# Answering the New Atheists – A Christian Addresses Their Arguments

*Kerby Anderson counters the claim by popular new atheists that Christianity (along with other religions) is blind, irrational and without any evidence. Kerby demonstrates that contrary to the atheists' claims God is not an invention of mankind, that faith is not dangerous, and that science and Christianity support one another. From a Christian point of view, the new atheists are bringing out tired old arguments that don't stand up to rational scrutiny.*

## Is Faith Irrational?

Many of the best selling books over the last few years have been written by the New Atheists. I'd like to consider some of the criticisms brought by these individuals and provide brief answers. You may never meet one of these authors, but you are quite likely to encounter these arguments as you talk with people who are skeptical about Christianity.

 For our discussion, we will be using the general outline of the book *Is God Just a Human Invention?* written by Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow.{1} I would encourage you to read the book for a fuller discussion not only of the topics considered here but of many others as well.

You cannot read a book by the New Atheists without encountering their claim that religion is blind, irrational, and without any evidence. Richard Dawkins makes his feelings known by the title of one of his books: *The God Delusion*.

Why does he say that? He says religions are not evidentially based: "In all areas except religion, we believe what we

believe as a result of evidence."{2} In other words, religious faith is a blind faith not based upon evidence like other academic disciplines. So he concludes that religion is a "nonsensical enterprise" that "poisons everything."{3}

Each of the New Atheists makes a similar statement. Dawkins states that faith is a delusion, a "persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence."{4} Daniel Dennett claims Christians are addicted to blind faith.{5} And Sam Harris argues that "Faith is generally nothing more than the permission religious people give one another to believe things without evidence."{6}

Is this true? Do religious people have a blind faith? Certainly some religious people exercise blind faith. But is this true of all religions, including Christianity? Of course not. The enormous number of Christian books on topics ranging from apologetics to theology demonstrate that the Christian faith is based upon evidence.

But we might turn the question around on the New Atheists. You say that religious faith is not based upon evidence. What is your evidence for that broad, sweeping statement? Where is the evidence for your belief that faith is blind?

Orthodox Christianity has always emphasized that faith and reason go together. Biblical faith is based upon historical evidence. It is not belief in spite of the evidence, but it is belief because of the evidence.

The Bible, for example, says that Jesus appeared to the disciples and provided "many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of □□the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

Peter appealed to evidence and to eyewitnesses when he preached about Jesus as "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

The Christian faith is not a blind faith. It is a faith based upon evidence. In fact, some authors contend that it takes more faith to be an atheist than to believe in God.{7}

## Is God a Human Invention?

Human beings are religious. We are not only talking about people in the past who believe in God. Billions of people today believe in God. Why? The New Atheists have a few explanations for why people believe in God even though they say God does not exist.

One explanation that goes all the way back to Sigmund Freud is projection. He wrote that religious beliefs are "illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes of mankind."{8} In other words, we project the existence of God based on a human need. It is wish fulfillment. We wish there would be a God, so we assume that he exists.

As Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow point out in their book, there are five good reasons to reject this idea. One objection is that Freud's argument begs the question. In other words, it assumes that there is no God and then merely tries to find an explanation for why someone would believe in God anyway.

The projection theory can also cut both ways. If you argue that humans created God out of a need for security, then you could also just as easily argue that atheists believe there is no God because they want to be free and unencumbered by a Creator who might make moral demands on them.

Perhaps the reasons humans have a desire for the divine is because that is the only thing that will satisfy their spiritual hunger. C.S. Lewis argued that "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desires: well, there is such a thing as

sex. If I find in myself a desire, which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. Probably earthly pleasures were never made to satisfy it, but only arouse it, to suggest the real thing."{9}

Some atheists suggest that perhaps we are genetically wired to believe in God. One example would be the book by Dean Hamer entitled *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into Our Genes*. It is worth noting that even the author thought the title was overstated and at least admitted that there "probably is no single gene."{10} Since the publication of the book, its conclusions have been shown to be exaggerated. Francis Collins served as the director of the Human Genome Project and has plainly stated that there is no gene for spirituality.

