

ON CHOOSING BETWEEN LAW AND LOVE

SCRIPTURES:

[Luke 10:25] And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

[Luke 10:26] He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

[Luke 10:27] And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

[Luke 10:28] And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

[Luke 10:29] But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

[Luke 10:30] And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

[Luke 10:31] And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

[Luke 10:32] And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

[Luke 10:33] But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

[Luke 10:34] And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

[Luke 10:35] And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

[Luke 10:36] Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

[Luke 10:37] And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

PREFACE

Although I love to read, I have never read the Bible. However, when I retired a few years ago, my colleagues gave me the King James Version of the Bible on audiotape and, in listening to them, I ran across something interesting that I would like to share with you.

ON CHOOSING BETWEEN LAW AND LOVE:

The first five books of the Bible are known as the *torah*, or the "Law," since it is within this set of books that we find Leviticus, the law of the priests of the tribe of Levi, and Deuteronomy, the so-called second law. They are marvellous documents, containing much of the instruction that God has given to His people. However, they contain *hundreds* of laws that, nowadays, only the most traditional of Jews even attempt to observe. Why is that? And why is it that, for the most part, we are content to rely on Jesus' observation that:

[Mat 22:37] Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

[Mat 22:38] This is the first and great commandment.

[Mat 22:39] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

[Mat 22:40] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Well, to understand that, you have to understand something about Abraham's covenant with God, as recorded in chapters 16, 17 and 21 of the book of Genesis (KJV):

[Gen 16:1] Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

[Gen 16:2] And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

[Gen 16:3] And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

[Gen 16:4] And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when

she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

[Gen 16:5] And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee.

[Gen 16:6] But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

[Gen 16:7] And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

[Gen 16:8] And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

[Gen 16:9] And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

[Gen 16:10] And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

[Gen 16:11] And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

[Gen 16:15] And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

[Gen 16:16] And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

[Gen 17:1] And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

[Gen 17:2] And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

[Gen 17:3] And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

[Gen 17:4] As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

[Gen 17:5] Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

[Gen 17:6] And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

[Gen 17:7] And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

[Gen 17:8] And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

[Gen 17:9] And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

[Gen 17:10] This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

[Gen 17:11] ...and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you....

[Gen 17:15] And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

[Gen 17:16] And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

[Gen 17:17] Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

[Gen 17:18] And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

[Gen 17:19] And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

[Gen 17:20] And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

[Gen 17:21] But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

[Gen 21:1] And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

[Gen 21:2] For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

[Gen 21:3] And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

[Gen 21:4] And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

[Gen 21:8] And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

[Gen 21:9] And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

[Gen 21:10] Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

[Gen 21:11] And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

[Gen 21:12] And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

[Gen 21:13] And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

[Gen 21:14] And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

[Gen 21:15] And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

[Gen 21:16] And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

[Gen 21:17] And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

[Gen 21:18] Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

[Gen 21:19] And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

[Gen 21:20] And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

[Gen 21:21] And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

The remainder of the book of Genesis tells the story of God's test of Abraham in the land of Moriah; Isaac's marriage to Rebekah and the conflict between their sons Esau and Jacob; and the story of Jacob's son, Joseph, and his adventures in Egypt. Exodus tells the story of Moses and the Israelites' departure from Egypt, the ten commandments that form the core of the Mosaic law, and a variety of other moral and religious laws. Leviticus contains the ritual of sacrifice and rules governing the investiture of priests, distinctions between the clean and the unclean, and laws of holiness or purity; while Numbers describes Moses' and Aaron's census of the Israelites by clan and family, the consecration of the Levites, the Israelites' rebellion against Moses, and a wide variety of laws ranging from the requirement that the Israelites put tassels on the hems of their clothing to the sacrifices to be offered on the various feast days. Finally, Deuteronomy chronicles Moses' review of the Israelites' history, his admonishment to love God "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength," and the blessings to follow those who keep the commandments and curses to fall on those who don't.

Now, the Law of Moses, particularly as contained in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, was both elaborate and strict; and it was that Law that the Pharisees and Sadducees were trying to get the Jewish people to observe when Jesus was born and when he preached in Galilee. And it was rigid adherence to the letter of that Law that he had to overcome in order to spread his message of love to the world.

It is in this regard that St. Paul's letter to the Galatians is instructive:

[Gal 4:1] Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth

nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

[Gal 4:2] But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

[Gal 4:3] Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world;

[Gal 4:4] But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law,

[Gal 4:5] To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

[Gal 4:6] And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

[Gal 4:7] Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

[Gal 4:8] Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

[Gal 4:9] But now, after that ye have known God, ...how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

[Gal 4:21] Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

[Gal 4:22] For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.

[Gal 4:23] But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise.

