

## **GOD’S WORD ON HOMOSEXUALITY: THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN AND THE REALITY OF FORGIVENESS**

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*Through following a distorted meaning of “love,” some in the present day have condoned homosexual practice, without realizing that biblical love excludes homosexuality because of its sinfulness. Christians can best share the gospel with homosexuals by calling their lifestyle what the Bible calls it—sin. Genesis 1–2, Matthew 19, and Ephesians 5 describe clearly the way that God has instituted marriage as a monogamous, heterosexual relationship. Genesis 19, Jude 7, and 2 Peter 2 illustrate how the Fall almost immediately eroded the purity of human sexuality, including a devastation of the divine institution of marriage. Leviticus 18 and 20 and Romans 1 lay out very plainly God’s instructions about how repulsive homosexuality is in God’s sight. Yet Isaiah 56 and 1 Corinthians 6 make plain God’s plan for homosexuals to find freedom and forgiveness through a life-changing faith in Jesus Christ. The door is wide open for homosexuals and lesbians to accept God’s invitation.*

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“All you need is love.”

So said the Beatles. If they had been singing about God’s love, the statement would have a grain of truth in it. But what usually goes by the name *love* in popular culture is not authentic love at all; it is actually a deadly fraud.

Far from being “all you need,” the world’s distorted view of love is something Christians desperately need to avoid. The apostle Paul makes that very point in Eph 5:1-3. He writes, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”

The simple command of verse 2 (“walk in love, as Christ loved us”) sums

up the whole moral obligation of the Christian. After all, God's love is the single, central principle that defines the Christian's entire duty.

*This* kind of love really is "all you need." Romans 13:8–10 says, "The one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments . . . are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Galatians 5:14 echoes that selfsame truth: "The whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Jesus likewise taught that all the law and the prophets hang on two simple principles about love—the First and Second Great Commandments (Matt 22:38–40). In other words, "love . . . is the bond of perfection" (Col 3:14, NKJV).

When Paul commands believers to walk in love, the context reveals that in positive terms, he is talking about being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving to one another (Eph 4:32). The model for such selfless love is Christ, who gave His life to save His people from their sins. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

In other words, true love is always sacrificial, self-giving, merciful, compassionate, sympathetic, kind, generous, and patient. Those and many other positive, benevolent qualities (cf. 1 Cor 13:4–8) are what Scripture associates with divine love.

But notice the negative side as well, also seen in the context of Ephesians 5. The person who *truly* loves others like Christ does must refuse every kind of counterfeit love. The apostle Paul names some of these worldly forgeries. They include immorality, impurity, and covetousness. The passage continues:

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them (vv. 4–7; unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are from the NASB).

*Immorality* is perhaps our generation's favorite substitute for love. Paul uses the Greek word *porneia*, which includes every kind of sexual sin. Popular culture desperately tries to blur the line between genuine love and immoral passion. But all such immorality is a total perversion of genuine love, because it violates both the Great Commandment (Mark 12:29–30) by disobeying God's Word, and the Second Great Commandment (Mark 12:31; cf. Rom 13:9–10) by seeking self-gratification rather than the spiritual good and sanctification of others.

*Impurity* is another devilish perversion of love. Here Paul employs the Greek term *akatharsia*, which refers to every kind of filth and impurity. Specifically, Paul

has in mind “filthiness,” “foolish talk,” and “crude joking,” which are the peculiar characteristics of evil companionship. That kind of camaraderie has nothing to do with true love, and the apostle plainly says it has no place in the Christian’s walk.

*Covetousness* is yet another corruption of love that stems from a narcissistic desire for self-gratification. It is the exact opposite of the example Christ set when He “gave Himself up for us” (v. 2). In verse 5, Paul equates covetousness with idolatry. Again, this has no place in the Christian walk, and according to verse 5, the person who is guilty of it “has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Such sins, Paul says, “must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints” (v. 3). Of those who practice such things, he instructs his readers to “not associate with them” (v. 7), but rather to “expose” their deeds of darkness (v. 11). Christians, then, are not showing authentic love unless they courageously speak the truth about all the popular perversions of love.

Most of the talk about love these days ignores that principle. “Love” has been redefined as a broad tolerance that overlooks sin and embraces good and evil alike. But that is not love; it is *apathy* mixed with *compromise*.

God’s love is not at all like that. Remember, the supreme manifestation of God’s love is the cross, where Christ “loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (v. 2). Thus Scripture explains the love of God in terms of sacrifice, atonement for sin, and *propitiation*: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). In other words, Christ made Himself a sacrifice to turn away the wrath of an offended deity. Far from dismissing our sins with a benign tolerance, God gave His Son as an offering for sin, to satisfy His own wrath and justice in the salvation of sinners.

That is the very heart of the gospel. God manifest His love in a way that upheld His holiness, justice, and righteousness without compromise. True love “does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth” (1 Cor 13:6). That is the kind of love we are called to walk in. It is a love that is “first pure, then peaceable” (cf. Jas 3:17).<sup>1</sup>

### **The Loving Truth about Homosexual “Love”**

If true love demands the courage to confront false love and its fruits, then homosexuality must be graciously yet firmly condemned for being exactly what it is—sin. Though homosexual advocates claim that their motivation is *love*, the Bible identifies all such attractions and passions as counterfeit love, a perversion of God’s intended design for intimacy and procreation. The immorality, impurity, and

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<sup>1</sup>The introduction to this article is adapted from my article in *Pulpit* magazine entitled, “The Kind of Love You Don’t Need” (April 19, 2007), online at <http://www.sfplp.it.com/2007/04/19/the-love-you-dont-need/>, accessed 9/27/08.

covetousness (lust) discussed in Eph 5:4-7 each describe an aspect of the kind of “love” that fuels homosexual desire. As for the conduct that flows out of that desire, “it is disgraceful to even speak of the things which are done by them in secret” (v. 12).

The truth about homosexuality, as evidenced from the Scriptures, is that such behavior is neither natural nor normal; and it is certainly not morally neutral. It is, instead, a distortion of God’s created order and a violation of His revealed will—making it as profoundly sinful as it is disgraceful and bizarre. Christians who advocate an attitude of tolerance and acceptance toward the homosexual lifestyle, often in the name of love, are in fact exhibiting anything but true, biblical love.

Churches and Christian leaders who, in the name of love, defend homosexuality and affirm gay and lesbian ministers and “marriages” not only degrade God’s moral standard but also lead others to sin. But condoning sin has no part in true love. Authentic love for others does not excuse their wickedness, but rather encourages them to do what is right. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments?” (1 John 5:2–3). To love Christ is to obey Him (John 14:15); and to love others is to encourage them to do the same (cf. Heb 10:24).

Compassionately but firmly speaking the truth to unsaved sinners, whatever their predominant sin might be, is a primary part of what it means to love the lost with a true love. Unless the sinner recognizes his sin, understanding the fact that he is under God’s wrath, he will not see his need for a Savior. And until he sees his need for a Savior, crying out for mercy and trusting in Christ, he cannot be saved. Thus, the loving evangelist is called to confront sin—showing sinners what Scripture says about both their current guilt before a holy God and their future condemnation if they do not repent.

If the goal is to reach homosexuals with the gospel, Christians must begin by showing them from God’s Word that homosexuality in all its forms is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord. The Bible never commends or condones homosexual behavior on any level. Rather, it consistently and repeatedly condemns it as that which God hates and promises to punish. Until homosexuals understand that the lifestyle that defines them is inherently and unnaturally sinful, they will never desire the forgiveness God offers to them (and to all sinners) if they will forsake their iniquity and embrace Jesus Christ.

### **The Bible and Homosexuality**

On the issue of homosexuality, God’s Word is neither silent nor unclear. Sadly, the contemporary church has been so inundated with pro-homosexual literature and advocacy, that it has in many cases lost both the ability to discern such disgraceful iniquity and the resolve to fight against it. Pro-homosexual Christians contend that the biblical injunctions against such behavior are either too ambiguous

or too tied to ancient culture to remain relevant today. But the issue is not really a lack of clarity—since the biblical commands are straightforwardly clear; nor is it a change of culture—since the moral rule of Scripture is founded in the unchanging character of God. The real issue, as with most moral compromises in the modern church, is a love of sin, and an idolatrous desire for cultural acceptance mixed with an arrogant disdain for the authority of Scripture. In spite of the fact that homosexuality has never been embraced or affirmed by God's people in the history of either Israel or the church, contemporary Christianity has done little more than muddy the waters with unwarranted ambiguity and controversy.

Thankfully, God's Word speaks directly to the issue of homosexuality in both the Old and New Testaments. In so doing, it establishes the divine design (or institution) for proper human sexuality, provides divine illustrations of God's wrath against such sexual perversion, and sets forth divine instruction directly prohibiting homosexuality. Yet, significantly, it also offers a divine invitation of redemption to any and all who will repent of their sin and embrace Jesus Christ in faith.

### **The Divine Institution**

#### ***Genesis 1–2; Matthew 19; and Ephesians 5***

The biblical case against homosexuality begins with the first few chapters of Genesis where God, on the sixth day of creation, established the sacred institution of marriage as that which only one man and one woman can rightly enjoy together. Genesis 1:27-28a states that, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.'" In the Hebrew, the words "male" and "female" are in the emphatic position, giving the sense of "the one male and the one female." Only one man and one woman existed in the beginning, and for a very important reason, nothing other than monogamous, heterosexual marriage was possible. Therein lies God's perfect paradigm for marriage, as that which involves one partner from each gender.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the paradigm that was established at creation, the rest of Scripture strictly forbids any sexual activity outside marriage—including all fornication (cf. Acts 15:29; 1 Cor 6:9; Heb 13:4), adultery (cf. Exod 20:14; Lev 20:10; Mark 19:18), bestiality (cf. Exod 22:19; Lev 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut 27:21), and homosexuality (cf. Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27).

Genesis 2:24 underscores the divine plan for marriage with these words:

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<sup>2</sup>Gordan Wenham (*Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987] 33) notes regarding Gen 1:28, "Here, then, we have a clear statement of the divine purpose of marriage: positively, it is for the procreation of children; negatively, it is a rejection of the ancient oriental fertility cults." The rest of Scripture indicates that marriage was instituted to procreate mankind, to raise up children to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). It is also for the purpose of companionship, so that man would not be alone (2:18) and for the purpose of sexual fulfillment and pleasure (1 Cor 7:4–5; cf. Heb 13:4).

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” Commenting on this verse, Kenneth Matthews writes, “Without question 2:24 serves as the bedrock for the Hebrew understanding of the centrality of the nuclear family for the survival of society. Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the divine norm from the outset of creation. [On the flip side,] homosexual behavior was a confusion of sexual identity between men and women.”<sup>3</sup> Homosexual unions (no matter what society may label them) cannot rightly be called “marriages,”<sup>4</sup> since they involve only one gender, possess no ability to procreate,<sup>5</sup> and cannot provide the kind of sexual companionship that God intended.<sup>6</sup>

Lloyd R. Bailey summarizes the case for heterosexuality based on the opening chapters of Genesis with these words:

A biblical case for exclusive heterosexual contact can (and has) been made on the basis of the creation stories in Gen 1–3. Part of God’s grand purpose was the creation of “male and female” (1:27) that would “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth . . .” (1:28). Furthermore, the proper complement to the male that God had created, in order to relieve his sense of estrangement from the rest of creation (2:18-20), was the formation of a fitting female sexual partner (2:20-24). Of course, other partners are possible (both lower animals and human males) . . . but such activity falls outside the intended design. Thus

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<sup>3</sup>Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996) 224. Noting the Christian continuation of the Jewish perspective on homosexuality, Matthews writes, “Christian expectations for sexual behavior were the same and were a given among Jewish converts, but the Gentile world did not follow such norms. It was against the customary practices of the Greco-Roman world that Paul urged sexual restraints (e.g., Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Thess 4:3-7).”

<sup>4</sup>R. Kent Hughes (*Genesis* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004] 63) underscores the importance of the Genesis account on the topic of homosexuality: “Now the obvious thing must be stated: Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the norm from the time of creation. The account is about Adam and Eve; there is no Adam and Steve! Legislators who would legitimize same-sex marriage, giving it the putative status of heterosexual marriage, are attacking a creation ordinance and are reproaching God himself. What unmitigated Dante’s terror awaits such presumption. God will not be mocked!”

<sup>5</sup>Daniel Block (*Judges Ruth*, New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holmann, 1999] 544) notes the short-sighted selfishness inherent in homosexuality. “Within the context of the Old Testament, since one lives on in one’s progeny, sexual activity takes on added significance in securing one’s future. Homosexual activity thinks only of the present.”

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Block continues, “Beginning with Gen 1:27-28, the Scriptures are consistent in affirming only heterosexual marriage. The intimacy described in Gen 2:24-25 is natural, good, and holy, and it remains so even after the fall. Within the context of marriage, through sexual activity a husband and wife express physical intimacy to complement their emotional and spiritual union. Although this form of intimacy is celebrated in Scripture as beautiful and good, according to Lev 18:22 and 20:13, the same kind of intimacy between two males is condemned in the sharpest of terms as [being] ‘an abomination,’ as on a par with adultery and incest, as a capital crime. Accordingly, homosexual activity is not only ‘against nature’; it is a crime ‘against God,’ another expression of ‘doing what is right in one’s own eyes.’”

a modern commentator has put it succinctly: “Even though an evaluation of same-sex intercourse is not the point of the text, legitimization for homosexuality requires an entirely different kind of creation story.” This is precisely what later Jewish and Christian writers had in mind when they condemned same-sex intercourse as “contrary to nature.”<sup>7</sup>

The NT reiterates the paradigm established in Genesis 1–2 through the words of both Christ and the apostle Paul. In Matt 19:4-6, and its parallel in Mark 10:4-8, Jesus affirmed the fact that “from the beginning” God made human beings “male and female” and that the sexual union represented in marriage involves a man being “joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” Christ’s words (taken from both Gen 1:27 and 2:24) underscore the fact that heterosexual marriage has always been God’s intention, in spite of man’s attempts to distort, deny, or disregard it. “The implication is that God instituted marriage by the creation of humans in two genders, male and female, and that the woman was created for the man just as, in a corresponding way, the man was given to the woman.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, homosexuality is not simply another option for two consenting adults; it is instead a perversion of God’s design for the procreation, pleasure, and preservation of the human race. As Christ affirmed, “[O]ur sexuality is of divine ordinance; it is intended to be exercised in monogamous relationships.”<sup>9</sup>

The apostle Paul also cites Gen 2:24 in Ephesians 5, in which he gives instructions on marriage and also uses marriage as an illustration of Christ and the church. When marriage is properly lived out, according to the way that God purposed it from creation, it not only brings great joy to the husband and wife, but also serves as a picture of Christ’s love for His bride, the church.

In 1 Tim 1:9-10, Paul denounces “immoral men and homosexuals” as among those who are “lawless and rebellious” and “contrary to sound teaching.”<sup>10</sup> The word he uses for homosexuals, *arsenokoitai*, literally means “males in the marriage bed,” and “seems to have been coined using the terminology of LXX Lev 18:22 [and]

<sup>7</sup>Lloyd R. Bailey: *Leviticus-Numbers* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys 2005) 255. Internal citation from Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001) 61-62.

<sup>8</sup>James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) 2:401. To this point, Michael Green adds, “Marriage was meant to be complementary: God ‘made them male and female’ ([v.] 4). It is not a unisex world. There is a God-ordained difference and complementarity between the sexes. That is so obvious that it only needs to be stated today when homosexual relationships have come to be seen as an equally valid alternative to marriage. The basic trouble about it is that it contravenes the complementarity that God has built into the sexes” (*The Message of Matthew*, *The Bible Speaks Today* [Wheaton, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000] 202 [emphasis in the original]).

<sup>9</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 481.

<sup>10</sup>William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000) 38, notes of these two words that “[t]he first word refers to male fornicators, and the second to sexual relations with the same sex.” Both were, in Paul’s mind, a violation of the seventh commandment.

20:13.”<sup>11</sup> The term underscores the fact that Paul viewed any homosexual acts as a sinful perversion, as Knight explains:

The word Paul uses is composed of two components. . . . The former is the specific word for male [*arsein*] with “strong emphasis on sex” (BAGD). The latter means generally “bed” and is a euphemism for sexual intercourse (BAGD). The word does not refer, as some writers have alleged, only to sex with young boys or to male homosexual prostitutes, but simply to homosexuality itself (so Paul explicitly in Rom. 1:26, 27 . . .). Paul writes elsewhere that the consequence for continued and unrepentant involvement in this, and other sins listed here, is exclusion from the kingdom of God and that deliverance from this, and the other sins, is an integral part of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Lord through the power of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 6:9-11).<sup>12</sup>

Scripture, in both Testaments, views marriage as a sacred institution and any sexual activity with someone other than one’s spouse is strictly forbidden by God (Heb 13:4; cf. Gal 5:19). This not only includes fornication and adultery, but also any form of homosexuality—since such runs contrary to the divine design established at creation.

### **The Divine Illustration**

#### ***Genesis 19; Jude 7; and 2 Peter 2***

The Fall, with its corrupting effects (Genesis 3), began to erode the purity of human sexuality immediately; and God’s perfect paradigm for marriage was quickly assaulted. Polygamy first appears in Gen 4:19; demonic sexual perversion in Gen 6:2; lewdness in 9:22; adultery (or near adultery) in 12:15-19; fornication in 16:4; incest in 19:36; rape in 34:2; prostitution in 38:15; and sexual harassment in 39:7. To this list, Genesis 19 adds the sin of homosexuality.

God’s strong opposition to homosexual behavior is perhaps most graphically illustrated in His response to the despicable behavior of the men at Sodom. In Gen 19:4-7, during an angelic rescue mission to save Lot from the city, the inhabitants of Sodom demonstrated the dreadful extent of their lust.

Before they [the angels, who had taken the appearance of men] lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.” But Lot went

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<sup>11</sup>Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 88. The authors further note that “there is little to be said lexically for confining the meaning of *arsenokoitai* to [merely] ‘male prostitutes’ or ‘call boys.’”

<sup>12</sup>George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 86.



out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly."

The savage mob, coming from every part of the city, was so consumed by immoral lust that even after being blinded, they continued to grope for the doorway (vv. 10-11). Lot, of course, recognized their homosexual passions as inherently wicked (v. 7). God did too, so much so that He utterly destroyed them for their great iniquity (cf. 18:20-33; 19:23-29).<sup>13</sup>

Some have attempted to argue, unsuccessfully, that homosexual behavior is not in view in this passage.<sup>14</sup> But passing the incident off as simply a violent breach of ancient hospitality laws goes against the context.<sup>15</sup> The mob did not want "to know" (v. 5) Lot's guests in a social way; they had no intention of befriending them or of sharing common interests. Their intentions were entirely sexual, as evidenced by both Lot's condemnation in verse 7 (where he calls their actions "wicked") and

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<sup>13</sup>Though Sodom was also guilty of other sins (Isa 1:10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:49, 58), it was the sin of homosexuality for which the city was primarily known. By the intertestamental period, it was almost exclusively remembered for sexual debauchery (cf. Jub 16.5,6; 20:5; T. Levi 14.6; T. Naph 3.4; 2 Enoch 10:4; 34:1-2; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 1.11). Jude 7 and 2 Pet 2:6-7 affirm this intertestamental understanding. Of course, Genesis 19 makes the issue self-evident in the context. As E. A. Speiser (*Genesis*, Anchor Bible [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1964] 142) points out, "[I]t was the city's sexual depravity, the manifest 'sodomy' of its inhabitants, that provided the sole and self-evident reason for its frightful fate." Richard F. Lovelace (*Homosexuality and the Church* [Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1978], 100-101) suggests that the other sins of Sodom fit the paradigm of Romans 1 regarding the wholesale perversion of pagan societies.

<sup>14</sup>For example, Walter Brueggemann (*Genesis* [Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox, 1982] 164) contends that there is "considerable evidence that the sin of Sodom was not specifically sexual." Later he concludes, "It may be that sexual disorder is one aspect of a general disorder. But that issue is presented in a way scarcely pertinent to contemporary discussion of homosexuality" (*ibid.*). For other examples, see D. S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, 1955), 4ff.; and J. J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City, Kans.: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1976) 42-50.

<sup>15</sup>Lloyd R. Bailey (*Leviticus-Numbers* 249) responding to those who suggest hospitality is primarily in view, writes, "Too much is being made of violation of the rules of hospitality when some modern interpreters discuss this episode. After all, no biblical guideline to proper behavior commands that 'Thou shalt be hospitable.' This later societal value, operative throughout the Muslim Near East, is being over-emphasized here and 'read into' the Bible." For an example of what Bailey is critiquing, note the comments of Robert G. Boling on Judg 19:22, "As in Gen 19, the initial and determinative offense is a violation of the law of hospitality" (*Judges*, The Anchor Bible [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1975] 276). K. Lawson Younger, Jr., responds to such interpretations of Judg 19:22 with these words, "[Some] over stress the inhospitality problem so that the horde's attempt at homosexual rape is reinterpreted as purely a matter connected to the inhospitality issue. Behind this is an effort to argue that the Scriptures do not condemn homosexuality as sin. This interpretation is untenable in light of Judges 19:24-25, where the host offers the Gibeonites the concubine and his daughter as alternatives (with rather obvious sexual overtones), and the men reject his offer and attempt to press home their desire for the man" (*Judges/Ruth*, The NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002] 359).

the offer of his daughters in verse 8 (where the same verb “to know” is used).<sup>16</sup> Though their violence alone was worthy of condemnation, it was the homosexual nature of their lust that made it particularly despicable to God (a point which both Jude 7 and 2 Pet 2:6-7 make certain). Thus, it is not merely violence or even homosexual rape that is being condemned. Rather it is any type of homosexual act or lifestyle. Such a conclusion is not only confirmed by considering later passages (in Leviticus and the NT), but can also be defended from the passage itself. As Hamilton explains:

We see at least four problems with the view that the prohibition here is only on [homosexual] rape. First, nowhere in the OT does the verb *yāda'* [“to know”] have the nuance of “abuse” or “violate.” Second, the OT uses unmistakable language to relate rape incidents. Thus the Shechemites “seized” and “lay with” and “humbled” Dinah (Gen. 34:2). Amnon “forced” and “lay with” his half-sister Tamar (2 Sam. 13:14). Similarly, the biblical laws about rape also use these terms: “seize,” “lie with” (Deut. 22:25–27). Third, this interpretation forces one meaning on “know” in v. 5 (i.e. “abuse”) but a different meaning on “know” three verses later (i.e., “have intercourse with”), for it is unlikely that Lot is saying: “I have two daughters who have never been abused.” Fourth, such an interpretation forces these incredible words in Lot’s mouth: “Do not rape my visitors. Here are my daughters, both virgins—rape them!” Clearly, then, the incident frowns on homosexual relations [in general] for whatever reason.<sup>17</sup>

Hamilton concludes his case by noting that in the similar account of Judg 19:22 the concubine and daughter are offered with the statement “and sexually mistreat them.” Whereas, by contrast, Lot avoids the use of any verb that would necessitate sexual aggression.

A strong case, then, can be made from this text itself that a kind of homosexual conduct is in view—as the object of God’s outpoured wrath and manifest fury. In fact, the obvious truth is strengthened in the effort to answer the lame misrepresentations of pro-homosexual advocates. Because the Sodomites were so perverse, the Lord destroyed the entire city, burying it under fire and brimstone. The term *sodomy*, coming from this incident, refers to such homosexual behavior as was

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<sup>16</sup>The same verb, “to know,” is used elsewhere in Genesis to speak of sexual intimacy (cf. 4:1, 17, 25; 24:16). See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 18–50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 33–34 for a full lexical treatment of this verb, including the number of times it appears in the OT.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 34–35.

notoriously practiced by the Sodomites.<sup>18</sup> A “sodomite” was a homosexual, so called because the sin of Sodom was homosexuality.<sup>19</sup>

As noted earlier, both Jude 7 and 2 Pet 2:6 refer back to the calamitous judgment on Sodom, removing any doubt as to fact that sexual perversion was a primary characteristic of the city—and the main reason it was subjected to the judgment of God in such a uniquely devastating way. Jude writes of “Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them” which “indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh.” By using the term “gross immorality” (a compound word in Greek), Jude indicates that their homosexual behavior was especially despicable in the eyes of God. The “strange flesh” that they pursued refers to Lot’s angelic guests, whom the men of the city thought were male visitors (as indicated by their demands in Gen 19:5). “Virtually all commentators agree that this [passage] refers to the incident in Gen 19:4-11, and most believe that this means the attempt at homosexual relations,” explains Peter H. Davids. “[It was] a violation of the laws of purity which prohibited the mixing of things, even between the sexes (Deut 22:5, 9-11). Thus seeking sexual intercourse with a person of the same sex would be seeking a different type of flesh than that which one was supposed to seek.”<sup>20</sup> The debauched behavior of the Sodomites, in seeking sexual pleasure from those outside God’s design (in this case, individuals whom they thought were fellow males), serves as a lasting illustration of the utter abomination that homosexuality is in the eyes of God.

The apostle Peter, like Jude, writes that Sodom and Gomorrah were characterized by “the sensual conduct of unprincipled men” and therefore “condemned . . . to destruction” (2:6-7). Lot, on the other hand, is regarded as righteous because, although he lived among them, “his righteous soul [was] tormented day after day by their lawless deeds” (2:8).<sup>21</sup>

Though Lot and his daughters were spared, everyone else in Sodom and the surrounding cities was destroyed by incineration and asphyxiation. The word translated “destruction” speaks of complete overthrow and ruin. In fact, the devastation was so complete that the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah remain

<sup>18</sup>W. Sibley Towner (*Genesis*, Westminster Bible Companion [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001] 172-73) explains, “The entire episode serves to underscore how corrupt the Sodomite culture was.”

<sup>19</sup>“Sodomite” is a much better term to describe someone practicing homosexuality than a term like “gay.” The term “gay” is preposterous and misleading, because it implies happiness. But the sad reality is that it is a word coined by people who experience massive guilt, massive loneliness, no future, no hope, severe pain, and impending death. It is a word that is coined to describe an illusion. Homosexuals are the most pained, troubled, hopeless people there are—because they are seeking pleasure outside God’s design and are under God’s wrath. The term “Sodomite” is better because it is a biblical term and it clearly identifies homosexuality as a sin, like the behavior of Genesis 19.

<sup>20</sup>Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 52.

<sup>21</sup>Peter’s terminology speaks to the same “sphere of moral debauchery” as described by Jude (cf. D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude* [Greenville, S.C.: Unusual Publications, 1989] 104).

undiscovered. It is possible, though archaeologists do not know for sure, that the cities are buried under the mineral-dense waters of the Dead Sea.

The precedent set by Sodom establishes a critical truth: depraved men cannot pursue sensuality and ungodliness and escape God's judgment (cf. Matt 25:41; Rom 1:18; 2:5, 8; Eph 5:6; 1 Thess 2:16; 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 10:26-27; Rev 6:17). The rest of Scripture refers back to Sodom and Gomorrah over twenty times as an illustration and warning to those who might also choose to live ungodly lives (cf. Matt 10:14, 15; 11:23, 24; Luke 17:28-32). It is an example that those in the homosexual community today would do well to heed.

### **The Divine Instruction**

#### ***Leviticus 18, 20; Romans 1***

What the book of Genesis implies (though quite plainly) about homosexuality, through its discussion of the institution of marriage and the illustration of Sodom, the Mosaic legal code makes explicitly clear: homosexuality is detestable in the sight of God. The words of Lev 18:22 are straightforward and direct: "You [men] shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." And the consequences are equally clear, "For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people" (v. 29). The prohibition is reiterated a couple chapters later with these words: "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them" (20:13). No Israelite would have questioned what God thought about homosexuality. Though the surrounding Canaanite cultures indulged in such perversions, the people of God knew to avoid all such conduct.<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, the sin of homosexuality is listed in Leviticus 18 and 20 in the context of other sexual sins, indicating the categorical timelessness of the prohibitions given in this section. The prohibition here was not limited to the civil or cultural life of OT Israel, a point which both the immediate context and the rest of Scripture confirms.<sup>23</sup> As Roy Gane explains,

In Leviticus 18 and 20 the prohibition of homosexual activity (18:22; 20:13) appears within the same legal framework that also covers incest, adultery, and bestiality. Adultery is independently excluded by the seventh of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:14; Deut.

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<sup>22</sup>In addition, cross-dressing (Deut 22:5), sex changes (cf. Deut 23:1), and male prostitution (Deut 23:18) were also strictly forbidden.

<sup>23</sup>Walt Kaiser (*Toward Old Testament Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983] 114) contends, "To prohibit homosexuality today, some would argue, would be like forbidding unclean meats. It is admitted, of course, that there is a category of temporary ceremonial laws, but I do not agree that homosexuality is among them. Nothing in its proscription points to or anticipates Christ, and the death penalty demanded for its violation places it in the moral realm and not in temporary legislation."

5:18), all of which, according to the New Testament, have ongoing application for Christians, whether they are Jewish or Gentile and live inside or outside the holy land (Rom. 7:7, 12; 13:9; James 2:11; Cf. Matt. 19:18-19). If these moral laws given to the Israelites are universal and timeless, why would the moral laws in Leviticus 18 and 20 not be the same?<sup>24</sup>

Thus, homosexuality is viewed in Leviticus as morally equal to sins such as adultery, incest, and bestiality. As noted earlier, such sins are wrong in any age and in any culture, because they violate the design for marriage that God established at creation. As John Walton explains,

[A]s with adultery, incest, and bestiality, it [homosexuality] is wrong because of the nature of the sexual partner. An illicit sexual partner may be married to someone else (adultery), may be a close relative (incest), may be an animal (bestiality), and may be someone of the same gender (homosexuality). Monogamous homosexual relationships are no more acceptable than only committing adultery with one person.<sup>25</sup>

Some commentators, in an effort to minimize the extent of this instruction, argue that the command itself extends only to OT Jewish men. Thus, it is suggested that the Bible does not prohibit females or non-Jewish males from participating in homosexual acts.<sup>26</sup> But such fanciful attempts to defend lesbianism and modern homosexuality ultimately fall flat. For starters, it was because God hated the homosexual perversions of other nations (specifically the Canaanites) that He gave this instruction to the Hebrews.<sup>27</sup> Thus, to argue that homosexuality outside Judaism

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<sup>24</sup>Roy Gane, *Leviticus-Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) 328. Gane continues by citing Acts 15:20, 29 to show that the apostles saw these sexual prohibitions as extending to the Gentile church, under the category of "immorality." He notes that "The New Testament explicitly condemns incest (1 Cor. 5:1), male homosexuality (Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10), and lesbianism (Rom. 1:26) practiced by any human beings. If we accept the biblical evidence, Christians everywhere are just as accountable to God for avoiding the practices listed in Leviticus 18 as the ancient Israelites were when the legislation was first given. The divine penalty for Israelites was to be "cut off" (18:29), which goes beyond death, and according to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 the penalty for Christians also goes beyond death."

<sup>25</sup>John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 490.

<sup>26</sup>Jacob Milgrom (*Leviticus* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004] 196) argues that the prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and 20 apply only to Jewish men and not to non-Jewish men or to women of any ethnicity. He writes, "To those who argue that the Bible enjoins homosexuality, a careful reading of the source text offers a fundamentally different view. While the Bible never applauds homosexuality, neither does it prohibit most people from engaging in it."

<sup>27</sup>John D. Currid (*A Study Commentary on Leviticus* [Webster, N.Y.: Evangelical Press, 2004] 244) notes, "Not only is homosexuality to be shunned because it is immoral, but it was also a common practice of the Canaanites (see Gen. 19). Even pagan priests are known to have practiced it (see Deut. 23:18; 1 Kings 14:24). The Old Testament condemnation of all sorts of homosexual practices is unique in the

is acceptable to God runs contrary to the very reason God gave such commands to His people. Moreover, although lesbianism is not specifically mentioned in the OT, the Jews understood that it was included in this prohibition—being condemned in the Talmud. It is also directly prohibited in the NT (Rom 1:26-27). Rabbi Jakobovits explains the Jewish understanding of the OT teaching with these words:

Whereas the more liberal attitude found in some modern Christian circles is possibly due to the exaggerated importance Christians have traditionally accorded to the term “love,” Jewish law holds that no hedonistic ethic, even if called “love,” can justify the morality of homosexuality any more than it can legitimize adultery, incest, or polygamy, however genuinely such acts may be performed out of love and by mutual consent.<sup>28</sup>

God’s utter hatred for homosexual behavior is brought home by the word “abomination,” which describes what God thinks of it, and any other violation of His intended plan for heterosexual marriage. The word occurs repeatedly in this context (18:22, 26, 27, 29, 30; 20:13) and is also “a term especially frequent in the Book of Deuteronomy, [which] refers to an act that is abhorrent or repugnant, such as idolatry and inappropriate worship of God (see Deut 7:25; 27:15; 17:10; 12:31; 18:9-14).”<sup>29</sup> In the same way that idolatry is a perpetual offense to God’s moral character, subject to His wrath and condemnation, so also is any perversion of His design for marriage.

The apostle Paul reiterates the prohibition of Leviticus in Rom 1:26-27, where he writes,

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

Both male homosexuality and lesbianism are in view in this passage, with God’s judgment falling on both because they involve unnatural acts (so defined because they violate the design of God for nature).<sup>30</sup> The word translated “function” (*chrēsis*)

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ancient Near East.” See also Gordon Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” *ET* 102 (1991):359-63.

<sup>28</sup>I. Jakobovits, “homosexuality,” *EncJud* 8:961-62. Cited from Mark Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000) 247.

<sup>29</sup>Mark Rooker, *Leviticus* 246.

