



“The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1)

REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

APRIL 2009

What’s Happening?

Time is Running Out!

Only a couple of weeks remain to reserve your spot for the RTB Alaska Cruise Conference, sailing through Alaska’s Inside Passage, August 8-15. Check out the reduced prices in the informative brochure at <http://www.reasons.org/cruise>. Space is limited and RTB can only guarantee your spot, if you book before May 10. So don’t delay!

Help Make a Difference

The Seattle Chapter and Campus Crusade are plan to do a “Skeptics Forum” at the UW next fall. To do this, we need to raise about \$5,000 to cover the costs. If you, your church, or your group, would like to help sponsor this event, contact the chapter at seattle@reasons.org.

We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. We are also happy to help you with resources to support your personal studies and/or ministry efforts.

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Testing the Truth Claims About Homosexuality

GREG MOORE

[Note: This article appears in two parts, this month and next.]

Surveys indicate Americans are becoming increasingly tolerant of homosexuality. For example, Americans interviewed in Gallup’s 2008 Values and Beliefs poll were evenly divided over the morality of same-sex relationships, with 48 percent considering them morally acceptable and 48 percent saying they are morally wrong. When Gallup asked this question in 2001, 53 percent said they were morally wrong and 40 percent said they were morally acceptable.¹



Similarly, a 2008 Newsweek poll found growing support for same-sex relationships, with 39 percent of Americans supporting full marriage rights and 55 percent favoring legally-sanctioned unions or partnerships. Both figures are notably higher than earlier in the decade, when 33 percent approved of the former and 40 percent backed the latter. According to the poll, support for a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage is also waning, with a majority of Americans now opposing such a ban.²

Some of this can be attributed to generational change because the younger you are, the more likely you are to support same-sex relationships.³ However, much of it is due to two things that challenge the traditional ethic towards homosexuality. One is the widespread assertion that homosexuality is genetic and a normal aspect of human nature. The other is the emergence of a pro-gay theology in the Church that promotes not just tolerance of homosexuality, but seeks to revise traditional theology so that homosexuality is morally permissible.

The trend towards greater acceptance of homosexuality is really not surprising given the secular turn of America. However, as followers of Christ, we are called to be different—not conforming to the pattern of the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). Thus, it is critical that our convictions are based on what God desires, rather than the truth claims of our culture. How can we be sure this is the case? In the words of the Apostle Paul, we need to test everything

and hold on to what is good (1 Thess. 5:21).

This paper is intended to facilitate that process. First, it investigates the claim that homosexuality is genetic. Next, it examines homosexuality through the eyeglasses of Scripture. Ultimately, it is my hope this information will help Christians strike a critical balance between demonstrating Christ's love for all people, while striving to live a life that is pleasing to God.

IS HOMOSEXUALITY INNATE?

Two decades ago, 20 percent of Americans believed homosexuality was genetic.⁴ Today, that number has nearly doubled to 38 percent.⁵ This is significant because the belief that homosexuality is innate causes people to develop much more positive attitudes about it.⁶

The growing popularity of this view is hardly surprising. Over the past decade, there has been a steady stream of pronouncements in the media that science has demonstrated that homosexuality is innate. The genetic argument is also used by gay activists in their effort to change public policy. The question is whether or not it is true.

The claim that homosexuality is a genetically-inherited condition rests on a foundation of three seminal studies that were conducted in the 1990s. What follows is a brief review of these studies.

Simon LeVay – Brain Differences (1991)

The first study came from Simon LeVay, a scientist at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies.⁷ LeVay dissected the postmortem brains of 19 homosexual men and 16 heterosexual men and measured a region of the hypothalamus (a portion of the brain responsible for certain metabolic processes and activities of the autonomic nervous system). What he determined was the hypothalamic region in the heterosexual group was, on average, twice as large as the homosexual group. This, he concluded, was strong evidence of a biological link to homosexuality.⁸

There are a number of flaws with this study. First, the sample size was very small and the sampling was not random. Second, LeVay did not confirm the heterosexuality of the men in the control group. Third, LeVay did not address the fact that all of the homosexual subjects had died of AIDS—something that could account for the brain differences he observed. Fourth, LeVay's findings have not been replicated by other researchers, a key criterion for validating scientific studies.⁹

However, the major problem is that LeVay failed to demonstrate the hypothalamic region had anything to do with sexual preference. Although the groups showed slight differences as groups, the range of sizes of the individual samples was virtually the same. In other words, the hypothalamic region of some of the homosexual men was actually larger than some of the heterosexual men.¹⁰ As a result, there was no direct correlation between an individual's sexual orientation and the size of his hypothalamus.