Richard Dawkins believes that religious ideas might have survived natural selection as "units of cultural inheritance."{11} He calls these genetic replicators *memes*. Although he has coined the term, he is also quick to acknowledge that we don't know what memes are or where they might reside.

One critic said that "Memetics is no more than a cumbersome terminology for saying what everybody knows and that can be more usefully said in the dull terminology of information transfer."{12} Alister McGrath perceives a flaw: "Since the meme is not warranted scientifically, we are to conclude that there is a meme for belief in memes? The meme concept then dies the slow death of self-referentiality, in that, if taken seriously, the idea explains itself as much as anything else."{13}

There is another explanation that we can find in the Bible. Why do most people believe in a God? The writer of Ecclesiastes (3:11) observes that it is God who has "set eternity in the hearts of men."

## Is Religion Dangerous?

The New Atheists contend that religion is not just false; it's also dangerous. Sam Harris believes it should be treated like slavery and eradicated.{14} Christopher Hitchens wants to rally his fellow atheists against religion: "It has become necessary to know the enemy, and to prepare to fight it."{15} Richard Dawkins is even more specific: "I am attacking God, all gods, anything and everything supernatural, wherever and whenever they have been invented."{16}

Much of the criticism against religion revolves around violence. We do live in a violent world, and religion has often been the reason (or at least the justification) for violent acts. But the New Atheists are kidding themselves if they think that a world without religion would usher in a utopia where there is no longer violence, oppression, or injustice.

Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow point out in their book on the New Atheists that details matter when you are examining religion. Injustices by the Taliban in Afghanistan ought not to be used as part of the cumulative cases against religion in general or Christianity in particular. The fact that there are Muslim terrorists in the world today does not mean that all Muslims are dangerous. And it certainly doesn't mean that Christianity is dangerous.

Alister McGrath reminds us that "all ideals—divine, transcendent, human or invented—are capable of being abused. That's just the way human nature is. And that happens to religion as well. Belief in God can be abused, and we need to be very clear, in the first place, that abuse happens, and in the second, that we need to confront and oppose this. But abuse of an ideal does not negate its validity."{17}

Religion is not the problem. People are the problem because they are sinful and live in a fallen world. Keith Ward puts

this in perspective:

> *No one would deny that there have been religious wars in human history. Catholics have fought Protestants, Sunni Muslims have fought Shi'a Muslims, and Hindus have fought Muslims. However, no one who has studied history could deny that most wars in human history have not been religious. And in the case of those that have been religious, the religious component has usually been associated with some non-religious, social, ethnic, or political component that has exerted a powerful influence on the conflicts.{18}*

The New Atheists, however, still want to contend that religion is dangerous while refusing to accept that atheism has been a major reason for death and destruction. If you were to merely look at body count, the three atheistic regimes of the twentieth century (Hitler in Nazi Germany, Stalin in Russia, and Mao in China) are responsible for more than 100 million deaths.

Dinesh D'Souza explains that "Religion-inspired killing simply cannot compete with the murders perpetrated by atheist regimes." Even when you take into account the differences in the world's population, he concludes that "death caused by Christian rulers over a five-hundred-year period amounts to only 1 percent of the deaths caused by Stalin, Hitler, and Mao in the space of a few decades."{19}

Religion is not the problem; people are the problem. And removing religion and God from a society doesn't make it less dangerous. The greatest death toll in history took place in the last century in atheistic societies.

## Is the Universe Just Right for Life?

The New Atheists argue that even though the universe looks like it was designed, the laws of science can explain

everything in the universe without God. Richard Dawkins, for example, says that "A universe with a creative superintendent would be a very different kind of universe from one without."{20}

Scientists have been struck by how the laws that govern the universe are delicately balanced. One scientist used the analogy of a room full of dials (each representing a different physical constant). All of the dials are set perfectly. Move any dial to the left or to the right and you no longer have the universe. Some scientists have even called the universe a "Goldilocks universe" because all of the physical constants are "just right."

