

Homophobia and Heterophobia: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

by Kent A. Philpott

Homophobia - "A hatred or fear of homosexuals." (from the Oxford Concise Dictionary). This expresses the core definition of homophobia as found in most standard dictionaries.

Heterophobia - "A hatred or fear of heterosexuals." This definition is not found in standard dictionaries, but the "Urban Dictionary" does not shy away from giving some rather politically incorrect definitions:

From the Urban Dictionary, found online at www.urbandictionary.com:

- **Homophobia** –
 - "Dislike, fear, hatred, and/or disapproval of gays and/or homosexuality, often (but not always) for religious reasons or because of insecurity about one's sexual orientation."
 - "fear of homosexuals or possibly a condition where one person has the same fears as someone else."
 - "a severe condition, usually prominent in Republicans and most of American culture, leading one to: 1. inaccurately use bible quoting for the justification of killing homosexuals; 2. restrict the rights of millions; 3. hide in their rooms crying if they looked at the male body of one of the same gender and do not vomit; 4. incessantly call things 'gay.'"
 - "the irritation of having faggotry shoved in your face."
- **Heterophobics** –
 - "Gays who are afraid of heterosexuals usually due to their own heterosexual feelings or leanings." This followed up with, "Gays, don't be afraid, you're probably just straight."
 - "People who indulge in bigotry or intolerance because of the Heterophobia sickness."
- **Heterophobia** –
 - "an unreasoning disgust of heterosexuals, frequently supported by erroneous and faulty statements about heterosexuals."
 - "The often-irrational fear of heterosexuals. Usually experienced by a homosexual or bisexual who has had bad experiences with heterosexual coupling."
 - "To hate heterosexuals out of some bizarre, irrational or innate fear of them. Probably due to repressed heterosexual feelings. Up with heterosexual pride!"
 - "Queer frustration and hatred towards straight oppression. Often mistakenly perceived to be equivalent to homophobia, or other forms of discrimination."
 - "Unreasoning prejudice against heterosexuals or their sexuality, the LGBT equivalent of reverse racism, and the inverse of homophobia. Commonly manifested as disgust with the very idea of straight sexuality and/or

reproduction. It copies the prejudices of homophobia, including the idea that straightness is unnatural, or unhealthy, or can somehow be 'cured.'"

- "Frequently paired with prejudice towards the opposite sex. This is surprisingly common in the LGBT¹ community but is often not addressed due to concerns for political correctness."
- "an irrational fear of going home."

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Finally, let me add this, which I gleaned - and paraphrased - from *Gay Religion*, edited by Scott Thumma and Edward R. Gray, and published by AltaMira Press in 2005: Some homosexuals believe homosexuality is necessary for the earth to survive, as the "breeders" keep pumping out babies, resulting in the population growing to an unsustainable level. Therefore, homosexuality is a survival mechanism.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

Both phobias are based on fear, or so it would seem. I would suggest that "phobia" is the wrong word to describe either phenomenon. The term means an irrational fear of something or other, such as agoraphobia - a fear of open spaces or public places. But are the so-called homo and hetero phobias based on fear? Is the homosexual fearful of heterosexuals? Is the heterosexual fearful of homosexuals? In both instances, I think not; My sense of it is that the "phobias" are something else all together.

Heterosexuals may disagree with homosexuals as to the rightness of homosexual behavior. And should they not be allowed this? Equal rights, justice, fairness, civil rights, and so on, are what most heterosexuals would agree are owed to all people regardless of sexual orientation. What if heterosexuals think homosexual behavior is "sinful" and morally wrong? Is this a bad thing?

Suppose it were a hate crime to even consider homosexual behavior wrong. Should certain kinds of thinking be criminalized?² Should "homophobes" be marginalized and discriminated against? Most outrageous is the goal that anything short of **complete acceptance** of all that is homosexuality be stamped out and eliminated, since such thinking is the seed bed for discrimination against homosexuals. Could it be that the pro-gay, LGBT community, the whole of it or segments thereof, might even justify the creation of a "thought police" that would be dedicated to eradicating anti-homosexual thinking and thinkers? Have I gone too far?

IRRATIONAL FEAR?

Once again let me state that to believe certain behavior is wrong is not necessarily born of fear or anxiety. There may indeed be those who are homophobic, that is, having a fear of being molested or raped by a homosexual, or fear of becoming one, or identified as being

¹ LGBT is now short for a longer string of initials that add Q ("queer" or "questioning") and I ("intersex") and others.

² As of the release of this essay (mid-2019), such has already occurred in Britain and Canada, and the state of California legislature has some form of this circulating now.

one, and the list goes on. And for those who have been in the military, or in prison, or in other circumstances where a homosexual might have a certain amount of power and authority, say a high school sports team coach, there may be homophobia, and such would not be irrational or imaginary.

Needless to say, heterosexuals in positions of power and authority over persons of the opposite sex have abused that authority in sexual ways. Certainly, there is much more of this than of homosexuals exploiting those of the same sex. Both are wrong, plain and simple.

I have been homophobic. In the Air Force there were homosexuals living in the barracks at Travis Air Force Base, and once in a while some would be caught doing what they ought not to have done and were either dishonorably discharged from the service or at least demoted and locked up for a while. In my thirty years as a volunteer at San Quentin Prison I found out that prison life was dominated by sex, some heterosexual, but mostly homosexual. I have also put five children through the school systems in Marin County, and I have been a freshman baseball coach for nine years. There are valid reasons why some have a fear of homosexuality. I don't want to get specific or graphic, but I have been there and seen that.

