to the newness of life.

This essay will be helpful to pastors, deaconesses, governing boards and staffs of Lutheran agencies that are involved with human care. In a day when many church bodies are severely compromised on matters surrounding homosexuality, such as the blessing of same-sex partnerships, the admission of homosexual persons into the ministry, and church-related agencies advocating a homosexual agenda in the area of adoptions, it is essential for our pastors and church workers to have biblically accurate resources for the articulation of God's truth, as it shapes our practice. The questions for study and discussion at the end of the essay will facilitate the use of this document, not only in circuit pastoral conferences and other forums for professional church workers, but also for congregational Bible classes and individual study. As most of the secondary literature referred to by Dr. Wenz is in German, a bibliography of recent books and journal articles in English is also included for further study. Dr. Holger Sonntag, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Carver, Minnesota, provided the translation of Dr. Wenz' essay into English.

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Pentecost 2006

INTRODUCTION

With the passing of the German Domestic Partnership Law [*Lebenspartnerschaftsgesetz*] in 2001, the debate on the legitimacy of homosexuality in society and church in Germany has reached a new stage.⁴ While society discusses the consequences of the Domestic Partnership Law, especially its constitutionality,⁵ there seems to be an overwhelming pressure especially on the Protestant territorial and free churches. One synodical assembly after another debates and decides regarding the question of the blessing of same-sex couples. Publicly the admission and acceptance of those pastors and church workers who have come out as homosexuals is demanded. And many a synodical resolution is nothing else than the retroactive legitimization of a reality that already exists in practice.⁶ One can observe the quick change of theological-eclesial positions within only a few years. What only a short time ago was held by a small minority, all of a sudden becomes part of the convictions of individuals governing the church and of synodical majorities. Older statements, which still opined negatively on the questions of blessing homosexual couples

⁴ Cf. Uta Rasche, "Gottesdienst nach Verpartnerung? Die evangelische Kirche streitet weiter über Segnungen für homosexuelle Paare," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [hereafter: FAZ] (10 Dec. 2001): 12: "The Domestic Partnership Law, which was passed by the votes of the coalition government of Social-Democrats and Greens and took effect in August [2001], gave new momentum to the discussion in the church." The article reports attempts by "leading theologians of the territorial church in Hesse-Nassau," who "take the new Domestic Partnership Law as an opportunity to offer a churchly rite of blessing after a public partnering at the town hall."

⁵ The Passau jurist, Johann Braun, has offered an excellent analysis of this law in *Ehe und Familie am Scheideweg: Eine Kritik des sogenannten Lebenspartnerschaftsgesetzes* (Regensburg, 2002).

⁶ Cf. Ernst Volk, "Gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe? Ein Plädoyer wider die Maßlosigkeit," M. Aust, H.-Ch. Gensichen, Th. S. Hoffmann (eds.), *Christlicher Glaube und Homosexualität: Argumente aus Bibel, Theologie und Seelsorge* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1994), 21-37. Here 21: "In the territorial church of the Rhineland there was already held a virtual marriage ceremony — of two fathers, by the way — without there having been a basis in the bylaws of that church"

and of the admission of homosexual pastors to the office,⁷ in part have been replaced by newer resolutions or overtaken by a contrary practice.

The question of a theological evaluation of homosexuality and of the practical implications of such an evaluation is controversial within churches and between churches. For instance, the criticism of ecumenical institutions by the Orthodox Church time and again is sparked by the question of homosexuality.⁸ The attempt is being made to deal with such resistance within and between churches by means of defamation and marginalization. A favorite instrument of church leaders and theological trend-setters is the fundamentalism label. Regardless of a substantive evaluation, it is interesting to see how the churchly approval of homosexuality and blessing of homosexual couples, which some see as long overdue, goes hand in hand with the stigmatization of those who reject such a course of action. Now that person is called a sinner who is not ready, without reservation, to promote the homosexual lifestyle and to advocate for its equality. Lifting the traditional theological condemnation thus goes hand in hand with issuing new condemnations.⁹ It is said: “You are no longer within the sphere of the Gospel and thereby within the Protestant or Lutheran church.” The question of homosexuality therefore touches on being the true Church.¹⁰

All this clearly shows that the debate concerning homosexuality is not a marginal question, but a question, which, due to its far-reaching implications for doctrine and practice, touches

⁷ Cf. Lutherisches Kirchenamt der VELKD (ed.), *Gedanken und Maßstäbe zum Dienst von Homophilen in der Kirche: Eine Orientierungshilfe* and “Vorläufige Stellungnahme des Theologischen Ausschusses der VELKD zum Problem der Homosexualität von Pfarrern,” Kentler (see n. 44), 62-79.

⁸ Cf. G. Kelter, “Der moderne Ökumenismus als Hindernis auf dem Weg zur Einheit der Christen?” *Lutherische Beiträge* 5 (2000): 268-276.

⁹ Cf. G. Besier, *Konzern Kirche: Das Evangelium und die Macht des Geldes* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1997), 168.

¹⁰ Cf. H. Hempelmann, “Kirche und Homosexualität: Sieben Perspektiven,” *Theologische Beiträge* 25 (1994): 181-191. Here 191.

on the unity of the Church and the salvation of man. After all, the normativity of Holy Scripture is particularly controversial. Everybody confesses adherence to the Reformation principle of Scripture; but immediately the question arises, what this confession really means for evaluating homosexuality and for dealing with homosexual Christians in the Church.

This essay takes the statements of the apostle Paul in **ROM. 1:18-32** as its starting point. In the mind of many of the protagonists on both sides, these verses represent a key text of Scripture for the evaluation of homosexuality. This corresponds to the high importance of the Letter to the Romans within the New Testament canon and as testament of the apostle Paul. One can therefore expect that here foundational matters are laid out which are relevant far beyond one particular congregational situation.

Especially important is the observation that homosexuality indeed is not an independent topic, neither of the Bible nor of Romans nor of the passage in **ROM. 1:18-32**. This anthropological phenomenon is rather viewed in a theological perspective. It is thereby placed into the biblical context of the history of salvation and damnation, of God with His humanity. It is placed into the context of the acting of the triune God in judgment and salvation. Yet in this context we still live today — and today's society and today's churches still live in this context as well. For this reason, the theological explanations of the apostle in Romans can lead to an understanding of homosexuality in theological perspective, based on which, then, also the current controversies can be sorted out.

One basic element of the Reformation principle of Scripture is the clarity of Scripture. It is therefore not our time which sheds light on the Scripture which is seemingly dark and in need of interpretation; but it is Scripture which sheds light on our time. Along these lines we want to pursue the following double question: In which horizon does Paul perceive the phenomenon of homosexual intercourse, which apparently already back then could not

be ignored, and could therefore also not be theologically neglected in the course of the missionary expansion of the Church? And how do his explanations, in the context of the whole Bible, shed light on the current churchly and societal controversy?

1. THE THREEFOLD EXCHANGE (ROM. 1:18–32)

The statements on homosexuality in Romans are found in the context of **ROM. 1:18–3:20**, in which Paul speaks of the revelation of God’s wrath over all men; of the fact that all of mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are without excuse before God. This serves as preparation for the proclamation of the righteousness of God in Christ. In **ROM. 1:18ff** he first speaks about the Gentiles among whom the guilt before God manifests itself differently than among the Jews.¹¹ From the beginning, ἀσέβεια, ungodliness, here corresponds to ἀδικία, doing what is against God.¹² God’s wrath aims at both. Truth is held down by ἀδικία, the injustice of man (1:18). This is then unfolded further in two series of thought (vv. 19-23 and 24-31).

Paul first points out, in 1:19-23, that the relation between man and God is wrong, even though God can be known from His works in creation (v. 21). The gratitude owed to the Creator for His creation is replaced by the enslavement of the thoughts to futility and the darkening of the foolish heart (ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά). “To live as humans within creation should have its meaning and goal in doxology. In reality, however, humans refuse to give this doxology — and by doing so they fall into the lack of meaning and goal which, according to the OT experience, is the essence of the idols understood as ‘futilities.’”¹³ The result is that man — claiming to be wise — becomes a fool and exchanges the

¹¹ Cf. U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Röm 1–5), Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar, vol. VI.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978), 93: “Paul unfolds the sentence 1:18 first in basically the same way Judaism commonly denounced the godlessness of the Gentiles”; furthermore, with examples, 96-99.

¹² Cf. *Ibid.*, 96: “Ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία in v. 18 are unfolded chiasmatically in vv. 19ff. and vv. 22ff.; they are treated again in the order of v. 18 in vv. 25ff and vv. 28ff.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

glory of God for images of men and animals (ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἐρπετῶν, v. 23). “Man now becomes like the animals and begins to worship animals.”¹⁴

Section 1:24-31 is subdivided by a threefold παρέδωκεν. This term describes God’s judging,¹⁵ the effects of the revealed divine wrath, which consist in that God gives up man “to the results of their apostasy which plays itself out in their relationship to themselves.”¹⁶ The first giving up concerns the human heart which, according to v. 21, is ungrateful and foolish. This giving up to the lusts of the heart is tantamount to “impurity” and implies that man dishonors his own body. Verse 25 brings to memory again that here are dealt with those who have exchanged God’s truth for a lie (μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει) and who worshiped the creature instead of the Creator. As in the Old Testament, according to Paul “idolatry [shows itself] as uncleanness and harlotry against God ... [and] in sexual uncleanness and ‘abuse’ ... of the bodies by the humans themselves.”¹⁷ The second giving up concerns dishonorable passions (παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας v. 26). This is now explained by pointing to the exchange of natural intercourse for the unnatural (μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν) among women and men. In this way, those who do such things pay themselves the wages of their error (πλάνη).¹⁸ The third giving up concerns the mind or spirit (νοῦς) of man which is

¹⁴ Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen. 1, 26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (Göttingen, 1960), 321, quoted in Wilckens (see n. 8), 108 n. 188.

¹⁵ Cf. A. Schlatter, *Romans: Righteousness of God* (1935), tr. S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA:1995), 42: “*Paredken* is the common term used for the judge’s verdict whereby he orders the execution of the punishment.”

¹⁶ Wilckens (see n. 8), 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁸ Cf. Schlatter (see n. 12), 44, regarding the two possible interpretations of “error” here: “With reference to plan Paul probably thought of the absurdity of [the Gentiles’] religion. This wantonness could not remain unpunished, and the recompense consists of the devastating power of their craving that lusts for the unnatural and disgraceful. Following the other interpretation Paul called *plan* that which was erotically unnatural and, in the case of *antimisthia*, had in mind the effects that destroy both body and conscience.”

depraved (v. 28). This shows itself in that man does what is not right (ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα), and it is further elaborated in a list of vices, which is opened by the term ἀδικία, which is already known from v. 18.

The threefold giving up of man by God corresponds to a threefold exchanging on the part of blinded man: He exchanges God's honor for images of idols (v. 23); he exchanges the truth for a lie (v. 25); and he exchanges natural intercourse for the unnatural (v. 26). The ingratitude toward God becomes apparent in doing what is not right before God. This is punishment insofar as man not only does not give God the honor that is due Him, but also insofar as man, by his unnatural behavior, robs himself of the honor bestowed on him as man and woman by God. The threefold exchanging characterizes sin as perversion "of the possibilities for life granted by the Creator."¹⁹ Therefore, as "giving up" by God denotes the fate-like nature of all of what takes place, so the "exchanging" denotes man's guilt, for which he is held responsible by God. The inescapability of the divine giving up and the human responsibility and guilt are definitely not mutually exclusive.²⁰ For verse 32 shows "the eschatological-forensic consequence":²¹ Those who have made themselves guilty of the exchanges named, become liable to the divine death-sentence. They are responsible for their action; there is no "excuse" for it (εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους, v. 20).

One does not have to view the threefold giving up as steps in temporal sequence, but primarily as three contemporaneous aspects of God's judging, which Paul thus presents as threefold.

¹⁹ Wilckens (see n. 8), 96.

²⁰ Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, tr. K. Grobel (New York, 1951), 250: "To be sure, God did give them up to sin (1:24ff.), but only as a punishment for the proto-sin of apostasy from the Creator — and this, of course, does not take away the guilt-character from sinning, but only means that apostasy, the sin of sins, necessarily draws the vices after it."