British astronomer Fred Hoyle remarked, "A commonsense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."{21}

McDowell and Morrow provide a number of examples of the fine tuning of the universe. First is the expansion rate of the universe. "If the balance between gravity and the expansion rate were altered by one part in one million, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, there would be no galaxies, stars, planets, or life."{22} Second is the fine tuning of ratio of the electromagnetic force to the gravitational force. That must be balanced to one part in 10 to the $40^{th}$ power. That is 1 with 40 zeroes following it.

Scientists also realize that planet Earth has extremely rare conditions that allow it to support life at a time when most of the universe is uninhabitable. Consider just these six conditions: (1) Life must be in the right type of galaxy, (2) life must be in the right location in the galaxy, (3) life must have the right type of star, (4) life must have the right relationship to the host star, (5) life needs surrounding planets for protection, and (6) life requires the right type

of moon.{23}

Scientists (including the New Atheists) are aware of the many fine tuned aspects of the universe. They respond by pointing out that since we could only exist in a fine-tuned universe, we shouldn't be surprised that it is fine tuned. But merely claiming that we could not observe ourselves except in such a universe doesn't really answer the question why we are in one in the first place.

Richard Dawkins admits that there is presently no naturalistic explanation for the find-tuning of the universe.<a href="#text24>{24} But he is quick to add that doesn't argue for the existence of God. And that is certainly true. We know about God and His character from revelation, not from scientific observation and experimentation. But we do see the evidence that the design of the universe implies a Designer.

## Are Science and Christianity in Conflict?

The New Atheists believe that science and Christianity are in conflict with one another. They trust science and the scientific method, and therefore reject religion in general and Christianity in particular.

Sam Harris says, "The conflict between religion and science is unavoidable. The success of science often comes at the expense of religious dogma; the maintenance of religious dogma always comes at the expense of science."{25}

Richard Dawkins believes religion is anti-intellectual. He says: "I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise . . . . It subverts science and saps the intellect."{26}

Are science and Christianity at odds with one another? Certainly there have been times in the past when that has been the case. But to only focus on those conflicts is to miss the

larger point that modern science grew out of a Christian world view. In a previous radio program based upon the book *Origin Science* by Dr. Norman Geisler and me, I explain Christianity's contribution to the rise of modern science.{27}

Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow also point out in their book that most scientific pioneers were theists. This includes such notable as Nicolas Copernicus, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, Blaise Pascal, Johannes Kepler, Louis Pasteur, Francis Bacon, and Max Planck. Many of these men actually pursued science because of their belief in the Christian God.

Alister McGrath challenges this idea that science and religion are in conflict with one another. He says, "Once upon a time, back in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was certainly possible to believe that science and religion were permanently at war. . . . This is now seen as a hopelessly outmoded historical stereotype that scholarship has totally discredited."{28}

The New Atheists believe they have an answer to this argument. Christopher Hitchens discounts the religious convictions of their scientific pioneers. He argues that belief in God was the only option for a scientist at the time.{29} But if religious believers get no credit for the positive contributions to science (e.g., developing modern science) because "everyone was religious," then why should their negative actions (e.g., atrocities done in the name of religion) discredit them? It is a double standard. The argument actually ignores how a biblical worldview shaped the scientific enterprise.{30}

The arguments of the New Atheists may sound convincing, but once you strip away the hyperbole and false charges, there isn't much left.

If you would like to know how to answer the arguments of the New Atheists, I suggest you visit the Probe Web page at

www.probe.org and also consider getting a copy of the book by Sean McDowell and Jonathan Morrow. You will be able to answer the objections of atheists and be better equipped to defend your faith.