<sup>30</sup>Douglas Moo (*The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996] 115) observes, “In keeping with the biblical and Jewish worldview, the heterosexual desires observed normally in nature are traced to God’s creative intent. Sexual sins that are ‘against nature’ are also, then, against God, and it is this close association that makes it probable that Paul’s appeal to ‘nature’ in this verse include appeal to God’s created order.”

was a common way to speak of sexual intercourse, and in this context can refer to nothing other than homosexual acts. Such behavior stems from “degrading passions”—*passions*, because in reality they are driven by selfish lust and not by true love; and *degrading* passions, because they are a twisted expression of God’s creative design. When man forsakes the Author of nature, he inevitably forsakes the order of nature.<sup>31</sup>

In spite of the clarity of this passage, homosexual advocates have made various attempts at explaining away its force. At least three arguments are advanced:

First, it is claimed that the passage is irrelevant, on the ground that its purpose is neither to teach sexual ethics, nor to expose vice, but rather to portray the outworking of God’s wrath. That is true. But if a certain sexual conduct is to be seen as the consequence of God’s wrath, it must be displeasing to him.<sup>32</sup>

Second, it is sometimes suggested that Paul is not referring here to homosexuality in general, but to *pederasty* (homosexual conduct involving an adult male and an adolescent or pubescent youth). Yet, nothing in the text indicates that the term should be limited to such behavior.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world was not limited only to pederasty,<sup>34</sup> nor would Paul’s Jewish background have allowed for homosexuality of any kind.<sup>35</sup>

Third, homosexual advocates argue that Paul is speaking of an individual’s sexual orientation (rather than the created order) when he uses the term “nature.” Thus, for homosexuals, “their relationships cannot be described as ‘unnatural’, since

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<sup>31</sup>James Dunn (*Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1988] 74) points out that “Paul’s attitude to homosexual practice is unambiguous. . . . Homosexuality is seen as a passion which is ‘worthy of no respect.’ Homosexual practice is characterized with the emphasis of repetition as ‘unnatural,’ where Paul uses very Greek and particularly Stoic language to broaden the appeal of the more characteristically Jewish rejection of homosexuality, and where he in effect appeals to his own readers’ common sense to recognize that homosexual practice is a violation of the natural order (as determined by God).”

<sup>32</sup>John R. W. Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994) 77.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Stott dismisses this argument with one sentence: “All one can say in response to this suggestion is that the text itself contains no hint of it.”

<sup>34</sup>Robert Jewett (*Romans*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007] 178-81) demonstrates the widespread nature of homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world, and not just pederasty. For more on this, see the discussion of 1 Corinthians 6 below.

<sup>35</sup>Hans Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975] 106) underscores the Jewish view of homosexuality. “The Jewish verdict on the latter is unequivocal.” In the corresponding footnote (n. 35), he writes, “Homosexual intercourse is punished by stoning. For the Jew it is one of the most abhorrent vices of the Gentiles.”

they are perfectly natural to them.”<sup>36</sup> However, such far-fetched interpretations are easily refuted (both from the context in Romans and from the way *kata physin* [natural] and *para physin* [unnatural] were used in ancient times).<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the thought of “sexual orientation” would have been completely foreign to Paul, and represents an anachronistic attempt to read modern conventions into the biblical text.<sup>38</sup>

So then, we have no liberty to interpret the noun “nature” as meaning “my” nature, or the adjective “natural” as meaning “what seems natural to me”. On the contrary, *physis* (“natural”) means God’s created order. To act “against nature” means to violate the order which God has established, whereas to act “according to nature” means to behave “in accordance with the intention of the Creator”. Moreover, the intention of the Creator means his original intention. What this was Genesis tells us and Jesus confirmed. . . . God created humankind male and female; God instituted marriage as a heterosexual union; and what God has thus united, we have no liberty to separate.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, both the general revelation of nature and the special revelation of Scripture bear out the fact that homosexuality goes contrary to God’s intended plan.

To be sure, all human beings are born in sin, and individual people can sometimes have varying tendencies and temptations toward certain sins. But no one is born a homosexual, any more than anyone might be born a thief or a murderer. Those who engage in a lifestyle of unrepentant theft, murder, adultery, or homosexuality do so of their own choice.<sup>40</sup> And they have only themselves to blame when they

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<sup>36</sup>Stott, *Romans 77*. As an example, Stott cites John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 107ff., who alleges that “the persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual people” (Boswell, 109).

<sup>37</sup>Richard Hays (“Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell’s Exegesis of Romans 1,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* [Spring 1986] 192) demonstrates that the two terms were “very frequently used . . . as a way of distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual behaviour” (cited from Stott, *Romans 77-78*).

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 200. Hays writes, “[T]o suggest that Paul intends to condemn homosexual acts only when they are committed by persons who are constitutionally heterosexual is to introduce a distinction entirely foreign to Paul’s thought-world.”

<sup>39</sup>Stott, *Romans 78*. Internal citation from C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975) 1:125.

<sup>40</sup>Craig L. Blomberg (*1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] 123) writes, “Under no conceivable circumstances can the Bible be made to defend the often-heard allegation that God created homosexuals that way. What genetic component may contribute to homosexual predispositions remains to be determined but, like inherent predispositions to alcoholism, violence, or various diseases, such a component, if demonstrated, would be an offshoot of the fall, not of creation. Equally crucially, genetic predispositions never exempt humans from biblical standards and accountability before God for moral or immoral behavior.”



receive “in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” Not only will they be judged in the next life, as those who will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9); but they also subject themselves to the grotesque physical consequences that come with homosexuality—including sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS and a much higher likelihood of criminal sexual violence.

### The Divine Invitation

#### *Isaiah 56, 1 Corinthians 6*

Although homosexuality is sharply condemned throughout Scripture, it is important to end any discussion of it by offering hope to those enslaved to such sexual sin. A divine invitation has been extended to all sinners, including homosexuals, and it is this: *You can find freedom and forgiveness at the Cross*. Those who sincerely repent from their sin and lovingly embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior will be forgiven and granted eternal life.

God's willingness to forgive sexual aberrations is seen in the OT, perhaps most clearly with regard to males who had become eunuchs. The Mosaic Law was very clear that God did not approve of eunuchs. “No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD” (Deut 23:1). Whether by his own choice or by the decision of his parents, men who had undergone such a procedure were an abomination to the LORD.<sup>41</sup>

Yet, in Isa 56:3-5, the LORD indicates that the eunuch still has hope if he will submit himself to the ways of God. (Of note in this passage is the fact that the eunuch, though incapable of procreating, will be given an everlasting name if he chooses to please the LORD.)

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,  
 “The LORD will surely separate me from His people.”  
 Nor let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”  
 For thus says the LORD,  
 “To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths,  
 And choose what pleases Me,  
 And hold fast My covenant,  
 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,  
 And a name better than that of sons and daughters;  
 I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.”

Though outside God's plan for his own sexuality, the eunuch who came to God in genuine repentance could be restored to His Creator. This divine invitation is further illustrated in the NT in Acts 8, when the Ethiopian eunuch came to saving faith in

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<sup>41</sup>In ancient times, parents would sometimes crush the organs of their small boys at the age of ten or so because they thought it would appease the deities.

Jesus Christ through the ministry of Philip (cf. vv. 26-38). Though this man stood condemned under the letter of the Mosaic legal code, he experienced God's grace when the Spirit saved him through the preaching of the gospel.

Salvation hope for homosexuals, extended to them through the divine invitation of the gospel, is made even more explicit in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Cor 6:9, the apostle again establishes the fact that homosexuality is, without question, a sin—a behavior that is detestable in the eyes of God. Among his list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God, Paul includes both the "effeminate" and the "homosexuals."

By the time Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians (in the mid-50s A.D.), homosexuality had been part of Greek and Roman culture for centuries. It has been claimed that both Socrates and Plato were homosexuals, along with fourteen of the first fifteen Roman emperors. Nero, the ruler under whom Paul was eventual martyred, reportedly had a boy named Sporis castrated in order to make him his "wife," in addition to his natural wife.<sup>42</sup>

So the Corinthian believers were no strangers to homosexuality, having at least a secondhand knowledge of the widespread sexual perversion that permeated the Roman culture. Some of them, due to their pagan pasts, were even more intimately acquainted with the sins of their day. They also understood, per Paul's instruction here, that such lifestyles were utterly unchristian and that those who practiced homosexuality (or any of the other sins in Paul's list) showed themselves to be outside of the kingdom of God.<sup>43</sup> Commenting on this verse, Barnett explains,

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<sup>42</sup>Though it is true that pederasty was practiced in the Greco-Roman world (as in this example) we need not assume that Paul had only pederasty in mind when he denounced homosexual practice. Richard Oster (*1 Corinthians*, The College Press NIV Commentary [Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995] 138-39) gives three reasons why: "1. The historical record is quite clear that homoerotic activity was not confined only to pederasty in the classical world. Homosexual practices also took place between adult men and between adult women. 2. To focus Paul's concern on the sole issue of pederasty reflects, I suspect, modern convictions about the abhorrence of sexual activity (of any kind) with minors. It is very improbable that Paul would have had any theological or cultural problems with sex between adults and minors within the context of marital heterosexuality. Generally speaking, Greek, Roman, and Jewish (first) marriages in Paul's day involved marriage between an adult male and a pubescent girl, usually half the age of her husband. The concept of lawful sex with minors was not the oxymoron that it is perceived to be in modern Western culture. 3. Paul's argumentation against homoeroticism elsewhere [as in Romans 1] makes it clear that it is homoerotic behavior itself, and not just some form of it, that is contrary to nature."

<sup>43</sup>Gordon H. Clark (*First Corinthians* [Jefferson, Md.: The Trinity Foundation, 1991] 89), commenting on v. 9 states, "Homosexuality is most definitely forbidden, both here and in Romans 1:27. There is also the Old Testament, to which Paul appeals as much as he does to his own apostolic authority." A few sentences later, responding to a liberal interpreter who wishes to dismiss the idea that homosexuality is forbidden in this text, Clark writes, "It is incredible how ridiculous liberals can be."

The biblical norm for sexual expression is clear. It is *either* abstinent singleness *or* heterosexual marriage. This is precisely the teaching of Jesus the Christ (see Matt. 19:3–12) which the Apostles to the Gentiles followed closely (see [1 Cor.] 7:1–40). Anything else is *porneia* / “fornication,” and is not sanctioned by God. . . .

Paul's list is explicit and detailed. He warns, ‘Don't be led astray’ (verse 9), suggesting that among them were those who saw no problem with these activities. They have counterparts today, including some church leaders who sanction behaviour condemned by the Bible. Yet the ‘Holiness Code’ as echoed here by Paul remains as a permanent standard. . . . Those who practice these things will find no place in the kingdom of God.<sup>44</sup>

Yet, though clearly condemning homosexuality as sin, this passage again emphasizes the divine invitation of salvation that extends to homosexuals and to all sinners. Whereas v. 9 explains the bad news—that those who practice homosexuality are on a path toward hell—v. 11 exclaims that such sinners can be saved and cleansed from their sin. The fact was that some of the Corinthian believers had been characterized by such behavior before their conversions. But God in His grace had transformed their lives.

In order to emphasize the change that had taken place in their hearts, Paul uses the strongest Greek adversative particle three times when he says, “*But* you were washed, *but* you were sanctified, *but* you were justified.” What they had been before salvation no longer mattered. What mattered now was that they had been set free from sin through faith in Christ. They were now “washed,” meaning regenerated and cleansed by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5; cf. 2 Cor 5:17); “sanctified,” made inwardly holy such that they could now live pure and Spirit-filled lives (cf. Gal 5:16, 22-23); and “justified,” having been clothed in the righteousness of Christ Himself (Rom 3:26; 4:22-25). Put simply, they had experienced total transformation from the inside out, made possible because of the grace that was theirs through the cross.

### Conclusion

Without question, any sexual conduct outside heterosexual marriage is clearly forbidden by Scripture. This includes both male homosexuality and lesbianism. Such homosexual unions violate the natural design of marriage as God's holy institution which He established at Creation. God's attitude toward homosexual conduct is demonstrated in His wrath poured out on Sodom; and it is made explicit in His instruction on the subject in both Leviticus and Romans.

Nonetheless, the gospel invitation extends to every sinner—including the homosexual—offering salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life to all who will embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. As He Himself promised: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28). And in

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<sup>44</sup>Paul W. Barnett, *1 Corinthians* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2000) 96-97.

another place, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). Countless former homosexuals, even in recent history, have been changed by the truth of the gospel. They are trophies of divine grace, living proof that the love of God can save sinners from even the most enslaving counterfeits.

#### **Addendum: A Pastoral Perspective on the Gay Agenda<sup>45</sup>**

If you've been watching the headlines over the last couple years, you may have noticed the incredible surge of interest in affirming homosexuality. Whether it's at the heart of a religious scandal, political corruption, radical legislation, or the redefinition of marriage, homosexual interests have come to characterize America. That's an indication of the success of the gay agenda. And some Christians, including some national church leaders, have wavered on the issue even recently. But sadly, when people refuse to acknowledge the sinfulness of homosexuality—calling evil good and good evil (Isa 5:20)—they do so at the expense of many souls.

How should you respond to the success of the gay agenda? Should you accept the recent trend toward tolerance? Or should you side with those who exclude homosexuals with hostility and disdain?

In reality, the Bible calls for a balance between what some people think are two opposing reactions—condemnation and compassion. Really, the two together are essential elements of biblical love, and that's something the homosexual sinner desperately needs.

Homosexual advocates have been remarkably effective in selling their warped interpretations of passages in Scripture that address homosexuality. When you ask a homosexual what the Bible says about homosexuality—and many of them know—they have digested an interpretation that is not only warped, but also completely irrational. Pro-homosexual arguments from the Bible are nothing but smokescreens—as you come close, you see right through them.

God's condemnation of homosexuality is abundantly clear—He opposes it in every age, including the patriarchs (Gen 19:1-28); the Law of Moses (Lev 18:22; 20:13); the Prophets (Ezek 16:46-50); and the NT (Rom 1:18-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Jude 7-8).

Why does God condemn homosexuality? Because it overturns God's fundamental design for human relationships—a design that pictures the complementary relationship between a man and a woman (Gen 2:18-25; Matt 19:4-6; Eph 5:22-33).

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<sup>45</sup>This is excerpted from an article published on *Pulpit* magazine a couple years ago (“God's Plan for the Gay Agenda,” October 4, 2006, <http://www.sf pulpit.com/2006/10/04/gods-plan-for-the-gay-agenda/>, accessed 9/29/08). Though it repeats some of the points made above, it provides a condensed approach to this issue from a more pastoral perspective. We trust it will prove helpful to those in ministry.

Why, then, have homosexual interpretations of Scripture been so successful at persuading so many? Simple: people want to be convinced. Since the Bible is so clear about the issue, sinners have had to defy reason and embrace error to quiet their accusing consciences (Rom 2:14-16). As Jesus said, "Men loved the darkness rather than the Light, [because] their deeds were evil" (John 3:19-20).

As a Christian, you must not compromise what the Bible says about homosexuality—ever. No matter how much you desire to be compassionate to the homosexual, your first sympathies belong to the Lord and to the exaltation of His righteousness. Homosexuals stand in defiant rebellion against the will of their Creator who from the beginning "made them male and female" (Matt 19:4).

Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by homosexual advocates and their futile reasoning—their arguments are without substance. Homosexuals, and those who advocate that sin, are fundamentally committed to overturning the lordship of Christ in this world. But their rebellion is useless, for the Holy Spirit says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9-10; cf. Gal 5:19-21).

So, what is God's response to the homosexual agenda?

Certain and final judgment. To claim anything else is to compromise the truth of God and deceive those who are perishing.

As you interact with homosexuals and their sympathizers, you must affirm the Bible's condemnation. You are not trying to bring damnation on the head of homosexuals; you are trying to bring conviction so that they can turn from that sin and embrace the only hope of salvation for all of us sinners—and that's through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Homosexuals need salvation. They don't need healing—homosexuality is not a disease. They don't need therapy—homosexuality is not a psychological condition. Homosexuals need forgiveness, because homosexuality is a sin.

I don't know how it happened, but a few decades ago someone branded homosexuals with the worst misnomer—"gay." Gay used to mean happy, but I can assure you, homosexuals are not happy people. They habitually seek happiness by following after destructive pleasures. There is a reason Rom 1:26 calls homosexual desire a "degrading passion." It is a lust that destroys the physical body, ruins relationships, and brings perpetual suffering to the soul—and its ultimate end is death (Rom 7:5). Homosexuals are experiencing the judgment of God (Rom 1:24, 26, 28), and thus they are very, very sad.

First Corinthians 6 is very clear about the eternal consequence for those who practice homosexuality—but there's good news. No matter what the sin is, whether homosexuality or anything else, God has provided forgiveness, salvation, and the hope of eternal life to those who repent and embrace the gospel. Right after identifying homosexuals as those who "will not inherit the kingdom of God," Paul

said, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11).

God's invitation to those in homosexual sin is that they repent and turn to Christ for salvation. Former homosexuals were in the Corinthian church back in Paul's day, just as many former homosexuals today are in my church and in faithful churches around the country. With regenerated hearts, they sit in biblical churches throughout the country praising their Savior, along with former fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, coveters, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Remember, such were some of you too.

What should be your response to the homosexual agenda? Make it a biblical response—confront it with the truth of Scripture which condemns homosexuality and promises eternal damnation for all who practice it. What should be your response to the homosexual? Make it a gospel response—confront him with the truth of Scripture that condemns him as a sinner, and point him to the hope of salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Stay faithful to the Lord as you respond to homosexuality by honoring His Word, and leave the results to Him.

## **CULTURAL AND MEDICAL MYTHS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY**

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*Three questions need to be answered regarding cultural and medical myths about homosexuality: (1) Is there a “gay gene”? In giving a positive answer, some sources cite two categories, nature and nurture. Behavioral genetics have sought and allegedly found a source for homosexuality, but many scientists have strong questions about behavioral genetics. Various studies have failed to prove conclusively that a “gay gene” exists. (2) Is it possible for a person to change sexual orientation from being homosexual to heterosexual? The current consensus in the mental health profession is that attempts to convert a homosexual to a heterosexual are too likely to be harmful. A possibility of change has been demonstrated, but worldwide consensus continues to view such a change as impossible because of biological and psychiatric factors. Studies by Spitzer and Jones/Yarhouse have identified examples of change without harm to individuals involved. (3) How have homosexual activists impacted modern culture throughout the world? Various pieces of legislation, both national and international, have put at risk anyone who dares to oppose homosexuality. Even some ecclesiastical leaders have softened their tone in speaking against this sexual deviation.*

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I must admit that earlier in 2008 I approached my Faculty Lecture as I approached writing this article, with a bit of fear and trepidation. I can identify with the prophet Amos when he affirmed, “I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son” (Amos 7:14). I am not a geneticist or the son of a geneticist. I am not a biologist or the son of a biologist. And I am not a cultural anthropologist or the son of one. I am primarily and gladly a student of Scripture. And even more narrow than that, my focus has been principally on the OT. With that in mind, I venture into regions of knowledge that are not areas I have mastered. I offer the following observations based on much hard work and research, but with humility in light of my limitations

as a non-scientist.<sup>1</sup>

Most of those who will read this article are much more interested in biblical studies rather than science, let alone genetics, psychiatry, psychology, and sociology. Regardless, I would encourage readers to give attention to today's issues as a way to understand better and be more able to minister to people who either wholeheartedly support or struggle with homosexuality.

This article deals with three major issues. First of all, is there a "gay gene"? Secondly, is it possible for a person to change sexual orientation from being homosexual to heterosexual? Thirdly, how have homosexual activists impacted modern culture throughout the world?

### Is There a "Gay Gene"?

On July 15, 1993, National Public Radio (i.e., NPR) reported a new study that was due to be released the next day. The tenor of the report suggested that someone had finally discovered a gene that causes homosexuality. NPR added a few quiet caveats at the end of their report, ignored by most listeners.<sup>2</sup> The next day, the *Wall Street Journal* headlined their report: "Research Points toward a Gay Gene."<sup>3</sup> The subtitle said "Normal Variation," affirming the opinion of the article's author that homosexuality was a normal variation of human behavior. At the bottom of the last paragraph on the last page, deep within the paper, a geneticist offered his opinion that this gene might only be associated with homosexuality and not the cause of it.<sup>4</sup> Regardless, for most of the world the discovery had been made and now the political wheels began to turn (leading to the push for protection of civil rights, laws against discrimination, civil unions, gay marriage, etc.).

As part of this issue of a "gay gene," it is essential to offer a basic definition of "sexual orientation." It "typically refers to the directionality of a person's sexual attraction" or "their sexual predispositions."<sup>5</sup> The various theories that seek to

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<sup>1</sup>I do teach a biblical ethics course with some regularity and have dabbled in the questions this article addresses, but I realistically understand that I am not an expert in this complicated area.

<sup>2</sup>Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 109.

<sup>3</sup>"Research Points toward a Gay Gene," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 July 1993.

<sup>4</sup>Even the scientist referred to as the source for this report, a gay man, Dr. Hamer of the United States National Institutes of Health, never claimed to have found a gene determining homosexuality. In another setting he stated: "We have not found the gene—which we don't think exists—for sexual orientation" (R. McKie, "The Myth of the Gay Gene," *The Press* [July 30, 1993]:9). He did claim to have found evidence that some male homosexuality was passed through female members of a family (cf. Neil and Briar Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It!: A Scientific Look at Sexual Orientation* [Lafayette, La.: Huntington House, 1999] 135).

<sup>5</sup>Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007) 27.



explain the source for or basis of a person's sexual orientation fall into two broad categories: **nature** or **nurture** (or some combination of the two).

#### Nature

For the last three decades, there has been a resurgence of research in genetic studies as relates to providing cures for diseases as well as finding the genetic basis for certain behaviors. During this time researchers have discovered genes responsible for Huntington's disease, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, and others. Researchers have made great progress on mapping the human genome and by the end of the twentieth century determined the genetic basis for 450 physical conditions.<sup>6</sup>

This success led some scientists to pursue genetic causes for various behavioral patterns. Consequently, a category of study—behavioral genetics—came into being. The various studies mentioned below pursue some kind of genetic explanation for homosexuality as a human behavior. However, in addition to the comments given for each of the methodologies discussed below, it is important to understand that numerous scientists have far-reaching questions about the clarity of behavioral genetics.

One example is this quote by Charles Mann, a regular contributor to *Science*: "Time and time again, scientists have claimed that particular genes or chromosomal regions are associated with behavioral traits, only to withdraw their findings when they were not replicated. 'Unfortunately,' says Yale's Gelernter, 'it's hard to come up with many' findings linking specific genes to complex human behaviors that have been replicated.'" Mann adds: "All were announced with great fanfare; all were greeted unskeptically in the popular press; all are now in disrepute."<sup>8</sup> This does not signify that there are absolutely no genetic factors that could impact or give rise to homosexual behavior. Nevertheless, it affirms that the alleged genetic basis of certain kinds of behavior is very ambiguous and is still open to debate. It is important to keep this in mind since the media in general and homosexual activists in particular ignore the genetic evidence's lack of clarity.

The broad consensus in the general population is that few people actually choose to have a homosexual or heterosexual orientation. Instead, they simply find themselves experiencing a same-sex or opposite-sex attraction as part of who they are. The first category used to describe the source for a person's sexual orientation, *nature*, refers to some kind of biological antecedent. The evidence for the biological or genetic cause of homosexuality includes research on twin studies, differences in

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<sup>6</sup>Neil and Briar Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It!* 135-36.

<sup>7</sup>Charles C. Mann, "Behavioral Genetics in Transition," *Science* 264/5166 (June 17, 1994):1687.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

brain structure, gene scans, and prenatal hormone exposure.<sup>9</sup> Only the first two of these will be discussed in any detail.

### **Concordance rates found in twins' studies**

Twins have been invaluable to medical research for a number of decades. Sadly, during World War II, horrific experiments were performed on twins by the Nazis. More recently, most twin studies are performed as a way of addressing various maladies. Twin "registers" exist in different countries and are the foundation for modern twin studies. Scientists are organizing a gigantic European register (with a projected 600,000 members).<sup>10</sup> However, one of the largest in use at present is in Australia, with more than 25,000 twins listed.<sup>11</sup> Various scholars have worked through different twin registries to find identical twins in which at least one twin has "same sex attraction." They then consider the frequency with which the other twin has those same tendencies ("concordance").

#### Foundational studies (1991, 1993)

Bailey, Pillard, and their colleagues initially published two studies dealing with male and female twins that established the public perception that there is a strong genetic component to the causation of a homosexual orientation.<sup>12</sup>

*Key terms.* Several terms commonly occur in discussions of the genetic issues as they relate to homosexuality. The first one is "identical twins" or "monozygotic" (from "one egg"). These children share the exact same genes and hence are always the same sex and have same eye color. They are identical in every biological characteristic that is caused by the genes. The second term involves

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<sup>9</sup>Various other potential sources of evidences for a natural cause of homosexuality have been and are being suggested. This article cannot be exhaustive in presenting all the possible suggested alternatives. The most commonly cited sources of evidence receive attention here.

<sup>10</sup>Neil and Briar Whitehead, updated chapter from *My Genes Made Me Do It!—A Scientific Look at Sexual Orientation*, <http://www.mygenes.co.nz/download.htm> (ch. 10, p. 1) (accessed 9/2/2008); cf. "Studies of European Volunteer Twins to Identify Genes Underlying Common Diseases," <http://www.genomeutwin.org/index.htm> (accessed 9/2/2008); O. Quintana Trias, "GenomEUtwin: A European Community Framework 5 Functional Genomics Special Initiative," *Twin Research*, 6/5 (October 1, 2003):353, <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/aap/twr/2003/00000006/00000005/art00001;jsessionid=5hkoff3ao8bu8.alice> (accessed 9/2/2008); cf. Dorret I. Boomsma, "Twin Registers in Europe: An Overview," *Twin Research and Human Genetics* 1/1 (February 1998):34-51.

<sup>11</sup>M. M. Braun, N. E. Caporaso, W. F. Page, and R. N. Hoover, "Genetic Component of Lung Cancer: Cohort Study of Twins," *The Lancet* 344 (1994):440-43.

<sup>12</sup>J. M. Bailey and R. C. Pillard, "A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 48/12 (December 1991):1081-96; J. M. Bailey, R. C. Pillard, M. C. Neale, and Y. Agyei, "Heritable Factors Influence Sexual Orientation in Women," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50/3 (March 1993):217-23.

“fraternal twins” or “dizygotic” (from “two eggs”). In this case, both eggs from the mother are fertilized by different sperms. They can be different gender and have different genetically determined characteristics (e.g., eye color). They would share the same basic degree of genetic similarities as any two siblings born to the same parents. The final term (in this overview) concerns “concordance.” Concordance studies seek to discern the percentage of times a *matching of sexual orientation of twins*, especially identical twins, occurs. The general assumption is that a greater percentage of sexual orientation concordance in cases of increased genetic similarity may indicate a genetic cause for a homosexual orientation.

*Basic methods and conclusions.* People who conducted concordance studies searched for members of the gay community who were twins and investigated the sexual orientation of their siblings. They reported the following “concordance” rates, i.e., cases where both twins shared a homosexual orientation:<sup>13</sup>

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Identical twins	52%	48%
Fraternal twins	22%	16%
Non-twin siblings	9.2%	14%
Adoptive siblings	11%	6%

Here is what they actually found:

- 29 out of 56 identical twins where both brothers were gay (52%)
- 1 triplet trio where all three brothers were gay
- 27 identical twin pairs where one brother was gay and one was not (48%)
- 12 out of 54 fraternal twins where both brothers were gay (22%)
- 6 out of 57 of the adoptive brothers where both brothers were gay (11%).

Thus, Bailey and Pillard concluded that their study on identical and fraternal twins provides evidence of a genetic cause for homosexuality.

Problems with these two studies

Various scholars have critiqued the studies published by Bailey and his colleagues.<sup>14</sup> Here are a few of the problems that have been raised. In the first place,

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<sup>13</sup>Bailey and Pillard, “A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation” 1089-96.

<sup>14</sup>Here are just a few of those critiques: Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000) 72-79; Stanton L. Jones and Alex W. Kwee, “Scientific Research, Homosexuality, and the Church's Moral Debate: An Update,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24/4 (2005): 304-5; Neil and Briar

the fact that Bailey recruited his samples by advertising in popular homosexual media outlets in the greater Chicago area would make his sample less representative. It was not a random sampling. This preferential recruiting could have been avoided by placing the advertisements in periodicals intended for the general public.<sup>15</sup> Second, the concordance rate does not mean that, for example, 52% of the population of identical twins were gay. It means that out of the twins interviewed (recruited through popular homosexual media outlets), 52% was the concordance rate. Third, if homosexuality is genetically determined, why did only 52% of the *identical* twins share the same sexual orientation? How about the other 48% who differed in their sexual orientation? If a homosexual orientation had a fundamental or primary genetic or biological cause, one would expect a higher level of concordance. Notice some other life characteristics that various studies have identified as having a *heritability rate* of around 50%: extroversion, depression, criminality, alcoholism, religiosity, fundamentalism, and divorce.<sup>16</sup> Those do not derive from genetic factors primarily but have a strong connection to external factors. Fourth, one must keep in mind that “heritable” does not mean “directly inherited”. To some degree, almost every human characteristic has a heritability rate. However, few human behavioral traits are directly inherited as with physical features like height, eye color, and skin pigmentation. “Inherited” refers to something “directly determined by genes,” with little or no way of preventing or modifying the trait through a change in the environment.<sup>17</sup> The numbers offered by researchers concerning the genetic basis for homosexuality refer to a potential heritability rate rather than to an indication of direct inheritance.

#### Bailey's Australian study (2000)

Recognizing the limitation of his own sampling, Bailey and his colleagues accessed the Australian Twin Registry and sent surveys to every twin who had registered in that list.<sup>18</sup> Notice the difference in the results, compared to his previous study:

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Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It!* 135-47; Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 123-29.

<sup>15</sup>As the next section indicates, Bailey and his colleagues used a more representative sampling for their study in 2000.

<sup>16</sup>Neil and Briar Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It!* 158-59. The authors footnote each characteristic to reference a study that suggested that heritability rate.

<sup>17</sup>Jeffrey Satinover, “The Gay Gene?,” *The Journal of Human Sexuality* (1996), <http://www.leaderu.com/jhs/satinover.html> (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>18</sup>J. M. Bailey, M. P. Dunne, and N. G. Martin, “Genetic and Environmental Influences on Sexual Orientation and its Correlates in an Australian Twin Sample,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78/3 (2000):524-36.

	U.S. <b><u>Males</u></b>	Australian <b><u>Males</u></b>	U.S. <b><u>Females</u></b>	Australian <b><u>Females</u></b>
<b>Identical twins</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Fraternal twins</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Non-twin siblings	9.2%	N/A	14%	N/A
Adoptive siblings	11%	N/A	6%	N/A

Bailey himself admits that the results suggest that concordance rates from his previous studies reflected an inflated bias in the sample he had gathered.<sup>19</sup>

#### Summary

The newer findings call into question whether or not there is a *significant* genetic influence involved in the causation of homosexuality. This kind of evidence (twin studies) has been overemphasized by those who favor some biological basis for homosexuality. The conclusions of Bailey's first studies were trumpeted in secular and religious media as evidence that favors a biological cause for homosexuality. It is also true that the apparent unanimity on a biological cause for homosexuality is not an accurate portrayal of the scholarly consensus. Various scholars have firmly rejected the notion that biological or genetic factors serve as the primary or fundamental basis for sexual orientation.<sup>20</sup> Though this evidence does not rule out all genetic involvement, it clearly minimizes its impact as a fundamental cause of a person's sexual orientation.

In addition to the study of genetic similarity of twins with regard to homosexuality, scholars have also given attention to differences in brain structure as a potential evidence for "built-in" causation of homosexuality.

#### Differences in brain structure

Various studies have suggested that one specific brain area (the interstitial nucleus of the hypothalamus [area 3], i.e., INAH3) may be different in homosexuals and heterosexuals.<sup>21</sup> LeVay's inaugural study posited a connection between brain structure and sexual orientation, but two later studies seriously questioned the clarity of his findings.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 534.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. W. Byne and B. Parsons, "Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50/3 (March 1993):228-39; Peter S. Bearman, "Opposite-Sex Twins and Adolescent Same-Sex Attraction," *American Journal of Sociology* 107/5 (March 2002):1183-88.

<sup>21</sup>For a comparison of conclusions of brain structure differences found in 6 studies (1985-2001), see the chart in Jones and Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research* 306.

Simon LeVay (1991)

LeVay claimed to have found conclusive proof that gay and straight men have distinct differences in brain structure. He discovered that a small area of the hypothalamus (INAH3) was smaller in gay men than in straight men (and was similar in size to that of women). Based on this evidence, LeVay concluded that there was only one reasonable conclusion: these brain differences were the *biological causes of sexual orientation*.<sup>22</sup>

In light of his article and the way pro-homosexual activists utilize LeVay's conclusions, one would think that his research provided very concrete support for this conclusion. However, at the end of the article, LeVay himself wrote that "the results do not allow one to decide if the size of INAH3 in an individual is the cause or consequence of that individual's sexual orientation" or whether it is the result of or the cause of a totally unrelated issue!<sup>23</sup>

William Byne (2001)

Byne and his colleagues revisited the issue of brain structure differences.<sup>24</sup> His study offered several corrections to LeVay's conclusions:

- INAH3 in women has a different number of neurons than men (heterosexual and homosexual), not primarily a different size or density. In other words, the INAH3 area in women is smaller, not because their neurons are smaller or more dense, but because they have fewer neurons.
- Heterosexual and homosexual males have comparable numbers of neurons.
- The volume or size of the INAH3 of homosexual males is between that of heterosexual males and heterosexual females—to a statistically nonsignificant degree.
- The slight difference in size of the INAH3 area between homosexual and heterosexual males is not proof of prenatal, biological determination of sexual orientation.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Simon LeVay, "A Difference in Hypothalamic Structure between Heterosexual and Homosexual Men," *Science* 253/5023 (August 30, 1991):1034-37.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 1036.

