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Latent Homosexuality as a Cause of Marital Discord

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The concept of overt homosexuality is quite old. In fact it is mentioned in the Old Testament. While there are several passages in Holy Scripture where homosexual connections are doubtful, there are at least six references which undoubtedly refer to homosexual acts, five referring to males and one to females. In all cases the practice is condemned in general terms.

The first two references are in Lev. 18: 2 and 20: 13 with the latter ordering the death penalty. In the New Testament three passages refer to male homosexuality: Rom. 1: 27; 1 Cor. 6: 9-10 and 1 Tim. 1: 9-10. Rom. 1: 26 can be understood as referring to acts between women: "for their women change the natural use into that which is against nature."

The Sodom and Gomorrah account (Gen. 19: 4-11) from which the sin of sodomy derives its name is controverted, although in past ages it was assumed to be the *locus classicus* of the divine condemnation of homosexual acts as the most heinous sins. Unfortunately the "traditional" interpretation has given the impression the homosexuals are moral monsters for whom God has selected special punishments. St. Paul, however, mentions other kinds of sins which deprive one of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6: 10; Rom. 1: 28-32 and Gal. 5: 19-21).

Latent homosexuality has only recently been recognized as an entity. As a consequence it is poorly understood and frequently not diagnosed. It is, however, a serious cause of unhappiness in marriage and frequently leads to disruption of the marriage. Since the concept is comparatively new and frequently unrecognized its importance as a cause of unhappiness in marriage cannot be underestimated.

Definition

So as to avoid misunderstanding, a few definitions are important. *Overt homosexuality* may be defined as *a permanent state in which the sexual object is a person of the same sex and, in which, there is a concomitant aversion or abhorrence (in varying degrees) to sexual contacts with members of the other sex.*

Latent homosexuality refers to this same condition but, in this case, it exists outside the patient's

consciousness. This condition may also be referred to as *unconscious* or *masked homosexuality*. The important element here is that the individual is not aware of his homosexuality as such. It does, however, produce certain conscious attitudes which although they may not appear to be related to homosexuality may puzzle or frighten him. In some cases the manifestation may be, for example, a preference for perverse forms of heterosexual intercourse such as fellatio or sodomy, or partial or complete impotence in heterosexual relations.

There has been extensive discussion as to the real meaning of the term "latent" as it refers to homosexuality. The term apparently had its origin in the writings of Freud. The discussion has revolved around the question as to whether *latent* means *dormancy* or *potentiality*. *Dormant* would mean that fully developed and matured functions were present in the unconscious in an inactive state, whereas *potential* would mean the presence of possible, but undeveloped, functions.¹ A lengthy discussion of this topic is not part of my present purpose but my experience leads me to the acceptance of the belief that the condition represents one which is *latent* and not *dormant*. This means that the homosexual tendency is repressed and, therefore, out of consciousness but nevertheless it is dynamic and capable of affecting conscious conduct and attitudes.

Clinical Manifestations

Clinically, the affected individual may experience only periodic, transient free floating anxiety. To the diagnostician, however, the condition may manifest itself in a variety of symptoms which may reveal themselves in different degrees of severity and with varying degrees of frequency.

1) There may be a lack of sexual interest in the other sex. This may be manifested by a delayed interest in social dating which may continue until it is commented upon by associates. Even then, if manifested, the interest remains purely platonic. Due to a reaction formation he may, on occasions, display an antisexual puritanism.

2) There may be a lack of sexual arousal even when "petting" is undertaken. This is frequently done out of curiosity to see if sexual arousal does take place, or merely because it seems to be an expected reaction.

3) A preference for the company of the same sex. This is obviously only significant when the other sex is avoided.

4) The occurrence of varying degrees of erotic phantasy in regard to the self-sex. This is likely to arouse some anxiety because, although not understood, it is regarded as "abnormal." Such phantasy may be associated with masturbation. There is a tendency for such imaginings to be masochistic in nature involving the other sex.

5) Erotic dreams of a homosexual nature, in both their manifest

and latent content, occur with varying degrees of frequency. They may also be related to anxiety.

6) There frequently occurs an obsessive curiosity concerning inversion and in men there may be an excessive interest in physical culture as if there was a need to prove masculinity.

7) In addition to this curiosity such individuals may express a fear of being homosexual without being able to offer an explanation. This may not, however, seem unreasonable to them in view of their recurring thoughts and feelings.

8) They may give a history of advances made to them by overt homosexuals. Their reactions to such advances may be quite violent. They may also report being uncomfortable or self-conscious in the presence of known or suspected inverts.

