

Sex, Crimes & Punishment

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INTRODUCTION

I here intend to consider criminal sexual conduct, or sex crimes, not as understood modernly, but according to the laws of nature and nature's God. I want to consider whether, according to Ionaq, any of the following arguments are true:

- 1) no form of sexual behavior is always wrong (for all people, in all places, and at all times);
- 2) sexual misconduct doesn't actually hurt anyone - the old *victimless crime* argument;
- 3) what a person does in his or her sex life is nobody's business but their own; and
- 4) civil government lacks jurisdiction to punish sexual offenses because even if sexual misconduct is immoral, it can't be made criminal.

Sexual immorality has been a part of human society since the earliest times. One of the first references to it in the Bible comes in Genesis 19, which describes the rescue of Lot and his family from the city of Sodom. We are told in Jude 7 that Sodom and the surrounding cities "indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire" (ESV), which the KJV translates as "giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh."

Another instance is Genesis 38, which contains the story of Judah having sex with his daughter-in-law Tamar while she pretended to be a prostitute following her husband's death. (She did this because Judah promised to give his youngest son to her as a husband in his brother's place, but never actually did so.) He declared that she should be burned for immorality (while not admitting his own shameful behavior), but then relented when she disclosed that he was the one who done it.

Sexual misconduct is commonly referred to as immorality in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament it goes by several terms, including lewdness, whoring, depravity, perversion, harlotry, prostitution and very often, abomination. However, the last term signifies a variety of offenses including idolatry, and not merely sexual misconduct. In fact, sexual infidelity is used as a common synonym for idolatry and spiritual unfaithfulness in the Bible.

The real launching point for our discussion of sexual misconduct comes from Leviticus 18 which describes, from God's point of view, the reasons why he displaced the indigenous peoples of Canaan and allowed the Israelites to take their place. This chapter lists a number of offenses, most of them sexual in nature, which may be viewed as offenses against the law of nature (for the reasons I will next describe), and therefore offenses for *all* the nations.

VIOLATIONS OF NATURAL LAW

In Lev. 18, God describes the offenses for which He will judge the Canaanites and remove them from the Promised land so that Israel may possess it. Those offenses include *incest, lewdness, menstrual intercourse, adultery, homosexuality* and *bestiality*. All of these I will further define and examine later.

Since the Canaanites were not a people or a nation subject to the Mosaic law, we should wonder

what basis God used to pass judgment on them. I submit the reason is quite simple - all of the offenses were (and are) contrary to the law of nature. Therefore, to use an historic legal phrase, *ignorance of the law is no excuse*, as the Canaanites either knew, or should have known, the above listed practices were prohibited by the very nature of the creation, to which they were witnesses.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Rom. 1:18-20.

Before examining the law of nature, let us firmly establish that the Canaanites were not under the Mosaic law. *First*, we have the explicit testimony of scripture that the Mosaic law was given only to the nation of Israel and not to any other people.

“Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ... Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” Ex. 19:3b, 5-6.

He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Ps. 147:19-20.

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. Rom. 2:14.

So, the testimony of scripture is that God set Israel apart from all other nations, He gave His laws (or, covenant) to them because they were special, God hasn't treated any other nation like Israel when it comes to His laws, and Gentiles (*i.e.*, non-Jews) never received the laws God gave to Israel. The conclusion is that the laws of ancient Israel never applied to anyone but ancient Israel.

I know some of you reading this have been led to believe by your pastor or teacher that the laws of ancient Israel were and are applicable to all of God's elect (*i.e.*, specifically including the Church, or Christians), except to the extent they have been modified or obsoleted. But that is not the testimony of scripture. Gentiles never were subject to the laws of Moses, and the Bible never says otherwise.

This fact was recognized by Hugo Grotius (a Christian legal scholar) in *THE LAW OF WAR AND PEACE* (1625), who said:

An ordinance, in fact, is not binding upon those to whom it has not been given. ... For, outside of the law of nature, the binding force of law comes from the will of him

who makes the law; and it is not possible to discover, from any indication, that God willed that others than Israelites should be bound by that law.

Second, as a general rule the divine covenants of the Old Testament are limited in application to those who give actual consent and their physical descendants. [For an extended discussion of this point, see, *Legal Foundations: Covenant Law*, at <http://www.lonang.com/foundation/1/f14.htm>.] Thus, the Mosaic covenant was specifically consented to by the people of Israel alive at the time it was made.

Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." Ex. 24:7-8.

The Mosaic Covenant is also described as applying to the descendants of Jacob a/k/a Israel numerous times throughout the scripture. See, *e.g.*, Ex. 31:16 - "Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever."

When considering the case of the Canaanites, they were descendants of Ham, not Shem, and consequently cannot be have been bound by the terms of the Mosaic law which was applicable only to the descendants of Jacob, a Semite. In other words, the Canaanites were a Gentile nation to whom the law was never given, they never consented to the law at the time it was given, and they were not descended from Israel.

Finally, there is no other divine covenant by which the Canaanites would have been bound to observe the sexual behavior laws listed in Lev. 18. True enough, they would have been bound by the Adamic and Noahic covenants the same as everyone else (given the fact that all of mankind after the flood is descended from both Adam and Noah). However, neither of those covenants by its terms has anything to do with sexual behavior laws.

Thus, there is no way the Canaanites may be considered to have been covenantally bound to observe the rules of sexual conduct enumerated in Leviticus 18. If the Canaanites were nonetheless bound to observe these rules, then they must have been bound by some other means. And what other means could have bound them, except the laws of nature which they were presumed to know? After all, God does not hold people accountable for wrongful conduct they had no reason to know.

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. Rom. 3:19-20.

If the Canaanites were not under the law of nature, then what other law would they have been under?

DEFILEMENT OF THE LAND

Thankfully, the question of whether the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18 were violations of the law of nature is not left to mere implication. The text of Leviticus 18 leads us straight to that conclusion. After cataloguing the offenses committed by the Canaanites, God states,

“Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.” Lev. 18:24-28.

From this we can gather several points: 1) the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18 made the people themselves unclean *and* made the land unclean, *i.e.*, defiled the land; 2) the sexual offenses applied equally to Israel and to Gentile nations; 3) the offenses applied equally to Jews and non-Jews living in Israel; and 4) the punishment for the listed offenses is said to originate with the land itself (“vomit you out”).

Lev. 18 is one of the bases for regarding sexual misconduct as making people *dirty*; thus, a *dirty mind* is one which contemplates sexual misconduct, because sexual misconduct makes one unclean.

