

Welcoming Church Forums

Mary I. Bockover

[4.29.13]

Forum 1

The Old Testament is often cited as evidence that God hates homosexuality. In the Old Testament, however, 'same-sex sex' that was explicitly cited as such was usually a form of rape. It was the ultimate form of humiliation that a man could perpetrate on another, instead of being motivated by sexual pleasure, mutual sexual arousal, or love. People tend to miss this about the Old Testament. Men were not so much 'having sex' with other men but were ravaging them with the purpose of doing them violence, or if nothing else, without concern for their humanity. Crucially, mistaking such acts of violence as 'homosexual' simply equivocates the actual evils of rape and dehumanization with the imagined (socially constructed) 'evils' of same-sex sex.

Forum 2

(In 2 Parts)

The binary of sexual opposition between males and females is more of a contingent rather than necessary fact about who we are as persons, at least more so than we think. Much of what it means to be a 'person' depends on how we conceive it. Notions of personhood – and how we identify ourselves as a person, which *entails* having a sexual identity – vary from culture to culture and can change within a culture along with other (e.g., biological or psychological) changes that define human experience. As a result, the belief that we have an unchanging, 'essential' sexual identity that is either male or female and is fixed and defined only in relation to its 'opposite' is called into question.

That people are born with inter-sexed conditions or have transitioned (in varying degrees) from one 'sex' to the 'opposite' challenges the idea that we can be unambiguously packaged into a binary box of 'essential' maleness or femaleness. The contemporary notion of gender is making sexual identity look even more like something we can consciously influence and direct. That is, sexual identity may be influenced by reflective life choices made for good reason instead of just being given at birth exactly because people are *essentially* imaginative, creative, and in large measure self-defining. Who we are to ourselves matters, in other words; when it comes to shaping our identity, our preferences and choices are a part of that process. Without this, taking responsibility for our sexuality, or for anything else for that matter would be impossible.