

NOTE: This material was first published in a series of 5 articles and published in the August, September, October, December, and January, 1983 and 1984 issues of **The Apostolic Messenger** when I was living in Jackson, MS. — Walton Weaver

Homosexuality And The Bible **Response To Gay Advocates** **Part Two**

by Walton Weaver

Argument No. 2, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Second, regarding Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, any attempt to arbitrarily enforce these highly culturally and historically conditioned passages-while no Christian person observes all the legal requirements which precede and follow them-stretches the credibility of even the worst biblical interpreter. The selectivity with which these interpreters treat the entirety of the Levitical law' is the best evidence that it is not their respect for the Scriptures which leads to their hostility toward homosexuality. It is their hostility toward homosexuality which allows them to disregard the best principles of interpretation.

1. Conditioned passages. Ken Martin does not deny that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 condemn homosexuality. He could not do that because a simple reading of the passages would tell anyone otherwise. “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is ,abomination” (Lev. 18:22). “And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). But Martin dismisses these passages as irrelevant today because, he says, they are “culturally and historically conditioned passages.” He does not explain how this is so, but other advocating homosexuals have told us that these passages only show us a concern for involvement in alien religions; they teach only ritual purity, not ethical or moral purity. Israel, in other words, is only being admonished to keep herself separate from the practices of the pagan Canaanites. It was not a separation from sin and evil to which Israel was called, but the call is one of separation from the idolatrous cultic practices of the time. Homosexuality is condemned because it is linked with these practices, not because it is a sin. I assume that this is what Martin believes.

2. More than ritual cleanness involved. The thing at stake here however is in fact a moral issue. David Atkinson, in his book, **Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship** (p. 82), defines the matter well in the following words:

In both verses, homosexual behaviour is described as *toebah* , translated ‘abomination’. This is a word with wide usage in the Old Testament, but which with reference to people always denotes an offence either against a person’s moral sense or against their religious integrity. Thus ‘every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians’ (Gen, 43.32). When the abomination is ‘before

the Lord,' *toebah* sometimes refers to practices derived from idolatry (e.g. 2 Ki 16.2); sometimes to sacrifices offered in the wrong spirit (e.g. Isa 1.13), or to 'lying tips' or 'divers weights' (Prov 12.22, 20.23). According to commentators, it expresses the idea of something 'loathed by God'; a thing which God 'detests'; something which is 'incompatible with the nature of Yehweh', a violation of divinely ordained boundaries. The primary reference thus appears to be incompatibility with the character of Yehweh, and not merely to 'what is not proper according to Jewish law and custom', (pace McNeil). In Lev 18.22 and 20.13, therefore, homosexual behaviour is thus censured as *toebah*: as incompatible with the nature of the Creator. K. Grayston goes even further in the suggestion that these verses provide 'an outstanding reversal of what is natural'.

3. Moral laws do not change. Martin seems to be bothered by the fact that the prohibitions on homosexuality are preceded and followed by legal requirements which no Christian would follow today. This was the argument advanced by Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Mallenkott, **Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?** The argument in this book was that if we are to hold that the passages on homosexuality are relevant today consistency and fairness would require that we also speak out against such common practices as eating rare steak (the passage forbids eating meat with blood in it, ww), wearing mixed fabrics, and having marital intercourse during the menstrual period." Their point is that these things are a part of the same Holiness Code, and therefore if part is binding today all should be binding.

The simple and only necessary response to this argument is that which has already been given above by David Atkinson: homosexuality is a moral sin, a sin against the very nature of God. This is not so of the other things mentioned by Scanzoni and Mallenkott. These are only infractions against the ritual code. The laws which call for ceremonial cleanness involve separation from other nations and their idolatrous practices (see Lev. 18:1-5; 20:1-7), or they call for respect for the rules of cleanness for tabernacle worship. There are other laws which involve moral issues, and homosexuality is one of them.

The Old Testament law has been abrogated (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14), including not only the ceremonial parts of the law but the moral aspects of the law as well. But moral law does not change; it is the same in all ages. We are not surprised therefore that the same high standard of moral cleanness is called for in the New Testament as was required in the Old Testament (cf. Gal. 5:16ff.; Col. 3:5ff.; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). The condemnation of homosexuality is included in the list of moral sins which are pronounced as sinful and damning (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9). The other kinds of cleanness required were linked with Israel's relation to other nations, tabernacle worship and the sacrificial system, and being tied in with the Old Testament system (not involving moral purity) we are not surprised that they are not reinstated in the New Testament.

4. The Best Principles of Interpretation. So Martin has no cause for alarm, nor is he justified in charging us with "disregarding the best principles of interpretation" when we hold that homosexuality is a sin today. We do not argue that it is a sin today because of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. These passages show that it was a sin in the Old Testament period, but not for the same reason that some of the other things named were considered to be wrong. It was a sin then, it is a sin now, and it will always be a sin because it is contrary to the very nature of God. It is a

moral sin against God. We dare not transmute moral issues into dispensable customs, as Bailey, McNeill, Scanzoni and Mallenkott, and other advocating homosexuals have done. That is not using the best principles of interpretation. I am willing to let the reader judge as to whether my credibility as a biblical interpreter is in question because of my handling of these verses, or whether I have the proper respect for the Scriptures. But it looks like to me, Mr. Martin, that “Thou art the man” (cf. 2 Sam. 12:7).

5. Twisting Scripture. Scripture is written so that it may be understood by those who are honest at heart and are seeking the truth (Lk. 8:15; Eph. 3:3-5; Matt. 5:6; 7:7-8). Some of it is more difficult than other parts, and those who have a theory to prove will twist the parts that are hard to be understood to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Peter, after having made this point, issues this warning to Christians: “Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever, Amen” (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

If this is to be said of those who will pervert Scripture hard to be understood, it would place those who would twist and pervert Scripture that is plain and easy to understand in a much worse light. I cannot understand a mind that can take such plain passages as those which condemn homosexuality and pervert them to the point of meaninglessness, unless of course that mind itself is grossly perverted as the Gentile mind was which “changed the natural use into that which is against nature” (Rom. 1:26; cf. 1:28). The warning of Isaiah the prophet should be heard by all: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isa. 5:20-21).