

Discussion Document on Homosexuality and The Salvation Army

Can Gays be Christian? Can Christians be Gay?

How would you feel about having a Gay Corps Officer?

If you are Gay, what's it like being a member of The Salvation Army?

How would you respond if your daughter told you she was a lesbian, or your son announced he was gay?

Salvationists might face some of these questions. This paper is to help people work out their own answers.

Contents

1. Definitions.
 2. Introduction.
 3. What's happened in the past?
 4. What is said to be wrong with homosexuality?
 - Natural Law.
 - What does the Bible say?
 - Ways of viewing Scripture.
 - Looking at particular texts.
 5. How the Church has responded in recent years.
 6. Is it reasonable to expect a homosexual to change?
 7. The Salvation Army and Gays.
 8. Questions for discussion.
 9. Further resources to look at.
-

1. Definitions

Homosexuality is having a sexual preference for people of the same sex. Bi-sexuality is where a person may be equally attracted to people of the same and the opposite sex.

2. Introduction

In the past, homosexual behaviour was generally regarded as immoral and illegal. Homosexuals were disciplined by the Church and punished by the community. In recent years community attitudes have softened and homosexual activity is no longer illegal. Some people in the Church agree with this change, others disagree.

Some Churches are now looking at whether or not a Christian can be an active homosexual, in the light of Biblical study, scientific discovery, and the present climate of opinion.

This discussion paper is not intended to argue one way or the other, but to provide Salvationists with a review of the current situation, to support them in framing their personal response to the issue of homosexuality and homosexual practice, especially in relation to the Church and to the Salvation Army.

3. What's happened in the past?

It used to be assumed that every individual was either male or female – that was clearly the way life was designed to operate, for procreation and the continuance of the species. Homosexual behaviour was therefore:

- (1) un-natural – so people would not normally do it.
- (2) sinful – so people should exercise their will-power to avoid it, even if they felt drawn in that direction, and repent if they did do it.

In Old Testament times homosexual behaviour was punishable by death by stoning. In Medieval Britain, the penalty was being buried alive, and later, death by hanging. In 1861 that became life imprisonment. From 1885, a lesser offence of “gross indecency” entailed a shorter prison term. In Britain in the twentieth century the law was seldom enforced until the homosexual spy scares in the 1950s and a number of high-profile prosecutions, which led to agitation for law reform. The Sexual Offences Act of 1967 finally permitted private homosexual acts between consenting adults aged 21 and over.

While tolerated, and eventually legalised, homosexual behaviour was still regarded as deviant and psychologically maladjusted, listed in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

Some explanations for homosexuality have been:

- (1) Homosexuality was determined by the way a child was brought up, perhaps because of a strong mother or weak father figure. It was hoped that people could be treated and counselled so that they might recover from it as from an illness.
- (2) It was hormonally determined (in the case of males, because of insufficient testosterone), a condition which might be treated chemically.
- (3) With the study of psychology it has come to be more widely accepted that sexuality is found on a continuum between male and female, and that most people have to varying degrees an element of the opposite gender in their make-up. American research by Alfred Kinsey and his associates, published in 1948, concluded that 4% of the male population was exclusively homosexual, with 5-10% “predominantly homosexual” with 25% “incidentally homosexual.” Kinsey's research and results have been challenged in recent years but it has become generally accepted that at least 5% of the population may be of homosexual orientation. The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its DSM in 1973.
- (4) Some argue that sexual orientation is genetically encoded, and therefore not open to change, though there is still disagreement about whether that is proven.

A “gay rights” (from “good as you”) lobby has emerged, campaigning for acceptance of homosexual orientation and behaviour as natural, requiring recognition with equal rights and the abolition of social, economic and legal discrimination.

In New Zealand, efforts to obtain legal relief for homosexuals included Ven Young’s unsuccessful 1974 reform bill and Fran Wilde’s successful 1985 decriminalisation Reform Act. In 2005 the Civil Union Act (enabling an equivalent to marriage for same-sex couples but under a different name) and Legal Recognition of Relationships Act (removing legal discrimination and disabilities previously experienced by same-sex partners) were passed by the New Zealand Parliament.

