

The Logic of the Mennonite Church USA “Teaching Position” on Homosexuality

By Ted Grimsrud

1. In his article on homosexuality, Ted Grimsrud talks about natural law. These are religious beliefs that “focus on what seems natural,” that is, what seems to be a physical fit, or an accepted tradition, or negatively, what gives us “feelings of revulsion.” This, more than the Bible, is the basis for some opposition to homosexuality. Which do you rely on more—the Bible or natural law—when it comes to your view on homosexuality? What relationship do you see between Biblical teaching and natural law? How would you apply natural law to other ethics issues, such as violence or lying?

2. The Mennonite Confession of Faith notes that, “Today’s church needs to uphold the permanency of marriage and help couples in conflict move toward reconciliation. *At the same time*, the church, as a reconciling and forgiving community, offers healing and new beginnings. The church is to bring strength and healing to individuals and families.” To what extent should the church lay down the rules of relationships and to what extent should it offer healing to Christians in broken relationships? That is, the church has more than one role here. How do we know when to condemn and when to be compassionate?

3. “... the Bible clearly is ‘against homosexuality.’ What is not often discussed is what this ‘against homosexuality’ refers to. ... That this is a complicated discussion should be recognized first off from the fact that the term ‘homosexuality’ is itself never used in the Bible, nor does it remotely approach any term used in scripture. The word itself is recent, and is a joining together of Greek and Latin roots. Neither biblical Hebrew nor biblical Greek has any words like this.”

Schweitzer and Grimsrud both mention this problem of defining terms. To what extent are people splitting hairs, and to what extent can good definitions enlarge our understanding of the issue?