Further, God has made the world in such a way that the land on which we live is itself directly affected by sexual offenses. Which is to say:

- 1) Some forms of sexual behavior are wrong in all nations at all times. Notice that Lev. 18 does not say that *God* vomited the Canaanites out of the land, but that the land itself vomited them out. Was there something special, something unique about the land of Canaan, or is it more likely that all land on the earth is made this way? In other words, that this is a universal rule applicable to all land for all time because it was *created* this way.
- 2) Sexual misconduct imposes additional consequences on nations and their territories above and beyond the curse resulting from the original fall of man. The original curse of the ground imposed toil and death, but said nothing about vomiting out inhabitants or making the land uninhabitable. Gen. 3:17-19. A defilement which leads to making the land uninhabitable is above and beyond the original curse of the ground.

An act which defiles the land is an act which is contrary to creation. That's why several of the Lev. 18 offenses were historically known as *crimes against nature* - the creation itself bears witness to their wrongfulness. Thus, shortly after noting the consequences which await those who (without excuse) refuse to see the attributes of God in the creation (Rom. 1:18-20), Paul goes on to say:

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women

exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. Rom. 1:26-28.

As a result, the creation itself bears witness to both the attributes of God *and* the wrongfulness of debased sexual behavior. Further, all men are held accountable for observing the creation and having this knowledge. This is a universal law of human nature, which is to say, it is the law of nature.

However, defilement of the land as a legal concept is not limited to the law of nature, it also has a direct connection to the *law of nations*. By this I don't mean the laws of international relations, but the universal principles of how God intends that all nations are to be governed. To be precise, I am talking about *the law of the nature of nations*.

When we say that certain sexual offenses violate the law of nature because they defile the land, this should call to mind the phrase, *the law of the land*. And the law of the land in legal usage doesn't refer to the "law of the soil," but rather the law of the nature of the community-at-large, *i.e.*, the law of the state (in the generic sense) or nation. And this is not by accident.

Consider the plight of the Canaanites. It wasn't merely the sexual immoral individuals who were vomited out of the land - it was the entire nation. Regardless of how many individuals actually participated in immorality, the entire nation (the community-at-large) suffered as a result. God's judgment - nature's judgment - was not confined to certain wrongdoers, but applied to the entire nation. The sexual offenses of the Canaanites had national implications.

If the sexual misconduct of the Canaanites defiled their entire nation, since they were a nation not under the Mosaic law, the same rules must apply to every nation, not just Canaan and not just Israel. There was nothing about the Canaanite nation, discoverable from the biblical text, which made it a special case. This is consistent with Rom. 13:1-3a:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.

This text indicates that all nations are subject to the universal principles of how God intends that all nations are to be governed, or the law of the nature of nations. And Rom. 13, if it ever applied to any particular nation at all, most definitely applied to the civil state in power when it was written, *i.e.*, the Roman Empire, a civil sovereignty *not* under the Mosaic law. So if this text applied to Rome, it must apply to all nations, for all men are equally subject to the laws of nature and the universal laws of nature's God.

As a consequence, both Lev. 18 and Rom. 13 testify to the existence of universal rules of human behavior that are binding on all nations *in their national capacities*, or as lawyers like to say, nations *qua* nations. Among these laws binding on all nations *qua* nations are the laws of sexual misconduct listed in Lev. 18.

So, when an offense against God is counted as one which defiles the land, it is an offense which is contrary to the creation *and* goes against the nature of civil society. As such, it cannot be an offense for only some people and not others - it is necessarily an offense which applies to all people in all places at all times and for all nations. The nature of the offense as a civil offense is inescapable.

PUBLIC, NOT PRIVATE, OFFENSES

We are accustomed to the idea that crimes are offenses against the public, as distinct from disputes between private persons. This is the basis for the great division in the law between criminal cases (public) and civil cases (private). Thus, in criminal cases, the plaintiff is always someone standing for the public, such as the *People*, the *State*, or the nation (*e.g., United States*). Even Blackstone, in his famous COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND (1765-69), denominated civil cases as *Private Wrongs*, and criminal cases as *Public Wrongs*.

Historically, civil cases and criminal cases were handled in separate courts, by separate judges, operating under different rules of procedure. We still have separate rules of procedure today, but most courts and judges hear both civil and criminal cases, just on different days. It used to be that a crime was enforced via punishments (death, imprisonment, whipping and/or a fine), and civil causes were redressed by some form of restitution, primarily monetary damages. Nowadays, those lines are being blurred more and more - especially in the area of allowing governments to pursue civil cases and awarding them monetary damages, as well as allowing punitive awards in civil cases.

But few people stop to ask what it is that makes a particular offense private or public. Are public wrongs necessarily worse than private wrongs? Do public wrongs hurt more people than private wrongs? Is something *public* just because the government says so? Are public wrongs really offenses against the government instead of the people at large? What is it that makes something a crime?

Blackstone, in his COMMENTARIES Vol. 4, stated that:

private wrongs, or civil injuries, are an infringement or privation of the civil rights which belong to individuals, considered merely as individuals; public wrongs, or crimes and misdemeanors, are a breach and violation of the public rights and duties, due to the whole community, considered as community, in its social aggregate capacity.

Of course, this merely begs the question - What makes certain wrongful actions a violation of public rights and duties, and other wrongful actions not so? Blackstone never answered this question. But he did say, "every public offense is also a private wrong, and somewhat more; it affects the

individual, and it likewise affects the community.” So, every public wrong is both criminal and civil, public and private? Wow, that just adds to the confusion.

I suggest that the laws of nature and nature’s God have a solution to the matter. The first part of which we have already seen, namely, that any act which defiles the land is one which defiles the law of the land, or the nature of the law of that civil society (*i.e.*, nation). By definition, an offense against any community-at-large or civil society is public and not private, meaning that there is no such thing as victimless sexual misconduct if it defiles the land.

All defilement offenses do injury to the community-at-large. The biblical record is pretty consistent in indicating this injury usually takes the form of conquest, disease, natural disasters and economic upheaval. In other words, things that you cannot point to and say, “this bad event is a direct result of such-and-such misconduct by so-and-so.” But the more any nation evidences a pattern or tradition of defilement offenses, the more it will see hardship and calamities rise.

For the Canaanites, defilement of the land resulted in conquest. For ancient Israel, defilement offenses resulted in deportation and dispersion. More than once, God warned the Israelites not to defile the land He was giving them (Num. 35:34, Deut. 21:23), but they did not listen. In a very real sense, the land Israel conquered when the Canaanites were vomited out, later vomited the nation of Israel out and the land was taken over by others. All as God warned in Lev. 20:22 and Deut. 28:36, 64.

