

**Revisionist Attempts to Discredit or Reject  
The Biblical Teaching on Homosexuality  
Dr. J. Alan Branch**

The plain teaching of Scripture is that sex is designed by a loving God to be enjoyed in heterosexual, monogamous marriage and that same-sex intercourse is forbidden. In spite of the plain meaning of Scripture, the culture has strongly pressed upon the Church and molded the way Christians think about sex in general and homosexuality in particular. As one example of the confused thinking within the Church, consider the comment from Jenell Williams Paris (now professor of anthropology at Messiah College) in *The End of Sexual Identity* (2011). Paris describes how a student (“Gregory”) in one of her classes saw a male drag queen at a bar and then made observations about God:

To the rhythm of loud techno music, the dancer moved in and out of the pulsing light, and seemed to move in and out of genders – man one moment, woman the next. In an instant, Gregory was filled with love. Isn’t God like a drag queen, he wrote, full of mystery and beauty, never entirely what we expect or imagine, moving in and out of our lives with grace? He [Gregory] was the only person in class to have such an insight. Without him, we wouldn’t have considered how God’s grace can burst into our lives in unexpected ways, and we wouldn’t have gotten to hear his story about how he was fitting together his sexuality and his spirituality.<sup>1</sup>

This is absurd, confused, erotic paganism masquerading as theology. Gregory is guilty of idolatry and his experience in the bar is more reminiscent of Canaanite Baalism than New Testament Christianity. Yet, in an effort to be affirming, Paris applauds Gregory’s supposed

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<sup>1</sup> Jenell Williams Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Define Who We Are* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 109. Paris’ book seems flawed to me at most levels, though she makes a few good points about ongoing struggle with temptation for all Christians.

insights. Why? Well, I'm not sure, but I suspect it has something to do with a desire not to be viewed as judgmental or condemning. In a similar way, much of the modern church has lost discernment on the issue of homosexuality for fear of being offensive. As a result, we are losing our capacity to be salt and light to a very lost culture.

The aggregate force of the press has been used to batter down opposition to LGBTQ identities. In both its news and entertainment formats, the media – print, audio, online, and film – have relentlessly pushed a narrative that supporting LGBTQ causes is a loving act, while opposing them is hatred. I support a free press, but with candor we must acknowledge the press's ability to influence public opinion. Writing in *Democracy in America* in 1835, Alexis De Tocqueville acknowledged the strength of the press in that day – then limited only to printed mediums – and said, “When a great number of the organs of the press adopt the same line of conduct, their influence becomes irresistible; and public opinion, when it is perpetually assailed from the same side, eventually yields to the attack.”<sup>2</sup> This “irresistible” power of the press is exponentially stronger in a day when the large amount of news is acquired online, and only a few search engines control access to which stories will come up first in a browser.

In what follows, I will try to summarize some of the various revisionist arguments concerning homosexuality. *Revisionist* is the best term I can find to describe my opponents. By revisionist, I mean a person who asserts he or she is a Christian, but who also rejects the clear teaching of Scripture that homosexual acts are forbidden, and engages in deconstruction of the Biblical text – a process of denying authorial intent in favor of a more culturally tolerable ethic. John Corvino of Wayne State University offers the following definition for homosexual revisionists:

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<sup>2</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Complete and Unabridged vols. 1 & 2, Henry Reeve, trans. (New York: Bantam Books, 2000, 1835), 216.

[Revisionists claim] The Bible doesn't teach that all homosexual conduct is wrong; rather, it teaches that certain kinds of homosexual conducts are wrong, and the traditionalist view [that believe the Bible teaches that all homosexual conduct is wrong] is based on a misreading or misapplication of the relevant texts.<sup>3</sup>

The revisionists' goal is to make Christians who adhere to the traditional understanding that homosexual behavior as sin to be seen as intellectually shabby and morally repugnant. Get ready for a wild ride in bizarre hermeneutics and sloppy historical background research!

## **I. Introduction: Major Contributions to the Revisionist View**

The term *homosexual* is a rather recent invention first having been coined by Austrian-born Hungarian writer Karl-Maria Kertbeny (1824-1882) in 1869. The last several decades have seen numerous attempts to discredit or reject the plain teaching of Scripture that homosexual acts are sin. Some revisionist authors actually have claimed the Bible does not teach that homosexual acts are sin. Though this list is not exhaustive, it does introduce some of the major works.

### **A. D. Sherwin Bailey (1910 – 1984)**

In 1955, British theologian Derrick Sherwin Bailey published *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, a work which directly attacked the traditional understanding of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. Bailey admitted that a sexual understanding of the Sodomites' demands is firmly rooted in Christian tradition, but said "the alternative non-sexual explanation

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<sup>3</sup> John Corvino, *What's Wrong with Homosexuality?*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24.

which has been put forward [see below] is at least equally consistent with text and spirit of the narrative; while in certain respects it is more satisfactory—particularly in that it is consonant with the Old Testament view of the Sin of Sodom, which will be discussed shortly.”<sup>4</sup> His work prepared the way for the Wolfenden report of 1957, an English document that argued that private, consensual homosexual conduct should not be a crime. Ten years later, homosexuality was indeed decriminalized in England.

## **B. John Boswell (1947-1994)**

John Boswell was a historian at Yale University and helped establish the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies. Boswell himself was a homosexual and died of an AIDS related illness. Even though he was openly involved in the homosexual lifestyle, he continued to assert that he was a Catholic.<sup>5</sup>

### *1. Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*

Boswell’s most well-known work was *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980) in which he re-stated many claims previously made by Bailey. In this work, Boswell asserts that neither Christian doctrine nor practice was explicitly anti-homosexual until the late Middle-Ages. In some places, he repeats and expands arguments first made by Sherwin Bailey.

### *2. Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*

Boswell’s other major work was *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (1994), in which he contends homosexual unions were

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<sup>4</sup> D. Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), 5.

<sup>5</sup> A lot of social media chatter has been generated in recent years by Wichita, KS native Matthew Vines, who claims to be a conservative Christian and a homosexual. I do not find Vines’ work original, but merely a popularizing of Bailey and Boswell’s arguments.

sanctioned by the church in the Middle Ages. Specifically, he claimed to discover "Adelphopoia" liturgy, which Boswell argues was for centuries used as a public liturgy to celebrate erotic relationships between people of the same sex.

### **C. Troy Perry and the Metropolitan Community Church (1940 - )**

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) was founded in 1968 in Los Angeles by Troy Perry. Though the denomination self-identifies as "Christian," the group is well-known as a church for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgendered (LGBT) people. Specifically, the church markets itself as a safe place for people from diverse sexual backgrounds. While heterosexuals are welcome, the MCC is definitely associated with people who identify as "Gay Christians." The group now claims to have 250 affiliate congregations in 23 countries around the world.

MCC founder Troy Deroy Perry was born in 1940 in Tallahassee, FL. Perry's father died when he was very young and his mother remarried a man who was abusive. As a result, Perry ran away from his home and lived with several relatives, returning to his mother when she divorced her second husband. Having settled in Winter Haven, FL, Perry was licensed to preach by a local Baptist church at age 15. He quickly moved to affiliate with the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) and became an evangelist. Married at 18 to Pearl Pinion, he soon moved to Illinois to study at Midwest Bible College while pastoring a Church of God in Joliet. Soon thereafter, he was caught in a homosexual affair and dismissed from the Church of God. Perry quickly moved to affiliate with the Church of God of Prophecy. Perry transferred from Midwest Bible College to Moody Bible Institute (1960-1961), then moved to California without completing a degree and started pastoring a church in Santa Ana. Eventually, he became more heavily involved in the homosexual lifestyle and divorced his wife, with whom he had also fathered two

sons. After serving in the U.S. Army from 1965-1967, Perry settled in Los Angeles and soon began his church as an outreach to homosexuals.

Troy Perry shares his own journey in his book *The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*, first published in 1972. According to Perry, he attempted suicide in 1968. Soon thereafter, his mother encouraged him not to give up on religion and to start a church for homosexuals. So, he placed an ad in the *Advocate*, a magazine for homosexuals, announcing the start of his church. The first service was in his living room with twelve people on October 6, 1968. Perry's book is a non-systematic summary of his own theology. In one of the more bizarre passages, Perry reflects on his pre-conception existence and says:

One thing is certain about me: I feel I have a total sense memory that predates my birth by a good long time. It's like being a seedling soul in two parts, your mother's and your father's genes. I have an awareness of having been a seedling – a physical presence in my father's sperm and in my mother's ovum before they were united.<sup>6</sup>

Perry is apparently making an attempt to build a case for his view of sexuality which is somehow tied to his "male" and "female" aspects. He goes on in the next paragraph to suggest that people are in fact born gay. The tenor of his book is that this is good, blessed by God, and should be celebrated. Perry has argued many times in the ensuing decades that Jesus never condemned homosexuality and that Old Testament passages condemning homosexuality are internally inconsistent or misunderstood. Perry was invited to the White House by President Jimmy Carter in 1978 and later by President Bill Clinton. He retired as the moderator of the MCC in 2005.

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<sup>6</sup> Troy Perry, *The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972), 10.

## D. Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004)

To understand many revisionist arguments, one should be acquainted with Jacques Derrida, an Algerian-born / French philosopher, is the father of literary deconstruction. Deconstruction is a literary-philosophical movement which is an attempt to open the text to a wide range of meanings. The result is authorial intent is no longer important. Deconstruction is also known as “reader-centered” interpretation. I mention Derrida here not because he has published on the issue of homosexuality in Scripture, but because deconstruction is exactly the method used by many interpreters who reject the traditional understanding of Scripture concerning homosexuality.

At least some pro-homosexual interpreters reflect a hermeneutic tangent to Derrida’s literary philosophy. For example, David K. Switzer of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University rejects the notion that the Bible strictly prohibits same-sex intercourse. In his discussion of the Biblical passages, he comments on the Bible as a whole and says, “It is God’s acting with us that defines the Bible as God’s Word, as we read or hear or remember the words of experiences of the Jews, Jesus, and the early church with God and with each other.”<sup>7</sup> This wrong-headed definition of Scripture reduces the Bible’s validity to our subjective experience instead of affirming its objective truth regardless of our experience.

## E. Sexual Orientation and Pro-Homosexual Arguments

As was noted earlier, the term *homosexual* was only invented in 1869. In the late Twentieth Century, homosexual activists began to insist that public debate no longer revolve around one’s sexual preference, and instead they began to insist on the use of the term

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<sup>7</sup> David K. Switzer, *Pastoral Care of Gays, Lesbians, and Their Families* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 38.

*sexual orientation*. Al Mohler explains the moral force of this shift in terminology:

Few modern concepts have been as influential as the psychosocial construct of sexual orientation. Firmly rooted in the national consciousness, the concept is considered by many Americans to be thoroughly based in credible scientific research. The concept of sexual orientation was an intentional and quite successful attempt to redefine the debate over homosexuality from same-gender sexual acts to homosexual identity – that is, from what homosexuals *do* to who homosexuals *are*.

Yet this concept is actually of quite recent vintage. In fact, even within the last decade, the concept more commonly employed by the homosexual movement was *sexual preference*. The reason for the shift is clear: “Preference” implied a voluntary choice, so the clinical category of “orientation” was more useful in public arguments.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, many of the revisionist arguments that follow assume that people who engage in homosexual acts are not morally responsible for their behavior because of their orientation.

For some people, the word “orientation” carries the idea of “inevitable,” and thus morally justifiable. Echoing similar ideas to Mohler, Thomas Schmidt comments on the idea of sexual orientation and says, “In other words, many people think that *orientation* indicates what a person is – and of course, the argument goes, we must *act* according to who we *are*. Thus, in two easy steps, it becomes not only morally justifiable but almost morally obligatory for a

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<sup>8</sup> Al Mohler, “Homosexuality,” in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), 269.



person with a homosexual orientation to engage in homosexual activity.”<sup>9</sup>

Many LGBTQ interpreters of Scripture are willing to assert explicitly that the authority of Scripture is in principle subordinate to the authority of critical insight about the Bible conferred by the experiences of oppressed LGBTQ people.<sup>10</sup>

## **II. Revisionist Arguments, Genesis 1 & 2 and Gender Confusion**

### **A. The Pro-Homosexual Argument: Gender as a Social Construction**

Prior to the last half of the twentieth century, all societies considered one’s gender to be decided at birth. People are born either male or female and should then, in a best case scenario, be raised in a manner that affirms the uniqueness and goodness of their gender. From a Christian perspective, the gift of gender is part of the goodness of God’s creation. While on rare occasions some people may be born with genitalia that reflect both sexes (traditionally called hermaphrodites, but now called “intersex” children), these are the exception and not the rule. Such cases are considered anomalies

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas A. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), 150.

<sup>10</sup> I’m slightly modifying a sentence from Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 211. In context, Hays is talking about feminists, but these feminist hermeneutics have been adopted by LGBTQ interpreters. At several points in my notes on homosexuality, I will quote Hays. I disagree with Hays’ view of the inspiration Scripture, especially his handling of particular passages in Matthew and John. For example, Hays doesn’t believe Jesus said most of the things recorded in John 8, and commenting on John 8:39b – 47, he says, “The scene makes no sense as a realistic account of any event in the life of Jesus; it can be read only as the Johannine community’s frustrated and angry response to Jewish interlocutors who have refused to “continue” in accepting the community’s extraordinary claims about Jesus.” *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 427. It is hard for me to understand why someone with Hays’ low view of Scripture would consider what the Bible says to be authoritative on any ethical issue, especially one as controversial as homosexuality. The ease with which he discounts passages he doesn’t like as the invention of the early church makes his opposition to homosexuality seem arbitrary. Nonetheless, in his chapter on homosexuality he makes some helpful observations which I will incorporate into my analysis at times. But I am approaching Scripture from the view of plenary, verbal inspiration.

similar to many other challenges faced by people living in a fallen world.

In complete contrast to the pre-sexual revolution view, the MCC considers gender to be a social construct and in so doing aligns itself with the most extreme components of modern secular and religious thought. The MCC offers the following definition for gender:

**Gender:** A set of complex and often contradictory socially constructed signifiers associated with a person's masculinity or femininity. Includes but is not limited to genitalia, gonads, chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, psychological or emotional self-understanding, roles, clothing, mannerisms, interests, and language. Gender is and can be assigned at birth, assigned by others interpreting these signifiers, or claimed for and expressed by one's self.<sup>11</sup>

Note that in this definition, gender can be something each of us claims for one's self. In this world, men may self-identify as women and women may self-identify as men based on their own self-understanding.

