

SYMPOSIUM ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN TODAY'S CULTURE

Stephen M. Krason, Guest Editor

Contributors:

Stephen M. Krason, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Introduction
John Finnis, Oxford University and University of Notre Dame
Joseph Nicolosi, National Association for Research and Therapy
of Homosexuality
Fr. John Harvey, OSFS, Founder, Courage
Gerard V. Bradley, Notre Dame Law School

The papers in this symposium were delivered at the Society of Catholic Social Scientists' spring conference of the same name on April 17, 1999 at Notre Dame Law School. The Society in its history has given some particular attention to this issue, having sent letters to all the members of Congress opposing the early Clinton Administration initiative to let known homosexuals into the military and to all the U.S. bishops pointing out the serious problems with the homosexual-specific ministries which have sprung up in various dioceses. The latter letter gained attention from a couple of national publications and generated numerous requests for copies. The fact that we have given this focus to the issue of homosexuality accords with the Society's intention to especially stress family issues. We wish to try to disseminate these papers beyond the confines of this journal, if possible.

Introduction
by Stephen M. Krason
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The authors of these papers are all prominent members of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. Dr. John Finnis and Fr. John Harvey are members of our Board of Advisors. Dr. Joseph Nicolosi has been a member since our early years, was the featured speaker at one of our annual conferences, and drafted our letter on homosexual ministries mentioned above. Professor Gerald Bradley is a former officer of the Society and has served for several years as Chairman of our

Public and Church Affairs Committee. The papers discuss four different aspects of the problem of homosexuality: the Church's teaching about homosexuality and the rationale for it; the pro-homosexualist politicization of the mental health profession and the latter's resulting unwillingness to provide adequate treatment for homosexuality; the encouraging pastoral response, fully in conformity to Church teaching, to people struggling with homosexuality as seen in the Courage organization; and the dangers to our culture represented by legal recognition of same-sex "marriages."

Dr. Finnis's paper sets out Catholic teaching about homosexuality and homosexual acts. He explains that, even though sin occurs only when a person freely chooses to commit homosexual acts, the inclination to same-sex attraction—i.e., homosexual "orientation"—is intrinsically disordered because any inclination to pursue a moral evil is disordered. This is a case irrespective of the reason or source of the inclination in the individual person, even if it is inborn. Finnis places this teaching of the Church into a philosophical context. The twin purposes, or goods, of marriage are the deepening of "loving friendship" between the spouses and procreating and rearing children. They promote the overarching good of marriage itself. The attainment of this good requires not just an exclusive, noncontraceptive sexual relationship between a husband and wife, but also the right intention to be having this relationship only with this person. Even to approve of sex outside of marriage upsets the good of marriage and renders one's own marital relationship or hoped-for future marital relationship conditional: If it legitimately can be resorted to, why should it not be resorted to in this case?

It goes without saying that homosexual acts could never fit these criteria and thus can never be moral. Similarly, of course, same-sex "marriage" or anything like it is impossible—anything which is less than a committed, exclusive and permanent sexual relationship between a woman and a man "cannot even" imitate real marriage. Finnis also cautions us about the "gay rights" movement's crusade for legal protection for sexual orientation. What it really seeks to protect is homosexual conduct.

Dr. Nicolosi's paper traces the odyssey of the American Psychiatric Association's treatment of homosexuality in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*—the basic reference source consulted by psychiatrists. Even though the pioneers of modern psychiatry and the APA in its earlier days upheld the traditional understanding of homosexuality as a serious disorder—consonant with the Church's Declaration on Homosexuality—later on, under the heightening political pressure of the growing homosexualist movement, it changed its position. Without any scientific or clinical evidence to justify this, it eventually dropped any reference to homosexuality at all from its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. This development is, interestingly, not unlike the journey that the APA and other groups took on abortion.

Nicolosi believes that the reason this happened was that psychiatrists and psychologists were intimidated by the “combined effects of the sexual revolution” and the movements for “civil rights, minority rights, feminist rights”—that is, they have been caught up in the steamroller of “tolerance,” even tolerance for behaviors that they know are deviant and destructive. How this has frozen therapeutic efforts to help homosexuals—which Nicolosi tells us is possible—and even research is uncanny.