<sup>24</sup>W. Byne, and others, "The Interstitial Nuclei of the Human Anterior Hypothalamus: An Investigation of Variation with Sex, Sexual Orientation, and HIV Status," *Hormones and Behavior* 40/2 (2001):91. Cf. Jones and Kwee, "Scientific Research" 306-7.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

- Though some of the difference in size may have been influenced by prenatal hormones, those differences could also have been the result, rather than the cause of, sexual behavior and preference (as a result of postnatal experience).<sup>26</sup>

Byne's study concludes: "Sexual orientation cannot be reliably predicted on the basis of INAH3 volume alone."<sup>27</sup>

Savic, Berglund, and Lindstrom (2005)

These three Swedish scholars exposed 36 individuals (12 heterosexual males, 12 homosexual males, and 12 heterosexual females) to male and female pheromones (derivatives of testosterone and estrogen). Of the various findings of this study, two deserve mention. First of all, the male homosexuals and female heterosexuals responded most to the male pheromone and the male heterosexuals responded most to the female pheromones. Secondly, the changes measured in the way the hypothalamus processed these signals suggested that "our brain reacts differently to the two putative pheromones . . . and suggests a link between sexual orientation and hypothalamic neuronal process."<sup>28</sup> Here is the central point of this information—*changes in the hypothalamus at times are the result of sexual orientation and behavior rather than the cause of it.*

Many studies of this kind completed so far have generated inconsistent findings, failed to reproduce findings, and have been characterized by poor methodology.<sup>29</sup> Of course, the question about brain structure is whether it is the result or the cause of homosexual orientation and behavior. However, it seems quite clear that any reference to differences in brain structure as a reliable indicator of a genetic basis for homosexuality is not justified by the evidence. Because of space limitations, the other two potential genetic causalities (genetic scans and prenatal hormone exposure) are just referenced for completeness.

### Genetic scans/linkage

Various studies have attempted to examine the entire genetic structure as part of an attempt to find genetic causes for homosexuality. Dean Hamer,<sup>30</sup> his

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Byne, "Interstitial Nuclei" 91.

<sup>28</sup>Ivanka Savic, Hans Berglund, and Per Lindström, "Brain Response to Putative Pheromones in Homosexual Men," *Proceedings of the National Academies of Science* 102/20 (May 17, 2005):7356.

<sup>29</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 28.

<sup>30</sup>Dean H. Hamer, and others, "A Linkage between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation," *Science* 261/5119 (July 16, 1993):321-27. Cf. Dean Hamer's book, *The Science of Desire: The Search for the Gay Gene and the Biology of Behavior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

colleagues,<sup>31</sup> and Brian Mustanski<sup>32</sup> have led these past attempts to examine the entire genetic structure of homosexuals. They studied 40 pairs of homosexual brothers and allegedly identified an X-linked gene at position Xq28 that was associated with homosexuality (inherited from the mother to her homosexual son). Also various ongoing efforts continue this research. Under the direction of Alan Sanders, researchers at the Evanston Northwestern Healthcare Research Institute, Northwestern University, University of Chicago, and University of Illinois at Chicago are also searching for genes that influence male sexual orientation.<sup>33</sup>

Hamer and others performed a common type of behavioral genetics investigation called the "linkage study." In this kind of study, researchers identify a behavioral trait that runs in a family, look for a chromosomal variant in the genetic material of that family, and determine whether that variant is more frequent in family members who share the particular trait. To the average person, the identified "correlation" of a genetic structure with a behavioral trait signifies that this trait is "genetic," that is, something directly inherited. In fact, it means absolutely nothing of the sort, and it should be emphasized that virtually no human trait is without *a number of genetic connections*.<sup>34</sup>

How is one to evaluate the methodology employed in these studies? Various scientists from diverse disciplines have questioned the clarity and accuracy of the suggested findings from these genetic scans.<sup>35</sup> They have generally dismissed the idea that the Xq28 marker provides evidence of genetic causation for homosexuality. Hamer's results have never been reproduced. In fact, two subsequent studies of other homosexual brothers have since concluded that there is *no* evidence that male sexual orientation is influenced by an X-linked gene.<sup>36</sup> Ongoing research in this area is looking for numerous genetic markers that would evidence a genetic cause for homosexuality.

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<sup>31</sup>S. Hu, and others, "Linkage between Sexual Orientation and Chromosomes Xq28 in Males but not in Females," *Nature Genetics* 11:3 (November 1995):248-56.

<sup>32</sup>B. S. Mustanski, and others, "A Genomewide Scan of Male Sexual Orientation," *Human Genetics* 116/4 (2005):272-78.

<sup>33</sup>See Alan R. Sanders, "Molecular Genetic Study of Sexual Orientation," <http://www.gaybros.com> (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>34</sup>Jeffrey Satinover, "The Gay Gene?," *The Journal of Human Sexuality* (1996), <http://www.leaderu.com/jhs/satinover.html> (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>35</sup>Jones and Kwee, "Scientific Research" 305-6; Jones and Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research* 79-83; Ingrid Wickelgren, "Discovery of Gay Gene Questioned," *Science* 284/5414 (April 23, 1999):571; Bearman, "Opposite-Sex Twins" 1186.

<sup>36</sup>George Rice, and others, "Male Homosexuality: Absence of Linkage to Microsatellite Markers at Xq28," *Science* 284/5414 (April 23, 1999):665-67; J. M. Bailey, and others, "A Family History Study of Male Sexual Orientation Using Three Independent Samples," *Behavior Genetics* 29 (1999):79-86.



**Prenatal hormone exposure**

This approach draws on the studies of animal fetuses that have been injected prenatally with abnormal doses of sex hormones (which is not at all comparable to what homosexual men or women have experienced). It also considers studies of “animal homosexuality” that consider “gay fruit flies,” “gay penguins,” and “gay sheep.” Although some scholars have found these studies significant, they seem to overlook fundamental differences between human and animal sexuality.<sup>37</sup>

**Summary**

All of the above research did not “discover” a gay gene, although many have suggested that. However, these studies that suggested some biological cause for homosexuality significantly influenced public perceptions. As Yarhouse points out, “The more people believed that homosexuality was a biological ‘given,’ the more likely they were to support a variety of issues deemed important to some in the gay community (e.g., ordination of practicing gay, lesbian, or bisexual clergy; gay rights legislation, etc.).”<sup>38</sup>

**Nurture**

The other category of suggested causes for homosexuality, nurture, focuses on environmental or psychological factors. Theories under this heading focus on parent-child relationships and psychodynamic theory, i.e., the activity and interplay of the unconscious and conscious mental and emotional forces that determine personality and motivation.<sup>39</sup>

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA):

There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of

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<sup>37</sup>For a few examples of this approach along with critiques, see Jones and Kwee, “Scientific Research” 306-8; Bearman, “Opposite-Sex Twins” 1188-90; Jones and Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research* 61-65; Neil and Briar Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It!* 113-24.

<sup>38</sup>Mark A. Yarhouse, “Homosexuality, Ethics and Identity Synthesis,” *Christian Bioethics* 10 (2004):241.

<sup>39</sup>This definition is drawn from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “psychodynamics, n.,” <http://dictionary.oed.com> (accessed 9/2/2008).

choice about their sexual orientation.<sup>40</sup>

Jones and Yarhouse affirm that current research concerning the cause of homosexuality is “decidedly inconclusive.”<sup>41</sup> They correctly conclude that one cannot point to genes alone, but that the cause draws on multiple and complex factors.<sup>42</sup>

#### **What if there is a “gay gene”?**

What if, at some point in time, scientists were able to present some concrete evidence that supported the concept of a “gay gene”? Al Mohler has addressed this question more than once on his well-known blog, [www.AlbertMohler.com](http://www.AlbertMohler.com). Here is a summary of some of his observations. In the first place, he would point out that the biblical understanding of the effects of sin would most certainly explain the corruption of the genetic code. Secondly, he would affirm that any genetic link for any sinful behavior indicates nothing about the moral status of that behavior. God’s verdict on homosexuality is determined in the Bible, not in any laboratory.

#### **Summary**

First of all, numerous scientists from various disciplines have and are working hard to demonstrate some fundamental or primary genetic or biological cause for homosexuality. Various homosexual activists speak and write as if a genetic cause for a homosexual orientation has been clearly established. Based on that alleged reality, they press for various kinds of civil rights protections since their lifestyle is not chosen or aberrant, but the result of the way they are “hard-wired” from birth. On the other hand, a number of homosexual activists have expressed concerns about finding a genetic cause for homosexuality. They suggest it could lead to prenatal testing and abortions to eliminate gay people<sup>43</sup> or could lead to attempts to correct genetic patterns. Secondly, based on the above genetic studies, *no clear evidence* confirms that genetic or biological factors provide the primary cause for a homosexual orientation. Finally, the above studies do not rule out any or all genetic or biological factors from the question of a homosexual orientation. The question is whether those features are determinative or could represent some kind of predisposition. As Jeffrey Satinover suggests, “A certain genetic constitution may make

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<sup>40</sup>American Psychological Association, “Answers to Your Questions for a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality,” <http://www.apa.org/topics/orientation.html#whatis> (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>41</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays* 29.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>For example, see Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation’s note about the recently inaugurated study of 1,000 pairs of brothers; “1,000 Pairs of Illinois Brothers Participate in ‘Gay Gene’ Research,” Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (October 30, 2007), [www.glaad.org/publications/archive\\_detail.php?id=4082&PHPSESSID=f](http://www.glaad.org/publications/archive_detail.php?id=4082&PHPSESSID=f) (accessed 9/2/2008).

homosexuality more readily available as an option, but it is not a cause of homosexuality.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Is It Possible for a Person to Change Sexual Orientation from Being Homosexual to Heterosexual?**

#### **What is a sexual orientation?**

As stated above, a simple definition of “sexual orientation” is “the directionality of a person’s sexual attraction” or “their sexual predispositions.”<sup>45</sup> However, the way one defines this expression varies widely among those who study and write about this issue. Broadly speaking, two metaphysical assumptions stand behind the way a person defines someone’s sexual orientation: “essentialism” and “constructionism.”

#### Essentialism

Proponents of this definition of sexual orientation argue that all types of sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual) represent “natural human kinds” that can be found throughout history and in other cultures. Generally, but not always, proponents of this view point to specific genetic or prenatal hormonal factors that lead to these differences in orientation.<sup>46</sup>

#### Constructionism

On the other hand, there are others who propose that sexual orientations are “social human kinds” and that distinctions made in contemporary culture about heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality reflect linguistic constructs that capture certain meanings about sexual behavior.<sup>47</sup> Most “constructionists” would lean toward external influences rather than genetic or biological features as the

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<sup>44</sup>Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* 114.

<sup>45</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 27. The APA offers this definition: “Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person’s sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions” (American Psychological Association, “Answers to Your Questions for a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality” ([http://www.apa.org /topics/orientation.html#whatis](http://www.apa.org/topics/orientation.html#whatis) [accessed 9/2/2008]).

<sup>46</sup>Yarhouse, “Homosexuality, Ethics and Identity Synthesis” 242-43.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 243. From a constructionist’s perspective, sexual orientation could be compared to being a Republican or Democrat. These categories are not universal “givens” that cross all cultural and historical realms. Instead, they are understandings fashioned by our society as a way of accounting for political preferences, identity, and voting patterns.

primary cause for a person's sexual orientation.<sup>48</sup> An understanding of the definition of sexual orientation will clearly impact the possibility of change or "re-orientation."

### **The general consensus: the impossibility of "change"**

#### Before the 1970s

Prior to the 1970s, the majority position of the leading professionals in the mental health community was that homosexuality was a psychological disturbance of some kind that could be treated successfully, resulting in a change from a homosexual to a heterosexual orientation.<sup>49</sup>

#### Between the 1970s and 1990s

In these two decades, rapid and almost unanimous shift occurred in professional opinion concerning homosexuality. On the one hand, opposition to regarding it as a psychological disturbance grew. On the other hand, more and more mental health professionals became convinced that any attempt to produce a change in sexual orientation was unattainable and necessarily harmful.<sup>50</sup>

#### Current consensus

The current general consensus in the mental health profession is that reparation or reorientation therapy can get some gays to identify themselves as "heterosexual" and therefore "ex-gays," but few, if any, will report changes in sexual attraction, fantasy, and desire consistent with true changes in sexual orientation. They reject the notion of a change from a predominant homosexual orientation to a predominant heterosexual orientation.<sup>51</sup> For example, in 2000 the APA recommended that "ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm."<sup>52</sup> A more recent APA publication affirms that all "major mental health organizations have officially expressed concerns about therapies promoted to modify sexual orientation. To date, no scientifically adequate research exists to show that therapy aimed at

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<sup>48</sup>Yarhouse ("Homosexuality, Ethics and Identity Synthesis" 243-46) is careful to point out that one should not confuse or equate the nature/nurture debate with the essentialist/constructionist debate. While his point is valid, the general correlation of these two debates seems to be appropriate at a basic level.

<sup>49</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 15.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup>Robert L. Spitzer, "Reply: Study Results Should Not Be Dismissed and Justify Further Research on the Efficacy of Sexual Reorientation Therapy," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32/5 (October 2003):472.

<sup>52</sup>"APA Reiterates Position On Reparative Therapies," *Psychiatric News* 36/13 (July 6, 2001):34.

changing sexual orientation (sometimes called reparative or conversion therapy) is safe or effective.”<sup>53</sup>

The basis for this thinking—the evidence versus the ideology

*The evidence, both secular and religious.* In their volume, *Ex-Gays*, Jones and Yarhouse provide an overview of psychotherapeutic change literature from the 1950s–1990s. Out of thirty studies, the percentage of positive outcomes, i.e., a change from homosexual to a heterosexual orientation varies from a low of 25% to a high of 82%.<sup>54</sup> Their review of “religiously mediated change literature” (including Spitzer’s study summarized below) also demonstrates the potential of a change in a person’s sexual orientation.<sup>55</sup>

What does the above evidence say and not say?<sup>56</sup> First of all, change from a homosexual orientation to a full or substantial heterosexual orientation is attainable by some individuals by a variety of means. Secondly, such a change is not easy and a high percentage of individuals may not make this change. Thirdly, change or modification of sexual orientation is not guaranteed for everyone who attempts such a change.

*The ideology.* Regardless of the evidence that seems to demonstrate clearly the possibility of change, the majority opinion throughout the world is that sexual orientation is immutable, i.e., cannot be changed. This bias without sufficient evidence draws on two primary sources. Advocates of the absolute immutability of a person’s sexual orientation, base their conclusion, first of all, on alleged biological causation. Richard Green argued that if homosexual orientation was solely biological in origin, any claim of orientation change through psychosocial means is ludicrous.<sup>57</sup> Green seems to ignore the fact that biological causation for homosexual orientation remains inconclusive. Scholars who ignore the ambiguity of the evidence and affirm that a person’s sexual orientation is immutable draw on alleged psychiatric evidence. In an influential article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Chandler Burr stated: “Five decades of psychiatric evidence demonstrates that homosexuality is immutable and nonpathological, and a growing body of more recent evidence implicates biology in

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<sup>53</sup>American Psychological Association, “Answers to Your Questions for a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality,” <http://www.apa.org/topics/orientation.html#whatis> (accessed 9/2/08). It is interesting to note that when Jones and Yarhouse (*Ex-Gays?* 16, cf. 388 n. 1) retrieved the APA answers brochure (4/2005), they found a much firmer statement: “Can therapy change sexual orientation? No. . . . [H]omosexuality . . . is not changeable.”

<sup>54</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 78-79, cf. 77-85, for an explanation of these charts.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 85-94.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>57</sup>Richard Green, “The Immutability of (homo)sexual Orientation: Behavioral Science Implications for a Constitutional (Legal) Analysis,” *Journal of Psychiatry and Law* 16/4 (1988):537-75.

the development of sexual orientation.”<sup>58</sup> This raises an important question. How does Chandler’s statement favoring immutability match the evidence summarized above, that demonstrated the sexual orientation could sometimes be changed? It is almost as if we must believe it because he said it.

#### Robert Spitzer—An Important Development

##### Spitzer’s study

Robert Spitzer<sup>59</sup> is a research psychiatrist who first gained prominence in 1973 when he lobbied the APA to remove the listing of homosexuality as a clinical disorder. In 2001 he addressed the APA and affirmed that whether through psychotherapeutic efforts or through ex-gay religious ministries (e.g., Exodus International), that homosexual men and women can and have changed to a heterosexual orientation.<sup>60</sup> Spitzer reported on interviews he conducted of 200 persons (143 males and 57 females) who had reported a change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation.<sup>61</sup> He interviewed only persons who experienced at least 5 years of some kind of change to a heterosexual orientation.<sup>62</sup> He asked each of these individuals 114 close-ended questions<sup>63</sup> and 60 more open-ended questions.<sup>64</sup> Almost all the questions focused on two time periods: the year before starting the therapy that led to their orientation change (PRE) and the year before the interview by Spitzer (POST).<sup>65</sup> The participants wanted not only to change their sexual orientation, but to function well heterosexually. 66% of the males and 44% of the females satisfied

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<sup>58</sup>Chandler Burr, “Homosexuality and Biology,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 271/3 (March 1993):65.

<sup>59</sup>According to an interview done by *Christianity Today*, Spitzer describes himself as a Jewish atheist, Douglas Leblanc, “Therapeutically Incorrect: Atheist Psychiatrist Argues That Gays Can Change,” *Christianity Today* 49:4 (April 20, 2005), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/april/20.94.html> (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>60</sup>Robert L. Spitzer, “Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orientation,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32/5 (October 2003):403-17.

<sup>61</sup>Consequently, this sample of persons is called a “convenience sample” rather than a “representative sample.”

<sup>62</sup>Spitzer (“Change” 405) only included people in his study who had a significant homosexual attraction for many years (at least “60” on a scale of 0-100 [with 100 being exclusively homosexual]) and who had experienced a substantive change in orientation (at least 10 points).

<sup>63</sup>These involved either yes/no answers or a number on a defined numeric scale (e.g., 0–100 or 0–10).

<sup>64</sup>For example, one question asked, “What were the most important things you talked about in your therapy?”

<sup>65</sup>Spitzer, “Change” 406.

the criteria to be described as “good heterosexual functioning.”<sup>66</sup> About 90% of all respondents indicated that they were only slightly or not at all troubled by the intrusion of homosexual thoughts or feelings after they had finished their therapy and lived with this new sexual orientation for at least five years.<sup>67</sup>

#### **What does Spitzer’s study not say?**

He does not affirm that all homosexuals can change to a heterosexual orientation. He does not even suggest that all homosexuals should or need to do this. In an interview after his initial presentation of his data to the APA, he acknowledged that the results of his study “may help 5,000 people, but harm 500,000.”<sup>68</sup> He also is concerned that the Christian right might use his findings to strengthen their campaign to prevent gays and lesbians from gaining civil rights protections.<sup>69</sup>

#### **What does Spitzer’s study say?**

In contradiction to the near-unanimous consensus in the psychiatric community and pro-homosexual proponents, Spitzer carefully argues for the genuine possibility for a person to change from a homosexual to a heterosexual orientation without the danger of emotion or psychological risk. Not only did the pro-homosexual activists condemn Spitzer’s study,<sup>70</sup> but many of his colleagues expressed their horror at his conclusions.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 411.

<sup>67</sup>Another way of looking at these statistics is that about 69% of the respondents were bothered to some degree by homosexual feelings (slightly—58.5%, moderately—9.5%, moderately—1%) and 31.5% were not bothered at all (ibid., 410).

<sup>68</sup>Ken Hausman, “Furor Erupts Over Study On Sexual Orientation,” *Psychiatric News* 36/13 (July 6, 2001):20.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>For example, in a pro-homosexual booklet that condemns Dr. James Dobson on numerous fronts (Jeff Lutes, “A False Focus on My Family,” p. 11, [http://www.soulforce.org/pdf/false\\_focus.pdf](http://www.soulforce.org/pdf/false_focus.pdf) [accessed 9/2/2008]), the author quotes Spitzer, “For the vast majority it is not possible for them to change their sexual orientation.” [Change therapy] “may help 5,000 people, but harm 500,000.” They suggest that this is an indication that Spitzer’s study is flawed.

<sup>71</sup>A number of his colleagues attacked Spitzer’s ethics and professional credibility, even to the point of accusing him of violating the Nuremberg Code of medical ethics for reinforcing the stigmatization and mental suffering of gays and lesbians (see M. L. Wainberg, and others, “Science and the Nuremberg Code: A Question of Ethics and Harm,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32/5 [October 2003]:419-68). At the APA meeting where Spitzer presented his paper, the APA issued a press release emphasizing that the “APA maintains that there is no published scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of reparative therapy as a treatment to change one’s sexual orientation” (Hausman, “Furor” 20).

Jones and Yarhouse—Another, More Recent, Development

Stanton Jones (Wheaton College) and Mark Yarhouse (Regent University) have written numerous essays, articles, and two books that deal with the issue of homosexuality, focusing on potential causes and whether a person can change sexual orientation. Their most recent book (2007), *Ex-Gays?: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*, revisits the issue addressed by Spitzer's 2001 article.

**What is Jones' and Yarhouse's focus?**

Their book reports on their research "on the possibility of change of homosexuality orientation via religiously mediated means."<sup>72</sup> They seek to answer two simple questions. In the first place, is it *ever* possible for an individual who has a homosexual orientation to change that orientation via religious means (esp. as a result of a cluster of conservative religious ministries that focus on ministry to homosexuals [e.g., Exodus International])? Secondly, is the attempt to change harmful, as so many today claim?<sup>73</sup>

**How do they hope to accomplish this?**

Their key operating principle is the "Principle of Falsifiability."<sup>74</sup> For example, while one cannot prove the universal claim that all crows are black, the discovery of even one crow that was not black would disprove the universal claim that all crows are black. For Jones and Yarhouse, here is the primary issue. They are investigating the claim, widely made today, that sexual orientation, homosexual orientation in particular, cannot be changed, that it is immutable.<sup>75</sup> They contend that "Compelling evidence that even one individual demonstrates fundamental change in sexual orientation will constitute an invalidation of the universal claim that sexual orientation change is impossible."<sup>76</sup>

**What are Jones and Yarhouse not claiming?**

In the first place, they are not seeking to prove that *permanent, enduring change* has occurred in the people who participated in their study. That would require another very long-term study.<sup>77</sup> Secondly, regardless of how many of the

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<sup>72</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 15.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 16

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>77</sup>Jones and Yarhouse (*Ex-Gays?* 118) hope to follow their "sample" of 98 individuals over the coming years and pursue that issue further.



individuals included in this study demonstrate significant change, this study provides no conclusive evidence about what proportion of individuals can change. That is not an objective of their study.<sup>78</sup>

#### **Their methodology**<sup>79</sup>

They interviewed 98 individuals who had some affiliation with Exodus International, indicating some desire to change their sexual orientation. Phase 1 participants included 57 individuals who were involved in the change process for one year or less (at the beginning of the study). Phase 2 participants dealt with 41 individuals who were involved in the change process for between one and three years (at the beginning of the study). The interviews conducted by Jones and Yarhouse took place in three phases, generally separated by 12-18 months.

#### **Basic Conclusions**

Their qualitative analysis of sexual orientation outcomes fell into six categories:<sup>80</sup>

- **Success—conversion (15%):** The subject reports considerable resolution of homosexual orientation issues and substantial conversion to heterosexual attraction.
- **Success—chastity (23%):** The subject reports homosexual attraction is either missing or present only incidently and in a way that does not seem to bring about distress.
- **Continuing (29%):** The person may have experienced diminution of homosexual attraction, but is not satisfied and remains committed to the change process.
- **Nonresponse (15%):** The person has experienced no significant sexual orientation change. The subject has not given up on the change process, but may be confused or conflicted about which direction to turn next.
- **Failure—confused (4%):** The person has experienced no significant sexual orientation change and has given up on the change process but without yet embracing gay identity.
- **Failure—gay identity (8%):** The person has clearly given up on the change process and embraced gay identity.

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<sup>78</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 17-18. For them to answer the question of probability would require the authors to examine a scientifically representative sample of all persons who experience homosexual attraction.

<sup>79</sup>They explain their basic methodology in chapter four (*Ex-Gays?* 106-43).

<sup>80</sup>Jones and Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* 368-69.

Summary<sup>81</sup>

What Jones and Yarhouse did find was that change in sexual orientation can happen and that change in sexual orientation does not harm the participant who changes. However, what Jones and Yarhouse did not find was that not just anyone can or did change. The “conversions” were not necessarily from total homosexuality to total heterosexuality. There is no indication of the permanence of these changes (yet).

**How Have Homosexual Activists Impacted Modern Culture  
Throughout the World?**

Various ways are available to demonstrate the impact of homosexuality on today's culture, here in the United States as well as the rest of the world. The following section provides just a small cross-section of the imprint left by homosexual activism in today's world. There are *numerous* other examples of the way homosexual activists have made and are making a powerful impact on public education and the political process in the United States as well as on political realities in the world.

The Issue of Homophobia

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, homophobia signifies the “fear or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality.”<sup>82</sup> However, different meanings have been assigned to this word. Although there are legitimate cases of homophobia, the modern use of the term has been expanded to take on social and political meanings. Gay advocates use it widely to refer to those who are hostile toward gay people and even those who disagree with the pro-gay perspective. They consider homophobic those who want to resolve their homosexual problems as well as therapists who try to help them. When working with this expanded definition, an important clarification would help. It is important to distinguish between prejudice or some kind of bias and homophobia. Those who disagree with the pro-homosexual agenda may also do it legitimately out of conviction, which is a strong belief. Those who object to homosexuality on religious or moral grounds do so out of conviction, not because of a phobia or prejudice. Unfortunately, this one word, homophobia, is used by different people in different settings with some very different meanings. It is rapidly becoming a “snarl” word like racism and sexism.

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 372-76.

<sup>82</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, “homophobia, n.,” <http://dictionary.oed.com> (accessed 9/2/2008).

## Domestic Impact

**Hate crime legislation—H.R. 1592**

On May 3, 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to expand the definition of hate-crimes to include violence motivated by perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.<sup>83</sup> This bill has not yet been voted on by the U.S. Senate or signed by the President.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, the bill presents a set of serious problems. This bill seems to set up a two-tiered justice system with a first-class and second-class set of victims. The existing hate-crime bill includes only non-behavioral characteristics (race, color, and national origin). According to recent FBI figures, hate crimes made up only 3% of violent crime in 2005. It is also interesting to note that 16% of those victims were attacked because of their religion and only 14% were attacked because of their sexual orientation.<sup>85</sup> Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center, said that one could rightly interpret the bill as another step toward normalizing homosexuality.<sup>86</sup>

**The “Philly 5”**

On October 10, 2004, a group of 11 Christians was displaying banners with biblical messages and “preaching God’s Word” to a crowd of people attending the Philadelphia “OutFest” event. After a confrontation with a group called the Pink Angels, described by protesters as “a militant mob of homosexuals,” the Christians were arrested and spent a night in jail. Eight charges were filed: criminal conspiracy, possession of instruments of crime, reckless endangerment of another person, ethnic intimidation, riot, failure to disperse, disorderly conduct, and obstructing highways. None of the Pink Angels was cited or arrested.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Susan Wunderink with reporting by Collin Hansen, “House Adds Homosexuality to Hate-Crimes Protections,” *Christianity Today* 51 (May 2007, Web-only), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/mayweb-only/118-52.0.html> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>84</sup>As part of the defense bill that was proposed in November 2007, the House Democrats sought to add the hate crimes measure as part of the package. Eventually, they dropped that extension of hate crimes protection from the defense bill that the president eventually signed in December 2007, Sarah Pulliam, “Hate Crimes Bill Dropped,” *Christianity Today* 51 (December 2007, Web-only), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/decemberweb-only/150-12.0.html> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>85</sup>“Incidents, Offenses, Victims, and Known Offenders by Bias Motivation, 2005—Table 1,” Uniform Crime Reporting Program: Hate Crime Statistics 2005, <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2005/table1.htm> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>86</sup>Susan Wunderink with reporting by Collin Hansen, “House Adds Homosexuality to Hate-Crimes Protections,” *Christianity Today* 51 (May 2007, Web-only), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/mayweb-only/118-52.0.html> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>87</sup>Ron Strom, “Testing the Faith: ‘Philly 5’ Win 1 in Court,” *World Net Daily Exclusive* (Jan. 21, 2005), [http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=42492](http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=42492) (accessed 9/3/2008).

In mid-February, all the charges were dropped as well as the bail requirement that they stay at least 100 feet away from any homosexual gathering.

### **Reverse bias**

Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD) calls the state of Indiana's efforts to institute a strict anti-gay marriage law as an "anti-marriage equality movement."<sup>88</sup> Their public statement represents a reverse bias against marriage under the guise of "anti-marriage equality."

### **California's SB 777**

On October 12, 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger signed SB 777<sup>89</sup> into law.<sup>90</sup> This bill deals primarily with what constitutes discrimination against homosexuals.<sup>91</sup> It changes numerous sections in the Education Code (EC). A key part of this bill mandates that ". . . a charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations, . . . and shall not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of the characteristics listed in Section 220."

#### **The pre-SB 777 education code**

In the Education Code before SB 777, under the section titled "Prohibited instruction or activity" (Section 51500), the code stated the following: "No teacher shall give instruction nor shall a school district sponsor any activity which reflects adversely upon persons because of their race, sex, color, creed, handicap, national origin, or ancestry."

#### **The impact of SB 777**

SB 777 changed existing Section 51500 of the EC by having it refer to amended EC Section 220. The resulting combination of Sections 51500 and 220 effectively imposes the following requirement on every public school: "No teacher

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<sup>88</sup>"Indiana's Anti-Marriage Equality Movement Halted," Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (January 26, 2008), [http://www.glaad.org/media/stw\\_detail.php?id=4197](http://www.glaad.org/media/stw_detail.php?id=4197) (accessed 9/2/2008).

<sup>89</sup>For an analysis of the bill before it was passed, see Roy Hansen, Jr., "SB 777—Private Schools & Private Home School," Private & Home Educators of California (February 4, 2008), <http://www.pheofca.org/SB777071017.pdf> (accessed 9/3/2008). Also, for a consideration of the bill that became law in January 2008 in California, see Roy Hansen, Jr., "SB 777—An Analysis," Private & Home Educators of California (February 4, 2008), <http://www.pheofca.org/SB777080124.pdf> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>90</sup>For those interested in reading this bill, see "Bill Number: SB 777," California Senate Records, [http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb\\_0751-0800/sb\\_777\\_bill\\_20070223\\_introduced.html](http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb_0751-0800/sb_777_bill_20070223_introduced.html) (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>91</sup>In this sentence, "homosexuality" serves as an abbreviated way to refer to the three categories of sexual orientation: "homosexuality," "bisexuality," and "transsexuality."

shall give instruction nor shall a school district sponsor any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias because of [one of the following characteristics: disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics].” Notice the comparison of these sections of SB 777 below:

Old 220: It is the policy of the State of California to afford all persons in public schools, regardless of their *sex, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, mental or physical disability, or regardless of any actual or perceived* characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, equal rights and opportunities in the educational institutions of the state. The purpose of this chapter is to prohibit acts which are contrary to that policy and to provide remedies therefor.

New 220: It is the policy of the State of California to afford all persons in public schools, regardless of their *disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other* characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, equal rights and opportunities in the educational institutions of the state. The purpose of this chapter is to prohibit acts which are contrary to that policy and to provide remedies therefor.

Old 51500: No teacher shall give instruction nor shall a school district sponsor any activity which reflects adversely upon persons because of *their race, sex, color, creed, handicap, national origin, or ancestry*.

New 51500: No teacher shall give instruction nor shall a school district sponsor any activity *that* reflects adversely upon persons because of *a characteristic listed in Section 220*.

What does this new law mean?

Here is what seems to be the punchline: Under SB 777, public school teachers are prohibited from giving any instruction, for example, that would make it look like same-sex marriages or a homosexual lifestyle was wrong. This means that any instruction, which supports marriage between a man and a woman as the only legitimate or best arrangement for a family or for rearing children, could be considered an illegal discriminatory bias against homosexuals or bisexuals.<sup>92</sup> This Section 220 does not apply to any private school that “is controlled by a religious

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<sup>92</sup>Roy Hansen, Jr., “SB 777—An Analysis,” Private & Home Educators of California (February 4, 2008), <http://www.pheofca.org/SB777080124.pdf> (accessed 9/3/2008).

organization if the application would not be consistent with the religious tenets of that organization<sup>93</sup> or to home schools.

#### Church Involvement or Non-Involvement in the Issue

##### **Emerging church**

Notice the statements by Brian McLaren on his blog for *Christianity Today* as relates to the relevance and clarity of the Bible concerning homosexuality:

Frankly, many of us don't know what we should think about homosexuality. We've heard all sides but no position has yet won our confidence so that we can say "it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us." That alienates us from both the liberals and conservatives who seem to know exactly what we should think.

If we think that there may actually be a legitimate context for some homosexual relationships, we know that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered, and the pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex. We aren't sure if or where lines are to be drawn, nor do we know how to enforce with fairness whatever lines are drawn.

Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making pronouncements. In the meantime, we'll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably.

When decisions need to be made, they'll be admittedly provisional. We'll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, psychology, genetics, sociology, and related fields.<sup>94</sup>

##### **Will we risk arrest if needed or not?**

In one of his blog entries in September 2006, Mohler referred to Joel Osteen, pastor of Houston's Lakewood Church, concerning his statements concerning homosexuality. When asked what he thought of gay marriage (during his visit to Massachusetts, the first state to make them legal), Osteen responded: "I don't think it's God's best. . . . I never feel like homosexuality is God's best." When pressed on the issue, Osteen said, "I don't feel like that's my thrust . . . you know, some of the issues that divide us, and I'm here to let people know that God is for them and he's on their side."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Roy Hansen, Jr., "SB 777—Private Schools & Private Home School," Private & Home Educators of California (February 4, 2008), <http://www.pheofca.org/SB777071017.pdf> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>94</sup>Brian McLaren, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question: Finding a Pastoral Response," *Out of Ur: Following God's Call in a New World—Leadership Journal Blog* (January 23, 2006), [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian\\_mclaren\\_o.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o.html) (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>95</sup>Albert Mohler, "Meanwhile, In No Apparent Danger of Arrest," [http://www.albertmohler.com/blog\\_read.php?id=766](http://www.albertmohler.com/blog_read.php?id=766) (accessed 9/3/2008).