**Notes**

Is God Just a Human Invention? (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010).
2. Richard Dawkins, "The Faith Trap," 20 March 2010, bit.ly/fFvLlJ.
3. Ibid.
4. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 28.
5. Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penquin, 2006), 230-231.
6. Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 110.
7. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004).
8. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of Illusion* (New York: Norton, 1989), 38.
9. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 119-122).
10. Quote of Dean Hamer in Barbara Bradley Hagerty, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 263.
11. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 316.
12. Victor Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2007), 257.
13. David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretension* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 26-27.
14. Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, 87.
15. Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007), 283.
16. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 36.
17. Alister McGrath, "Challenges from Atheism," in *Beyond*

*Opinion*, ed. Ravi Zacharias (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 31.
18. Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 73.
19. Dinesh D'Souza, *What's So Great About Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2007), 215.
20. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 78.
21. Quoted in Paul Davies, *The Accidental Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 118.
22. Mark Whorton and Hill Roberts, *Holman QuickSource Guide to Understanding Creation* ((Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2008), 308.
23. Sean McDowell, "Is There Any Evidence for God? Physics and Astronomy," *The Apologetics Study Bible for Students*, gen. ed. Sean McDowell (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010).
24. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 188.
25. Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, 63.
26. Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 321.
27. "Origin Science," www.probe.org/origin-science/.
28. Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 46.
29. "The Jewish God, the Christian God, or No God?" Debate between Christopher Hitchens, Dennis Prager, and Dinesh D'Souza, 1 May 2008.
30. Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton, *The Soul of Science* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994).

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# "Is There a Genetic Component

# to Homosexuality?”

**Dear Dr. Bohlin,**

**I noticed that you have some background in genetics. I am writing an article involving homosexuality for my own website. Many homosexuals want to say they are “born” that way, or that God made them homosexual. However, the evidence so far is unconvincing.**

**I am a student of science and scientific knowledge and have some background in science as well. I believe that there may be a genetic component to what some homosexuals experience.**

**Also, I’ve been thinking that some homosexuals may have a genetic defect somewhere that we may discover. They may not want to hear or believe this, but I think it is a possibility. They don’t seem to realize that just because they may be “born” homosexual does not mean that they were meant to be homosexual. For example, some are born with sickle-cell anemia, but we know that this is due to a genetic defect and that this is abnormal for red blood cells. This is a problem that needs to be fixed. I think we may find in the genetic code a defect that leads some to homosexuality. I purposely used the word “some” in my statements because I think it is pretty well established by now that homosexuality is not a monolith and that some of them do choose this lifestyle deliberately. So what do you think?**

No one has identified any gene that has been linked to homosexuality. Dean Hamer reportedly found a chromosomal region that was prevalent in male homosexuals but his work was unrepeatable and has been largely discarded.

It certainly is possible that there may be a gene or sets of genes that predispose someone to homosexuality. But you correctly surmise that this in no way would determine homosexual behavior. We all probably have genetic

predispositions of one sort or another that make it easier for us to sin in some areas than in others. This could be similar to suspected predispositions for some to alcoholism (as found in some races and ethnic groups). This does not mean their alcoholism is excused or acceptable. The same would be true of any predisposition to homosexuality.

Keep in mind also that many who desire to leave the homosexual lifestyle can and do, and many have successfully worked to change their romantic and sexual attractions. If it were in any way genetically determined, this would not be possible. It would be like choosing to have genetically blue eyes and blonde hair (hair coloring and colored contact lenses aside).

Also, many in the gay community are distancing themselves from any genetic component to homosexuality because that would mean a genetic test could eventually be developed for it. They know full well that many parents would likely choose to have any embryo/fetus testing positive for homosexuality to be aborted or simply not implanted in the case of IVF.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, PhD
Probe Ministries

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# Homosexual Theology: A Biblically Sound View

*Kerby Anderson helps understand the complete biblical perspective on homosexuality. As Christians, Kerby helps us understand the biblical truth and how to apply it with*

*compassion in our dealings with those around us.*

## The Sin of Sodom—Genesis 19

Does the Bible condemn homosexuality? For centuries the answer to that question seemed obvious, but in the last few decades pro- homosexual commentators have tried to reinterpret the relevant biblical passages. In this discussion we will take a look at their exegesis.

The first reference to homosexuality in the Bible is found in Genesis 19. In this passage, Lot entertains two angels who come to the city to investigate its sins. Before they go to bed, all the men (from every part of the city of Sodom) surround the house and order him to bring out the men so that "we may know them." Historically commentators have always assumed that the Hebrew word for "know" meant that the men of the city wanted to have sex with the visitors.

