

Lions and Tigers and Bears, Oh My!

by Robert Babecka

Homosexuality, masturbation, and contraception, oh my! What do these three sexual practices have in common other than people seeking pleasure engage in them and the Catholic Church calls them sinful?

For people to accept any of these forms of sexual activity they must accept the principle that a sexual act deliberately closed to procreation, a sexual act with pleasure as its goal is legitimate.

How does acceptance of contraception affect these other sexual practices?

Regarding homosexuality, there will be little ground to reject homosexual relationships as valid alternative lifestyles. Since the purpose of sex becomes pleasure, how can one person deny another sexual pleasure, when the first is engaging in sex that serves no higher purpose than pleasure? The arguments against homosexuality are reduced to it being unnatural and it being condemned in the Bible. The homosexual community quickly refutes the first argument. It must be natural because they did not invent these desires. These desires are part of their natures. In truth they are right. All sorts of problems occur in nature, we cannot say birth defects are unnatural. We can only say they are unfortunate. The second argument does not carry much weight for unbelievers because they will not accept sacred scripture on its authority alone, and without some obvious distinction between homosexual and heterosexual sex, God's reasoning is obscure. In addition, without similar arguments against masturbation, it certainly seems that homosexual sex is the only fruitless, "unnatural," sex being singled out.

Stephen Miller writes for the *Independent Gay Forum*, as well as several other publications. He also serves as a board member of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). He has arranged and participated in numerous meetings with national media executives, including the president of CBS News and the managing editor of *Time Magazine*. Its safe to say Mr. Miller is active in the battle over gay rights.

In his article, "Put the Blame on Birth Control," originally published in *Miami Weekly News* (September 1999), Mr. Miller comments that the "religious right" is losing the "culture wars." He points out that there is a rising movement among political conservatives to not only condemn homosexual practices, but all sex that is not procreative. He quotes some conservative articles that posit the link between the acceptance of contraceptive sex and the acceptance of homosexuality. Mr. Miller comments that these ultra-conservative views are alienating their proponents from mainstream America. Seeing nothing wrong with either form of sex Mr. Miller ends his article by making the point that mainstream America, at least many mainstream Christians don't want to see:

"The funny thing about this argument is that, leaving aside the reactionary political program, it contains more than a kernel of truth. After "the pill" became widespread during the early '60s, human sexuality was freed as never before from being necessarily tied to procreation. Heterosexuals who value sex as much

for emotional intimacy (or even, post-Playboy, physical recreation) as for reproduction can more easily make the leap into seeing "non-procreative" homosexuality as an acceptable variant of sexual expression."

Christian views on masturbation have eroded even further. Christians had condemned this practice until recently (see Protestants and Birth Control). However, if one rejects that the story of Onan in Genesis, chapter 38, prohibits sex deliberately made non-procreative, then masturbation becomes acceptable.

Dr. James Dobson is the founder and president of *Focus on the Family*, a nationally syndicated radio program aired on 4,000 stations daily. He is also a noted Christian psychologist and writer, having written several books and numerous magazine articles. In his book, *Preparing for Adolescence*, Dr. Dobson states,

"Still, the subject of masturbation is a very controversial one. Christian people have different opinions about how God views this act. Unfortunately, I can't speak directly for God on this subject, since His Holy Word, the Bible, is silent at this point. I will tell you what I believe, although I certainly do not want to contradict what your pastor or parents believe. It is my opinion that masturbation is not much of an issue with God. It's a normal part of adolescence, which involves no one else. It does not cause disease, it does not produce babies, and Jesus did not mention it in the Bible. I'm not telling you to masturbate, and I hope you won't find the need for it. But, if you do, it is my opinion that you should not struggle with guilt over it...The best I can do is suggest that you talk with God personally about this matter and decide what He wants you to do. I'll leave it there, between you and Him."

Of course, Dr. Dobson does contradict those parents and pastors with his statement. He also ignores the plain interpretation of *Genesis 38* (and the historic Protestant interpretation). Of even larger concern, he ignores the great dignity of human sexuality, the divine gift of participating with God in bringing new souls into this world. These young people may be experiencing guilt because they somehow recognize masturbation degrades their human sexuality.

Why does a homosexual activist see the link between contraception and society's views on homosexuality (and masturbation, too), while conservative Christians do not? Because he does not feel burdened to live to the Christian standard of morality he can more freely examine its logic. Those of us burdened with practicing as we preach may have to make real sacrifices if we examine this Christian standard closely. This "burden" causes a real tendency to rely only on superficial arguments against sexual acts clearly condemned by scripture, ignoring the more fundamental principles involved.