Mohler contrasted Osteen's evasive non-answer to that fact that Stephen Green was recently arrested in Great Britain for passing out pamphlets that included Bible verses clearly declaring homosexuality to be a sin.<sup>96</sup> Christians in many parts of the world now risk arrest for declaring openly what the Bible clearly teaches. Mohler makes the point that Osteen's answer "will put him at very little risk for arrest. But then, pandering prophets are rarely at much of a risk from the public anyway."<sup>97</sup>

### Helpful resource

Daniel Heimbach provides a listing of religious statements on sexual morality from various mainline denominations.<sup>98</sup>

### International Impact

#### Canada's Bill C-250 (May 2004)

In Canada, "homophobia" is already illegal. Homosexual activist Member of Parliament Svend Robinson worked for 10 years to get Bill C-250, a private members bill (which almost never get passed into law) through parliament (equivalent to the US House of Representatives). The bill added "sexual orientation" to the pre-existing hate crimes and genocide bills. Opponents of the bill argued that sexual orientation was not fully defined, and existing legislation already offered legal protection. Their protests fell on deaf ears. Passages of the Bible condemning homosexuality, in Leviticus and Romans, have been declared akin to "hate literature" by a judge in Saskatchewan.<sup>99</sup>

#### The arrest of a Swedish pastor for preaching against homosexuality (2005)

Åke Green is a Pentecostal Christian pastor who was sentenced to one month in prison under Sweden's law against hate speech. On February 11, 2005 an appeals court, overturned the decision and acquitted him. However, on March 9, the Prosecutor-General appealed this decision to the Supreme Court, which on November 29 also acquitted him. In their opinion, while Green had violated Swedish law as it currently stands, a conviction would most likely be overturned by the European Court

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<sup>96</sup>Albert Mohler, "The Criminalizing of Christianity in Great Britain," [http://www.albertmohler.com/blog\\_read.php?id=768](http://www.albertmohler.com/blog_read.php?id=768).

<sup>97</sup>Albert Mohler, "Meanwhile, In No Apparent Danger of Arrest," [http://www.albertmohler.com/blog\\_read.php?id=766](http://www.albertmohler.com/blog_read.php?id=766).

<sup>98</sup>Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004) 375-449.

<sup>99</sup>"European Union Seeks To Expand Gay Rights, Penalize Dissenting Viewpoints," *National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality* (February 3, 2006), <http://www.narth.com/docs/criminalize.html> (accessed 9/2/2008).

of Human Rights, based on their previous rulings regarding Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>100</sup>

In 2002, the Swedish parliament included references to sexual orientation in a list of groups protected against persecution in the form of threats and expressions of disdain. The list appears in a section of Swedish criminal law (*Brottsbalken*) known as The Act on Persecution of Minority Groups (*Lagen om hets mot folkgrupp*).<sup>101</sup>

### **The expansion of gay rights in the European Union (February 2006)**

Leaders in the European Union (EU) have passed a resolution stating that “homophobia” is a social evil and an irrational fear of homosexuals. The “Homophobia in Europe” resolution compares homophobia to racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and sexism” and calls for its criminalization. The leader of this effort is Franco Frattini, the justice minister of the EU. He stated: “Homophobia is a violation of human rights and we are watching member states on this issue and reporting on cases in which our efforts have been unsuccessful.” The resolution warns that any refusal to grant homosexuals same-sex marriage status will be considered a crime of homophobia.<sup>102</sup>

### **The decision of the UN Economic and Social Council (December 28, 2006)**

At the end of 2006, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) granted official status to three European homosexual organizations as well as the International Lesbian and Gay Federation (ILGA).<sup>103</sup> After previously voting against this coveted status for such groups, the Bush administration’s representative has now voted for it. As reported by the UN watchdog organization, Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), the U.S. vote to approve accreditation for the three groups prompted an unnamed UN representative from another nation to comment: “While the Bush administration has been solid on life issues, it seems irrational to me

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<sup>100</sup>“Åke Green cleared over gay sermon,” *The Local: Sweden's News in English*, (November 29, 2005), <http://www.thelocal.se/article.php?ID=2590&print=true> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>101</sup>“Åke Green,” *Answers.com*, <http://www.answers.com/topic/ke-green> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>102</sup>“European Union Seeks To Expand Gay Rights, Penalize Dissenting Viewpoints” (February 3, 2006), *National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality*, <http://www.narth.com/docs/criminalize.html> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>103</sup>ILGA has a history of association with the world’s leading organizational advocate of pedophilia, the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). The relationship between ILGA and NAMBLA had led to UN rejection of the group in the past. Now claiming to have broken its ties to NAMBLA, ILGA nevertheless refuses to condemn man-child sex.



that they insist on favoring gay groups that clearly seek to undermine marriage and the family.”<sup>104</sup>

#### **The decision of various European cities (October 30, 2007)**

The government of Catalonia, Spain, joined ILGA (joining the European cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Venice). The Catalanian organization called “E-Christians” wrote that “the ILGA is a pressure group, an international political lobby, that has as its objective the construction of a homosexual society. . . . Their political agenda has the intention of eliminating the natural differentiation of humanity between men and women for another based on the differentiation of heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgenders, etc.”<sup>105</sup>

The primary agenda of the ILGA is to establish homosexual sex acts as a “human right,” something no binding UN document has ever done. To this end, it is a promoter of the “Yogyakarta Principles,” a gay-rights declaration drafted in Yogyakarta, Indonesia earlier this year by several members and ex-members of United Nations “human rights” bodies and other international organizations.<sup>106</sup>

#### **Potential government control of private and home schools over “homophobia”**

Gay activist groups in Ontario are urging the provincial ministry of education to exert more control over private and home schools to fight against the alleged effects of homophobia.<sup>107</sup>

### **Summary**

In this article I have sought to consider three primary issues which I present as three questions. Here are the general conclusions:

First of all, is there a “gay gene”? Science has in no fashion clearly demonstrated a fundamental or primary genetic cause for homosexuality. That does not mean that genetics has nothing to do with homosexual desires and behavior.

<sup>104</sup>John F. McManus, “Homosexual Groups Win UN Acceptance With U.S. Approval,” *The John Birch Society: Standing for Family and Freedom* (December 28, 2006), <http://www.jbs.org/index.php/jbs-news-feed/763-homosexual-groups-win-un-acceptance-with-us-approval> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>105</sup>Matthew Cullinan Hoffman, “Government of Catalonia Joins International Homosexual Organization Associated with Pedophilia: Outraged Catalonians Denounce Decision as Immoral and Unjust,” *LifeSiteNews.com* (October 30, 2007), <http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2007/oct/07103009.html> (accessed 9/3/2008).

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>“Canadian Gays Urge More Government Control Of Private and Home Schools Over ‘Homophobia’” (February 8, 2008), *National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality*, <http://www.narth.com/docs/morecontrol.html> (accessed 9/2/2008).

However, any genetic factor does not determine that a person has a homosexual orientation, hence making it acceptable and moral. God's Word is the primary source for what we believe about homosexuality.

Secondly, is it possible for a person to change sexual orientation from being homosexual to heterosexual? Yes, various studies demonstrated that there was a potential for sex-orientation change, especially in religious settings that focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ. The general consensus that a homosexual orientation is immutable is an ideological statement that does not draw on numerous lines of evidence.

Finally, how have homosexual activists impacted modern culture throughout the world? Sadly, homosexual activists have impacted all parts of the world with an influence that greatly surpasses their numbers.

**Appendix: a selection of gay/homosexual activist organizations:**

ACLU Gay & Lesbian Rights Project  
Equality Federation  
GLAD—Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders  
GLAAD—Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation  
GLMA—Gay and Lesbian Medical Association  
GLSEN—Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network  
Gay and Lesbian Leadership Institute  
Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund  
Gay Yellow Pages  
HRC—Human Rights Campaign  
IGLHRC—International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission  
GLAAD—Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation  
HRC—Human Rights Campaign  
ILGA—International Lesbian and Gay Association  
LLDEF—Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund  
NCLR—National Center for Lesbian Rights  
NGLTF—National Gay and Lesbian Task Force  
NAMBLA—North American Man/Boy Love Association  
NGLTF—National Gay and Lesbian Task Force  
Other Sheep—"Multicultural ministries with sexual minorities"; Member of ILGA  
PFLAG—Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays  
Rainbow Wedding Network  
SIECUS—Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States

## **MARRIAGE AND HOMOSEXUALITY: TOWARD A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING**

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*A clear pattern of attack on the biblical definition of marriage has emerged alongside the recent widespread propagation of a homosexual agenda. The ultimate goal of the widely publicized deviant lifestyle is to destroy marriage, reverse sodomy laws, and force acceptance of different rules on society as a whole. The movement comes in conjunction with an attempt to eliminate male-and-female gender distinctions and a reinterpretation of biblical texts that support those distinctions. In particular, the biblical command to love one another suffers from distortion as proponents of homosexuality plead for tolerance toward their deviations. Their proposals are a far cry from the biblical perspective on marriage as expressed in the Genesis account of creation. That account outlines five purposes of God in His creative work: reproduction, the union of one woman and one man, woman functioning as a complement to man, picturing the relationship between Christ and His church, and a fulfilling of distinctive roles by husband and by wife. A same-sex union cannot possibly fulfill any of such perspectives. In addition, the Mosaic Law clearly forbids homosexuality as does Paul's epistle to the Romans. Scripture never approves of any sexual relationship except the marital, monogamous, one-woman, one-man union.*

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For more than fifty years, the traditional family has been disappearing from the American scene. From single parent homes to children born out of wedlock to simple cohabitation, the traditional family has been losing traction and spiraling downward. In 2003, the *New York Times* announced, "The United States is becoming a post-marital society."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*New York Times*, November 23, 2003, quoted in *What's Wrong with Same-Sex Marriage?* by D. James Kennedy & Jerry Newcombe (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004) 15.

Over the past decade, the legalization of same-sex marriages in a handful of states has exacerbated this dilemma. Though there are lulls in the firestorm of legislative debates, it is apparent that these moments are merely brief respites for the purpose of reloading and re-energizing a frontal assault on the very foundation of society—the traditional marriage and family.

It is certainly understood that, for the Christian, the issue of marriage and homosexuality must find its anchor and focus in the Word of God. Only there can the divine definition and intent for marriage be discovered. And once that definition is uncovered, it becomes evident that the same-sex marriage model is incapable of fulfilling the stipulations prescribed in the divine revelation.

However, before the biblical texts are examined, a number of corollary factors that frame such a study must be exposed. An investigation and explanation of these factors, intrinsically linked to marriage, will aid in understanding the ultimate goals and underlying agenda of the homosexual attack on the traditional one-man, one-woman institution of marriage.

### **I. The Foundational Issues and the Homosexual Agenda**

When undertaking this investigation, a number of complementary factors that are inexorably intertwined are remarkably evident. The factors are more than merely concomitant or coincidental; they are rudimentary and foundational. They are nerve endings that have not only taken root in the spinal column of the same-sex marriage debate, but have been exposed as primary causes of society's deadly cancer.

#### **A. The Redefinition and Destruction of Marriage**

Those who advocate same-sex marriage are not merely interested in cohabitation. Rather, they are unrelenting in their desire to redefine marriage. No, not just to redefine it; they are adamant in their efforts to drive marriage into oblivion! During the decade of the nineties, households led by married couples plummeted below 25 percent.<sup>2</sup> As a result, in certain strongholds of liberal and antinomian thought, kindergarten and first-grade teachers are carefully instructed that a family is a “unit of two or more persons, related either by birth or by choice, who may or may not live together, who try to meet each other's needs and share common goals and interests.”<sup>3</sup> In 1997, then-President Bill Clinton, speaking at a “Hate Crimes” conference at George Washington University, exhorted schools across America to design and institute pro-homosexual diversity programs “to teach [children] a

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<sup>2</sup>Eric Schmitt, “For the First Time, Nuclear Families Drop Below 25 Percent of Households,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2001.

<sup>3</sup>Alan Sears and Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003) 52.

different way.”<sup>4</sup>

Although homosexuality occupies a prominent position in this discussion, it is increasingly evident that in reality this is not a debate about homosexuality. Rather, “it is first and fundamentally an argument over marriage.”<sup>5</sup> The real issue is not homosexuality; the central focus is marriage—or, more accurately, the dissolution of marriage. Quite simply, the plot is to overthrow traditional marriage. Why? Because gay or lesbian marriage will not erase the negative stigma that accompanies same-sex relationships. Says one lesbian author, “We must not fool ourselves into believing that marriage will make it acceptable to be gay or lesbian.... Marriage is not a path to that liberation.... We must keep our eyes on the goals of providing true alternatives to marriage and of radically reordering society’s view of family.”<sup>6</sup>

In 2004, San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom ordered the city to issue same-sex marriage licenses. Claiming constitutional footing, Mayor Newsom argued that to do otherwise would be discriminatory. Invoking his own version of inalienable rights, he resorted to an illegal bending and twisting of the laws of equal rights, hoping thereby to enhance his own political agenda and force the unacceptable upon society as a whole.

Such examples are only the tip of the iceberg. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the inevitable watershed nature of an agenda, giving an all-too-evident look at the consequences. Eager for the legal right to engage in sinful activities, a small, aberrant segment of society, under the rubric of equal rights, is demanding a definition of marriage of their own liking. Erwin Lutzer expands this thought when he writes,

George Dent, writing in *The Journal of Law and Politics*, says that once same-sex marriage is affirmed, then other forms of “marriage” will quickly be affirmed as well, such as polygamy, endogamy (the marriage of blood relatives) and child marriage. In fact, the policy guide of the American Civil Liberties Union calls for the legalization of polygamy, stating, “The ACLU believes that criminal and civil laws prohibiting or penalizing the practice of plural marriage violate constitutional protections for freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion, and privacy for personal relationships among consenting adults.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Bedard, “Clinton Urges School Diversity Training,” *Washington Times* (Nov 11, 1997):A1, quoted in “Family News From Dr. James Dobson,” *Newsletter* (June 1998):3.

<sup>5</sup>David Frum, quoted from Sears and Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda* 92.

<sup>6</sup>Paula Ettlbrick, “Since When is Marriage a Path to Liberation?” in *Same-Sex Marriage: The Moral and Legal Debate*, eds. Robert M. Baird and Stuart E. Rosenbaum (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2004) 261.

<sup>7</sup>Erwin Lutzer, *The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage* (Chicago: Moody, 2004) 29. Michael Kinsley writes, “The solution is to end the institution of government monopoly on marriage. And yes, if three people want to get married..., let ‘em. If you and your government are implicated, what do you care?” (“Abolish Marriage: Let’s Really Get Government Out of Our Bedrooms,” *Washington Post* (July 3, 2004):A23).

Homosexual write, Michelangelo Signorile openly acknowledges the driving motive for this agenda. He writes, "A middle ground might be to fight for same-sex marriage and its benefits and then, once granted, redefine the institution of marriage completely, to demand the right to marry not as a way of adhering to society's moral codes but rather to debunk a myth and radically alter an archaic institution."<sup>8</sup>

The words of French philosopher Michel Foucault are even more direct and chilling. Prior to his AIDS-related death in 1984, he wrote,

Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who have used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.<sup>9</sup>

The agenda is *not* marriage for gays and lesbians; it is imperative that this underlying principle be clearly understood. The ultimate agenda is to change the rules—to destroy marriage, reverse the sodomy laws, and to force acceptance on society.

### **B. The Removal Gender Distinctions**

The redefinition and destruction of marriage has been joined, interestingly, by another segment of today's society. If one pulls back the covers, one finds another agenda—one that has marriage and family clearly in the cross-hairs. What is the target? Their aim is to expunge marriage of its biblical moorings. The homosexual agenda has coupled with the Women's Liberation movement to erase marriage of its beauty and reduce it to rubble. In the 1988 issue of the National Organization of Women's magazine, called *NOW Times*, Dr. Sheila Craven asserts, "Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the women's movement must concentrate on attacking this institution. Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage."<sup>10</sup>

The November 1971 issue of the *Declaration of Feminism* magazine blatantly asserts, "The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore, it is important for us to encourage women to leave their husbands, and not to live individually with men.... We must go back to

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<sup>8</sup>Michelangelo Signorile, "Bridal Wave," *OUT* magazine (December/January 1994):161.

<sup>9</sup>Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977) 151, quoted in Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow? Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexual Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995) 49.

<sup>10</sup>Phil Stringer, "Militant Feminism," online at <http://usiap.org/Family/Unit/MilitantFeminism.html>, accessed 7/25/2008.

ancient female religions like witchcraft.”<sup>11</sup> The *NOW Times* adds, “Every woman must be willing to be recognized as a lesbian to be fully feminine.”<sup>12</sup> As anyone can see, the two agendas are inextricably woven together.

Nor is this agenda the sole propriety of the far-left. Egalitarians within the so-called evangelical camp encourage, unwittingly I believe, this agenda as well. When they appeal to the apostle Paul’s words in Gal 3:28 that “...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus,” they overlook the fact that the context is one of justification by faith, whereby all classes of Christians are children of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Chuck Colson argues that this is all a part of a unisex movement. He writes: “All this gender blending grows out of and feeds on...an aggressive gay subculture. Homosexuality could not survive as a valid ‘alternative lifestyle’ in a culture that took gender distinctions seriously.”<sup>13</sup>

### C. The Reinterpretation of Biblical Texts

For the homosexual agenda to gain any traction in America, especially among evangelicals, it must find a way to undermine the Bible and erode its enormous authority and influence. In his article, “Liberating Gay Theology,” Rev. Jeffery Dennis writes that gays and lesbians do not need counseling, healing, or understanding. Rather, the Scriptures need to be redefined according to social norms. He contends,

Gays and lesbians are here to transform the church.... We need a gay God, a God who would lead us toward a more affirming, harmonious, creative, socially conscious, and spiritually profound life.... We need a gay Spirit, a Spirit which would retain the particularity of individuals in the global village, not to be reviled but to be cherished. This Spirit’s goal would not be unity but a “unity in diversity,” not the wedding feast of the Lamb but the festival of Cain and Abel, the archetypal brothers, bringing their first fruits together to God.<sup>14</sup>

This agenda is verifiable countless times over. Dr. Anna Carter Florence, professor of preaching at Columbia Theological Seminary, recently made a startling announcement to the homosexual audience at the Trinity Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. Regarding her ministry to future church leaders, she remarked, “First-year seminary is all about learning to lose. First, we take their Jesus away. Then we mess with their Bible. Then their heads. By the first of November, they don’t know who

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Chuck Colson, “What Can Gender Blending Render,” *World* (March 2, 1991):5 n. p.

<sup>14</sup>Jeffery P. Dennis, “Liberating Gay Theology,” *The Other Side* (September-October 1993):7-58. Also cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005), and the March 2, 2007 blog by R. Albert Mohler Jr., “Is Your Baby Gay? What If You Could Know? What If You Could Do Something About It?” online at <http://www.albertmohler.com/blog>, accessed 8/30/2007.

they are any more.”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, once the biblical God is deposed, then special revelation (the Scriptures) is rendered non-existent; no basis for moral law exists. Man becomes a law or god to himself, leaving him to read the tea-leaves of general revelation in search of some form of moral compass. Known as existentialism, this makes experience pre-eminent. As a result, they must filter all moral guidelines through the grid of current social ideals, values that have been spawned and nurtured in the cradle of one's personal perspective of the world around him. Because there is no divine authority, all history (biblical and otherwise) must be interpreted and aligned with perspectives that are in tune with personal experience.<sup>16</sup>

#### **D. A Misconstruing of God's Commandment to Love One Another**

Everyone seems to be aware of a few well-known biblical phrases, including “God is love.” From the studio of “Larry King Live,” to the floor of the Senate, to the columns of the *Los Angeles Times*, Jesus is quoted as being in support of gay marriage. His words are repeatedly invoked as a magical formula, a sacred mantra that supposedly endorses any relationship and declares it to have divine blessing. Although the people wielding them are oblivious to the fact that they are grasping onto the wrong end of the sword, they nonetheless confidently (and blindly) thrust these words forth, hoping to undercut any biblical perspectives that speak to the contrary and thereby silence any church-going critics.

All in the name of tolerance, this is an attempt to turn the focus away from the Word of God and towards the love of God. They seek to highlight the love morality of Scripture at the expense of the law of morality.<sup>17</sup> One advocate puts it this way:

We need the Bible as a source to understanding Christ—but we need to spend more time observing His spirit as related there rather than the “letter of the law” given by His followers in attempting to spread His message. Pick up an addition [*sic*] of the Bible with Christ's recorded statements printed in red. Study only His words, comparing His positive approach throughout the Scriptures. Notice His emphasis on love—His silence

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<sup>15</sup>Jean Patrick, “Speaker compares battle for LGBT ordination in PCUSA to Exodus story,” *The Layman Online*, online at <http://www.layman.org/layman/news/2007-news/speaker-compares-battle-for-lgbt.htm>, accessed 7/23/2008. Cf. Peggy Campolo, “In God's House There are Many Closets,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith*, eds. Anthony and Peggy Campolo (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999) 100-104.

<sup>16</sup>Though some who embrace this would disavow God's existence, others would accept the reality, though they would deny that He has accurately and inerrantly revealed Himself. Rather, they would contend that God and His will must be discovered through existential methods of testing, i.e., through general revelation.

<sup>17</sup>Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, commenting on this perspective, remarks, “Jewish law holds that no hedonistic ethic, even if called ‘love,’ can justify the morality of homosexuality any more than it can legitimize adultery, incest, or polygamy, however genuinely such acts may be performed out of love and by mutual consent” (“Homosexuality,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* [Jerusalem: Macmillan, 1971] 8:962).



on the means of sex but concern only with the motives behind it.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, God has no concern for how sex is done, whether heterosexually or homosexually. Rather, He is only concerned “with the motives behind it.” Supposedly, as long as it is done within the context of love, it meets with divine approval.

There is no question that God is a God of love. The biblical text is replete with assertions that announce and support this truth. But His attribute of love does not evacuate the intrinsic content and value of His other attributes, such as His holiness and righteousness. The love of God never condones sinful actions. Biblical love, as with all divine attributes, has moral ground rules that guard its parameters and infuse it with a requisite fullness of meaning and breadth of understanding. God’s command to love one another never overrides or contradicts His requirements for holiness. The Scripture is clear. “Homosexual behavior can never be the ‘loving thing’ to do.”<sup>19</sup>

## II. The Biblical Perspective of Marriage & Its Implications

God’s plan for the human family is clearly set forth in Scripture. Consequently, when discussing marriage and homosexuality, it is imperative that one understand the biblical basis of marriage and its divine purposes. Defense of any perspective of marriage, whatever that might be, is doomed to moral and social failure unless it is rooted and grounded in the explicit teaching of God’s Word.

The Scriptures contain a number of texts that address this issue in one way or another—passages such as 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1–2. In this article, however, the focus will be directed primarily on the creation account, with a brief look at Leviticus 18 and Romans 1.

### A. The Creation Account

Scripture as a whole is not silent about marriage, but the Genesis account speaks most specifically about it and God’s intention for it. The opening pages of human history explicitly present God’s design for human sexuality and marriage, laying the foundation of a biblical theology of marriage.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it is only appropriate to begin with the creation account of the first man and the first woman. Further, that these divine proclamations occurred *before* the Fall should not be overlooked. Before sin entered the world and depravity began to distort man’s perspective, the account of Adam and Eve unmistakably reveals God’s intention for their relationship in

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<sup>18</sup>Kim Stablinski, “Homosexuality: What the Bible Does and Does Not Say,” *The Ladder*, July 1969, n.p., quoted by P. Michael Ukleja, “Homosexuality in the New Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (October–December 1983):357.

<sup>19</sup>Ukleja, “Homosexuality in the New Testament” 357.

<sup>20</sup>“Gen 2:24 makes explicit that God’s original design for sexuality and marriage in the relationship between Adam and Eve is set forth as a pattern for all future sexual relationships” (Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007] 16).

marriage and lays the foundation for marriage's purpose and function in His created world.

In the biblical account of the creation of the first man and first woman, five perspectives speak directly to the subject of marriage and its comparison with homosexuality. The five are not intended as a full theology of marriage. Rather, they are the ones that most directly interact with the issue of homosexuality in contrast to God's design for marriage.

**1. Biblical Marriage from the Reproductive Perspective.** The Genesis account is very explicit in recounting how God created the birds, fish, and other animals "according to their kind." They were designed to reproduce according to their specific kind; any kind of cross-breeding was strictly forbidden (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9-11).

Consequently, that the account of man's creation carries a similar theme with similar directives is not surprising; a marked symmetry is evident throughout this early biography. Mankind was intentionally created in two sexes—male and female. The order of creation is vividly portrayed from the very beginning; they were sexually distinct human beings.

God's first instruction to the first man and the first woman follows closely His deliberate creation of them (Gen 1:27): "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28).<sup>21</sup> First of all, it is noteworthy that this instruction to procreate immediately follows the divine blessing upon the newly created man and woman. The text reads, "And He blessed them and He said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'" Procreation is one of God's blessings designed for the marriage union. Same-sex marriages, on the other hand, are unable to produce offspring and cannot fulfill this aspect of God's design. They are incapable of receiving this divine blessing.<sup>22</sup>

Second, Adam and Eve were designed to procreate—to give birth to offspring. And though it is not the only purpose for marriage,<sup>23</sup> its being given first must not be underestimated or overlooked. Genetically incapable of fulfilling this command, homosexuality obviously has no place in God's design for mankind. It is a breach of God's opening instructions to the first married couple. Gordon Wenham observes, "To allow the legitimacy of homosexual acts would frustrate the divine

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<sup>21</sup>The same instruction was given to Noah and his family after the flood (Gen 9:1, 7). This is noticeably different from the instructions of the Mesopotamian gods (*Epic of Atrahasis* 3:7:1-8).

<sup>22</sup>Reproduction is repeatedly viewed as a blessing in the Hebrew Scriptures (Gen 12:2; 17:2; Ps 127:3-5).

<sup>23</sup>This is certainly not the only purpose, as Gen 2:18, 20 and Prov 5:15-19 clearly enunciate. Davidson adds: "Still, sexuality cannot be wholly subordinated to the intent to propagate children. Sexual differentiation has meaning apart from the procreative purpose. The procreative blessing is also pronounced upon the birds and fish on the fifth day (v. 22), but only humankind is made in the image of God. Genesis 1 emphasizes that the sexual distinction in humankind is created by God particularly for fellowship, for relationship, between male and female" (*Flame of Yahweh* 49).

purpose.”<sup>24</sup> From the beginning, confusion of sexual identity has had no place in God’s design.

Third, reproduction is an integral dimension in God’s plan for His newly created earth. Accordingly, He follows his instruction to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with a command to subdue it and rule over it (Gen 1:28). “It is necessary that humans ‘be fruitful and multiply’ in order to create enough humans to exercise stewardship; hence sexes are necessary; hence ‘male and female’ (1:27).”<sup>25</sup> Again, as noted earlier, same-sex partnerships are incapable of fulfilling this divine stipulation.

Fourth, procreation is the means God has ordained to propagate His eternal truths. Though the Bible commands all to evangelize, Scripture holds traditional marriage, comprised of a father and a mother, to be the primary prescription for evangelism (e.g., Deut 6:4ff.).

**2. Biblical Marriage from the One Woman/One Man Perspective.** The creation account sets forth a beautiful picture of the perfect marriage. Remarkably, it does so in contrast to other aspects of God’s creative activity. In an apparent effort to expedite His command to fill the extensive amount of open space, swarms of sea creatures were created. Then followed His command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:20-22). Such was not the case, however, with the creation of mankind. Even though the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth is the same, God created only one man and one woman and thereby erected a marriage construct for all subsequent generations.<sup>26</sup>

Yes, polygamy, concubines, and divorce were permitted because of sinfulness and “hardness of heart.”<sup>27</sup> But Jesus added that “from the beginning it has not been this way” (Matt 19:8). That God’s design for marriage was between one man and one woman is quite obvious. The Pastoral Epistles reiterate that standard when they restrict leadership in the church to those marriages characterized by a one-woman/one-man relationship (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>G. J. Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” *The Expository Times* 102/12 (September 1991):363. Also see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987) 33. At the same time, it should be noted that the Genesis 2 account makes no mention of reproductivity. The fullest degree of marriage is accomplished in leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh, without any reference to procreation; sexual love in and of itself between a man and his wife has divine blessing.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow? Comparison and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995) 44.

<sup>26</sup>Davidson notes, “The phrase, ‘a man and his wife’ indicates a heterosexual marriage relationship of a man and a woman as the Edenic model for all time” (*Flame of Yahweh* 21).

<sup>27</sup>Never, however, is homosexuality or any form of deviant sexuality allowed. Scripture is replete and forthright in its prohibition and punishment of such behavior (cf. Lev 18; 20; Rom 1:27).

<sup>28</sup>This is corroborated from a different perspective in 1 Cor 7:2, where the apostle Paul exhorts, “Each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband.”

**3. Biblical Marriage from the Complementary Perspective.** The account in Genesis 2 reveals another purpose of marriage. After God had created the animals, He noted that Adam's creation was incomplete; He states that "it is not good" (Gen 2:18). As a remedy, He announced His plan to make for man a suitable partner. Quite obviously, He didn't make another man to help him! Quite the contrary! Whatever was not good in the creation of man could be resolved only by creating a woman to come alongside; someone who was now "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). She came into the picture to fulfill a unique need, something that only a woman could do. After bringing the animals to Adam for naming, apparently to heighten Adam's awareness of what he was lacking, God created a woman.

The terminology employed in both 2:18 and 2:20 is derived from the Hebrew word נָגֵד (*neged*). Though commonly translated "suitable," when the preposition כִּי (*ke*) is attached, it can be more accurately rendered "corresponding to." As such, it does not describe "sameness," but rather depicts an opposite that is a perfect complement. In this case, it describes a person who perfectly fulfills and completes what is lacking in the man. Victor Hamilton correctly notes, "It suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him.... The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole."<sup>29</sup> Only a man and a woman can become "one flesh." Only a monogamous, heterosexual relationship can fulfill the "one flesh" description set forth in Scripture. It is impossible for a homosexual partnership to become one flesh, because it is impossible for the one partner to provide what is lacking in the other.<sup>30</sup>

**4. Biblical Marriage from the Analogical Perspective.** Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. Ephesians 5 quotes the creation account, providing a direct link between the two passages. Paul unmistakably notes that marriage is intended to teach, through the one-flesh union, the

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<sup>29</sup>Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 175. Gordon J. Wenham adds that the phrase "seems to express the notion of complementarity rather than identity. As Delitzsch (1:140) observes, if identity were meant, the more natural phrase would be 'like him,' כְּמוֹהוּ" (*Genesis 1–15* 69). Schmidt elaborates, "Adam is not given a mirror-image companion, he is given a *her* (Gen 2:18), and he delights in her *correspondence* to him (Gen 2:23), which resides both in her likeness (human) and her difference (female). The pair are, literally and figuratively, made for each other.... The pair are complete counterparts, including their physical natures" (*Straight & Narrow* 44). Later, Schmidt adds that fully complementary partners have reciprocity, not symmetry: "The Song of Solomon witnesses to the equal delight of the man and the woman in the pleasure brought by the other, but they are different pleasures. *His* breasts are not like two fawns; *her* legs are not like alabaster columns. *Viva la difference!*" (59).

<sup>30</sup>What does it mean to 'become one flesh?' First, and most obviously, becoming one flesh speaks of the marriage act—the joining together of man and wife in sexual union. Since Paul uses this phrase when speaking of illicit relations with a prostitute, we know that physical oneness occurs through the mere sexual act itself, as in 1 Corinthians 6:16... (Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Helper By Design: God's Perfect Plan for Women in Marriage* [Chicago: Moody, 2003] 93).

relationship of Christ and His church (Eph 5:29-32).

Because of this incredible bond and the picture it depicts, it is no surprise that same-sex marriage is at the forefront of the attack against marriage. Same-sex marriage simply cannot picture the biblical truths that Scripture vividly paints for marriage. For a couple of reasons, homosexual partnerships are incapable of representing this truth. First, a partnership between two men or two women cannot replicate the essence of marriage in the Scriptures, which is always between a man and a woman. Secondly, homosexuality can never illustrate the spiritual union between Christ and His Bride, the church. Christ is not engaged to be married to Christ; the church is not awaiting marriage to itself. The analogy is absolutely devoid of any meaning if homosexuality is brought into the equation.

**5. Biblical Marriage from the Role/Relationship Perspective.** When God made man and woman, he gave them different roles. Those roles, so specifically set forth in Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1–2, set forth the divine parameters and intentions of God’s design for marriage. Furthermore, in every marital relationship, Scripture gives specific, unique roles and responsibilities to each gender; each has specific responsibilities to bring to the relationship. God has made each gender to complement the other.

Remarkably, these roles are abundantly evidenced in same-sex relationships. One takes the more dominant role of the male and one takes the role of the female. That, of course, forces one of the partners to violate his or her God-ordained role.<sup>31</sup> In a gay relationship, one of the two partners must play the submissive role, a role not intended for him by God. In a lesbian relationship, one of the two women must take the more dominant leadership role, a role not intended for her by God. From the role/relationship perspective, homosexual partnerships violate God-intended design.

## **B. The Levitical Account**

Archaeological documents from the ancient Near East have confirmed that homosexuality was practiced from earliest times. More often than not, this was done as a part of some cultic worship. Evidence also indicates that it was practiced in Canaan during the patriarchal times (Gen 19:5)<sup>32</sup> and in the period of the Judges (Judg 19:22-25).<sup>33</sup> However, the biblical text is explicit that such was not to be so with those who worshiped Yahweh. The Mosaic Law clearly prohibits homosexual-

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<sup>31</sup>Of course, this is of no concern for same-sex relationships, since their pursuit embraces independence rather than interdependence.

<sup>32</sup>Some have suggested that a lack of hospitality was the sin of Sodom. However, Jude 7 makes it unmistakably clear that they “indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh,” rendering that interpretation false.

<sup>33</sup>Other references to homosexuality in the OT include Deut 23:18 where “dogs” almost certainly have reference to homosexuals. Coupled with the mention of prostitution in the same verse, the reference is most likely to male temple prostitutes (cf. also Rev 22:15).

ity. Lev 18:22 states, “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” The prescribed punishment for such actions was capital—“they shall surely be put to death” (Lev 20:13). In fact, the practice of homosexuality was so abhorrent that even cross-dressing was prohibited (Deut 22:5).

### **C. The Pauline Account (Rom 1:20)**

In the Pauline account of Romans 1, little doubt exists as to God’s perspective on homosexuality. No biblical text speaks more explicitly and unequivocally than this one. But it also speaks of marriage. It clearly infers that any kind of same-sex relationship is sinful. Instead of the blessings of a heterosexual, monogamous marriage detailed elsewhere in Scripture, here there is nothing but a degenerative description of divine judgment and woe on homosexual practice. Whether gay or lesbian, both are subject to the outpouring of divine wrath and abandonment.

Same-sex marriage goes contrary to the natural order. God’s design for marriage does not work within the rubric of homosexuality. It simply can’t!

