

The “Genetic Excuse for Sin” Theory

Introduction

There are quite a few diseases and conditions that are known to be “genetically determined” - i.e., items that are caused by the exact makeup of a person’s DNA.

For example, the condition of color blindness is definitely genetic in nature. That disorder is passed from parents to children, through their “X” sex chromosomes.

Women have two X chromosomes, so in order for a woman to express the color blindness disorder, *both* of her X chromosomes need to contain that trait. (If only one of a woman’s X chromosomes has the trait, then she is known as a “carrier” of the disorder.)

However, men only have one X chromosome (and one Y chromosome) - so if a man’s one X chromosome contains that trait, then he will express color blindness. This author is quite familiar with that scenario.

In a very similar way, the disease of hemophilia is also genetically determined - again, through the X sex chromosome.

So, if a person has a genetically-determined disease or condition, then he was “born that way”, so to speak. (Or, to be more precise, he was “conceived that way”.)

Are genetic disorders “intentional”?

Since there are quite a few conditions that are genetically determined, that raises the question: “Did God *design* us, from the outset, to have these genetic problems?” To my knowledge, there isn’t any verse in Scripture which *explicitly* answers that question, but there are some “hints” about the answer to it.

First off, consider these verses:

Genesis 1:31 (ESV):

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

When God finished His work of creation - including humans - He pronounced it “very good”. That seems to imply that Adam and Eve were created *without* any genetically determined disorders - because (for example) it would seem rather strange for God to call creation “very good”, if Adam were color blind and Eve had hemophilia.

Genesis 2:15-17 (ESV):

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

God told Adam that if he *did* eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then he would die. That certainly seems to imply that if Adam had *not* eaten from that tree, then he would *not* have died - i.e., he would have lived forever.

That, in turn, appears to indicate that Adam did *not* have any genetic diseases when he was created; because if he did - and if he had obeyed God - then he (presumably) would have had those genetic diseases for *all eternity*.

Genesis 3:17-18 (ESV):

¹⁷And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

After Adam sinned, God told him that *because* of that sin, the ground would produce thorns and thistles. That seems to imply that there were *no* thorns or thistles, *before* Adam's sin.

In other words, it seems to imply that thorns and thistles are a “corruption” of creation, which occurred because of Adam's sin. In a similar way, the genetically-determined disorders that we see today may be a “corruption” of our DNA - which *also* came about as a result of Adam's sin.

Next, consider these passages:

Isaiah 61:19-20 (ESV):

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.
²⁰ No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,

Isaiah 35:5-6 (ESV):

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Revelation 21:3-4 (ESV):

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their

God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

All of the above passages indicate that during the Kingdom, people will not have *any* disabilities of *any* kind - because God will remove *all* sources of pain.

That, in turn, implies to me that God did not “design” us to suffer from genetically-determined disorders - because if He did, then why would He take them away during the Kingdom?

So, to reiterate, genetically-determined disorders appear to be a result of *human sin* - i.e., they were *not* part of God’s original design.

Two other genetic conditions

Some other conditions, which are at least *partially* genetically determined, have a direct influence on our *actions*. Two such conditions are the disorders of alcoholism and compulsive gambling.

Since those disorders are genetically determined, the following question arises: “Since people are *born* with genetic conditions, does the presence of such a condition provide an “excuse” for bad behavior?”

For example, if a person is genetically predisposed to alcoholism, then does that give him a “free pass” to get drunk? Or, if a person is genetically predisposed to compulsive gambling, then does that “let him off the hook” for wasting all of his money gambling?

Scripture has quite a bit to say, about both drunkenness and about the proper use of money:

Proverbs 20:1 (NASB):

¹Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,
And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

Proverbs 23:29-32 (ESV):

²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?

³⁰ Those who tarry long over wine;
those who go to try mixed wine.

³¹ Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.

³² In the end it bites like a serpent
and stings like an adder.

Hosea 4:11 (HCSB):

¹¹ Promiscuity, wine, and new wine
take away [one’s] understanding.

Ephesians 5:18 (HCSB):

¹⁸ And don't get drunk with wine, which [leads to] reckless actions, but be filled with the Spirit:

Proverbs 13:11 (NASB):

¹¹ Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles,
But the one who gathers by labor increases it.

1 Timothy 5:8 (HCSB):

⁸ Now if anyone does not provide for his own relatives, and especially for his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Hebrews 13:5 (ESV):

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

From what I can see, all of the above passages state that drunkenness and excessive gambling are sinful - *without* any exception.

In other words, those passages do **not** say, "Drunkenness and excessive gambling are sinful - *unless* you are genetically predisposed to those actions." Instead, the passages simply state that those actions are sinful, period.

Is any sinful behavior "excusable"?

To my knowledge, there are very few Christian groups that *officially* "excuse" drunkenness or excessive gambling, due to genetic predispositions. For example, there are very few Christian groups which claim that drunkenness is actually "OK", if a person is genetically predisposed to alcoholism.

In fact, from what I have seen, almost *no* sinful behavior is *explicitly* "excused" on genetic grounds, by any significant number of sincere Christians.

