

# STONEHENGE TO STONEWALL

## Or Gay History In A Nutshell

BY CHARLES EMOND

### An Apostle By Any Other Name

St. Paul had quite a task. First he had to sell this quirky new Jewish faith with only one god to Greeks and Romans used to a pantheon of intriguing deities.

Then he had to try to settle all those pesky mysteries Christianity is rife with. What exactly did Jesus mean with the bread and wine trick? Can we eat seafood now? Where did he go on that cloud, and is he coming back before lunch?

So Paul became the Dear Abby of his day, dashing off letters of advice and admonition to his little churches here and there around the Mediterranean. He wrote so much that he was eventually bound to touch upon homosexuality. (Doesn't everybody?)

However, he does so only in an angry tirade against the immorality of the Roman society of the time. Remember that same-sex activity was common at all levels of this society, as were prostitutes of both sexes.

#### What's in a Name?

Paul himself experienced a radical conversion. One day, God punched him out and when he came to, even his name had changed — from Saul to Paul.

It was quite a punch, and some will tell you to this day that he was not right after that. He went from being a persecutor of Christians to a regular Jehovah's Witness, knocking on every door in Damascus and handing out cheap pamphlets.

Who else but a religious nut would blame women for the fall of Adam, tell them to sit down, shut up, and cover their heads? I refer you to 1 Timothy 2:11: "...during instruction a woman

should be quiet and respectful. I am not giving permission for a woman to speak or to tell a man what to do," and Ephesians 5:24,25: "...as the church submits to Christ so should women to their husbands, in everything."

He was very lucky the women who cooked his meals didn't poison his gefilte fish.

#### Foreskins for Jesus?

As Apostle of the Gentiles (non-Jews), Paul was faced with some big problems.

One major issue was whether his converts needed to become Jews first and then Christians, or whether they could skip that extra step. This was important because, for one thing, Jewish men are circumcised as babies — ou try convincing a hunky Roman centurian that he has to give up some skin to the rabbi! Paul very quickly discovered that circumcision was not good for business, so he decided to let the Gentiles skip that step.

But on to the quotations for which Paul is famous. In his first letter to some Corinthians (6:9), he says, "You know...that people who do wrong will not inherit the kingdom of God...people of immoral lives, idolaters, catamites, sodomites, thieves, etc." The words 'catamites' and 'sodomites' are of interest to us because they are sometimes translated as 'homosexuals.'

But according to John Boswell, 'catamites' is better translated as either 'wanton' or 'someone who masturbates.' The beloved King James version translates 'catamites' as 'effeminate,' which makes this appear to be a condemnation of drag queens!

Boswell also suggests that 'sodomites' means 'male prostitutes.' King James translates it as 'abusers of themselves with mankind,' which suggests guys working their way through the entire human race! (So many men, so little time!) Certainly, the translation offered by Boswell makes more sense.

Then, in 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul writes that the law is for "those who are immoral with women or with boys or with men." This list is simply a counsel not to be immoral.

From these two passages, we can conclude that Paul was against male prostitution and immoral behavior. Who can argue with that?

#### Those degrading passions!

Finally we have the statement most beloved by Fred Phelps and his ilk, the one you see on all the hate placards: Romans 1:24-27.

This part of Paul's letter to some Romans is entitled "God's anger against the pagans." Paul is really wound up here as he writes, "That is why God abandoned them (Romans) to degrading passions: why their women have turned from natural intercourse to unnatural practices, and why their menfolk have given up natural intercourse to be consumed by their passion for each other: men doing shameless things with men and getting an appropriate reward for their perversion." The reward, he adds, is to be left out of paradise.

He is clearly addressing people who have "turned from" or "given up" what they had been doing, and not gay folk at all. He is condemning sexuality driven

by passion and not by love, and he is railing against people who are not being true to their natures.

This passage, incidentally, includes possibly the only reference to lesbian behavior in the entire Bible.

Obviously, these comments are not applicable to the loving same-sex relationships that were a part of the early church, according to Boswell. Early Christians even had same-sex marriages and included the prayers in their prayer books. It is also interesting to note that it took the Christian church a thousand years before it specifically addressed the issue of homosexuality at the Lateran Council of 1179.

#### That's it?

Yes, indeed! These three passages are the only references to homosexuality in the New Testament. Nothing is said by Jesus Christ or the other apostles, and nothing occurs in the four gospels! It has often been said that there is much more in the Bible to justify slavery and condemn lending money at interest, to say nothing of prohibiting rich people from going to heaven.

In truth, the Dear Abby of the

Romans much more often writes about love. "All the commandments...are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Romans 13:9,10) "There are three things that last: faith hope and love; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) After all, this is the main Christian message, but do you think we will see these verses on placards at the next fundamentalist rally?


Maybe it is time for God to start punching out a few more persecutors and changing a few more names!

*Next time: celibate monks, vestal virgins, and eunuchs. ▼*

*For more information: Daniel Helminiak's What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality, ISBN 0-9624751-9-X, is a complete analysis of the issue.*

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