9) Childhood or adolescent experiences may have occurred. These, however, should not be regarded as significant *per se* but only if related to other, and continuing manifestations.

10) In some cases there may be present traits which would indicate an identification with the other sex in thoughts or attitudes. Occasionally there may have been present a more or less conscious desire to be a member of the other sex.²

11) If such individuals get married varying degrees of impotence may be manifested. This may reveal itself in an almost total lack of sexual interest, e.g., in one case

there was only once act of intercourse in thirty-six years of marriage. In other cases there may be a gradual decrease in sexual interest until it is displayed only on the urging of the heterosexual partner.

12) This disorder is of much greater importance in men than in women. In the man the sex act requires active participation, whereas the woman receives. Impotence and frigidity are unitary in the male; they are not necessarily related in the female.

It must be again emphasized that in such cases the individual is not consciously aware of his basic disorder and except for adolescent experiences may never have overtly experienced homosexual arousal.

Marriage and the Latent Homosexual

Such individuals should not get married. Marriage should never be regarded as a treatment for lack of sexual interest. In spite of this fact many such individuals are told by poorly informed counselors to "Go ahead and get married. After your marriage it will all work out." This is not so.³ It will not "work out." This statement brings up two questions which require an answer: 1) Why will it not work out? and 2) What can be done to prevent such marriages?

Marriage is a vocation, theoretically open to all. There are, however, certain qualifications which each partner should have before deciding to enter the married state. A proper heterosexual

orientation should certainly be one of these. The homosexual, whether latent or overt, lacks this orientation and as a result is likely to be psychologically, if not physically, impotent. Since the essential matter of marriage is the right of the other person's body for complete conjugal relations, it seems only logical that each partner should expect that his mate be capable not only of performing, but also of expressing true conjugal and parental love by the marriage act. Such an ability would seem to be, at least from the psychological standpoint, an essential condition of marriage.

However, in the present church law such an ability is not an essential condition of marriage. All that one need be able to do is to perform the physical act of intercourse. In addition, what about women who derive no pleasure whatsoever from the marital act and do not desire the marriage act at all—who are completely frigid.

There can be no satisfactory operational psycho-sexual relationship between a heterosexual and a homosexual partner. Any relationship which occurred would be accidental, infrequent and a counterfeit of the real thing. It must be emphasized that although the homosexuality in the cases under discussion is latent, it affects the conscious life of the individual. The matrimonial consent (which brings into existence the marriage bond) must be directed toward the giving and receiving of the right to

acts which are truly expressive of conjugal love. This is the real essence of marriage and cannot be complete and free in an invert. It will always be conditional.

In addition, as it being more frequently stressed today, since procreation is not the only end of marriage, the mutual love and happiness of the partners is of the greatest importance. The spiritual and disinterested love of the spouses for each other must animate the marriage.

In the opinion of Dom Boissard the immediate end, that is the one first achieved, "is to give the couple through the close, complete and final union of the lover's person with that of the beloved, that completion which is his natural desire: a deeply valued support-material, bodily, sensual, emotional and spiritual all at the same time—which is for the majority of human beings the providential means to their personal and social perfection, of their moral progress and of their sanctification."⁴

This passage from Pius XI's encyclical *Casti Connubii* carries this same meaning.

"In the community of the home love is not expressed by mutual support only: it must aim higher, in fact its principal objective must be to strive every day to form and perfect the interior life each in the other. Their day-to-day relationship will help them to make daily progress in virtue above all to grow true in charity towards God and their neighbor, that charity in which all the Law and

the Prophets are finally summed up . . . That growth of the interior life of the couple, this continual effort to help each other towards perfection, can even, and truly, be called the cause and primary reason of marriage as strictly as the Roman catechism teaches, at least if we do not look at marriage as strictly an institution intended for the procreation and education of children, but take a wider view of it as the sharing of life as whole, an habitual intimacy—of society."

Homosexual love is always selfish love, a sensual love and certainly not the love referred to by St. Paul when he spoke of the love of husbands and wives: "You who are husbands must show love to your wives as Christ showed love to the Church when he gave Himself up on its behalf (Ephesus 5: 25)."

"Can we conclude from a text such as this that an absolute parallel exists between the relations of husband and wife and the relation of Christ and the Church? There is no question of this, and the reasons are obvious, the first one being in the very nature of a relationship between creatures and the fact that it is realized through the senses, physically, even though it is rooted deeper and grows higher. Yet St. Paul himself goes further, saying that the bride is the completion of the bridegroom as Christ is completed by the Church which 'is his body, the completion of him who in all things is complete' (Ephes. 1:23). And again: 'You

who are husbands must show love to your wives, as Christ showed love to the Church when He gave Himself up on its behalf' (Ephes. 5:25).