Right now you should be asking yourself - as America has gone down the path of accepting and approving sexual immorality more and more over the last 50 years or so - have foreign attacks, diseases, natural disasters and economic upheaval decreased, remained constant, or increased?

Fifty years ago, what were the levels of HIV, AIDS and genital herpes compared to now? Is the threat of a viral pandemic lesser or greater? Is there more or less economic upheaval compared to then? How about outright attacks on our nation - better or worse now? What about earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornados, fires and droughts? To the extent any of these things have gotten worse, is it a mere coincidence? Are we just in the bad years of a 100 year cycle?

CRIMINAL IN ALL NATIONS

An additional consideration in our examination whether sexual misconduct is merely immoral or also criminal is that God has defined those offenses which are criminal and not left it to mere guesswork. To establish what sexual offenses God has defined to be criminal for all nations, I am going to examine those which are declared to be capital offenses under the Mosaic law.

Before examining those particular offenses, let me step back a moment and explain the logic for doing this. We know that not everything in the Mosaic law is a general rule for all nations; nor is everything in the Mosaic law given only to Israel. Some things in the Mosaic law merely reflect the law of nature, and to that extent, such laws are binding on all nations - not *because* they are included in the Mosaic law, but because they are in fact part of the law of nature. But how do we know what

things in the Mosaic law reflect the law of nature?

I have written extensively in other essays how to navigate the Mosaic law for this purpose. [See, e.g., *Legal Foundations: The Bible As Law*, <http://www.lonang.com/foundation/1/f17.htm>; *Tithing and the Law of God*, <http://www.lonang.com/foundation/6/f6D1.htm>; and *Studies in the Laws of Nature's God: The Mosaic Law*, <http://www.lonang.com/foundation/1/f1L.htm>.]

Let me only summarize here (and leave the proof to my other writings) that the eternal moral law, as John Calvin called it, or the law of nature (as I call it) consists of those legal rules which are rooted in the creation itself and are not principally derived from something God only instituted or revealed later on, or that God gave only to certain persons.

All aspects of human sexual behavior are things which inherently partake of the original creation. The creation of man as male and female, the institution of marriage and the family, and the nature of individual sexual identity all go back to the very beginning of time. Gen. 1:27. When God finished creating the world and everything in it, and declared that it was very good (Gen. 1:31), this included human sexuality.

Nothing about human sexual behavior and right or wrong sexual conduct evolved, developed, or was divinely imparted subsequently. Nothing God has ever done since creation has changed the rules of human sexual behavior. (But see the discussion of incest, below.) Therefore, when we look at the Mosaic laws pertaining to sexual conduct, we know those are grounded in human nature itself, not anything peculiar to the Jewish people. The ancient Israelites did not have any unique attributes of sexuality not held in common with all of mankind.

Further, we know that capital punishment, authorized via the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:6), was given to all mankind (*i.e.*, all the descendants of Noah) and was not limited to the ancient Israelites. Which is to say, no more and no less, that anything declared by God to be a capital offense, whether revealed in the laws peculiar to Israel or not, *is by definition a crime (public offense) and not a merely private offense*. Not even in a true theocracy are merely private offenses punishable by capital punishment. Capital punishment and private offenses are mutually exclusive, period.

If that is so, it only remains to be determined: 1) whether something declared to be crime in ancient Israel is also a crime in all other nations; and 2) whether the punishments authorized in ancient Israel also apply in all other nations. And the first thing you should notice is that those are two separate questions - the answer to each may be quite different from the other.

As to the first question - some, but not all, of the crimes recognized in ancient Israel are also crimes in all other nations. This goes back to our analysis of the Mosaic Code mentioned earlier. To the extent something in the Mosaic law reflects the law of nature, then it applies to all nations, not because it is in the Mosaic law, but because the law of nature applies to all nations.

For example, the religious offenses under the Mosaic law would not apply in all nations. All non-theocratic nations are not authorized to punish religious offenses against God, such as idolatry,

blasphemy, heresy, etc. These things may be *moral wrongs* in all nations, but they are not *crimes* in all nations because God has not given all nations authority to punish religious offenses. However, the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18, as we have shown *are* crimes in all nations under the law of nature. Thus, we will want to see the extent to which there is an overlap between the sexual offenses in Lev. 18 and those sexual offenses punished as crimes in ancient Israel. Any offense which shows up in both contexts will qualify as a crime in all nations.

As to the second question - generally no, the punishments authorized in ancient Israel will *not* apply in all other nations. One principal reason for this is that capital punishment for all the nations is limited to murder under the Noahic covenant until such time, if ever, that God authorizes capital punishment for other offenses. Thus, I am not arguing, nor do I need to argue, that all capital sexual offenses in ancient Israel are in fact capital crimes for all nations today.

All I need to argue in this essay, and all I am arguing, is that capital sexual offenses in ancient Israel are inherently crimes that all nations can punish in some form or another. *How* they are to be punished in Gentile nations is beyond the scope of this essay. Let us work, in the meantime, on building a consensus that recognizes the valid exercise of civil authority and duty of all nations to punish such offenses, and *after that* we can worry about the appropriate forms of punishment.

Therefore, to the extent God has declared any sexual offenses to be capital crimes under the Mosaic law, notwithstanding they are part of the covenant given to the Israelites, such offenses are inherently: 1) rooted in the creation and part of the law of nature; and 2) liable to be punished by the rightful exercise of civil power in all the nations.

So, now that we have laid the groundwork for our analysis, what are the sexual offenses recognized as capital crimes under the Mosaic law? They are:

Incest. Lev. 20:11-12.

Lewdness. Lev. 20:14.

Menstrual intercourse. Lev. 20:18.

Adultery. Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22-29.

Homosexuality. Lev. 20:13.

Bestiality. Lev. 20:15-16. Ex. 22:19.

A couple of special cases (Lev. 21:9 and Deut. 22:21) which I will discuss later.

Now let's compare that to the list of offenses of the Canaanites who were not under the Mosaic law:

Incest. Lev. 18:6-16.

Lewdness. Lev. 18:17-18.

Menstrual intercourse. Lev. 18:19.

Adultery. Lev. 18:20.

Homosexuality. Lev. 18:22.

Bestiality. Lev. 18:23.

All of the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18 are also among the capital crimes in ancient Israel. What does this mean? It means that this is further evidence the sexual offenses committed by the Canaanites are in fact crimes which all nations are authorized to punish. Or, to be blunt about it, we're not supposed to wait around for God to enforce the laws of nature regarding sexual misconduct, because He expects us to do it through our civil governments.