### **Conclusion**

The Scriptures establish clearly God’s intention for marriage. The biblical picture of marriage, including both its foundation and superstructure, is comprised of many different and distinct elements—the reproductive perspective, the one-woman, one-man perspective, the complementary perspective, the analogical perspective, and the role/relationship perspective. In each case, however, it is clear that homosexual partnerships are incapable of fulfilling these divinely-ordained purposes for marriage.

One might take exception to this statement, claiming that a same-sex relationship can provide sexual pleasure. After all, isn’t sexual pleasure one of God’s designs for marriage? There is no doubt that Scripture does speak of such pleasure in the marriage relationship. However, whenever it does, it is first of all always between a married man and his wife (e.g., Prov 5:15-19). Furthermore, the idea of sexual pleasure is not expressed in Scripture as a stand-alone purpose. Thus, while it is true that a homosexual partnership may be able to provide some level of pleasure, the claim overlooks the fact that when Scripture does describe sexual pleasure in marriage, it depicts it as a by-product of marital, heterosexual union. The Bible always speaks of it as a pleasure that is enjoyed within the context of fulfilling the biblically-delineated purposes for marriage. Only within God’s design for marriage can sexual pleasure be good, as Thomas Schmidt notes,

Homosexual practice lifts sexuality out of the context of time and place and constitutes a living declaration that another *expression* of sexuality is good.... There is more to sexuality than “what’s in it for me” or “what’s in it for the two of us.” We must also consider “what’s in it for everyone.” Homosexual practice constitutes a denial in practice of the good instituted by God from the beginning. That is not to say that the

homosexual consciously intends to deny the good, but that the result is a declaration in practice that something else is good.

On what basis is homosexual practice good? The most sophisticated rationale written to date maintains that in the last analysis, an individual discovers that it simply feels good. This will not do. It is unaccountable to the implications of creation for the body and for the partner....<sup>34</sup>

God designed the family to be a man and woman who are then capable of producing a child. It is in the DNA; it is the genetic structure of civilization. If you don't have that, you don't have civilization. Same-sex marriage is a strike at the very core of the existence of civilization. It is in the fabric of human thinking to understand that a man and a woman make a marriage and a family.<sup>35</sup>

Without that divinely ordained structure of civilization, society can only spiral downward and eventually plunge into a morass of moral debauchery. Erwin Lutzer queries with alarm:

If marriage is no longer the union of one man and one woman but rather any two persons who want to cohabit, then who is to say that it must be limited to two people? Why not a trio of three men or women? And why not one man with two wives or ten? After all, we must extend "equal rights" to all individuals to live according to any arrangement they wish. The end result is the destruction of marriage as we know it....<sup>36</sup>

Once there is a crack in the mortar or a chink in the armor of marriage—marriage as God designed it, as the Scriptures describe it, and as every civilization has known it—another step toward the eventual destruction of society will ensue.<sup>37</sup> It is truly the destruction not only of marriage but of civilization!

The apostle Paul is adamant about the sanctity of marriage. Any sexual act, including fornication, adultery, and effeminacy (cf. 1 Cor 6:9), is an affront to and violation of marriage. It is not just homosexuality; all deviations are sin!

Scripture never lends its approval to any kind of sexual partnerships outside the marital, monogamous, one-woman, one-man union. Every other form of sexual encounter, including looking at pornography on television, the Internet, or in

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<sup>34</sup>Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow?* 48.

<sup>35</sup>John MacArthur, "Larry King Live telecast," CNN, Feb 24, 2004.

<sup>36</sup>Erwin W. Lutzer, *The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage* 27-28.

<sup>37</sup>This reality is corroborated in places such as Scandinavia. Stanley Kurtz, research fellow at the Hoover Institute, notes, "In socially liberal districts of Norway, where the idea of same-sex registered partnerships is widely accepted, marriage itself has almost entirely disappeared" (Stanley Kurtz, "Death of Marriage in Scandinavia," *Boston Globe*, March 10, 2004; quoted in Kennedy & Newcombe, *What's Wrong with Same-Sex Marriage?* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004] 60). In an editorial of *The Wall Street Journal* (February 5, 2004), then-governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney wrote, "That benefits are given to married couples and not to singles or gay couples has nothing to do with discrimination; it has everything to do with building a stable new generation and nation" (quoted in Kennedy & Newcombe, *What's Wrong with Same-Sex Marriage?* 64).

magazines, is illicit and sinful in God's eyes. The connection between Paul's condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1 and the opening verses of Romans 2 must not be overlooked. The chapter break is unfortunate, for the two are vitally intertwined. Commenting on this vital connection, one writer insightfully remarks,

This shoe fits every heterosexual who reacts with disgust at a broadcast of a gay rights demonstration and then turns the channel to stare uncritically at adultery in a drama, trivialization of sex in a sitcom, fornication in a music video, and virtual prostitution in advertisements.... More to the point, the power of the gospel is not about looking at sexual sin on a television screen but about looking at sexual sin in the mirror.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow?* 54-55.



## CHRISTIAN PARENTING AND HOMOSEXUALITY

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*The difficulties encountered in parenting, including that caused by children's depravity, are best resolved through implementing biblical principles. In a society that is permissive and even positive toward the homosexual lifestyle, Christian parents should adopt eleven biblical goals in rearing their children. (1) They should do everything to reflect God and His glory. (2) They should help their children understand the gospel so that they receive salvation. (3) They should protect their children from physical and spiritual harm. (4) They should instruct their children in the truths of Scripture. (5) They should interpret Scripture so as to give their children a Christian worldview. (6) They should prepare their children for the responsibilities of adulthood. (7) They should prevent their children from falling to temptation by teaching them the consequences of sin. (8) They should correct any tendencies their children display toward sinful activities. (9) They should provide for the physical and spiritual needs of their children. (10) They should provide positive behavioral examples for their children to follow. (11) They should establish clear lines of communication with their children. These goals will help them deal with the same morally degenerate world as existed during NT times.*

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Parenting is harder than I imagined. My wife and I are parents to three sons who are presently eight, ten, and twelve years old. Along with other Christian parents, we are acutely aware of the daunting challenges and immeasurable joys of rearing children. Admittedly, the ages of my sons reveal the limitations of my experience as a parent. Still, I am persuaded that although experience provides cumulative and exponential advantages to parenting, biblical principles supersede lessons learned from praxis.

The Bible is not only *capable of*, but *indispensable to* Christian parenting. No dimension of child-rearing is beyond the scope of God's Word. But having the

sufficient resource of God's Word does not make this privileged task simpler or easier. Parenting is a multi-level maze of challenges to navigate and sins to mortify—both in parents and in children. The concerns of parenting are as numerous as the number of children. Dealing with the depraved infection natural to our children's souls in the septic morality of our culture is far beyond the intuitive abilities of loving parents. Sin's pulverizing destruction comes from both the outside—culture's moral chaos—and from the inside—the soul's pervasive sinfulness.

Parenting can be wrongly interpreted as a process of keeping our children good and pure. The truth is that every child is born sinful. The goal is not to keep children from becoming messed up by sin; instead it is to see their inborn sin covered by the gospel. As a friend of mine puts it, "Parents can't mess up their children; they come that way as a result of Adam's fall."

Among the sticky issues parents must address in rearing their children, homosexuality is one of the more awkward and unsettling issues to face. However, avoiding it is not an option in the moral sewage of the 21st-century world.

The interest of this article is *parenting and homosexuality*. It will have a deliberate pastoral tone. The purpose is not to debate the legitimacy of homosexuals as parents, but to provide assistance to parents in a world where homosexuality is vying for normalcy. Homosexuals can indeed fulfill the secular roles of guardians/parents and in some states do it legally. But they cannot become biological parents to a common offspring as a result of their union. Even more important, they cannot fulfill the biblical roles and mandates for parenting since these guidelines are comprehensively heterosexual (both explicitly and implicitly) in Scripture. God's creative archetype in Genesis lays an obvious paradigm for heterosexuals as parents. Gordon Wenham insightfully deduces:

In Genesis 2, the Lord is portrayed as doing everything possible for Adam's well-being, providing a well-watered garden full of beautiful fruit trees. Noticing his loneliness, God creates all the animals as Adam's companions, but they did not meet his need. So eventually Eve is created. But is this not a bit mean? God could have provided Adam with other men friends or several Eves. That only one woman is provided by the all-powerful, all-generous God surely is significant: it indicates the divine approval of heterosexual monogamy. One man with one woman is God's model for relations between the sexes.<sup>1</sup>

Not only is heterosexual monogamy established in Genesis 2, the command to the first couple to "be fruitful and multiply" would have been impossible with a homosexual couple. Homosexuality has a decidedly *limiting* effect on population growth. The fifth commandment likewise plainly points to heterosexual parents—"father and mother"—(Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16) which is affirmed by the

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<sup>1</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, "Family in the Pentateuch," in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context*, eds. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 26.

apostle Paul in Eph 6:1-2 where he quotes the fifth commandment.

Sexual intimacy is presented from the outset of Scripture as the blessing of God to heterosexual, *married* couples. All other venues of sexual expression are explicitly forbidden because they violate the divinely established covenant commitment of a man and woman in marriage. Daniel Block observes,

According to the Old Testament, not only do human beings express their humanity and status as images of God within the context of heterosexual relationships, but sexual activity itself has three functions: biological (procreation), social (physical expression of covenant commitment and intimacy) and aesthetic (for pleasure). Within the context of marriage, sexual activity between husband and wife is purposeful, noble, sacred and necessary for the well-being of the family. Homosexuality, premarital and extramarital sexual relations, and bestiality are deemed abhorrent violations of the ethical and ritual order.<sup>2</sup>

That “homosexuality, incest, and bestiality were legislated against alongside one another in the OT (e.g., Lev 18:6-23)”<sup>3</sup> is noteworthy. Teaching the propriety of experiencing sexual intimacy is a serious priority of Christian pedagogy.

The most pressing question for the Christian community in this debate is not the legitimacy of homosexuals as parents. More important is answering the question of how to handle appropriately the subject of homosexuality with our children. As defended elsewhere in this edition of *TMSJ*, this article presupposes that homosexuality is sin, it has no genetic footprint, it is an ungodly threat to marriage, and that homosexuals are invited to repent and believe the gospel along with any other sinner.

### **Living in a Homosexual Culture**

Homosexuality itself is out of the closet. It shows up on the evening news, the front page of the paper, the contents and covers of magazines, TV sitcoms, and dramas, Hollywood’s big screen productions, and the schools and neighborhoods where our children spend a considerable amount of their time. Homosexuality has been taken for granted in our world. Peter Jones notes,

Homosexuality is not a marginal fad of Western culture. Like the Sodomites who pounded on Lot’s door millennia ago, the modern gay movement gathers at the doors of our churches and academies, demanding entrance and full recognition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Daniel I. Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003) 85.

<sup>3</sup>For a fuller discussion on the synonymous culpability of these sexual aberrations, see David W. Chapman, “Marriage and Family in Second Temple Judaism,” *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003) 224.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Jones, *The God of Sex: How Spirituality Defines Your Sexuality* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Victor, 2006) 67.

Thomas Schmit reinforces Jones' warning when he says that homosexuality is "an issue so important that it increasingly appears to be the battleground for all the forces seeking to give shape to the world of the next century."<sup>5</sup> Schools and media have launched a shock and awe campaign to promote a kind, gentle, culturally accepted homosexuality. What are the basic beliefs of this agenda? Over twenty years ago Randy Alcorn summarized the homosexual movement's basic beliefs. These tenets remain the same and are gaining more acceptance in public opinion.

1. Homosexuality is an inborn nature—not an illness, not a choice, and not subject to change by an act of the will, psychological therapy, or religious experience.
2. Homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality, it just happens to occur less frequently. It is not an undesirable condition except for its social stigma, which is the result of misguided or hateful homophobics.
3. Homosexuals constitute a legitimate minority as blacks or Chicanos. Homosexual rights are just as valid as women's rights.
4. Homosexuals have made essential contributions to the development of Western culture. (Homosexual literature is often filled with references to famous homosexual artists, musicians, poets, and statesmen.)
5. Homosexuals should openly acknowledge their condition—"come out of the closet"—and live their desired lifestyle. They should be proud, not ashamed to pursue homosexual relationships.<sup>6</sup>

Those homosexuals who claim Christian faith (a significant number) argue that God created them as they are, accepts them as they are, and endorses a lifestyle in keeping with the nature<sup>7</sup> He has given them.<sup>8</sup> This assumption, however, is a recent view and

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995) 11.

<sup>6</sup>Randy Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution: Recovering Our Sexual Sanity* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1985) 136-37.

<sup>7</sup>See Michael Grisanti's article in this edition of *TMSJ* for a study exposing the absence of a genetic footprint for homosexuality. Additionally, Joseph and Linda Nicolosi's research concludes that "[t]here is no evidence demonstrating that homosexuality is mandated by biology. In fact, none of the research claims that homosexuality is mandated by biology. Only the press and certain researchers do, when speaking in sound bites to the public" (Joseph Nicolosi and Linda Ames Nicolosi, *A Parents' Guide to Preventing Homosexuality* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002] 62).

<sup>8</sup>Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution* 136-37. For more information on pro-homosexual explanation of biblical data, refer to sources cited in Alex D. Montoya, "Homosexuality and the Church," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 11/2 (Fall 2000):155-68.

against the grain of every sector of church history.<sup>9</sup>

In the rip current of the homosexual force, Christian parents cannot afford to play defense alone. A strategic, intentional plan to handle the homosexual question with our children is of great spiritual consequence. Edisio Sanchez identifies the gravity of the problem:

The reasons Christian parents have lost the opportunity to participate as key subjects in the training of their children are varied and complex. In the majority of cases, parents seem incapable of guiding their children through the labyrinths of life on the basis of biblical principles. Decisions concerning faith, morals, careers—to name only a few issues—have been left to schools, colleges, the mass media, schoolmates, or neighbors, and only in small measure to religious centers, much less to home.<sup>10</sup>

Under the loving leadership of Mom and Dad and the local church, morals must be guided by informed, purposeful, and systematic biblical instruction. Homosexuality should be understood in the context of a comprehensive parental strategy. Parents would profit from establishing biblical goals which will answer the homosexual questions and shape wholesome heterosexuality in children. Unfortunately, homosexuality is more frequently handled psychologically than biblically in Christian literature. What follows is a macro-strategy for parenting in which the sin of homosexuality may be categorized and addressed. Against the trend of psychological approaches, these biblical goals may serve Christian parents as they grapple with the issue of homosexuality and parenting.

### **Eleven Biblical Goals of Christian Parenting**

**1. Glorification.** Paul exhorted the Corinthians, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). The aim of glorifying God has a comprehensive application for every dimension of life, even rearing children. Likewise, Peter wrote, “whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; *so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*” (1 Pet 4:11, emphasis added). Glorifying God is an all-inclusive response to salvation.

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<sup>9</sup>After a survey of the church’s traditional position on homosexuality from the church fathers to the modern church, Richard Loveless concludes, “Until recently, the public posture of all sectors of the church toward homosexuality, even including liberal Protestantism, has rarely diverged from the traditional, negative stance. Homosexuals have been (at least theoretically) welcome in the church if they are repentant and sexually inactive, but active homosexuality has been regarded either as sin or, at the least, as a contagious illness” (Richard F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality: How Should Christians Respond?* [Eugene, Ore.: Resource Publications, 2002] 29).

<sup>10</sup>Edisio Sanchez, “Family in the Non-narrative Sections of the Pentateuch,” in *Family in the Bible* 33.

Consequently, parenting has primarily an upward direction. Everything parents do should point toward and reflect God and His glory. Since God has revealed Himself and His glory in Scripture, submitting to biblical principles in life and in parenting is foundational. Very simply, every tributary of life should find its end in God.

In relation to sexuality, Peter Jones submits.

There is a deep correlation between a monistic understanding of God and the practical issues of spirituality—particularly, sexuality. The pagan understanding of God as a spiritual force within nature produces a deconstruction of heterosexual norms. Polytheism produces “polygender.” Behind the many sexual choices are many gods.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, when Christian parents worship the God of the Bible through affection and action, His ways become a transcendent standard for children. God Himself becomes the focus and context of the home. Theology proper becomes the model they see and the air they breathe as it is worked out in the roles Mom and Dad fulfill toward each other.

Children will be informed by example that heterosexuality is not only God’s pattern, but His gift as well. Heterosexual love is glorifying to God. It is not necessary for children to read the Song of Solomon to realize this. Godly parents are an ever-playing video for them to watch and learn.

**2. Salvation.** A second principle involves the goal of our children’s conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. Though only God can save children, their salvation ranks as the greatest desire for any believing parent. Aiding children in their basic and advancing understanding of the gospel is the linchpin of Christian parenting. Practically, this means teaching them about the person, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is followed by calling them to respond to these facts in faith and repentance. What does the gospel have to do with homosexuality? In 1 Cor 6:9-11 Paul<sup>12</sup> explains the relationship when he says,

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were

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<sup>11</sup>Jones, *God of Sex* 17.

<sup>12</sup>Andreas Kostenberger makes an important observation about the apostle Paul: “The major source concerning the New Testament’s view of homosexuality is the Apostle Paul, who uses the term *arsenokoites* (not previously attested) in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 and refers to homosexuality in an important passage in Romans 1:27” (Andreas Kostenberger, “Marriage and Family in the New Testament,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003] 242).

sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Notice the implications regarding homosexuals. First, the roll call of hell includes homosexuals, while the roll call of heaven excludes homosexuals. Second, homosexuality and salvation are mutually exclusive. Finally, Jesus Christ and homosexuality cannot reside in the same soul. Note the imperfect tense in 1 Cor 6:11, “such *were* (ἦτε) some of you.” Some were *effeminate* (μαλακοί), a term appearing two other times in the NT (Matt 11:8, Luke 7:25) that refers to soft clothing (cf. Matt 11:8) and at its root has the meaning of “smooth” and “effeminate.”<sup>13</sup>

Some debate whether this term relates to homosexual prostitutes or all forms of homosexual behavior. Dionysius of Halicarnassus applies the term to a male prostitute.<sup>14</sup> In Hellenistic literature, however, it is translated as effeminate.<sup>15</sup> It described “men and boys who are sodomized by other males.”<sup>16</sup> It did not merely refer to male prostitutes;<sup>17</sup> rather, there is a broad agreement that μαλακοὶ refers to “the passive ... partner ... in male homosexual relations.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the parallelism in verse 9 between fornication and adultery, and effeminate and homosexuals indicates that Paul is addressing two manifestations of heterosexual sin and two manifestations of homosexual sin. With this background, it is reasonable to conclude that μαλακοί (effeminate) is best translated as a passive homosexual partner while ἀρσενοκοῖται (homosexual) refers to the active partner.

The point is clear: participants in homosexuality will not inherit the kingdom of God. But a collateral lesson is taught here as well. Paul unmasks an agenda of deception when he exhorts the Corinthians, “Do not be deceived” (1 Cor 6:9). The protocol of the homosexual agenda is to deceive people into believing that homosexuality is under the blessing of God, and His divinely designed sexual

<sup>13</sup>Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 166.

<sup>14</sup>Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 7.2.4.

<sup>15</sup>Dio Chrysostom 49[66]; Diogenes Laertius 7:173 (cited by Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000] 448). Cf. R. K. Harrison, “Weakness,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 3:999.

<sup>16</sup>Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University Press, 2000) 613.

<sup>17</sup>John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University Press, 1980) 107, 341-44; R. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 85-88.

<sup>18</sup>Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 449; C. K. Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 140.

orientation for some. The apostle could not be more clear or foreboding: salvation through Christ will not be extended to (“inherited” by) practicing homosexuals. But the good news is that “such were” some of the Corinthians. The Corinthian church had *former* homosexuals on its membership roll.

Instructing children about salvation includes detailed discussions about repentance. Homosexuality is one of the explicit sins Paul mentions that require categorical repentance.

**3. Protection.** Christian parents have a strong desire to safeguard children from physical and spiritual harm. Solomon says, “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you” (Prov 3:1-2). Parental care involves giving our children “length of days and years of life.” The book of Proverbs showcases the parental role and responsibility to provide protection for their children. This protection is spiritual, physical, moral, social, financial, and emotional. Homosexuality, however, poses an epic threat to our children in every one of these areas. It threatens to expose children to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, emotional scarring, mental confusion, relational trauma, and manipulative predators. A large part of protecting children from homosexual influences is awareness of the entertainment industry’s homosexual agenda, which aims to normalize homosexuality by portraying it as simply an alternative, though wrongly maltreated, lifestyle.

Not everyone is tempted by homosexuality. For many it is a repulsive thought, but for others it is a serious desire. The objects of each person’s sinful temptations are on a broad spectrum of lusts. It is very possible that Christian parents have a child who has a sinful proclivity towards same gender attraction.<sup>19</sup> In this case he or she must be protected from himself/herself. The well-known passage in 1 Corinthians provides hopeful insight, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1 Cor 10:13). Any child who wrestles with inappropriate attraction to his/her own gender can be guided by this hope. A way of escape exists for any temptation and grace to endure it also—even homosexuality. But that hope is offered only to believers. Here again is the paramount importance of the gospel as the answer to any sin and lustful temptation.

**4. Instruction.** It should be the parents’ goal to teach children biblical truth

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<sup>19</sup>It is beyond the parameters of this article to delve into the needed counsel for shepherding a child and family through the many issues associated with a child’s homosexual attractions. For an excellent starting point, see Bob Davies’ two chapters: “Church ministry to Persons Tempted by Homosexuality” and “‘Someone I love is Gay’: Church Ministry to Family and Friends,” in *Pastoral Leadership for Manhood and Womanhood*, eds. Wayne Grudem & Dennis Rainey (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002) 209-46.



and its wisdom. John Younts notes that “in the era of cable TV it seems almost absurd to turn to God and His Bible to understand sex. The idea that sex is God’s creation and gift to man does not compute in the 21st century world.”<sup>20</sup> We have succumbed to a revisionist or selective approach to the Bible. Revisionists dumb down and edit the Bible so much that the meaning is changed. This is the hermeneutic of *Veggie Tales*. In the selective hermeneutic, the interpreter simply skips parts that he does not think are appropriate for children.

The reality is that one encounters heterosexuality in the first two chapters of the Bible and homosexuality in the thirteenth chapter of the Bible. By simply opening the first book of the Bible, the reader is obligated to deal with sexuality.

Further, parents ought not to neglect the pronounced emphasis on sexual purity in the book of Proverbs, which is defined as sexual relations between a man and woman in marriage (Prov 5:1-21). Moreover, children are to be brought up in the “instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:1-4). The Great Commission’s emphasis on instruction in discipleship applies to our children. Premarital instruction and counseling does not begin when our children become engaged; it starts when they come home from the hospital after birth. Wholesome teaching about Christian marriage and modeling of a Christian marriage may be the best antidote for homosexual temptations. It is a beautiful thing when our children want a relationship with a spouse who will model Mom’s or Dad’s relationship. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a paradigmatic passage about parental instruction. Parenting is to occur for the duration of the parents’ life, not merely when children are young. Moses indicates that this instruction is both formal and informal and in the context of every phase of life.

This raises the bar for parents to be familiar with the teaching of both testaments concerning homosexuality.<sup>21</sup> Genesis 19 paints a scene of divine disapproval of homosexuality in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Leviticus 18:22 clearly commands that a man “shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:13 furthermore states, “If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood-guiltiness is upon them.” This concept is not merely effective in the OT, but is applied in the NT by

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<sup>20</sup>John A. Younts, *Everyday Talk: Talking Freely and Naturally about God with Your Children* (Wapwallopen, Pa.: Shepherd, 2004) 110.

<sup>21</sup>For comprehensive defenses of the Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality, see James R. White & Jeffrey D. Niell, *The Same Sex Controversy: Defending and Clarifying the Bible’s Message About Homosexuality* (Bloomington, Minn.: Bethany House, 2002); and James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000). Chapter 8 of DeYoung’s volume provides an excellent and succinct summary, as well as interaction between revisionistic and biblical arguments about homosexuality.

Paul<sup>22</sup> in 1 Cor 6:9-11 where he uses the term ἀρσενοκοίτης to refer to a “male who engages in sexual activity with a person of his own sex, pederast.”<sup>23</sup> This term is never used to refer to heterosexual intercourse.<sup>24</sup>

It is most appropriate to break open the Bible’s sealed book—Song of Solomon—as we teach our children the principles of heterosexual relationships. Certainly discretion is needed to determine appropriate age and maturity for teaching the content of Solomon’s sexual education, but there is a time for exposing children to the fact that sex is God’s gift and beautiful in the context of heterosexual monogamy. Christian parenting needs to be built on purposeful instruction about sexuality—both its propriety and its aberrations.

**5. Interpretation.** It is the responsibility of the parents to provide their children a Christian worldview. Parents should function as spiritual optometrists who help their children interpret their world through corrective theological lenses. Children are naïve and ignorant about the inherent deceptions of sexual sin. Paul warns the Ephesian church about this deception of sexual sin when he writes,

[B]ut immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. *Let no one deceive you* with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience (Eph 5:3-6, emphasis added).

Every sin, including homosexuality, needs to be exposed as a dangerous lie. A part of parental responsibility is to instill in the minds of children a proper category for sin. That is different than categorizing sin’s evil. Homosexuality is a serious sin, but it is a no-more damning sin from any other.

Both over-reacting and under-reacting to homosexuality are dangerous. Interpreting homosexuality in the light of a world ruled by the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2) will put it in a proper context. Parents need not be surprised by this issue, but rather anticipate dealing with it alongside their children. Isolation from sin is not as wise as communication about it. No matter what a parent does, children will eventually have to face the sin of homosexuality and generate a response. Helping them formulate convictions about sexual sins and sexual purity while they are in the home and under the direct influence of parents is better than sending them

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<sup>22</sup>Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow* 95.

<sup>23</sup>Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Literature* 109.

<sup>24</sup>Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth* 166 n. 18.

off to college and hoping their convictions work themselves out.

**6. Preparation.** Parents have an inherent duty to prepare children for the responsibilities of adulthood. Peer pressure situations arise at an early age and children are vulnerable to capitulate from biblical convictions. These convictions should not be based on parental admonitions alone, but grounded in the commands of God. Children, and especially teens, are ripe for purposeful discipleship. The right training about marriage will hopefully prepare their hearts for the gospel. According to Ephesians 5, the gospel has a reciprocating pedagogical relationship with marriage. Marriage is designed by God to be an earthly illustration of the gospel and the gospel serves as pattern for marriage.

But what happens when children encounter homosexuals? Christian love is not limited to heterosexuals alone. The saving gospel of Jesus Christ is offered to any sinner, regardless of the depth or breadth of sin. Julia Johnston is right in her hymn “Marvelous Grace”; grace is truly greater than all our sins. Sinners are the objects of God’s affection in the sacrifice of His Son, not the objects of His (or our) ridicule. It is an unfaithful gospel witness to laugh at homosexuality, whether it is portrayed on the screen or encountered in reality. Jesus wept over sin; how can we entertain ourselves with it?

In Rom 1:32, Paul hints at the notion of being entertained by sin. He writes “although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also *give hearty approval* to those who practice them” (emphasis added). Those who are entertained by sin fall into the category of the individuals who “give hearty approval” to sin. Parents can influence their children to have a mindset that mourns over all sin,<sup>25</sup> including homosexuality. This attitude is foundational for evangelistic motivation.

**7. Prevention.** The next goal is prevention. Any Christian parent desires to deter sin in children and equip them for the battle with temptation. In Psalm 73, Asaph contrasts the life of the wicked with the life of the righteous. He reminds the reader that immorality has destructive physical, emotional, and social consequences. Yet, he honestly portrays the pleasures of sin as attractive to the flesh. Asaph cites the consequential judgment of God as the perspectival deterrent for enjoying the pleasures of sin (Psa 73:17-20).

Preventing children from experiencing the wrath of God (Eph 5:2-6) necessitates honest discussions about the attractiveness and damnable consequences of sin. Since homosexuals cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-11), discussions about the eternal danger of homosexuality can occupy early discussions

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<sup>25</sup>Note the response of Daniel to the sin of Israel (Daniel 9), Jeremiah to the sin of Judah (Lamentations 1), Ezra to the sin of the exiles (Ezra 10:6), and the psalmist to sinners in general (Psa 119:136).

with children as the subject is engaged.

What if a child experiences homosexual temptation, him- or herself? Scripture offers sufficient grace for repenting from this sin. Homosexuality is merely a sin, even if it is a more gross and depraved sin according to the sensibilities of some. The power of the gospel enables the believer to deny self and be victorious over all fleshly desires (Rom 6:11-14; Gal 2:20). A child does not have to “give in” to his or her temptation, but rather rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the temptation (1 Cor 10:13) because of saving faith in Jesus Christ. The process of repenting from homosexuality is no different from that of any other sin. Since the Bible provides no special approach to this sin, it can be safely assumed that the common means of grace for any other sin may be applied.

**8. Correction.** Christian parents are entrusted by God to identify sin in children and help them repent of it with gospel truth. Within the context of homosexuality, it is the obligation of parents to watch for signs of cross-gender behavior and correct it. Moses forbids such behavior in Deut 22:5 where he says, “A woman shall not wear man’s clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman’s clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.” Boys should act like boys and girls like girls. There is a certain intuition about this. Biblical masculinity and femininity should be a part of the stated and modeled curriculum of Christian parents. Fundamentally, parents ought to assume that children’s views of sex will need correction, especially during the teenage years. Left to their own lusts and imaginations, wrong conclusions about sex and sexuality are guaranteed. Correcting and shaping the minds of children about homosexuality will obviously take on different intensities and details depending on age.

Here is an obvious assumption. For parents to be able to correct the sinful inclinations of their children, a thorough knowledge of biblical principles and personal knowledge of each child is needed. Personal holiness, biblical knowledge, a credible example, and a working knowledge of the functional centrality of the gospel in parental lives are the foundations for correcting sinful behavior and attitudes in children.

**9. Provision.** A ninth goal of parenting is to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of children. Parents, especially fathers, have a serious responsibility to provide for their children. The apostle Paul imposes significant responsibility on fathers in 1 Tim 5:8 where he teaches, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Not only is this kind of man not qualified for spiritual leadership (see larger context of the passage), but he is worse than an unbeliever. If parents do not meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of their children, they will be vulnerable to anyone who will—including homosexuals.

Fathers have specific admonitions about the responsibility to be the role

model in the lives of their children. Throughout the book of Proverbs, the father is the primary teacher of his sons as he passes the baton of life to them. As Dad works on having a biblical, fatherly relationship with his children, care must be taken not to exasperate his children (Eph 6:3), but rather bring them up in the discipline (or instruction) of the Lord. The relationship between a father and a son will affect the choices the son makes. One survey of 117 homosexual men details the childhood relationship with their fathers. The results are alarming:

86% spent little or no time with their fathers  
 50% believed their fathers did not love them  
 45% said their fathers humiliated them  
 44% were neglected by their fathers.<sup>26</sup>

Fathers need to understand that their relationships with their sons affect their choices in life.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most influential provision a father gives a child is personal care and a loving relationship.

**10. Imitation.** Not only are parents responsible to provide spiritually and physically for their children, but they are to lead exemplary lives worthy of imitation. They are to maintain a godly example for children to emulate. Reading and honoring Scripture, loving one's spouse, humble dependence on the Holy Spirit and His convictions, softness to correction, and quick repentance are only a sample of the characteristics that parents are to instill in their children and exemplify with their lives. Children are quicker to imitate than obey. Christian parents do well to remember this principle every time they make a decision that may conflict with their verbal profession.

Again, parents are especially to model a godly marriage. What a legacy for children to observe their parents, and say, "My parents' relationship is so rich and meaningful, I want one like it." Mom and Dad's relationship should stimulate children to pursue marriage, not avoid it.

The importance of Dad's influence on his sons and Mom's influence on her daughters cannot be overstated. In Titus 2:2-6 Paul describes discipleship taking place within genders (older men and women with younger men and women, respectively).

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<sup>26</sup>Chad W. Thompson, *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004) 114.

<sup>27</sup>Mark Penn cites three studies suggesting that "gay men outnumber lesbians in America by approximately 2 to 1" (Mark Penn, with E Kinney Zalesne, *Mircotrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* [New York: Twelve, 2007] 3). If these studies are right, a focus on the issue of homosexuality with boys more than girls is a considered response. Interestingly, Raphael Patai notes, "It is remarkable that while men and women are warned against the practice of bestiality, no reference at all is made to female homosexuality in the Levitical law, nor anywhere else in the Bible" (Raphael Patai, *Family, Love, and the Bible* [London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1960] 152).

Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Likewise urge the young men to be sensible.

If this is the pattern for discipleship in the church, how much more should it be a parental blueprint? Paul's instruction about mentoring involves skills and character. Both categories find unique and specific applicability in same-gender mentoring. It is from older believers that younger believers find direction for God-honoring spousal relationships. Parents are on the front lines of this modeling. Children first and most influentially learn how to relate to both genders by observing their parents.

Although preference for one another and interaction with the opposite sex is critical for healthy development of a child, the most important virtue to model is the preeminence of Christ in all things (Col 1:18). The most overarching lesson for parents to teach children is the supremacy of Christ in practical Christianity. Christ will be the final Judge of every person (John 5:22) and every knee will bow before Him (Phil 2:9-11). When children see that their parents live in the awareness of such realities, imitation is a beautiful result.

**11. Communication.** Finally, parents are to interact purposefully with children as authoritative consultants for life. A good communication bridge allows children's sexual curiosities to be answered by Mom or Dad instead of by experimentation and sinful observation through entertainment media. Sally Leman Chall observes, "Almost all parents talk *to* their children, but Christian parents need to make a concerted effort to talk *with* their children."<sup>28</sup> No subject can be off limits for discussion with our children. Obviously, age must be considered with any discussion, but the topics of conversation ought to include a comprehensive spectrum, including sexuality.

Communication with children will no doubt be proactive and reactive. This is especially true with the subject of homosexuality. Young children and teens will inevitably want to process their thoughts about homosexuality through conversation. The challenge is making sure that these conversations are between parents and children. Left to peers and the media, it is unlikely that an accurate biblical perspective will be presented. A ready parent will anticipate the subject of homosexuality arising and be prepared to provide biblical context for it as sin.