4. What is wrong with homosexuality?

Within the Church the usual arguments derive from (1) Natural Law and (2) the Bible.

4.1 Natural Law

The Roman Catholic Church bases its arguments regarding sexual morality (including same-sex behaviour) on a philosophical system called Natural Law. Putting it very simply, this philosophy says that God has built certain purposes and “ends” into the elements of creation, and that people act rightly when their actions aim to satisfy those purposes and achieve those ends. Accordingly, Natural Law reasoning holds that people act wrongly when they intentionally frustrate the purposes and ends that have been built into the fabric of creation. In sexual matters, the Catholic Church presently teaches that human sexuality is jointly for procreation and love. Sexual activity that intentionally makes procreation impossible is therefore regarded as morally wrong. This, the Catholic Church says, is what Romans 1 means when it says that same sex behaviour is “unnatural.”

We should note that Natural Law thinking is not exclusive to the Roman Catholic Church. There are many Protestants who also appeal to “the Creator’s design for life” as a basis for their moral arguments. And we should also note that not all Catholics agree with the official position of the Vatican that homosexuality is “inherently disordered.”

Against the Vatican’s conclusion, some people accept Natural law as a sound philosophy but contend that same sex behaviour between loving partners is as consistent with the purposes of human sexuality as sexual behaviour between a husband and wife who choose to use contraceptives. More radical approaches reject Natural Law theory itself, either on the basis that it makes no sense to talk about “purposes” in nature or on the grounds that one cannot logically infer *ethical* conclusions from purely *natural* facts.

4.2 What does the Bible say?

Protestant Christians are more likely to base their view of homosexuality particularly on Scripture. Salvationists doctrine says the Bible is the “Divine Rule of Christian faith and practice”. However, within that general framework the Bible can be viewed in a number of different ways:

Ways of viewing Scripture

(i) The Bible is to be taken literally and obeyed as God's instructions. Problem: this simplifies everything but makes for inflexibility if followed to the letter, and for inconsistency if it is not. Many who hold this view about what the Bible says about Homosexuality, are selective in their reading and ignore prohibitions against mixing cotton and wool in one garment (Lev. 19:19), or the instruction to stone adulterers (Deut. 22:22), or the law that a girl who is raped must marry her attacker and never be divorced from him (Deut. 22:28-29).

(ii) Some parts of the Bible are more important than others. For example, Jesus said that justice and mercy are more important than tithing herbs (Matt 23:23). We all treat some laws as over-riding some others – just as we believe that an ambulance may break the speed limit, for example, to save a life. Problem: people will disagree about how you decide which laws are more important.

(iii) The Bible is a special place where God speaks to us, but not everything in it is God's instruction, and all instructions in it do not need to be obeyed now. The authority of scripture is found in God who gives the Word, not in the words themselves. For example, in Mark 7:15-19 Jesus says not only that the Jewish food laws are to be over-riden but that they were never right in the first place. Problem: this approach does not help decide what is authoritative and what is open to debate and opinion.

(iv) The Bible is the record of two thousand years of history and insight and opinion and revelation; the story of God's encounter with his people, and not simply a list of instructions. The Holy Spirit enables us too to encounter God through the Scriptures as they challenge and engage us, enabling us to live not by the letter but by the Spirit, as Paul puts it in Romans 7:6. Problem: for some people however this is not clear-cut enough, with too many woolly, grey areas of uncertainty.

Most of us will use all of these ways of viewing Scripture at different times and in various situations. It is helpful to be aware of this when we try to work out what is a Christian way of dealing with difficult issues like homosexuality and how the church should respond to particular situations.

Looking at particular texts.

A number of places in the Bible refer to homosexual behaviour. The mainstream of Christian thought has always understood these as simple prohibitions, but in recent years there has been a lot of discussion about their meaning.