I cannot help but conclude there is no such thing as a "victimless" crime. All crimes are, by definition, harmful to the public, that is, the community. Consent of the parties involved does not negate the unlawfulness of the act or the harm to the community. Nor does it matter whether sexual offenses are committed in private or in public. That they happen at all is sufficient to invoke civil power to punish them.

It only makes sense that this exercise of civil power is not merely an option, subject to discretion of whether to enforce the laws against sexual crimes or not, but an actual duty. That is, all nations must enforce the laws of criminal sexual conduct whether they want to or not. The failure to exercise this civil jurisdiction is itself cause for God to take action - eventually. But when God takes action, watch out!

What else are we to conclude from the example of the Canaanites? Which is more likely: 1) that every single person in Canaan committed sexual immorality (even the elderly and the children); or 2) the entire nation was judged for its failure to curb the sexual immorality of those who indulged in such behavior?

When the land vomited out the Canaanites as described in Lev. 18, was it merely because there were immoral individuals living in the land, or was it also because the nation in its civil capacity failed to do anything about it? And if it was just a result of the behavior of some individuals, then why was the entire nation punished? Was there no national wrongdoing as a civil society?

In fact there is a divine pattern that whenever God authorizes man to do something, it creates a duty for man to do it. In Gen. 1:28, when God told man to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion," it wasn't as though mankind as a whole had discretion whether to procreate or take dominion. These things were not, and are not, mere options to consider, but are things which mankind *must do*.

Thus, we see that when God said, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man *shall* his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6), it was followed up in Num. 35:31, "you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he *shall* be put to death." In other words, do not fail to execute a murderer. Capital punishment is not a mere option, and enforcement is non-discretionary - it is a requirement.

Similarly, when God itemizes the punishments for sexual offenses committed in Israel (Lev. 20:10-18), the injunction is nearly always that the wrongdoers "shall surely be put to death," removing any doubt that capital punishment is a requirement, not an option. This is the divine pattern - the way God operates. So if God expects all nations to punish sexual crimes, it is a duty, not a choice.

To sum up, all the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18 (incest, lewdness, menstrual intercourse, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality) are public crimes. Since God has revealed these to be public crimes, man cannot decriminalize them, or downgrade them to merely private wrongs, much less can any nation turn such behavior into a protected civil right. Public enforcement via the exercise of civil power is a responsibility and duty for all nations.

SPECIFIC OFFENSES

Now let's take a closer look at each of the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18:

1. **Incest** (v. 6-16), or sexual relations between a man and a prohibited relative, specifically, his *mother, step-mother, sister, half-sister, step-sister, granddaughter, aunt (by blood or marriage), daughter-in-law, or sister-in-law.*

The reason given why any incestuous relationship is prohibited is that it “uncovers the nakedness” of a close male relative. Looking at this from the male perspective, each man is authorized to have sexual relations only with his wife. However, he is also responsible for the care and protection of his daughters and any other female members of his household. Historically, this meant that no woman was authorized to have sex until her father (or other male head of household) approved it by giving her in marriage.

Incest puts a man in the position of taking advantage of a woman whose chastity he is likely under a duty to protect, due to extended families living in one household or in close proximity. Alternatively, incest violates the authority of another close male relative to give a woman in marriage to someone else while she is still a virgin.

Notice that the Levitical degrees of incest do not expressly include a daughter, a niece, or a first cousin. As for daughters, this is covered by the next offense (lewdness), as a man can hardly have sex with his daughter except that he also has had sexual relations with her mother - and having sex with a woman and her daughter is prohibited as *lewdness*. Thus, to list daughters under the category of incest is redundant. Plus, from a biblical perspective, lewdness is a category of offense which carries the added moral stigma of being a form of *depravity*. So instead of letting father/daughter sexual relations off the hook, Ionang actually treats such relations as *worse* than incest.

As to nieces and cousins, these are customarily included in Anglo-American statutes prohibiting incest, but I can find no evidence from the scriptures that these relationships give rise to an offense against nature. Whether such sexual relationships ought to be prohibited on other grounds is a point I will not take up now. What I want to establish is a baseline, if you will, of offenses against nature which are universal so we know where all nations must draw the line. And apparently, nieces and cousins are not on the wrong side of that line.

As to whether the prohibitions against incest apply to women as well as men, assuming for the moment that a woman would be the sexual initiator rather than the man (a less frequent circumstance, historically), all we have to do is look at any such relationship from the male

perspective. If a woman initiates sex with her nephew, then from his perspective he has had relations with his aunt, a prohibited conduct. If she has sex with her son, then he has had sex with his mother, which is prohibited, etc. Consequently, it adds nothing to describe the offenses from the female point of view, and takes away nothing by omitting it.

2. **Lewdness** (v. 17-18), refers to sexual relations of a man with a woman and her daughter or granddaughter; or, marriage to a woman and her sister while both are alive. Lewdness is here referred to not merely as a form of unlawful behavior, but as a form of *depravity*. Lewdness in the biblical sense is always a form of sexual double-dealing among close relatives. My best guess at a rationale is that a man should not abuse his position as the head of a household by having sex with multiple women in the same family.

One of the historic arguments against both incest and lewdness has to do with inbreeding and the possible genetic degradation of any offspring. These arguments are interesting as possible corroboration of the legal rules, but Ionang provides no genetic reasons which undergird the prohibitions. All Ionang is concerned with is who has what authority, and when that authority is constrained. To suppose a scientific basis for legal rules misses the point - law is not a function of the current state of scientific knowledge.

There are a number of notable instances of both incest and lewdness committed by the biblical patriarchs which are never expressly condemned in the Bible. For example, Abraham married his half-sister Sarah, an instance of incest. Jacob married Leah and Rachel, sisters who were each alive while married to the same man, an instance of lewdness. It is also fairly to be implied, if the account of Adam and Eve is to be taken literally, that their children (in order to propagate) would have had to marry a sibling, committing incest.

I do not know of any satisfactory explanation for such things. Some people hypothesize that the drastic population reduction caused by Noah's flood may have so altered the human gene pool that God found it necessary to impose restrictions on incestuous relations in order to prevent genetic degradation. Hence, sexual behavior that may have been acceptable before the flood would have become necessary to prohibit afterwards. However, such sentiments are pure speculation without any legal basis. There is no legal evidence God ever took such action, and no amount of scientific inquiry can supply it. Again, science cannot explain a legal rule.