There is one specific "exception" to the above rule, though. In other words, there is **one specific** type of sinful behavior, which is "excused" on genetic grounds, by many Christians.

That one exception is, of course, *homosexual behavior*.

The basic argument that some groups make, about homosexual behavior, is as follows:

"God explicitly *designed* some people to be homosexual. Therefore, homosexual behavior must actually be OK with God - because otherwise He wouldn't have made people that way."

There are three specific issues to address, with the above argument. First of all, that argument claims that God purposely *designed* some people to be homosexual. As mentioned above, it appears that God did not design *anyone* to have any genetic disorders. Instead, all genetic disorders are a result of human sin - *not* because of God.

Some people claim that homosexual behavior is *not* a disorder at all. In other words, some people believe that homosexual behavior is a completely “normal” condition - i.e., that it is something that God *wanted* people to have, from the very beginning of creation.

However, take a look at this verse:

Genesis 1:28 (ESV):

²⁸And God blessed them [Adam and Eve]. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

The phrase “be fruitful and multiply” is an idiomatic expression, which basically means “have lots of children”. Needless to say, homosexual behavior *never* produces *any* children. As a result, it certainly appears to me that God did *not* intend for *anyone* to be homosexual.

The second question to answer is: “Is there *any* genetic predisposition to homosexual behavior *now*?” In other words, if God did not *design* people with homosexual predispositions, then does that condition arise - at least partially - from genetic “corruption” of our DNA?

Some groups assert that there is *no* genetic link to homosexual behavior *at all*. Basically, those groups claim that homosexual predispositions are only caused by environmental factors - such as child abuse. In other words, those groups state that homosexual behavior is *solely* caused by learned, psychological issues - i.e., that it has *nothing to do* with genetic corruption.

However, it is interesting to note that homosexual behavior has been observed in many species of animals as well - including animals with *extremely* primitive nervous systems, such as flies. Do flies exhibit homosexual behavior due to learned psychological issues?

Not only that, but a few years ago some explicit tests were run on fruit flies. In those tests, researchers discovered that they could cause fruit flies to exhibit homosexual behavior, by *manipulating the genes* of those flies. In other words, the researchers were able to “switch” the fruit flies from heterosexual behavior to homosexual behavior - and *back again* - through genetic manipulation (as well as through the use of drugs.)

A summary of the research in question can be found at [this link](#).

So, it appears that God did not *design* anyone to have homosexual predispositions. However, there does appear to be a genetic “corruption” of our DNA *now* - and that corruption *does* cause some people to have that disorder today.

As a result, the question becomes: if a person has a genetic predisposition to homosexual behavior, then does that mean it is “OK” for that person to engage in that behavior?

Needless to say, there are numerous passages in Scripture which explicitly *condemn* homosexual behavior. Here are a few of them:

Leviticus 18:22 (NASB):

²²You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.

Romans 1:26-27 (ESV):

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and 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.

1 Timothy 1:9-10 (HCSB):

⁹We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV):

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

All of the above passages state that homosexual behavior is sinful - in fact, it is in the same category as murder and idolatry.

Also note that those passages do not provide any “genetic exception” for homosexual behavior. That is, those passages do **not** say that homosexual behavior is actually *permissible*, if a given individual has a genetic predisposition to it.

So, it certainly appears to me that homosexual behavior is *always* sinful - regardless of any given person’s genetic makeup.

Conclusion

From what I can see, God originally designed humans to be “perfect” - i.e., to not have *any* genetically-determined disorders.

However, due to Adam’s sin, our DNA has apparently become “corrupted” - so that *now* there are a quite a few diseases and conditions, which are genetically determined.

Some genetically determined disorders have a strong influence on our behavior. Three such disorders are predispositions to alcoholism, to compulsive gambling, and to homosexual behavior.

Since those conditions are at least partially genetic in nature, some groups claim that those conditions - especially homosexual behavior - are actually “OK”, if a person is genetically predisposed to it.

However, Scripture does not provide any sort of “genetic excuse” for sinful behavior. Instead, Scripture states that sinful behavior - including homosexual behavior - is *always* wrong.

So, the final question is: “If a person has a genetically determined disorder, which influences him to sin, what can he *do* about that disorder?”

I believe the answer to that question is: “Pray to God for assistance, in overcoming the disorder”. Consider these passages:

Luke 11:9-13 (HCSB):

⁹ “So I say to you, keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

John 15:7-8 (ESV):

⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

James 5:13-15 (ESV):

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Finally, consider this passage:

Luke 9:23-24 (ESV):

²³ And he [Jesus] said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

Notice what Jesus says there: if a person wants to be a follower of Jesus, he must deny himself, and take up *his* “cross”, *daily*.

The “conventional wisdom” about that passage is that all Christians must be prepared to be *persecuted* for being a Christian. I certainly believe that that is *part* of the meaning of that passage.

However, it occurs to me that an *additional* meaning of that passage is as follows: If a person wants to be a true follower of Jesus, then he must *resist* his own inclinations to sin. In other words, he must *deny* his own *genetic predispositions* to sinful behavior.

If the above meaning is true, then that provides even more evidence that there is no “genetic excuse” for sinful behavior.