More recently, proponents of homosexuality argue that biblical commentators misunderstand the story of Sodom. They argue that the men of the city merely wanted to meet these visitors. Either they were anxious to extend Middle-eastern hospitality or they wanted to interrogate the men and make sure they weren't spies. In either case, they argue, the passage has nothing to do with homosexuality. The sin of Sodom is not homosexuality, they say, but inhospitality.

One of the keys to understanding this passage is the proper translation of the Hebrew word for "know." Pro-homosexuality commentators point out that this word can also mean "to get acquainted with" as well as mean "to have intercourse with." In fact, the word appears over 943 times in the Old Testament, and only 12 times does it mean "to have intercourse with." Therefore, they conclude that the sin of Sodom had nothing to do with homosexuality.

The problem with the argument is context. Statistics is not

the same as exegesis. Word count alone should not be the sole criterion for the meaning of a word. And even if a statistical count should be used, the argument backfires. Of the 12 times the word “to know” is used in the book of Genesis, in 10 of those 12 it means “to have intercourse with.”

Second, the context does not warrant the interpretation that the men only wanted to get acquainted with the strangers. Notice that Lot decides to offer his two daughters instead. In reading the passage, one can sense Lot’s panic as he foolishly offers his virgin daughters to the crowd instead of the foreigners. This is not the action of a man responding to the crowd’s request “to become acquainted with” the men.

Notice that Lot describes his daughters as women who “have not known” a man. Obviously this implies sexual intercourse and does not mean “to be acquainted with.” It is unlikely that the first use of the word “to know” differs from the second use of the word. Both times the word “to know” should be translated “to have intercourse with.” This is the only consistent translation for the passage.

Finally, Jude 7 provides a commentary on Genesis 19. The New Testament reference states that the sin of Sodom involved gross immorality and going after strange flesh. The phrase “strange flesh” could imply homosexuality or bestiality and provides further evidence that the sin of Sodom was not inhospitality but homosexuality.

Contrary to what pro-homosexual commentators say, Genesis 19 is a clear condemnation of homosexuality. Next we will look at another set of Old Testament passages dealing with the issue of homosexuality.

## Mosaic Law—Leviticus 18, 20

Now we will look at the Mosaic Law. Two passages in Leviticus call homosexuality an abomination. Leviticus 18:22 says, “Do

not lie with a man as one lies with a women; that is detestable." Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable." The word for "abomination" is used five times in Leviticus 18 and is a strong term of disapproval, implying that something is abhorrent to God. Biblical commentators see these verses as an expansion of the seventh commandment. Though not an exhaustive list of sexual sins, they are representative of the common sinful practices of nations surrounding Israel.

Pro-homosexual commentators have more difficulty dealing with these relatively simple passages of Scripture, but usually offer one of two responses. Some argue that these verses appear in the Holiness code of the Leviticus and only applies to the priests and ritual purity. Therefore, according to this perspective, these are religious prohibitions, not moral prohibitions. Others argue that these prohibitions were merely for the Old Testament theocracy and are not relevant today. They suggest that if Christians wanted to be consistent with the Old Testament law code in Leviticus, they should avoid eating rare steak, wearing mixed fabrics, and having marital intercourse during the menstrual period.

First, do these passages merely apply to ritual purity rather than moral purity? Part of the problem comes from making the two issues distinct. The priests were to model moral behavior within their ceremonial rituals. Moral purity and ritual purity cannot be separated, especially when discussing the issue of human sexuality. To hold to this rigid distinction would imply that such sins as adultery were not immoral (consider Lev. 18:20) or that bestiality was morally acceptable (notice Lev. 18:23). The second argument concerns the relevance of the law today. Few Christians today keep kosher kitchens or balk at wearing clothes interwoven with more than one fabric. They believe that those Old Testament laws do not pertain to them. In a similar way pro-homosexual

commentators argue that the Old Testament admonitions against homosexuality are no longer relevant today. A practical problem with this argument is that more than just homosexuality would have to be deemed morally acceptable. The logical extension of this argument would also have to make bestiality and incest morally acceptable since prohibitions to these two sins surround the prohibition against homosexuality. If the Mosaic law is irrelevant to homosexuality, then it is also irrelevant to having sex with animals or having sex with children.

