

A STUDY AID

Prepared by The Committee on Religious Concerns  
Of The Mattachine Society of Washington

IS HOMOSEXUALITY A SICKNESS ?

A Compendium of Informed Opinion in the Negative

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" I would like to say that I could tell the reader in a few words the nature, cause and cure of homosexuality. It would then be superfluous for him to read any other book on the subject. I am sorry that I cannot do this. We all seem to be as far from being able to do this as we are from expounding the nature, cause and cure of heterosexuality or of love - or indeed of life and the universe itself with all its manifold phenomena. Indeed, the latter task may seem to be as near to, or as far from solution as the former. "

DR. CHARLES BERG, F.B.P.s.S.,  
D.P.M.

Co-Author of The Problem of  
Homosexuality, 1958

This pamphlet is a representative, but by no means exhaustive compilation of professional and authoritative commentary opposed to the concept of homosexuality as a sickness, disturbance, or other pathology.

The following quotations have been somewhat hurriedly arranged during the month preceding the January 7, 1966 meeting of the Special Needs Sub-Committee of the Department of Ministry, Vocation and Pastoral Services of The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

The Committee on Religious  
Concerns,  
The Mattachine Society of  
Washington

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DR. J.H. KAHN  
Johns Hopkins Medical School

" Homosexuals are not sexual curiosities, anomalies, NOR ALWAYS IN CONFLICT WITH THEMSELVES. Those who are in distress need the help which others require, who are in the same degree of emotional turmoil. "

DR. ROBERT LINDNER  
Author of: Handbook of Correctional Psychology, Contemporary Criminal Hygiene, Explorations in Psychoanalysis, Rebel Without A Cause, The Fifty Minute Hour, and Must You Conform?

" Within the last few decades the idea that homosexuality is an illness, a mental disease, an abnormality of behavior falling within the province of psycho-pathology, has gained broad acceptance. During the recent war, when psychiatry and clinical psychology surged to prominence, this notion took hold. Today, many of my colleagues in these fields have abandoned that naive view, modified it, or tend toward the conceptions I have outlined in these pages . . . Declaring the homosexual mentally ill, therefore, brings him within the compass of this regressive view and the range of all the "therapies" devised to insure his conformity. It may masquerade as a boon to the invert and a humanitarian modification of historic prejudice and hate: it is, in fact, but another way to obtain the conformance - this time in the area of sex-behavior - our dangerously petrifying institutions demand. "

DR. CLARENCE A. TRIPP (Ph.D.)  
Clinical Instructor at the Downstate Medical Center (Brooklyn, New York)

" Notions that homosexuality is unnatural and sick - and that its so-called cure would always be desirable, are still held by some professionals, and the lay public in general. Issues of sickness are made seemingly more valid in the eyes of clinicians by the fact that they so consistently see a sample of the population where homosexual tendencies are associated with severe guilt, conflict, or other neurotic disturbances. . . . As for psychotherapy, I know of not one single validated instance of any basic sexual change ever having been accomplished. Nor was the Kinsey Research ever able to find a single instance of any such change. Nor does the issue seem to be of the least importance. Even if there were treatment procedures for successfully revising an individual's whole personal value system, would we be ready to apply those procedures . . . to those millions of persons who are primarily homosexual for their entire lives? "

DR. GEORGE WEINBERG (Ph.D.)  
Author of many articles on psychology and statistics, as well as a textbook, Statistics: An Intuitive Approach, and the soon to be released Personality Change. Dr. Weinberg is a psychotherapist in private practice in New York City. He is a former

professor at New York University and Hunter College. Dr. Weinberg spoke at the 1965 ECHO Conference and took a strong anti-sickness stand, in which he told homosexuals about the dangers of Psychoanalysis. He said:

" Some homosexuals seeking cures have very dominating analysts and they are actually afraid to admit to their analysts that they have not been cured. "