## Conclusion

Where do we go from here? A glimpse of the moral decay of society will

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<sup>28</sup>Sally Leman Chall, *Making God Real to Your Children* (Grand Rapids: Spire, 1991) 86.

hopefully motivate people to apply these goals in parenting. Imagine a world in which sexual immorality is promoted, available, and accessible, a world in which adultery is common, prostitution legal, drunkenness normal, and theft a constant threat, a world in which most children rebel against their parents and fornication and incest are rampant, God is openly hated, the justice system rarely works for the innocent, and Christianity is illegal. Imagine a world in which homosexuality is out of the closet, is publicly recognized, and enjoys promotion and protection from the government. This is not an imaginary world, nor is it a glimpse into the future. It is a description of the world of the NT. Jesus lived in this world and the gospel was cradled in this kind of society. It is at this point that Solomon should be heard: “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9). Homosexuality has not taken God by surprise, but God’s nature is to take homosexuals by surprise with the saving truth of the gospel.

The problem is parenting, not homosexuality. In Rom 1:24-27, Paul says that having rejected God, society defaults to a destructive and perverted lifestyle. The only antidote for this sinful spiral is the gospel. The earlier the gospel is embraced, the better equipped children will be to have footing on the slippery slopes of a godless, sin-promoting society.

In the midst of a morally deteriorating Greco-Roman culture, Paul instructed the Ephesian believers to

walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness (Eph 4: 17-19).

Participation in “every kind of impurity”—which includes homosexuality—is the consequence of being “excluded from the life of God.” Christian parents can mitigate the influences of homosexual temptations and the homosexual agenda by guiding children into this life in God through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tedd and Margy Tripp say it well:

In all our nurturing as parents the gospel must be central. It is the only hope for forgiveness. It is the only hope for deep internal change. It is the only hope for power to live. The grace of the gospel is the center of everything for Christian parents.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Tedd and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, Pa.: Shepherd, 2008) 180.

## THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO HOMOSEXUALITY

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*A tidal wave of immorality has inundated the United States and the rest of the world, demanding that the church respond to homosexuality in four ways. First, it must expose the sinfulness of homosexuality as depicted in the NT. Second, it must clarify that the grace of God and forgiveness extends to homosexuals also. The NT also makes this clear. Third, the church must expel practicing homosexuals from its fellowship. For them to remain a part of the church activities is a blemish that cannot be tolerated because it would indicate moral compromise, a lack of courage in confronting sin, and a failure to exercise the biblical prerogative of excommunication. Fourth, the church must resist the assault of homosexuality on society as a whole. The purposeful effort to sell the homosexual lifestyle is organized and dangerous and needs a concerted resistance to halt that movement.*

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Fueled by the attitudes of free sex, abortion on demand, the acceptance of pornography, and the coming out of homosexuality into the public square, the sexual revolution of the 1960s unleashed a tsunami that threatens the moral basis of American life. All these have brought a tidal wave of immorality which is hitting America and the world, leaving unimaginable destructive effects in its wake, among which are:

- increased promiscuity
- millions of aborted babies
- millions of babies born out of wedlock
- a generation of blended families
- destruction of marriage and the family
- erosion of morals in schools and in public media
- promotion of homosexuality on an unprecedented scale



The almost universal acceptance of homosexuality as a normal and natural lifestyle is one result of this sexual revolution. Moral decay permeates every aspect of society from the White House to the school house. Consider what former Vice-President Al Gore had to say about homosexuality:

I think gay men and women ought to have the same rights as heterosexual men and women—to make contracts, to have hospital visiting rights, to join together in marriage....I don't understand why it is considered by some people to be a threat to heterosexual marriage.<sup>1</sup>

The passage of SB777 by the California legislature and its signing into law by the governor make the public schools a viable force in the promotion and protection of homosexuality in public schools. More recently, the California Supreme Court issued a ruling that the banning gay of marriages was unconstitutional, thus opening the door for the legalization of gay marriages and the demise of the traditional biblical union of husband and wife.

There is no question that the church faces a major issue on how to respond to homosexuality in our society and in the church. The church must rise to the challenges before it is rendered powerless by its apathy or before it is persecuted to inactivity for its lack of earnestness in stemming the tidal wave of moral corruption. She must heed the words of Scripture:

For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light (Eph 5:5-13).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, no effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:9-11).

The context today is much like it was in the Corinthian church. What God

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<sup>1</sup>Pete Winn, "Gore Expresses Support for Homosexual Marriage" online at <http://americansfortruth.com/issues/civil-unions-gay-marriage/page/6>, accessed 6/18/2008.

said to them is exactly what the church needs to hear today. We need to hear and we need to act. Just as the Corinthian church needed to respond to the moral corruption of its day so does the church need to do today. There are four responses to the onslaught of homosexuality needed today.

But before we consider the responses, we must also identify the attitudes which paralyzed the Corinthian church in its need to respond properly to the immorality it was facing. They were ignorant, deceived, arrogant, and apathetic to the moral corruption within the church. The church today has the same problem. It is ignorant of the biblical mandate, it is being deceived by both the Christian and secular thinkers, it is arrogant in its attitude toward God's Word and sin, and it is apathetic to the dangers it faces from the enemies of the gospel and of biblical marriage.

The biblical mandates found in Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 5-6 demand from the church four responses to homosexuality.

#### I. THE CHURCH MUST EXPOSE HOMOSEXUALITY AS A SIN AGAINST GOD.

Homosexuality is more than a mere sexual preference, a social choice, a genetic predisposition as some say; it is a sin against Almighty God. It is a willful assault on the person and work of God. Homosexuality is against God in these four ways. First, *homosexuality is a sin against God's creative order*. God's Word is very clear about man's sexuality, about its purpose and its nature. Consider these references:

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:27-28).

The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:22-24).

And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from 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 they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt 19:4-6).

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb 13:4).

Hence, the Scriptures affirm that any violation of the creative purposes of God is a sin against Him. Furthermore, it proceeds to state categorically that homosexuality is not only sin but a perversion of the creative order:

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them....For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their woman exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error (Rom 1:24-27).

A second way that homosexuality is against God is that *homosexuality is a sin against God's law* (1 Tim 1:8-11). The Scriptures clearly identify homosexuality as a sin which violates the express law of God. In Paul's discussion of God's law, he states,

Realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted (1 Tim 1:9-11).

The apostle clearly makes homosexuality a sin which cannot be reconciled with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scripturally, one cannot be a Christian and a homosexual.

The third way that homosexuality is against God is that *homosexuality is a sin against God's Kingdom* (1 Cor 6:9-10). The apostle Paul informs an ignorant mind and corrects a deceived heart by stating clearly that homosexuality excludes one from inheriting the kingdom of God. In other words, a homosexual will not inherit eternal life and go to heaven; instead, such will be guilty of sin and subject to eternal punishment in hell. Note what it says:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-10).

Finally, the fourth way that homosexuality is against God is that *homosexuality is a sin against God's holiness* (1 Thess 4:3; 1 Pet 1:15-16). The Bible is clear on God's expectation of His people:

But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

This holiness pertains specifically to the area of sexuality:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God... For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you (1 Thess 4:3-8).

Homosexuality is called an unrighteous and ungodly act (Rom 1:18; 1 Cor 6:9; 2 Pet 2:9; Jude 4). I have dealt with the revisionists' treatment of these verses in a previous issue, and so will not go into these discussions here.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, Christians are under obligation to know and to make known the sinfulness of homosexuality. They cannot be swept away by the tide of public opinion or public decrees; nor can they remain mute concerning the terrible consequences of those who practice homosexuality. They must make known to all the temporal wrath associated with homosexuality; that as a temporal judgment of God, it degrades the human nature and destroys the body in no uncertain terms (Rom 1:18, 26-27). They must also make known the eternal wrath which will be faced by those who practice this sin (Rom 1:32; 2 Pet 2:2-11; Jude 4-8). They must be told that "the Lord is the avenger in all these things" (1 Thess 4:6), and that "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb 13:4). As the watchman of Israel was warned not to be silent about the judgment coming upon the nation, so too, Christians dare not be silent about the dangers that homosexuals are facing (cf. Ezek 3:17-19).

## **II. THE CHURCH MUST EXTEND THE GRACE OF GOD TO HOMOSEXUALS**

Indeed, homosexuality is a sin against God, but it is also one of many sins against God, and it is a sin for which Christ died. This is a truth which the church must never forget. Believers are called upon by Christ to extend the grace of the cross to homosexuals, to assure them that God's forgiveness, peace, and the hope of eternal life is available to them as well.

If church is to be involved in bringing homosexuals into the fold of Christ it must be prepared to do the following. *The church must first learn to show compassion to the homosexual.* Tim Wilkins said, "Over time I've discovered that when it comes to homosexuality, Christians show great passion in one of two areas. Either they are passionate about extinguishing the pro-gay movement or about

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<sup>2</sup>Alex Montoya, "Homosexuality and the Church," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 11/2 (Fall 2000): 155-68.

expanding God's movement by introducing them to His Son."<sup>3</sup>

The church can be guilty of the attitude of the Pharisees towards the sinners of their day. The Pharisees displayed an absolute lack of concern and compassion for those who were lost (cp. Luke 15:1-32). Christ taught compassion for the lost, and this includes the homosexual:

Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners?" But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire compassion, and not sacrifice," for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:10-13).

R. Albert Mohler writes, "Homosexuals are waiting to see if the Christian church has anything more to say after we declare that homosexuality is a sin."<sup>4</sup> Homosexuals are hurting people and need more than condemnation; they also need compassion.

In the second place, *the church must be willing to associate with homosexuals*. Here is where the church displays its ignorance and its arrogance when it comes to reaching out to homosexuals. The church can misunderstand what it means to be in the world but not of it. We may think that it means for Christians to have absolutely nothing to do with homosexuals. The Bible speaks of the opposite. It shows that it is unavoidable and in many ways necessary to associate with homosexuals if we are to present the gospel to them. Paul corrected the Corinthians when he said,

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world (1 Cor 5:9-10).

Clearly we must dispel the label of being "homophobic" by not refusing to befriend and associate with homosexuals. We have nothing to fear and everything to gain for the gospel's sake.

Thirdly, *the church must have the conviction of the power of the gospel to convert the homosexual*. That homosexuals are such by nature and therefore cannot change nor should society try to change them into heterosexuals has been exposed as utterly false. The power of the gospel has been rendered ineffective by the deception placed upon the church that homosexuals cannot be changed. Prior to the

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<sup>3</sup>Tim Wilkins, "Preaching on Homosexuality/Taking the Road Less Traveled," *Preaching* 23/6 (January February 2008):13.

<sup>4</sup>Cited in *ibid.*, 14.

“sexual revolution,” no question existed about homosexuals being able to change. Jones and Yarhouse in their book *Ex-Gays?* state,

About four decades ago and earlier, the majority wisdom of the leading professionals in the mental health community was that homosexuality was a psychological disturbance of some kind that could, though perhaps with difficulty, be treated successfully, resulting in satisfactory readjustment to heterosexual experience and satisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

That majority opinion has now changed and the American Psychological Association now claims that homosexuality is not changeable.<sup>6</sup> Again, this change took place without any scientific evidence. The study done by Jones and Yarhouse was done to challenge this myth and states that their study “produces significant scientific evidence that sexual orientation is in fact changeable for some, and this should trigger a considerable reexamination of many of the presuppositions about sexual orientation and sexual identity that hold sway in contemporary Western culture.”<sup>7</sup>

The Christian church has known this all along. It has always believed that the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). It is a truth in Scripture that wherever the sinfulness of sin is mentioned, the power of the gospel is also mentioned as that force which counteracts the power of sin to enslave and to condemn.

After the condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1, Paul wrote, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:23-24).

After the condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Cor 6:9, Paul adds, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). The homosexual can experience regeneration through the Holy Spirit, the power to triumph over indwelling sin as described in Romans 6, and the full assurance offered to all believers in the justifying work of Christ (cf. Romans 8). Mark Christopher gives the church a great admonition when he states,

Homosexuality is not a greater sin than other sins and does not require a different plan on God's part to save and redeem. What the above passage teaches us is that there is more grace in God than there is sin in your past! As someone once said, “He is a better

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<sup>5</sup>Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007) 15.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 42.

Savior than you are a sinner"! The message of amazing grace is exactly what the Church needs to promote and practice.<sup>8</sup>

After the condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Tim 1:10, Paul magnifies his own sin above all sins and says, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (1 Tim 1:15). If God can save the worst, then He can obviously save a homosexual.

Wherever man's depravity and sinfulness are magnified, so also is the grace of God magnified so as to more than make up for man's fallen nature. Consider the testimony of Eph 2:1-10 and Titus 3:3-7. These promises apply to homosexuals as well.

The fourth way that the church can extend the grace of God to homosexuals is for *the church to provide special discipleship for homosexuals*. The New Testament testifies to the possibility and frequency of a believer's relapse into their former way of life. The convert from a homosexual lifestyle is no exception. Christians should not be surprised by the difficulties encountered by some in overcoming their former lusts, nor should they give up in their efforts to disciple them into the new life in Christ.

The rise of numerous support groups for homosexuals is testimony to the necessity of the church to focus on those who desire Christ and who desire to live a victorious life in Christ. Groups like Exodus, Regeneration, Genesis Counseling, Desert Stream Ministries, New Hope Ministry, Cross Ministries, and others exist to help those who want to leave the homosexual lifestyle. All these groups offer God's grace and hope to those who desire a relationship with Jesus Christ. Andy Comiskey of Desert Stream Ministry writes, "We must renounce the unbelief prevalent in certain evangelical circles that resigns homosexual strugglers to little if any release from their tendencies. That perception of God is too small."<sup>9</sup>

The success of special groups designed to minister to homosexuals and ex-homosexuals is clearly evident. Again, these groups testify that the "early hopes for instant healing have given way to belief that transformation occurs through a lifetime of discipleship."<sup>10</sup> They serve as an example and motivation for the church to become involved in the salvation of homosexuals and a subsequent discipleship in a new life in Christ.

Finally, if the church is to extend the grace of God to homosexuals, *the church must effectively incorporate converted homosexuals into the Body of Christ*. At times the church has allowed the stigma of homosexuality to follow the converted

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<sup>8</sup>Mark Christopher, *Same-Sex Marriage: Is It Really The Same?* (Constantia, South Africa: The Voice of Hope, 2007) 44.

<sup>9</sup>Tim Stafford, "The Best Research Yet," *Christianity Today* (October 2007):51.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

homosexual into his new life in Christ. They may not be welcomed nor easily assimilated into the fellowship of believers, or they may be subject to certain restrictions not given to other converted sinners. The Corinthian church serves as a model in the way it was composed of all sorts of sinners. Note how Paul addressed the church: "Such were some of you; but you were washed..." (1 Cor 6:11). The "some" refers to the fact that the church contained some ex-fornicators, some ex-idolaters, some ex-adulterers, ex-effeminate, ex-homosexuals, some ex-thieves, etc. The phrase "such were some" indicates the conversion from a life of sin to a new relationship with Christ, and acceptance into the fellowship of believers in Corinth.

The church cannot adopt an arrogant attitude toward converted homosexuals, but instead deal biblically with their conversion, and in fact, rejoice that God has saved "some." Again, Andy Comiskey of Desert Stream Ministry gives the church this challenge: "We do need sexperts, counselors who can do things that small groups cannot ... but for the church to say that help exists only outside our walls, that is not optimal. I think it has to be body life."<sup>11</sup> Alan Chambers of Exodus affirms: "The traditional pattern within Exodus has been a stepping-stone or launching pad to leave the homosexual lifestyle or a life of secrecy, to find camaraderie with others facing the same struggles, and then to go on to embrace the church. What if a church was so dynamic that a Sunday school class could do the same thing? What if people in church could become transparent, and people in those Sunday school classes became comfortable to share their stuff as well?"<sup>12</sup>

### III. THE CHURCH MUST EXPEL PRACTICING HOMOSEXUALS FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

The tidal wave of sexual immorality has invaded the church, and the church has done little or nothing to deal with the cancer within. Sexual immorality in all of its forms can be found in the church, ranging from divorce, people sleeping together, lewdness, and even homosexuality. As in Corinth, the church today must also deal with the immorality within.

*The church today is faced with the problem of moral compromise.* The church in Corinth was tolerating a man living in an incestuous relationship with his father's wife. Instead of mourning over this sinful situation, the apostle accused them of arrogance (1 Cor 5:2). The solution the apostle proposed was that the church exercise church discipline and remove the wicked man from their midst (5:13).

The church today is in a sad state of affairs. The debate today in some denominations is not the removal of the wicked from their midst, but as to whether or not they should appoint a homosexual to be a priest, pastor, or bishop in the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.



church. Never mind the problem of immorality. Has the church lost its spiritual sense?

Furthermore, it is alarming how the church tolerates the blasphemies of certain so-called Christians and continues to give them recognition for these blasphemies and allow them to hold positions of influence in the church and its institutions. Consider the statement made by Horace L. Griffen, an Episcopalian priest and teacher at an Episcopalian seminary. In his argument for the black church accepting homosexuals, he says of the apostle Paul,

Knowing that sexuality can be mysterious even when it is revealing, and recognizing that scientific and social research informs us about our bodies and sexual expressions in ways that were hidden from those who lived twenty centuries ago, it is reasonable that Paul could not have known about homosexuality as we know about it today. To accept this reality as responsible reasonable Christians, we can conclude that the apostle makes an uninformed judgment limited by his time and space.<sup>13</sup>

Such is the epitome of human arrogance, and the type of arrogance Paul found in the Corinthian church concerning some who were not willing to accept his authoritative and God-given teachings (1 Cor 4:18-21). The theological landscape is littered with such revisionists who continue to call their arrogant blasphemies theological insights and relevant discoveries. The church should cry, "Enough," and put these wicked people out of the fold.

In addition, *the church must have the courage to confront the homosexual activist within and outside the church*. As we will discuss in more detail later on in this article, the homosexual community has an agenda aimed at the traditional lifestyle and at the Christian interpretation of sexuality and marriage. One of their aims is to silence opposition to their lifestyle. They do this with the weapon of intimidation. In an article in *Guide* magazine entitled "The Overhauling of Straight American," Marshal K. Kirk and Erastis Pill put forth an agenda to convert American culture and to demonize the opponents. One of their tactics is to intimidate the opposition. Here is what they suggest:

We can undermine the moral authority of homophobic churches by portraying them as antiquated backwaters, badly out of step with the times and with the latest findings of psychology. Against the mighty pull of institutional religion, one must set up the mightier draw of Science & Public Opinion.... Such an unholy alliance has worked well against churches before, on such topics as divorce and abortion.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Horace L. Griffen, *Their Own Received Them Not* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2006) 74.

<sup>14</sup>Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill, "The Overhauling of Straight America," *The Guide* (November 1987), Online at <http://americansfortruth.com/issues/health-science/page/7>, accessed 6/18/2008.

That is why they delight in calling some evangelicals homophobic, transphobic, and biophobic so that they will tone down our rhetoric. Even evangelical leaders have succumbed to their tactics. A recent profile of Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill, drew this assessment of his view on homosexuality. *Time* magazine said of Bell and evangelicals like him,

Polling by the evangelically oriented Barna research group shows that at least half of regular churchgoers ages 16 to 29 think their church is too judgmental, too political and too negative about homosexuality. Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow describes today's young adults as spiritual "tinkerers." Bell, 37, is guilty of none of the negatives. He is largely apolitical, thinks that only those with gay friends are positioned to judge homosexuality—and he tinkers marvelously.<sup>15</sup>

Since when does friendship qualify one to speak courageously against sin? We can see the extent that intimidation, deception and arrogance have muted the voice of God's spokesmen. May it not happen to us!

Furthermore, *the church must have the conviction to practice excommunication on its own membership*. This was part of the solution to the immorality that had crept into the church at Corinth. The church's response was arrogance, tolerance, and the subtle deception that they were acting in love and Christian liberty. God's solution was the biblical practice of excommunication, or isolation from the life of the church. The sad truth is that most churches do not deal with the sin within their walls. The problem in the church today is not so much the onslaught of homosexuality as it is the toleration of any sin in the church. If we have not dealt with the other forms of immorality, why should the church deal only with homosexuality?

John MacArthur expounds on Paul's command to the church at Corinth:

Faithful believers are not to keep close company with any fellow believers who persistently practice serious sins such as those mentioned here. If the offenders will not listen to the counsel and warning of two or three other believers and not even of the whole church, they are to be put out of the fellowship. They should not be allowed to participate in any activities of the church—worship services, Sunday school, Bible studies, or even social events. Obviously, and most importantly, they should not be allowed to have any leadership role. They should be totally cut off both from individual and corporate fellowship with other Christians, including that of eating together (v. 11; cf. 2 Thess. 3:6-15). No exceptions are made. Even if the unrepentant person is a close friend or family member, he is to be put out.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>David Van Biema, "The Pastor's No Square," *Time* (December 6, 2008):60.

<sup>16</sup>John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1984):130.

The danger of deception is always present in the church. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 6:9 is not only a clarification of who is qualified to inherit the kingdom, but is also a warning to the so-called brother of 5:11. Every one of the sins committed by the so-called brother of 5:11 is repeated in 6:9-10. A professing believer who lives a lifestyle of 6:9-10 is most likely not a believer, and thus will not go to heaven. The multitudes of "tares" that fill the pews of the church need this stern reminder. They may not be going to heaven, and thus are greatly deceived.

#### IV. THE CHURCH MUST RESIST THE ASSAULT OF THE HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY UPON SOCIETY

The apostle Paul does not address a danger that exists today in our democratic society. The apostle could only tell the Corinthians that they had a responsibility to judge those within the church; those outside the church, God would judge (1 Cor 5:12-13). The Christians in Corinth had little if any influence in the civil affairs of the city. Today, Christians in a democratic society have a major role in determining the morality of their communities.

What Christians in American need to know is that the homosexual community has an organized agenda to change the moral fabric of American society. This organized effort has been well documented by David Kupelian in his *The Marketing of Evil*, an expose of Marshal Kirk and Hunter Madison's book, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear And Hatred of Gays in the '90's*.<sup>17</sup> A more recent book is *The Agenda: The Homosexual Plan to Change America* by Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, president of Traditional Values Coalition, who states, "The homosexual agenda is an all-out assault on everything we believe in and an attack on everything our Founding Fathers hoped to give us when they fought to establish this great nation."<sup>18</sup>

*The church needs to be aware of the purposeful effort to sell the homosexual lifestyle to America.* David Kupelian shows the sophisticated strategy of Kirk and Madsen to change the way Americans think about homosexuality, and writes of three phases called, "Desensitization," "Jamming," and "Conversion." "Desensitization" consists of inundating the public in a continuous flood of gay-related advertising, presented in the least offensive fashion possible. "Jamming" is psychological terrorism meant to silence expression of or even support for dissenting opinion. "Conversion" is the conversion of the average American's emotions, mind, and will, through a planned psychological attack, in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>David Kupelian, "Quotes from Homosexuality Statistics," Online at [http://www.conservapapdia.com/Homosexuality\\_Statistics](http://www.conservapapdia.com/Homosexuality_Statistics), accessed on 02/07/2008.

<sup>18</sup>Louis P. Sheldon, *The Agenda* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Frontline, 2005) 9.

<sup>19</sup>Kupelian, "Homosexuality Statistics."

In "The Overhauling of Straight America," Kirk and Pill offer these five strategies:

- Talk about gays and gayness as loudly and as often as possible
- Portray gays as victims, not as aggressive challengers
- Give protectors a just cause
- Make gays look good
- Make the victimizers look bad.<sup>20</sup>

The effect this effort has had upon the number and nature of the exposures that homosexuality gets in public is already obvious. The news media is notorious for under-reporting any negative exposure of homosexuality.

*The church must be made aware of an organized effort to sell the homosexual lifestyle to America.* It is known fact by now that the homosexual community comprises a very small segment of the population, less than 2% by some estimates, but not nearly the 10% that was originally proposed. Yet in spite of their small numbers, the homosexual community has been able to gain popular approval and support across the country. The reason behind this is their ability to organize themselves into an effective force for change and influence.

Consider a list of some organizations formed by the homosexual community, and their respective goals:

- The Human Rights Campaign—Lobbying Political Action (called the world's most powerful homosexual pressure group)<sup>21</sup>
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force—Grassroots Organization
- Gay and Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN)—Transforming K-12 Schools/Colleges
- Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)—Cultural Acceptance, Lobbying, Schools
- Lambda Legal—Changing the Law/Pro-homosexual Lawsuits
- ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Project—Lawsuits
- Service Members Legal Defense Network—Military
- Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)—Media/Hollywood
- National Center for Lesbian Rights—Lesbian Parenthood/Child Custody
- National Lesbian and Gay Journalistic Association—Changing Media from Within
- Gender Pac—Redefining Gender Norms/Transgender "Lobbying"

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<sup>20</sup>Cited in Sheldon, *The Agenda* 48.

<sup>21</sup>"Is Nancy Pelosi Right? Can God 'Bless' America with Homosexual Activism?" Online at <http://americansfortruth.com/news/is-nancy-pelosi-right-can-god-bless-america-with-homosexual-activism.html>, accessed on 6/19/2008.

Soulforce—Redefining Biblical Beliefs as “Homophobic”/Propagandizing  
Christian Colleges  
Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders—Lobby/Law/Same Sex Marriage

These are some of the agencies which serve the homosexual community in accomplishing its agenda. An indication of how mainstream they are and to what degree of influence they have become is seen in the remarks of House Speaker Pelosi from California to the Human Rights Campaign: “God has certainly blessed America with the work of the Human Rights Campaign.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition, *the church needs to resist the political effort to sell the homosexual lifestyle to America*. It has been a major thrust of the homosexual agenda to have laws passed that will secure their status and protect their rights. The homosexual activists have been successful in having sodomy laws removed from numerous states. The recent passage of SB 777 in California is an evidence of their ability to get laws passed even when the majority is not in favor of their position. Even the Supreme Court has been swept into its arms. This statement by Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia helps us understand the influence of the homosexual on the Supreme Court:

Today’s opinion is a product of a Court, which is the product of a law-profession culture, that has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda, by which I mean the agenda promoted by some homosexual activists directed at eliminating the moral opprobrium that has traditionally attached to homosexual conduct.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, *the church must be made aware of the dangerous effort to sell the homosexual lifestyle to America*. The homosexual agenda poses a physical, social, and moral threat to American, a threat that is quite obvious to the homosexual agenda but for which they take no regard. The homosexual community and those whom they influence and control have no desire to face up to the dangers of the homosexual lifestyle. In their promotion of homosexuality rarely is there ever a discussion on the dangers of the homosexual lifestyle. The life of a homosexual is far from gay.

The lifestyle of homosexuals is most harmful to the homosexuals themselves, evidenced by the diseases spread by homosexual on homosexual, and by the emotional and physical harms homosexual bring on themselves. The Washington Globe on “World’s AIDS Day, 2007” paid tribute to

The 500,000 Americans dead of AIDS  
The 1,000,000 Americans who are HIV positive

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Antonin Scalia, “Quote from Homosexual Agenda,” Online at <http://www.conservapedia.com/Homosexuality>, accessed 02/07/2008.

The 15,000 dead in the DC area  
The 40,000 new HIV cases per year.<sup>24</sup>

If any other single source was leading so many Americans to die or to contract such a deadly disease, a state of emergency would have already been declared in the land. The success of homosexuals has only led to their continual pain.

The homosexual is also a threat to the community, the heterosexual citizens of the land. A new strain of bacteria call MRSA (methicillin-resisitant staphylococcus aureus) has been discovered which has been shown to resist certain forms of antibiotics. This new strain has been growing in places like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and other large centers of homosexuality. MRSA is a high-risk bacteria and 13 times more contagious in anal sex. "Once this reaches the general population, it will be truly unstoppable," said Binh Diep, a researcher at the University of California, San Francisco, who led the study.<sup>25</sup>

Matt Barber of Concerned Women of America states,

Homosexuality is an issue of morality. But it is also a fundamental issue of public health. The evidence is clear. American government, educational systems, and courts should note the facts presented in this paper and advance public policy and curricula that encourage sound behavior rather than offering special protection and endorsement to a behavior that threatens individuals as well as public health. The future of America hangs in the balance. If society is not willing to address the homosexual issue on moral grounds, then the medical evidence alone should be enough to convince the fair-minded that homosexuality is incompatible with good public health.<sup>26</sup>

The church has no other option but to attempt to stem the slide of America to Sodom. Homosexuality threatens the sanctity of marriage and even marriage as an institution for society. Homosexuality even threatens the safety and security of children. Homosexuals account for almost half of all child abuse cases. Indeed, where will the homosexual recruit new partners for their sexual encounters?

Louis Sheldon offers this warning to the church today:

I do not exaggerate when I say that this trial by fire will determine the very survival of our culture and the fate of civilization as we know it. This is not a battle against foreign enemies or third world extremists, but against an even greater foe: the forces of darkness and legions of angry homosexuals and lesbians determined to abolish Christian virtue and

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<sup>24</sup>Janice Crouse, "HIV/AIDS: Anybody Can Get It," Online at <http://americansfortruth.com/news/hivaids-anybody-can-get-it.html>, accessed 06/19/2008.

<sup>25</sup>J. Matt Barber, "MRSA Outbreak Among 'Gays'—Let the Whitewash Begin" online at <http://americansfortruth.com/news/mrsa-outbreak-among-gays-let-the-whitewash-begin.html>, accessed 6/18/2008.

<sup>26</sup>Kupelian, "Homosexuality Statistics."

moral judgment in any form. We must proceed with caution, and we must come forth with open hands.<sup>27</sup>

What is to be the church's response to homosexuality? This writer has offered a fourfold response which is both biblical and balanced. The church can no longer remain ignorant, deceived, arrogant, or apathetic to this important issue facing it. There are no more "new worlds" for the modern pilgrims to flee to. The line has been drawn in the sand. The church must do what Jude asked it to do: "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 4). Apathy is not an option, neither is failure.

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<sup>27</sup>Sheldon, *The Agenda* 240.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON THE TRUTH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

Compiled by Dennis M. Swanson  
Director of the Seminary Library

The 2008 Faculty Chapel Lecture Series at The Master's Seminary was on the subject of "The Truth About Homosexuality." The bibliography below is a compilation of the contributors research as well as additional material.

This bibliography is not designed to be exhaustive; given the nearly endless scope of literature on the subject of homosexuality, that would be impossible. This is simply an effort to facilitate further research and study by readers of *TMSJ*. It is divided into three sections: (1) Monographs and Multi-Author Works; (2) Journal and Periodical Literature; (3) Unpublished and Online Resources.

### Monographs and Multi-Author Works

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## REVIEWS

Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes. Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2008. \$23.00. 443 pp. Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Those who study the Bible with informed sources have profited from Bailey's past books, *Poet and Peasant* and a companion work *Through Peasant Eyes*, devoted to Jesus' parables. In this latest product the same author has four chapters on the birth of Jesus, two on the beatitudes, four on the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, three on dramatic acts of Jesus, seven dealing with Jesus and women. Three of the latter are also on parables, and join twelve other chapters devoted to gospel parables. This effort repeats six parables dealt with in Bailey's two previous books, with just a bit of new material and some fresh organization. These six comment on the Two Debtors, the Widow and the Judge, the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, and the Great Banquet.

The chapters on the Savior's birth delve into detail on Luke 2:1-20, the genealogy in Matthew 1, the visit of wise men and Herod's atrocities, and Simeon and Anna. On dramatic acts, Bailey studies the Call of Peter (Luke 5:1-11), the Inauguration of Jesus' Ministry (Luke 4:16-31), the Blind Man and Zacchaeus (18:35-19:11). On Jesus and the Women, the writer has an introductory chapter, then the Woman at the Well (John 4:1-47), the Syro-Phoenician Woman (Matt 15:21-28), the Lady in the Stoning Threat (John 7:53-8:11), the Woman and Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50), the Widow and the Judge (Luke 18:1-8), and the Wise and Foolish Women (Matt 25:1-13). Three of these are on parables, and later Bailey has an entire section on further stories of Jesus.

On Jesus' birth, the author sees Joseph and Mary as accepted into a private peasant home of Davidic people or relatives, not forced to resort to a lonely cave or cold stable. The birth was in the family living room because the guest chamber was already filled. Bailey stresses the honor that Middle Eastern village people showed guests. In Matthew 1, he seeks to answer why, despite a custom of Jewish genealogies tracing males, Matthew mentions four women. As to the wise men, they were from Arabia since gold was mined there, and frankincense and myrrh are from trees that grow only in that area. He cites Justin Martyr (A.D. 160) who says five times in his *Dialogue with Trypho* that these travelers hailed from Arabia, and adds that Tertullian and Clement of Rome made the same claim (53).

The book offers insights on the nine beatitudes and each detail of the prayer in Matt 6:9-12. It argues that prayers such as this one should be brief, simple, and direct can be potent, as were prayers of Jesus in the Gospels, though at times He prayed for great spans of time. Much is devoted to the meaning of "Abba," a word that an Aramaic person used for his or her human father, a respected person of rank, or a teacher. Bailey disagrees with Joachim Jeremias' claim that "father" was unique on the lips of Jesus, and points out that the OT uses "father" a dozen times in reference to God. He feels that the phrase "Our Father" is defined by Jesus in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

The chapters on Jesus and women provide many cultural aspects. Bailey refers to the woman at the well as "the first Christian female preacher" (cf. John 4:29-30). She left the well and became a spring for others as she shared the message. On the woman in Simon's house, several customs enrich the discussion, and lessons stand out—e.g., forgiveness, love, faith, obedience, the elevation of women. Culture is vital in the account of the ten virgins. For example, the foolish women did not prepare by having a clay flask of oil to replenish their lamps, and could not borrow preparations for the coming of the bridegroom. In the spiritual analogy, people cannot get commitment and discipleship on loan, but must personally be ready for Christ's coming.

Scholars on parables bring much difference of opinion to the study of the Unjust Steward. Bailey is certain that this manager is not only a rascal when first his boss accuses him, but a deceitful embezzler in his brief, private, individual deals with clients before he leaves office. He causes a large portion of the debts to be lost to the boss to reap his selfish gain in the clients' gratitude to him for saving them money. The boss later would take the loss quietly rather than incur the debtors' angry accusation that he had gone back on arrangements they felt were by his authority. The steward is explained this way by some. Bailey does not grapple with the view of others that the steward, accused of guilt at first, later helps his boss and the clients by cutting away his own interest, thus ingratiating himself with the debtors. The boss gets his full amount and seems to be a hero for generosity. Parabolic studies see the matter quite differently, and it does not appear as simple as Bailey makes it. In either view, however, the boss praises the steward not for being clean but for working an ingenious plan to play to his advantage after he has turned in the books.