## **B. Evangelical Response**

At a most basic level, the assumption of gender as a social construct opens the way for an ever-expanding list of sexual self-identification. Furthermore, the MCC fails to address the most basic difference between genders: childbearing.<sup>12</sup> Women become pregnant and carry children to term and then nurse them after birth. Men cannot become pregnant or nurse children. So, it is difficult to

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<sup>11</sup> The Metropolitan Community Church, "Trans-Glossary: Gender," accessed February 20, 2008, <http://www.mcccchurch.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Transgender2&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=1054#Gender>.

<sup>12</sup> I am using the terms sex and gender as synonyms.

comprehend how the MCC can say childbearing is a social construct. Outside the MCC, other authors have gone further and claim that heterosexuality is merely a social construct as well. For example, Dr. Robert Minor, professor of religion at the University of Kansas, argues that heterosexuality is forced upon people. He bemoans the fact that no one is asking, “What is the cause of heterosexuality?”<sup>13</sup> In response, perhaps heterosexuality is “caused” by the simple fact that although men and women are created differently, their anatomical structures correspond to each other and are designed for mutual giving of love and the conception of children. In stark contrast to the MCC, historic Christianity has affirmed that both of these aspects of human sexuality should be expressed in heterosexual and monogamous marriage.

The literature available on the MCC website does not address Genesis 1 & 2 in relation to homosexuality. This is unfortunate because the Christian doctrine of creation is the foundation for a correct understanding of Gender and sexuality. Genesis 1:26 – 28 emphasizes that both males and females share equally in the image of God, thus affirming the goodness of the gift of gender. Genesis 2:24-25 is the foundational passage of Scripture for marriage and clearly emphasizes that sex is to be reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. Sex is designed by God to be shared in the marriage covenant between a husband and a wife. Any deviation from this standard is sin. In his teaching about divorce, Jesus Christ reaffirmed Genesis 2:24-25 as the correct starting point for understanding marriage (Matthew 19:4-6). The MCC has a flawed starting point because of its failure to engage these texts in a rigorous way.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert N. Minor, *Scared Straight: Why It's So Hard to Accept Gay People and Why It's So Hard to Be Human* (St. Louis: Humanity Works, 2001), 130.

### III. Revisionist Arguments Concerning Sodom and Gomorrah

The last several decades have seen numerous attempts to remove the stigma of homosexuality from the judgment God brought on Sodom and Gomorrah. I will attempt to summarize these revisionist arguments and offer a brief response to each one.

#### A. Revisionist Arguments Surrounding the Hebrew verb *yada*

Homosexual revisionist interpreters deny that Genesis 19 reflects a divine disposition against homosexuality. The MCC uses a “straw man argument” to dismiss any moral approbation against homosexuality in the Sodom story and says, “Some ‘televangelists’ carelessly proclaim that God destroyed the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of homosexuality. Although some theologians have equated the sin of Sodom with homosexuality, a careful look at Scripture corrects such ignorance.”<sup>14</sup> By using the term “televangelist,” the MCC implies people who believe Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of homosexual sins are equivalent to religious hucksters. Many attempts by pro-homosexual revisionist interpreters revolve around the Hebrew word *yada*.

1. “It’s really about rape, and not two people in a committed relationship.”

Episcopal theologian and open homosexual William Countryman comments on both Sodom in Genesis 19 and Gibeah in Judges 19 and says, “Neither story, as it stands in scripture, condemns same-gender sexual intercourse as such; violence against strangers is the point.”<sup>15</sup> The MCC adopts a similar view and basically says Genesis 19 is concerned with rape and is not a

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<sup>14</sup> Don Eastman, “What the Bible Does and Does Not Say – Homosexuality: Not a Sin, Not a Sickness, Part 2.” [www.MCCChurch.org](http://www.MCCChurch.org). (Accessed February 20, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 25. Countryman divorced his wife to embrace the homosexual lifestyle.

condemnation of two homosexual people in a loving committed relationship. Using a tactic common among homosexual activists, the MCC overstates the importance of the lexical breadth of the word “to know” (*yada*): “The Hebrew word for ‘know’ in this case, *yadah*, usually means ‘have thorough knowledge of.’ It could also express intent to examine the visitor’s credentials, or on rare occasions the term implies sexual intercourse. If the latter was the author’s intended meaning, it would have been a clear case of attempted gang rape.”<sup>16</sup> The MCC seems to be arguing from two different directions here. First, they seem to be suggesting that the request was not sexual in nature, a claim common among homosexual activists. Secondly, even if the request was sexual, it could only be classified as a case of rape, and not a blanket condemnation of all homosexual intercourse in general, especially between two loving people in a committed relationship.

As Christians, we acknowledge that the men of Sodom in Genesis 19 were not asking for consensual sex, but that does not mean the passage is not informative about homosexuality. Evangelical Scott Rae says, “One should exercise caution in using this account, since the specific instance was clearly nonconsensual. It is not clear that this story can be applied to consensual homosexual relationships, though other parts of the Bible do apply to those.”<sup>17</sup> But instead of suggesting Genesis 19 *only* applies to homosexual rape, perhaps it is better to say the passage *at least* applies to homosexual rape. What do I mean? The Bible clearly recounts instances of heterosexual rape, but elsewhere celebrates the joyful gift of sex in marriage. In contrast, there are two accounts of homosexuality in the Bible – Genesis 19 and Judges 19 and there are no didactic or narrative passages where homosexuality is presented in a positive light. In this way, Genesis 19 reinforces the negative picture of homosexuality detailed elsewhere.

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<sup>16</sup> Donald Eastman, “What the Bible Does and Does Not Say.”

<sup>17</sup> Scott Rae, *Moral Choices*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 275.

2. "Genesis 19 is really about a violation of ancient hospitality codes."

A common revisionist argument asserts Lot violated certain Ancient Near Eastern hospitality codes by not introducing his guests to the other men of the town. When the men of Sodom came to his door, they were merely requesting that Lot introduce his guests as a matter of community courtesy. Central to this attempt to downplay the sexual nature of Sodom's sin based is the common lexical meaning of the Hebrew verb *yada* (יָדָע). The word occurs 944 times in the OT and "is used in every stem and expresses a multitude of shades of knowledge gained by the senses."<sup>18</sup> *Yada*'s basic meaning is "to know." It often refers to people becoming acquainted with each other.

The use of the verb *yada* in Genesis 19 becomes central to the argument that Lot violated ancient hospitality codes and that Genesis 19 is not about homosexuality. Genesis 19:5 (ESV) says the men of Sodom called out to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know (*yada*) them." Revisionist interpreters suggest when the men of Sodom asked to "know" Lot's visitors, the residents of the city were merely asking to become acquainted with the new guests to the town. Sherwin Bailey reflects this view and comments, "Our ignorance of local circumstances and social conditions makes it impossible to do more than guess at the motives underlying the conduct of the Sodomites; but since *yada*' commonly means 'get acquainted with,' the demand to 'know' the visitors whom Lot had entertained may well have implied some serious breach of the rules of hospitality."<sup>19</sup> Bailey also contends that Lot actually precipitated the mob scene outside his door by flaunting the expected standards of behavior for someone who was not a citizen proper of Sodom, but merely a sojourner. He contends that Lot should have informed the city leaders of the

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<sup>18</sup> Jack Lewis, "Yada," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, Harris, Archer, Waltke, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 366.

<sup>19</sup> Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 3-4.

presence of his guest. Since Lot did not do so, the men of the city came to his home out of concern for their own safety. Bailey then summarizes his own view and says:

Is it not possible that Lot, either in ignorance or in defiance of the laws of Sodom, had exceeded the rights of a *gēr* [sojourner] in that city by receiving and entertaining two “foreigners” whose intentions might be hostile, and whose credentials, it seems, had not been examined? This would afford a natural and satisfactory reason for the investment of Lot’s house by the citizens, and for their demand: ‘Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out to us, that we may know them’ – that is, take cognizance of them, and enquire into their *bona fides*.<sup>20</sup>

Bailey then says that Lot’s plea for the men of Sodom “not to act wickedly” towards his guests is simply the plea of a good host attempting to avoid an embarrassing social occasion.

If Genesis 19 merely records a disagreement about hospitality codes, why then were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed? Bailey claims his “re-interpretation” in no way affects the legitimacy of the judgment which ensued. He says, “The lawless commotion before Lot’s door and the boorish display of inhospitality (coupled, no doubt, with other signs of wickedness which would not escape their scrutiny) could well have been sufficient to satisfy the angels that the report was true – and judgment followed accordingly.”<sup>21</sup>

Most people assume that Lot’s offer of his daughters to the men of Sodom confirms the sexual nature of their demand, especially when Lot refers to his daughters as women who have not “know”

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<sup>20</sup> Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 4. *Bona Fides* is a Latin phrase which means “good faith” and refers to evidence which shows that what you have said about yourself is true.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

(*yada*) a man. Bailey this sidesteps contextual evidence and says, “Not doubt the surrender of his daughters was simply the most tempting bribe that Lot could offer on the spur of the moment to appease the hostile crowd.”<sup>22</sup> Bailey believes that the desperate nature of Lot’s offer suggests Lot’s tacit admission to his own fault in causing the commotion.

Bailey’s arguments have been very influential and widely repeated. For example, John Boswell affirmed Bailey’s re-interpretation and said, “Since 1955 modern scholarship has increasingly favored [Bailey’s re-interpretation], emphasizing that the sexual overtones to the story are minor, if present, and that the original moral impact of the passage had to do with hospitality.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Response 1: Bailey has a defective view of Biblical Inspiration.**

When all is said and done, Bailey does not even believe the destruction recorded in Genesis 19 actually occurred in the manner described! According to Bailey, the story of the destruction of the cities of the plain was invented as ancient people superimposed divine motives onto natural phenomenon. In short, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by an earthquake, but “the people of that time who, being ignorant of the scientific explanation, would inevitably tend to ascribe the disaster to supernatural agencies.”<sup>24</sup> The tale was further expanded into a morality tale to warn people that sometimes divine beings visit them in the form of strangers. While the original moral to the story was related to hospitality, Bailey says “the association of homosexual practices with the Sodom story is

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<sup>22</sup> Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 93.

<sup>24</sup> Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 7. Bailey later says, “It is clear that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was an historical event, and that it was due to natural and not supernatural causes.” *Ibid.*, 8.



a late and extrinsic feature which, for some reason, has been read into the original account.”<sup>25</sup>

Sherwin Bailey views the story of Sodom and Gomorrah from a “history of religions” approach. For Baily, Genesis 19 is simply one myth among many similar myths in the ancient world. In contrast, Jesus Christ affirmed the historical reality of the event (Matthew 10:14-15).

**Response 2: The citizens of Sodom were definitely inhospitable!**

**Response 3: Of the 15 clear uses of *yada* in a sexual context, several are in Genesis.**

As was stated earlier, *Yada* is used 944 times in the OT and it indeed has the basic meaning of “to know.” It is occasionally used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Outside of Genesis 19:5, it is used 15 times in clear reference to sex. These fifteen occurrences are quoted below from the NKJV because it translates *yada* as “know” in every context.

Genesis 4:1: Now Adam *knew* (*yada*) his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”

Genesis 4:17: And Cain *knew* (*yada*) his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

Genesis 4:25: And Adam *knew* (*yada*) his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth.

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<sup>25</sup> Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 8.

Genesis 19:8: [Lot said] See now, I have two daughters who have not *known* (*yada*) a man; please let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish.

Genesis 24:16: Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had *known* (*yada*) her.

Genesis 38:26: So Judah acknowledged them and said, "She [Tamar] has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." And he never *knew* (*yada*) her again.

Numbers 31:17 – 18: Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has **known** (*yada*) a man intimately. But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not **known** (*yada*) a man intimately.

Numbers 31:35: [Plunder in war included] and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not **known** (*yada*) a man intimately.

Judges 11:39: And it was so at the end of two months that she [Jephthah's daughter] returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She *knew* (*yada*) no man.

Judges 19:22: As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house *and* beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may **know** (*yada*) him *carnally!*"

Judges 19:25: But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they *knew* (*yada*) her and abused her all night until morning.

Judges 21:11: And this *is* the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has **known** (*yada*) a man intimately.”

I Samuel 1:19: And Elkanah *knew* (*yada*) his wife, and the LORD remembered her.

I Kings 1:4: The young woman was very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not *know* (*yada*) her.

Bailey himself agrees that ten of these passages demonstrate the use of *yada* in an unambiguously sexual way. Of these ten occurrences to which Bailey will concede, six are in Genesis and one is in the very passage in question (Genesis 19:8)! Furthermore, to affirm a sexual connotation to *yada* in passages which refer to heterosexual intercourse and then reject a sexual connotation to *yada* in Genesis 19:5 and Judges 19:22 when homosexual activity is in question seems to be an arbitrary approach to translation.

#### **Response 4: Bailey’s argument does not explain why Lot offered his daughters.**

Bailey’s argument concerning Lot’s daughters seems especially weak. Other than a predisposition to remove moral stigma from homosexual acts, one is left to wonder why Bailey agrees to a sexual use of *yada* in 19:8 and then rejects such an interpretation in 19:5. Christians do not attempt to expunge Lot from guilt: his offer of his daughters is cowardly and cruel. Yet, the context does indeed favor the idea that Lot offered the crowd the opportunity for heterosexual intercourse with his daughters instead of homosexual intercourse with the visitors to his home. Also, if the Sodomites were only concerned about hospitality, one is hard pressed to understand why they did not seem the least bit puzzled at a sexual offer of two young

women. Instead, they became more insistent and violent, requiring angelic deliverance.

### **Response 5: The Revisionist view makes God unjust.**

If the revisionist's view is correct, God brought judgment on the entire plain simply because of a misunderstanding concerning hospitality codes.

In conclusion, it is perhaps helpful to add that Christian moral opposition to homosexual acts is not based on Genesis 19 *alone*. As I have shown elsewhere, homosexual acts never receive moral approval in Scripture. So, even if one grants the revisionist approach to Genesis 19 (and I do not) it is a non sequitor to then claim that moral opposition to homosexuality is misguided.