DR. ISADORE RUBIN (Ph.D.)  
Managing Editor of Sexology Magazine

" Unless there is a place for the homosexual in the Great Society there will never be a great society in any meaningful sense. . The body of evidence which says that homosexuality is not a sickness has grown to a point where it can no longer be ignored. . The Journal of the American Medical Association continues to disregard studies proving that homosexuality is not an illness... We cannot create a great society while condemning millions of our fellow citizens. "

DR. E.M. MARSH  
Gynecologist (San Francisco)

" Doctors should take the scientific and biological view, in which no sexual activity is 'un-natural' if they want to do their patients the most good. . . The theologian makes a moral judgment based on the traditional Judeo-Christian code of behavior; the sociologist asks what's best for the greatest number; the lawyer asks what's legal. The physician should make no judgment apart from that which has to do with the physical and mental health of his patient. Doctors are as poorly educated about sex and as much in the dark as other people. Still, they are the ones most often asked for advice about it. "

DR. WARDELL B. POMEROY  
Co-Author of the Kinsey Research findings

" Yes, times are changing. There is a real opportunity for the Mattachine Society to play a role during this period of flux. It will not accomplish this role as long as its members believe the nonsense that society has been saying for the past 150 years, or as long as they are weighed down by feelings of low self-esteem induced by society's attitude toward them. When you (homosexuals) are called nuts and neurotics and goofers by therapists, immoral by the clergy, criminals by lawyers and judges, and perverts and child seducers by the public, you need a special kind of faith in yourself and faith in your fellow man before the collective ego of the Mattachine Society can be healthy and effective. "

DRS. DESMOND CURRAN AND J. WHITBY  
(from the British Medical Journal - September 14, 1957)

" For the patient who is adjusted to being homosexual much less is possible; no doctor could produce for the Wolfenden Committee a "cured" case of complete homosexuality. "

DR. SIGMUND FREUD  
 Founder of Psychoanalysis

" Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, IT CANNOT BE CLASSIFIED AS AN ILLNESS; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.) It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime, and cruelty too."

DRS. KINSEY, POMEROY AND MARTIN  
 (Excerpts from Sexual Behavior in the Human Male. Baltimore:  
 W.B. Saunders, 1948

" The homosexual has been a significant part of human sexual activity ever since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal. . . . The evidence which we now have on the incidence and frequency of homosexual activity indicates that at least a third of the male population would have to be isolated from the rest of the community, if all those with any homosexual capacities were to be so treated. . . . It is argued that an individual who is so obtuse to social reactions as to continue his homosexual activity and make it any material portion of his life, therein evidences some social incapacity; but psychiatrists and clinicians in general might very well re-examine their justification for demanding that all persons conform to particular patterns of behavior. . . . As a matter of fact there is an increasing proportion of the most skilled psychiatrists who make no attempt to re-direct (homosexual) behavior, but who devote their attention to helping an individual accept himself, and to conduct himself in such a manner that he does not come into open conflict with society. "

DR. ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG (Ph.D.)  
 Psychoanalyst, Sociologist, and Professor of Sociology at New York University and Professor of Sociology at the New School.

" It seems quite doubtful that homosexuality is a disease . . . Homosexual behavior often is a symptom or part of illness; so is heterosexual behavior. (I am reminded of a colleague who reiterated " all my homosexual patients are quite sick" - to which I finally replied "so are all my heterosexual patients." As our culture has absorbed analysis, analysts have become culture-bound. It seems a questionable gain) . . . Many homosexuals are neurotic or psychotic and seek the help of analysts, as do many heterosexuals. It does not follow that homosexuality itself is an illness - that it is always associated with clinical symptoms (other than the sexual choice itself) of disturbance. . . . I do not believe that homosexuality as such can or need be treated. But the sicknesses of homosexuals, in which homosexuality plays a part, require treatment as do those of heterosexuals . . . Homosexuality, therefore, is as natural as heterosexuality. "

REPORT OF THE (WOLFENDEN) COMMITTEE ON HOMOSEXUAL OFFENSES  
AND PROSTITUTION. London: Presented to Parliament by Command  
of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth.