"We can see more clearly here the meaning that we should learn from this symbol. It is the greatness of an absolute giving which is here envisaged."⁵

"The Church measures love by the fullness of the meaning given to that 'yes,' by the completeness of that consent which is a promise of a quite different standard from those that are exterior and purely emotional. Marriage is a 'society of love, that is, one in which its members are required to love each other,' writes Dom Mas-sabki, who among recent defenders of Christian love has given it the highest place."⁶

The fulfillment of the specifically human sexual act occurs by the union of the whole persons of both husband and wife. It is a mutual compenetration of two human beings who are united body and soul with each other. Even though he may occasionally perform the physical act of intercourse, such a complete relationship is impossible for the homosexual whose love is essentially narcissistic. In the presence of such a sensuous and essentially disinterested relationship there would be a constant threat to the permanency of the marriage.

A sampling of the literature in reference to "homosexual love" shows a universality of opinion that the homosexual cannot experience true love.

"In contrast to them stands another 'love' which is *sui generis*—a love between man and woman which seeks fulfillment in the establishment of a 'one flesh' *henosis* the creation of an unique common life in marriage and the building of a family. This, too, has its chastity, but of a different order, for it is a love in which the sexual organs have their proper and necessary uses, both in its consummation and in the furtherance of its relational and conceptual ends; chastity here, therefore, relates to the due employment of the sexual faculties for their appointed purposes.

"It will be evident *ex hypothesi* that such a love as that last described and the union in which it results cannot possibly have any parallel in homosexual relationship. While therefore, we may not deny that homosexual love can be a true and elevated experience, we must insist that it is one to which expression may not be given in sexual acts—a limitation which it shares with all forms of heterosexual relationships except one."⁷

Male homosexuals often enjoy feminine company and are liked by women, but it is a common fallacy to believe that if they are introduced to sufficiently seductive members of the opposite sex they will be aroused. Nothing is further from the truth. They are as unaffected by the charms of a bevy of chorus girls as the normal man would be by a platoon of guardsmen. It is most important to stress this, and to contradict the common belief that marriage

will cure homosexuality. On the contrary, it is merely a recipe for tragedy.⁸

"'All the world loves a lover'—but he must be a normal lover and a natural lover. This the invert cannot be."⁹

"There is also a question as to whether it is ethically justifiable to ask any woman to give herself into the keeping of a man who is, and who will probably remain, incapable of giving her his full affection, and who will be tempted, at least, to seek expression for his radical-passion in the society of his own sex. This idea is hideous."¹⁰

"The honest invert will admit—perhaps with regret—that he does not know what it means to experience normal (heterosexual) desire and that, while he may, or may not, be peculiarly passionate, he feels that whatever potential romances lie sleeping in his heart, they will never be awakened by a woman."¹¹

"There are inverts for whom feminine society has platonic attractions and who go sometimes even so far as to practice a little lovemaking for convention's sake. On the other hand, many inverts brought to frank admission will tell you that women bore them, while some regretfully admit that in the presence of women they are physically distressed."¹²

"These men are attracted exclusively toward men. Erotic situations involving an attractive woman leave them indifferent or even fill them with repugnance or vague fear."¹³

"The essential feature of this strange manifestation of the sexual life is the want of sexual sensibility for the opposite sex, even to the extent of horror, while sexual inclination and impulse toward the same sex are present."¹⁴

"I am now speaking not of actual homosexuals who, as pathological figures are *incapable of real friendship* and, therefore, find no particular sympathy among normal individuals, but of more or less normal young people who feel such an enthusiastic friendship for each other that they express their feelings in a sexual form."¹⁵

"More common than this auto-monosexualism are the cases of homosexuality, in which persons of the opposite sex can cause no sort of desire or erection at all."¹⁶

As a result of these factors the homosexual is, at least, psychologically impotent in heterosexual relationships. Both the stimulus and the desire for such relations are absent and there is likely to be, in addition, a positive aversion for the act.

In summary the homo-heterosexual marriage is not a true marriage because the homosexual partner, due to his orientation sexually, is unable to establish a complete and lasting relationship with the heterosexual spouse. As a result of this he cannot give proper matrimonial consent and is more than likely to be psychologically impotent.

What Can Be Done To Prevent Such Marriages?