### **B. Genesis 19 Revisionist Arguments based on Ezekiel 16:46 -59**

**Ezekiel 16:49-50:** Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it. (NASB)

Revisionist interpreters appeal to Ezekiel 16:46 – 59 to suggest another way of avoiding the implication that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for sexual immorality. Advocating an interpretation frequently cited in the broader homosexual community, the MCC says:

Ezekiel 16:48-50 states it clearly. The people of Sodom, like many people today, had abundance of material goods. But they failed to meet the needs of the poor, and they worshipped idols. The sins of injustice and idolatry plague every

generation. We stand under the same judgment if we create false gods or treat others with injustice.<sup>26</sup>

Essentially, pro-homosexual advocates claim Ezekiel 16:49-50 teaches that Sodom was punished for failing to help the poor, not because of homosexual behavior. The Sodomites were evil capitalists, just like all those politically conservative Christians today! Even some evangelicals have been at least partly influenced by this argument. For example, in the article on homosexuality in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, R.E.O. White combines his own flawed understanding of the verb *yada* in Genesis 19:5 & 19:8 along with Ezekiel 16:49 – 50 and says, “Traditionally homosexuality was the sin for which Sodom was destroyed by divine judgment . . . This interpretation depends upon uncertain translation, while Ezekiel 16:49 – 50 and Sirach 16:8 – 9 give other reasons for the judgment.”<sup>27</sup>

Another recent twist on the Ezekiel 16 centered revisionist approach was suggested by Brian Doyle, who states:

What then were the people of Sodom really after? They wanted “to know” but not in the ‘biblical’ sense! [i.e., no sexual content to their sin] Their sin was ultimately one of hubris. Ezekiel, arguably the first to offer serious exegesis of the narrative in Genesis 19, places ‘pride’ at the top of the list of Sodom’s vices. The people of Sodom were not out on a frenzied search for sexual gratification, their ultimate plan was ‘to know’ the divine presence and thereby rise above the divine in act of hubris.<sup>28</sup>

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26 Don Eastman, “What the Bible Does and Does Not Say.”

27 R.E.O. White, “Homosexuality,” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Walter Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 574. The Book of Sirach is part of the Apocrypha included in the Catholic Bible and was written perhaps between 200 – 175 BC. Sirach 16:8 says, “He [God] did not spare the neighbors of Lot, abominable in their pride.” Again, some argue Sirach is claiming Sodom was judged for pride, not homosexual behavior.

28 Brian Doyle, “Knock, Knock, Knockin’ on Sodom’s Door: The Function of τλδ/φτ in Genesis 18-19”, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28.4 (2004): 438.

In either case, failing to help the poor or pride, the net result of revisionist arguments based on Ezekiel 16:49-50 is that Sodom was not punished for sexual immorality.

### **Response 1: Revisionist Interpreters Pose A False Dichotomy**

Reinterpretations of Genesis 19 based on Ezekiel 16 are appealing to many people because homosexual activists appear to be following the principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. However, on closer inspection, one sees that revisionist arguments pose a false dichotomy and say we must choose either abuse of the poor or sexually immorality as the sin of Sodom. In reality, Ezekiel's comments indicate that a hedonistic culture contributed to class exploitation. Ralph Alexander agrees and makes the connection between economic and sexual sin: "Sodom's chief sin had been pride and self-exaltation. This stemmed from her abundant materialism (food), given to her from God (Gen. 13:10), which had resulted in false security, apathy, a luxurious life of ease, and the corollary disdain and neglect of the poor and needy. This material ease fostered sexual perversion."<sup>29</sup> As I will argue below, a case can possibly be made that Ezekiel 16:49 actually condemns the social exploitation sins of Sodom while 16:50 addresses the sexual sins of Sodom. Ezekiel himself critiques Sodom for both social sins and sexual sins.

### **Response 2: Ezekiel 16 is One of the Most Sexually Explicit Passages in the Bible**

In Ezekiel, Jerusalem is repeatedly called an adulterous wife and a prostitute, setting the stage for a series of sexually charged descriptions of sexual immorality and idolatry. All of this sexually explicit language culminates when Jerusalem is compared to Sodom.

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<sup>29</sup>Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 817.

The sexually graphic language of Ezekiel 16 makes it quite incautious suddenly to abandon any sexual connotations in Ezekiel 16:49 – 50. Matthew Vines is misleading when he says “sexuality goes unmentioned” in Ezekiel 16:49 - 50.<sup>30</sup> While the specific words *sexual immorality, adultery, or harlotry* are not used in these two verses, there are two reasons to reject Vines’ assertion. First, Ezekiel 16 has the most sexually explicit language in the Bible, thus the reference to Sodom fits naturally in the passage, and the sexual overtones of Sodom’s sin would not have been lost on the original audience. Second, the text does use the word *abomination*, the same word used to describe same-sex behavior in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

### **Response 3: Unnatural Behavior is Paralleled**

In Ezekiel 16:3 – 5, Yahweh is a compassionate parent who adopts a homeless child – Israel / Judah. In an unnatural turn of events, the child he loved has abandoned him. Furthermore, Ezekiel 16:20 says they engaged in child sacrifice, an unnatural act. Thus, it makes sense that Sodom is referenced since the men of Sodom also reversed the divine order of creation and demanded homosexual intercourse. As Peterson notes, “Sodom had rejected the God-given natural order of heterosexual coupling opting for that which was against nature (cf. Romans 1:26 – 27). Therefore, because of these ungodly influences, a proverb will be recited in the land: “like mother, like daughter” (16:44).”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Ezekiel 16:47 – 48 refers to both Samaria and Sodom as Jerusalem’s sisters from whom Jerusalem learned “detestable practices” (Ezekiel 16:47). The word *detestable* is תועבה/ *to’ebah*, the common OT word for *abominations*, with special emphasis on sexual abominations.

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30 Matthew Vines, *God and The Gay Christian: The Biblical Case for Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 64.

31 Brian Neil Peterson, “Identifying the Sin of Sodom in Ezekiel 16:49 – 50,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61.2 (June 2018): 314.

## Response 4: Ezekiel 16:43 Also Mentions the Lewd Behavior of Sodom

Revisionist arguments typically ignore Ezekiel 16:43 which states, “Because you did not remember the days of your youth, but enraged me with all these things, I will surely bring down on your head what you have done, declares the Sovereign LORD. Did you not add *lewdness* to all your other detestable practices?” The word *lewdness* is *zimma* (זמה). According to Wold, it refers to premeditated sexual crimes (Lev. 18:17, 20:14, Judges 20:6, Ezekiel 16:27, 58, 22:9, etc), is applied to deliberate sin, and sometimes stands parallel to words for lust and harlotry in Ezekiel. Ezekiel’s purpose is not to diminish the sins of Sodom, but to illustrate the seriousness of Israel’s rebellion. In context, he is referring to lewd sexual behavior, thus making a reference to Sodom most appropriate.<sup>32</sup>

## Response 5: Revisionists Ignore Ezekiel 16:50

The revisionist argument lifts verse 49 out of context and ignores verse 50. Verse 50 states that the people of Sodom committed “abominations.” This is the word *to’ebah* (תועבה). This is the same word used in Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” While it is clear that the prophets referred to a great number of things as abominations, it is obvious that sexual immorality was one of those things. Furthermore, the word *to’ebah* occurs in the singular in Ezekiel 16:50, even though the plural form of the word has been used throughout the chapter. Peterson points out that the singular in 16:50 actually points to the prohibitions of homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20. Why? In Leviticus 18 and 20, it is only homosexuality that is described as an abomination in the singular before God. Any of the other sexual sins in Leviticus 18 and 20 that are labeled an *abomination* use the plural

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<sup>32</sup> Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 88.



form of the word.<sup>33</sup> Thus, one can make the case Ezekiel is making an intentional link to the sexual prohibitions of homosexuality in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

### **Response 6: Jude 7 Clearly States the Sexual Nature of Sodom's Sin**

Jude 7 (NASB): Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Jude 7 clearly teaches that sexual immorality was central to the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. The phrase translated “indulged in gross immorality” is one word in Greek: *εκπορνεύσασαι* (*ekporneusasai*). A. T. Robertson comments that this passage refers to “horrible licentiousness, not simply with women not their wives or in other nations, but even unnatural uses (Romans 1:27) for which the very word ‘sodomy’ is used (Genesis 19:4-11).”<sup>34</sup>

Bailey argued that Jude does not “ascribe the punishment of the Sodomites to the fact that they purposed to commit homosexual acts *as such*; their offence was rather that they sought to do so with “strange flesh” – that is, with supernatural, non-human beings.”<sup>35</sup> Richard Hays of Duke University makes the same assertion and says, “The phrase ‘went after other flesh’ . . . refers to their pursuit of nonhuman (i.e., angelic!) ‘flesh.’ The expression *sarkos heteras* means ‘flesh of another kind’; thus, it is impossible to construe this passage as a condemnation of homosexual desire, which entails precisely the pursuit of flesh of the *same* kind.”<sup>36</sup>

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33 Brian Neil Peterson, “Identifying the Sin of Sodom in Ezekiel 16:49 – 50,” 316.

34 A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament*, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), 189.

35 Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 16.

36 Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 404.

Emphasis in the original. One should note that Hays does not advocate an overall approach towards homosexuality that is as radical as Bailey or Boswell.

The type argumentation concerning Jude 7 such as is represented by Bailey and Hays fails in the several ways. First, the contention that Jude has the angels in mind when he refers to “strange flesh” is a stretch at best. Second, though Bailey admits the sexual nature of their sin, he downplays the strong nature of the term “indulged in gross immorality.” Third, what might possibly be true when the terms “indulged in gross immorality” and “strange flesh” are used on their own, is far less likely when the terms are used together. Fourth, Jude 4 reinforces the sexual nature of the sin and refers to godless men “who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord” (NIV). Finally, much of Bailey’s argument in particular only works if one assumes the Bible does not advocate a uniform view of sexual morality.

### **C. Revisionist Arguments contending Sodom and Gomorrah was a case of homosexual rape.**

As I alluded to earlier, some revisionist arguments say that the cities in Genesis 19 were judged for attempted rape, not “mere” homosexual behavior. This approach is enticing to many because it affirms the sexual nature of the demands made on Lot’s visitors while avoiding criticism of modern homosexuals involved in “loving, committed” relationships.

**Response 1:** This does not explain why God’s judgment fell on the whole plain.

**Response 2:** The visitors at Lot’s door certainly intended to coerce the visitors and were willing to use force if needed. However, nowhere does the text indicate that what the men of Sodom wanted to do would have been acceptable if Lot’s guests had consented.

## **D. Revisionist Argument Concerning Sodom and Gomorrah: The Interpretation of Homosexual Sin in Sodom dates from the Greek Occupation of Palestine**

View Stated: R.E.O. White says, “The assumption of homosexuality in Sodom dates from the Greek occupation of Palestine, when “the Greek sin” seriously endangered Jewish youth and strong scriptural warning was necessary.”<sup>37</sup> Essentially, White is claiming homosexuality was read back into the text of Genesis during the Seleucid or Ptolemaic rule of Judah in order “scare” young men away from participating in homosexual sex like the Greeks did.

Response: Central to White’s argument is his own flawed understanding of the correct translation of Genesis 19:5. The text clearly narrates a demand for homosexual sex by the men at Lot’s door.

## **IV. Revisionist Arguments Surrounding Leviticus**

### **A. The holiness code in Leviticus only condemns homosexual behavior when it is part of pagan worship.**

While the prohibition of homosexual behavior in Leviticus seems clear enough, the MCC says: “Given the strong association of *toevah* [abomination] with idolatry and the Canaanite religious practice of cult prostitution, the use of *toevah* regarding male same-sex acts in Leviticus calls into question any conclusion that such condemnation also applies to loving, responsible homosexual relationships.”<sup>38</sup> Boswell also states, “One might well infer that the condemnations in Leviticus were in fact aimed at curbing temple prostitution in particular rather than homosexual behavior in general.

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<sup>37</sup> R.E.O. White, “Homosexuality,” 574.

<sup>38</sup> Don Eastman, “What the Bible Does and Does Not Say.”

This was not the usual understanding of later Jewish tradition, but it is suggested by the LXX, upon which Christian moralists drew.”<sup>39</sup> Boswell builds much of his argument on a supposed distinction between what is intrinsically wrong and mere ritual impurity. William Countryman flatly rejects the idea that Leviticus condemns all same-sex intercourse and says, “The common practice of treating the text as a blanket prohibition of all sexual interaction between males or even between females goes far beyond what it actually says.”<sup>40</sup>

**Response 1:** In context, several other destructive behaviors are condemned, such as incest and burning children. Does Boswell mean these practices are acceptable as long as they are not part of pagan worship?

**Response 2:** Boswell’s conclusions flow from a flawed premise. The LXX translation is informative, not determinative. But even Boswell’s research concerning the LXX is flawed.

**Response 3:** It is in fact the case that some Canaanite religious practices incorporated homosexual prostitution. Furthermore, the original audience of Leviticus 18:22 (Israelite followers of Yahweh) may have immediately thought of Canaanite practices as an intended point of reference. Walter Kaiser’s comments are helpful, “This text . . . does not allow for permissible homosexual activity, but the context may suggest such activity implied Canaanite practice to Israel.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 101, n. 34.

<sup>40</sup>William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, & Sex*, 24.

<sup>41</sup>Walter Kaiser, *Leviticus*, in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1127.

**B. The holiness code is only concerned with ritual impurity, not matters of intrinsic right and wrong.**

Some contend the holiness code of Leviticus is only concerned with ritual impurity related to acts of worship, and not matters of intrinsic right and wrong from an ethical perspective. This revisionist argument is closely related to the previous one and has significant overlap at points. In this form of argumentation, revisionists contend that while Leviticus does explicitly condemn homosexual behavior, it is condemning homosexual behavior that is associated with the worship of pagan androgynous deities. According to revisionists, it is this form of homosexual behavior that is identified as an “abomination,” thus rendering one ritually unclean.

**Response:** Boswell’s arguments based on the word תועבה (*to’ebah*) are flawed. Wold offers this critique of Boswell, “Ascribing a restrictive meaning to תועבה so as to make it mean the same thing in all contexts results in misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Nevertheless, Boswell limits the term to ritual impurity and cultic prostitution.”<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the condemnations of homosexuality in Leviticus occur in the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17 – 26, not Leviticus 1 – 16 which is more focused on ritual impurity.

**C. If one affirms the moral precepts in the holiness code, then you must be in favor of capital punishment for homosexuals.**

**Response:** This is a case of *argument in absurdum*. This argument fails to understand the distinctions between civil, ceremonial, and moral law in the Old Testament.<sup>43</sup> Christians today do not argue for the capital punishment of people who participate in

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<sup>42</sup>Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 107.

<sup>43</sup>Robert Minor, professor of religious studies at The University of Kansas, rejects the tripartite division of the law, saying it is “historically unsupportable.” Robert Minor, *Scared Straight: Why It’s So Hard to Accept Gay People And Why It’s So Hard to Be Human* (St. Louis: Humanity Works, 2001), 19. In fact, there is a rich tradition in Christian hermeneutics affirming this approach.

homosexual acts.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, neither do we want homosexual behavior to receive a position of privilege in our civil codes.

One should also note that New Testament authors quote frequently from the Holiness code of Leviticus and assume its guidelines are still applicable:

**Romans 13:9**: The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." [**Leviticus 19:18**] (NIV)

**1 Peter 1:15 – 16**: But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." [**Leviticus 19:2**] (NIV)

#### **D. Leviticus 18 & 20 Only Has Rape in Mind**

This revisionist argument says that the Levitical passages in question here are only criticizing male, homosexual rape. As was stated to me personally on one occasion, "These passages just mean that one should not rape a man just as one should not rape a woman."