²¹ Wilckens (see n. 8), 95.

God's wrath manifests itself in that God exposes man to the lust of his blind heart, to his drive-like passions, and to his foolish mind, without protecting him from the consequences of his godlessness anymore. The punishment consists precisely in that God lets man do as the latter pleases, which is, however, against God's good order for life. Even if all do not commit every evil act, there is nonetheless solidarity among the sinners against God: No one asks for the will of God; instead, even if one does not participate in everything, one nonetheless approves of those who live it all out.²²

It is important to note that homosexuality is by no means the only ἀδικία, which separates from God. Thus, the point is not to single out a certain group of people from a humanity that is otherwise presumed sinless. On the contrary, one rather needs to ask if not every man, due to the total blinding of humanity, bears in himself the potential to live out to the extreme the consequences of his distance from God. When one considers that God is the one who gives up humanity, one can hardly deny this.²³ This becomes even clearer when one looks at Romans as a whole. All men are living under sin without excuse (3:9-20) — that is the point of the argument of the apostle, by which he “characterizes the situation of ‘man,’ which is presupposed in the Gospel”²⁴ and which is fundamentally changed by the revelation of the Gospel which is directed toward the sinner. “This is why what has been said in 1:18-32 belongs to the contents of the Gospel, in which both are fulfilled: the wrath of God which destroys all sinners and His

²² Cf. Ibid., 116: “The approval which is commonly given to actual sin (by taking recourse to the rational-educated ability to judge), as if the rebel against God first finds himself; true freedom of independent living — this approval is in reality, that is, under the eschatologically relevant aspect of God's wrath, deep foolishness and deception; this is why the δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ, which is rejected by man, turns especially against those who legitimize sin by their approval.”

²³ Regarding the argument that “many are unaffected by these charges,” Schlatter writes (see n. 12, 45): “Paul nevertheless directed each of these expression, including that of the unnatural eroticism, to everyone, for the individual is not to be so foolish that he becomes alarmed over sin only after succumbing to it himself. Observing sin in others indicates to him both his need for the saving message and knowledge about what it will save him from.”

²⁴ Wilckens (see n. 8), 102.

righteousness which makes this result of His wrath of no effect.”²⁵ The total context of Romans shows how the end of God’s wrath in the Gospel of Jesus Christ affects the modes of behavior described in 1:18-32. Accordingly, the time under God’s wrath and the modes of behavior characterizing this time are past for the Christians.²⁶ The vices listed in **ROM. 1** fall under God’s forgiveness for Christ’s sake; they are covered “by forgiving the sins which had been committed in the time of his patience” (3:25-26). The effect of the Gospel on the fruits of the wrath of God is thus not their miraculous transformation from deadly vices to Spirit-filled gifts of creation to be enjoyed in gratitude. It is not that the behaviors under God’s wrath are sanctified and integrated into life. Rather, they now ought to remain past and overcome by virtue of Baptism, for the question of the apostle applies here: “How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (6:2). The Christian is free from the rule even of these sins (6:3-23; 7:24f.; 8:2, 13) which brought death before (1:32; 6:23). They belong to the works of darkness which the Christian, in light of the coming day of the Lord, puts down in favor of the weapons of light (13:11-14).

It is therefore noteworthy that Paul explicitly mentions homosexual intercourse in **ROM. 1** and does not simply make general remarks concerning deviant sexual desires. Rather, he elaborates “concretely what is meant: homosexual ‘intercourse’ (χρησις) among women and men which Paul condemns as ‘exchange’ (cf. vv. 23, 25) of ‘natural’ intercourse for the ‘unnatural,’ as a shameful act.”²⁷ This apostolic judgment, however, cannot be rejected in principle by simply pointing to the apostle’s ignorance of human sciences.²⁸ Instead, one has to ask for the meaning of the

²⁵ Ibid., 103.

²⁶ Cf. Ibid., 112: “In contradistinction to Judaism, primitive Christianity viewed the vices as characteristic for the time *ante fidem* (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11); as ‘works of the flesh’ to which the ‘virtues’ as ‘fruit of the Spirit’ are radically opposed (Gal. 5:19ff, 22ff); for Christians, the vices are the past that has been done away with, and Christians are warned against returning to them (2 Cor. 12:20f., cf. 1 Cor. 5:10f).”

²⁷ Ibid., 109f.

²⁸ This is done by Wilckens (see n. 8), 110 n. 205 and Schrage (see n. 35), 436.

elaborations of the apostle in the entire context of biblical revelation. Only in this way the theological rationale becomes clear, because of which Paul here sees in homosexual intercourse a behavior against God deserving of God's wrath and death-sentence. The questions why Paul sees the turn to homosexual intercourse as an ungodly "exchange" can only be answered based on the remaining biblical statements regarding human sexuality. Thus, what is needed is not simply the apodictic quoting of proof texts, but, alongside the explication of the individual passages, an "interpretation of the pertinent passages in the full context of biblical anthropology,"²⁹ which is accountable both biblically and hermeneutically.

2. "THEY EXCHANGED NATURAL INTERCOURSE FOR UNNATURAL PRACTICES"

2.1 THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN AND SEXUALITY — MAN AS MALE AND FEMALE

A favorite method of dealing with the exclusively negative statements on homosexuality in Paul is to place them in opposition to the proclamation of Jesus. Time and again, it is pointed out that Jesus did not address homosexuality at all. Jesus, it is said, is only concerned about the love in relationships. However, this argument is contradicted by the fact that Jesus, according to the witness of the evangelists, did not leave any doubt about His view of man. Against the law's regulations concerning divorce, He explicitly upholds the primordial creation and determination of man as male and female. For He prefaces the later regulations of the institution by what has been "from the beginning of creation" and thus critically juxtaposes what was first to what came later. By doing so, Jesus immediately takes the foundational words from Genesis into His present context and relates them critically to human regulations. Because God has created man male and female from the beginning, "a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they

²⁹ Hempelmann (see n. 7), 184.

are no longer two, but one flesh” (MARK 10:6-8; MATT. 19:4-6). Man and woman’s “being one flesh” is thereby explicitly confirmed by Jesus, who takes up GEN. 2:24, as the “wherefrom” (origin) and “whereto” (goal) of man. Whenever man turns to woman, Adam’s archetypal life is repeated. Adam, to be sure, is, by virtue of the breath of life breathed into his nostrils, a “living creature” by himself (GEN. 2:7), but he is not yet complete: God does not want the loneliness of man; he is to get a helper (GEN. 2:18). This helper is not found among the animals (GEN. 2:20), but led to Adam by God Himself (GEN. 2:21-22). Adam recognizes her as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” At the same time, the correlation and difference is expressed right away: “she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (GEN. 2:23). OT scholar Horst Seebass judges: “Because here as always in the Old Testament life is the goal of God’s acting and *life and blessing belong together* (both in the widest sense), it is impossible to apply GEN. 2:18-23 to homosexual relationships.”³⁰

It is furthermore important to note that Jesus’ support of the fundamental anthropological realities in Mark and Matthew immediately precedes the blessing of the children (MARK 10:13-16; MATT. 19:13-15). The adults are not to hinder the children, who are born in the relationship of man and woman, from entering the kingdom of heaven. By doing so, Jesus not only upholds marriage as creational gift of His Father, but He also connects the “generation of children” to the kingdom of heaven. The children who are born in the wedlock arranged by the Creator are to be allowed to come to Jesus. Thus, Jesus shares with the Old Testament a view of man in which sexuality is not a goal in itself, but something that is to be seen within the context of the Creator’s blessing aiming for the passing on of life. Man and woman’s “being one flesh” is not exhausted by sexual intercourse. Rather, the purpose of the

³⁰ “Das Nein des Alten Testaments: Die spezifische Aussage des AT zur Homosexualität zwischen Sippenweisung und altorientalischer Praxis,” Aust, Gensichen, Hoffmann (see n. 3), 65-72. Here 71.

union of both sexes lies in the expansion of the union by means of offspring. Man's commission and the Creator's blessing consist in passing on life.

This is the reason why human sexuality is not addressed in an isolated manner in Scripture. What is addressed is the lifelong marriage of man and woman as the Creator-given context of sexuality. The command and the promise to pass on life in this union hold true beyond the fall into sin. **GEN. 5-11**, and its lists of nations and families, show how this is fulfilled. The patriarchal narratives show that infertility and the lack of children are experienced as existential problems. As the place where life is passed on in a comprehensive sense, marriage of man and woman is therefore also the presupposition for, and the expression of, the fact that man finds himself in a succession of generations, that he, in other words, is a historical being.

What is new in the New Testament is that here God's blessing in Christ can also be passed on in unmarried life. In view of salvation in Christ and of the passing world, marriage and family do not represent absolute values in the kingdom of God (cf. **LUKE 14:26; 1 COR. 7:29**). According to Jesus and the apostle Paul, there is the unmarried life for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, but this is clearly the exception and includes sexual continence (**MATT. 19:12; 1 COR. 7:1-7**). The command of chastity applies to the married and to those who are, either currently or permanently, unmarried (cf. in addition to **GAL. 5:23** and **1 THESS. 4:3**, see also **JOHN 8:11**!). Meilaender reminds us that the Reformation — beyond worldliness and world-flight — does not fall back behind the New Testament, when Luther, in his explanation of the Sixth Commandment, makes chastity the foundational principle in these matters. "Although the sixteenth-century Reformers often exalted the importance of marriage, especially as part of their attack on monastic vows, marriage itself is not the fundamental requirement.

Chastity is.³¹ Unmarried life³² and the estate of marriage are, in the New Testament, two ways of life which God uses to propagate the kingdom of God by men and to pass on the faith in the saving Word. In the New Testament, marriage and family are thus not only fruits of the blessing of the Creator and Sustainer, but also the place where salvation in Christ is passed on.

The marriage between man and woman, instituted with the passing on of life in mind, is therefore not only relevant in the article on creation but also in that of the Church. This is further highlighted by the fact that, in numerous passages in the Old as well as in the New Testament, marriage between man and woman is seen as an image of the relationship of God to His chosen people (**HOS. 1-3; JER. 2:2; 3:1; EZ. 16:23F; EPH. 5:21-33**). These texts show very clearly what marriage is all about: it is about a life-long covenant in which two people of different sexes faithfully share and pass on life. As marriage is an image of God's faithfulness to His people, sexual immorality is an image of the unfaithfulness of God's people. As marriage and faithfulness to God are under God's blessing and contribute to life, harlotry and apostasy from God are under God's wrath and judgment. This is focused Christologically in the New Testament, where, in Ephesians, the self-giving of Christ for His congregation is presented to the married couple as an example for their life together (**EPH. 5:23-33**), or when, again and again, the relation between Christ and the Church is described in the images of marriage feast, bride and bridegroom.

All of this can be summarized as follows: The union of man and woman in marriage is an essential part of the biblical view of man in the Old as well as the New Testament. It is the place in which man finds not only sexual fulfillment but also life together.

³¹ G. Meilaender, "Homosexuality in Christian Perspective," Meilaender, *Things that Count: Essays Moral and Theological* (Wilmington, 2000), 59-76. Here 66.

³² On the gift of continence cf. the reflections of J. Roloff, "Auf der Suche nach biblischen Kriterien für eine heutige Sexualethik," *Lutherische Kirche in der Welt: Jahrbuch des Martin-Luther Bundes*, vol. 46 (Erlangen, 1999): 31-54. Here 44-50.

Additionally, marriage plays a role for the view of God, since it reflects God's faithfulness to His people. Life and faith in Christ are passed on in marriage and family. According to the New Testament, the relationship between man and woman in union and difference corresponds to the relationship between Christ and His Church. Marriage between man and woman is therefore not only an "order of creation," but a gift of God for which and through which God wants to work in His world and Church for the salvation of mankind. Aspects of the doctrines of creation, salvation, and of the Holy Spirit here work together. Marriage is about the acting of the triune God.