Further, this hypothesis does nothing to explain the cases of Abraham and Jacob. If we surmise that these prohibitions against incest and lewdness were effective only upon being announced in Leviticus 18, then we have fairly well destroyed any logical basis by which God could have held the Canaanites accountable to these standards. The only way God could have held the Canaanites accountable, is if these standards were part of the law of nature applicable to all men in all places at all times from the beginning, *i.e.*, prior to Noah's flood.

The only conclusion I can come to is that both Abraham and Jacob engaged in unlawful behavior which God assumed we would take notice of simply by virtue of the laws of nature and the fact that he expressly prohibited such things later on. As for their respective punishments, apparently God

was satisfied by whatever judgments He imposed in his sovereign discretion and further punishment by a civil ruler was unnecessary. After all, this is the divine *modus operandi* both in the case of Cain (a murderer before Noah's flood) and David (who was a murderer after the Noahic covenant), neither of whom were punished by other men.

3. **Menstrual intercourse** (v. 19). I daresay menstrual intercourse is something which probably strikes most people today as not a significant form of immorality. However, the fact that it is among the offenses listed in Lev. 18 and it was a capital crime in ancient Israel (both of the offenders were to be "cut off from among their people" - implying their deaths, not merely exile) should give us pause to reconsider the seriousness of this offense. Again, nothing about female menstruation would be peculiar to the Jews, so we have to assume this is a law of nature applicable to all people.

One possible explanation is that by definition impregnation is impossible during menstruation. Thus, the process of procreation is knowingly frustrated. A woman would not be able to argue in fact or in conscience that she didn't know she was menstruating. The frustration of impregnation would be intentional.

The only other clue I can discern comes from Lev. 20:18, where it is said that the act of menstrual intercourse means the man "has made naked [the woman's] fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood." This I take to be a form of uncleanness, not in a ritualistic sense peculiar to the Jews, but according to the law of nature. The scripture says in several places that *life is in the blood*, so perhaps this plays into the prohibition somehow. See Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11,14; Deut. 12:23.

In any event, no matter how strange it may sound to us, God found it a sufficient basis for passing judgment on a Gentile nation. Following the general rule found in Ps. 19:1-9 and Rom. 1:18-20, the creation reveals the laws of God, these rules are knowable and not hidden, and all men are accountable to know and obey them. God does not hold people accountable for things about which he has not revealed, so the prohibition of menstrual intercourse must be a part of the law of nature. Otherwise it would not be listed in Lev. 18.

4. **Adultery** (v. 20). Adultery is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, at least one of whom is married to someone else. Adultery, like fornication, has likely always been with us, and probably always will. Nonetheless, God expects us to conduct ourselves otherwise. If adultery was important enough to be included in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:14) and it was a capital crime in ancient Israel, it must be important to the God who made us.

I am fascinated that many Christians accept the Ten Commandments as part of the eternal moral law of God (and defend public displays of the Decalogue in government buildings), yet at the same time argue that Jesus may have done away with the law of adultery as per the account of the adulterous woman in John 8:1-11 ("Neither do I condemn you"). I am skeptical of such arguments.

First, if we look at Lev. 20:10 and Deut. 22:22, it is abundantly clear in each instance that "both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" and "both of them shall die." By definition,

you cannot have just one person guilty of the crime of adultery - it takes two. And, as a matter of justice, public authorities cannot show favoritism by prosecuting only one party to the crime and not the other.

So of course, in the Jn. 8 account, the Jews bring only the woman, and not the man, before Jesus - notwithstanding that by their testimony she had "been caught in the act." So right away, there is a procedural issue: Where is the man? If it takes two to commit adultery, how can the woman alone be prosecuted? What if the man was the one who was married?

The other problem is that Jesus, just because he was the Son of God, was not a public official vested with civil authority to judge crimes. Jesus Himself addressed this very issue in Luke 12:14, in the context of judging a civil dispute. Even if the woman in Jn. 8 was guilty of adultery, Jesus could not judge her in a governmental capacity. So regardless of her guilt, He *could not* condemn her. It's not that He *refused* to condemn her as a matter of discretion; rather, He was *unable* to condemn her because He lacked the authority to do so.

Nevertheless, Jesus recognized the sinfulness of her actions by telling her to "go, and from now on sin no more." Far from modifying or obsoleting the law against adultery, He actually recognized and upheld it.

Second, Jesus never came to modify or abolish the laws of God except for those relating to the Levitical priesthood, the means of salvation, the temple and the altar. Heb. 7:12. All other laws, especially the eternal moral law of God such as the commandment against adultery, He came to fulfill (Mat. 5:17-19). That is, He came to uphold the moral law, keep it, and obey it. Further, "whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

So, no, Jesus did not abolish the law against adultery. Or the laws against any other sexual misconduct. Nothing Jesus did in His entire ministry changed these laws in any way. Ever since the creation, these laws of nature continue unabated and remain in full force and effect. Only our willingness to enforce them has changed - the laws themselves are eternal.

5. **Homosexuality** (v. 22). Homosexuality is consensual sexual relations between persons of the same sex. Although the Scripture here expressly refers only to sexual relations between two males, it undoubtedly includes sexual relations between two females. The Bible commonly uses male nouns and pronouns to indicate both genders, and there is no reason to suppose God would approve of homosexual relations between women.

For one thing, whatever arguments from nature apply to male homosexuality would also apply in the case of females. Second, Rom. 1:26-27 treats both cases the same: "For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another." Both cases are equally disapproved.

So what does homosexuality consist of, exactly? The texts in Leviticus are as follows: "You shall

not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” Lev. 18:22. “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.” Lev. 20:13.

In both texts, homosexuality has nothing to do with whether the parties are consenting, whether either of the parties is under age, or whether oral or anal sex is performed. These things *may* be present, but they are not *required* to be present as a necessary element of the offense. In fact, the suggestion is the opposite: two men lying together as a man would normally lie with a woman. In other words, consensual sex by two adults of the same gender.

In Leviticus, homosexuality is called an *abomination*, suggesting that it is not merely wrongful, but detestable. Whereas adultery is wrongful and a violation of the institutions of marriage and the family, it is at least consistent with the nature of human sexuality, that is, heterosexual relations. Homosexuality, on the other hand, is contrary to the nature of human sexuality itself, and therefore is a greater departure from lawful conduct. For this reason, homosexuality has historically been known as *the crime against nature*, whereas adultery has never been so designated.