Yes, I have a certain amount of what is mistakenly called homophobia. So, what should be done with someone like me? Do I not have a right to it? Must the authorities be intolerant of it? As a Christian, must I repent of it?

I do not want to be fearful of homosexuals, and in fact, to the best of my ability, I am not. With the growing numbers of people coming out as gay in American, if I were homophobic, I would live a fearful and miserable life. I live in the world and am very much a part of it; I am a law-abiding citizen, and I will act according to the laws of the land. But I reserve the right to believe that homosexual behavior is wrong, based on the source of authority I value—the Bible.

FOR ALL HAVE SINNED

What about heterosexuals? Many, perhaps most, heterosexuals are disturbed sexually to one degree or another. And how would we expect anything less, particularly in Western societies where sex is distorted and confused? We have rapists, child molesters, sex-slave traffickers, pimps, brothel keepers, porn addicts and makers, and more than I care to know about, and in far greater numbers than do the homosexuals. The marketplace commercializes sex and throws naked flesh before our eyes daily to sell products.

Much of the distortion has come along with the millennia-long patriarchal cultures that are in place in most parts of the world, cultures that falsely empower men to control those who are physically weaker. And our religions have either looked the other way or actually institutionalized this departure from Biblical models, including Christianity. All of this morass has to do with what theologians call "the Fall," that time when humans rebelled against the Creator God (who, by the way, is both feminine and masculine, see Genesis 1:27), and sex got completely tweaked.

Moments after the Fall, Adam and Eve— or if you can't handle that, the first man and woman— looked at each other, having a new knowledge of good and evil firmly implanted in their brains, and realized they were naked and were ashamed. Wow! Ashamed and guilty—and it is right here where the trouble is. Read the account below and see what you make of it. Here is Genesis 3:1-13:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

GUILT AND SHAME

A careful interpreter could reel off pages of commentary and never get to the bottom of all that is in the above passage. But there is certainly guilt and shame.

The balance between the man and the woman was gone. Together they reflected the Creator; now separate and apart life drastically changed and not for the better. Heterosexual marriage is now a mere shadow of what it was intended to be. Not until that which is called heaven and paradise, symbolized as a wedding between Christ, the groom, and the Church, His bride, will there be restitution and realization of the original intent of the Creator. Until then, well, we know the story, don't we?

Pleasure, contentment, fulfillment, completion, happiness, rightness— it was all there for Adam and Eve. These wonderful gifts were replaced with guilt and an abiding sense of shame. No matter how much pleasure might be found in a sexual act, it would never be, for anyone, what it could have been. So we have sin lodged right in the core of the identity of

the human sexual experience. And heteros and homos have forever attempted to overcome guilt and shame.

Within marriage between a man and a woman, however flawed and imperfect, is contained a hint and a promise of what will come in the grand *eschaton*, that end point when there will be a recreation and a new heaven and a new earth. What God started will be completed. God's laws, the thou-shalt-nots, were intended to make the best of what is. Adultery, fornication, and homosexual acts are a breaking of the law, and thus guilt and shame arise. That is just how it is.

Though the LGBT community may succeed in all its demands for equality and normality, guilt and shame will remain. Could it be that the homosexual, who in the quest to eradicate homophobia, is really being driven by guilt and shame? If homosexual behavior is normal and good, then ought not the negative and powerful emotions go away? But they will not go away, since the 'wrongness experience' is hard wired into every human being.

God made sex and meant it for both procreation and pleasure; it is a strong bond that keeps a husband and wife together. It is in that "one flesh" relationship where sex can be experienced absent guilt and shame. God-ordained and -approved sex is a wonderful thing. A marriage between a man and a woman allows for the freedom to develop a very sexy relationship, which is not driven by lust and a never-ending quest for fulfillment. This free sexuality opens a door to a "peaceful easy feeling."

IS ACHIEVING EQUALITY ENOUGH?

Victory won, normalcy and equality achieved, backed by the law of the land, and clear sailing ahead. All will be well, right? This has certainly not been so for heterosexuals, and the trend seems to be downward rather than the other way around. We read studies that indicate the younger generations are shunning the sexual experience altogether due to how fraught with problems it is. Will homosexuals fare better? Probably not.

Sexuality is a human core identity, but it is not larger than the kingdom of God and life eternal. The fuss about homo and hetero phobias is magnified, because sex has become so very distorted and filled up with the hope of ultimate satisfaction. In sexuality, even for the most well adjusted and blissful heterosexual married couple, there will be disappointment and frustration. As they say, "Get over it."

PHOBIAS MUST NOT DRIVE OUR BEHAVIOR

Both hetero and homo phobias are expressions of sinfulness, not the sense of fear itself, but the acting out on the fears to the detriment of others. We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves, so we have to admit that expressing these phobias is wrong. At least, let us deal humanely and rationally with each other, homosexual and heterosexual. Let us hear and respect each other's positions while not having to approve of them.

If I could say that homosexual behavior is right, I would do so, but I cannot. I cannot say that the heterosexual's adulteries and fornications are right, either. To approve

homosexuality in any form, or to approve sex outside of marriage, is unacceptable from a Biblical perspective. And to many, the Biblical perspective itself is unacceptable.

There is hope, strength, and dignity in saying "No." The aberrational, criminal, abusive, or exploitive quest for self-centered sexual pleasure cannot be tolerated by a civilized society where the rights of the weak must be safeguarded. Watching someone head off the steep cliff without shouting out a warning is both negligence and unloving to the extreme.

Enough of this phobia talk.

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