

Homosexual Adoption

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This is a time when authorities from all parts of society seem to agree that family structures are in crisis. Every measurable criterion of social dysfunction – from poor educational attainment, through psychological disturbance, to criminal activity – is on the increase. A mountain of sociological evidence links this with the breakdown of natural family structures¹. It is also a time when adoption regulations have become controversially stringent, with many potential adoptive parents being refused children on the grounds of their racial background or even their faith commitments.

It may therefore be wondered why the issue of adoption by homosexual couples should be debated at all. Yet within the last few months the Children's Society, an official Anglican body, has come out in favour of such adoptions, as has a judge, Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss of the Family Division.

Things came into sharp relief through the headline case of two Essex homosexual millionaires, who challenged several conventional norms at once. One of them conceived twins by *in vitro* fertilisation of an anonymous donor's ovum, in the USA. The embryos were then implanted in a second surrogate mother's uterus. After birth, the babies were registered with the first man as one parent, and the other man as the second, no mention being made of either the biological or surrogate mothers. Finally, residence was granted over here, though as yet the official parentage of the twins seems not to have been settled. One pities any child in this situation who longs, as so many do, to identify their biological parents.

This case highlights some of the questions relating to homosexual adoption, but is exceptional in other ways, not least in that much of the child-care is apparently being performed by female nannies. It is certainly not a template for the more commonly considered scenario, though it has added fuel to the fire of those who wish to see such adoptions in society.

Assumptions – not evidence

In the light of the current sociological problems, then, why should there be such pressure to allow homosexual couples to adopt? The answer has little to do with any evidence for or against, but a lot to do with assumptions. It runs something like this: *since* the homosexual lifestyle is normal for a sizeable minority of the population, *therefore* it is unjust and illogical to

discriminate against them in any area open to others.

Put this way, it is hard to fault the argument. If homosexuality is a valid alternative to heterosexual relationships, then not only adoption, but marriage, membership of the army and eligibility for the Archbishopric of Canterbury ought to be open to gays. That is why public reaction to the Essex couple has generally been, "Good luck to 'em, I say."

We have reached the situation in the year 2000 where the initial premise of the argument, "*since the homosexual lifestyle is normal for a sizeable minority of the population...*" is an unchallenged – even unchallengeable – assumption. It is on the same level as the beliefs that democracy is always good, that punishing children is always bad or that the Bible has been disproved by science. People "know" they are true, and are not only surprised if someone disagrees, but are unable to comprehend how any sane person could question them. It is easier to reply with words like "fascist", "authoritarian", "fundamentalist" or, in our present case, "homophobe".

But the assumptions underlying this debate must indeed be questioned, for the welfare of individual children is at stake, and the future direction of our society is under threat. That questioning, it seems to me, must of course involve presenting the evidence. But because we unfortunately live in a culture that only considers evidence it *wants* to believe, it must also repeatedly point out how weakly-based the current assumptions are. Our Biblical world-view does not so much give us the basis for our argument, so much as to liberate us from the spirit of the age so that we can actually see there is an argument.

The ten percent fallacy

The first question comes in the consideration of the prevalence of homosexuality. A figure of 10% has become an assumption in all discussions. It enables documentary-makers to state that 25,000 homosexuals died for their country in World War Two, by the simple expedient of dividing the total war dead by ten (thus paving the way for changing the regulation banning homosexuals in the forces). It dictates the number of gay and lesbian characters that appear in the Soaps, and indeed the number of programmes orientated towards the homosexual community.

But the fact is that this figure is based solely on the infamous 1948 Kinsey Report, which is now

shown to be methodologically almost worthless and possibly deliberately biased. In contrast, a bigger and much better designed national (British) studyⁱⁱ found that only some 2.4 % of men had had a “homosexual experience”. For half of them it was “a single, possibly youthful and experimental, occurrence and for [them] homosexual inclination was not a lasting orientation”. A minority of 1-2% may still need to have its rights safeguarded, but it ought not to dictate the direction the rest of society takes.

The gay gene myth

The supposed innateness of homosexual orientation also needs to be challenged. The same study showed that homosexuality seems to be strongly related to surroundings and conditioning. Same-sex genital contact was three times more likely among men who had attended boarding schools, and youngest brothers are more likely to be homosexual than those who are older. The idea that there is a “gay gene” was always a media misrepresentation of research findings, but the research itself has been called into question by other scientists. Homosexual activists have admitted that it was always “a totally implausible theory”ⁱⁱⁱ – indeed, whilst heterosexual liberals defend homosexuality on the grounds of its biological determination, homosexual activists see it as a freedom of choice issue.

Whether we see the homosexual lifestyle as a free choice, or as the result of circumstances, this evidence shows it to be an uncommon and abnormal state, and society ought to demand strong evidence that it will *not* have a detrimental effect on adopted children.

As natural as...?