**Response:** This is simply a case of reader-centered interpretation better known as deconstruction. This interpretation divorces hermeneutics from authorial intent.

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<sup>44</sup> A small fringe group known as Christian Reconstructionists do want to reinstitute OT civil law. For example, Greg Bahnsen argued that the crimes which warranted capital punishment in the Old Testament continue to deserve the death penalty today. However, Bahnsen had no particular animus towards homosexuals, but wanted to reinstitute the entire civil code of the OT! His theonomic position has a small following, but does not represent Evangelicals as a whole. See Greg Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1979), 441 – 442.

**E. If you Christians are going to quote Leviticus about homosexuality, then why don't you follow all of the OT law?**

1. Position stated

Some revisionists will assert Christians who quote the Levitical condemnation of homosexuality are being hypocrites. Why? Because we cite the passages in Leviticus which address sexual sin and homosexuality in particular, but we don't keep kosher law or other commands in Leviticus. At a popular level, this objection was stated in Kurt Eichenwald's anti-Bible tirade in the January 2, 2015 edition of *Newsweek*:

In other words, Orthodox Jews who follow Mosaic Law can use Leviticus to condemn homosexuality without being hypocrites. But fundamentalist Christians must choose: They can either follow Mosaic Law by keeping kosher, being circumcised, never wearing clothes made of two types of thread and the like. Or they can accept that finding salvation in the Resurrection of Christ means that Leviticus is off the table.<sup>45</sup>

2. Response

Arguments like Eichenwald's overlook the distinction between civil, ceremonial, and moral law. The civil and ceremonial laws have been fulfilled in Christ while the moral precepts still pertain.

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<sup>45</sup> Kurt Eichenwald, "The Bible: So Misunderstood It's A Sin," *Newsweek* December 23, 2014, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/2015/01/02/thats-not-what-bible-says-294018.html>.

## F. Revisionist Arguments Concerning Leviticus and Sexual Orientation

### 1. Stated

A popular revisionist argument says Leviticus, along with other passages of Scripture forbidding homosexuality, are only forbidding exploitive homosexual relationships or homosexuality when practiced as part of pagan worship, but the passages are not addressing people who are constitutionally homosexual and in a loving, committed relationship. In *God and the Gay Christian*, Matthew Vines claims being a gay Christian in a committed relationship is compatible with Biblical Christianity.<sup>46</sup> In regards to the Levitical prohibitions of same-sex sexual behavior, Vines concludes the text does not have sexual orientation in mind, thus it cannot be speaking against homosexuality as it is known today.<sup>47</sup> We moderns have moved beyond the narrow, insufficient categories of Scripture.

### 2. Response

Vines is quite wrong. Even though Vines admits abomination is a negative word, he incorrectly concludes “it doesn’t necessarily correspond to Christian views of sin.”<sup>48</sup> In fact, the sexual ethics of Leviticus serve as the background for NT condemnations of homosexual sin. Furthermore, Vines fails to see Leviticus as commentary and explanation of Biblical sexual morality as initially defined in Genesis 1 & 2.

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<sup>46</sup> Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent, 2014), 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.



## V. Revisionist Arguments Regarding Temple Prostitutes

While the OT clearly condemns homosexual temple prostitutes, some revisionists actually claim homosexuality was part of early Israelite worship!

### A. Argument Stated

This argument assumes the conclusions of the Documentary Hypothesis. In this paradigm, Israel's religion evolved from a primitive animism to an ethical monotheism. As part of this proposed evolution, Deuteronomy is dated not to the era of Moses, but is instead dated to the time of Josiah's reforms. Furthermore, according to the Documentary Hypothesis, Leviticus is dated either to the period of the exile (586 – 539 BC) or soon thereafter. The important point from this perspective is that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses nor does it date from the time of Moses. Instead, it is a composite document that reflects the growth and development of Israelite monotheism.

The various elements of the Documentary Hypothesis are fused into the idea that early Israelites practiced homosexuality as part of their worship. How can they say this? II Kings 23:7 records that amidst Josiah's many reforms between 630 – 620 BC, he tore down the "houses of the male cult prostitutes that were in the LORD's temple." Revisionists insist that Deuteronomy and Leviticus were not written by Moses, but were both composed from sometime around 625 or later. Thus, the fact that II Kings 23:7 mentions male prostitutes in the temple is evidence that early Israelite religion was more permissive and open to homosexuality. Sadly, the reform minded authors of Deuteronomy retreated from such a tolerant attitude and introduced new prohibitions of homosexuality in Deuteronomy 23:17 – 18 and Leviticus 18 & 20. Alfred Kinsey represents the "temple prostitutes" argument and says:

The more general condemnation of all homosexual relationships originated in Jewish history in about the seventh century B.C., upon the return from the Babylonian exile. Both mouth-genital contacts and homosexual activities had previously been associated with the Jewish religious service, as they had been with the religious services of most of the other peoples of that part of Asia, and just as they have been in many other culture elsewhere in the world. 49

Kinsey goes on to say: "Male homosexual temple prostitutes, "kadesh," were at one time a part of Jewish religion, as may be gathered from II Kings 23:7, and from the warning in Deuteronomy 23:17 – 18." 50

## **B. Response**

First, Kinsey cites as his source Edward Westermarck's *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (1917), apparently asserting that Westermarck claimed homosexual activity was part of early Israelite worship. But a careful reading of Westermarck leads me to the conclusion that Kinsey is misquoting Westermarck. Westermarck discusses the origins of the Hebrew prohibition of homosexual acts in detail on pages 487 – 488. While Westermarck does mention the fact that Canaanites had temple prostitutes, he does not mention temple prostitutes among the Israelites. Kinsey and his colleagues simply misread their source. What Westermarck does say is, "So also the Hebrews abhorrence of sodomy was largely due to their hatred of a foreign cult." 51 Kinsey does rightly refer to Westermarck in this

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49 Alfred Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde Martin, and Paul H. Gebhard, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953), 482.

50 Ibid., 482.

51 Edward Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1917), 487.

regard, but his overall citation shows a lack of carefully reading his source.

Second, Kinsey's assertion that "Both mouth-genital contacts and homosexual activities had previously been associated with the Jewish religious service" is not remotely mentioned in Westermarck. There is no evidence for this claim whatsoever and it appears to be a fabrication of Kinsey's twisted mind.

Third, the temple prostitutes who were removed by Josiah were removed because they were not supposed to be a part of Israelite religion. The idea was borrowed from Canaanites.

Finally, the necessary condition for this argument to work is the validity of the Documentary Hypothesis. The Documentary Hypothesis is hopelessly flawed. There are good reasons to date both Leviticus and Deuteronomy to the time of Moses (I'll give you my notes on that if you want them).

## **VI. Revisionist Arguments Surrounding David and Jonathan**

I Samuel 18:1 – 4: When David had finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan committed himself to David, and loved him as much as he loved himself. Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him return to his father's house. Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as much as himself. Then Jonathan removed the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his military tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt.

I Samuel 20:41: When the young man had gone, David got from the south side of the stone Ezel, fell with his face to the ground, and bowed three times. Then he and Jonathan kissed each other and wept with each other, though David wept more.

II Samuel 1:26: I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother. You were such a friend to me. Your love [אַהֲבָה] for me was more wonderful than the love of a woman.

### A. Revisionist Argument Stated

Revisionist interpreters of Scripture claim David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers. It is with some reservation that I mention this argument since the average Christian who reads the Bible never considers a homosexual slant on the friendship of David and Jonathan. The false claim that David and Jonathan were lovers reflects a deep sadness among homosexual men in particular: Many of them have never had a deep friendship with another male that was not sexual in nature. Therefore, the David and Jonathan passages are read in light of their own experience and not the historical context.<sup>52</sup>

Deconstruction of the David and Solomon friendship shows literally no end in liberal scholarship, with Yaron Peleg (now at Cambridge) going so far as to say the text of Samuel seeks to feminize Jonathan by presenting him in a womanly manner, and thus discredit him and the line of Kish as legitimate rulers of Israel.<sup>53</sup> In his analysis, Peleg gifts short shrift to the exciting narrative of 1 Samuel 14 in which Jonathan and his armor-bearer engage in an audacious attack against a far superior force of Philistines, with the two men climbing uphill over rocks to kill twenty enemy warriors. This daring act initiated a tremendous victory over the Philistine army. Such an account of bravery hardly seems intended to present Jonathan as a man insecure in his gender identity. Peleg's odd theory tells us more

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<sup>52</sup> I am concerned to read Preston Sprinkle comment, "David and Jonathan weren't gay. But they did experience deep-seated, same-sex affection, and nonsexual intimacy toward each other. Same-sex oriented Christians experience similar desires only to a greater degree." Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 147. Sprinkle is flatly wrong because he associates modern categories of sexual desire with the friendship of David and Jonathan: Sexual desire for another man is not analogous to a Godly friendship between two men.

<sup>53</sup> Yaron Peleg, "Love at First Sight? David, Jonathan, and the Biblical Politics of Gender," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30.2 (2005):171 – 189.

about the never-ending, strange, and unholy speculations of reader-centered interpretation than it does about David and Jonathan.

## **B. Evangelical Response**

The remarkable friendship of David and Jonathan is set against the backdrop of Saul's unstable behavior. As Saul's son, Jonathan was the next in line for the throne, yet even Jonathan recognized God's special blessing on the life of David. 1 Samuel 18:1 says, "Jonathan loved [David] as his own soul." The Hebrew verb for love in this verse is *ahav* and it is never used in the OT in reference to describe homosexual desire or activity. The two clear OT narrative passages describing homosexual desire are Genesis 19:5 and Judges 19:22. In both of these cases, the verb *yada* is used to describe a demand for homosexual behavior, but this verb is never used to describe Jonathan and David's friendship. When 1 Samuel 18:1 – 4 describe David and Jonathan's friendship, the Hebrew word for "love" is not intended to imply a sexual relationship, but is used in the sense of loyalty to an agreement or relationship, and in this context it is not surprising that 1 Samuel 18:3 says Jonathan made a covenant with David.

There is no hint of a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan. Claiming such an unholy perspective displays a lack of understanding of customs and mores in the Ancient Near East. As David and Jonathan grieved together over the unstable behavior of Saul, 1 Samuel 20:41 records how they expressed their sadness at a friendship ruined by Saul's insecurities and violence: "When the young man had gone, David got from the south side of the stone Ezel, fell with his face to the ground, and bowed three times. Then he and Jonathan kissed each other and wept with each other, though David wept more." Concerning the show of affection between David and Jonathan, Robert Gagnon says, "There is nothing inherently homosexual about two men kissing each other in ancient Near

Eastern society. These were not erotic kisses but kisses of sorrow that conveyed the deep emotional pain of a committed friendship and alliance cleft by circumstances beyond their control.”<sup>54</sup> Even in our own day, there are cultures where men greet one another with a kiss without any latent sexual intent implied.

After Jonathan died in battle, 2 Samuel 1:26 records that David mourned for him and said, “I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother. You were such a friend to me. Your love for me was more wonderful than the love of a woman.” The Hebrew noun for “love” here in 2 Samuel 1:26 is *ahavah* (אַהֲבָה) and its verbal form is found in Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love (אָהַב) your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, the same verbal form is also used to describe God’s love for Israel in 1 Kings 10:9. Leviticus 19:18 and 1 Kings 10:9 do not have any sexual overtones, and neither do the descriptions of David and Jonathan’s friendship. Puritan author Matthew Henry grasped David’s grief and said, “Nothing is more delightful in this world than a true friend. . . . Nothing is more distressful than the loss of such a friend; it is a parting with a piece of one’s self.”<sup>56</sup>

We should grieve when people think the deep friendship of David and Jonathan was sexual. Of course, we must teach correct Biblical principles of hermeneutics and that the authorial intent of the text reigns supreme over any modern interpretative gymnastics. But the revisionist argument concerning David and Jonathan reflects the brokenness of people in the homosexual lifestyle: It is impossible for them to imagine two friends of the same sex who care deeply for each other without wanting sexual favors. And this is where the beauty of the local church can make the Gospel come alive for terribly wounded people: A local church may be the first place where some

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 151-152.

<sup>55</sup> Lloyd R. Bailey, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Leviticus – Numbers* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2005), 247.

<sup>56</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, vol. 2, *Joshua – Esther* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 352.

men or women have had other people of their own gender express genuine love with no hidden sexual expectations. When we do so, we get to make new friends in the name of Jesus and demonstrate to them what a real friendship is.

## VII. Revisionist Arguments Concerning the Ministry of Jesus

In my experience, the most common form of revisionist argument is based on the absence of any explicit condemnation of homosexuality in the four Gospels.

### A. View Stated

The MCC and other homosexual activists frequently will claim, “Jesus never once explicitly condemned homosexuality! Therefore, you are being unfair to quote Bible verses that seem to say homosexuality is sin!” In fact, this is possibly the most common argument one will hear from the “Christian-Gay” movement. In this form of revisionist argument, pro-homosexual advocates emphasize Jesus never specifically condemned homosexuality. Sometimes, the revisionists will actually grant that other texts teach that homosexual acts are sin, but they claim to follow Jesus instead of Scripture on this issue. One MCC document says, “While the Bible is an important witness to the relationship between God and humanity, it is not the ultimate revelation of God—Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh is. We must guard against what some scholars have called bibliolatry—making an idol out of Scripture.”<sup>57</sup> Matthew Vines adds, “Increasingly, young believers in particular feel caught in and repulsed by an often meanspirited theological debate about sexual orientation. They long for a charitable yet biblically sound message on this topic that’s not at odds with the Jesus of the Gospels.”<sup>58</sup> The implication of Vines’ statement, of course, is that a view of Scripture

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<sup>57</sup> Mona West, “The Bible and Homosexuality.” [www.MCCChurch.org](http://www.MCCChurch.org). (Accessed February 15, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 1.

which says same-sex sexual intercourse is not moral is somehow inconsistent with Jesus' teachings.

## **B. Response**

### 1. Argument from Silence

In response to revisionist interpreters, we must first be clear that they are making an argument from silence. For example, let us apply their form of argumentation to wife-beating. The Gospels do not record Jesus ever specifically saying, "Thou shalt not beat your wife." However, no one argues that Jesus considered wife-beating morally acceptable!

