

## St. Paul And The Identification Of Heterosexuals And Homosexuals

**Earlier Everyone Was Assumed To Be Straight.** At the time of the Apostle Paul, and even until the mid-19th century, there was no way to distinguish [homosexuals from heterosexuals](#), for these terms and concepts did not yet exist. All people were simply assumed to be straight naturally, and this meant that such a term as “straight” was redundant with respect to sexuality, somewhat like speaking of a round circle, a dry desert or a four-legged cow. For Paul, especially as influenced by the Hebrew scripture and culture, sex with someone of the same sex would simply be considered as unnatural, perverse and even a rebellion against God’s primary intention regarding the two sexes, i.e., producing children.\* \*\* Hence it is easy to see why Paul would denounce same-sex sexual activity,\*\*\* even as we would most likely have done at that time and with that understanding.\*\*\*\*

\* See [Genesis 1:28](#).

\*\* See Brereton’s comprehensive and rather academic essay on [Paul and homosexuality](#) And also a history of the [translation of the Greek word "arsenokoitai"](#) in the Bible (it originally meant "molester of boys" and not "homosexual" which was first used in English translations in 1946).

\*\*\* See [Romans 1:18–28](#).

\*\*\*\* Not only was same-sex sex contrary to nature in Paul's understanding, but even appearances, e.g., hair styling, could be unnatural per [1 Corinthians 11:4-16](#), where women might imitate men, and men women.

**Earlier Everyone Was Assumed To Be Right-handed.** In an analogous vein, [Immanuel Kant](#), prominent scientist and philosopher of the 1700’s, and expressing the science of his time, counted all humans as naturally right-handed, and the apparent exceptions (left-handers) were something on the order of cross-eyed or squint-eyed people.\* \*\*

\* See [Regions](#) (printed page 40, 2nd paragraph).

\*\* According to the best estimates, approximately [10% of the population is left handed](#), and this has continued for thousands of years. Here is an article from *Smithsonian Magazine* about research concerning [what might make some people left-handed](#).

**Modern Understanding.** Today Paul would know that some people are homosexual, i.e., people who are *naturally* attracted to persons of their own sex, and where same-sex attraction would not be thought of as unnatural at all,\* and certainly no more sick or malicious than writing with one's left-hand.\*\* Hence today Paul would assert that as a person the homosexual needs salvation just like anyone else, but not due to that person's natural, homosexual orientation.

\* Indeed a world with homosexuals, resulting naturally in fewer children than heterosexuals, might even be considered as advantageous today to the extent the world is getting crowded. In this regard see [God’s Left Hand Joke](#).

\*\* The Latin word for left-hand is the root of the English word “[sinister](#).”

**Another Analogy.** Our understanding of the orbit of the moon around the earth may also be helpful as a further analogy to what has changed in our understanding of sexuality over the last 2,000 years. In Paul’s day the movement of the moon would have been looked upon as a simple, circular orbit around the earth (which is the visual impression) representing, in this analogy, the *assumed*, universal sexual orientation of the human race at that time, i.e., for the opposite sex.\* Then later, beginning with [Isaac Newton](#) of the 1600’s, this motion would become recognized as primarily encompassing *two distinct and simultaneous movements* of the moon: 1. flying past the earth in a straight line and 2. falling directly down onto the earth in a straight line, and together giving the *appearance* of a single, circular orbit. Accordingly these two movements can represent for us the heterosexual and homosexual orientations of humanity as understood today, and both of which are now counted as natural.\*\*

\* With regard to the orbit of the moon as an analogy we are speaking here only of sexual *orientation* and not actual *behavior*.

\*\* As of 1973 the [American Psychiatric Association](#) no longer considers homosexuality to be a mental illness. And the Pope has sanctioned the [blessing of gay couples](#) (though not yet gay marriage).

## Related

This post is a modification of the first appendix to an essay on [Christian Liberty and Promise](#). See also [Paul's Letter to Christians in Rome](#). And see especially this discussion from the [Reformation Project](#) which is similar in reasoning to this post. And see also a comparison of the historical treatment of [Left Handers and Gays](#), and [Queer Animals Are Everywhere](#).

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