Genesis 19: Lot's angelic visitors at Sodom

This is the story of how two angels carried out an inspection of Sodom and were given hospitality by Lot. A crowd of men gathered outside and demanded that the visitors be handed over, "so that we may *know* them." Lot proposed handing over his two unmarried daughters instead but this was unacceptable to the crowd, who were eventually dispersed when the angels struck them with blindness.

Traditionally this story has been taken as referring to homosexual behaviour of the Sodomites, because “know” meant sexual connection. Some recent commentators have suggested that in unsettled and dangerous times, the citizens wished to know who the visitors were rather than to sexually abuse them, pointing out that “know” (*yadha*) implies carnal knowledge in only 10 of its 947 occurrences in Scripture, and that Lot clearly misunderstood their intention. Some other Biblical references to the story (such as Ezekiel 16:48-49) condemn the Sodomites for their attitude to strangers and the poor rather than for homosexuality. Other commentators say that homosexual rape of defeated foes was common practice in the Ancient Near East and that the ancient editors of the Bible clearly intended to condemn the practice.

Judges 19: the rape of the Levite concubine at Gibeah

This offensive story, which has many parallels with the events in Sodom, again has the offer of a woman for rape as an alternative to homosexual assault, and this time the offer is accepted. Again, there is some ambiguity about the point of the story, with homosexual behaviour condemned but hatred of strangers and breach of hospitality being the evils mainly targeted.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: the Holiness Code

Chapters 17-26 of Leviticus are known as the Holiness Code, this whole section on personal and family morality taking its theme from 19:2: “Be holy, because I, the Lord, am holy.” This material from the Jerusalem Priestly tradition is not about morality in our sense but about ritual cleanness.

This Holiness Code includes not only the instruction to “Love your neighbour as yourself” but a range of prohibitions about avoiding practices of the Canaanites like trimming men’s hair round the temples (Lev.19:27, re-enforced in later times to preserve Jewish distinctiveness) and not mixing different things such as fibres in a cloth, cross-ethnic marriages, cross-breeding animals and cross-dressing people. All are about the “confusion” of nature. The prohibition of same-sex acts falls within the same category because of the mixing of male and female roles. The two references to homosexuality are in 18:22 (“You shall not lie with a man as with a woman...”) and 20:13 (“If a man has intercourse with a man as with a woman... they shall both be put to death”).

Some claim these same-sex prohibitions have no bearing on modern understanding of sexuality, and belong with the other prohibitions ignored by conservative Christians who eat rare steak, wear polyester-cotton blends and get their hair cut. Others would point out that the Church has always maintained this prohibition but not the others, and that it belongs to a different order of prohibition – concerning moral rather than ceremonial requirements.

Of the Old Testament evidence in general, we might say that condemnation of homosexual practices was not in itself the main point; rather that it fell within the wider concern for the survival of the Hebrew people as separate from others, and for the defence of family and married life. Outside these, sexual irregularities, misuse of semen, confusion between species and violation of the natural order were seen as threats and abominations. For all these broader reasons homosexual behaviour was seen as unacceptable.

Romans 1:26-27: Paul on dishonourable passions

Paul here puts same sex behaviour, of both women and men, within the context of idolatry, so that exchanging the worship of the true God for untrue worship is linked with changing natural for unnatural practices. Traditionally this is regarded as expressing disapproval for homosexual practices. Some have recently argued that Paul is condemning only those heterosexuals who have “changed” their natural use and his condemnation does not apply to those who are homosexuals “by nature”. This is an argument dependent on a particular modern view of homosexuality; one unlikely to have occurred to Paul in his time.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10: Paul on wrong-doers

Paul includes *malakoi* (“softies”) and *arsenokoites* (“men lying in bed”) in a list of “wrong-doers who will not inherit the Kingdom.” Some interpret these words as referring to catamites and sodomites – passive and active partners in sexual activity. Others suggest that the words are not necessarily paired in this way; that the first refers to effeminate men (though it seems odd that Paul should denounce people simply on grounds of effeminacy), and the second to male prostitutes serving either sex.

