

PRONOUNCEMENT

Homosexuality

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years churches and individuals who hold to an orthodox view of marriage and sexuality have come under increased pressure. Political and religious advocacy for the acceptance of homosexual relationships and same-sex marriage has grown significantly. There seems to be a concerted effort to marginalise the many reasonable and sincere people in our communities who, in good faith, maintain a traditional outlook on sexuality. This reality has prompted the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) to offer transparency in terms of our pastoral approach and position on this issue.

We base our assessment of this matter on the teachings of the Bible, God's holy and inspired Word that guides us in all aspects of belief and behaviour (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It is our sincere conviction that the family structure of husband, wife and children should continue to be the basic relational ideal which we as a church adhere to and advocate (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5). Unfortunately, as things now stand, the mere holding of such a view may lead to accusations of homophobia. We live in a time where those who express unpopular opinion are often shamed and persecuted. As a church we believe that individuals and assemblies can be orthodox in their assessment of marriage and sexuality while demonstrating a gracious and compassionate attitude towards those who do not share our view or lifestyle commitment.

2. REVISIONIST THEOLOGY

Conflicting evaluations of homosexuality have elicited different responses from different churches. Some denominations have sought to ease the tension by changing their doctrinal view of marriage and sexuality. An umbrella term commonly connected to advocacy groups is the initialism LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer). Though used as a slur in the past, the term 'queer' has undergone a change in usage. 'Queer' now refers to the ideology connected to homosexuality - that homosexuality is natural, legitimate and commendable. A further development is the emergence of Biblical scholars who accept and defend queer ideology. The website www.queertheology.com states its goal as follows: "How do you reconcile Christianity with an LGBTQ identity? Queer Theology provides a supportive community and in-depth resources..."

Even though many queer theologians do not identify as such, they introduce revisionist expositions of the Biblical texts that refer to homosexual practices. Some of these scholars present the view that the scientific premises of the Bible are outdated. Others operate on

the assumption that the Biblical writers could never have conceived of long-term committed homosexual relationships. Then there are those who claim that the Bible only speaks out against oppressive homosexual acts such as prostitution, pederasty or orgiastic debauchery. These approaches allow such theologians to argue that the Biblical texts which condemn homosexual behaviour are antiquated, misunderstood, unclear or simply unacceptable.

In truth, however, the pagan world into which the teachings of Jesus came was well acquainted with all types of homosexual liaisons and relationships. It therefore seems opportunistic to assume that the message of the Bible cannot apply to this issue. Romans 1:24-27, which addresses both male and female homosexuality (a rare feature for an ancient text), speaks of it in the context of 'exchanging the truth of God for the lie' and describes the process as 'error' (vs 27). It is significant that a doctrinal ideology which legitimises homosexual practise should be pointed out in the New Testament as heresy.

3. OUR BIBLICAL POSITION

As a church that accepts the authority of Scripture, the AFM evaluates contemporary ideology in the light of the Bible. We do not evaluate the Bible in the light of contemporary ideology. The declining moral climate of society cannot be the standard to which we hold ourselves. Nor can we rely on the guidance of theologians focused on deconstructing a Biblical text they neither believe in nor venerate. For this reason, we affirm our belief in the Bible as God's written Word, inerrant, infallible and inspired. Although the ceremonial provisions of the Old Testament have found their fulfilment in the atonement of Christ's death, the imperative of the Old Testament's moral provisions continue in essence through the lives of Christians. It must be noted here that both the Old and the New Testament evaluate homosexuality in the same way: as behaviour that is to be expected but prohibited (Gen 19:4-11, Lev 18:22, Rom 1:25-27, 1 Cor 6:9-10, Jude 1:7). Since the Bible speaks clearly of human relationships and sexuality, the church must fulfil its responsibility to prophetically voice its distinctive message in society.

It is the calling of the church to declare and affirm the Bible's position on this matter: **that marriage, as the relational norm, is an exclusive, binding, affectionate union between one man and one woman (Gen 1:27-28, Matt 19:4-5, Eph 5:31) that functions as God's natural and created context for sexual relations and procreation.** Sexual relationships that deviate from this ideal can be neither holy nor Biblical (Gal 5:19-21, 1 Tim 1:10). **The AFM affirms its position that all sexual immorality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, are unambiguously and unconditionally forbidden by God's Word.**

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1The word πλάνη (plané) refers here (as in other New Testament texts), to theological or ideological falsehood - heresy.



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