2.2 THE EXCHANGE: HOMOSEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Referring to both the Old and New Testaments, Jesus and His apostles speak about marriage and the blessing of children in the perspective of the doctrines of creation and Church. On the flipside of marriage,³³ so to speak, this leads us to addressing homosexual intercourse in the perspective of the doctrine of sin. The Bible deals with specific sins in a twofold perspective: that of judgment and that of forgiveness and sanctification.

Paul's statements in **ROM. 1** are paradigmatic for dealing with homosexuality from the vantage point of the doctrine of sin. As seen above, homosexual intercourse is presented here exclusively in the perspective of God's judgment and wrath and, on man's part, in the perspective of loss of honor and the missing of one's own determination as God's creature. This corresponds to the findings in the Old Testament where homosexual intercourse is never viewed positively, but is considered an expression and symptom of a fallen world (**GEN. 19; JUDGES 19**).³⁴ This corresponds

³³ Cf. W. Pannenberg, "Die Liebe und ihr Maß – Maßstab für das Kirchesein der Kirche," Aust, Gensichen, Hoffmann (see n. 3), 14-20. Here 17. Meilaender (see n. 28), 59: "In whatever way those who are not Christians may approach this topic, for Christians there should be no discussion of homosexuality that is not also a discussion of marriage and its purposes."

³⁴ Cf. W. Zimmerli, *Die Weltlichkeit des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen, 1971), 41: "The account of the sin of the Sodomites in Gen. 19 puts Israel's attitude vis-à-vis the perversions of Canaan into sharp relief."

furthermore to the condemnation of homosexual intercourse in the Law as ungodly — excluding from fellowship with the holy God — “abomination” (LEV. 18:22; 20:13). Hans Walter Wolff comments: “Homosexuality is a failure to recognize the difference of the sexes, and with it the basic way of arriving at a fruitful life through the overcoming of self-love. Sodomy is resisted in the same way (LEV. 18:23).”³⁵ The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, expresses the intended meaning of the Hebrew original by prohibiting intercourse between men (καὶ μετὰ ἄρσενος οὐ κοιμηθήσῃ κοίτην γυναικός βδέλγμα γάρ ἐστιν, LEV. 18:22). One cannot fail to notice that Paul, by using the word ἄρσενοκοίται in 1 COR. 6:9 (cf. 1 TIM. 1:10), quotes the Septuagint almost verbatim. Especially in view of the fact that the New Testament does not uphold many of the other rules even of the so-called Holiness Code (LEV. 17–26), it is noteworthy that Paul applies the statements of the Holiness Code on homosexuality also for the sanctification of the Christians. When Paul writes in 1 COR. 6:9 that intercourse between men excludes from the kingdom of God, then this corresponds to the rejection of such intercourse by God in the Old Testament as “abomination” (הַתְּוֵעָה),³⁶ which excludes man from God’s blessing and thus abandons him to death.

³⁵ *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, tr. M. Kohl (Philadelphia, 1974), 176. E. S. Gerstenberger (*Leviticus: A Commentary*, tr. D. W. Stott, Louisville 1996, 299) arrives at a totally contrary conclusion: “In reality, the Old Testament condemnation derives from fears and taboos that for centuries have been considered obsolete, and are finally being replaced even in the church itself by uncramped, humane attitudes. Something similar applies to ‘abomination with animals.’ ... The people of antiquity entertained all sorts of demonic fears (cf. the discussion of Lev. 18:23) ...” Cf. on Gerstenberger the appropriate criticism raised by W. Führer against him, “Irregeleitete Kirche: Eine exegetisch-theologische Überprüfung der Synodalbeschlüsse zur Segnung homosexueller Partnerschaften in Gliedkirchen der EKD,” *idea-Dokumentation* 3 (2003), 9.

³⁶ Cf. K. Haacker, “Exegetische Gesichtspunkte zum Thema Homosexualität: Stellungnahme zum Arbeitspapier ‘Homosexuelle Liebe’ für rheinische Gemeinden und Kirchenkreise,” *Theologische Beiträge* 25 (1994): 173–180. Here 175: “The word *to’ebah* expresses an absolute taboo and wants to create disgust.” When one reads through the New Testament, with the Greek word for abomination (βδέλγμα) in mind, one cannot say anymore that the human acts marked biblically as abomination represent marginal issues of little relevance, cf. also Rev. 17:5: Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς (on this cf. F. Hauck / S. Schulz, πόρνη κτλ., TDNT VI:594).

Yet how does Paul arrive at this harsh condemnation? **ROM. 1:27** speaks of error in connection with homosexual behavior. One has to keep this in mind when Paul, in **1 COR. 6:9**, admonishes: “Do not be deceived.” The errors from **ROMANS 1** still affect the Christian congregation, which is not surprising given the fact that Rome and Corinth were large cities back then.³⁷ According to **1 COR. 6:9-11**, these errors are present as temptation from the past of some members, but also in the pagan surroundings. As **ROM. 1:18** speaks of unrighteousness, so here the unrighteous are addressed: They are, as they are, excluded from the kingdom of God.³⁸ Paul also mentions those who practice homosexual intercourse.³⁹ They stand right next to the other sinners. Paul states nonchalantly: “Such were some of you.” Then a reminder of Baptism⁴⁰ follows: “But you were washed; you were sanctified; you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (**1 COR. 6:11**). Faced with the threatening return of the old habits in the congregation, Paul thus reminds his listeners of Baptism and its effect. Baptism is two things: reception of the heavenly inheritance and end of the old godless life — the other side of the new beginning in Christ. Forgiveness of sins and sanctification are both given through Baptism (v. 11). The old patterns of behavior are thus not integrated into the new Christian life, but are forgiven and done away* with, even deprived of their *power*, through Baptism: “‘Being made holy’ denotes, beyond this aspect, not only the freedom from the guilt of sin, but also from the power of sin. By means of baptism, man is drawn from being

³⁷ “In antiquity, the word ‘corinthizing’ was used as a synonym for sexual licentiousness, laxness, and immorality” (Führer, see n. 32, 12).

³⁸ Cf. W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (1Kor 1,1–6,11), Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar, vol. VII.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991), 429: “The danger to be misled is particularly great in Corinth, especially by means of the self-deception that the issues raised are mere adiaphora, or that one could be sure of the eschatological ‘inheritance’ under all circumstances.”

³⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 432: “Ἀρσενικοίτης is the one who has sexual intercourse with men, not only the male prostitute. The [Luther Bible’s] translation ‘Knabenschänder’ [abuser of boys], however, gives the impression, as if Paul dealt only with sexual intercourse with boys or male adolescents, not with adult men.”

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 427f.

fallen to the sphere of power of the old world into the sphere of God's holiness and committed to holiness."⁴¹

"Especially because Paul views baptism not only as something cognitive, but as something effective-causative, it can serve him as the foundation of a thoroughgoing renewal and commitment."⁴² The lives of the heirs of the kingdom of God are no longer focused on the idol, on sex, on intoxication, or on money, but on the holy God. As He is holy, so they too are holy through Baptism. Paul shows in **1 COR. 6:20–7:40** how this has consequences especially for the sexual life. **1 TIM. 1:8–11** also refers to homosexual behavior. Against a false legalism Paul asserts what the Law says and what it does not say. While marriage is a gift to man from God (**1 TIM. 4:1–5**), the Law does apply, according to **1 TIM. 1:8–11**, to sinners and the godless (cf. **GAL. 5:18–23!**), among them murderers, the sexually impure, those given to homosexual intercourse — patterns of life which are "contrary to sound doctrine" (v. 10).

The New Testament statements on homosexual intercourse thus fit into the baptismal admonitions of the apostles, which are foundational for the instruction of the Christian congregations in a life corresponding to the Gospel. Important not only for that reason, but also for the debate on the homosexual lifestyle is the following observation: The New Testament mandates that the life of Christians cannot be reduced to the commandment of love. Rather, specific — and universally present — behaviors are named that affect a life in fellowship with God and others, which lead to a separation of the baptized from the kingdom of God.

A peculiar understanding of time and reality plays itself out here. Then and now, darkness and light, old and new are not related like two stages of a development in the New Testament. Rather,

⁴¹ Ibid., 433.

⁴² Ibid., 433.

they are treated like opposites. The old way of life, [relegated to the] past and overcome by Baptism, constitutes a constant danger out of which the Christian is called. Yet, faith does not lead to isolation from the world. Rather, the New Testament admonitions direct into a salutary way of dealing with the creational gifts of God and thus also with sexuality. Old and new, the slavery to sin and the freedom in sanctification, life in darkness and life in light, life in the flesh and life in the Spirit are juxtaposed, e.g., in the following passages: **ROM. 6; 8:1-17; 1 COR. 6:9-11; GAL. 5:16-26; EPH. 4:17-5:20; COL. 3:1-17; 1 THESS. 5:1-11; TITUS 3:3-8; 1 PETER 1:13-16.** The first letter of **PETER (1:16)** even restates the demand from the Old Testament Holiness Code (**LEV. 19:2**): “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” Paul, for his part, establishes a direct connection between this holiness and the avoiding of sexual immorality by means of marital faithfulness (**CF. 1 THESS. 4:3F.**).

All these passages show two things. On the one hand, behaviors from the pre-Christian time of the baptized and from their non-Christian surroundings remain a temptation for Christians standing in the faith.⁴³ This does not only affect sexuality, but also dealing with money and goods and other things. This applies also not only to the sinful deed, but already to the sinful wish or lust, including aberrant “heterosexual” lusting (cf. also **MATT. 5:27-32; 2 PETER 2:14**). On the other hand, Christians are now emphatically called, not to resign themselves to such behaviors, but to let them be past. At the same time, the proclamation of the saving effects of the redemptive acts of Christ (cf. besides the passages already mentioned, especially **1 COR. 6:20; 7:23; 1 PETER 1:18F.**), of Baptism, and of the presence of the Spirit, opens up the freedom to avoid

⁴³ Cf. Hauck/Schulz (see n. 33), 593: “As compared with the different judgment of the Greek world and ancient syncretism, the concrete directions of Paul bring to the attention of Gentile Christians the incompatibility of πορνεία and the kingdom of God. No πόρνος has any part in this kingdom, 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5.”

the former sins and to live the Christian “virtues,” the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian is free to use God’s gifts in the areas of sexuality, property and food. But he is to do this within the limits in which God gives these gifts. This means, for the area of sexuality, that the place where sexuality may and ought to be lived within the sanctification effected by Baptism is the marriage between man and woman.⁴⁴ This excludes extramarital intercourse as well as homosexual intercourse.⁴⁵

This demonstrates yet again that the New Testament mandates concerning homosexuality do not represent a foreign element in the Bible. They rather reflect the view of man which can be discerned in the central biblical passages on the creation of man in the Old as well as New Testament — a creation which has been severely damaged by human sin and perversion, but which, under the Gospel, enters again into the hallowed service of the Creator, so that Christian ethics, not only in questions of sexual ethics, avoids falling into ascetical rigorism as well as unrestrained pursuit of human urges. The boundaries drawn by the apostle are neither determined by his times, nor are they arbitrary, but they correspond to the original will of the Creator for His creatures. The fact that the New Testament again and again names the boundaries in ethical questions so concretely shows how much Christianity is tempted to conform to its own pagan past and surroundings. According to the unanimous opinion of the apostles, the Christians back then did not need to be focused on some abstract commandment of love. They needed to hear concretely what corresponds to love as summary of the Law of God and what does not; which fruits are of the Spirit and which are of the flesh. The

⁴⁴ Cf. Roloff (see n. 29), 53: The “partnership of man and woman” “is more than a mere institutionalized possibility of fulfilled sexuality; it is, in fact, the only place where sexuality is placed under sanctification.”

⁴⁵ Cf. Hauck/Schulz (see n. 33), 590: “The NT is characterized by an unconditional repudiation of all extra-marital and unnatural intercourse.”

baptized Christian's ability to make ethical judgments also needs to be constantly clarified and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, as it is expressed in the apostolic admonitions.