" But we feel bound to say that the evidence put before us has not established to our satisfaction the proposition that homosexuality is a disease. . . . Our evidence suggests, however, that homosexuality does not satisfy any of them (the three criteria for a condition to be recognized as a disease) unless the terms in which they are defined are expanded beyond what could reasonably be regarded as legitimate. . . . Many people behave in an unusual, extraordinary or socially unacceptable way, but it seems to us that it would be rash to assume that unorthodox behavior is necessarily symptomatic of disease if it is the only symptom that can be demonstrated. . . . On the criterion of symptoms, however, homosexuality cannot legitimately be regarded as a disease, because in many cases it is the only symptom and is compatible with full mental health in other respects. . . . Our medical evidence seems to show three things: first, that in general practice male homosexuals form a very small fraction of the doctor's patients; secondly, that in psychiatric practice male homosexuality is a primary problem in a very small proportion of the cases seen; and thirdly, that only a very small percentage of homosexuals consult doctors about their condition. "

DRS. DESMOND CURRAN (Consultant Psychiatrist and Member of the Wolfenden Committee) and DENNIS PARR (Dept. of Psychiatry, St. George's Hospital, London)

The following are conclusions of both doctors based upon a study of 100 homosexuals:

" In our series, both practising and non-practising homosexuals were on the whole successful and valuable members of society, quite unlike the popular conception of such persons as vicious, criminal, effete, or depraved. We found no reason to regard most of the patients as physically, intellectually, or emotionally immature (unless the basic criterion for 'immaturity' is that of being a homosexual - a circular argument.) Only half of the patients showed significant psychiatric abnormality other than their sexual deviation, and such associated abnormalities were often slight. MOREOVER, MANY OF THESE ABNORMALITIES WERE EXPLICABLE AS A REACTION TO THE DIFFICULTIES OF BEING HOMOSEXUAL. If homosexuality is a disease (as has often been suggested) it is in a vast number of cases MONOSYMPTOMATIC (having only a single symptom), NON-PROGRESSIVE, AND COMPATIBLE WITH SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AND OBJECTIVE EFFICIENCY. "

DR. HARRY BENJAMIN  
Psychiatrist, Author

" If adjustment is necessary, it should be made primarily with regard to the position of the homosexual in present day society and society should more often be the patient to be treated than the invert.

DR. HARRY BENJAMIN (Continued)

" 'Must the individual homosexual be rejected in our time?' That such a question should even be asked makes me feel a bit ashamed. At least that was my first reaction. With similar justification we could ask whether a left-handed or a color-blind person should be rejected. All of these people exist, and they exist by no fault of their own. Quite naturally they should not be rejected. . . . As I see it, homosexuality can have a wide variety of reasons and motivations. Homosexuality is to be considered a symptom due to numerous underlying causes and not a fixed entity like a disease. It can hardly be called unnatural, being often a product of nature."

DR. BLANCHE M. BAKER  
Psychiatrist, Writer

" I regard homosexuality as a way of life and not a disease in any sense. I agree with the late Dr. Alfred Kinsey that homosexuality is one of our mammalian heritages appearing widespread in the general population as a matter of individual variation."

DR. J.A. HADFIELD  
Lecturer on Psychopathology and Mental Hygiene at the University of London.

" I no longer take homosexuals on for treatment, for the number of cases any one analyst can treat is limited. The process of cure . . . cannot be considered a practical answer to the widespread incidence of homosexuality. "

DR. D. STANLEY-JONES  
Royal Society of Medicine - Symposium on Homosexuality

" Any course of therapy which seeks to reverse the fundamental pattern (homosexual orientation) is not only fore-doomed to failure, as all the reported cases testify, but is also quite indefensible when regarded in the light of absolute morality: attempted treatment or alteration of the basic personality (of a homosexual) can only be described as a moral outrage. "