In addition, LeVay assumed the brain is hardwired or permanently fixed—something scientists now know is not the case. Instead, the brain exhibits plasticity,

In the **NEWS...**

[Old-Earth Creationism on Trial](#)

This article by RTB's Jeff Zweerink responds to some of the charges made in a new book written from a young-earth perspective that declares old-earth creationist guilty of compromise. Go to: <http://www.reasons.org/Old-EarthCreationismOnTrial>.

[The Science of Teen Sex](#)

This Breakpoint article interviews Dr. Freda McKissic Bush, the author of a new book on casual sex affects our children. According to Bush, sexual choices make changes in the brain, changes that lead us to start seeing the behavior as normal. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=11624>.

[Deifying Darwin](#)

This tothesource article discusses how atheists venerate Darwin as a secular saint because of the simplicity of his theory, yet such a view doesn't match the reality of what has been discovered over the past century. Go to http://www.tothesource.org/4_15_2009/4_15_2009.htm.

[Helium Diffusion Rate](#)

This article on the RTB website discusses the claim that the helium diffusion rate in zircon is evidence of a young-earth. Go to <http://www.reasons.org/HeliumDiffusioninZirconAResponseToQuestionsbytheRATETeam>.

[Tolerance Around the World](#)

This Breakpoint article by Alan Chambers, head of the largest Christian ministry for those struggling with same-sex attraction, discusses how true tolerance cuts both ways and depends on an environment where opposing viewpoints can coexist. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=11632>.

remodeling connections according to the areas that are most frequently used. Researchers have also shown that sexual behavior can cause brain differences. Given this, it is reasonable to conclude that the brain differences LeVay observed—if you accept his findings and some researchers do not—were the result of living a homosexual lifestyle, not the cause of it.¹¹

So, what does this study really prove? In actuality, not much. In fact, LeVay has admitted:

It's important to stress what I didn't find. I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn't show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain.¹²

Bailey and Pillard – Twins Study (1991)

The second study came from Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard, researchers at Northwestern University and the Boston University School of Medicine.¹³ The researchers examined the brothers of homosexual men: 56 identical twins, 54 fraternal twins, 142 non-twin brothers and 57 adopted brothers. What they found was 52 percent of identical twins, 22 percent of the fraternal twins, 9.2 percent of the non-twin biological brothers, and 11 percent of adopted brothers were homosexual. Based on this, they concluded male sexual orientation is substantially genetic.¹⁴

The basic idea in twin studies is to show the more genetically similar two people are, the more likely they will share the trait you are studying. Identical twins are the most genetically similar (100 percent), fraternal twins and non-twin siblings are next (both 50 percent) and unrelated siblings are the least similar (less than 5 percent). Therefore, if a trait is genetic, both identical twins should inherit it, less but similar numbers of fraternal and non-twin siblings should inherit it, and a small number of non-biological (adoptive) siblings should have it.¹⁵

The glaring problem with this study is the concordance rates were counter to the expected trend. In nearly half of the identical twins (48 percent), one brother was not homosexual. The number of fraternal twins and non-twin brothers that shared homosexuality was significantly different (22 percent vs. 9.2 percent). And, the number of adoptive brothers that shared homosexuality was actually larger than the number non-twin biological brothers that shared homosexuality (11 percent vs. 9.2 percent).¹⁶

Today, numerous twin studies have been conducted. The trend we see is the more recent and better-conducted the study, the smaller the detected genetic influence on homosexuality. In fact, based on all the data that has been accumulated to date we can conclude, if one identical twin (male or female) is homosexual, the chances the

co-twin will be homosexual is only about 10 percent. In other words, identical twins usually differ.¹⁷ Thus, when twin studies are evaluated objectively, they fail to provide any valid support for the claim that homosexuality is substantially genetic.