In this context, homosexual intercourse is not only an exchange of that which is according to creation and the Creator for that which Paul calls “unnatural,” which, however, must not be misinterpreted naturalistically, but [rather be interpreted] within the context of the biblical understanding of Creation and man. In addition, practiced homosexual love, as every kind of sexual immorality, represents an exchange in the sense of turning away from a life hallowed by God's Spirit in Baptism, an exchange of the Spirit for the flesh; of the new being, destined by God for life, for the old, lost being. The rejection of homosexual intercourse in the New Testament therefore follows from theological reasons; it is not a result of adapting the proclamation of the Gospel to the circumstances of the times. For the answer of the New Testament to the exchange of Spirit for flesh is, not only in the case of homosexuality, the call to repentance and the call back to Baptism; the New Testament also places the Christian again under the reality of salvation of the congregation of God, which is brought about in Baptism by the Holy Spirit. A theological ethic which takes these realities seriously is therefore “guardian, not over some ‘conformity’ with ‘evangelical norms’ — an idea which goes quite well with the antinomianism of the notion that whatever exists is already thereby justified — but over the evangelical *πλήρωμα* of actions, over their Spirit-wrought content of reality in contradistinction from all instances of absence and lack of Spirit which are immediately judged as such.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Th. S. Hoffmann, “METAAATH: Gleichgeschlechtliche Ersatzhandlungen und Eheimitate als theologisch-ethisches Sprach- und Sachproblem,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 41 (1995): 176-195. Here 181f.

3. “THEY EXCHANGED GOD’S TRUTH FOR A LIE”

3.1 “NEW INSIGHTS” AND HOLY SCRIPTURE

Already for some time now, many in the ecclesial discussion have attacked the notion that homosexual intercourse can be questioned based on biblical statements. Two basic points are repeatedly adduced for this: on the one hand, new insights in the human sciences; on the other hand, changes in the exegesis of Holy Scripture itself. The collection of essays, *Die Menschlichkeit der Sexualität*, edited by Helmut Kentler already in 1983,⁴⁷ shows paradigmatically how both points are combined.

According to Kentler, the biblical statements on homosexuality ought not to be relevant anymore because one has meanwhile recognized, on the one hand, that homosexuality is not a free decision of man’s will, but part of his nature; and on the other hand, that man is actually bisexually disposed⁴⁸ so that homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality. Kentler claimed that heterosexuality and homosexuality are “alternative shapes of style in the process of forming a sexual life that matches the personality type”; they are two different “dialects” of the same “body language” sexuality;⁴⁹ they “become alternative projects which continue to make human life possible after the end of the intimate togetherness of the child with the mother.”⁵⁰ The authorities adduced for these insights are on the one hand, psychotherapeutic schools, and on the other hand the post-WW II Kinsey reports on questions of “human sexuality.” At issue here is a changed understanding of sexuality in church and society. Claiming the

⁴⁷ *Die Menschlichkeit der Sexualität: Berichte – Analysen – Kommentare – ausgelöst durch die Frage: Wie homosexuell dürfen Pfarrer sein?* (Munich, 1983).

⁴⁸ Cf. Kentler, “Die Menschlichkeit der Sexualität,” Kentler (see n. 44), 15-59. Here 37f. On Kentler’s earlier work *Sexualerziehung* (Hamburg 1970) cf. the critical comments in Ch. Meves, *Manipulierte Maßlosigkeit: Psychische Gefahren im technisierten Leben* (Freiburg, 1971), 83-114.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 55; cf. also G. J. M. van den Aardweg, *Das Drama des gewöhnlichen Homosexuellen: Analyse und Therapie*, tr. I. Elgert, 2nd ed. (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1992).

⁵⁰ Kentler (see n. 45), 15.

support of science,⁵¹ an enhanced notion of sexuality⁵² is advocated against tying sexuality to marriage and the imparting of life to the next generation, which is promoted by state and church. This enhanced notion stands out in that here sexuality and procreation are basically separated. Sexuality, according to this view, is not important for procreation — which in nature often takes place asexually — but for the mixing of the genetic pool.⁵³

This enhanced notion of sexuality is also the basis for criticizing the traditional statements of churches regarding the homosexual lifestyle. Accordingly, what is criticized is that they consistently tie sexuality to marriage and thereby do not do justice to man. Marriage is here understood as an order and not based on the inner life. Against this, it is necessary to speak about love; and marriage must not be kept out of the discussion and changeability. The “strange fixation on marriage” prevents human sexuality from being perceived in an unbiased way.⁵⁴

However, newer insights concerning the recreational and fun functions of sexuality, which apply to all ages from childhood to old age, are said to be more substantial.⁵⁵ What is needed, it is said, is therefore the cultivation of desire, for whatever is experienced as arousing is not natural but learned and acquired, which is why, also according to this approach, the first years of life have to be seen as decisive and formational.⁵⁶ Sexual communication as an achievement of culture and as body language is therefore valuable in itself; it is not in need of any “ennobling” by external goods or

⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 18: “Christianity today ... is in danger of becoming the servant of the bourgeois state and of degenerating into a family religion. The convenient marriage between church and state, however, has one problem: It can no longer rely on the results of scientific research.”

⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*, 20ff.

⁵³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁴ Cf. on this paragraph H.-G. Wiedemann, “Die Beurteilung homosexueller Beziehungen in Stellungnahmen der evangelischen Kirchen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” Kentler (see n. 44), 81-88. Here 86-88.

⁵⁵ Kentler (see n. 45), 22f.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 23f.

by placing it into ‘higher’ relations (which is to say, not first by a wanted child and not first by marriage does a sexual encounter become human and dignified).⁵⁷ Research into so-called sexual perversions is said to have revealed basic truths: sexual formation is part of the formation of identity and personal integration. Also the perversion is therefore to be considered as a “respectable ego-accomplishment,” which strengthens the ego and keeps the person together. Suffering is first caused by the lack of understanding on the part of others. Since in our society no one lives without developmental deficits, their sexualization plays a major role to defend against fears and to domesticate conflicts.⁵⁸

According to this view of things, it is therefore important that sexuality independent of procreation can be a source of healing for people; that it therefore represents an advantage in the survival of the fittest; that it has recreational effects and makes communication possible; that it provides outlets for dissatisfaction experienced elsewhere; that it creates a sense of integration and identity; that it helps to overcome hardships in life and to improve one’s chances in life. This is why, it is said, prohibitions in this area should be used very sparingly, since one might otherwise take away a means of self-healing.⁵⁹ In short, sexuality as such contributes to healing, and benefits life regardless of whether it is practiced with a partner or not, and regardless of the kind of partner. Since sexuality is not hereditary, but learned, it must be practiced in education just like walk and speech; otherwise, it will remain underdeveloped and pathological. In each case, society is formative.⁶⁰ Each society shapes the sexual behavior that fits its order; there is nothing imaginable that is not practiced among the various peoples, all the way to child sex.⁶¹ Since sexual education creates various types

⁵⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid., 26-28.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ibid., 28.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid., 28-33.

⁶¹ Cf. Ibid., 33.

of human beings, it is irresponsible to speak of “orders of creation” in this area. Such a phrase is suspicious of being ideological, because here a certain type of morality is to be given preference. But this has the effect of destroying culture.⁶²

The view of history connected to this approach shows what is meant here. According to this view, misogyny, sexism and homophobia in the church grew out of the same root.⁶³ Particularly the raising of children along roles determined by their sex has traditionally served to support patriarchy, because role and identity of a human being are not fixed, but are passed on in the process of raising the child.⁶⁴ While there is the pathological fixation on heterosexuality as an expression of the unconscious repression of one’s own bisexual and homosexual needs, homosexuality is not to be seen as a pathology, but as a “defense against what makes sick, a working through and a resolution of problems and, thus, as a sign of health.”⁶⁵ In the homosexual as well as in the heterosexual “camp ... the whole breadth of male and female possibilities of realization is present,” which pursue all the same drive-goal of satisfaction, only that what gives satisfaction is different.⁶⁶ The ways of sexual intercourse also are not significantly different, because anal intercourse is by no means typical for only the homosexuals.⁶⁷

One cannot miss in Kentler’s exposition the attempt to show the complete equality of, or the denial of differences between, homosexuality and heterosexuality — with the one exception of the object that satisfies the drive. The denial of the pathology of homosexuality goes hand in hand with the

⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*, 33f.

⁶³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 39-41.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 47

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 48.

assertion of “pathological traits” in the “normal heterosexual.”⁶⁸ These traits become apparent in that marriage and family are not good in and by themselves, but bring forth many diseases and abnormal developments.⁶⁹ The sexual itself is therefore not to be considered a psychological pathology, but “whatever hampers, disturbs, or makes the sexual impossible.”⁷⁰ To be sure, it is to be admitted that there is among homosexuals a tendency to promiscuity. But this is counterbalanced, on the part of the heterosexuals, by a tendency to adopting an ideology of possession.⁷¹ The utter equality of both variants leads to the demand that neither ought to be privileged so that the manifold opportunities of expression can come to the fore.⁷²

Based on these “new insights,” the biblical statements are thoroughly reevaluated within the context of church and theology. Hans Georg Wiedemann has taken on this task in the volume edited by Kentler.⁷³ According to his essay, the assertion that homosexuality is excluded in the protological texts rests on “a dogmatic interpretation of Old Testament texts which manifests itself in the doctrines of divine orders of creation and institutions. Contrariwise, it is important to see what the texts really (only) are saying.”⁷⁴ Accordingly, homosexuality has to be seen as a gift of the Creator,⁷⁵ which can be derived from **GENESIS 2** just as much as heterosexuality, because the point in the text is that man needs

⁶⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid., 50-52.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁷¹ Cf. Ibid., 55f.; cf. on this U. Eibach, “Homosexualität und Kirche,” *Theologische Beiträge* 25 (1994): 192-211. Here 200: “The impression is therefore given that what is actually ‘pathological’— namely, the sexual life lived in less than its fullness — is the monogamous life of heterosexual people.”

⁷² Cf. Kentler (see n. 45), 56f.

⁷³ H.-G. Wiedemann, “Homosexualität und Bibel,” Kentler (see n. 44), 89-106.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁷⁵ Cf. the programmatic work by M. Steinhäuser, *Homosexualität als Schöpfungserfahrung: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Urteilsbegründung* (Stuttgart, 1998).

a partner as a helper.⁷⁶ **GEN. 1:28**, for its part, is “not a command to beget children, but a word of blessing.”⁷⁷ The fact that the Bible addresses homosexuality in the context of idolatry is explained by asserting that only homosexuality in the pagan cult is rejected, that the point therefore is only cult prostitution.⁷⁸ A variation of the biblical reevaluation is the method of “queering,” that is, retroactively making important persons into homosexuals. E.g., the deep friendship between David and Jonathan can be interpreted as a homoerotic relationship.⁷⁹ Contrariwise, Wiedemann at least maintains “that the explicit Old Testament judgment over homosexuality against the described background is negative.” But then he writes, “It is a totally different question whether we can simply adopt this judgment today. There are good theological reasons not to do so.”⁸⁰

As far as the New Testament is concerned, it is pointed out that the topic of homosexuality is not mentioned in the gospels. Since Jesus was not a preacher of morals, one can conjecture with H. J. Schoeps: “According to everything we may assume, he ... would have been less interested in the question of the relationship as such than in the quality of the individual loving relationship.”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Cf. Wiedemann (see n. 70), 96: “The declaration of the Territorial Church of the Rhineland thus states correctly that, just as man in woman, so the homosexual person can find help for their life in their same-sex partner.”

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 98: “It is a fact that we encounter homosexual practice in the OT only in connection with the suspicion of apostasy to foreign gods and that, beyond this, there is no interest in describing and explaining homosexual relations.”

⁷⁹ Thus Gerstenberger (see n. 32), 297f: “And yet homosexuality does not seem always to have been condemned this radically in Israel ... It ... may be that in addition to his intensive relationships with eight primary women, David also cultivated a relationship with another man during his life. Tradition [would have] acknowledged this, and it [would have] left its ineradicable traces in the narratives. In that case, however, the total disdain and proscription of male homosexuality would represent a late phenomenon, that is, a characteristic feature of the early Jewish community.” [The text in square brackets is in the German original, but omitted in Stott’s English translation, which makes Gerstenberger’s hypothetical “tradition” seem a bit more real.] One has to question this interpretation with E. Volk (see n. 3), 30: “How deeply degenerated does the imagination have to be, if friendship between men can only be seen in erotic terms!”