Some argue that Paul is denouncing only the Graeco-Roman practice of paederasty (corruption of minors) and/or prostitution, and that the blanket condemnation of homosexuality is a recent homophobic reaction. Against this, it can be pointed out that Paul had a choice of words at his disposal and chose *not* to use *paiderastes* (lover of boys) or *paidophthoros* (corrupter of boys) which would have made that point. This passage is a source of the traditional Church opposition to homosexual practice – which Paul would have learned and passed on from his Jewish background – so that there is an unbroken tradition of this teaching in the Church.

1 Timothy 1:8-11: Concerning the legitimate use of the law

Here again the *arsenokoitai* (“men lying in bed”) are included in a list of people who are lawless and disobedient. The word is variously translated in modern versions as “abusers of themselves with men” (RV), “sodomites” (RSV), “perverts” (NEB and NIV), “sexual perverts” (Good News), “homosexuals” (Living Bible) or “those who are immoral with women or with boys or with men” (English Jerusalem Bible). Some people see this as a reference to homosexual practices; others say it is a general condemnation of promiscuity and that restricting its application to homosexuality simply betrays a prejudice brought to the text rather than derived from it. The views of the translators determine whether the translation is more or less specific.

Some other passages are sometimes cited, but tend to be more general in application rather than specifically about homosexual behaviour.

General comments on the use of Scripture

In the early Church when Paul wrote, the emphasis was on forgiveness of sins committed before conversion. Subsequent sins, such as the case of the man living with his step-mother at Corinth, were dealt with on a case by case basis. A difficulty for us today in assessing such texts is that Paul is writing out of a Jewish tradition which naturally abhorred homosexual behaviour (just as he disapproved of long hair in men – by way of contrast with the writers of Leviticus, who disapproved of *short* hair...). He was also dealing with converts from a Graeco-Roman world in which paederasty (child sex abuse) was common and he would have been quite justified in writing, “And such were some of you...” (1 Corinthians 6:11). So the question still arises as to which of Paul’s opinions imply reflect his own culture, and what should be taken as a moral absolute, applicable to all cultures, at all times.

Some argue that, although homosexuality has been known as far back as history goes, it is unlikely that Paul faced the modern situation of adult gay men and women seeking to commit themselves, within the Christian family, to a permanent loving relationship including the physical expression of that relationship. Would he have reacted so disapprovingly in such a case? Others reply that after all, he did not accommodate his message to his Greek contemporaries who thought paederasty was socially acceptable, so it is unlikely that he would have soft-pedalled his views on homosexual Christians either.

People give different answers, and they all claim support from the Bible. Examination of particular texts does not therefore prove beyond argument the case for or against Christians practising homosexual behaviour. Those against homosexual behaviour can show that the writers and people of Bible times did not accept it. Those wanting a broader and more permissive Biblical ethic either claim that,

- (1) correctly interpreted, the texts do not actually forbid homosexual activity after all; that there are other meanings to the texts;

or else that

- (2) those particular parts of the Bible no longer apply to contemporary Christians. Just as the early Church came to understand that Gentiles as well as Jews could enter the Kingdom, and in the 18th and 19th century Christians came to believe that slavery was wrong, so, it is claimed, in these times Christians can lose their prejudice against homosexual behaviour.

How we understand, interpret and apply the Scriptural texts is often determined by the assumptions we bring to them, both about the meaning and relevance of the Bible and about what we believe is acceptable in our contemporary culture. Clearly there is no agreement on these issues. We have to decide for ourselves where the weight of probability lies.

5. How the Church has responded in recent years:

Christians have responded in various ways to these changes in public perception and law, as well as to the differing Biblical arguments.

- Groups like the Metropolitan Community Church, which are explicitly for gay people. Originally formed for gay Christians excluded from and rejected by other church bodies, such groups regard homosexuality as God-given expression of sexuality and to be celebrated.
- Some more liberal mainline churches have adopted an inclusive policy and some have accepted practising homosexuals as clergy.
- Some are divided over whether or not homosexuality is permissible for a Christian.
- Some have come to an “agreement to differ” on the subject so that individual parishes can have different policies.
- Most conservative Evangelical churches including The Salvation Army, follow the Roman Catholic church in admitting that homosexual orientation is a fact of life, but insisting that homosexual practice is wrong.
- There are groups and Churches which do not accept that homosexuality is an orientation over which the person has no control but regard it as a deliberately wrong choice. Some organisations, like Exodus Ministries, seek to convert homosexuals and encourage them to seek to change their orientation.