More to the point, to say that the Mosaic law has ended is not to say that God has no laws or moral codes for mankind. Even though the ceremonial law has passed, the moral law remains. The New Testament speaks of the "law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2) and the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). One cannot say that something that was sin under the Law is not sin under grace. Ceremonial laws concerning diet or wearing mixed fabrics no longer apply, but moral laws (especially those rooted in God's creation order for human sexuality) continue. Moreover, these prohibitions against homosexuality can also be found in the New Testament as we will see next as we consider other passages reinterpreted by pro-homosexual commentators.

## New Testament Passages

In our examination of the Old Testament teachings regarding homosexuality, we found that Genesis 19 teaches that the men of Sodom were seeking the strangers in order to have sex with them, not merely asking to meet these men or to extend Middle Eastern hospitality to them. We also discovered that certain passages in Leviticus clearly condemn homosexuality and are relevant today. These prohibitions were not just for the Old Testament theocracy, but were moral principles binding on human behavior and conduct today.

At this point we will consider some of the New Testament passages dealing with homosexuality. Three key New Testament

passages concerning homosexuality are: Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10. Of the three, the most significant is Romans 1 because it deals with homosexuality within the larger cultural context.

> *Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

Here the Apostle Paul sets the Gentile world's guilt before a holy God and focuses on the arrogance and lust of the Hellenistic world. He says they have turned away from a true worship of God so that "God gave them over to shameful lusts." Rather than follow God's instruction in their lives, they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18) and follow passions that dishonor God.

Another New Testament passage dealing with homosexuality is 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. " Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Pro- homosexual commentators make use of the "abuse" argument and point out that Paul is only singling out homosexual offenders. In other words, they argue that the Apostle Paul is condemning homosexual abuse rather than responsible homosexual behavior. In essence, these commentators are suggesting that Paul is calling for temperance rather than abstinence. While this could be a reasonable interpretation for drinking wine (don't be a drunkard), it hardly applies to other sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6 or 1 Timothy 1. Is Paul calling for responsible adultery or responsible prostitution? Is there such a thing as

moral theft and swindling? Obviously the argument breaks down. Scripture never condones sex outside of marriage (premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexual sex). God created man and woman for the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24). Homosexuality is a violation of the creation order, and God clearly condemns it as unnatural and specifically against His ordained order. As we have seen in the discussion thus far, there are passages in both the Old Testament and the New Testament which condemn homosexuality.

## "God Made Me Gay," Part 1

At this point in our discussion, we need to consider the claim made by some homosexuals that, "God made me gay." Is this true? Is there a biological basis to homosexuality? For the remainder of this essay, we will consider the evidence usually cited. Simon LeVay (a neuroscientist at the Salk Institute) has argued that homosexuals and heterosexuals have notable differences in the structure of their brains. In 1991, he studied 41 cadavers and found that a specific portion of the hypothalamus (the area that governs sexual activity) was consistently smaller in homosexuals than in heterosexuals. He therefore argued that there is a distinct physiological component to sexual orientation. There are numerous problems with the study. First, there was considerable range in the size of the hypothalamic region. In a few homosexual men, this region was the same size as that of the heterosexuals, and in a few heterosexuals this region was a small as that of a homosexual.

Second is the chicken and egg problem. When there is a difference in brain structure, is the difference the *result* of sexual orientation or is it the *cause* of sexual orientation? Researchers, for example, have found that when people who become blind begin to learn Braille, the area of the brain controlling the reading finger actual grows larger. Third, Simon LeVay later had to admit that he didn't know the sexual

orientation of some of the cadavers in the study. He acknowledged that he wasn't sure if the heterosexual males in the study were actually heterosexual. Since some of those he identified as "heterosexual" died of AIDS, critics raised doubts about the accuracy of his study.