### 2. Jesus Affirmed the Inspiration and Authority of the OT

Second, Jesus affirmed the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament and the Old Testament clearly defines homosexual behavior as sin. In Matthew 5:17 – 19, He said:

Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches people to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.  
(HCS)

When Jesus refers to the "smallest letter," he has in mind the Hebrew *yodh*, the tenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet which is merely a small mark at the top of line and looks like this: ך. When he refers to the "stroke of a letter," he is possibly referring to the small strokes that



distinguish several Hebrew letters which look similar: כ / כ, ר / ר, and ר / ר. Commenting on Matthew 5:18, D. A. Carson says Jesus has “the highest possible view of the Old Testament.”<sup>59</sup>

### 3. Jesus Condemned All Sexual Immorality

Third, Jesus condemned sexual immorality in general and raised the standard even higher. When discussing adultery, Jesus reinforced the OT moral stance and raised the standard even higher, insisting that an impure thought-life is equivalent to adultery. (See Matthew 5:27-30). It seems difficult to imagine that Jesus would have then softened His moral stance on other sexual sins specifically condemned in the OT law.

Jesus’ teaching on sexual ethics undercuts the primary and often unstated premise of much of modern LGBTQ moral argumentation, mainly, the idea that satisfying sexual desires is essential to happiness and health.<sup>60</sup> But Jesus’ ethic doesn’t teach self-indulgence, Jesus’ ethic teaches *self-denial*. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” Denying one’s self is applicable to the broad scope of Christian living, but regarding the particular topic we are addressing here, denying one’s self means we do not rush to fulfill every sexual desire, but our sexual ethics are surrendered to Christian discipleship. Assuming we have a moral obligation to satisfy sexual desires outside of God’s parameters is the same thing as saying we should trust the flesh in place of God,<sup>61</sup> and Paul warns us of the foolishness of such thinking when he said, “So then . . . we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you live according to the flesh, you must die; but if

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<sup>59</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 145. Please note that Carson takes a more dim view of the distinction between civil, ceremonial, and moral laws which I articulate elsewhere. Carson and I simply disagree and I think the tripartite division of the law can withstand robust investigation.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel R. Heimbach, *Fundamental Christian Ethics* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2022), 389.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Romans 8:12 – 13)

#### 4. Jesus Affirmed Heterosexual and Monogamous Marriage

Fourth, when asked about divorce, Jesus affirmed heterosexual and monogamous marriage as the creation standard in Matthew 19:4 - 6:

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:4 – 6 NKJV)

Jesus first affirms the goodness of gender by referencing Genesis 1:27 and the fact God made humans “male and female.” He then cites Genesis 2:24 in reference to marriage in particular, a passage which clearly says a man cleaves to his “wife,” not to another male and not to more than one female. By quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, Jesus affirms heterosexual and monogamous marriage as God’s standard.

#### 5. Jesus Affirmed the Judgement on Sodom

In Matthew 11:23, Jesus criticizes the town of Capernaum for its failure to listen to the Gospel and makes reference to the destruction of Sodom, saying, “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until today.” In this passage, it seems that Jesus affirms that Sodom was in fact judged in a just manner. In this way, he affirms the Old Testament narrative of Sodom’s destruction.

## 6. Revisionist Interpreters pose a False Dichotomy

The “Jesus was silent about same-sex intercourse” argument poses a false dichotomy between Jesus and the rest of Scripture. The argument has a flawed premise: Jesus teaches one thing and the rest of the Bible teaches something else. But Scripture has a unified message because Scripture has a unified author: The Holy Spirit.

## 7. Revisionist arguments have flawed views of love.

On a broader level, revisionists will assert that Jesus was loving, kind and forgiving to sinners and thus homosexuals should be welcomed into full membership in the church in the name of love. In contrast, Christians who contend that homosexual acts are sin are portrayed as intolerant, unkind and inconsistent with the love of Jesus. The strength of this revisionist argument comes from the fact that traditional Christians have in fact failed to live in a manner consistent with the Lord Jesus Christ and at times we have failed to exhibit Christ-like to any number of people. Guilt is a powerful motivating factor.

The weakness of revisionist arguments regarding broad concepts of love comes from a misunderstanding of the love Jesus demonstrated. For LGBTQ advocates, “loving” someone means you do not suggest that what the person is doing is wrong in the realm of sexual ethics. In fact, Jesus Christ modeled and taught a very high standard for sexual ethics. Robert Gagnon reflects my thoughts here when he says:

What was distinctive about Jesus’ ministry was not that he refused to make judgments about the conduct of others, or even that he lowered his moral standards. On the contrary, in many areas he elevated those standards. What was distinctive was his incredibly generous spirit even toward those who had lived

in gross disobedience to God for years. . . . Jesus did not confuse love with toleration of all behaviors and neither should the church.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, we should not confuse Biblical notions of love with modern, expansive notions of tolerance.

Sometimes, 1 John 4:8 – “God is love” – is leveraged in revisionist arguments. But one should keep in mind that 1 John 1:5 also says, “God is light,” a statement affirming God’s holiness. And 1 John 1:5 – 2:2 is an extended discussion in which the Apostle John refutes the notion that one can be indifferent to personal sin and still be considered a sincere follower of Christ. J.I. Packer commented on the connection between 1 John 1:5 and 1 John 4:8 and said:

So the God who is love is first and foremost light, and sentimental ideas of his love as an indulgent, benevolent softness, divorced from moral standards and concerns, must therefore be ruled out from the start. God’s love is holy love. The God whom Jesus made known is not a god who indifferent to moral distinctions, but a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, a God whose ideal for his children is that they should “be perfect . . . . as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). He will not take into his company any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not follow after holiness in life.<sup>63</sup>

Revisionist arguments that Christians should be indifferent to homosexual behavior because, after all, “God is love,” understand neither the subject of this sentence – *God* – nor the predicate

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<sup>62</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Text and Hermeneutics*, 212 – 213.

<sup>63</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1973, reprint 2018), 121 – 122. Packer’s comments come from his chapter on the love of God, and I find much of what he says helpful. But if I’m reading his comments correctly, God’s general goodness to the entirety of mankind is a kind of love, but God only truly loves the elect. This is a position I reject. I also note that even though Packer cites John 3:16 in the chapter on love, he does not interact with the word *world* in John 3:16.

nominative in this sentence – *love*. Revisionists interpreters urging the church to abandon Scriptural teaching on sexual ethics in the name of love are doing so because they have inherited incoherent fragments of a once coherent way of thinking about love, fragments of the Christian doctrine of love filtered through the autonomous individualism of the sexual revolution and mediated by a deficient view of Scripture which denies plenary, verbal inspiration.

### Conclusion

The Gospels do not record any explicit statement from Jesus where he said something like, “You shall not engage in homosexual intercourse.” However, Jesus affirmed the inspiration of the Old Testament which clearly refers to same-sex intercourse as sin, He raised the sexual standards of the OT by declaring an impure thought life to be adultery, He affirmed heterosexual and monogamous marriage as God’s creation standard, He affirmed God’s righteous judgment on Sodom, and He advocated a view of love which showed mercy to sinners without condoning their sin. A sound reading of the Gospels leads to the conclusion that Jesus did not affirm homosexuality as an optional lifestyle for his followers.<sup>64</sup>

## **VIII. Revisionist Arguments Concerning Romans 1**

Revisionist interpreters employ multiple tactics in attempts to avoid the plain teaching of Romans 1:18 – 32, which is that male and female homosexual acts are examples of serving the creature rather than the Creator.

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<sup>64</sup> From time to time, some revisionist interpreters have attempted to claim Jesus and John (the disciple Jesus loved) were homosexual or that Mary and Martha were actually lesbian lovers. Richard Hays rightly rejects such nonsense, saying, “Such exegetical curiosities, which have found no acceptance among serious New Testament scholars, can only be judged pathetic efforts and constructing a New Testament warrant for homosexual practice where none exists.” Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 393.

## A. Paul is not Addressing Constitutional Homosexuality

John Boswell claimed that in Romans 1 Paul was criticizing constitutionally heterosexual people who engaged in homosexual acts, and was not addressing two homosexual people in a loving, committed relationship. He asserted that for a constitutionally heterosexual person to engage in same-sex intercourse is to go “against nature.” Boswell commented on Romans 1:24 – 27 and said, “What is even more important, the persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons.”<sup>65</sup> The argument insists Paul does not address loving, committed homosexual relationships between persons who are constitutionally homosexual; he only condemns “unnatural” homosexual activities, with “unnatural” being defined as constitutional heterosexuals engaging in homosexual acts. Perhaps we can call this the “unnatural for heterosexuals” argument.

The “unnatural for heterosexuals” argument appears in various forms from both radical gay-rights activists and self-professing “evangelicals.” For example, Lewis Smedes, who taught at Fuller Seminary, argued that such a thing as constitutional homosexuality is real and that there are cases where “a person’s sexuality is so deeply conditioned toward homosexual responses that he cannot change.”<sup>66</sup> Smedes suggests that such people have two options: celibacy or something he called “optimum homosexual morality.” For those who accept the second option, Smedes offers this suggestion: “Within his sexual experience, he ought to develop permanent associations with another person, associations in which respect and regard for the other person dominates their sexual relationship.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 109.

<sup>66</sup> Lewis Smedes, *Sex for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 72.

<sup>67</sup> Smedes, *Sex for Christians*, 73.

Boswell and others have suggested that in Romans 1 Paul is not condemning a loving committed relationship between two people who are genuinely homosexual. Instead, the claim is made that here Paul is condemning heterosexuals who pursue homosexual relationships in rejection of their heterosexual nature.<sup>68</sup>

**Response 1:** This is a case of question begging. The argument assumes such a thing as constitutional homosexuality exists. The logic of homosexual activists seems to be as follows, “Since I have an involuntary desire to participate in this behavior, I should not be held morally accountable.” While I disagree with Richard Hays approach concerning the Sodom and Gomorrah incident, his comments at this point are helpful. Hays emphasizes that Scripture rejects the “commonsense assumption” that only freely chosen acts are morally culpable. While Hays seems to view the concept of constitutional homosexuality more favorably than I do, he still rejects this as sufficient to justify participation in homosexual activity. He says, “We are in bondage to sin but still accountable to God’s righteous judgment for our actions. In light of this theological anthropology, it cannot be maintained that a homosexual orientation is morally neutral because it is involuntary.”<sup>69</sup>

**Response 2:** Anachronistic hermeneutics. This argument assumes Paul was familiar with a disputed modern argument. Thomas Schreiner forcefully states the folly of pro-homosexual misinterpretation at this point when he says, “This interpretation should be rejected since there is no evidence that Paul understood the “nature” of human beings in the individualized and psychological

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<sup>68</sup> I think Matthew Vines is trying to get at something like this argument when he says, “I doubt you could point to a moment when you chose to be attracted to members of the opposite sex. The attraction is simply part of who you are. The same is true for me. Same-sex attraction is completely natural to me. It’s not something I chose or something I can change. And while I could act on my sexual orientation in lustful ways, I could also express it in the context of a committed, monogamous relationship.” Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 29. What Vines seems to miss is that from Paul’s perspective, same-sex desire is not natural, but an inversion of the natural order.

<sup>69</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 390.

sense that is familiar to us in the twentieth century.”<sup>70</sup> D. F. Wright adds, “This atomistic reading of these verses is artificially strained, for Paul is commenting on human society at large and focuses on behavior itself. A distinction between persons of heterosexual and homosexual orientation was almost certainly unknown to him.”<sup>71</sup>

## **B. The Only Type of Homosexuality With Which Paul Was Familiar Was Pederasty**

Robin Scroggs, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, published *The New Testament and Homosexuality* in 1983. He argued that the only model of homosexual relationships common in the ancient world was pederasty, or the relationship between an older man and a male youth. If this is the case, then Paul’s statements in Romans 1 are only a condemnation of this sort of exploitive relationship and have no relevance for a loving, committed same-sex relationship between responsible adults. As such, Romans 1 is irrelevant for modern debate.

**Response:** Scroggs is simply in error. While sexual relationships between men and boys were not terribly uncommon in ancient Greece, these were not the only types of homosexual relationships in the first century. Mark Smith rejects Scroggs’s claim and says:

The primary weakness of Scroggs’s analysis of this issue lies in the chronology of the evidence. He does not reckon adequately with the fact that pederasty was most common among the social elite in some Greek city-states during the archaic and classical periods –400 years and more before Paul. From the time of the Peloponnesian war (431-404 BCE), evidence for

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 6, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 95.

<sup>71</sup> D. F. Wright, “Homosexuality,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 413. It is of interest to note that Matthew Vines, though rejecting the traditional understanding of Romans 1, even admits the unnatural for heterosexuals argument is flawed. See Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 102.



pederastic practices declines considerably, though other homosexual practices continued unabated.<sup>72</sup>

Smith goes on to say, “The literary evidence for non-pederastic homosexual practices is both more common and significant than Scroggs implies.”<sup>73</sup> In Romans 1, the relations are not described as pederastic and the disapproval leveled there has nothing to do with exploitation.<sup>74</sup> The Apostle Paul was aware of a broad spectrum of homosexual behavior and the traditional understanding that sees Romans 1:26-27 as an overarching condemnation of same-sex intercourse is correct.

### **C. Paul Was Condemning excess as opposed to Moderation**

Matthew Vines says, “Paul wasn’t condemning the expression of a same-sex orientation as opposed to the expression of opposite-sex orientation. He was condemning *excess* as opposed to *moderation*.”<sup>75</sup> This is wishful thinking on Vines’ part and is not based on any sound exegesis of Romans 1.

### **D. Pagan Deconstruction of the Bible**

In his book *Coming Out as Sacrament*, Chris Glaser offers several religious arguments in favor of homosexuality. Specifically, he argues from a panentheistic worldview: “The intellectual foundation for the intuitive faith of my heart had been broadened and strengthened by process thought, a philosophical theology that introduced me to panentheism, the belief that the cosmos is in God. . . . The cosmos is,

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<sup>72</sup> Mark D. Smith, “Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26-27,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64.2 (1996): 233.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>74</sup> Following Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 398.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 104.

according to panentheism, God's body, God's incarnation, to broaden a Christian doctrine."<sup>76</sup>

**Response:** Glaser's thinking is the type of worldview Paul is condemning in Romans 1:18-32, one which blurs the distinction between the creation and the creator.

## IX. Revisionist Arguments Surrounding I Corinthians 6:9-11

There have been many attempts to circumvent the plain reading of 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 regarding homosexuality. Regarding the word *arsenokoitai*, Matthew Vines went so far as to say, "So even if the compound *arsenokoitai* did originate from Leviticus, that still wouldn't tell us what it means."<sup>77</sup> I am left to wonder what background evidence would be enough to convince Vines of the word's meaning!

### A. Arguments Surrounding the word *malakoi*

Revisionist interpreters attempt either to broaden or narrow the meaning of *malakoi* in order to lessen its moral force in context of 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11.