Also in the mix of reasons for these developments has been a kind of misguided humanitarian motive—as well as a desire to find a cover for psychiatry’s and psychology’s embarrassment. These professions wanted to check “social discrimination” against homosexuals, and they felt frustrated and embarrassed about their low success rate in reorienting homosexuals—so they just decided to say that the affliction no longer existed!

Now, ironically and tragically, a kind of reverse discrimination is occurring: those who wish to change their homosexual orientation are being told they have no problem and are denied help and treatment. Perceptively—and very much in line with the critique of contemporary social science that the SCSS more broadly makes—Nicolosi sees the roots of psychology’s—and hence psychiatry’s—grave errors about issues such as this in their abandonment of its traditional philosophical roots and embracing of, first, value neutrality and later the humanistic movement with its confusion of feelings with morality.

Father John Harvey’s paper first explains how the acceptance of an “inverted sexuality”—i.e., contraceptive sexual acts as forms of self-gratification, which people believe they are entitled to—which characterizes heterosexuals as well as homosexuals has in turn promoted the acceptance of homosexuality. He then summarizes, like Finnis, the Church’s teaching on homosexuality—i.e., that the condition is objectively disordered and acts are always immoral—and places it squarely within Divine Revelation. As such, it has been the Church’s teaching since Christ’s time. Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, and later in the Church Fathers, it is clear that the aim of human sexual activity is to forge the “one flesh union” of husband and wife and to procreate; homosexual activity thus is clearly and consistently rejected.

Harvey insists that, while our degraded culture and sex addiction may render some practicing homosexuals inculpably ignorant about the moral character of their actions, most are responsible. This was a necessary starting point for the building of Harvey’s now well-known (in orthodox Catholic circles) pastoral program for homosexuals called “Courage.” Courage seeks to assist persons with same-sex attractions to develop and practice the virtue of chastity. Harvey briefly discusses the history and growth of Courage. He also discusses “Encourage,” an organization to help parents whose children have embraced the “gay lifestyle” and abandoned the Faith. Both are spiritual support groups fully committed to the orthodox teaching of the Church. He also lists

the “Five Goals of Courage,” which were drawn up by some of the organization’s earliest members and remind one of the goals of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Finally, Gerard Bradley’s paper addresses the major recent public policy initiative of the homosexualist movement: the legal recognition of same-sex unions, so that all the legal benefits of marriage may be available to homosexual and lesbian couples. He stresses that same-sex “marriage” is not only not moral but, more basically, a logical and practical impossibility. This is something that law cannot help but acknowledge within the category of capacity to marry. As it holds—actually, simply recognizes the realities about—that minors because of immaturity and the already-married because of their existing commitment are without the capacity to marry, so it must hold that homosexual couples lack such a capacity because they do not possess the natural complementarity for marriage. Courts, however, are increasingly unable to see this problem. Like Father Harvey, Bradley asserts that the growing confusion about, and even acceptance of, homosexuality developed from our separation of sex from procreation. We have long since redefined marriage as something which does not necessarily have to involve an openness to children, and so we paved the way for the “gay lifestyle.”

The implications for the law, Bradley tells us, are momentous. If same-sex “marriage” is to be recognized, why not polygamy? Why not “marriages” of “two boys and one girl”? And the list of perverse relationships entitled to legal protection could go on and on. The implications for our culture could be even more serious, for to undercut traditional marriage means to debase children. Accepting same-sex “marriage” will stimulate acceptance of *in vitro* fertilization and the cloning of children because it will decisively separate sex from procreation. Children will come to be seen more and more as commodities instead of the gifts that they really are, and their dignity and rights will be progressively diminished.

Bradley believes that, in spite of cultural decay, there is still enough residual sense among the American public about the traditional character of marriage—that sexual activity is most appropriate within it, and that it is partly about children (i.e., is “perfected” by children)—that the case against the legal recognition of same-sex “marriage” can still be won.

This thought-provoking symposium will help its readers to better understand different dimensions of the homosexuality question. It will help them to better understand why the homosexual condition is disordered and homosexual conduct wrong, why homosexuality has come to be increasingly accepted in our culture and the grave implications this presents, and the fact that there is hope both for our political society’s repelling the efforts to gain acceptance for homosexual conduct and for the individuals afflicted with the condition of same-sex attraction.