[Gal 4:24] Which things are an allegory [i.e., a story with a deeper meaning]; [and from the New Jerusalem Bible]: these two women stand for the two covenants. The one given on Mount Sinai -- that is Hagar, whose children are born into slavery; now Sinai ...represents Jerusalem in its present state, for she is in slavery together with her children. But the Jerusalem *above* is free, and that is the one that is our mother....

[Gal 4:28] Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

[Gal 4:29] But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

[Gal 4:30] Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.

[Gal 4:31] So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

[Gal 5:1] Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

[Gal 5:3,4] For I testify again to every man that ...whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

[Gal 5:5] For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

[Gal 5:6] For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

[Gal 5:14] For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The question of "And who is my neighbour?" is, of course, amply answered by the story of the Good Samaritan. The question of "And what is love?" is a little more difficult. However, one simple rule is to be found in St. Paul's letter to the Romans:

[Rom 13:10] Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

* * * * *

Now, do you remember the story of the preacher who died and went to heaven? St. Peter met him at the golden gates and walked with him down the golden streets, until they came to a row of magnificent churches. The doors were open wide and you could hear the congregations singing, and St. Peter said to the preacher, "You can have any of these congregations for your own." So he chose a big one and walked up the steps and down the aisle until he came to the pulpit. The singing stopped, so he began to preach. But about twenty minutes into his sermon, a trap door opened beneath him and he dropped into the basement. As he was picking himself up and dusting himself off, he saw St. Peter coming down the basement step. "St. Peter," he said, "I was just nicely getting into my sermon when this trap door opened and dropped me into the basement. Whatever is going on?" "Well," said St. Peter, "it's heaven for the congregation, too, you know."

So, I know that I have been blathering on for quite a while and that all this scripture is bound to have tried your patience; and I know that I in particular don't have any right to preach at you and that, for the most part, it is "preaching to the converted" anyway; and I want to thank you for your indulgence. But let me tell you just a couple more stories, and then I promise to stop. The first is from the gospel according to St. Matthew:

[Mat 25:31] When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

[Mat 25:32] And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

[Mat 25:33] And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

[Mat 25:34] Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

[Mat 25:35] For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

[Mat 25:36] Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

[Mat 25:37] Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

[Mat 25:38] When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

[Mat 25:39] Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

[Mat 25:40] And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

[Mat 25:41] Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

[Mat 25:42] For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

[Mat 25:43] I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

[Mat 25:44] Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

[Mat 25:45] Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me.

And you may think that I am talking about the starving millions in Africa, or the battered and abused men and women and children at home and abroad, but I am not --- although I *could* be, and we had better not be indifferent to their fate! I am talking about a gospel that is **inclusive**, one in which *everyone is our neighbour*, and to be loved accordingly. And I am talking about the numbers of people who have been driven away from this “Church of Jesus Christ” because they did not feel acceptable to us, and the ease with which we tend to judge the **other** sinners of the world, *in spite of* everything Jesus had to say about the subject. Jesus said:

[Mat 7:1] Judge not, that ye be not judged.

[Mat 7:2] For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

[Mat 7:3] And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

In St. Paul's letter to the Romans, we read:

[Rom 14:1] Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

[Rom 14:2] For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

[Rom 14:3] Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him.

[Rom 14:4] Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.

[Rom 14:5] One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own

mind.

[Rom 14:6] He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

[Rom 14:7] For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

[Rom 14:8] For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

[Rom 14:9] For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

[Rom 14:10] But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

[Rom 14:11] For I live, saith the Lord, as it is written. And every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall swear to God.

[Rom 14:12] So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

[Rom 14:13] Let us not therefore judge one another anymore....

[Rom 14:14] I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

[Rom 14:15] But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, thou walkest not charitably if thou eatest. Therefore destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

[Rom 14:16] ...

[Rom 14:17] For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

[Rom 14:18] For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Acceptable to God, but not approved of by their brothers and sisters in the Church? "God forbid," as St. Paul would say. How arrogant of us it would be to reject those who are acceptable to God! And yet I know that many people

find it hard to be *non-judgementally accepting* of those whose behaviour they believe to be sinful -- the homosexual, for example, or the man or woman who is "living in sin." Well, I am not trying to tell you that "anything goes" -- after all, remember what St. Paul said in his letter to the Romans: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour" -- but I do want you to know that *you cannot use the Mosaic Law as the basis for judging whether or not a particular behaviour is acceptable*. If you are going to call yourself a *Christian*, you had better understand that, in *Christianity*, the acceptability of behaviour is not based on the Law¹; for those who are truly *Christian*, the acceptability of any particular behaviour is based on whether or not it is the loving thing to do.