#### 1. The Narrow Interpretation: Only Referring to Prostitution

In *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (1983), Robin Scroggs (deceased, taught at Chicago Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary) argued that in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11, *malakoi* meant "feminine call-boys."<sup>78</sup> Since Paul only has prostitution in

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<sup>76</sup>Chris Glaser, *Coming Out as Sacrament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 2. In *Coming Out to God*, Glaser says, "I do not claim Christian spirituality encompasses all truth of the only truth." Chris Glaser, *Coming Out to God: Prayers for Lesbians and Gay Men, Their Families and Friends* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1991), 21.

<sup>77</sup>Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 124.

<sup>78</sup>Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 1984), 106 – 108.

mind, 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 cannot be used to condemn two loving people in a committed homosexual relationship. Again, Scroggs claimed that Paul's use of the word *malakoi* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 is only referring to visiting young, male prostitutes. The word *arsenokoitai* is then only referring to the man who pays a male prostitute for his services. Scroggs contends that Paul is simply prohibiting the men at Corinth from visiting an effeminate call-boy.

## 2. Dale Martin

Dale Martin teaches at Yale University. He argues that in the Greek context *malakoi* can note a wide variety of things, such as soft or decadent living, a fondness for expensive clothes or gourmet foods, excessive attention to one's hair, long hair, wearing perfume or makeup, gluttony, too much heterosexual sex, laziness, cowardice, and (finally!) the acceptance of phallic penetration by another male. Martin's point is that, since *malakoi* reflects a belief that feminine traits are inferior, it is misogynist and contemporary interpreters and believers should abandon an appeal to what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11.

Gagnon summarizes how both Scroggs and Martin attempt to render the word *malakoi* unimportant in modern discussions of homosexuality:

Both Scroggs and Martin seek to render the word *malakoi* unusable for those who regard all homosexual behavior as sin: Scroggs by showing the word is too narrow to embrace non-prostituting passive homosexual males; Martin by demonstrating that the word is too broad to be taken seriously today, embracing as it does not only passive homosexual males but also any heterosexual males who display effeminacy.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 307.

## B. John Boswell's Claim: *Arsenokoitai* refers to "male prostitutes"

### 1. Boswell's Claim

In his 1980 work *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, John Boswell said:

Ἀρσενοκοῖται, then, means male sexual agents, i.e., active male prostitutes, who were common throughout the Hellenistic world in the time of Paul. That such a designation existed in the Latin of the time is well known: the *drauci* or *exoleti* were . . . male prostitutes capable of the active role with either men or women. Ἀρσενοκοῖται is the Greek equivalent of "drauci": the corresponding passive is παρακοιται. 80

In this way, Boswell is basically arguing that Paul is only criticizing men who sold themselves as prostitutes to play the "inserting" partner for men or women. Boswell can then infer that 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 has no relevance or moral critique for two people in a loving, committed homosexual relationship. Robin Scroggs echoes Boswell and suggests Paul is only addressing pederasty, saying the "arsenokoites in this context must be the active partner" who keeps a young boy as his "mistress." Boggs concludes, "Seen in this way, [1 Cor. 6:9 – 11] shares the disapproval of this form of pederasty in agreement with the entire literature of the Greco-Roman world on the topic!"<sup>81</sup> Boggs goes on to say that the "Gay Community" of today

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80 Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 344.

81 Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 108.

also decries such relationships: Paul is not condemning two, loving, committed adults in a committed relationship.

## 2. Response

David F. Wright provides a devastating critique of Boswell's specific claims in his 1984 article, "Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ἀρσενοκοῖται (1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10)." The most problematic aspect of Boswell's argument is the fact he does not discuss or entertain the idea that Paul derived the term ἀρσενοκοῖται from the LXX of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. This is most likely because Boswell had already dismissed out of hand the idea that Christians would actually appeal to the moral precepts of the OT law in an authoritative way: "It would simply not have occurred to most early Christians to invoke the authority of the old law to justify the morality of the new: The Levitical regulations had not hold on Christians and are manifestly irrelevant in explaining Christian hostility to gay sexuality."<sup>82</sup> Boswell's claim is completely at odds with a sober reading of the New Testament. David Wright concludes his critique of Boswell by saying that Hellenistic Jewish writings contemporary with the rise of Christianity unambiguously condemned the homosexuality encountered in the Greek world. In light of this, he says, "At the same time the moral philosophers of the Hellenistic era were increasingly coming to question homosexual indulgence. The presumption is thus created that ἀρσενοκοῖται came into use, under the LXX of Leviticus, to denote that homoerotic vice which Jewish writers like Philo, Josephus, Paul, and Ps-Phocylides regarded as a signal token of Greek depravity."<sup>83</sup> In other

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<sup>82</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 105.

<sup>83</sup> David F. Wright, "Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ἀρσενοκοῖται (1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10)," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 38.2 (June 1984): 145.

words, Boswell's argument is made in contradiction to the weight of historical, linguistic, and textual evidence.

Likewise, Scroggs' analysis is hopelessly flawed because he too discounts the LXX background for ἀρσενοκοῖται.

## C. The MCC, I Corinthians 6:9 – 11, and Homophobia Arguments

### 1. Argument Stated

The MCC argues that using the word “homosexual” in translating 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is actually a sign of homophobia. Much of their argument is influenced by Scroggs' work. They suggest, much like their interpretation of the Levitical passages, that if Paul is prohibiting homosexual behavior, he is only prohibiting it in the context of prostitution, and not a loving, committed relationship. But beyond Robin Scroggs, much of the MCC argument flows from the flawed argumentation of John Boswell; he argued that *malakoi* may or may not refer to homosexuality. Similarly, Boswell stated the word *arsenokoitai* may simply mean “males who have intercourse” and is thus used here merely to refer male prostitutes in general. According to Boswell, “The argument that in I Corinthians 6:9 the two words “μαλακοι” and “αρσενοκοιται” represent the active and passive parties in homosexual intercourse is fanciful and unsubstantiated by lexicographical evidence.”<sup>84</sup>

### 2. Evangelical Response

**Response 1: The Terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* definitely refer to sinful sexual behavior.** In responding to the pro-homosexual revisionist arguments, it is vital to begin by stating the obvious. 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 is a vice list. The first three vices – sexual

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<sup>84</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 341.

immorality, idolatry, and adultery – are all clearly related to sexual sin. Keep in mind that in the Old Testament Israel’s idolatry is often compared to adultery and that in Romans 1:18 – 32 Paul indicates homosexual behavior is in fact a form of idolatry. There is no doubt that adultery (vice number three in the list) is a sexual sin. Therefore, whatever may be said about the terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, they clearly have sexual sin in mind. In this way, we see that Martin’s attempt to make *malakoi* mean anything and everything is hopelessly flawed. A sound hermeneutical principle is “context is king.” In context, Paul follows this vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 with the most important and detailed discussion of sexual ethics in the New Testament in 6:12 – 20. Again, the context clearly points to the fact *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* have sexual sin in mind. The only debate is what kind of sexual sin.

**Response 2: *Malakoi* and *Arsenokoitai* clearly have homosexuality in mind.** I will not repeat everything I detail in my notes on “The Bible and Homosexuality.” *Malakoi* was clearly used in pre-Christian literature to refer to the passive or effeminate male in a homosexual relationship. *Arsenokoitai* is clearly a word derived from the LXX of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, both passages which condemn homosexual behavior.

**Response 3: Divide and Conquer!** Again, we must point out the obvious: *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* do not occur in isolation, but they occur side by side. Furthermore, as I have noted above, the words are clearly expressions of homosexual behavior. On closer inspection, the MCC/Boswell/Scroggs interpretation is a case of “divide and conquer.” Gordon Fee comments on Boswell’s argument and states, “What may be true of the words individually is one thing. But here they are not individual; they appear side by side in a vice list that is heavily weighted toward sexual sins.”<sup>85</sup> Taken together, the words

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<sup>85</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 244.

emphasize both the assertive and receptive partners in male homosexual intercourse.

**Response 4: Boswell’s Translation is a Linguistic Impossibility.** D. F. Wright comments: “[*Arsenokoitai*] denotes (males) “who lie or bed with males” (not, as Boswell argues, “males [prostitutes] who lie with” (males or females), which linguistically is impossible). Whether Jewish or Christian –even a Pauline—neologism, the term picks up the Levitical ban, which did not have pederasty in view. Even if what Paul has chiefly in mind is pederasty, his choice of this word, at best very rare, depicts it as sinful in the generic context of males having sex with males.”<sup>86</sup>

**Response 5: Good News:** Paul states emphatically that people had been delivered from these sins by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## X. Revisionist Arguments Surrounding 1 Timothy 1:8-11

### A. Argument Stated

**Revisionist Arguments:** Deborah Krause is the Academic Dean and Associate Professor of New Testament at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, a school affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Krause published a feminist commentary on First Timothy in 2004. Krause’s primary thesis is that First Timothy was written in the late first century or early second century by an unknown author. According to Krause, the letter was not written by Paul and was not sent to Timothy. Instead, Krause claims the author of First Timothy was engaged in a power struggle in the early church and “grappled to re-engage the wisdom and authority of Paul.”<sup>87</sup> Since Paul did not write First Timothy, then this statement condemning homosexuality should not be read as a command from God, but as

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<sup>86</sup> D. F. Wright, “Homosexuality,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 414.

<sup>87</sup> Deborah Krause, *First Timothy* in the Readings Commentary Series (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 1.



the distorted opinion of an unknown man engaged in a power struggle in the early church. Krause argues the condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Timothy 1:10 has been “used historically to discredit the full participation of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons in the life of the church” and is a key verse in the “stockpile of homophobic weaponry.”<sup>88</sup>

## **B. Evangelical Response**

**Response:** I Timothy was indeed authored by the Apostle Paul. Attempts to discredit Pauline authorship flow from ideological rejection of the content of the pastorals.

## **XI. Revisionist Argument: Christians Once Supported Slavery from the Bible!**

Homosexual revisionist interpreters often point to Christian support of slavery in previous generations as an example of bad hermeneutics. The claim is made that in the future people will look back on conservative interpreters today who oppose the normalizing of LGBTQ identities as being just as misguided as interpreters of Scripture in the 1700s or 1800s who supported slavery.

### **A. Revisionist Argument Stated: Robert Minor**

Many homosexual activists will criticize Christians who oppose homosexuality on Biblical grounds by reminding Christians of the tragic incidence of religiously supported arguments for slavery prior to the Civil War. A favorite target of this argument is the Southern Baptist Convention. The revisionist argument seems to follow this trajectory:

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 27.

1. You Baptists/Christians/Fundamentalists claim the Bible says homosexuality is a sin.
2. You Baptists/Christians/Fundamentalists at one time claimed the Bible supports slavery. In fact, the biggest Protestant denomination in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention, was founded because it advocated slavery.
3. None of you Baptists/Christians/Fundamentalists now claim that the Bible supports slavery and you insist that your forefathers were wrong to do so.
4. Who is to say that you Baptists/Christians/Fundamentalists are just as wrong now about the issue of homosexuality?

One person who has made this very argument is Dr. Robert N. Minor, a University of Kansas professor and advocate for homosexual rights. I will quote him at length:

For nineteen hundred years, the dominant Christian interpretation of the Bible supported slavery. Most Western pulpits rang with the conviction that this is: "What the Bible says."

Frankly, if we take the verses in the Bible which explicitly mention slavery and slaves literally, it is difficult to find support for the abolitionist position. Slavery is always used as a positive paradigm for Christians. Slaves are regularly told, particularly in the New Testament, that they are to obey their masters as they would God even if their masters treated them cruelly. There is no literal command to end slavery.

On top of this, numerous passages which have nothing to do with the enslavement of people of color, were also interpreted to support slavery. One example, the famous "Curse of Ham" in Genesis 9:25, still turns up in attempts to preach that Black

people were cursed by God so they were born to serve other races! . . . America's largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, was founded in 1845 to maintain slavery as a system sanctioned by God in the Bible. . . . What began to change were cultural attitudes toward slavery, and in a few cases, its accompanying prejudices. As these new attitudes became more and more pervasive, they could no longer be marginalized and ignored by the larger culture. Eventually, when these cultural attitudes became the dominant ones, people's interpretation of the Bible changed.<sup>89</sup>

How do we respond to Minor? Is the Christian interpretation of Scripture in relation to homosexuality as wrong as pre-Civil war advocates of slavery?

## **B. Response**

**Response 1:** Slavery Was Wrong and the SBC was Wrong, but Minor's conclusion does not follow.

Part of the strength of Minor's argument comes from the fact that he states one thing that is absolutely correct: Southern Baptists were wrong in 1845. However, his conclusion does not follow: Just because an individual or group is wrong at one point does not necessarily mean they are wrong at other points. For example, while I strongly reject Minor's overarching premise, he is actually correct in some of his statements about the manner in which some boys are encouraged to see women as objects for sexual exploitation.

**Response 2:** Biblical Arguments for Slavery are Not as Strong as Minor Suggests.

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<sup>89</sup> Robert N. Minor, *Scared Straight*, 22 – 23.

The Biblical arguments suggested in favor of slavery prior to the Civil War were not as strong as was suggested. Furthermore, Minor himself overstates the Biblical case for slavery in order to strengthen his own position. He also fails to mention one of the several arguments against slavery from a Biblical perspective.

### **Response 3:** Argument Ad Hominem

Minor's reference to the "Curse of Ham" is an argument ad hominem. By bringing up this horrible instance of Scripture-twisting, he suggests that opponents of homosexuality are just as evil as racists. Furthermore, by referencing the "Curse of Ham," Minor is suggesting that the Biblical arguments against homosexuality are just as weak as the racist interpretation of Genesis 9 and the "Curse of Ham."

### **Response 4:** Straw Man Argument

Minor's reference to the "Curse of Ham" is also a straw man: he leaves the uninformed reader with the impression that Biblical interpretations that see homosexuality as sin are just as weak and misguided.

### **Response 5:** Imprecise History

Not all Christians supported slavery from Biblical texts. In fact, many opponents of slavery prior to the Civil War would be classified as Evangelical Christians by today's standards! For example, slavery in England was ended because of the effort of Evangelical Christians, most notably William Wilberforce. Furthermore, Minor overlooks the degree to which slavery was tied to a flawed economic system in the Southern United States. Slavery was a means of economic exploitation. Also, in point of fact, to suggest that people simply

“changed their attitudes” about slavery is bad history and does a disservice to the thousands of men who died in battle to end the practice. Slavery was ended in the United States at the point of a bayonet.

## **XII. Arguments Ad Hominem – Ad Infinitum**

Dr. Minor is a good segue into the last and most frequently used revisionist argument: the charge of homophobia. In fact, the term “homophobia” is used broadly to label anyone who has a negative attitude against homosexual behavior. The argument appears in various forms.