Bailey's treatment of the Pounds takes the entrusted amounts to represent spiritual gifts, whereas scholars vary with several different views here. Jesus gives the entrustments by grace, then reward in the roles of greater responsibility in service. He also is generous, Bailey feels, in not punishing or rejecting an unfaithful slave. He does not deal with the similarities that exist between this parable and the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30), as an example of what happens to an unfaithful slave there.

The book is often stimulating, quite readable, steeped in cultural benefits drawn from decades of research, and liable to stir one to agree or disagree. In view

of the substantial comments just on parables (nearly 200 pages, 239-426), serious students of Scripture will find this a provocative work to add to their shelves of parabolic studies. In this reviewer's appraisal, the book has much to offer but rates after specialist parabolic commentaries by Arland Hultgren, Klyne Snodgrass, Stanley Ellisen, and Simon Kistemaker, in that order.

A. Philip Brown II and Bryan W. Smith. *A Reader's Hebrew Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. xxviii + 1652 pp. \$49.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Philip Brown is associate professor of Bible and ministerial education at God's Bible College (Cincinnati, Ohio) and Bryan Smith is Bible integration coordinator for Bob Jones University Press (Greenville, S.C.). The project commenced after Brown saw *A Reader's Greek New Testament* (Zondervan, 2004), then compiled a sample of Jonah to present to the publisher as a proposal.

*A Reader's Hebrew Bible (RHB)* makes a good first impression. Attractively bound in tan Italian Duo-Tone with gilt-edged pages and a ribbon page marker, it displays clean typeset pages with legible fonts. It appears to be a durable edition that will stand up under a lot of use. An informative "Introduction" (xii-xxvi) prepares the user well, explaining the volume's purpose, text, and glosses. Experienced Hebrew Bible readers will find that it takes time to adapt to the absence of text critical apparatus and *masorah parva*, but beginning Hebrew students will take to it like a duck to water.

A few glitches exist in the first edition due to software conversion problems. For example, at Ps 107:21-26 (1220) a Hebrew accent (*telisha parvum*) appears in the margin to the right of the verse numbers. Those, along with other examples elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, should have been inverted *nuns*. In addition, only in Genesis, an error in typesetting code produced a *seghol* with a *tsere* in 322 words (e.g.,  $\Psi\Omega\Omega$  instead of  $\Psi\Omega\Omega$ , Gen 1:20). Brown performs yeoman service by revealing the errata himself on the Internet at the following URLs that he posted July 10, 2008: <http://exegeticalthoughts.blogspot.com/2008/01/readers-hebrew-bible-review-by-its.html> and <http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=pgvtUNGb0ZrsJiCb86RGMfA&hl=en>.

All proper nouns occurring less than 100 times in the Hebrew (less than 25 times in the Aramaic) are screened in gray. Footnotes accompany all words occurring less than 100 times in the Hebrew Bible and less than 25 times in the Aramaic sections. An appendix lists all Hebrew words occurring more than 100 times together with their respective glosses (1644-50). A second appendix lists all 27 differences between the text of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)* and the electronic database for the Westminster Leningrad Codex 4.4 (WLC) (1651-52).



*BibleWorks 7.0*, a popular Bible software program, employs WLC as its Hebrew Bible text. The pattern for each footnote entry is as follows:

<sup>fn#</sup>Homonym# Lemma stem: *HALOT*; BDB; Alternate.  
<sup>fn#</sup> II מוּשַׁבַּח QAL: cease; recede; DCH: **depart**.

The primary lexicons are Koehler and Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (*HALOT*; Brill, 2001) and Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (BDB; Clarendon Press, 1907). Alternates include Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon* (Eerdmans, 1971) and Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (DCH [sic]; Sheffield Academic Press, 2001). All glosses are context-specific, not arbitrarily chosen (xxi). From time to time Brown and Smith cite a commentary, author, or other reference work for the alternate meaning. For example, in Josh 9:4 footnote 7 presents the alternate as “NICOT: act as an ambassador, WBC: disguise oneself as a messenger” (377). Brown and Smith derived these alternate glosses from Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, New International Commentary on the OT (Eerdmans, 1994) and Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary (Thomas Nelson, 1983).

Actually, these two sample entry types occur very seldom. Most footnotes in *RHB* are like footnote 48 in Jer 10:14—“צָרָה QAL: smelt; refiner, goldsmith” (807). DCH and Holladay tend to be the most frequent alternate sources for glosses. Anticipating questions concerning the use of Holladay, the authors explain that “substantial differences” exist between it and *HALOT* (xviii). Brown supplied this reviewer with the following statistics concerning alternate glosses in *RHB*: 244 from Holladay, 172 from *DCH*, 8 from WBC, 4 from NICOT, and 1 from *NIDOTTE* that occurs in 4 separate instances. In addition, author-supplied glosses occur in 185 instances (not separate glosses). Absence of an alternative gloss does not necessarily indicate satisfaction with *HALOT* and BDB (xxii). Sometimes the authors were either unable to find an adequate gloss or were uncertain of what one would be.

Brown and Smith follow the practice of the J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research by displaying both *Kethib* and *Qere* readings in the text. The text (*Kethib*) of Gen 8:17 in *BHS* reads אֲנִי־הָאֱלֹהִים, while the margin offers אֱלֹהִים־אֲנִי as the *Qere*. In *RHB* the text reads: אֲנִי־הָאֱלֹהִים<sup>Q</sup> אֱלֹהִים־אֲנִי<sup>K</sup> (12). Thus, the authors assume the traditional viewpoint that the Masoretes employed *Qere* to correct the text (xv). They do not mention the possibility that the *Qere*, according to John Barton (*Holy Writings, Sacred Text* [Westminster John Knox, 1997]) and James Barr (“A New Look at *Kethibh-Qere*,” *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 21 [1981]:19-37), might not be a correction of the *Kethib*, “but a registration of the reading tradition which enables the scribe not to be misled by it” (Barton, *Holy Writings* 124).

Description of the text and practices of the volume leads to a more pragmatic issue: How should Hebrew teachers utilize *RHB*? Since *RHB* encourages the student to learn all Hebrew vocabulary found over 100 times in the Hebrew Bible, it does not interfere with the very important role of vocabulary acquisition.

The authors point out that the volume “seeks to facilitate reading . . . , it cannot serve as a replacement for the standard lexica” (xvii). Reading *RHB* produces a literal translation, not a technically accurate translation. Students will more readily gain confidence in their reading ability by having the rarer words glossed for them in the footnotes.

*RHB* does not replace good lexical skills, sound exegetical work, and careful textual critical analysis (xvii-xviii). Readers “must discern which gloss is contextually appropriate” (xxi). Users must not construe reliance on *HALOT* and *BDB* as agreement with their glosses. In fact, on a number of occasions the two authors had reason to question the accuracy of glosses offered by one or more lexicons. Brown and Smith purposefully offer no alternate translation in such situations (xxii). In addition, the authors treat multi-word idioms word-by-word, leaving the determination of actual meaning to the reader (xxiii).

When the text is difficult in both *Kethib* and *Qere*, some exegetes resort to conjectural emendation. The authors of *RHB*, however, avoid it completely, giving the reader no hint at all as to how to resolve the reading. For example, two footnotes occur in Prov 22:20 (םִשְׁלֹשֵׁים וְשָׁלוֹשׁ יָמִים, one for each reading: “שָׁלוֹשׁ יָמִים ago, the day before yesterday . . . III שְׁלֹשֵׁים fighting charioteer; adjutant” (1366). The footnotes give no indication that commentators and Bible translations are nearly unanimous in reading the text as “thirty [sayings]” (שְׁלֹשֵׁים). Wrestling with these issues contextually teaches the student to think.

Therefore, teachers might recommend or require *RHB* as a text in beginning Hebrew and Hebrew reading courses with the confidence that it will not undercut their teaching goals. Indeed, with *RHB* teachers will find that they can require a greater amount of reading without having to supply word lists for the assigned passages. In schools with required chapel attendance, students can carry *RHB* with them for checking OT texts in the Hebrew—another great method for expanding and retaining knowledge of the Hebrew Bible.

James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson. *The New Guidebook for Pastors*. Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2007. 311 pp. \$24.99 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

This book is written as a follow up to *Criswell’s Guidebook for Pastors*, written by W. A. Criswell, famous Southern Baptist preacher and pastor. James W. Brant is a professor of theology at The Criswell College, and Mac Brunson is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. These two men have teamed up to produce a new manual for pastors to guide them through the maze of pastoral responsibilities.

The book contains 21 chapters of practical advice to pastors, with each chapter having the caption of “The Pastor and His. . . .” It covers the whole field

from the call to the retirement. It provides a good companion volume to Criswell's book, bringing many of the issues pastors face up to date. The chapters are full of practical wisdom and suggestions, but not much on theological foundations. The chapters on "His First Church," "Missions, and Evangelism," "His Ethics," "Changing Churches," "His denomination" are clearly new items to consider.

The authors have a Southern Baptist background, and write for a Southern Baptist pastor, which might be an obstacle if the reader is not a Baptist. Aside from this, the authors provide a much needed update on what a young pastor needs to know. The book also provides some valuable resources in the appendixes, which by themselves would be worth the price of the book.

Christopher Cone, ed. *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*. Fort Worth, Tex.: Tyndale Seminary, 508 pp. \$29.00. Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Twenty-three chapters seek to reflect Dispensationalism in its best, most defensible light. They celebrate Ryrie, long-time Professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, and author of the definitive *Dispensationalism Today*. He also did *The Ryrie Study Bible, Premillennialism and the Christian Faith, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, The Grace of God, The Holy Spirit, Revelation, Acts, Basic Theology, Balancing the Christian Life, So Great Salvation, "Epistles of John" (Wycliffe Bible Commentary), The Miracles of Jesus, The Bible and Tomorrow's News*, and a number of journal articles and chapters in other books. He even has written the first chapter in the current book, advocating "The Necessity of Dispensationalism."

Cone is president of Tyndale Theological Seminary and Biblical Institute. He joins Ryrie and fifteen other writers. Robert Thomas of The Master's Seminary contributes Chapters 6 ("The Principle of the Single Meaning") and 9 ("The New Testament Use of the Old Testament") from his own book, *Evangelical Hermeneutics*.

Some chapters are of substantial help. Others might give the impression that they stress points found more or less in systems the work opposes, such as amillennialism. The work joins a large number of books in the past three decades which collect chapters by main exponents of a premillennial dispensational conviction.

In Cone's "Four Pillars of Dispensationalism," this reviewer must confess that only one of these points seems to distinguish dispensationalism substantially from other theologies. This is his fourth point, using consistent, literal hermeneutics to explain Scripture. Cone lists a lot of ideas to favor a historical/grammatical method (25-30). Parts of this seem inconclusive in rejecting one system's handling of biblical phenomena and favoring another. Some will conclude that certain

dispensational interpreters on specific passages practice solid and natural hermeneutics, but other dispensational views on texts meet with rejection even from many others in the system. And passages are open to different interpretations, some of which have more solid proof. However, candidly, this is also true of systems that the book opposes, such as amillennialism and postmillennialism. Dispensationalists do contend for a basic approach that often measures texts according to the most natural, evident, straightforward sense that the words convey.

Charles Ray in “Basic Distinctives of Dispensationalism” (chapter 4) presses some interesting points. One is the difficulty that amillennialists face in conceiving of Satan as bound in the present age (Rev 20:2) when quite a number of NT passages are lucid on the very strong, deceptive activity of Satan or demons today (48-49). A further point is the non-premillennial idea that has the church present since the beginning of the Bible (50). Contrary to this, Ray shows, dispensationalists argue for distinguishing Israel and the church, and say the church began at Pentecost (Acts 2). Among Ray’s observations are these: non-mention of the church in the OT, Paul’s calling the church a “mystery hidden in God,” not made known in pre-NT generations (51), the church as yet future in Matt 16:18, the church as “one new man [person]” (Eph 2:15), not an old entity to which God is simply continuing to add more people. With these is the factor that the apostles were at a stage of the church’s *foundation* in Eph 2:20, not integrated after it was far along in a lengthy history (52).

Ray also sensitively reconsiders NT texts in which covenant theologians equate the church with Israel (53-58). An example is Gal 6:16, “the Israel of God.” He defends rendering the word *kai* there in the primary sense as “and,” so as to refer to Gentiles who believe (distinct from people of Israel) “and the Israel of God,” i.e., people ethnically of Israel who also are genuinely of God (55). This fits with the idea that Israel is Israel in an ethnic sense in its vast multiplied occurrences in the NT, just as in the OT (56).

Some will wonder about wording in chapter 13 where “the day of the Lord” seems limited to being a time of God’s *wrath*. Some passages appear to see the “day” (era) as continuing on to include *blessing* in the kingdom that follows judgment. For example Joel 3:14 seems to focus on judgment in “the day of the Lord,” and in the context about that time v. 18 refers to blessing “in that day,” naturally the “day” the context defines.

Both judgment and blessing will occur in a “day” in which God shows extraordinarily that He is indeed “Lord.” Later, the current work does cite Paul Enns to the effect that the Day of the Lord even carries through the millennium (280), conceding that it also includes a blessing aspect. The work also allows that among relevant texts, 1 Cor 5:5 is one which states that “the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (282). If so, statements of chapter 13 at different points would be more effective if everywhere consistent, i.e., the “day” is only one of wrath, or within it God also shows his Lordship in blessing for which the judgment has cleared the way.

Ray's chapters 14-15 craft a very careful look at interpretations of Dan 9:24-27. He shows that views lack defensible evidence when they posit that the "sevens" refer to days, weeks, or months. He argues it as more reasonable that the reference is to *years*. His contribution also helps on views about *which period* the "seventy sevens" covers. He defends the meaning of years as actual years, the first sixty-nine transpiring before the Messiah's death and the end of the seventieth seven at the Messiah's Second Advent.

John Whitcomb's detailed reasoning that the two witnesses (Revelation 11) are two individuals comes in chapter 17. He argues that numbers in the Revelation are, for the most part, sensible if seen as literal (359). He even makes an ambitious effort to support the two witnesses being Elijah and Moses brought back from the afterlife. Not all dispensationalists can agree that Moses will die twice, and so far apart, once in Deut 34:5-7 and again in Rev 11:7-8. And not all will concede that Elijah personally needs to be one of the two future heralds. For example, Daniel Wong has developed much reasoning against the probability that the two are Moses and Elijah, rather the two are future servants who are as yet unknown ("The Two Witnesses in Revelation 11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154, July-September 1997).

Jerry Hullinger in chapter 18 assesses in diligent detail views on the time of the temple in Ezekiel 40-48. He argues against it being just an ideal and not a literal temple, or Solomon's historical temple, or the church (Eph 2:11ff.) or Christ (John 2:19), or the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 (377-85). He himself reasons that it meets the best hermeneutical demands to see it as literal during the millennium, after Christ's Second Coming.

Chapter 21 has the sobering arguments of Ron Bigalke, Jr., to defend dispensational teachers as advocating social action to improve the world. He shows evidence to argue unfairness of Reformed claims that the system is socially irresponsible, indifferent, and concerned only with the future.

The work has enough to show that dispensationalists in a number of passages ought to be taken seriously. They seek to explain Bible verses in their most natural sense, and some individual efforts reasonably achieve this.

Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi. *An Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006. xviii + 364 pp + 6 DVD set. \$99.98 (cloth). Reviewed by Kyle C. Dunham, Faculty Associate.

As an addition to the Invitation to Theological Studies series, *An Invitation to Biblical Hebrew* furnishes a useful introductory grammar for beginning students to biblical Hebrew. Russell T. Fuller, associate professor of Old Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Kyoungwon Choi, at the time of publication a Ph.D. student at SBTS, take up the time-tested deductive approach, focusing on "mastery of the fundamentals of Hebrew phonology (the

sounds)” and “of Hebrew morphology (the forms of the language)” (xvii). The authors contend that “until phonology and morphology are mastered, syntax cannot be truly understood or appreciated,” on the premise that “Hebrew cannot be learned in a year” (xvii). The aim of the approach, and ultimately of the grammar itself, is “that students will master Hebrew so well that they will actually use it for ministry” (xvii). By presenting the language in such a “thorough manner,” the authors seek to counteract the unsettling tendency for erstwhile seminary students to ignore Hebrew upon graduation, concluding that “this will only happen—not by computer programs—when students truly learn the language” (xviii).

Within that goal, the grammar is an accessible, largely effective primer to the fundamentals of biblical Hebrew. The grammar divides into two parts: (1) Phonological Principles (chapters 1-6, 26 pp.) and (2) Morphological Principles (chapters 7-38, 256 pp.). The section devoted to phonological principles covers the alphabet, syllabification, the shewa, the dagesh (*lene* and *forte*), the *qamets* and *qamets hatuf*, gutturals, and the rules of proto-Hebrew. The section on morphological principles divides into four sections: (1) Particles (chapters 7-9, 17 pp.); (2) Nouns and Adjectives (chapters 10-16, 49 pp.); (3) Strong Verbs (chapters 17-28, 53 pp.); and (4) Weak Verbs (chapters 29-38, 98 pp.). The first portion takes aim at particles, covering the article, the interrogative markers (וְ and וַ), the direct object marker, inseparable prepositions, and the preposition וְ. The portion on nouns and adjectives follows, with treatment of the noun in its absolute and construct state, the syntax of nouns and adjectives, the pronominal suffixes attaching to prepositions and nouns, and segholate nouns. The third section presents the strong verb, including the perfect and imperfect forms, participles and infinitives, and an introduction to the seven principal stems. Presentations of the stative verb and the attachment of pronominal suffixes to the verb are included. The final portion deals with weak verbs and is the lengthiest, comprising over one-third of the entire grammar (proportionate to the difficulty of what the authors identify as the “Mount Everest of Hebrew” [189]). The various weak verbs are analyzed, those with gutturals or *aleph* in the first, second, or third root letter; with *waw* or *yod* in the root; with *nun* as first root letter; and geminate verbs. With its comprehensive treatment of the weak verb, the textbook mitigates considerably the difficulty of that elusive aspect of Hebrew grammar and in so doing offers its greatest contribution.

The terminology of the grammar is geared by the authors’ own admission to beginning students, not to Hebrew scholars, with popular and at times colloquial expressions (xvii). Such turns of phrase as “the shewa is an impoverished vowel, the low rent district of Hebrew—some are vocal about it, others are silent” (13) and “down from Sinai, we now examine the idolatries of the particles, those demons only exorcised through memory—mostly” (31) illustrate this tack. The grammar follows modern Israeli pronunciation (4). Emphasis is placed on understanding the rules of so-called proto-Hebrew (i.e., pre-biblical Hebrew) (Fuller and Choi designate chapter 6 “the heart of the grammar” and “the Hebrew Sinai”) (25). Here the reader realizes the authors’ governing methodology: to grasp Hebrew morphology the

student must become a skilled craftsman able to dismantle each word to its original (pre-biblical) form and to reassemble it.

In addition, several other aspects of the grammar will prove beneficial to the beginner. The authors' consistent use of mnemonic devices and catch phrases assists in the assimilation of some of the more formidable features of Hebrew grammar (the acronym SQeNeMLeVY [18 n. 5] is one example). The mastery of proto-Hebrew forms provides a solid foundation for grasping with alacrity how Hebrew words are "put together." The authors' correlation of the pronominal element with the suffixes and prefixes of the perfect and imperfect verbs is a helpful correlation for comprehension of the morphology of the strong verb (104, 110). Further, the authors' explication of certain aspects such as circumstantial clauses, which differentiate *waw* + noun constructions from *waw* consecutive constructions, is informative (164–65). The charts and appendices are very beneficial in illustrating the concepts of the book.

A few other features of the grammar are of benefit. The authors place welcome emphasis on drills and repetition, placed along with probing questions at the end of each chapter. This technique compels the student to master elemental concepts and is on the whole a strength of the grammar (one caveat is that the cumulative drills become somewhat exacting by the end of the book; drills on the material of chapter two—syllabification of words, placement of the dagesh, and distinguishing the silent vis-à-vis vocal shewa—are included in *every* subsequent chapter [by chapter 25 the drills portion is longer than the lesson itself, nearly three full pages]). In addition, the authors use a variety of innovations which set the grammar apart. For instance, vowel pointing variations for verbs are taught via a color method (e.g., A = red; E or Ê = green; O = orange) (127) (however, this reviewer is admittedly ambivalent toward the color method; see below). Treatment of the morphology of nouns and verbs utilizes a "box" method to illustrate the process of adding suffixes and shifting accentuation (51 and *passim*), which may allay some of the discomfiture arising from the occasionally perplexing alteration of Hebrew forms.

A few minor weaknesses of the grammar merit mention. First, no direct Scripture is cited or incorporated until the final two chapters, so the longsuffering student must wait some time to apply his or her knowledge of Hebrew to the text itself (in fairness, the authors modify and create Hebrew texts for translation in the grammar often close to actual biblical texts, yet without citation). Second, the box method of morphology has drawbacks. The concept is never thoroughly explained in the grammar (although more so in the DVDs), but is used pervasively with nouns and verbs. The authors use boxes in lieu of a paradigmatic strong verb (such as לָטַק) to master the conjugations, which lacks opportunity for audible reinforcement and requires greater rote memorization. Third, the color method for verbs is of uncertain value to this reviewer, who was as confused at times by the explanation of the colors as by the various modifications of the forms themselves, as illustrated in the following explanation:

If the details are forgotten, remember A/Ē for all stems except the Pu“al, Hoph‘al A/A... Pi“ēl has a little green (3ms) in the perfect; Niph‘al has a little red (2, 3fp) in the imperfect-imperative; Hithpa“ēl is the most colorful A-ē/Ē-a; Hiph‘il has the Hireq-Yod A-î/Ī-ē; the Pu“al and Hoph‘al are Communists (all red) A/A (135).

Fourth, curiously the authors omit explanation of the triliteral root system of Hebrew verbs.

In addition to the grammar, a set of six DVDs with thirty-eight lectures, which feature Russell Fuller’s presentation of the lessons of the textbook, are available. The DVDs will prove quite helpful to those seeking further reinforcement of the concepts, including perhaps students without opportunity for formal seminary training. While the format of the presentation is simple (Fuller is seated, teaching the lessons with a white board), the technique is effective, and Fuller takes opportunity to provide fresh insights and to enhance and reinforce the concepts. The DVDs are exceptionally profitable in drilling down the tools and pedagogy of the grammar. Fuller’s closing statement expresses his desire that the knowledge gained will be used for God’s glory, a worthy desire this reviewer echoes.

J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, and C. Marvin Pate. *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 512 pp. \$35.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Seminary Library.

The world of biblical and theological reference works has for some time needed a new, updated reference source on biblical prophecy. J. Barton Payne’s excellent *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1973) is now severely dated and not formatted to deal with specific terms. Rather it treats prophecy by prophecy in the text. John Walvoord’s *Every Prophecy in the Bible* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Victor, 1999), was much along the same line, but was a decidedly disappointing production.

This current volume is arranged along the lines of a normal reference work, dealing with terminology (both biblical and theological), prophecy within individual books of the Bible, and concepts. The authors have presented this work as “conceived with the purpose of helping lay people in the church study and understand biblical prophecy” (7). The authors state that they have “no theological agenda to push or prophetic viewpoint to champion, other than a strong commitment to the Scriptures and a passion to interpret the biblical texts in accordance with the intention of the biblical writers” (ibid). The phrase “strong commitment to Scripture” as opposed to inerrancy strikes this reviewer as an interesting choice of words.



As laudable as the authors' intentions were, the end product presented in this work is a disaster. The individual article headings are a mish-mash that obviously had no input from any editorial hand experienced in reference subject headings. For instance, instead of listing all of the views of the rapture under a standard and easily understood heading such as "Rapture, Views of" (with individual "see" listings for the names of each view placed alphabetically, for example, "Mid-Tribunational Rapture: See Rapture, Views of" pointing to the single main article) each view of the rapture is given a separate entry. The problem is that the entries for the Pretribunational Rapture (348-51) and Prewrath Rapture (351-52) follow each other with no break. This gives the appearance to the target audience that these are the only two rapture views. The Midtribunational Rapture (284-86) and Posttribunational Rapture (337-40) entries are lost. Even more oddly, an actual entry for "Rapture" (362-64) has much of the same material as in the scattered articles. The same problem plagues several subjects such as those related to the millennium and the Book of Revelation (where articles related to the interpretive options of Revelation are scattered throughout the volume). A lengthy article has charts for the "Seven Churches of Revelation" (416-24), but then the work has individual articles for each of the seven cities. The "see" references that are used at the end of the articles are not set off adequately in terms of type font or style to catch the eye. The authors decided not to use "see also" references, simply using "see," apparently not knowing the difference or being unaware of standard reference work formatting.

Though choices for entries are also a question for any reference work, some of the omissions are egregious. Entries exist for the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and the New Covenants, but no entries for or even references to the other biblical covenants (e.g., Noahic, Palestinian, Mosaic, and Priestly). By comparison, an entry does occur for the entirely insignificant and obscure individual named Noadiah in the OT (314). Some of the "see" entries are distracting. On page 416, an entry for "Servant of the Lord" appears with the line "See Servant Songs." That "see" line is followed immediately with the entry for "Servant Songs" making the "see" entry rather pointless. Actually, the first entry "Servant of the Lord" would have been the stronger and more logical heading for the entry. Though the volume has an entry for "Heaven" (200-201), it has none for "Hell" or even "Eternal Punishment," not even a "see" reference that would point the reader to the inadequate entry for "Lake of Fire" (246). A one-paragraph entry for "Second Advent" (409) is followed immediately by a lengthy entry for "Second Coming," clearly rendering the previous entry superfluous since no meaningful distinction exists between the two.

Another confusing choice is listing Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as "Book of" instead of "Gospel of." This is most problematic with the Gospel of John. Under the heading of "Book of John" (231-32) one is left wondering exactly what is meant, the Gospel account or one of the three epistles. In fact, it is not until the second paragraph of the entry that the reader is informed that the Gospel account is being discussed. As one progresses through the article the question arises over whether the epistles will also be discussed at all; they are not. Some biblical books,

despite their obvious importance in biblical prophecy (e.g., The Book of Romans, especially Chapters 9–11) are left untreated. The labeling of the entries with “Book(s) of” is inconsistent, sometimes used and sometimes not (e.g., 1 and 2 Thessalonians).

Bibliographic entries for the articles (or even a separate bibliography listing) are conspicuous in their absence. In the 122 endnotes (483-87), a decidedly poor practice in a “dictionary”; the authors give no indication as to which article a particular note pertains (and the formatting of the superscript numbers renders them difficult to find). The only index is a Scripture Index “with Apocrypha.” However, the Apocryphal Books are not in their standard location (between the Old and New Testament) nor are they categorically labeled, but simply listed after Revelation. This work might have been salvaged with a simple index listing of all the articles, but this was not done. An index of people named would have been an easy and useful addition. Multiple typographical errors and several misplaced or misleading “header labels” (see the top of pages 342, 343, 344, 345, and 346 for examples) are further blemishes.

The volume gives every appearance of being rushed through production without careful editorial examination and with no regard for the use of standard subject headings or standard reference-work formatting. The good material that appears (and there are some well-written, albeit unremarkable, portions in this volume) is hopelessly lost in the confusing maze of this “dictionary.” It cannot be recommended at any level, for it is over-priced, poorly executed, and incomplete.

Michael P. Knowles, ed. *The Folly of Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2007. 264 pp. \$18.00 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry.

This book has an emphasis on the methods and models of preaching, with Michael Knowles providing a number of well-known and some not-so-well-known preachers giving their emphasis on preaching. The book has four main divisions:

- “New Creation”: The Social Dimensions of Preaching
- “Not with Plausible Words of Wisdom”: Homiletic Method
- “Grace Sufficient”: The Theology of Preaching
- “Grace Sufficient”: Sermons

Among the contributors are David G. Buttrick, Tony Campolo, Thomas G. Long, Martin Marty, John R. W. Stott, Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, and Haddon W. Robinson. The editor endeavored to garnish the best of these authors, and use it to emphasize the nature of preaching. He utilized the Corinthian exhortation on the foolishness of the message preached as the theme.

As would be expected in a book of this nature, the sections vary in style, approach, and theological foundations. One derives profit in its reading, and the preacher is challenged with various themes. The section on "Sermons" provides examples on models of preaching. Although not intentionally expositional, the sermons do expand one's concept of preaching.

Paul E. Koptak. *Proverbs*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003. 712 pp. \$29.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

The NIV Application Commentary's primary aim is to provide biblical expositors with a tool that will help them bring the message of Scripture into a modern context (7). To expedite the series' aim, the authors divide each commentary into three sections: "Original Meaning" (traditional exegetical material), "Bridging Contexts" (explanation of the text's timeless truths that move readers closer to present-day application), and "Contemporary Significance" (modern application). The last two sections of each passage studied are the obvious focus of this volume and are extremely helpful as guides to application for the devotional reader as well as the teacher and preacher.

Up front, Koptak warns readers not to think of the Book of Proverbs "as the kind of success handbook we find in the self-help section" (19). Throughout the commentary he remains cautious in making application of Proverbs to modern readers. In doing so, he makes the reader aware of the similarities and differences between the world of Proverbs and today (20; cp. 76-81). For Koptak, the purpose of Proverbs is "to foster wisdom," (24) and it "sets out for its readers three pursuits under the banner of wisdom: knowledge, character, and piety" (63). By looking at both the rhetorical elements of Proverbs (25-27, 33-35) and its relationship to ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature (27-30), he prepares readers for both interpretation and application. At key junctures he focuses on the importance of literary context (e.g., 152-54, 284-87). Koptak addresses many comments directly to the preacher and teacher to offer suggestions on how to preach difficult passages within Proverbs (e.g., 216-17). Repeatedly, he points out catchwords, clusters, strings, themes, and structures that provide a literary context even for the collections of individual proverbs (337, 354-55, 381, 393-94).

Rather than adopting the viewpoint that Proverbs prepares civil servants for service in the Israelite royal court (cf. 30-31), Koptak adheres to a family orientation in the book. In his first words dealing with Prov 1:8-19, he writes, "The literary setting for the instruction in chapters 1-9 is the home schooling of a young man coming of age" (71). This approach presents lessons for young people and parents alike. Indeed, the commentator claims that the text "urges parents to take seriously the task of wisdom education in the home" (110). Parents will find this commentary

supportive of their educational role with their children, as well as challenging them to avoid the mistake of applying the truths of Proverbs to the young alone (112).

An examination of some of the key interpretive issues within Proverbs presents a picture of Koptak's interpretive conclusions. On the personification of Wisdom in Proverbs 8, Koptak identifies a NT development of an analogy between Wisdom and Christ without taking the passage as prophetic (42, 243, 258-61). Without getting bogged down in the various views of 11:30, the commentator works through the text to demonstrate that the meaning is that "the wise promote life, they do not take it away" (325). In regard to the rod in 13:24 and 23:13, he denies that the text supports corporal punishment (362, 547). Presenting four views of 22:6 (and a fifth in a footnote), he concludes that the proverb speaks primarily of "the initiation into adulthood and the teaching of its expectations and responsibilities" (518). He identifies the "son" in 30:4 as "any person who learns wisdom" (657).

A work of this size covering the entire book of Proverbs must be limited in depth and detail. Such constraints force an incomplete discussion of some key topics (such as the meaning of *peti*, "simple"; 59-60). Even though this volume was published prior to Waltke's two volumes on Proverbs in NICOT (Eerdmans, 2004, 2005), Koptak lists the work in his helpful "Select Bibliography on Proverbs" (51-56).

In conclusion, this volume does not replace the need for exegetical works like Waltke's (NICOT). Koptak's contributions exegetically and expositionally are comparable to those of Duane A. Garrett's *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (NAC; Broadman, 1993) and Tremper Longman's *Proverbs* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms; Baker Academic, 2006). Expositors, however, will find that Koptak's commentary provides greater guidance in applying the text of the book of Proverbs—its greatest contribution.

Robert Letham. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2004. xv + 551 pp. \$24.99 (paper). Reviewed by Cliff McManis, TMS alumnus and Associate Professor of Theology, The Cornerstone Seminary.

Dr. Robert Letham, the former pastor of Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware, teaches systematic theology at Wales Evangelical School of Theology. He writes from a Reformed perspective (ix).

Letham's work is a welcomed *tour de force* in trinitarian studies. He begins this substantive tome by begging for a "recovery of the Trinity at ground level" (7) among evangelicals (5), in all areas of life and worship (1), in most pulpits and pews (1), and especially in the Western church as a whole (3-7). He laments that Christians and the church abroad have relegated the Trinity to insignificance. Even theologians and scholars have failed here, for Letham alleges that the doctrine of the

Trinity has not been significantly advanced or developed since the work of Calvin. Consequently, a “serious *lacunae* in contemporary Christian awareness of the triunity of God” (11) has developed. Letham’s goal is to fill the void.

He divides his work into four parts. The first section he calls “Biblical Foundations,” in which he gives a cursory overview of selected OT texts, a survey of the deity of Jesus and a basic examination of triadic NT patterns of the Holy Spirit (17-85). The second section is “Historical Development,” in which he traces trinitarian progress from Irenaeus [A.D. 130-200] to Calvin [A.D. 1509-1564] (87-268). The next section he calls “Modern Discussion.” Here he traces the influences of Barth, Rahner, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Torrance, and others (269-376). The last part covers “Critical Issues” In this he metes out practical implications of trinitarian theology on worship, prayer, song, missions, and others (376-478).

In his work, Letham gives priority to “Historical Development” by committing 179 pages to the discussion; he gives the least attention to “Biblical Foundations” with a mere 68 pages. This is in keeping with his observation in the Introduction that one cannot appreciate the Trinity without “a wide and thorough historical underpinning” following “carefully and patiently the development of the church’s understanding” (11). In hindsight, Letham’s study is based more on historical theology than on biblical theology. In fact, at times Letham downplays “Biblicism” (5), “biblical studies” (5), and biblical exegesis (384) in favor of historic creeds (383-84), church Fathers (378), and even philosophical theology (360-62, 379). Despite this periodic tendency, overall, Letham proves himself to be vigorously committed to biblical authority and inspiration.