There is something of a fudge in the idea that homosexual activity is as natural as heterosexual. Today, we speak of people “having sex” and it is assumed that just as males and females “have sex” together, so can two members of the same gender. But what takes place between two men is, in biological terms, not sexual union at all. It involves using parts of the body not designed for sexual use, and requires the use of lubricants, muscle-relaxants and other far from “natural” things. Even so severe internal damage is not uncommon, increasing the risk of both local and generalised disease.

And homosexuality is, without doubt, a high-risk lifestyle. One in six actively homosexual men in London is HIV positive, according to the Terrence Higgins Trust. It is true that, currently, there are about the same number of new cases of HIV amongst UK heterosexuals as homosexuals – but the real meaning of the figures comes when we realise how small the

homosexual population actually is: 1.5% of the population is still the largest single group of AIDS sufferers. Other sexually-transmitted diseases are also common among homosexuals, and can be fatal: they include various strains of gonorrhoea, and Hepatitis B. Life expectancy for homosexuals is significantly lower than for heterosexuals: the homosexual lifestyle is strongly linked to premature death, with life expectancy reduced by 25 - 30 years^{iv}.

Glad to be gay?

The assumption that most homosexual people are glad about their situation is also a profound oversimplification. For many, it is a burden. The literature shows high rates of alcohol and drug abuse, major depression and suicide^{v, vi, vii}. Conventional wisdom ascribes this simply to homophobia – repeal Section 28, assert Gay rights, and the oppressed minority will be free to enjoy their sexuality. It will be impossible finally to prove or disprove this, of course, until society has been restructured, but so far there is no sign of it. It sounds remarkably like the 1960s assertion that sexual liberation would reduce abortion and lower divorce rates.

It is hard for proponents of homosexual adoption to square these findings with the fact that many married adoptive parents are rejected on the grounds of health prospects or even smoking habits.

A stable environment?

Break-up of the family is one of the most damaging things that can happen to children^{viii}. Nowadays it is impossible to exclude this possibility when placing adoptive children, but exhaustive efforts can be, and are, made to minimise it. But stable homosexual relationships are in a minority of just a few percent. Only Denmark, so far, has experience of legalised homosexual “marriage”. Six years after it was instituted, only 5% of homosexuals had availed themselves of the right, and 28% of these had already died or divorced^{ix}. Advocates of homosexual adoption need to prove that these dreadful statistics are invalid.

Bullying

Another aspect to be considered is that of the sociological effect on children belonging to a homosexually-based family. One of the main arguments for the repeal of *Section 28* is that homosexual children are bullied at school, and that “proper” teaching materials would lessen such discrimination.

If such bullying is a widespread problem (and it is hard to believe there are that many school-age children engaged in what are still illegal activities), then it suggests a degree of

homophobia that will surely take a long time to change. Racism is still a problem amongst children, thirty five years after the Race Relations Act was passed, so how long would it take to eradicate discrimination against those deemed homosexual? Would it be fair to expose adopted children to this risk, when their only “crime” was to be placed with homosexual “parents” in an untested sociological experiment?

The love that dares to speak its name

It has been inevitable in an article like this that homosexuals, and particularly those wishing to adopt, are in danger of being “objectified”. But this is certainly not my intention, or else the charge of “homophobia” would be well-founded. I work with homosexually orientated people – active or not – most days. Some are my friends, some my brothers in Christ. Like me, they are all, by nature, lost sinners. As Christians we are only starving people showing other starving people where we have found bread. That bread is the message of the gospel of grace, the message of a love that dares indeed to speak its name – the name of Jesus Christ, who has died to save us from all that binds us.

Whatever we conclude about the principles involved, if homosexuals do adopt children, they are likely to come to our toddler groups and Sunday Schools. Their adoptive parents must be welcomed too, as Christ would welcome them. That is the major challenge for us in this matter.

References

ⁱ A good summary is in Patrick Dixon, *The Rising Price of Love* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1995) ch.6.

ⁱⁱ Welling K, Field J *et al.*, *Sexual Behaviour in Britain; the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles* (Penguin, 1994)

ⁱⁱⁱ Peter Tatchell, *The Observer*, 25 April 1999.

^{iv} Cameron, Playfair & Wellum, *The longevity of homosexuals before and after the AIDS epidemic* (Omega, 1994).

^v Williams *et al.*, *Multidisciplinary Baseline assessment*, p.127.

^{vi} Rosenberger *et al.*, *Psychopathology in Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection: Lifetime and Current Assessment* (Comprehensive Psychiatry; 34, May/June 1993), p.153.

^{vii} Bell & Weinberg, *Homosexualities*, pp.200-201, 444.

^{viii} Tripp & Cockett, “Children living in re-ordered families”, *Social Policy Findings No. 45* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1994)

^{ix} Wockner, *Advocate*; 726 Feb 4 1997, p.26.

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