If it is agreed, and in my mind this is undisputable, that such marriages are undesirable it is important to consider their prevention. Of prime importance is that the physician bear in mind that such a condition exists; otherwise he may fail to recognize it. Latent, masked, or unconscious homosexuality is a definite clinical entity. If the counselor, whether medical or clerical, bears the condition in mind he will in most cases be able to bring it to the attention of the couple. Even if they decide to go ahead with the marriage he will have rendered them a service.

Canon 1020 (par. 2) requires the pastor to ask certain questions concerning the state of mind of the parties. This was expanded in a 1941 Instruction of the Congregation of the Sacraments. If he is well informed concerning this condition and suspects that it may be present he could at least make a referral to a psychiatrist for further inquiry.¹⁷

In conclusion I wish to emphasize:

1) Those concerned professionally with marriage should become increasingly aware of the clinical syndrome of *latent homosexuality*.

2) When this condition is present the couple should be urged not to get married.

3) Ecclesiastical authorities should give thought to making homosexuality, whether latent or

overt, an impediment to marriage because:

- a) The invert may not be able to form true marriage consent.
- b) He cannot develop the selfless love necessary to marriage.
- c) He is psychologically impotent in a relationship with a heterosexual partner.

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1. Salzman, Leon, "The Concept of Latent Homosexuality," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. XVII, No. 2 (1957), pp. 161-169.

2. Bieber, Irving, ed., *Homosexuality—A Psychoanalytic Study* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1962), pp. 257-258.

3. The exclusive homosexual, as a rule, should be strongly advised against marriage, no matter how greatly he seems to long for the comforts of a conventional home or for a child. The belief that marriage can cure true homosexuality in any way is a fallacy. It matters little if the prospective bride is aware of his abnormal tendencies; such marriages almost always lead to sorry complications for all parties. Permissible exceptions are marriages of convenience with a woman who is either totally anhedonic or a lesbian herself, or considerably older than the patient. In these cases he may obtain some of the companionship and ordered life of marriage without its sexual obligations. [John F. Oliven, M.D., *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology* (Philadelphia and Montreal: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1955), p. 450].

Is marriage indicated as a solution in cases of homosexuality? For pseudohomosexuals, as we have defined them, marriage or a return to regular marital life will often be the best and only solution. But it would be disastrous to advise marriage to a genuine homosexual as long as he has not

been changed into a heterosexual by some method of therapy, regardless of whether his condition is supposed to be organogenic or psychogenic. Marriage does not cure the genuine homosexual from his perverse inclinations, and because he does not feel any real psychic attraction toward the other sex, his condition will cause his partner untold grief. Should a homosexual, before being cured, insist upon marriage, he is morally bound to reveal his condition to his partner. [Rev. James H. Vanderveldt and Robert Odenwald, M.D., *Psychiatry and Catholicism* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1957), p. 434].

4. Dom Boissard, *Questions theologiques sur le mariage*, p. 17.

5. DeFabregues, Jean, *Christian Marriage* (Hawthorne Books, New York, 1959), p. 23.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

7. Rees, J. Tudor, and Harley V. Usill, *They Stand Apart* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 51-52.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Anomaly, *The Invert* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Co., 1948), p. 31.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

13. Oliven, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

14. Kraft-Ebing, R. V., *Psychopathia Sexualis* (New York: Physicians and Surgeons Book Co., 1934), p. 335.

15. Jung, C. G., *Contributions to Analytical Psychology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1948), p. 217.

16. Hirshfeld, Magnus, *Sexual Pathology* (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1940), p. 274.

17. CANON 1020. 2. He must ask the man and the woman even separately and cautiously, whether they are under any impediment, whether they are giving their consent freely, especially the woman, and whether they are sufficiently instructed in Christian Doctrine, unless in view of the quality of the persons this last question should seem unnecessary.

Prayer

By Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn

O Lord it is easy to dwell with You!
So easy for me to believe in You!
When Spirit clouds over and I, crushed, am made dumb
When even the smartest people know not what tomorrow will bring
You bestow the clear assuredness of being
Vigilantly keeping the channels of Goodness unclogged.
Surpassing thus the summit of earthly glory I behold the Way,
which alone I never could have found
Wondrous Way, opposite to despair,
Whence myself shall become the reflection of Your world.
What need have I to speak what You alone shall reveal to me,
and if I find not the time to carry it through
It means You've chosen others for the task.

Believed to be appearing for the first time in English, the poem above by Alexander Solzhenitsyn was translated from Croatian by Hilda Prpic. It was published in the Danica Morning Star, a weekly publication of the Croatian Franciscan Press in Chicago.