DRS. FRED H. BROWN (Clinical Psychologist at the Mt. Sinai Hospital) AND RUDOLF T. KEMPTON (Chairman, Dept. of Zoology, Vassar College)

" In order to understand inversion we must cease to view it as a disease. The homosexual or invert becomes a problem for the psychologist because he does not fit into any clear niche in our society. . . . Sexual inversion is not a disease, but a consequence of biologic or psychologic factors or a combination of both . . . Psychological treatment has enabled individuals to make a better emotional adjustment to their homosexual wishes with reduction of such symptoms of nervous strain as already described. "

RUTH BENEDICT

Famous Anthropologist, Author of Patterns of Culture  
Columbia University

" Western Civilization tends to regard even a mild homosexual as an abnormal. The clinical picture of homosexuality stresses the neuroses and psychoses to which it gives rise, and emphasizes almost equally the inadequate functioning of the invert and his behavior. We have only to turn to other cultures, however, to realize that homosexuals have BY NO MEANS BEEN INADEQUATE TO THE SOCIAL SITUATION. THEY HAVE NOT ALWAYS FAILED TO FUNCTION. In some societies they have been especially acclaimed. . . . When the homosexual response is regarded as a perversion, however, the invert is immediately exposed to all the conflicts to which aberrants are always exposed. His guilt, his sense of inadequacy, his failures, are consequences of the disrepute which social tradition visits upon him, and few people can achieve a satisfactory life unsupported by the standards of their society. The adjustments that society demands WOULD STRAIN ANY MAN'S VITALITY, and the consequences of this conflict we identify with their homosexuality. "

DR. med WOLFGANG E. BREDETSCHNEIDER  
German Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

" The much used term 'against nature' is utterly ridiculous and cannot stand up against scientific or reasonable analysis, as long as such analysis is able to keep itself free from bias . . . Homoerotic behavior has always been, is, and will remain in all likelihood. Why fight against it constantly? Why deny its actual existence? Why not, instead, render it useful for the sake of all? "

DR. DONALD JAMES WEST, M.B., D.P.M.

" Homosexual behavior seems to arise from some deep-rooted natural urge which finds different expression in different cultures . . . such propensities are a part of man's natural biological inheritance. In our culture such tendencies are suppressed. "

DR. CHARLES BERG, F.B.P.s.S., D.P.M.  
Consultant Psychologist to the British Hospital for Functional Nervous Disorders, and late Physician to the Tavistock Clinic and the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency.  
Author of many well-known books.

" Homosexuality is not a disease, nor even a clinical entity. It is nothing more than a particular form of expression, of a psychic state which is common to all living creatures. . . . In the light of what we know of psychology, this does not warrant the heterosexual feeling superior to the homosexual, or regarding him as somebody to whom he can teach better ways. . . . Like any human action, homosexuality - like heterosexuality - means something different in each individual. "

DR. JOSEPH STEIN  
 Author of Maturity in Sex and Marriage, 1963

" To perceive it (homosexuality) as an unnatural deviation, an illness, and, therefore, as a perversion of the sexual instinct, is to lose sight of the fact that the social dictate does not reflect biology. . . . It would be very difficult to establish the existence of an exclusively HETEROSEXUAL instinct on the human level. There is considerable reason to think that if left to his own devices, modern man might not be so predominately heterosexual, certainly not exclusively so. "

DR. EVELYN HOOKER  
 The University of California  
 Author of Extensive Research Papers on Homosexuality

"What are the psychological implications of the hypothesis that homosexuality is not necessarily a symptom of pathology? I would VERY TENTATIVELY suggest the following:

1. Homosexuality as a clinical entity does not exist. Its forms are as varied as heterosexuality.
2. Homosexuality may be a deviation in sexual pattern which is within the normal range, psychologically. This has been suggested on a biological level by Ford and Beach.
3. The role of particular forms of sexual desire and expression in personality structure and development may be less important than has frequently been assumed. "

DRS. KURT HILLER, FRANZ REINHARD AND JUERGEN ROGGENHAUSEN  
 Germany

" We declare that love between those of the same sex, however incomprehensible, absurd, or even abhorant it is to the feelings of normal people, is neither a vice nor a disease; it is not a mockery of nature but a manifestation of nature; it is an erotic variation that has been observed amongst all peoples of the earth since the dawn of human thought. "

DR. VON KRAFFT-EBBING

" That contrary sexual sensation cannot thus be necessarily regarded as psychical degeneration, or even as a manifestation of disease, is shown by various considerations . . . It has become impossible to maintain in this connection the idea of 'disease'. " - From New Studies in the Domain of Homosexuality.