⁸⁰ Wiedemann (see n. 70), 98.

⁸¹ Quoted in Wiedemann, *Ibid.*

As for Paul, whose “rejection of homosexual love” has “deeply inserted itself into the collective unconscious of man within our culture,” his rejection is based on taking over a customary moral judgment of late antiquity.⁸² As for **ROMANS 1**, Paul does not intend to give “an independent statement on homosexuality” here;⁸³ in addition, he does not at all advance moral arguments here, for the vices here are results of God’s wrath, not its causes.⁸⁴ “Immorality is not guilt, but punishment. This is why morality does not protect from God’s wrath — quite to the contrary.”⁸⁵ Paul, it is further said, does not talk about homosexuality in the context of a “sexual ethics”; it is therefore impossible to derive a sexual-ethical norm from **ROM. 1:26F.** as well as from “the other two New-Testament texts.”⁸⁶ To be sure, Paul considered homosexuality a vice of the Gentiles. Yet it is important that he talks neither about heterosexual nor homosexual love. The “so-called proof texts for a biblical prohibition of homosexuality” have thus turned out to be “clearly marginal.”⁸⁷ In view of the questions that are new compared to the biblical tradition, seeking orientation today therefore has to begin with the “revelation and proclamation of the unconditional love of man in Jesus Christ.”⁸⁸ Homosexually loving people are not at all in view in the Bible.⁸⁹ The rejection of homosexuality is therefore part of the “biblical view of world and man,” which “is unfounded today.”⁹⁰ This is why it appears as theologically legitimate “to include homosexuality in the diversity of the divine creation.”⁹¹ Additionally, the exclusion of homosexuality leads to

⁸² Ibid., 99.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Cf. Ibid., 100f.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 101.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Cf. Ibid., 103.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

“its being misjudged as willful behavior of basically heterosexual people,” while today’s sexology teaches us to understand homosexuality as “anthropological category,” as “a personality structure which cannot be eliminated without endangering an individual as a whole person. Adopting the biblical judgment on homosexuality is therefore, based on today’s insights into man, impossible — unless theology decides that it does not want to engage real people anymore.”⁹² “A humane Christian sexual ethic can no longer pass by the insights of the human sciences, here of sexology. Accordingly, it has to take as its starting point a holistic concept of sexuality that is related to man (and not to functions and institutions, that is, to begetting children and to marriage), which integrates homosexuality as an equally important and equal area of sexuality. In their moral concepts, the biblical authors are clearly dependent on past knowledge about man as well as on societal conventions. The desire to cling to them without any change can imply to overhear the preaching of God’s love of man for our time — that love out of which we all try to live in our relationships.”⁹³

The commandment of love thus equally applies to homosexual and heterosexual relationships: “It cannot be important with whom a person has a sexual relation, but how he treats the other in this relationship.”⁹⁴ A sinfulness of the homosexual intercourse as such is therefore rejected in principle. Not homosexuality as such is sin but only its irresponsible practice.⁹⁵ What remains to be done is to accept homosexuality as well as heterosexuality as variants of creation and to praise the Creator jointly in this way.⁹⁶

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 104.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Cf. Ibid., 82.

⁹⁶ Thus C. Bäumler, “Selbstverständigung des Heterosexuellen beim Homosexuellen: Ein theologisches Gutachten,” Kentler (see n. 44), 145-193. Here 182f., approvingly quoting comments by H. Frör: “I also want to be united with the homosexual next to me in this, that we both together can join in the praise of God: ‘I thank you that I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works!’ (Ps. 139:13) ... We sin against the creatures of God, when we suggest to homosexuals not to respond to their creatureliness or to ‘keep it at least hidden.’ ...”

Homosexuals with their way of life have a specific gift of the Spirit to contribute to the Christian congregation.⁹⁷ Whoever, against this, insists on a negative evaluation of homosexuality has to be considered a homophobe, as a sinner who transfers being afraid of his own homosexual desires on the confessing homosexual and who, therefore, is himself in need of repentance.⁹⁸

One cannot fail to notice that many of the arguments presented here, which originally could be found especially in publications of the [German] lobby group “Homosexualität und Kirche” [HuK, Homosexuality and Church], have meanwhile found their way into official ecclesial pronouncements on the question of how to deal with homosexual church members and officeholders.⁹⁹

3.2 TRUTH AND LIE IN THE CONTROVERSY IN SOCIETY AND CHURCH

Surveying the argumentation for the equivalence of homosexuality, one notices a collusion between so-called “new insights” and a hermeneutic that elevates the biblical commandment of love to a “canon in the canon.” The alleged insight of the human sciences in the equivalence of homosexuality and the prohibition of its rejection is reinforced on the part of the Church by the commandment of love, which, as it is said, obligates us to “accept” also those

⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 175, referring to H. Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 3: Sex, tr. J. W. Doberstein (Grand Rapids, 1979), 287: “When one adds to this Thielicke’s remarks on a possible special charisma of homosexually oriented people, then the church ought to value having homosexually oriented persons among its officeholders. They would bring positive qualifications for the pastoral ministry to homosexuals.”

⁹⁸ Cf. R. Pringel, “Plädoyer für eine Christianisierung der Kirche im Umgang mit den Homosexuellen,” Kentler (see n. 44), 194–225. Here 199, 211; also Kentler (see n. 44, preface), 9f.–N. Mosen (“Homosexualität, Gesellschaft und Politik: Bericht eines Insiders,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge*, see n. 98, 185f.) writes, after having studied truly problematic examples of irrational fear of homosexuality (or rather: homosexuals): “In the context of the self-image of homosexual groups as a socially disadvantaged social minority, homophobia is placed on the same level as racism and sexism. The image of the poor underprivileged person emerges, who is unable to fight the brutality of the power-establishment. Homophobia thereby becomes a political question. Homophobia thus becomes, in the words of a commentator, ‘a disease that needs to be healed; a discrimination that needs to be eradicated; and, in the religious context, a sin that needs to be forgiven.’”

⁹⁹ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 197.

individuals who wish to live their homosexuality openly and who acknowledge this. Eibach is correct in writing: “The assertion that homosexuality is one of many expressions of a multiform human sexuality, and as such, equivalent (or, respectively, equal) to heterosexuality, represents the ethical and theological core of the current controversies in the churches; for this hypothesis is interpreted theologically to mean that homosexuality is a ‘disposition’ or ‘gift’ willed and created by God just like heterosexuality.”¹⁰⁰

Now, seriously engaging the thesis of an equivalence of homosexuality cannot avoid examining the underlying argumentation and the theological approach connected to it. It is, first of all, striking that the question, what is the object of the biblical command of love and acceptance? is not answered from the theological realities of the Bible, but from selected “insights” of the human sciences. In particular, the Kinsey reports gain almost the status of new revelations. They are held as normative and are deployed in the debate accordingly. As for the psycho-therapeutic insights, it is interesting that contrary approaches and insights are systematically ignored and suppressed or disqualified as expressions of sinful, that is, homophobic attitudes.¹⁰¹ According to Eibach, a majority of those engaged in the human sciences still considers homosexuality to be a “symptom of a failed psycho-sexual development”¹⁰² and no equivalent variant of human sexuality. However, theologians, ecclesial groups, and synodical majorities act as if science has proved the equivalence of homosexuality; and,

¹⁰⁰ U. Eibach, “Homosexualität und die christliche Bestimmung für die Lebensformen der Geschlechter,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 197-226. Here 202, cf. *Ibid.* n. 12: “Some district conventions of the Church in the Rhineland assert this also for bisexuality.”

¹⁰¹ Cf. on this issue the contributions assembled in the volume *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge: Dokumentation eines ökumenischen Symposiums*, organized by the Deutsches Institut für Jugend und Gesellschaft (OJC) Reichelsheim (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1995); furthermore H. Brand, “Konflikt und Gemeinschaft in der Ökumene: Ein Erfahrungsbericht aus Harare,” *Lutherische Kirche in der Welt: Jahrbuch des Martin-Luther-Bundes*, vol. 47 (Erlangen, 2000), 159-182. Here 173.

¹⁰² Eibach (see n. 68), 200. Cf. also J. Nicolosi, “Eine andere Sicht von männlicher Homosexualität,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 151-159. Here 151-153. Nicolosi also sheds light on the reasons which, in 1973, led the American Psychological Association (APA) to strike homosexuality from its “list of pathological disorders” (*ibid.*, 152).

after declaring the fact of homosexuality normative, they hallow it by means of the biblical commandment of love. One obviously cannot fail to see here that adopting sexual personal fulfillment as a norm is by no means a neutral perspective, but results in a new norm, namely, the satisfaction of individual needs.¹⁰³ T. Rendtorff judges here with all desirable clarity: “The reduction of norms and ethical criteria to the acceptance of natural dispositions is a declaration of bankruptcy of ethics.”¹⁰⁴ It therefore needs to be asserted emphatically that in fallen creation the given cannot simply be the normative.¹⁰⁵ If this were so, where are the limits? Based on such a line of argumentation, could not pedophilia, incest and sodomy also be understood as legitimate measures of self-realization which stabilize one’s personality?¹⁰⁶

Contrary to this view, one needs to assert, based on the above-mentioned findings from Holy Scripture, that all arguments which are lined up against the abiding relevance of the biblical statements on homosexuality are null and void. Neither in the Old nor in the New Testament does the rejection of homosexual intercourse aim merely at cult prostitution.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the

¹⁰³ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 197-199.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted according to W. Schlichting, “Dem Wort aus dem Weg gehen,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 227-237. Here 237. Cf. Meilaender (see n. 28), 73: “If the ‘natural’ denotes simply the desire some people consistently have, the whole bewildering variety of such desires that exist in our world, we will lose our grip on norm entirely.”

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Hempelmann (see n. 7), 188: “Where the factual becomes the norm, there the dignity of man is given up as a being which can interact with himself but also with his wishes and urges. ... In fallen creation which is under the power of sin, the ‘naturally given’ is not simply identical with what God created and willed.”

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Ibid., 187; furthermore R. Werner, “Homosexualität und die Vollmacht in der christlichen Gemeinde,” *Theologische Beiträge* 25 (1994): 223-240. Here 228: “Some representatives of groups advocating emancipation (also in the church) aim even further: They demand the legalization of pedophilia and the total sexualization of life.” Cf. the report “Leitung der Reformierten Kirche tritt aus Protest zurück,” *FAZ* (Jan. 16, 1999): 2, according to which the president of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands defended a pastor and assistant professor who “had called for tolerance of pedophiles and had claimed that a pedophile relationship ‘evidently harms children very little or not at all.’ President Vissinga said that the pastor speaks ‘in a very respectful way about the kind of love that does not harm one’s neighbor.’” Furthermore, Meilaender (see n. 28), 73: “Then we very quickly find ourselves without the conceptual resources needed to speak ethically about incest, bestiality, and adultery.”

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Haacker (see n. 33), 176.

New Testament texts speak about homosexual intercourse as such, not just about the humiliation of one partner in this context.¹⁰⁸ Finally, Paul's evaluation of homosexual intercourse in the context of the doctrines of sin, Spirit, and Baptism goes far beyond every contemporary evaluation as seen in the example of Stoic philosophy.¹⁰⁹ The emphasis on marriage between man and woman as the place in life of a sexuality blessed by the Creator, however, is not the expression of an erroneous theology of orders, but the unanimous witness of Jesus and of His apostle, based on Genesis.

Paul, finally, would be hardly surprised if he were to learn “that today one does not speak about homosexual inclination as something freely chosen but as a somehow fateful matter. He would only see this as a confirmation of his way of speaking in **ROMANS 1**.”¹¹⁰ Sin, seen biblically, is always fate as well as guilt for which God holds man accountable.¹¹¹ If there is therefore a potential homosexuality of all people, then this is so — not because of some constitutive bisexuality to be exalted as a gift of the Creator — but because of the universal sinfulness of man. Already for this reason, the “postulated dependence on inclination” can, “even if it exists, be no convincing point of departure for forming a theological-ethical judgment as well as for practical pastoral care.”¹¹² The Gospel is “the judgment over what is merely given” not only in other areas, but also in the area of sexuality, “insofar as it subjects everything that is merely given to the Law,” while human “self-exculpation by means of externals and other things is an integrating part of the reality of sin.”¹¹³ There is thus, coming from the New Testament, indeed “perverted love.”¹¹⁴ This is why

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 203.