### **A. You Are A Homophobe!**

#### **1. Argument Stated**

The most common response to anyone who publically expresses disapproval of the homosexual agenda is for the pro-homosexual advocate to derisively refer to their opponent as a “homophobe.” The word “homophobe” is an epithet intended to express contempt for anyone expressing moral objection to homosexual behavior while simultaneously participating in socially acceptable abuse of the opponent. Based on two words “homo” (same) and “phobia” (fear), the word homophobe implies that anyone who disagrees with homosexual behavior is repressing a secret fear of homosexuals. Carl Trueman explains the way the word *homophobia* is used as a club to bludgeon dissenting opinions:

Criticism of homosexuality is now *homophobia*; that of transgenderism is *transphobia*. The use of the term *phobia* is deliberate and effectively places such criticism of the new sexual culture into the realm of the irrational and points toward an underlying bigotry on the part of those who hold such views.<sup>90</sup>

Homophobia and transphobia are used in much the same way as the words “racist” or “bigot” are used; calling your opponent a “homophobe” implies your opponent is unfairly prejudiced against gays or lesbians and hates people who participate in same-sex behavior. In a 2012 position statement, the Pan American Health Organization (a regional office of the World Health Organization) issued a position statement opposing reparative therapy which said, “Homophobia, in any of its manifestations and expressed by any person, should be exposed as public health problem and threat to human dignity and human rights.”<sup>91</sup> Given the breadth of this exhortation, I suppose Baptist preachers are now a risk to the public health!

Another word of recent origin (Pre-2012) is *heterosexism*, defined as someone who wrongly favors heterosexuals as opposes to homosexuals. The word is intended to carry the same negative moral label as *racism*. As if “heterosexism” isn’t enough, revisionists must warn us of the dangers of “heteronormative hermeneutics,” the terrible sin of interpreting the Bible as if heterosexual intercourse (in marriage) is normative and all other expressions of sexuality are sin. Chris Glaser decries the heterosexism of religious institutions and instead argues for “spirituality,” and says, “Spirituality is not about control, or dishonesty, or rejection of human experience, or an inability to deal with reality, or the destruction of self-worth. Clearly,

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<sup>90</sup> Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 21.

<sup>91</sup> Pan American Health Organization, “‘Cures’ For An Illness That Does Not Exist,” 3. [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6803&Itemid=1926](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6803&Itemid=1926).

then, homophobia and heterosexism contradict the nature of spirituality.”<sup>92</sup>

But “homophobe” is the most common term. Here are some examples of how the charge “homophobe” is used in public debate about homosexuality:

If you are a professor who chooses not to post the “gay flag” on your office door indicating your office is a “safe place” for homosexuals, you are a homophobe.

If you think it is a bad idea for civil governments to provide health benefits for “domestic partners,” you are a homophobe.

If you are a teenager who chooses not to put your name in a high school paper advertisement indicating your support for homosexual students, you are a homophobe.

If you oppose same-sex marriage, you are a homophobe.

If you think that same-gender sexual behavior is a sin, then you are a homophobe.

If you do not allow your child to go to a birthday party for a little boy who has “two daddies,” you are a homophobe.

If you question the idea that homosexual behavior is genetically predetermined, you are a homophobe.

If you think it is possible for people to stop participating in homosexual behavior, you are a homophobe.

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<sup>92</sup> Chris Glaser, *Coming Out to God*, 29 – 30.

If you oppose a gay pride parade in your community, you are a homophobe.

If you oppose the idea that homosexuals should be allowed to serve openly as homosexuals in the military, you are a homophobe.

## 2. Response

By calling anyone who disagrees with the pro-homosexual agenda a “homophobe,” homosexual activists engage in a form of intellectual intimidation and coercion. By making the terms “homophobe” and “racist” morally equivalent, the homosexual activist is able to short-circuit any serious and open discussion about the merits of public policy that affirms same-sex marriage. Labeling someone as a “homophobe” is frequently an attempt to get rid of an opponent whom we cannot or do not want to answer.<sup>93</sup> The number purported sexual phobias increases as culture moves further and further away from Judeo-Christian Ethics. For example, Richard Pillard of Boston University commented on the negative reaction of many people in the late 1940s and early 1950s to the Kinsey reports and says, “The censure of erotophobes was of course expected.”<sup>94</sup> So, people who reject Kinsey’s bizarre worldview are really “erotophobes” – repressed people with a fear of the erotic.

The “Christians are homophobes” argument is often a red herring intended to detract from the real issue which is that Christian moral opposition towards many forms of sexual immorality bothers the conscience of people involved in the immorality.

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<sup>93</sup> My language here is influenced by T.B. Maston. He used similar terminology in reference to the terms “liberal” and “conservative.” See T.B. Maston, “Problems of Christian Life – Compromise,” *Baptist Standard*, December 18, 1968, 13; found in William M. Tillman, Jr., Rodney S. Taylor, and Lauren C. Brewer, eds., *Both-And: A Maston Reader: Selected Readings from the Writings of T.B. Maston* (No City: T.B. Maston Foundation For Christian Ethics, 2011), 257.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Pillard, “Foreword,” in Vernon A. Rosario, *Homosexuality and Science: A Guide to the Debates* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2002), ix.



**B. If you oppose the LGBTQ agenda, you are secretly hiding your own LGBTQ identity.**

1. Argument Stated

Ted Haggard was the founder of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO, an enormous mega-church. Haggard also served as leader of the National Association of Evangelicals from 2003 – 2006. He argued forcefully against gay marriage and was a vocal supporter of Colorado’s Amendment 43, a measure passed by voters of Colorado on November 7, 2006 which affirmed traditional marriage. Just a few days prior to the ballot measure, a homosexual prostitute named Mike Jones revealed Haggard had paid him for sex and that Haggard also used crystal methamphetamine. Haggard was subsequently fired from his church and resigned as head of the NAE. New Life Church subsequently learned of an abusive sexual relationship between Haggard and a young man who was a member of New Life Church.

In case similar to Haggard, Eddie Long (1953 – 2017), the pastor of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church near Atlanta, GA, was a vocal opponent of homosexuality, but was exposed for having sexual encounters with male interns at his church. In September, 2010 three young men filed separate lawsuits alleging Long abused his position as pastor to coerce them into sexual relationships. The lawsuits were settled out of court in May, 2011. Long remained as the pastor of New Birth Church, though attendance and giving declined. Long’s wife, Vanessa, initially filed for divorce after the allegations became public, but the divorce was never been finalized. As a note, this was Long’s second marriage, his first ending after barely one year.

George Rekers (b. 1948) is a psychologist and ordained Southern Baptist preacher. He held a number of distinguished academic positions at Kansas State University and the University of

South Carolina. A strident opponent of homosexuality, Rekers was a founding member of the Family Research Council in 1983. On April 13, 2010, Rekers was photographed in the Miami Airport returning from a ten-day European vacation with a male prostitute named Giovanni Roman.<sup>95</sup>

In some ways, Haggard, Long, and Rekers reinforce the Elmer Gantry caricature of preachers as tormented souls fighting sexual demons who do catharsis by making their listeners feel guilty.

Quite often, homosexual activists suggest Christians who engage in moral argumentation against homosexuality are actually struggling with same-sex attraction themselves. Homosexual activists assert Christians who respond to homosexual arguments are engaging in a sort of self-loathing: We [Christians] hate the fact we are struggling with homosexual temptation so we rant against those who have accepted it. We are disgusted with ourselves for feeling tempted to engage in homosexual sex, so we denigrate people who have given in to the temptation. Alfred Kinsey touched on this type of argumentation. In *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, he said, "There are probably more males and fewer females who fear their own capacities to respond homosexually."<sup>96</sup>

## 2. Response

Before responding, I want to be clear: Ted Haggard and Eddie Long are an embarrassment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the church as a whole would be far better off if both of them would leave the public square. While it is difficult to know exactly why Haggard

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<sup>95</sup> Penn Bullock and Brandon K. Thorpe, "Christian Right Leader George Rekers Takes Vacation With 'Rent Boy,'" *Miami New Times*, May 6, 2010, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/2010-05-06/news/christian-right-leader-george-rekers-takes-vacation-with-rent-boy/>. Prior to the trip, Rekers was already divorced and the father of 6 grown children, one of them adopted.

<sup>96</sup> Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 486.

and Long railed against homosexuality in the way they did, we must grant the point that these two men were hypocritical in their actions.

But the claim that everyone who preaches against homosexual behavior is flawed for several reasons, but three are most prominent. First, this argument assumes the homosexual activist knows the secret motive of their opponent, which they most assuredly do not and cannot know with certainty. In this way, it is actually an attack on their opponent's character. Second, one could just as easily argue that homosexual activists are the ones engaging in self-loathing, secretly disgusted with their own behavior and therefore attacking anyone who questions their adequacy. But, we have just said such argumentation goes to motive, so I will move on. Third, the evidence is that most people who argue against the moral legitimacy of homosexuality are quite comfortable in their own sexual lives and do not have the burning, inner turmoil of sexual repression suggested by gay activists.

### **C. Ad Hominem – Children / Siblings of Conservatives Who Engage in Homosexuality**

#### 1. View Stated

Homosexual activists take great delight in pointing to children from fairly conservative families who practice homosexuality. Here are some examples commonly cited by homosexual activists:

1. Richard Socarides. Richard Socarides is a practicing homosexual and the son of Charles Socarides (1922 – 2005). From 1993 to 1999, Richard Socarides worked as a White House advisor for the Clinton Administration in a variety of senior positions, including as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor for Public Liaison. Charles Socarides was clinical professor of psychiatry for many years at the Albert

Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, where he retired in 1996. He is perhaps the most well-known mental health professional who continued to oppose homosexuality's change in status in the DSM in 1973. Charles Socarides was married four times (divorced 3x).

2. Ronald Roberts, son of televangelist Oral Roberts announced he was gay and divorced left his wife and three children. Ronald Roberts committed suicide on June 10, 1982. Oral Roberts' grandson, Randy Roberts Potts, has also declared that he is a homosexual.

3. Mary Cheney. Mary Cheney is the daughter of former Vice-President Dick Cheney. Mary Cheney is a lesbian and has a partner, Heather Poe. Mary Cheney gave birth to a child in 2007. Gay Activists delight in mentioning Mary Cheney because of the Bush Administration's opposition to gay marriage.

4. John Schlafly is the son of conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly. John announced his homosexuality in 1992.

5. Candace Gingrich. Candace Gingrich is the half-sister of former Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich. She is a practicing lesbian and homosexual activist.

Homosexual activists use examples like these to say something like this, "See, even you conservative people have children who are gay. You conservatives are supposed to be religious and believe in the Bible and a loving God. Would a loving God *really* want you to tell your own children they are sinful simply because they follow their most deeply-felt desires?" Essentially, this form of Ad Hominem argument says people who oppose homosexuality are bad parents and don't love their children.

## 2. Response

Christians believe all people are born with a sin nature (Romans 3:23), even *our own children!* Christian parents love their children when they do any number of things contrary to God's will. This *does not* mean we approve of their actions. Furthermore, Gay Activists tend to paint these situations in ways which are not true to reality. The conservative parents are portrayed as intolerant and uncaring while their children who practice homosexuality are presented as broad-minded and kind. In reality, the situation is often quite different. Good and honorable parents set boundaries and establish moral parameters for their. The human tendency to rebel against moral authority (our sin nature) often expresses itself in various forms of sexual immorality, including homosexual behavior.

### **D. Christians Who Oppose Homosexuality Encourage Violence Towards Homosexuals**

#### 1. View Stated

As was mentioned earlier in the tragic death of Matthew Shepherd, when people who practice homosexuality are killed, Christians are often blamed for creating a hostile moral environment which justifies violence against homosexuals. For example, when San Francisco politician Harvey Milk was murdered in 1978, Christian doctrine was blamed as a contributing factor. The word homophobia seems originally to have been coined with these types of incidents in mind, but has been expanded to include any form of moral opposition to homosexual behavior. Thus, the not so subtle message of homosexual activists is that if you oppose homosexual behavior, then you secretly think that violence against homosexuals is acceptable.

#### 2. Response

Murder is a sin regardless of the motives. In this light, Christians can share in the deep concern that Harvey Milk's murderer, Dan White, was convicted of voluntary manslaughter instead of first degree murder. Furthermore, homosexual activists sometimes blur the issues at stake in the murders of some practicing homosexuals. For example, the murderers of Matthew Shepherd, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, committed an evil act and deserved to be punished to the full extent of the law. While they may have in fact targeted a homosexual male, they were also motivated by their desire to rob another person. The degree to which substance abuse contributed to the death of Matthew Shepherd is still debated. What is clear is that Shepherd was murdered. Christians oppose murder and do not encourage people to murder homosexuals. Christian moral opposition to homosexuality cannot be said to contribute to violence against homosexuals any more than Christian moral opposition to adultery creates a hostile environment for adulterers.

## **E. The Fred Phelps Argument**

### **1. View Stated**

Closely tied to the previous argument is what I call the "Fred Phelps" Argument. Fred Phelps is the "pastor" of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, KS. He and his followers protested outside of Matthew Shepherd's funeral, holding up vulgar signs which essentially claimed Matthew Shepherd deserved what he got. Homosexual activists claim that Phelps is the logical conclusion of the Christian moral stance. David Gushee, Professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University, links Fred Phelps to conservative opposition to the homosexual agenda by Evangelical Christians. After mentioning Anita Bryant, Jerry Falwell, and Tim LaHaye as opponents of homosexual rights, Gushee then says, "Westboro

Baptist Church has provided a horrifying example of the continued survival of “Christian” contempt for gay and lesbian people, but their very marginality has been instructive evidence of progress elsewhere.”<sup>97</sup>

## 2. Response

Fred Phelps (1929 – 2014) was an evil man masquerading as a minister of the Gospel and he serves as sort of straw man for revisionist interpreters. Phelps is presented as a true example of Christianity, and is thus easily dismissed because of his insensitive and vitriolic nature. The argument is then that other pastors who oppose homosexuality can be dismissed just as easily. In reality, Christian opposition to homosexuality is based on the tension between loving people while not approving sinful actions. Phelps had a truncated and dangerous approach because he omitted any genuine idea of loving people. His church is really more of a “cult” than a church. For the record, Phelps and his bizarre crowd have picketed Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on two separate occasions. Why? Because our school says people can be forgiven of participating in homosexual acts.