DR. IWAN BLOCH  
 Author of The Sexual Life of Our Times

" I have observed a great number of homosexuals belonging to all ages and occupations in whom not the slightest trace of morbidity was to be detected. They were just as healthy and normal as

DR. IWAN BLOCH (Continued)

"heterosexuals. . . . For me, there is no longer any doubt that homosexuality is compatible with complete mental and physical health. "

DR. EUGENE DE SAVITSCH

" Homosexuals . . . probably constitute anything from 5 to 10 percent of our population, and in the majority of cases are no more responsible for their condition than is a brunette for her hair or a Negro for his skin. . . . There is no germ, so far as we know, that makes an individual seek a member of his own sex . . . . These people (well-adjusted homosexuals) should, in my opinion, keep as far as possible from the medical profession, except when suffering from appendicitis, pneumonia, or some organic ailment, the treatment of which will not upset their psychological balance. "

DRS. CLELLAN S. FORD AND FRANK A. BEACH.

(Dr. Ford is Professor of Anthropology, Yale University and Dr. Beach is Professor of Psychology, Yale University. They are authors of Patterns of Sexual Behavior. )

" Human homosexuality is the product of the fundamental mammalian heritage of general sexual responsiveness as modified under the impact of experience. . . . The cross-cultural and cross species comparisons presented in this chapter combine to suggest that a biological tendency for inversion of sexual behavior is inherent in most if not all mammals including the human species. "

DR. FRANK A. BEACH  
Professor of Psychology, Yale

" People who say that homosexual activities are biologically abnormal are wrong. . . . We find ourselves then, agreeing with Gide in his contention that homosexual behavior should be classified as natural from the evolutionary and physiological point of view. "

## A RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you are unable to locate any of the books on the following reading list, the Committee on Religious Concerns of the Mattachine Society of Washington will gladly assist you. Write:

The Mattachine Society of  
Washington  
P.O. Box 1032  
Washington, D.C. 20013

- Baily, D.S., Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955
- Benson, R.O.D., In Defense of Homosexuality, Julian Press, Inc. New York 1965
- \*Cory, D.W., The Homosexual in America, New York: Greenberg, 1951
- Cory, D.W. Ed., Homosexuality - A Cross Cultural Approach, New York: Julian Press, 1956
- Ford, C.S., and Beach, F.A., Patterns of Sexual Behavior, Chap. VII New York: Harper and Hoeber, 1951
- \*Heron, A. (Ed.) Toward a Quaker View of Sex. London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1963
- Hooker, E.A., A Preliminary Analysis of Group Behavior of Homosexuals, Journal of Psychiatry, 42: 217-225, 1956
- Hooker, E.A., The Adjustment of the Male Overt Homosexual, Journal of Projective Techniques, 21: 18-31, 1957
- Kinsey, A.C., et al. Sexual Behavior in the Human Male. Baltimore: W.B. Saunders, 1948, and Kinsey, A.C. et al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female. Baltimore: W.B. Saunders, 1953
- \*Kuhn, D., (Ed.) The Church and the Homosexual, Glide Urban Center, 330 Ellis Street, San Francisco, California 94102
- \*Ruitenbeek, H.M., (Ed.) The Problem of Homosexuality in Modern Society. New York: Dutton, 1963
- \*Wolfenden, J., Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957. Published in U.S. by Stein and Day, 1963

\* Indicates that this book is available in a paperback edition.