¹¹⁰ Haacker (see n. 33), 177, cf. n. 17 above!

¹¹¹ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 203f.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 95, cf. *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹³ Hoffmann (see n. 43), 181, 183.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Pannenberg (see n. 30).

one needs to ask — when it comes to “today’s oft-heard argument, that homosexual practices are legitimate and in agreement with the Gospel where they are an expression of love” — “whether, contrary to a romanticizing notion, love in the Scriptures does not manifest itself in a concrete, specified acting: ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (JOHN 14:15).”¹¹⁵

Yet, as to the “enhanced notion of sexuality,” one has to point out that in the New Testament not only homosexual intercourse, but every intercourse out of wedlock is seen as irreconcilable with a sanctified life with Christ. In this sense, homosexuality is indeed only one form of the biblically rejected *porneia* that violates the undivided devotion of a man and a woman to one another. The rejection of a distinction between “good” and “promiscuous” homosexuality propagated by the churchly lobby group *Homo-sexualität und Kirche* (HuK) speaks volumes in this context. And the claim of a universal bisexuality of all people, in connection with the demand — made for the sake of the psychic integrity of man — that this bisexuality also ought to be lived out, is nothing other than an invitation to general promiscuity.¹¹⁶ The theological justification and the churchly acceptance of bisexuality thus lead to a sanctioning of permanent adultery.¹¹⁷ The total disjoining of

¹¹⁵ Hempelmann (see n. 7), 187. Cf. R. Slenczka, “Völlige Desorientierung? Zur Orientierungshilfe des Rates der EKD über ‘Homosexualität und Kirche,’” Id., *Neues und Altes*, vol. 3: *Dogmatische Gutachten und aktuelle Stellungnahmen* (Neuendettelsau 2000), 219–221. Here 220: “According to Scripture, however, love is, not the abrogation, but the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:10).”

¹¹⁶ The sexologist M. Dannecker admits “that talking about permanent partnerships belongs to the first phase of the struggle for emancipation; promiscuity is part of the homosexual person’s nature. This is why it is understandable that representatives of HuK feel that it is discriminating to distinguish ‘between good, socially adapted, inconspicuous, monogamous homosexuals on the one hand and ... non-conformist and promiscuous homosexuals on the other hand’ and demand the full acceptance of a promiscuous and bisexual lifestyle also in the church” Eibach (see n. 68), 200.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 210f. n. 54: “It is surprising that, according to the pertinent demands of groups pushing for emancipation, in many opinions of theologians and synodical assemblies (...) it is already presupposed as something self-evident that also a bisexual inclination can be lived out of Christian responsibility. The argument that this sanctions permanent adultery is swept aside by pointing out that marriage and marital faithfulness have been passed by reality and are an expression of a double moral standard anyway (...). One here overlooks completely the many tragedies which take place in many bisexual relationships.”

sexuality from procreation thus ultimately results in a detaching of sexuality from its biological and social functions.¹¹⁸ The holistic fullness of living as partners in marriage in a mutually complementary way, which is open for the passing on of life, is replaced by a promiscuous lifestyle. The homosexual way of life, in distinction to the abstention from marriage and sexuality, thus proves to be not at all a real alternative, but it thus becomes an imitation¹¹⁹ of marriage between members of the opposite sex as willed by God.

This is confirmed by the fact that, just at a time when many heterosexuals abstain from a formal wedding, homosexuals demand to be admitted to civil recognition and ecclesial blessing,¹²⁰ and they even demand the right of adoption. The debates in society and church are not at all about how to deal with individual homosexual people, but they are all about the general recognition of a specific lifestyle as equal to heterosexual marriage and family. In fact, it is not only about the recognition of the homosexual way of life, but also about the recognition of a “gay identity.”¹²¹ Once the discussion has moved there, at stake is no longer a legitimate protection from harassment, but the civil rights of a recognized minority.¹²² To be sure, as for the churchly and societal treatment of homosexual people, one must indeed observe that church

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 198f., 205f.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Hoffmann (see n. 43), *passim*.

¹²⁰ Cf. G. R. Schmidt, “Maßnahmen an der Ehe: Zehn Thesen zu Homosexualität und Kirche,” Aust, Gensichen, Hoffmann (see n. 3), 38–55. Here 40.

¹²¹ Cf. J. Nicolosi, “Identität und Sexualität: Ursachenforschung und Therapieerfahrung bei homosexuellen Männern,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 31–42. Here 31: “‘Homosexual’ describes a sexual orientation On the other hand, ‘gay’ is a socio-political identity. A person chooses a gay identity as one possibility of dealing with homosexuality.” [Cf. J. Nicolosi, “The Gay Deception,” C. Wolfe, ed., *Homosexuality and American Public Life*, intr. by W. Kristol (Dallas, 1999), 98–105, esp. 98f.]

¹²² Cf. N. Mosen (see n. 95), 164f.; furthermore, *ibid.*, 176: “Homosexual historian David Altman has put it this way: ‘The single biggest victory of the gay movement . . . has been moving the debate away from behavior to identity. This has pushed the opposing side into a position in which they appear to be attacking the rights of homosexual citizens and no longer combating a certain behavior which is, in their opinion, anti-social.’”

and society have been guilty in the past.¹²³ However, one needs to maintain with Ulrich Eibach that bringing about an equality of the homosexual lifestyle with marriage cannot be the only way of resisting the exclusion of, and discrimination against, homosexual people.¹²⁴ One also needs to ask whether at a time when politicians, who openly profess their “gay identity,” are widely applauded;¹²⁵ when homosexual eroticism is openly displayed and advertised in street demonstrations;¹²⁶ when homosexuals as an evidently affluent societal group are targeted by marketing,¹²⁷ one can truly still speak of societal discrimination. Rather, one can indeed observe that the government’s support for homosexual partnerships takes place at the expense of marriage and family, which are constitutionally protected for good reasons, and additionally leads to new discriminations.¹²⁸ What is the justification

¹²³ Cf. the sensitive remarks by Hempelmann (see n. 7), 181.

¹²⁴ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 192f.

¹²⁵ Cf. K. Schuller, “Ein Juchzen und Jauchzen: Die Berliner SPD ist gekommen, sich zu freuen,” FAZ (11 June 2001): 2; the article “Be-Coming In,” FAZ (12 June 2001): 51 shows that the situation in so-called “Christian” parties is no different.

¹²⁶ Cf., e.g., M. Küpper, “... und das ist gut so: ‘Wowi, Gysi und das Verhältnis zwischen Homosexuellen und Politik auf dem Christopher Street Day in Berlin,” FAZ (25 June 2001): 11: Homosexuals “are now welcomed in such an enthusiastic way that the perceived new arrivals marvel at being praised for their sexual orientation as if it were a progress of civilization.” K. Adam wonders “why people who can bring their sexual obsession into the light of public without restraint are still considered a discriminated group” [“Kinderlandsverräter: Wie die Gleichstellungspolitik Ungerechtigkeiten schafft,” FAZ (29 June 2001), 55].

¹²⁷ Cf. Mosen (see n. 95), 177: “A marketing poll of the *Wall Street Journal* showed that homosexuals in reality belong to the most affluent societal groups in America.” For the very similar situation in Germany cf. F. Böge, “Kochen mit Max und Holger: Homosexuelle im Werbefernsehen,” FAZ (10 May 2001): 14.

¹²⁸ B. Rüthers, “Ehe und Familie im Wandel des Zeitgeistes: Die Gestaltungsfreiheit des Grundgesetzes hat verfassungsrechtliche Grenzen,” FAZ (18 May 2000): 15: “The family offers protection, comfort, and trust. In the family sympathy, solidarity, circumspection, reliability, and discipline are experienced and passed on. The aimed-for making legally equal non-marital and homosexual partnerships misses these basic functions and differences. It would severely damage the common good.” Cf. also Adam (see n. 123). This is why I cannot understand Führer’s evaluation of the law who, in his otherwise good essay, writes: “The new legal status of homosexual partnerships brought about by the 2001 Domestic Partnership Law makes it possible to meet homosexuals in a legally protected space, against which there are no churchly objections ...” (see n. 32), 18. This does not properly characterize the law, since it aims at making homosexual partnerships widely equal with marriage. Cf. on this the critical remarks by the jurist Braun (see n. 2), who shows in a detailed analysis how the law in many ways creates new discriminations and additionally contributes to the destruction of the foundations of society, a fact which also the Church cannot ignore. Cf. my review in *Lutherische Beiträge* 8 (2003): 64-66.

for preferring certain sexually defined partnerships — beyond heterosexual marriage and family protected by the constitution — to other partnerships which are not sexually defined?¹²⁹

Counter to these developments, one has to maintain that the ethos of marriage is a superior given for the formal ethos of a society.¹³⁰ One needs to add that this preeminent place of marriage applies also to theology and church. This not only corresponds to the saying of Jesus: “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female’” (**MARK 10:6**), whereby He places the fundamental anthropological realities established by God from Genesis before and above human law and ecclesial finding of the truth. At the same time, at stake are also the future of a society and its responsibility to pass on life to coming generations,¹³¹ therefore, the protection of families and children. This also applies to the demand to grant homosexual couples the right to adoption as well as to the hopes and demands of some homosexuals to have offspring without heterosexual intercourse with help from the techniques of reproductive medicine.¹³² In both cases, an actionable right to children is claimed, which — also for heterosexual couples — must not and cannot exist, but which also does not take the affected children into consideration.¹³³ This is the

¹²⁹ Cf. R. Müller, “Bedenken gegen Lebenspartnerschaft: ‘Bitburger Gespräche’ zur Rechtspolitik,” FAZ (15 Jan. 2001): 4 and R. Spaemann, “Was nicht des Staates ist: Die Homosexuellenehe wäre ungerecht,” FAZ (14 March 2000): 49.

¹³⁰ Cf. Hoffmann (see n. 43), 188; furthermore, emphatically, Braun (see n. 2) *passim*.

¹³¹ Cf. Th. S. Hoffmann, “Haus ohne Verhüter: Nicht gleichmachen, was ungleich ist. Die ‘Ehe der Homosexuellen’ im Lichte des Naturrechts,” FAZ (28 Feb. 2000): 54.

¹³² Cf. R. Flöhl, “Klonieren bald gesellschaftsfähig?” FAZ (18 Feb. 1998), N 2: “Homosexuals and lesbians have put high hopes in cloning, since it makes one’s own reproduction possible without foreign genes.” Cf. furthermore the report: “Baby von zwei Müttern: Fortpflanzungstechnik für lesbische Paare,” FAZ (22 Jan. 2002): 42 and Mosen (see n. 95), 193: “An Auckland in-vitro fertilization clinic was told that artificial insemination can no longer be denied to unmarried or lesbian women.”

¹³³ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 201; n. 29: “Questioning of heterosexuality as the normative guiding ideal of raising children is also at the bottom of demanding a right to adoption for homosexual couples; for, without a doubt, a homosexual formation takes places in this way which appears justified on this basis.” Also cf. J. Cardinal Meisner, “Die Sinnlichkeit des Glaubens: Warum die Katholische Kirche dagegen ist, dass homosexuelle Menschen heiraten,” FAZ (19 Jan. 2000): 13: “The demand for the adoption of children by homosexual couples once more clearly shows that not the well-being of the child, but the need of the homosexual couple for children is most important here.”

peak of the claim to “self-realization” which obviously does not have anything to do with the self-giving love of the Gospel.

The exchange of truth for a lie in these questions, however, is by no means a societal phenomenon only; it also informs the debate in the churches. It begins with questions concerning the interpretation of Scripture, and how theological as well as ethical judgments are established. It continues with ignoring, marginalizing, or defaming successful pastoral approaches leading to the liberation from homosexuality. According to some observers, a true battle of worldviews is raging.¹³⁴ By way of example, we will take a closer look at the critical analysis of discussion papers of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland by the Bonn ethicist, Martin Honecker, and at that of the decision of the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Schleswig-Holstein by the journalist, Konrad Adam, since in both cases it becomes very clear what is at stake in church and society.