### **F. If you do not affirm the LGBTQ agenda, you are encouraging LGBTQ kids to commit suicide.**

#### 1. View Stated

This form of ad hominem argument suggests that when and if a teenager involved in homosexuality commits suicide, then Christians have contributed to his or her death by creating a moral environment which does not affirm homosexual behavior. Essentially, the

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<sup>97</sup> David Gushee, “Change We Can All Support: The LGBT Issue, Part 3,” *Associated Baptist Press*, July 22, 2014, accessed August 13, 2014, <http://www.abpnews.com/opinion/columns/item/28960-change-we-can-all-support-the-lgbt-issue-part-3>.

homosexual activist argument says, “You Christians claim to love children. Look at all these homosexual kids who feel oppressed because you don’t affirm their sexuality. Some of them even *kill themselves!*” Essentially, opposition to homosexuality is equated with hating children.

## 2. Response

The causes of teenage suicide are multiple and complex. Teenagers have committed suicide for an almost infinite number of reasons. Not infrequently, teenage suicides are in fact quite selfish. The teenager often thinks, “I’ll show them (*them* usually being another human who is not conforming to the teenager’s desires) how evil they are! I’ll get back at them! I’ll kill myself. *Then they’ll feel guilty!*” Teenage suicide is always tragic, but it is frequently a self-centered act. In fact, the mere *threat* of suicide is sometimes used by teenagers as a tool of manipulation in an attempt to make other people conform to their wishes.

The confused and complicated nature of teenage suicide noted, a thoughtful Christian does not deny that some boys who are not as masculine as others or girls who are not as feminine as other girls sometimes suffer very real and traumatizing events in childhood and adolescence. The Christian answer is to offer compassion, prayer, and genuine friendship to such kids. When we communicate Biblical teachings on sex, we strive to maintain a healthy balance between conviction and compassion.

### **G. Former Evangelicals Who Pretended to be Heterosexuals, but were really homosexuals.**

A group of ex-evangelicals exists who now claim to be homosexual. This argumentation is often used in tandem with assertion that many Christians are afraid of their own homosexual tendencies (see above under B).



## 1. Argument Stated

Homosexual activists delight in telling the stories of people who formerly identified with Evangelical Christians but then embraced the homosexual lifestyle. The argument has moral force at several levels within popular thinking. First, the argument affirms the contention that homosexuality really can't be changed. After all, these were very religious people. The argument is commonly stated like this, "Look at all these people who self-identify as evangelicals who are coming out of the closet. If Jesus really is opposed to homosexuality, why didn't he change them?" The second way the argument has force is that it not so subtly suggests that many evangelicals actually have conflicted feelings of sexual attraction which they try to mask in their opposition to homosexual behavior. Thus, the person who comes out of the closet is presented as brave and virtuous while the evangelical who continues to oppose homosexuality is presented as a troubled person who engages in self-loathing because of his or her own innate sexual orientation. Finally, homosexual activists like to use the former-evangelical-now-gay argument to "prove" that evangelicals really are not loving people. Stated popularly, this argument says, "See, you evangelicals say you love the sinner but hate the sin. But you are afraid to admit you have gay people in your churches and you intimidate them into silence. They can't even express who they really are because the gay people know you won't love them."

### a. Popular Example 1: Mel White

Mel White earned a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Seminary and was an Evangelical pastor for a time. He is most well known as being a ghostwriter within the Evangelical publishing community, having been the primary author for Billy Graham's *Approaching Hoofbeats*, Pat Robertson's *America's Date With Destiny*, and Jerry

Falwell's *If I Should Die Before I Wake*. White claims to have tried everything possible to change his homosexuality and eventually attempted suicide. Eventually, he divorced his wife and embraced the homosexual lifestyle, becoming the pastor of the Dallas Cathedral of Hope, a MCC church. He founded Soulforce, a pro-homosexual group based in Lynchburg, VA.

b. Popular Example 2: Michael Bussee

Michael Bussee as a leader of Exodus International, but he left the group in 1979 to be with his lover and fellow Exodus member, Gary Cooper. Eventually, both men divorced their wives and had a "commitment ceremony" with each other in 1982. Cooper died of AIDS in 1991.

c. Popular Example 3: Ray Boltz

Many evangelicals were taken quite by surprise when popular Christian song writer and recording artist Ray Boltz announced he had divorced his wife in order to embrace homosexuality. The winner of three Dove Awards and author of favorite songs such as "Thank You," "Take Up Your Cross," "I Pledge Allegiance to the Lamb," and "The Anchor Holds," Boltz declared his homosexuality in a September 12, 2008 article in *The Washington Blade*, a homosexual newspaper. Married for thirty-three years and the father of four children, Boltz now affiliates with the Metropolitan Community Church and lives with his homosexual partner in Florida.

2. Response

While former-evangelicals-now-gay claim evangelical churches were uncaring to them, it is equally possible that the people now self-identifying as homosexual are engaging in self-centered behavior without concern for the way their actions affect other Christians.

Furthermore, I personally have known a number of men who professed to be evangelicals and left their wives for other women. Using the pro-homosexual argument, I suppose I should not condemn these as adulterous men, but affirm them as “men designed for multiple sexual partners.” Quite frankly, Christian discipleship is hard and difficult for all followers of Christ. That is why Jesus described following him as going through a narrow door. One’s personal feelings and desires stand under the judgment of Scripture; the validity of Scripture is not determined by how any Christian “feels” at any given moment.

## **H. “Born Again” Homosexuals Who Returned to the Gay Lifestyle or “Ex-ex-Gays”**

### **1. Argument Stated**

In the almost 50 years since the Stonewall Riots, a number of “ex-gay” ministries were started in opposition to the radical gay rights movement. Though varying in their expression, these groups typically asserted that after receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, many people were changed from a homosexual to heterosexual desire. However, as gay activists delight in sharing, many of the people in these different Christian ministries wound up returning to the gay lifestyle and repudiating their previous involvement in “ex-gay” ministries. In fact, Exodus, International, the largest “ex-gay” ministry in the U.S., decided to shut down on June 19, 2013 and issued an apology for claiming people can change their sexual orientation. Alan Chambers, the final president of Exodus, stated in the apology that he had lied about his ongoing struggles with same-sex attraction, and then said, “I am sorry we promoted sexual

orientation change efforts and reparative theories about sexual orientation that stigmatized parents.”<sup>98</sup>

a. Popular Example 1: Michael Bussee and Gary Cooper

Michael Bussee (He appears in two categories here!) was one of the co-founders of Exodus, International, a now defunct organization that at one time was the leading “ex-gay” ministry in the United States. In 1979, he returned to the gay lifestyle to live with Gary Cooper, another man involved in the Exodus ministry. Eventually, they divorced their wives and were joined in a “commitment ceremony” in 1982. Cooper eventually died of an AIDS related illness in 1991.

b. Popular Example 2: John Paulk

John Paulk was a “drag queen” and homosexual prostitute who claimed to have been converted to faith in Jesus Christ. Subsequently, he married a lady who left the lesbian lifestyle. Paulk was employed by Focus on the Family and he and his wife wrote a book titled *Love Won Out* to describe their exodus out of the gay lifestyle. He was also elected chairman of the board of Exodus, International. On September 19, 2000, Paulk was caught in a gay bar in Washington, D.C. where he was apparently trying to pick up other men using an assumed identity. Paulk now completely repudiates the ex-gay movement, and in 2013 he said, ““Today, I do not consider myself 'ex-gay' and I no longer support or promote the movement. Please allow me to be clear: I do not believe that reparative therapy changes sexual orientation; in fact, it does great harm to many people.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Melissa Steffman, “Alan Chambers Apologizes to Gay Community, Exodus International to Shut Down,” *Christianity Today* June 21, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/june/alan-chambers-apologizes-to-gay-community-exodus.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Sunnive Brydum, “John Paulk Formally Announces, Apologizes for Harmful ‘Ex-Gay’ Movement,” *The Advocate*, <http://www.advocate.com/politics/religion/2013/04/24/john-paulk-formally-renounces-apologizes-harmful-ex-gay-movement>.

David Gushee, professor of Christian Ethics at Mercer University, summarizes the view of the ex-Gay movement from someone from the theological left: “The admitted failure of the ex-gay movement has destroyed the plausibility of sexual-orientation-change efforts. Whatever pastoral approach the church takes, it should not be that discredited and damaging one.”<sup>100</sup>

## 2. Response

Many mistakes have been made in the “ex-gay” movement of the last several decades. One of the most serious mistakes is that evangelicals have been too quick to rush born again homosexuals into the public spotlight without giving them sufficient time to mature in their faith, grow in basic spiritual disciplines, and learn how to overcome temptation. This reflects a broader problem in Evangelical Christianity: Famous converts are rushed forward and given a large platform presence without sufficient time for growth. Excessive praise and adulation are difficult for even the most mature Christian to accept without at least some hubris. As is seen by the number of Evangelical mega-church pastors who have been caught in sexual immorality, intense public popularity often precedes a major moral downfall. This premature exposure to the public spotlight has contributed to the reversal of opinion of many people in the “ex-gay” movement.

One reason Evangelicals (and Southern Baptists) have been quick to push people with an “ex-gay” testimony into the pulpit is the oppressive drum beat of biological determinism forced on our nation by those who mindlessly repeat Lady Gaga’s “born this way” ideology. We believe people are more than the sum of our DNA; people have a soul, are volitional, and can trust in Jesus Christ and be

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<sup>100</sup> David Gushee, “If This Is Where You Get Off The Bus: The LGBT Issue, Part 6,” *Associated Baptist Press*, August 12, 2014, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.abpnews.com/opinion/columns/item/29057-if-this-is-where-you-get-off-the-bus-the-lgbt-issue-part-6>.

changed. But our sense of urgency to respond to the culture war must not cloud our better judgment concerning good pastoral care. Anyone who publicly professes they are “no longer gay” is inviting intense attack and mean-spirited assault as the left-wing birds of prey descend on them.

Underneath many of these “ex-gay” failures is a distinct element of spiritual warfare. I Peter 5:8 warns us the “Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.” This is most certainly true with anyone wishing to leave the homosexual lifestyle in contemporary America. People leaving the homosexual lifestyle are in an unenviable position since the culture will ridicule them, their former circle of friends will mock them, and their new Christian brothers and sisters often don’t know how to help. Since we have an enemy eagerly pursuing our flock, shepherds should resist the temptation to rush new converts into the pulpit. Instead, we should spend lots of time helping them develop the spiritual tenacity necessary to overcome strongholds of temptation and besetting sins.

## **XII. Homosexuality in Islam**

These lecture notes focus on the attempts of people who self-identify as Christians to re-position the traditional Christian stance against homosexual behavior. Since many of my students will be engaged in missions in an Islamic environment, I include a few brief comments here about Islam and Homosexuality.

### **A. Prohibited by the Qur’an**

Surah 7:80 – 81: And [We had sent] Lūt [Lot] when he said to his people, "Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you

approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people."

This is the Qur'anic version of Genesis 19. Lūt is clearly Lot of the Bible.

Surah 26: 165 – 166: [Lot speaking to the men of Sodom] Do you approach males among the worlds and leave what your Lord has created for you as mates? But you are a people transgressing.

## **B. Homosexuality in The Hadith**

"Don't allow men who imitate women and women who imitate men into your houses." (al-Bukhari, al-Kaba'ir/the Major-Sins by Muhammad ibn-'Uthman adh-Dhahabi) From this reference, one can assume that there were people practicing homosexuality in pre-Islamic Arabia.

## **C. Varying Practices within Islam**

### **1. Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, it is common for older men to have boy lovers aged 9 – 15. It is common for dances to occur where young boys are dressed up like women to perform for older men. In Afghanistan, using a boy sexually is not considered as wrong as sexual infidelity with a woman. In a perverse turn of events, women are viewed as unclean, but boys are clean. Some men will claim they are not homosexuals because they do not "love" the boys, but only use them sexually.

### **2. Iran**

Execution of homosexuals has not been uncommon in Iran since the Revolution of the late 1970s. However, in an odd twist, sex-change operations are rather common in Iran. Apparently, this is viewed as a “work-around” to avoid execution. If a man, in particular, is caught having sexing with another male, then the claim is made, “Aha, you must really be a woman!” In the 1980's the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, issued a fatwa allowing gender reassignment surgery - apparently after being moved by a meeting with a person who claimed to be a woman who said she was trapped in a man's body.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

The lure of the LGBTQ affirming community can be immensely strong for anyone experiencing same-sex attraction or some level of gender nonconformity. What such people often find there in the LGBTQ community is that the things that previously caused shame are now a reason for celebration. Yet the question remains: Is the LGBTQ worldview true? Does the celebration offered there actually help one to see the world more clearly?

William Countryman, an Episcopal priest and formerly Sherman E. Johnson Professor in Biblical Studies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, CA, criticizes conservative Christians’ stance on homosexuality and says:

This [homosexuality] has come to be the supremely contentious issue of our times, with some Christians even insisting that this is a topic worth dividing churches over, despite the fact that scripture, as often noted, has little to say on the topic and is open to a variety of interpretations. . . . The question before Christians today is not really so much about homosexuality as about whether the churches are prepared to rethink the issue



honestly and openly. This is something that right-wing Christians of all sorts are determined to prevent.<sup>101</sup>

When Countryman says there are a variety of interpretations concerning homosexuality and Scripture, he is correct – there are a variety of heretical, poorly-formed interpretations based on a deconstruction of the text leaving the interpretations themselves completely divorced from authorial intent. So, when he says he wants Christians to “rethink” the issue honestly and openly, what he really means is he wants Christians to reject the plain meaning of the text and embrace his sexually libertine ethics. In contrast, Scripture is unequivocal in its description of homosexual acts as sin.

I should warn students that the radical homosexual rights movement does not want an open forum or debate concerning the morality of homosexuality. From their perspective, discussions with people who challenge the morality of the homosexual lifestyle impart a modicum of credibility to those with whom they disagree.<sup>102</sup> Thus, they typically resort to name calling and intimidation as opposed to any real dialogue or debate. The pressure from our culture not only to stop teaching the Bible but actively to embrace LGBTQ perspectives can be oppressive. Even other preachers who might have the courage to speak will abandon the faithful preacher in silence. The temptation is to yield at length and subside into silence, as if he his tormented by remorse for having spoken the truth.

There are often broken family relationships in the background of LGBTQ people, but not always. Many LGBTQ people come from happy families with lots of love. But in some cases, there is a broken or terribly unhealthy relationship with parents. One of the purposes of a father is to help us establish the truth of who we are. For some, men in particular, looking for a connection with dad can be

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<sup>101</sup> William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, & Sex*, 280.

<sup>102</sup> My language here is influenced by Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 96.

transferred to longing for affection from male peers. Many gay men might say, "I knew I was a guy; I just didn't feel I was a very good one."

How do we interact? Keep in mind that a gentle answer turns away wrath. Somehow, we need to learn to communicate that disagreement doesn't mean rejection. Can we learn how to make a point without making an enemy? The world is reactionary, and we should be prepared for a level of unfiltered reaction. We must stay calm when this occurs. Believe in God to do what He always does: Convict people of sin and save.

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