The variety of attitudes possible could therefore be summarised as:

- Some see a homosexuality as a deliberate choice. They read the Scriptures as forbidding homosexual behaviour and therefore unacceptable in the Church.
- Some distinguish between homosexual orientation and homosexual conduct. They see homosexual orientation as beyond a person’s control, but still regard homosexual behaviour as a matter of choice, unacceptable in the Church.
- Some say that a homosexual – or bi-sexual – orientation is normal and God-given, and ask the Church to be “inclusive” of active homosexual behaviour.

All groups would probably agree with Augustine’s rule, “Love God and do what you like”, but would disagree over how that rule might be applied in practice.

6. Is it reasonable to expect a homosexual to change?

- If people are “born homosexual”, and have no choice about it, then one of the following views might be held:
 - (A) Some would argue that even if this is the case, the opportunity to change is still available, and that a spiritual, conversion experience would enable or open up the possibility of change. Some people can testify to this kind of change.

(B) Some would say that efforts to encourage a change of orientation are not helpful, and unlikely to be successful. Some people have had very unhappy experiences struggling unsuccessfully to change or suppress their orientation, or having other people attempt to “re-programme” them. It can be argued that a homosexual needs to accept his or her orientation in order to have inner peace.

In the second case, the choice then would be between

(a) Treating homosexuality rather like a handicap which, for reasons of ethical belief, denies a person of the possibility of participating in a full, sexually-active life. In this case a homosexual would be expected to remain celibate.

or

(b) Regarding homosexuality as an orientation which determines what kind of life-style a person may appropriately lead, including participation in an active sex-life.

- If homosexuality is a choice, rather than irreversibly conditioned, then the possibility of changing that orientation exists. There may be some who are not genetically or socially conditioned but who have made a choice or drifted into a homosexual behaviour for a variety of reasons.

In some cases people have made a further choice to reject a homosexual way of life and either remain single and celibate or enter into heterosexual marriage. A spiritual, conversion experience may give the opportunity for this to happen. There are people who testify to this experience and change.

7. The Salvation Army and Gays

The Salvation Army’s Soldier’s Covenant provides a statement of what Soldiers believe and how they promise to live: That Covenant does not refer to homosexuality.

The Army also issues “Positional Statements” which serve as guidelines outlining the international Army’s corporate opinion on certain moral and social issues. The Salvation Army does not tell Salvationists (or anyone else) what to think but it has regulations about what Salvationists, who have voluntarily subscribed to the organisation’s moral and ethical positions, may and may not do.

“Positional Statements” on Homosexuality have been produced in various Salvation Army territories, supporting the distinction drawn between orientation and conduct or life-style. The position adopted is that homosexual orientation is not blameworthy but that homosexual behaviour disqualifies one from soldiership or leadership in The Salvation Army. Sexual relationships are for married heterosexual couples, and sexual acts outside marriage are wrong, whether between heterosexual or homosexual. A homosexual soldier or leader in the Salvation Army would therefore be expected to remain celibate.

One of the most recent of these Positional Statements is from the United States of America, as follows:

POSITIONAL STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

The Salvation Army holds a positive view of human sexuality. Where a man and a woman love each other, sexual intimacy is understood as a gift of God to be enjoyed within the context of heterosexual marriage. However, in the Christian view, sexual intimacy is not essential to a healthy, full, and rich life. Apart from marriage, the scriptural standard is celibacy.

Sexual attraction to the same sex is a matter of profound complexity. Whether this is the result of genetics, environment, or some combination of both, attempts to deny its reality or to marginalize those of a same-sex orientation have not been helpful. The Salvation Army does not consider same-sex orientation blameworthy in itself or simply a matter of the will. While some Christian believers witness to a reorientation to heterosexuality, this has not been the experience of all.