It has been fashionable in recent years to call into question whether the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Sodom being the root word of *sodomy*, another term for homosexuality) actually engaged in homosexual behavior and to suggest other reasons why they were judged by God. The original account in Genesis states:

the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may *know* them.” Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not *known* any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men.” Gen. 19:4-8.

From the context, and given other similar uses of language in Genesis, such as Gen. 4:1 (“Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived”), it is clear that the verb *to know*, *known* and *knew* all mean *carnal knowledge*, *i.e.*, sexual relations. But were there any doubt about it, those doubts are put to rest by Jude 7, referring to “Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued *unnatural desire*.” This mention of unnatural desire (translated as *strange flesh* in the KJV) is a pretty unambiguous reference to homosexuality.

6. **Bestiality** (v. 23), or sexual relations between either a man or a woman and any animal, is referred to as a *perversion*, indicating great shamefulness and depravity. It is the worst of all possible sexual offenses, because it doesn’t merely run contrary to nature, it actually turns nature upside-down. When God created the world, he made man to have *dominion* over the animals, since animals are living *things*, whereas man is a *being* with a living soul. See, Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7.

By committing an act of bestiality, a person treats a mere animal as being equal with humanity, as a co-partner. Instead of having dominion over the animal, the person denies the image of God in man and functions as a mere animal himself/herself. The animal cannot actually be elevated to the

position of being made in the image of God, so instead the person degrades himself/herself to the level of a mere *thing*. In short, engaging in bestiality is an implicit denial of one's humanity and the image of God in man, because it treats men and animals as being essentially the same.

It used to be that bestiality was a topic not to be discussed in polite society. The subject was hardly tolerated except in hushed tones and in extreme circumstances. That such conduct is today portrayed as humorous shows the extent to which our modern society has become depraved. In the entertainment industry, jokes about men and sheep, or women and horses, are already cliché. Mark my words - humorous treatment is merely a precursor to the normalization of human and animal sexual interactions.

Next time you see a sci-fi show that contains interspecies dating, or a TV commercial showing a pig that has a human girlfriend, realize you are being conditioned to accept these possibilities in real life. It is part of a larger philosophical thread that we share this planet with all species, and there is nothing inherently special or different about humans compared to animals. The degradation of humanity and a denial of the image of God is coming to a neighborhood near you.

7. ***Omitted offenses.*** Interestingly, Leviticus 18 makes no mention of serial fornication, prostitution, harlotry or whoredom. However, it would be a mistake to assume their omission indicates these forms of sexual conduct are approved by God.

All of these may be regarded as variations on the same theme of serial fornication, or having multiple sexual partners, one after the other in a series, without benefit of marriage to any of them. All of these are generally comprehended in the term *immorality* when used in scripture. And all of these are denounced throughout the Bible. But why not here in Lev. 18? Certainly, serial fornication is rooted in the nature of human sexuality as much as any other sexual offense, and therefore must be equally immoral in all nations at all times.

The difference is likely one of enforcement authority. That is, even though serial fornication is universally denounced as immoral in scripture, only very limited authority is ever given to men to do anything about it. This does not mean serial fornication is unimportant to God, as I will show in the next section, but that God largely reserves to Himself the authority to punish such conduct.

Thus, in all of the Mosaic law, there are only three limited instances in which fornication is punished, and only two of those treated it as a crime. The first imposed capital punishment on the daughter of a priest (but not on other women) who committed serial fornication. Lev. 21:9. The second punished a woman by stoning if she passed herself off as a virgin when getting married, but was found to be lying. Deut. 22:21.

I regard both of these offenses as applicable to only ancient Israel and not to nations in general. The first offense is directly linked to the Levitical priesthood of ancient Israel which automatically disqualifies it as a law of nature offense. The second offense seems likely an attribute of the theocratic laws (not the eternal moral laws) because it has to do with preserving the holiness of the Israelites.

The third instance was if an unmarried man slept with a virgin, he was forced to marry her and was prohibited from ever divorcing her. Deut. 22:28-29. Apparently that was punishment enough for both of them. Given that the divorce laws in ancient Israel are not something that carries over to all nations (“I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you”), this third instance is not a good candidate for a law of nature offense.

So in spite of the immorality of the offense of serial fornication, it was never regarded as a general crime for all the people of Israel, nor for all the nations. I would be hesitant to extrapolate a general rule applicable in all nations via the law of nature from any of the three instances cited above. Which leaves me to conclude that unlike the other sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18, fornication is not a crime against nature that all nations are required to enforce and punish.

I have a theory as to why serial fornication is treated differently than other sexual offenses under *lonang*. All of the sexual offenses in Lev. 18 are capable of being undertaken by only one or two people without the assistance of others.

But the reality of serial fornication is that rarely is there a lone person who goes about seducing multiple partners who are all *victims*. People can rarely be seduced into doing something they are not already predisposed to do. So serial fornication requires the existence of a pool of potential partners from whom a person can choose. Each person in this pool is predisposed to have sex with someone to whom they are not married, and is likely to engage in serial fornication himself/herself.

In other words, serial fornication indicates a general degradation of community morality, not merely individual morality. The wider the scope of immorality (say, if serial fornication were to become the accepted norm in society) the more it would indicate a significant decline in the culture as a whole.

Which leaves God to punish such things not on an individual basis through the government prosecution of crimes, but to subject entire communities and nations to divine judgment outside of the criminal process. And this is what I will next consider.

GOD HATES IMMORALITY

Sadly, America has become the land of the depraved, and the home of the immoral. Prostitution is increasingly institutionalized and treated as a regulated industry. Labor activists routinely talk of prostitutes as “sex workers” whose rights need protecting. Casual repeated whoredom is rampant in all forms of entertainment, on college campuses, and has become the expected social norm. Magazines hold contests and publish lists of people to see who has had sex with the most partners. And it matters not who (or what) anyone chooses to have sex with (except for minors).

But since we are looking at sex crimes through the lens of the laws of nature and nature’s God, it will be helpful to remember that *lonang* is simply the expression of the will of God for all people in the creation and in the Bible. And if you want to know the will of God about sexual immorality, you should consider this excerpt from 2Pet. 2:4-19:

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ... if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to ... keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Bold and willful, ... these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing. ... These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

So let's recap. Sexual immorality is not *less* of a concern to God because it has ancient origins, but rather a greater concern because it harkens back to the angelic rebellion pre-dating human history. God has punished whole cities for sexual immorality, wiping them from the face of the earth, and He can (and will) do it again. Sexual immorality is *lawlessness*, and there are two things God especially hates: 1) those who indulge in defiling passions; and 2) those who despise authority.