Reg Reynolds, 1997

¹ For those who accept the wisdom encapsuled in the Book of Mormon, the Mosaic Law had "passed away" (that is, it had ended) with its fulfilment in Jesus. See, for example, 3 Nephi 7: 1 - 6, as given in Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1

[3 Ne 7:1] And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings, he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them, Behold, ye have heard the things which I have taught before I ascended to my Father;

[3 Ne 7:2] Therefore whoso remembereth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day.

[3 Ne 7:3] And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words, he perceived that there were some among them who marvelled, and wondered what he would concerning the Law of Moses; for they understood not the saying, that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

[3 Ne 7:4] And he said unto them, Marvel not that I said unto you, that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

[3 Ne 7:5] Behold, I say unto you, that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.

[3 Ne 7:6] Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfill the law; therefore, it hath an end.

APPENDIX 2

[1 Cor 13:1, NKJV] Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love,² I have become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

[1 Cor 13:2] And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.

[1 Cor 13:3] And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing.

[1 Cor 13:4] Love suffers long, and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up,

[1 Cor 13:5] Does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

[1 Cor 13:6] Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

[1 Cor 13:7] Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[1 Cor 13:8] Love never fails; but whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

[1 Cor 13:9] For we know in part, and we prophesy part.

[1 Cor 13:10] But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

[1 Cor 13:11] When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

[1 Cor 13:12] For now we see in a mirror, dimly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then I shall know just as I also am known.

[1 Cor 13:13] And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

² From the Greek "agape."

APPENDIX 3

[Luke 16:19] There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.

[Luke 16:20] And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

[Luke 16:21] And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

[Luke 16:22] And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

[Luke 16:23] And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

[Luke 16:24] And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

[Luke 16:25] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

[Luke 16:26] And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

[Luke 16:27] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

[Luke 16:28] For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

[Luke 16:29] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

[Luke 16:30] And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

[Luke 16:31] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

APPENDIX 4

Although this paper is not about homosexuality per se, homosexuality is such a potential source of contention within the church that it may be appropriate to say a few words about it specifically. In St. Paul's letter to the Romans, we read:

[Rom 1:18] For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

[Rom 1:19] Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

[Rom 1:20] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

[Rom 1:21] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

[Rom 1:22] Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

[Rom 1:23] And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

[Rom 1:24] Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

[Rom 1:25] Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

[Rom 1:26] For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

[Rom 1:27] And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

[Rom 1:28] And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things

which are not convenient;

[Rom 1:29] Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

[Rom 1:30] Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

[Rom 1:31] Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

[Rom 1:32] Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Now, this passage, while primarily concerned with those who “changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,” does express St. Paul’s condemnation of homosexual behaviour --- “...men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly” --- along with his condemnation of all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, [and those who are] despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful.

Similarly, in his letter to Timothy, he wrote:

[1 Tim 1:5] Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

[1 Tim 1:6] From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

[1 Tim 1:7] Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

[1 Tim 1:8] But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;

[1 Tim 1:9] Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

[1 Tim 1:10] For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with

mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

[1 Tim 1:11] According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

It seems *to me*, therefore, that St. Paul was reasonably clear in his condemnation of homosexuality. Nevertheless, it also seems *to me* that such a position was more consistent with his status as a Pharisee at the beginning of the Christian era than it is with the distinction that he repeatedly made between obedience to the Mosaic law and obedience to Jesus' commandment regarding love.

In the body of this paper, I quoted at length from the fourth and fifth chapters of St. Paul's letter to the Gallatians. The fifth chapter continues:

[Gal 5:13] For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

[Gal 5:14] For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself....

[Gal 5:16] This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh....

[Gal 5:19] Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

[Gal 5:20] Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

[Gal 5:21] Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

[Gal 5:22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

[Gal 5:23] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Perhaps this too could be read as a condemnation of homosexuality (under the heading of "uncleanness"); but I am more inclined to read it as yet another of St. Paul's attempts to clarify the distinction that he had previously tried to make between the two covenants: (1) that given on Mount Sinai (the covenant which placed the Jews under bondage to the Law) and (2) the freedom to which the Christian fellowship was called (the covenant that Jesus established with his followers, in which love was to be the guiding principle).

APPENDIX 5

In 1835, W.W. Phelps presented to the general assembly of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints the following statement regarding marriage:

[Sec 111:1a] According to the custom of all civilized nations, marriage is regulated by laws and ceremonies:

[Sec 111:1b] therefore we believe, that all marriages in this Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints should be solemnized in a public meeting, or feast, prepared for that purpose:

[Sec 111:1c] and that the solemnization should be performed by a presiding high priest, high priest, bishop, elder, or priest, not even prohibiting those persons who are desirous to get married, of being married by other authority.

[Sec 111:1d] We believe that it is not right to prohibit members of this church from marrying out of the church, if it be their determination so to do, but such persons will be considered weak in the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[Sec 111:2a] Marriage should be celebrated with prayer and thanksgiving; and at the solemnization, the persons to be married, standing together, the man on the right, and the woman on the left, shall be addressed, by the person officiating, as he shall be directed by the Holy Spirit; and if there be no legal objections, he shall say, calling each by their names:

[Sec 111:2b] "You both mutually agree to be each other's companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others, during your lives?"