Scripture forbids sexual intimacy between members of the same sex. The Salvation Army believes, therefore, that Christians whose sexual orientation is primarily or exclusively same-sex are called upon to embrace celibacy as a way of life. There is no scriptural support for same-sex unions as equal to, or as an alternative to, heterosexual marriage.

Likewise, there is no scriptural support for demeaning or mistreating anyone for reason of his or her sexual orientation. The Salvation Army opposes any such abuse.

In keeping with these convictions, the services of The Salvation Army are available to all who qualify, without regard to sexual orientation. The fellowship of Salvation Army worship is open to all sincere seekers of faith in Christ, and membership in The Salvation Army church body is open to all who confess Christ as Savior and who accept and abide by The Salvation Army's doctrine and discipline.

Scriptures: Genesis 2:23-24; Leviticus 18:22; Mark 2:16-17; Romans 1:26-27; Romans 5:8; I Corinthians 6:9-11; I Corinthians 13; Galatians 6:1-2; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; I Thessalonians 5:14-15; I Timothy 1:15-16; Jude 7

Approved by the Commissioners' Conference, May 2001. Approved by International Headquarters July 2001.

1985 Homosexual Reform Bill

The Salvation Army in New Zealand opposed this bill, though there was some division of opinion on this matter amongst Salvationists. It was announced that the Army would organise the collection of signatures for a petition against the bill, and the Army made a submission to the Parliamentary Select Committee opposing it. Some Salvationists, acting in a private capacity, also appeared before the Select Committee in support of the bill. The Army's official opposition led to demonstrations outside some Corps during meetings and many people in the community still resent the Army's actions at that time. In the Further Resources section at the end of this paper there is a link to a more detailed account of these events

2005 Civil Union and Legal Recognition of Relationships Bills

The Salvation Army in New Zealand did not oppose these bills. A survey was made of Salvationist opinion prior to the Army's making a submission to the Select Committee. Responses were roughly equally divided amongst those opposed to both bills, those supporting the Relationships bill but disagreeing with Civil Union, and those supporting both bills. In its submission the Army accepted the arguments for the Relationships Act which removed legal discrimination against homosexual partners, but urged upon Parliament the importance of supporting and valuing marriage as foundational to society. The Salvation Army has chosen not to register its Marriage Celebrants as Civil Union Celebrants; officers may not conduct civil unions.

Within the Salvation Army in New Zealand today a range of views may be held:

- Some totally accept and endorse the official view, not accepting homosexual behaviour as compatible with soldiership or Christian profession, and believing that the health of society and the integrity of the church demand this.
- Some disagree with the official view, and would prefer a more accepting and inclusive line to be taken.
- Some Salvationists may be firmly against homosexual behaviour in theory, but are in a quandary or more accepting when it comes to particular cases, as when their own children or siblings or friends are gay.
- Others may be more liberal in theory, but would not want a Corps Officer or Youth Group Leader who was openly gay for example. (The NIMBY syndrome – Not in my back yard...)

In all these circumstances, whatever the views held by various people, there is often a great deal of pain, hurt and bewilderment experienced by all involved, calling for great pastoral sensitivity and support.

Questions may arise about how the Salvation Army relates to homosexuals on at least four levels:

(1) How the Salvation Army and individual Salvationists relate to members of the gay community in wider society, especially given our history of opposition to Homosexual Law Reform.

(2) How inclusive Salvation Army corps communities are of practising homosexual Christians who wish to be part of their fellowship.

(3) The situation of homosexual people wishing to become soldiers (or of people who are already soldiers and wishing to "come out" as homosexual).

(4) The situation of homosexual people either believing themselves called to officership in the Salvation Army, or expressing a willingness to accept responsibility in the Army at a local level.

