

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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**Evangelist and Editor:
Dempsey Collins**

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A Review of the Arehart-Asher Debate on Homosexuality

*by Keith Sharp
Conclusion*

Fourth Argument: It is specifically condemned in the New Testament (Rom. 1:26-27). Brother Asher offered an exegesis of Romans 1:18-27 in which he showed that the over-all problem of the Gentiles was the rejection of the authority of God, the same sin of which Charlie is guilty. He pointed out that Paul taught that homosexuality is self-abusive (v. 24), disgraceful (v. 26), unnatural (vv. 26-27), vulgar (v. 27), error (v. 27), forbidden (v. 24), and condemned (vv. 18, 29). He charged that homosexuals received the very “recompense” of which the apostle spoke (v. 27) in their own bodies. Asher argued that homosexuality was “against nature” (v. 26) in that it violates God’s created order.

Fifth Argument: Homosexuality has always been sinful. There was never a time when men were without law from God (Rom. 4:14; 5:13). A survey of biblical history shows this is certainly true with respect to sexual behavior; the marriage law was universal from the beginning (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:8), the sinfulness of homosexuality is exemplified in every age (Gen. 19; Judg. 19; Rom. 1:18-31; II Pet. 3:9), it was condemned under the Mosaic code (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:22; 20:13), and was specifically condemned by Christ and his apostles (Matt. 19:1-9; I Cor. 7:1-9; Heb. 13:4; Rom. 1:26-27).

Arehart’s Affirmative

Dr. Arehart’s strongest argument in audience appeal was his own personal testimony. He asserted he was born gay and could not change. He told of being raised a Methodist, accepting Christ at a Billy Graham Crusade, and being called to preach. He concluded, “God called a gay to preach” and offered John 15:16 as a text to prove this calling was a divine approval of his sexual orientation. Arehart retold with pathos his several attempts to overcome being gay – including “praying through to victory,” an exorcism, and counseling by a “Christian psychologist,” a recognized Baptist scholar. He recalled that the psychologist finally told him, “You are homosexual; you are Christian; God doesn’t give a damn.” From that point on Charlie Arehart has accepted his gay orientation and the homosexual lifestyle. He described his basic theology as the four pillars of Methodism: the Scriptures, tradition, reason and personal experience.

Reliability of Scriptures: Charlie contended we cannot take the Bible as our only source of authority. He asserted that one third of the Hebrew words in the Old Testament need to be redefined as the result of recent tablet finds in Syria, emphasizing changes in vowel markings. Dr. Arehart also argued that there are a great many Greek texts for the New Testament and that widespread and important differences exist between them. He also contended that many biblical words are mistranslated. Charlie asserted that the Bible has errors in it. As examples, he asserted that the Septuagint text doesn’t match the Massoretic text, and described the vowel markings below Hebrew vowels, contending they were uncertain and that the disputed differences could greatly affect the meaning of Scriptures. He denied the dictation theory

of inspiration. He said the church once condemned Galileo, and, as it was forced to change from teaching an earth centered universe, it would be forced to change on homosexuality.

Cultural Relevance: Dr. Arehart also argued that many passages are no longer culturally relevant and offered I Cor. 11:2-16 as one example. He called himself a “Christian evolutionist” and a “process theologian.” He said the world is maturing, while God always remains the same, but that God is actively involved in human affairs. He asserted that the human race quickly became non-monogamous, and that marriage in the Old Testament was simply a property rights issue. He asserted the Hebrew Scriptures did not condemn as adultery a Jewish man having sex with another woman than his wife unless that woman was the wife or virgin daughter of another Hebrew. He described the Bible as a “patriarchal book” which has been used to oppress blacks, gays, and lesbians, but, more than any other group, women. He charged that the Scriptures have been employed to beat women down to chattel and to keep them subservient. He predicted the day will come when female images of God in Scripture will be universal language. He recognized that God is neither male nor female and concluded that inclusive language is in order when describing God. Charlie stated that the purpose of Matt. 19:3-9 was to elevate the status of women, and that Jesus did not intend for his teaching on marriage to be applicable to all. He contended that divorce was the “most Christian approach” for 50% of the marriages in Colorado.

Situation Ethics: He called himself a “situational ethicist” and endorsed the statement by Norman Pittinger: “Sex is good; sex with someone you know is better; sex with someone you love is best.”

Wholly of Grace: Arehart contended we are saved by grace through faith alone (John 3:16). He accused Asher of creating a “works righteousness dynamic” in which one has to be good enough to be saved.

Bias Against Gays: Dr. Arehart charged that New Testament passages which seem to condemn homosexuality were mistranslated as the result of the prejudice of the church against gays, a prejudice, he asserted, which resulted from the widespread acceptance by early Christians of the apocryphal book, “The Epistle of Barnabas,” a ridiculous work which explains Old Testament prohibitions against eating unclean animals on the basis of the supposed sexual activities of the animals.

Positive Mention of Gays: Charlie produced several biblical examples he contends are positive mention of gays. He is absolutely positive the relationship between David and Jonathan was homosexual (I Sam. 18:20; II Sam. 1:25-26). He also presented Ruth and Naomi as likely lesbian lovers. He argued that eunuchs are passive partners in homosexual intercourse and offered Matt. 19:10-12 as Jesus’ endorsement of homosexuality and the Ethiopian eunuch as a positive example of a gay person (Acts 8:26-39). He contended that the word “servant” in Matt. 8:5-13 means “young male lover and that, when Jesus healed him, he tacitly endorsed his homosexuality.

Conclusion

Brother Jeff Asher defended his position admirably and crushed the arguments presented by Dr. Arehart. I have never seen a debater better prepared for his opponent’s argumentation. Dr. Arehart is an able defender of his position. He relies heavily on the book *Social Tolerance of Homosexuality* by Yale professor Dr. John Boswell, himself homosexual.

American disapproval of gays and lesbians is on the wane. This is now the point issue in the humanistic attack on biblical morals. I recommend that we join this national debate by writing letters to the editors of newspapers, refuting the articles and letters defending homosexuality, and by teaching Christians, especially our teenagers and young adults, the truth. If we do not prepare and act, our young people, who are under heavy pressure on college campuses to accept and even participate in homosexuality, will be lost to humanistic amorality.

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

“...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16