Honecker deals with two discussion papers of the standing theological commission of the Rhineland’s territorial church from 1996.¹³⁵ Since both papers have led to far-reaching synodical decisions,¹³⁶ taking a look at Honecker’s elaborations is worthwhile still today. Honecker, after a brief introduction to the argumentation and style of the papers, criticizes first of all the one-sided composition of the commission, which, additionally, “wanted to eliminate from the outset other positions as fundamentalist, Catholic, confessionalist, and bourgeois in order to declare its own — emancipationist — evaluation as the only

¹³⁴ Thus, e.g., H. Hempelmann, “Die Autorität der Heiligen Schrift und die Quelle theologischer Grundentscheidungen,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 238-261. Here 242.

¹³⁵ M. Honecker, “Ehe und ‘andere Lebensformen’: Theologische Bricolage in zwei Diskussionspapieren der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland,” *Zeitwende* 68 (1997): 1-11.

¹³⁶ Cf. U. Rasche, “Segnungen für homosexuelle Paare: Die hessen-nassauische Kirche berät – Mehrheit der Gemeinden dagegen,” *FAZ* (7 Dec. 2001): 4: “In January 2000 the synodical assembly of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland endorsed the blessing of homosexuals against the will of its President, the President of the Council of the EKD, Kock.” The status quo on these issues in this and other churches in the EKD is documented by Führer (see n. 32), 18f.

possible 'evangelical' stance."¹³⁷ Honecker, commenting on the program "Shaping sexuality in a way that does justice to community" which is advocated in the papers by taking recourse to the biblical term *zedāqa* [justice] and by rejecting "a legalistic narrowing of seemingly biblical propositions," states: "It is the motto of sexual liberation, of emancipation from prejudices, of sexual revolution, which, delayed by one generation, is thus brought into the 'evangelical-churchly realm'; ... sentiments of the Zeitgeist of the 60s and 70s" are thus "continued in the church ... without any break."¹³⁸ On the other hand, the treatment of Scripture is marked by numerous omissions¹³⁹ as well as by the application "of a constructivist-emancipationist interpretation of the Bible": "the 'foreign' Bible is ... adapted to current needs. The text meets the needs of an 'experience society' [*Erlebnisgesellschaft*] (G. Schulze) halfway. It satisfies a craving for religious life; the wish for the oneness of sexuality and spirituality. A subjectivist self-service mentality can find itself in it without any problem. The normative vacuum which is created thereby cannot be compensated for, or filled, by this kind of theology."¹⁴⁰

Adam, addressing the resolution of the 1997 synodical assembly of the Schleswig-Holstein Church at Rendsburg not to deny committed marriage-like partnerships the Church's blessing, states that the synodical resolution "speaks about marriage and family, but does not mention the children with one word." It is the journalist

¹³⁷ Honecker (see n. 132), 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 6. Hoffmann (see n. 43), 177 talks about the "making up for, or even blessing of, the secular 'sexual revolution' on the levels of theology, church law, and pastoral practice"

¹³⁹ Cf. Honecker (see n. 132), 7f. Honecker mentions *ibid.* the omission of the Sixth Commandment; of the interpretation of marriage as a covenant and as a likeness of the faithful covenant of God with Israel; of the biblical warning against faithlessness; of the words of Jesus regarding divorce and marriage. Equally absent is any reference to the "basic human phenomenon of shame (Gen. 2:25)." He furthermore criticizes the truncating falsification of the Pauline statements, etc. Equally important is his comment on the documents' view of history: "The positive things are mostly omitted; the missionary importance of the 'Christian' home and of marriage and family lived in a Christian way at the beginning of Christianity are missing as well as the Reformation's refocusing on the duties of family and marriage as source of the evangelical congregation ..."

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

who reminds the Church that “the contexts recorded in Genesis” cannot simply be forgotten, much less can they be denied. Adam sees in the synodical procedure a victory of the “debate culture,” “which advances progress at the expense of those who cannot participate in the debate and who therefore cannot defend themselves: today’s incompetents and tomorrow’s unborn.” By blessing all sorts of relationships, the Schleswig-Holstein Church fulfills “the greatest commandment of market society,” according to Adam: “Be flexible and mobile! To act upon this imperative is difficult with children, more difficult than without them.” And he adds to this the theologically most important thought: the church assembly serves “the same god who, for it, only has taken on the name of ‘individualization.’ This god does not like any long-term commitments and, already for this reason, does not know what to do about children who need such commitments.”¹⁴¹

4. “THEY HAVE EXCHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD FOR AN IMAGE”

With Adam’s remarks we have also explicitly reached the thought which Paul, in **ROM. 1:18-32**, takes as his point of departure: the exchange of the true God for human images of God. This exchange can be discovered in the debate on homosexuality on different levels. First of all, it concerns the basic question of the interpretation of Scripture. Honecker’s analysis shows that a justification of homosexual lifestyle is only possible by leaving out and falsifying numerous biblical passages. The role of the commandment of love as canon in the canon — that is, as a criterion by which seemingly conflicting biblical passages are criticized or simply eliminated — is played by the term *zedaqa* in the paper from the Rhineland. Yet Honecker’s elaborations show that here too — like the commandment of love in other cases — one biblical aspect is taken out of con-

¹⁴¹ K. Adam, “Evangelische Erleuchtung: Die Nordelbische Kirche modernisiert sich,” FAZ (26 Feb. 1997): 35.

text and is used as a code word for foreign, external principles of interpretation.

At times the tensions which arise between societal images and biblical mandates, and which collide also within the Church, are inserted into the biblical canon itself, when it is said, e.g., “that there is a tension within the biblical canon which, according to our insights, cannot be resolved and which therefore has to be lived with and has to be brought to bear on all churchly decisions.”¹⁴² “In clear text this means, however, that in church the unequivocal nature of God’s word of Holy Scripture is to be brought in line with the equivocal nature of a pluralistic society.”¹⁴³ The inner-churchly argumentation with the apparent contradictory nature of Scripture in sexual-ethical questions is a prime example of “enunciating, in the guise of the scholarly thesis, a religious *confessio* against the texts,”¹⁴⁴ which “inevitably leads to polytheism and naturalism,” “in which Creator and creature are not distinguished anymore.”¹⁴⁵ If the Church thus makes itself to be the “advocate of a postmodern anything goes,”¹⁴⁶ then the desires of man become criteria of biblical interpretation and ethical judgment; then the acting of the triune God in judgment and salvation is replaced by the images and

¹⁴² *Mit Spannungen leben: Eine Orientierungshilfe des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zum Thema “Homosexualität und Kirche”* (EKD-Texte, no. 57), as quoted in Slenczka (see n. 112), 221.

¹⁴³ Slenczka, *Ibid.* Cf. Hempelmann (see n. 131), 240f.: “Yet where everything, including opposites, are equally valid [*gleich gültig*]; where, in the name of a pluralism willing to integrate everything, contradictions are left standing without any resolution, there the truth itself no longer matters [*gleich gültig*] because of all the equally valid [*gleich gültig*] truths; ... There the ‘subtle survival strategy of the people’s church [*Volkskirche*]’ leads to a situation in which clarity and identity of biblical contents are not fought for anymore; there not only one’s own foundation — the Reformation’s Scripture principle — is given up out of fear of excluding others or of losing members; there, in the end, also those members are lost which one wanted to retain at all cost, because they more and more get the impression that everything can be proved with the Bible without anyone objecting.”

¹⁴⁴ J. Baur, “Sola Scriptura – historisches Erbe und bleibende Bedeutung,” H.-H. Schmid, J. Mehlhausen (eds.), *Sola Scriptura: Das reformatorische Schriftprinzip in der säkularen Welt* (Gütersloh, 1991), 19–43. Here 40 [for an extended version of Baur’s essay, see J. Baur, *Luther und seine klassischen Erben: Theologische Aufsätze und Forschungen* (Tübingen, 1993), 46–113. Here 106].

¹⁴⁵ Slenczka, “Die Auflösung der Schriftgrundlage und was daraus folgt,” *Id.*, *Neues und Altes*, vol. 3: *Dogmatische Gutachten und aktuelle Stellungnahmen* (Neuendettlesau, 2000): 249–261. Here 252.

¹⁴⁶ Hempelmann (see n. 131), 240.

ideals of society concerning a life that is successful, and that is therefore well-pleasing to the god of one's own wishes and desires. In doing so, however, the churches do justice neither to their pastoral responsibility in relation to the affected individuals nor to their shared responsibility for society.

4.1 THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THE SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

The latest churchly statements on homosexuality show less of a critical commentary to societal developments than an uncritical blessing of the same. This too is about the conflict between God and the gods of man, for a society that ignores the ethos of wedlock, which the Creator placed before all human institutions, becomes itself a “creator of institutions which are supposed to represent and contain that which can only come from outside of society.”¹⁴⁷ The demand to help homosexuals to have offspring by means of medical methods all the way to cloning is an extreme but logical consequence. A church which, for its part — in eager willingness to make up for the sexual revolution in its own realm — “blesses” such newly created institutions, in the final analysis cooperates in the societal destruction of marriage and family. This is, also within the Church, not “progress” but an uncritical return to an “antinomian pattern of behavior which revives traditions of the Christian Gnosticism of late antiquity: ... successive polygamy, even of the academic and pastoral personnel; statements favoring a ‘holistic’ sexuality liberated from the yoke of marriage; near-total abstinence from pre-marital asceticism among theologians and non-theologians alike; the practice and demanding propagation of homosexual behavior represent ... a clear break with what, so far, has been self-evident for the ethos of the New Testament but also for that of the Reformation.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Hoffmann (see n. 43), 188.

¹⁴⁸ J. Baur, *Das reformatorische Christentum in der Krise: Überlegungen zur christlichen Identität an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1997), 52; cf. also Führer (see n. 32), 22 and passim.

It must be permitted to ask, who is actually shaping whom or, respectively, who is rather shaped by whom. Paul, at any rate, writes in **ROM. 12:2** in a way that clearly agrees with **ROM. 1:18-32**, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” To be sure, such a return of the Church to God’s will does not have by any means the promise that society will follow it unquestioningly. But, at any rate, then everybody who has ears could hear the salutary things that the Church has to announce, also to the world, from God’s Word. Honecker’s elaborations show, in an exemplary manner, what this salutary ministry to an idolatrous world could look like. According to him, it would be necessary in our situation — in which the “synergy between, on the one hand, scientific-technological insight and innovation and, on the other hand, societal change and a transvaluation of values” is evident — “to analyze critically the claim of emancipation and self-realization, of rationality and ‘enlightenment.’ For all earthly experience is temporal, subject to time. ‘Eternal’ blessedness, ‘eternal’ satisfaction of desires is impossible on earth. Christian faith was and is conscious of this. This is why Christians and churches have become advocates for personal integration, for tying sexuality to what is humane, and for cultural sociability. This aspect is not brought to bear anymore, when the critique of traditional churchly statements merely promotes the emancipation from the good reasons of tradition, with the result that, ‘even in evangelical ethics, marriage cannot be the only form of life in which sexuality can be lived.’”¹⁴⁹

4.2 THE IMAGE OF GOD AND THE PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

The exchange of God for human images of God necessarily continues on all levels of churchly activity, beginning in the Divine Service, continuing in pastoral care and the content of proclamation and instruction, and on to questions of church government.

¹⁴⁹ Honecker (see n. 132), 10.