[Sec 111:2c] And when they have answered "Yes," he shall pronounce them "husband and wife" in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by virtue of the laws of the country and authority vested in him:

[Sec 111:2d] "May God add his blessings and keep you to fulfill your covenants from henceforth and for ever. Amen."

[Sec 111:3] The clerk of every church should keep a record of all marriages solemnized in his branch.

[Sec 111:4a] All legal contracts of marriage made before a person is baptized into this church, should be held sacred and fulfilled.

[Sec 111:4b] Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife; and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.

This document was not presented to the church as revelation, but it was adopted as Section 111 of the church's Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and it has been retained in every edition of the book published by the Reorganization since that time. And in the preamble to Section 111, it is noted that:

"The church knows no other law of marriage than that which is set forth here."

The church's stand against polygamy, as presented in this section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, was vehemently adhered to until 1972, when contact with other cultures caused our President and Prophet to turn to God for guidance regarding the stance which the church should take towards a convert who was already engaged in a polygamous marriage. In response to that emergent situation, the following revelation was received:

[Sec 150:10a] Monogamy is the basic principle on which Christian married life is built. Yet, as I have said before, there are also those who are not of this fold to whom the saving grace of the gospel must go.

[Sec 150:10b] When this is done the church must be willing to bear the burden of their sin, nurturing them in the faith, accepting that degree of repentance which it is possible for them to achieve, looking forward to the day when through patience and love they can be free as a people from the sins of the years of their ignorance.

[Sec 150:11a] To this end and for this purpose, continue your ministry to those nations of people yet unaware of the joy freedom from sin can bring into their lives. In this way they will be brought to a knowledge of the teachings of my gospel and be made ready and willing to help spread the message of reconciliation and restoration to other worthy souls.

[Sec 150:11b] In this ministry and apostolic council, as the chief witnesses of the gospel, are directed to interpret and administer the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel in a manner appropriate to the circumstances in which they find such persons.

[Sec 150:12a] The spirit of unity must prevail if my church is to survive these perilous times and continue as a viable force in the world, fulfilling

its destiny. You, my people, have been called apart to assist in this great work in these last days.

[Sec 150:12b] Put aside petty differences and join together as never before that all may labor together according to the gifts with which I have endowed you, and my Spirit will be with you now and forever more.

The principle of monogamy was not abandoned, but neither was rigid adherence to it condoned. I believe that it is within that context and with that spirit that the church should now begin to rethink the whole issue of homosexual marriages. Of course, in doing so, it will have to contend with the following statement adopted by the Standing High Council in 1982:

1. The church recognizes that there is a difference between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity (defined as sexual acts between persons of the same sex). The former is accepted as a condition over which a person may have little or no control; the latter is considered immoral and cannot be condoned by the church.
2. The church affirms that Christian marriage is a sacred covenant relationship, ordained of God between a man and a woman. The sacrament of marriage has a long theological and ecclesiastical history, and the symbolism is exclusively heterosexual. Homosexual unions are not and should not be considered marriages in the sacramental sense.
3. The church affirms the worth of all persons. Homosexuals as well as heterosexuals are children of God and have full claim upon the acceptance and reconciling ministry and care of the church. That is, individuals with a homosexual orientation who refrain from homosexual acts should be fully accepted into the ongoing life of the congregation. Those persons who engage in homosexual acts should be dealt with in terms of redemptive ministry and/or church law procedures in the same way as those who engage in heterosexual acts outside of marriage.
4. In the critical matter of ordination, the church should not admit a practicing homosexual to the priesthood. It cannot sanction homosexual acts as morally acceptable behavior any more than it can endorse heterosexual promiscuity....

Obviously, then, there is no provision in RLDS church law for any form of

marriage between same-sex individuals, although it does appear that it is generally accepted that there are people who are genetically programmed for sexual attraction to members of their own sex. However, the Standing High Council's juxtaposition of homosexual acts and heterosexual promiscuity suggests *to me* a certain confusion between sexual behaviour -- which, because the church does not sanction homosexual marriages, *cannot* occur within the confines of a church-sanctioned, committed loving relationship -- and promiscuous sexual behaviour that subverts the kind of committed loving relationship (i.e., marriage) that the church both sanctions and sanctifies between heterosexual couples. For this reason, as well as because it would appear to be the loving thing to do, it seems to me that it is now time for the church to begin to consider the solemnization and sanctification of committed relationships between same-sex individuals, although perhaps not under the label of "marriage" per se, since marriage has a lot of heterosexual implication in the minds of most people.