Further, sexually immoral people are like irrational animals to God, whose destiny is only destruction. And this is what they deserve. They delight in being sexually immoral in broad daylight, acting like everything is normal, never tiring of doing wrong, always looking for new opportunities to have sex. They encourage everyone they can to act like them without regard for how it harms people. They promise sexual freedom, but in reality it is bondage.

Now let's compare 2Pet. 2 with Jude 6-13 (excerpt):

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme

the glorious ones. ... But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Let's see now: A comparison of sexual misconduct with the angelic rebellion - check. Sodom and Gomorrah punished for sexual immorality and unnatural desire - check. These are an example of the coming judgment for the sexually immoral - check. Sexually immoral people defile the flesh and reject authority - check. They blaspheme God and His laws and act like unreasoning animals - check. They eat and drink like everything is normal, but are instead reserved for the gloom of utter darkness forever - check. Balaam's error and storm driven mists - check, check.

Does it look like a pattern to you? Because it sure looks like a pattern to me.

Given that we have already examined essentially all of the forms of sexual misconduct in the Bible, *defiling passions and unnatural desires* are pretty easily identified as the offenses listed in Lev. 18 together with serial fornication (omitting the three special cases in Lev. 21 and Deut. 22 which were likely peculiar to ancient Israel). To put a modern gloss on it, *defiling passions and unnatural desires* would be known today as sex with anyone you want, anytime you want, any way you want. Yeah, that sounds like the world today.

CONSEQUENCES OF IMMORALITY

But what do we make of this *despising and rejection of authority, and blaspheming* the scripture talks about? The authority which is despised and rejected is the authority of God's law to regulate sexual conduct, to prohibit certain types of sexual misconduct, and to give men the authority to enforce these laws. The blasphemy referred to is the way in which sexually immoral people slander God, denigrate His laws, and ridicule the idea that they are under any actually binding sexual constraints.

Notice that the sexually immoral are compared to three persons in all of human history whose evils were significant enough to be singled out for mention, none of whose wrongs had anything to do with sex.

Cain - who offered to God what was not holy, thought it was adequate, and resented it when God said it wasn't. Balaam - who jumped at the chance to do evil as long as he was well paid for it. And Korah - who thought he could openly challenge the authority of men chosen by God to lead Israel and enlist others to participate in his rebellion. Instead, the earth opened up and swallowed him alive along with 250 of his closest friends.

Similarly, the immoral have sex in unholy (unlawful) ways, think it's OK, and resent any implication that it isn't. When confronted with their unlawfulness, instead of acknowledging their error and repenting, they persist in wrongdoing and blame God for holding them back. They jump at the chance to profit from unlawful sex (sex sells!). They openly challenge and mock the authority of civil government (as a minister of God) to define what is and is not lawful sexual relations, to prohibit what is unlawful, and to enforce those laws.

"We don't need government prying into people's bedrooms," some people say. "Sexual activity is personal and should be private," they say. Except, of course, unlawful sexual relations have a nasty habit of becoming public, open and notorious.

Today, immorality has become the everyday fabric of entertainment, which takes every possible opportunity to normalize the unlawful. It is an unavoidable part of advertising in all forms. It has become the approved content of educational curricula for younger and younger students. Its proponents hold public rallies and marches. Typical college life consists of an endless string of sexual encounters. Immorality isn't private any more - it has taken over the entire culture openly and notoriously.

But God doesn't take too kindly to having His authority challenged, or the authority of public officials to enforce His laws. I daresay these things are just as important to God as the sexual misconduct itself. Why else would He condemn the immoral for despising and rejecting authority? You can shake your fist at God if you want, but see how far that gets you in the long run.

And if the examples of Cain, Balaam and Korah tell us anything, things may not go so well for you when you despise God's authority in the here and now, either. Cain was cursed and made a vagrant and a wanderer. Gen. 4:12. Balaam was met by an angel with a flaming sword - essentially, a divine assassin. Num. 22:22-33. Korah was swallowed up by the earth. Num. 26:10. I guess you could say they each received their reward.

So the expectation of the flagrantly immoral is more of the same. 2Pet. 2:9-10 indicates God knows how "to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion." Thus, the Canaanites were conquered and enslaved. Sodom and Gomorrah were wiped from the face of the earth.

And today? Well, we can look to Deut. 28:15-44 for some clues about that. An interesting read. But in short, when people turn their backs on God, he brings conquest, disease, natural disasters and economic upheaval. And that's *before* the final Day of Judgment, in the here and now. But hey - it could never happen *here*, right? I mean, God would never do that to *us*, the people of God, would He? It's not as if Deut. 28 was directed to the people of God - oh wait - I guess it was.

But God will spare the righteous, right? Oh, you mean how God spared the righteous in Israel from slavery in Egypt and deportation to Babylon? Or how the Jews and Christians were spared from the cruelty of the Roman Empire? Or how the early Church was spared from persecution? That kind of sparing? Well then, yes, the same rules apply now.

TYPICAL CHRISTIAN RESPONSES

I fear that when I first wrote this article, I underestimated the capacity of people to avoid the obvious, so I now find it necessary to address some of the ways people often respond to the arguments I have made.

A Ministry Opportunity

Perhaps the most common Christian response is to acknowledge the immorality of the sexual offenses listed in Lev. 18, but then to reach out in love to minister to these people because they are hurting and need to be shown that God loves them enough to have Jesus die for their sins. This response is sometimes known as “love the sinner, hate the sin.” But what it really does is view sexual immorality as a ministry opportunity.

I do not say this lightly, so when I say it, please take me seriously: sexual immorality of the type we have been talking about (the Lev. 18 offenses) is not a ministry opportunity. Each of the offenses is a crime against nature which God demands that all nations enforce and punish, and if they fail to do so, He will punish them.

If we, as a nation, did the job God expects and demands that we do, the sexually immoral wouldn't be plying their trades in the open streets, organizing protest marches and opening gay bars. If we did our job right, the immoral would be fewer and harder to find, for one thing. There wouldn't be any communities of openly immoral people that one could minister to.

But the inherent flaw in viewing sexual immorality as a ministry opportunity is that it assumes the one thing such people need most is love. Is that what God assumes? What does the Bible say?

“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Lk. 5:32. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom. 5:8. Well said, well said, but note: the Gospel is for the unrighteous, but for anyone to avail themselves of the Gospel, they must first repent of their wickedness. So don't talk to me about ministering love to the immoral if the chief purpose of that ministry is anything other than bringing them to repentance. You can't minister the Gospel to people if you only encourage them to continue in their immorality.