Dean Hamer – The Gay Gene (1993)

The third study was conducted by Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute.¹⁸ Hamer examined the families of gay men and found in many families gay men had gay relatives on the mother's side of the family. Based on this, he hypothesized that a gene for homosexuality might be found on the X chromosome, which is passed from the mother. He then examined 40 pairs of homosexual brothers and found 33 of the pairs had a matching DNA region of the X chromosome known as Xq28. This led him to conclude that male homosexuality is genetically linked to that region of the X chromosome.¹⁹

There are two significant problems with this study. First, Hamer didn't check to see whether any of the heterosexual men in these families also had the genetic marker. As a result, he failed to demonstrate that there is a direct linkage between the Xq28 marker and homosexuality. Second, Hamer never explained why seven pairs of brothers did not have the genetic marker. If this is the gene for homosexuality, all of the homosexual individuals should have possessed that marker; however that was clearly not the case.²⁰

Since the Hamer study was published, two independent labs have examined the linkage of the Xq28 marker to male homosexuality. Both studies were larger and better-designed than Hamer's study, yet neither was able to reproduce anything remotely resembling his results. One study examined 54 pairs of gay brothers and concluded the linkage was statistically insignificant.²¹ The other study examined 182 families and concluded gay brothers were no more likely to share the Xq28 marker than would be expected by pure chance.²²

Based on this, it is clear Hamer overstated the significance of his findings. Furthermore, thanks to the Human Genome Project this issue can now be put to rest. The one piece of information that was hoped to come from that project was the identification of the so-called "gay gene." Both the human X and Y chromosomes (the two sex-determining chromosomes) have now been completely sequenced. Yet, after countless hours and millions of dollars analyzing these unique chromosomes, neither the map for the X nor the Y chromosome contains any "gay gene."²³

Final Comments

So what is the truth about homosexuality? All of the data now available clearly indicates homosexuality is not hardwired by DNA.²⁴ It may be influenced by genetics, as many human behavioral traits are, but whatever genes may be involved represent predispositions, not predeterminations.²⁵ Thus, it is not scientifically accurate to say

genetics are the cause of homosexuality or that homosexuals are “born that way.”

Furthermore, such a claim is really not reasonable. Inherited traits, like eye color, come from genes that are passed from parent to child. That is how they persist from one generation to the next. Of course, the obvious problem for homosexuality is partners of the same sex partners are biologically unable to reproduce. If they can't reproduce, they can't pass on a “gay gene.” Therefore, if homosexuality was caused by a “gay gene,” the homosexual population would eventually disappear.²⁶

Consider also the issue of changeability. Individuals who are born with an inherited trait, like diabetes, have no hope of changing that condition because it is a product of the genes they inherited from their parents. However, homosexuality is very different. Numerous studies demonstrate that gay men and women can change the core features of their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual—something that would be impossible if homosexuality was caused by genetics.²⁷

Instead, what the data indicates is environmental factors are the largest causes of same-sex attraction.²⁸ This leads many researchers to conclude that homosexuality stems from a combination of nature (temperament) and nurture (environment). One way to understand this interaction is by the following equation:²⁹

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Genes} + \text{Brain Wiring} + \text{Prenatal Hormonal Environment} &= \\ &\text{Temperament} \\ \text{Parents} + \text{Peers} + \text{Experience} &= \text{Environment} \\ \text{Temperament} + \text{Environment} &= \text{Homosexual Orientation} \end{aligned}$$

Simply put, multiple factors contribute to a homosexual orientation. Genetics may play a weak or indirect role, but it is environment, particularly childhood experiences and free will choices that determine how a person responds to whatever genetic predispositions that might be present.³⁰ Or, as Dr. Francis S. Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, has described the contribution of genetics to homosexuality:

“... we have all been dealt a particular set of cards, and the cards will eventually be revealed. But how we play the hand is up to us.”³¹

[TO BE CONTINUED IN THE MAY NEWSLETTER]

Greg Moore is president of the Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe. He is a trained RTB apologist and works for the city of Everett, WA.

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Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at seattle@reasons.org. You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.