In December 1991, Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard published a study of homosexuality in twins. They surveyed homosexual men about their brothers and found statistics they believed proved that sexual orientation is biological. Of the homosexuals who had identical twin brothers, 52 percent of those twins were also homosexual, 22 percent of those who had fraternal twins said that their twin was gay, and only 11 percent of those who had an adopted sibling said their adopted brothers were also homosexual. They attributed the differences in those percentages to the differences in genetic material shared.

Though this study has also been touted as proving a genetic basis to homosexuality, there are significant problems. First, the theory is not new. It was first proposed in 1952. Since that time, three other separate research studies come to very different conclusions. Therefore, the conclusions of the Bailey-Pillard study should be considered in the light of other contrary studies. Second, most published reports did not mention that only 9 percent of the non- twin brothers of homosexuals were homosexuals. Fraternal twins share no more genetic material than non-twin brothers, yet homosexuals are more than twice as likely to share their sexual orientation with a fraternal twin than with a non-twin brother. Whatever the reason, the answer cannot be genetic.

Third, why aren't nearly all identical twin brothers of homosexuals also homosexual? In other words, if biology is determinative, why are nearly half the identical twins not homosexual? Dr. Bailey admitted that there "must be something in the environment to yield the discordant twins." And that is precisely the point; there is something (perhaps everything)

in the environment to explain sexual orientation. These are two studies usually cited as evidence of a biological basis for homosexuality. Next we will consider a third study often cited to prove the claim that “God made me gay.”

## “God Made Me Gay,” Part 2

Now let’s look at another study often cited as proof of this claim. This study is often called the “gay gene” study. In 1993, a team of researchers led by Dr. Dean Hamer announced “preliminary” findings from research into the connection between homosexuality and genetic inheritance. In a sample of 76 homosexual males, the researchers found a statistically higher incidence of homosexuality in their male relatives (brothers, uncles) on their mother’s side of the family. This suggested a possible inherited link through the X chromosome. A follow-up study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers found that 33 shared a variation in a small section of the X chromosome. Although this study was promoted by the press as evidence of the discovery of a gay gene, some of the same concerns raised with the previous two studies apply here. First, the findings involve a limited sample size and are therefore sketchy. Even the researchers acknowledged that these were “preliminary” findings. In addition to the sample size being small, there was no control testing done for heterosexual brothers. Another major issue raised by critics of the study concerned the lack of sufficient research done on the social histories of the families involved.

Second, similarity does not prove cause. Just because 33 pairs of homosexual brothers share a genetic variation doesn’t mean that variation causes homosexuality. And what about the other 7 pairs that did not show the variation but were homosexuals?

Finally, research bias may again be an issue. Dr. Hamer and at least one of his other team members are homosexual. It appears that this was deliberately kept from the press and was only revealed later. Dr. Hamer it turns out is not merely an

objective observer. He has presented himself as an expert witness on homosexuality, and he has stated that he hopes his research would give comfort to men feeling guilty about their homosexuality.

By the way, this was a problem in every one of the studies we have mentioned in our discussion. For example, Dr. Simon LeVay said that he was driven to study the potential physiological roots of homosexuality after his homosexual lover died of AIDS. He even admitted that if he failed to find a genetic cause for homosexuality that he might walk away from science altogether. Later he did just that by moving to West Hollywood to open up a small, unaccredited "study center" focusing on homosexuality.

Each of these three studies looking for a biological cause for homosexuality has its flaws. Does that mean that there is no physiological component to homosexuality? Not at all. Actually, it is probably too early to say conclusively. Scientists may indeed discover a clear biological predisposition to sexual orientation. But a predisposition is not the same as a determination. Some people may inherit a predisposition for anger, depression, or alcoholism, yet we do not condone these behaviors. And even if violence, depression, or alcoholism were proven to be inborn (determined by genetic material), would we accept them as normal and refuse to treat them? Of course not. The Bible has clear statements about such things as anger and alcoholism. Likewise, the Bible has clear statements about homosexuality.

In our discussion in this transcript, we have examined the various claims of pro-homosexual commentators and found them wanting. Contrary to their claims, the Bible does not condone homosexual behavior.

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