The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, ... the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality. 1 Tim 1:9-10. OK, so what is the chief concern for immoral people - love, or law?

Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord! Ps. 104:35. You gotta love the Psalmist, who longed for the wicked to perish from the earth, while praising the Lord. Is that your attitude, when you praise God? Do you think you are praising God, when you work to prevent the immoral from getting their just reward? Perhaps it is time for a reality check.

Total Accommodation

A less frequent Christian response, but one which is gaining steam, is to welcome the sexually immoral into the church as full participating members, let them be church leaders, ordain them as clergy, and even start special congregations for people sharing the same sexual vices. In other words, a total accommodation of immorality done in the name of tolerance. What does the Bible say?

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. ... I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. [Y]ou are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. ... But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality ... not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you. 1 Co 5:1-13 (excerpted).

To this may be added various other scriptures to the effect that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:8, 11; Eph. 5:3, 5.

What are we to conclude then? First, anyone who professes to be a Christian but persists in immoral behavior is an evil person. Second, the proper response of the Church is to excommunicate such a person, not tolerate them. Third, even though an immoral person's spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (*i.e.*, the resurrection), in this life their body is to be delivered to destruction. So much for ordaining immoral clergy.

Confusion of Jurisdictions

Then there are those Christians who pick up on 1 Cor. 5:12-13 (above) and proclaim that Christians cannot judge non-Christians in such matters, and that only God can judge them. In other words, we Christians will do our thing, and the non-Christians will do their thing, and *ne'er the twain shall meet*. The net effect of which is that civil society (nay, even a Christian state) should respond the way God expects the Church to respond, *i.e.*, by loving the sinner.

It sounds great, except for one tiny little thing. That's not how God demands civil governments respond to evil and lawlessness.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who

carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Rom. 13:3-4.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 1 Pet. 2:13-14.

Notice that from God's perspective, the role of civil rulers is to carry out God's wrath on wrongdoers and punish those who do evil. God has not authorized civil governments to love people. Civil governments "bear the sword," and the sword cannot be used as an instrument of love, grace or charity.

It never ceases to amaze me how many Christians confuse the jurisdictions of Church and State, thinking that just because it is not the place of the Church to judge outsiders, therefore civil governments can't either. I will not go into this matter in detail here, because any student of American history knows that the separation of church and state (the original concept as embodied in the First Amendment, not the perverted form adopted by the Supreme Court) is essentially a Christian concept derived from the Bible.

God gave the Church and nations separate, non-overlapping authorities, separate missions and purposes, and separate means for accomplishing those purposes. It is a classic Christian error to confuse the two jurisdictions, but 2,000 years of bad history does not excuse the plain teaching of the word of God. It's why we don't allow civil governments to control religion, or allow religious institutions to maintain armies. The result is never as good as one might hope, because it is contrary to the law of God.

CONCLUSION

After considering all of the above analysis, this is what I have concluded:

- 1) Ionang clearly indicates that some forms of sexual behavior are wrong in all nations at all times;
- 2) such misconduct defiles the land and imposes additional consequences on nations and their territories above and beyond the curse resulting from the original fall of man;
- 3) the consequences resulting from sexual misconduct are of a public nature, so it matters not whether the offense was committed in private or public;
- 4) the public nature of sexual misconduct makes such behavior criminal, not merely immoral, conferring jurisdiction on civil rulers to punish it; and
- 5) civil rulers have not merely the authority, but the affirmative duty, to punish sex crimes.

Now it's true - not all sexually immoral behavior can be punished by men. Some things are immoral - like hate - that are beyond the power of man to enforce via civil power. Fornication appears to be of this nature. But we have a duty to punish those things God has given man the authority to punish, and we dare not shrink back from fulfilling that duty. Thanks to Leviticus 18, the sexual crimes God expects all nations to punish are clearly spelled out and available for all to see.

Which leaves plenty of room for the Church to inform the culture about sexual immorality (especially those actions which civil government cannot punish) and the consequences awaiting the willingly indulgent. But tell me, where is the consistent witness against immorality by those who claim to be members of the true Church? Where is the example of Christians who exhibit better behavior than the rest of the culture? Should it be any surprise that if God decides to visit punishment on the wicked, people who claim to be Christians will not be spared?

I can already hear the howling of the defenders of sexual misconduct to the effect that I am standing alone against the tidal wave of history. In other words, that the arguments I have made are arguments of the past, and they have been swept away. That the clear movement of history is the liberalization of sexual activity to not only remove punishments, not just to eliminate stigmas, but to legitimate, protect and even institutionalize the most bizarre and perverse sexual behaviors - all in the name of progress and/or evolution.

After all, what is same-sex marriage, except the institutionalization of homosexuality? But to the advocates of sexual license, it's not enough that what was once criminal is now permitted. What was once criminal must now be legitimated (made a civil right), normalized (remove all social stigma) and elevated to the highest possible social status. Ultimately, immorality may even become a matter of legal duty, if the purveyors of unlawfulness have their way.

I have no doubt that the advocates of immorality will not be satisfied with achieving merely equal status in society - they will seek to achieve dominance. Thus, after full equality is attained, the next logical step is to attack normal and moral sexual conduct. Heterosexual marriage will be denigrated, then stigmatized, then no longer protected, and perhaps even outlawed. Schools will not merely expose young children to deviant lifestyles, they will be required to write about them favorably, be tested on their moral views, and forced to conform to the deviant agenda.

The ultimate goal of the advocates of sexual immorality is to not only break free from the bonds of God's laws of sexual conduct, but to rub the noses of all God-fearing people in their immorality. Or, as the Psalmist said it, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'" Psalm 2:2-3. In other words, to break free from God's legal restraints, and if possible, turn everything upside-down.

But as long as we're talking about inevitability, let's also consider what the Psalmist says next. "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury." Psalm 2:4-5.

There is nothing in this life as inevitable as the laws of nature and nature's God. You can rail against them all you want, but they aren't going anywhere, and you can't change them. Nor, strictly speaking, can they be ignored. God's laws of sexual (mis)conduct are part and parcel of the universe. They cannot be suspended, avoided, or conquered. They will be enforced, one way or another.

So, no, I do not stand against the tidal wave of history. Every corrupt society since the time of Noah (of which the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah may be considered a type of firstfruits) eventually suffers the enforcement of the laws of nature and nature's God. The tidal wave is moving the opposite way. Don't be fooled by the recent "gains" of sexual miscreants. When the waters get calm and start to recede, that's when the tidal wave is about to come crashing ashore.

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