8. Questions for discussion:

- (i) When the Bible forbids homosexual acts, should we take that as permanently binding, like the Ten Commandments, or was it culturally-conditioned, relevant to Biblical times but not to ours?
- (ii) Which of the ways of reading the Bible discussed in this paper do you find most helpful? Do you usually approach reading the Bible from one of these ways in particular or does it depend on the particular passage or the occasion and purpose for which you are reading?
- (iii) John Wesley said there were four things that needed to be considered by Christians (The Epworth Quadrilateral) when making decisions. They were:
 God's revelation - *the Bible*
 Tradition - *the two thousand years history of the Church*
 Reason - *rational thinking*
 Experience - *one's personal journey in Christ*

Consider being a "gay Christian" in the light of each of these.

- (iv) We ask, "What would Jesus do?" We do not know from the Bible how Jesus would have responded to homosexual people, though his words to the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) and the woman at the well (John 4:1-26) could be summarised as "I don't condemn you, but don't keep on doing it." How do you think Jesus would have responded to a gay person? Would Jesus regard homosexual behaviour as sinful? Would his answer be the same today as it would have been as a first-century Jew?
- (v) The Salvation Army says Christians who are actively homosexual cannot be soldiers in the Army, but says they are welcome to belong to the Army's worshipping community and fellowship. Similarly, the Salvation Army does not claim that a Christian cannot alcohol and smoke tobacco but that Salvationists voluntarily do without those things for the sake of the mission. Is homosexual behaviour in the same category?
- (vi) If you were a homosexual person, how would you feel about this distinction – that you were welcome to come along, but not fully to belong?
- (vii) The Salvation Army says that for the heterosexual Christian, celibacy is a choice, but for the homosexual Christian it's compulsory. By analogy, we might say that for the non-alcoholic, abstinence from alcohol is a choice, but for the alcoholic it's a necessity. Is this a fair comparison? How reasonable is such an expectation?
- (viii) We sometimes hear the expression, "Hate the sin but love the sinner". (Or, "love the sinner but not the sin.") That is, we distinguish between the person and the behaviour. However, sexual orientation is part of everyone's identity whether they are heterosexual or homosexual. If what we call the person's "sin" is who they are, are we saying to the

homosexual, “You must deny your identity in order to qualify for our love”? How would you feel about that as a gay person?

- (ix) Some say that an active sex-life is part of a fully human and fulfilled life, and that homosexual people have their needs just as heterosexual people do. Discuss arguments for and against this argument.

9. Further resources to consult:

Everybody has an opinion about this subject, and most of them want you to accept theirs. If you enter “Gay Christians” in Google, you get more than nine million sites. Obviously there will be both good and bad places to look for information. However, here are a few resources to start with, giving a variety of points of view.

Grant Sandercock-Brown: “A Pastoral Response to Homosexuality”. *The Practical Theologian*, Vol. 4 No. 1, April 2006, pp. 25-38. ([click here to view](#))

Anonymous: “The Third Way”. *Stimulus*, Vol. 12 No. 2, May 2004, pp. 26-28.
http://www.stimulus.org.nz/index_files/Stim%2012-2%20Third%20Way.pdf

David Clark: “The Spiritual Abuse of Gays and Lesbians”, *Refresh*, Summer 2002, pp. 20-22.
http://www.sgm.org.nz/refresh_2_2.htm#Spiritual

Christina Tyson, “Line in the Sand: What does it mean for Christians to love their homosexual neighbours?”. *The War Cry*, 13 May 2006. ([click here to view](#))

Chris Rowland, “Seeking a Better Way Together”.
http://www.eklesia.co.uk/content/comment/article_050620stpaul.html

George S. E. Hopper, *Reluctant Journey*.
Full text available from <http://www.reluctantjourney.co.uk/>

Reviewing this book, the Editor of *The Salvationist* stated: *Reluctant Journey* is totally biblical in its approach. All Christians ... who find repugnant the idea of welcoming homosexuals into church or corps would benefit from reading this sensible, sensitive book. Written in Christian love, it should be read in the same spirit. [20 September 1997]

Ian Hutson, “The Salvation Army and the 1985 Homosexual Law Reform Bill in New Zealand”. Unpublished paper, 2002. ([click here to view](#))