If one arrives at the conclusion that homosexuality is to be regarded as gift of the divine Creator, it is only consistent for the Church to bless homosexual couples that so desire. Also, the exclusion of practicing and confessing homosexuals from church work, especially from the pastoral office, is then simply impossible, especially when one holds to a mere functional understanding of the office.¹⁵⁰ In this sense, the demands of *Homosexualität und Kirche* and of those who demand a seemingly loving opening of the Church for practicing homosexuals are only consistent. Yet this makes it all the more important to see that this cannot anymore be legitimized with Holy Scripture or the love of the Gospel. A churchly blessing of a homosexual couple is therefore also no blessing bestowed by the triune God. Rather, here humans act on their own authority and in the name of their images of God. “As the church cannot invent sacraments which Christ has not instituted, so it also cannot bless what God has not blessed.”¹⁵¹ Such an act is open rebellion against the First Commandment,¹⁵² and it necessarily must have the effect of splitting the Church.¹⁵³

Directly connected to what takes place in the divine service is, also in this instance, the pastoral practice of the Church. For it is evident that “a churchly recognition of homosexuality as an equally valid way of life weakens the will to change.”¹⁵⁴ “When the churches say, ‘gay is good,’ they take away much of the incentive necessary to begin the long and painful way of change. It is significantly easier to change churches than one’s own life. In many cases, the church deprives the homosexual person of the motivation to change. It may be that the Christian battling his

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Bäumler (see n. 93), 149.

¹⁵¹ G. Hennig, “Stellungnahme zu sogenannten ‘neuen Lebensformen,’” *Theologische Beiträge* 25 (1994): 241f. Here 242.

¹⁵² Cf. Hempelmann (see n. 7), 190: “With the argument that one must not withhold God’s blessing from anyone, the blessing of the living and holy God is blasphemously placed on something which is an abomination to God”; cf. also Schlichting (see n. 101), 237.

¹⁵³ Cf. Volk (see n. 3), 35f.

¹⁵⁴ Hempelmann (see n. 7), 191.

homosexuality is surrounded by people who tell him that he should celebrate his homosexuality as a gift from God.”¹⁵⁵ In this context, the common practice in churchly counseling agencies or in the church’s youth work of confirming youth and those seeking advice in their homosexual orientation is a terrible thing.¹⁵⁶ Equally terrible is the “coming out” which is praised as the conclusion of self-realization. This is nothing else than a public confession, which, like every other confession, implies a condemnation of the opposite way. Where intimacy is abandoned in such an aggressive way,¹⁵⁷ a salutary pastoral practice is made extremely difficult. In view of the tragic nature of the life of many homosexual people, Christian pastoral care must try to assist them to lead a life beyond the forced public self-exposing and a retreat into hiding.¹⁵⁸ The intimacy, or respectively, confidentiality in pastoral care, is absolutely necessary for this.¹⁵⁹ Such confidentiality is indeed the opposite of proud coming-outs. Equally, offering a seemingly permanent — thus marriage-like — homosexual partnership as a way out is no solution.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, the general defamation of homosexuals in the congregation is totally wrong. Instead, the important ethical distinction between person and work, also of homosexual inclination and practice, helps to bring about a pastoral encounter beyond rejection of the person and indifference toward their acts.¹⁶¹ Here church and theology would gain spiritual authority, if they found again the courage to speak also in other areas about continence in various areas of life and about suffering

¹⁵⁵ F. Worthen, “Schritte aus der Homosexualität,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 71–84. Here 74.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. J. van der Sluis, “‘Ich bin nicht mehr so’ – ein Lebensbericht,” *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98), 15–24. Here 15; Eibach (see n. 97), 222.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Schmidt (see n. 117), 52.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Nicolosi (see n. 118), 42.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Volk (see n. 3), 35.

¹⁶⁰ Thus Roloff (see n. 29), 54, who thinks that this “would by no means be the only ethical compromise, which the Christian congregation has learned to practice.” Similarly the EKD-document *Mit Spannungen leben* (see n. 139), cf. with critical remarks Slenczka (see n. 112), 220.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Hempelmann (see n. 7), 190; Eibach (see n. 68), 209f.

for the sake of the Gospel. Based on the New Testament, at any rate, Christian ethics know “also in other areas of life about the possibility of abstaining from sexual activity (e.g., in single life, in celibacy, etc.).”¹⁶² Pastoral care here needs to distinguish between, on the one hand, therapies that are necessary and helpful in achieving a salutary use of one’s sexuality and, on the other hand, Confession and Absolution which also the person who is therapeutically “healed” continues to need.¹⁶³ The near-complete loss of Confession and Absolution in the realm of the churches has the necessary effect that church and theology have no spiritual authority anymore when it comes to dealing with serious disruptions of the relationship between God and man. This, in turn, has to do with the total elimination of the horizon of the final judgment. The responsibility before God and the standard of the external divine Word, which judges and pardons the sinner, is replaced by an ultimately merely immanent self-mediation in relation to one’s own image of God. This, in turn, serves to confirm one’s own self-realization — man as sinner remains with himself, unable to open up and give himself to his Creator, or any creature different from himself. In this way, it is subtly denied that also pastoral care is about the (necessary) conflict between God and the images of God, for man reaches the freedom of faith only when the lies of his feelings give way to the truth of faith.¹⁶⁴ Many reports of those affected show that such processes of healing and hallowing are possible as miracles of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁵ It is nothing but a denial of the power of the Holy Spirit

¹⁶² Hempelmann (see n. 7), 190.

¹⁶³ Cf. Hoffmann (see n. 43), 194: “Even simply ‘successful’ therapeutic ‘techniques’ fail in view of the guilt to which the conscience bears witness and which is revealed in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Only in His presence also forgiveness takes place” — obviously, one needs to add, in the presence of the Holy Spirit that is sacramentally — by Baptism and Absolution — mediated. On the significance of Confession cf. also Werner (see n. 103), 239.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. van der Sluis (see n. 153), 20: “Rom. 1 says that homosexuality means to be exposed to false thinking. Truth is suppressed by the lie; and the lie is that homosexual feelings make happy. What does living out of faith mean? It means that we can complement, even replace, the lies of our feelings, of our senses, by the truth of faith.”

¹⁶⁵ Cf. van der Sluis who, as one personally affected by homosexuality, reports about his therapeutic work (Ibid., 18): “For us, homosexuality is not a ‘being thus’ but a ‘being directed’ into a certain direction. Change is possible to lead a liberated life in celibacy or in a heterosexual relationship.” Cf.

active in the Word and in the Holy Sacraments, beginning with Baptism, when such healings are denied or explained away.

This is why basic decisions in churchly instruction and in proclamation are highly necessary either way. This is why the advocates for the equality of homosexuals try to start here.¹⁶⁶ This is why it is absolutely necessary for the Church to proclaim the biblical view of man in an unadulterated manner as the foundation for a life that is blessed by God, and, where this is needed, to call sinners to repentance. It would be irreconcilable with the biblical view of man to admit practicing homosexuals to church work, especially to the pastoral office.¹⁶⁷ “Churchly teaching and instruction have to state clearly that homosexuality and even more so, bisexuality ... are by no means forms of sexuality that are equal to heterosexuality; and that it is therefore not a matter of indifference which shape sexuality takes on. Heterosexuality therefore has to be the unequivocal guiding ideal of all sexual education; and people who are still wavering in their sexual orientation should unequivocally be encouraged (e.g., by means of pastoral care and psychotherapy) toward heterosexuality. Thus, all possibilities should be exhausted, especially by way of prevention and therapy, to protect people from homosexual influences and lifestyles.”¹⁶⁸ One only needs to add here that it is primarily not about education against something, but positively, about education for marriage and family, in the context of which also the charisma of celibacy should be addressed by the Church more clearly as a genuine alternative. Honecker, referring to Luther’s explanation of the Sixth Commandment, reminds us what is, in this area of life, the most important duty of every Christian and his greatest joy in the faith, namely, to help preserve “somebody else’s chastity ... with word and deed.”¹⁶⁹

furthermore all the essays gathered in the collection *Homosexualität und christliche Seelsorge* (see n. 98).

¹⁶⁶ Cf. on the effects of sexual education: Mosen (see n. 95), 171-173.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Eibach (see n. 68), 208; Schmidt (see n. 117), 40f.

¹⁶⁸ Eibach (see n.68), 208.

¹⁶⁹ Honecker (see n. 132), 1f.; cf. also Meilaender (see n. 28), 66f.

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QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Wenz notes both the societal and churchly changes of attitudes toward homosexuality in Germany. (p. 1-2) Do you see parallel developments in North America?
2. The key biblical text that Wenz deals with is **ROM. 1:18-32**. Read this passage carefully. What are the foundational issues laid out by the Apostle in this text? How does the overall context set in **ROM. 1:18-3:20** help us understand what Paul is doing here?
3. “It is therefore not our time which sheds light on the Scripture which is seemingly dark and in need of interpretation; but it is the Scripture which sheds light on our time” (p. 3). How does this statement of the Reformation principle of the clarity of Scripture help us in the current debate over homosexuality?
4. What is the fundamental point that Paul makes in **ROM. 1:19-23**?
5. In verses 24, 26, 28 the Apostle speaks of God “giving them” (sinners) up or over to their sins. What is entailed in each of these incidents of God giving sinners up to their sin?
6. Wenz writes “The threefold giving up of man by God corresponds to a threefold exchanging on the part of man” (p. 6). What are these exchanges? What is the ultimate outcome of these exchanges?
7. Paul condemns homosexual intercourse as an exchange of the natural for the unnatural. How does Wenz argue that this apostolic judgment cannot be dismissed by an appeal to Paul’s “ignorance of human sciences” (p. 8)?
8. How does Wenz answer the objection that Jesus never condemned homosexual behavior (p. 9ff)?

9. According to Wenz, why is it that sexuality is not addressed in an isolated manner in the Scriptures (p. 11ff)?
10. How is marriage given Christological focus in the New Testament? (p. 12ff) What does this mean for the New Testament's interpretation of sexual sin?
11. Wenz points out that both the Old and New Testaments see homosexuality as an expression and symptom of a fallen world (p. 13). How is **LEV. 18:22** echoed in **1 COR. 6:9** and **1 TIM. 1:10**?
12. How does Baptism contradict homosexuality? (p. 15)
See **1 COR. 6:9-11**.
13. After survey a number of New Testament passages (p. 7) Wenz what are the two things that Wenz concludes that these passages show (p. 16-18)?
14. How does Wenz answer the objection of those theologians like Helmut Kentler that biblical statements on homosexuality are not relevant anymore because it is par of man's nature, not subject to human decision (p. 20ff)?
15. Wenz argues that attempts to defend homosexual behavior have "the effect of destroying culture" (p. 23). What are the evidences of this?
16. How do the proponents of homosexuality misuse the biblical commandment to love making it a "canon within a canon" (p. 27-28)?
17. How does Paul's evaluation of homosexuality involve the doctrines of creation, sin, the Holy Spirit, and baptism (p. 30-31)?
18. Wenz writes that societal and churchly acceptance of homosexuality challenges "fundamental anthropological realities established by God from Genesis before and above human law and ecclesial finding of the truth. At the same time, at stake are also the future of a society and its responsibility to pass on

life to coming generations, therefore the protection of families and children. This also applies to the demand to grant homosexual couples the right of adoption as well as to the hopes and demands of some homosexuals to have offspring without heterosexual intercourse with the help of reproductive medicine” (p. 35). How does this truth guide the policies of church-related adoption agencies?

19. Wenz quotes Martin Honecker’s description of “a constructivist-emancipation interpretation of the Bible” (p. 36-37) How is this approach to Scripture demonstrated by those who call for the acceptance of same-sex unions by the church? What does such an approach to the Holy Scriptures finally do to the Scriptures?
20. Knorad Adam notes that in a recent resolution of a territorial church in Germany regarding church blessing for homosexual partnerships “speaks about marriage and family, but does not mention children with one word” (p. 37). How does this omission fail to show genuine justice?
21. Why are “naturalism and polytheism” inevitable outcomes if the church gives in to societal pressures to accept homosexuality as a legitimate way of life (p. 39)?
22. If church agencies make provisions for the adoption of children, how does the church itself then cooperate “in the societal destruction of marriage and family” (p. 40)?
23. Wenz writes “A churchly blessing of a homosexual couple is therefore also no blessing of the triune God. Rather, here humans act on their own authority and in the name of their images of God” (p. 42). In light of the first commandment, what does this mean? How does this connect with **ROM. 1:18-32**?
24. What suggestions does Wenz make for appropriate, evangelical pastoral care of homosexual persons (p. 42ff)?

NOTES

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