One clear theme gives continuity to Letham’s study. He repeatedly bemoans the fact that throughout church history, the “Eastern and Western churches have faced different tendencies toward imbalance on one side or the other” regarding views of the Trinity (2). Letham’s mission is to establish a modern-day corrective, providing the perfect biblical balance. The East, from the earliest times, has been prone to subordinationism (and tritheism), due to over-emphasizing distinctions among the divine persons, thus relegating the Son and the Holy Spirit to sub-deity roles that are somehow derivative ontologically or by altogether positing three distinct gods (3, 211, 251, 354, 377, 463). Letham says Pannenberg, Moltmann, Gunton, and Bray are guilty here (321, 463). On the other hand, the Western church has routinely leaned toward modalism, blurring eternal distinctions among the three persons of the Trinity due to an imbalanced focus on the divine essence. Augustine is the culprit here (3). Because of his Neo-Platonist inklings (430) and his ahistorical/allegorical hermeneutics, Augustine had a faulty starting point for explicating his doctrine of God. Letham avers, “Augustine held to the Trinity only with some difficulty” (446); even worse, he writes, “[T]he Augustinian model has bred atheism and agnosticism” (212; cf. 408). Other Western theologians who inherited the sin of Augustine’s modalism in one degree or another include Aquinas (235), Barth and Rahner (7), Warfield, Charles Hodge, Berkhof, and Packer (4).

Only Calvin (252-268) and Owen (409, 117, 419) come away somewhat unscathed from the historically exacting pen of Letham and his tacit examples of heresy.

Letham's solution to striking the delicate balance between starting with the distinction of persons versus starting with the divine essence when systematizing a biblical doctrine of God is to pursue "equal ultimacy" (463). Simply put, this entails a restraint from conceiving of the divine being separately from person. Or positively stated, recognize, "The one Being of God is identical with the communion of the three divine Persons and the Communion of the three divine Persons is identical with the one Being of God" (462). According to Letham, only T. F. Torrance [1913-2007] has been able to pull this off (356, 373). Following suit with Torrance, Letham suggests his own remedy toward the perfect, biblical, trinitarian balance by delineating his six "Vital Parameters" which constitute his working definition of the Trinity (381-83). His six parameters are as follows: (1) we need to recognize the equal ultimacy of the being of God and the three persons; (2) the three persons are *homoousios*; each person is the whole God; (3) the three persons mutually indwell one another in a dynamic communion; we need to invoke the historic doctrine of *perichoresis*; (4) the three persons are irreducibly different from one another; the Son is eternally distinct from the Father and the Spirit; (5) there is a fixed, eternal order among the persons regarding their relations; the Son is sent from the Father only; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son; this is the historic doctrine of *taxis*; (6) finally, "A doctrine of the Trinity that is to be faithful to the Bible from which it emerges must give equivalent expression to each of the above parameters."

True to his promise, at least for this reviewer, Letham delivered—he craftily and painstakingly advanced the doctrine of the Trinity in a refreshing, edifying, and biblical manner. Of his many contributions, one stands out. He forges a meticulous and unrivaled historical analysis of the development of trinitarian thought in the church, especially in the seminal centuries. Letham reminds readers that Irenaeus bolstered a healthy triadic view of God and excoriated ontological dualism (96); Tertullian bequeathed to the church helpful terms like *trinitas* and *persona* (98); he reminds the reader that *hypostasis* and *ousia* were once synonymous (119); Athanasius gave *hypostases* new, more precise nuances (144) and introduced the concept of "mutual indwelling" (139); the Cappadocians enhanced and clarified the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (164); people frequently confuse the "creed of Nicaea" of A.D. 325 with the "Nicene Creed" of A.D. 381 (87, 115, 168). Other examples abound.

As for weaknesses, not many were glaring ones. At times, he overstates the case: "For the vast majority of Christians, including most ministers and theological students, the Trinity is still a mathematical conundrum" (1; cf. 5, 212, 272, 356, 408). Letham does not know "most" ministers first hand. Also, for a treatment that intends to be comprehensive and up to date, it is surprising that Letham is not conversant with other solid works recently wrought that advance trinitarian studies from a biblical and exegetical stance, like Carl Henry, Millard Erickson, Bruce

Demarest and Gordon Lewis, James White, John Feinberg, and Wayne Grudem. Despite the oversight, Letham's work is monumental and will serve the church well for years to come.

Tremper Longman III. *Proverbs*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 608 pp. \$39.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

The commentary series of which this volume is a part targets primarily the needs of "scholars, ministers, seminary students, and Bible study leaders" (12). It is confined to Psalms (3 vols. by John Goldingay), Proverbs (by Longman), Song of Songs (by Richard S. Hess), Job, and Ecclesiastes. Tremper Longman III, the Robert H. Gundry professor of biblical studies at Westmont College (Santa Barbara, California), is the editor of this series as well as the author of this particular volume. He has authored or co-authored more than twenty books, including commentaries on Ecclesiastes (NICOT; Eerdmans, 1997), Daniel (NIVAC; Zondervan, 1999), the Song of Songs (NICOT; Eerdmans, 2001), Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary; Tyndale, 2006), and Jeremiah and Lamentations (NIBC; Hendrickson, 2008). Longman also wrote *How to Read Proverbs* (InterVarsity, 2002).

A general introduction (21-87) precedes this volume's commentary section, providing detailed examination of Proverbs' title, canonicity, authorship, and date (21-26), social setting (26-28), text (28-29), genre and literary style (29-36), structure (36-42), ancient Near Eastern background and relationships (42-56), theology (56-61), relationship to Ecclesiastes and Job (61-63), relationship to the NT (64-69), extrabiblical developments of the metaphor of Woman Wisdom (69-72), and selected theological topics (72-87). Longman's introduction rivals Bruce K. Waltke's longer introduction (2 vols., NICOT; Eerdmans, 2004) in its detail and exceeds introductions in both Duane A. Garrett's (NAC; Broadman, 1993) and Paul E. Koptak's (NIVAC; Zondervan, 2003) introductions. One significant aspect of Longman's approach to Proverbs is in his rejection of any systematic structure to Proverbs 10-31 (15-16, 40-41). In other words, he believes that the collections in the final two-thirds of the book are arranged randomly (with an occasional rare grouping) without a context to help the reader understand the individual proverb. In regard to the relationship between ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature and the Book of Proverbs, Longman states that they merely share "an international tradition of wisdom" (54) that possesses some similarities.

Longman's commentary consists of three sections: translation (his own with technicalities relegated to footnotes), section-by-section interpretation with repetition of translation to mark off each discussion (supported by both bibliographical and technical footnotes), and theological implications (including some discussion of

application and relationship to the NT) following each section's commentary. For example, the commentary for Proverbs 1 begins with the translation of all 33 verses (91-93). Its interpretation commences with 1:1-7 as a section including an introduction (93-94), verse-by-verse comments (94-103), followed by identification of theological implications (103-4). Then the next section (1:8-19) is covered in the same fashion (104-10), followed by 1:20-33 (110-14). Some chapters, though possessing multiple sections, have only one discussion of theological implications (e.g., chapters 2 and 5; 126-27, 163-65). Due to Longman's view of the random nature of Proverbs 10-31, he provides no treatment of theological implications for those chapters.

In his commentary, Longman views Woman Wisdom as representing "not only Yahweh's wisdom but Yahweh himself" (59). However, he does not mean that Proverbs 8 prophesies concerning the Messiah (70, 212). Rather, the NT identifies Jesus as Wisdom herself (68). According to Longman, "Seeing this connection between Jesus and Woman Wisdom has important implications for how Christians read the book of Proverbs" (ibid.). Thus, wisdom in Proverbs is ultimately a choice between God and false gods, not just a way of living or thinking wisely. Being one of the most controversial issues of interpretation in Proverbs (203), this issue of Wisdom's relationship to Yahweh (and/or Jesus) provokes one of Longman's longest treatments of theological implications (208-13).

Proverbs 11:30 is a *crux interpretum*, with commentators taking a number of different views. Longman identifies three major interpretive approaches, including the popular "winning souls" and leans toward the view that "the actions and advice of the wise preserve and enhance the lives of others" (266). Unlike Koptak (see review of Koptak's work in this issue of *TMSJ*), Longman interprets 13:24 as a reference to corporal punishment (292). The topic is significant enough in his opinion to require an entry in his "Topical Studies" appendix ("Physical Discipline," 564-65). Proverbs 22:6 presents another *crux*. The commentator first warns that the reader must recognize "some built-in ambiguities" (404) in order to prevent being too dogmatic when applying the text's principle. Secondly, he reminds the reader that these proverbs are not laws or promises. As he puts it, "The proverb is simply an encouragement to do the right thing when it comes to raising one's children" (405). In regard to the "son" in 30:4, Longman indicates that the preceding four rhetorical questions in the context make it clear that "the questioner is asking about human beings" (523).

In his "Topical Studies" appendix (549-78), Longman offers an alphabetically arranged entries on twenty-seven select topics touched upon by individual proverbs in the randomly organized final two-thirds of Proverbs. Examples of these topics include "Alcohol" (550), "Appropriate Expression of Emotions" (551), "Business Ethics" (553), "Illness and Health" (558-59), "Messengers" (563), "Rumors/Gossip/Slander/Insult" (568-69), "Table Manners" (572-73), and "Women/Wife" (576-78). The volume closes with a fairly extensive "Bibliography" (579-93), "Subject Index"



(594-96), "Author Index" (597-99), and "Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings" (600-608).

As with other volumes in this series, Longman's *Proverbs* presents ministers and seminarians, as well as informed laymen, with a welcome addition to the growing number of recently published commentaries on Proverbs. Wise expositors will utilize a variety of these commentaries as guides in the study of this important section of God's written revelation.

Victor H. Matthews and James C. Moyer. *The Old Testament: Text and Context*. 2d ed. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005. xv + 357 pp. \$34.95 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Both Matthews and Moyer are professors of religious studies at Missouri State University. Matthews has authored at least six books including *Manners and Customs in the Bible* (3d ed., Hendrickson, 2006) and *Studying the Ancient Israelites: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Baker, 2007). In addition, he has co-authored at least eight books, including *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (3d ed., Paulist, 2007), as well as *The Social World of Ancient Israel* (Hendrickson, 2005) with Don Benjamin, and *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (InterVarsity, 2000) with John H. Walton and Mark W. Chavalas. Moyer has written numerous book reviews and articles for *Biblical Archaeologist*. With Matthews, he co-authored "Archaeological Coverage in Recent One-Volume Bible Dictionaries," *BA* 55 (1992):141-51—one of several articles dealing with one-volume Bible dictionaries, atlases, handbooks, and commentaries.

Hendrickson published the first edition of *The Old Testament: Text and Context* in 1997. Revisions in this second edition add nearly 36 pages to the volume, including updated archaeological data, new sidebars illustrating the text's discussions and providing new translations of ANE texts, restructured chapters, recomposed study questions concluding each section, "Additional Resources" (312-16) providing students with tools to pursue further studies, and an expanded "Glossary of Terms and Concepts" (317-31). Indexes for "Names and Subjects" (333-42) and "Ancient Sources" (343-57) conclude the volume.

The textbook's 105 sidebars are its key feature. Examples of their subject matter and representative pages are as follows: biblical information (9, 73, 152), archaeological information (12, 25, 94), historical information (15, 287), literary and interpretative information (30, 53, 132-33), various translations of ANE texts (83, 140, 179), and Scripture quotes (63, 67, 106).

The authors provide 243 study questions presented in 39 sets (some with as few as 2 questions). Many of the questions have no relation to the textbook's coverage. Students must seek the information in the suggested resources contained

in pages 312-16. Throughout the text the authors place unfamiliar technical terms in bold type, indicating that the glossary provides a definition. Outside the shaded sidebars, Matthews and Moyer have also inserted 11 maps, 2 charts, 6 drawings, and 21 photos where pertinent to the discussion. However, it could not be considered richly illustrated—pages of text remain uninterrupted by such insertions (e.g., 183-214 and 234-78). Although the volume is an introductory textbook to the canonical OT, it includes overviews of deuterocanonical books (294-307).

One of the strengths of this volume is its utilization of archaeological data and ANE literature to illuminate the historical and social setting of OT events and characters. Matthews and Moyer present superb parallels between the biblical text and ANE records (e.g., 169, 192, 256). Other positive aspects of the volume include their treatment of *khosed* (158), their understanding of biblical acrostics (210) and chiasms (212), and their recognition of the defensibility of a patriarchal date for the composition of the Book of Job (244). They also offer very sound reasons for the absence of “God” in the Book of Esther (275).

Beyond these positive observations, however, the volume possesses many negatives. To start with, the volume exemplifies a minimalist and documentarian approach championed by liberal theologians applying a hermeneutics of doubt and suspicion regarding the biblical record. Apparently Darwinian evolution is one of the authors’ presuppositional standards (“questions that have troubled humanity since the cave,” 237). Social and religious evolutionary philosophy informs their treatment of the development of the Jewish religion (219-21). The volume also promotes multiple authorship for Isaiah (212). The authors attribute apparent differences between parallel biblical texts to either the biblical writer’s ignorance or an editor’s agenda (175). Denying the messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53, the authors adhere to multiple interpretations of the text (216). In addition, they belittle and misrepresent the NT view of Satan (245). In fact, they argue that the writers of Scripture utilized non-historical events to communicate truth (276)—an example being the Noahic Flood (52, 276). Furthermore, they take an agnostic stance with regard to the historicity of the exodus (81) and explain away divine revelation whenever possible (89, 119, 243, 288).

In a methodological matter, Matthews and Moyer frequently cite detailed statistics, but provide no sources to support them (e.g., 83, 86, 217). As far as coverage is concerned, they omit any reference to the finds at Ebla (Tel Mardikh). For the sake of accuracy, the glossary needs corrections as follows: Qumran is not the only site for Dead Sea scroll discoveries—there are eight additional sites (“Dead Sea Scrolls,” 320); “Haplography” (323) is the accidental deletion of a word or phrase where two of the same were originally present; and, the entry for “Theodicy” (330) is much too general.

While this volume contains some valuable information, the authors’ approach and views create an atmosphere of antismiraculism and minimalism antithetical to divine revelation. Evangelical teachers would do well to avoid its use

as a textbook. All of the good material occurs readily elsewhere within either a neutral or a soundly evangelical context.

Donald K. McKim, ed. *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007. xxvii + 1107 pp. \$45.00. Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Seminary Library.

In 1998 InterVarsity Press released the *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* also edited by Donald K. McKim, a rather disappointing production. The publicity releases for this new volume announce it as a "revised and vastly expanded edition" of that work. The statement, however, on the verso said, "Some material previously appeared" in the *Historical Handbook* and is a much more accurate reflection of the reality of this much improved and valuable work. Though the publisher treats this as a true "second edition" (which is technically true), carrying the former works preface as well as a new preface; the fact that it has a new title demonstrates the publisher's desire for this to be seen as an entirely new work.

McKim, formerly the academic dean and professor of theology at Memphis Theological Seminary and currently the reference editor for Westminster John Knox Publishing, has clearly grown in his craft. Some of his early editorial efforts were often heavy handed and reflected his own theological biases rather than furnishing the impartial and thorough work one expects in standard reference works. He clearly assembled a fine staff of assistants as well as a first-rate group of contributors. McKim himself contributed one full article (William Perkins, 815-19). The scope of the essays has a largely Western orientation, reflecting interpreters from Europe and North America as McKim admits. He states in his new preface that in this work, "there is a lack of sufficient entries on women biblical interpreters and on those from outside the predominant areas of Western Europe and the United States" (xii). This is an odd complaint from the editor, who seems to be criticizing his own editorial decisions (he stated one paragraph earlier, "the list of those to be included in such a volume has been my decision, in consultation with others"). Interestingly, the two women for whom there are entries (Fiorenza Elisabeth Schussler, 895-99; and Phyllis Trible, 989-92) also represent two of the five articles for living individuals, and two of the three for those who would be considered currently active scholars.

The first part of this volume consists of six introductory essays presenting a survey of "Biblical Interpretation Through the Centuries." The periods are covered by different contributors and include The Early Church (1-14); The Middle Ages (14-121); The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (22-44); The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (45-66); Europe in the Twentieth Century (67-87); and North American in the Twentieth Century (88-102). Like the individual article, each section contains a useful introductory bibliography. The essays are well done, clearly written and logically presented; particularly in the more complex later essays.

Also included are useful indexes of Persons, Subjects, and an alphabetical listing of the individual articles.

The selection of individuals for articles in a work like this is almost certain to solicit discussion on inclusions and exclusions. However, by and large this reviewer has few disagreements with the selection. One could argue that the omission of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (1813-75) is a decided mistake. Most certainly the omission of I. Howard Marshall (b. 1934) is significant, considering the fact that another living scholar of the same era (Walter Brueggeman, b. 1932), along with the aforementioned Schussler and Tribble, were included. Marshall's influence among evangelicals in biblical interpretation is considerable. Of those included, the oddest entry is perhaps for John Locke (668-70), who though possessing a biblically derived foundation for his theories of politics and economics, his works on biblical studies were not unique and really made no lasting contribution in the field.

The selection for the articles was, however, largely even-handed and represents early Catholic, Reformed, evangelical, and even dispensational contributors. Those of varying denominational affiliations are also represented. All the articles are generally two pages or more and contain significant bibliographies. The articles are exceptionally thorough and do not shy away from pointing out negative aspects of writers' lives, such as the Nazi affiliations of Gerhard Kittel (614-18), or theology controversy, such as the significant errors of William Barclay (144-46). In a couple of entries, two individuals are listed together because their work is more often considered in a united rather than an individual manner (Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, 606-8; and B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, 1038-43).

This work represents a major and welcome addition to the world of reference works in biblical and theological studies. It will be an excellent jumping off point for students beginning their research and will be exceptionally useful for pastors who would like a little background on various commentators and scholars whom they encounter in their studies but know little about.

New American Standard Bible Audio. Narrated by Stephen Johnson. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers. 58 CDs. \$99.95. Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Hendrickson Publishing has released the updated New American Standard Bible on audio CD. For those who desire to listen to the Bible being read while traveling or working out, this is a helpful product. The quality and clarity of the CDs are pretty much on a par with those of other CDs. The CDs are arranged in the same order as a written Bible, making it easy to find the book and chapter one seeks. It will take anyone hundreds of hours to listen to the entire Bible being read. To have the technology available to do so is a blessing for those who live today.

It should be understood that listening to someone read the Bible is somewhat similar to listening to someone sing a song: some will thoroughly enjoy it; others will not. This will be somewhat like “beauty is in the ear of the beholder.” The reading by Stephen Johnson is not a natural reading but rather is a somewhat dramatized one, and the potential purchaser needs to understand this before purchasing the series. People who will listen to these books of the Bible being read will most likely love it or hate it, but probably very few of those will be in the in-between category. Again realizing that a lot of this will be along the lines of personal preference, I did not enjoy listening to this (as any other professor will have those who greatly like his classes and those who do not); so my criticisms are not meant as a harsh or hateful attack. Often it seems that the focus was on the reader and how it was being read rather than the content of what was being read. To me, it was almost like having a fairy tale read rather than the holy Word of God. That being said, I am sure you would have other people listen to this audio Bible, thoroughly enjoy how it is done, and would thus benefit accordingly. I recommend listening to a CD (perhaps from the Hendrickson website) before purchasing the entire set to see in which category you belong.

Not many options are available for those who desire to listen to NASB on CD, especially the 1977 version. Much to my delight, I was able to find a used and no longer being released 1977 OT NASB read by E. W. “Red” Jeffries on Amazon.com. (I had previously purchased the NT by the same reader as a separate set.) For those interested in obtaining this, they may want to see what is available online.

Either way, or with other versions recorded and made available, listening to the Bible being read is a helpful way to saturate oneself with the Word of God. It also puts us back in the Bible world, as most of the original recipients had the Word of God read aloud while in the assembled congregation.

Mark D. Roberts. *Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007. 202 pp. \$12.99 (paper). Reviewed by Kelly T. Osborne, Associate Professor of New Testament.

With a Ph.D. in New Testament from Harvard University, Mark D. Roberts (hereafter MR), senior pastor of Irvine Presbyterian Church, is one of the brave souls helping to stem the tidal wave of disinformation about Jesus flooding our world. One need only look at the best-selling success of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* (New York, Doubleday, 2003) and Bart Ehrman’s *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York, Harper-Collins, 2005) to see how widely views hostile to traditional and specifically biblical Christianity are promoted, purveyed, and consumed by a reading public that seems more anxious

than ever to find ecclesiastical cover-ups, edgy portrayals of Jesus, or some new spin on what has been in existence and known for hundreds of years.

In his stand against false views and misinformation about Jesus, MR gets straight to the point in the title of his “blook”—a book based on a blog (21-23)—*Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. For a Bible-believing Christian the obvious answer is “Yes, of course, we can trust the Gospels!” But MR writes for readers “who don’t have specialized academic knowledge and who don’t want to wade through a much longer volume” (23), and includes those who are “troubled by negative views of the Gospels” as well as those “unfamiliar with the Bible” (20).

The book as a whole does a good job of answering the question posed in its title, but MR does narrow the focus to whether the canonical gospels offer “reliable historical information about Jesus of Nazareth” (13, MR’s emphasis). In chapter 1, he relates how his personal experiences during undergraduate days at Harvard University initially caused his faith in the historical accuracy of the canonical Gospels to be shaken, but later strengthened, as he wrestled with historical and critical issues raised in class by some of his theologically liberal professors (14-19). His method is to state the issues in the form of fifteen FAQs (= Frequently Asked Questions; note the typical blog terminology), to which he responds with one short chapter devoted to each question (25-195). Sample questions/chapter titles are: Chapter 2, Can We Know What the Original Gospel Manuscripts Said? Chapter 9, Are There Contradictions in the Gospels? Chapter 10, If The Gospels Are Theology, Can They Be History? Chapter 11, Do Miracles Undermine the Reliability of the Gospels? Chapter 13, Does Archeology Support the Reliability of the Gospels? His procedure is clear, the discussion concise, the style informal and the eventual overall answer to the book’s central question (“Can we trust the Gospels?”) is a simple and solid “Yes” (195). For all of this, MR’s efforts should be applauded and commended.

Because the book is intended for a wide popular, as opposed to a scholarly or academic, readership, and because it is published by Crossway Books, a well-known conservative evangelical publishing house, it is imperative that the issues and problems raised regarding the reliability of the Gospels be dealt with clearly and accurately. This MR does well in chapters 2 and 3 (Did the Evangelist Know Jesus Personally?), giving a brief but useful introduction to key matters of NT textual criticism (25-37) and arguing for the traditional authorship of the Gospels (39-51).

In chapter 4 (When Were the Gospels Written?), however, MR begins to give this reviewer some cause for concern over whether to recommend his book. He allows for a late date for the composition of Matthew, Mark and Luke, namely, A.D. 65-85, 60-75, 65-95, respectively (54-58). The implication of these dates is that Mark was written first and Matthew and Luke used, i.e., copied from, Mark’s Gospel and a hypothetical “sayings of Jesus” source, designated by modern scholars as Q. This scenario for the origin of the Synoptic Gospels is generally known as the Two Source or Two Document hypothesis. MR makes explicit use of this hypothesis in

chapter 5 (What Sources Did the Gospel Writers Use?) as he tries to show that Matthew and Luke depend on Mark and Q. Even among conservative evangelical scholars today, unfortunately, such views on Gospel chronology and origins are routinely espoused, even though the earliest external evidence we have for Gospel composition points to independence from one another and the order as they appear in our Bibles (see R. L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, *The Jesus Crisis*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 3).

According to MR, the Gospels fit the genre of Hellenistic biography and therefore cannot be expected to record the *ipsissima verba* (Latin for “his own words”) or the precise words of Jesus, but only the *ipsissima vox* (Latin for “his own voice”) or general content of what Jesus said (84-92). MR actually illustrates this principle with, not the words of Jesus, but with the voice which comes from heaven when Jesus comes to be baptized by John, and Matthew’s account has, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (3:17, NRSV), whereas Mark (3:11) and Luke (3:22) have “You are my Son, the Beloved; with You I am well pleased” (86-87). MR’s dismissive attitude toward harmonizing the differences leads him to say,

It would be pretty hard to argue that the voice from heaven said the same sentence twice in slightly different ways (though I expect this argument has been made somewhere). No, it seems more likely that Matthew and Mark used slightly different words for the same vocal event (86-87).

But here MR should consult W. Hendricksen’s commentary on Matthew (*Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973] 215), who suggests this very thing, namely, that God did indeed speak “in slightly different ways” to Jesus and to John the Baptist (and others? Cf. the review of D. L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] in *TMSJ* 15/1 [Spring 2004]). Of course, in circles of scholarship where historical-critical methods are *de rigueur*, and where MR completed most of his NT training (18-19, 54 n.1), Hendricksen’s commentary may lack reputation. But it is surely not so difficult to believe that God spoke more than one sentence to and about His Son on the occasion of His baptism, unless, of course, one has already accepted historical-critical methods like the Two Source hypothesis.

Chapter 9 gives further evidence that MR’s approach depends on historical-critical methods. Discussing Jesus’ healing of the paralytic (Matt 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26) MR assumes that the Two Source hypothesis is an accurate way to describe how the different accounts were composed (107-8). He then argues that Mark’s “digging through” the roof and Luke’s mention of “roof tiles” are not contradictory, since the latter merely “paraphrased Mark’s text so that his readers wouldn’t worry about how one ‘digs through’ a tiled roof” (108). MR’s opinion is that “Mark’s version is more literally accurate” (108). Later MR states that it is misguided to harmonize these accounts by trying to show that “both Mark and Luke are literally accurate” (109). He suggests that such effort at harmonization is

“unpersuasive if not downright silly” (108). But since we simply do not know what kind of roof the house had, does it make more sense to say that there could have been more than one kind of roofing material over the house and give both Mark and Luke the benefit of the doubt in terms of their accuracy, or to say that Mark is more likely to be literally correct and that Luke is careless about the detail? But, someone may ask, why quibble about insignificant details of the text like roof tiles? For the person who believes in the inerrancy of Scripture, however, the more important question should be: Precisely which details in the text are insignificant, and who is to make the decision as to which details are important and which are not, and why are they designated thus?

MR is inconsistent when in chapter 10 he argues that, although the Evangelists wrote theologically, they were still concerned about history. He states, “Believe that Jesus was really God in the flesh and you’ll pay close attention to what he actually said and did” (120). True, the kind of roof over the house where the paralytic was healed might not quite qualify as “what he actually said and did,” but, throughout the Gospels, both the location and the responses to Jesus by individuals and groups in both speech and deed are recorded as part of the account of His words and actions. Is the environment given by the Gospel writers as the backdrop to Jesus’ words and deeds less important than the verbal interactions of men and women with Him? Perhaps, but does that mean that these details are recorded inaccurately? Since the Evangelists thought various amounts of background information important enough to include, the topographical, historical, social, and geographical material given in their accounts must not be dismissed as unimportant. The difficulty with historical-critical methodology continues to be that once part of it is accepted, where does one draw the line?

Chapters 11-15, on the other hand, really form the strongest part of the book as they tackle in straightforward, non-technical language such matters as miracles (127-38), non-biblical literary and archeological evidence about Jesus and early Christianity (139-62), whether political ambition caused Christians to change significantly the content of the NT texts (163-72), and why the canonical Gospels ultimately came to be regarded as the only accounts worthy to be part of the NT (173-86). MR concludes with a chapter giving his final, positive answer to the question stated in the book’s title (187-95). General and Scripture indexes bring the book to an end (197-202).

The aim, the tone, the style, and much of the content of this book (chapters 1-3, 11-16), as noted above, are all reasons to appreciate MR’s answers to the FAQs he sets forth, because they will be helpful in countering many of the erroneous ideas and views on Jesus and the Gospels currently being disseminated. In the places this review has noted, however, the work clearly suffers from the effects, and thus the dangers, of historical-critical methodology. This is disappointing, and readers of this journal are strongly urged to exercise great caution in using and/or recommending this book.



Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall. *Called to Be Church. The Book of Acts For A New Day*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 286 pp. \$20.00 (paper).  
Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry.

Anthony B. Robinson is a pastor in the United Church of Christ and Robert W. Wall is a professor of Christian Scriptures at Seattle Pacific University. Together they have written this volume as an exposition of selected passages from the Book of Acts with a present-day application of these passages.

In fourteen chapters they cover the main movements of the Book of Acts, from the birth of the church in Antioch through its growth, conflicts, and ultimate spread to the Gentile world. The final eight chapters of Acts are summed up in a discussion on church/state relations. The fifteenth and final chapter of the book are their concluding reflections.

Each chapter has two sections. First, there is a general exposition and explanation of the passage done in a non-technical manner, void of references, many quotations, and outside substantiation. The authors draw from the previous commentary by Wall in the New Interpreter's Bible series. The exposition is basically good, but certain liberal tendencies bleed through.

The second portion of the chapter is an attempt to make a contemporary application of the lesson learned from each section discussed. The authors give some great insight into how to learn to do church from the life of the early church. They show a keen knowledge of the relevant issues confronting the church today, and this work can be a valuable tool in knowing how to address them. Not all the applications were on target, but enough is given to make this a good tool in the study of the church.

Allen P. Ross. *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006. 591 pp. \$35.99 (cloth).  
Reviewed by Paul S. Lamey, TMS alumnus and Pastor of Preaching, Grace Community Church, Huntsville, Ala.

Allen Ross is professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama. His contributions to evangelical theology have been primarily in the area of OT exposition (series commentaries on Proverbs in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Genesis and Psalms in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, larger commentaries on Genesis *Creation and Blessing*, and Leviticus *Holiness to the Lord*). In *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, Ross delivers a stimulating book that spans the disciplines of exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology. However, the book probably fits best within the larger discipline of biblical theology as Ross attempts to survey the theme of worship

throughout Scripture. The author relates the genesis of his thoughts on worship as beginning when he was a boy growing up in a German Baptist Church. Ross has since traversed many denominations and in the meantime immersed himself in the message and backgrounds of Scripture. His rich heritage and study have culminated in a work that is neither overly erudite nor too simplistic.

In recent years a few books have made unique contributions to the church's understanding of worship, such as Hughes Oliphant Old's *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture*, John Frame's *Worship in Spirit and Truth*, also his *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*, and Ryken, Thomas, and Duncan's festschrift in memory of James Montgomery Boice, *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*. Ross' work stands apart from these and other works in that his stated goal is different:

The intent of this book is to take the readers through the Bible so that they may see these patterns and principles emerge and in the process understand more fully their Christian heritage and thereby discover ways to improve their worship. This is not simply a theology of worship; it is an inductive study of the biblical material as it was revealed over time, for the purpose of identifying the abiding theological truths that must inform our worship today (64).

The book has ten parts which are further divided into twenty-eight chapters. The first of two tables of contents lists the contents in "brief," and the second gives a complete outline of the book's detailed structure. Both are useful in reading and reviewing the material. A moderate number of footnotes in which readers will find a treasure trove of additional resources and excursions deal with most technical matters.

Part one (chapters 1-2) covers foundational matters in which Ross moves the reader from creation to eternity with a conservative approach affirming the historicity and authority of Scripture. He introduces worship by examining the Lord's self-revelation and seeks a definition of worship. Ross maintains a Trinitarian emphasis in defining worship. Part two (chapters 3-5) covers worship in the original creation of the garden, emphasizing the image of God. Part three (chapters 6-8) is an overview of worship during the patriarchal period. Ross's discussion of Abraham's altar building as "proclamation" was enlightening. Part four (chapters 9-12) examines worship under the leadership of Moses. Here Ross explores the institution of a holy place and worship leadership in Israel. In part five (chapters 13-17) Ross summarizes the celebratory aspects of worship expressed as praise in Israel. Here he covers the use of the Psalms in worship and seasonal celebrations. Part 6 (chapters 18-20) is an examination of worship reform in summarizing OT prophetic literature. Part seven (chapters 21-24) looks at worship in anticipating the New Covenant with particular attention to Jesus' teaching on worship, including a chapter on communion (chapter 24). Part eight (chapters 25-26) details patterns of early church worship with an emphasis on Acts and the NT epistles. Ross does not delve into extra-biblical material such as the *Didache* and early church fathers. Part nine

(chapters 27-28) is a wonderful section on the future realities of worship in glorious perfection. Part ten does not contain formal chapters, but concludes the work with Ross's fifteen "Basic Principles for More Glorious Worship."

A few areas caught this reviewer's attention. First, Ross notes that "The Bible itself does not give a comprehensive definition of worship; it simply describes things that people have done or should do when they receive the revealing words and works of God" (50). He also rightly eschews the popular approach "of explaining worship on the basis of the etymology of the English word" (ibid.).

The subject of worship in general and music in particular is a loaded minefield in the church today. Ross's tenacious commitment to the biblical text and less to various traditional applications was refreshing and created a greater appreciation for Scripture. "For serious, thorough study of the subject, people need to consult the Bible every step of the way. . ." (65).

Readers will appreciate Ross's consistent emphasis on the centrality of the Word in worship. The author writes that "Whenever proclamation has been lost to worship, worship loses its way and becomes empty ritual" (146), and "if the revelation of God inspires fear and adoration, it also leads to spiritual renewal in the worshiper" (53). The Word has always given shape to other aspects of worship. Writing about the Passover, Ross remarks, "Without this proclamation, people would think of it as just a good meal" (160).

Additionally, his commitment to the authority of Scripture is conspicuous. Regarding the origin of Israel's worship, He writes, "It is hard to accept a theory that says that the whole religious system of Israel was simply borrowed from the pagan world and then artificially credited to God's revelation at Mount Sinai" (132). The following lengthy quote captures the author's commitment to a thoroughly biblical understanding of worship:

Worship begins with the response to divine revelation. But if little time or attention is given to the revealed Word of God, read, proclaimed, or taught, then to what do people respond? The result is that worship becomes superficial or sentimental. If the church is truly interested in recapturing the spirit and nature of the prophetic and apostolic ministry of the Word in worship, then there will have to be a greater emphasis placed on reading, teaching, and preaching the Word of God, but it has to be with clarity, accuracy, power, and authority (429).

This reviewer found few areas of disagreement or concern. In a section entitled "The Savior in the Garden," the author's failure to discuss the *proto-evangelium* of Gen 3:15 (cf. 114-16) is perplexing. Second, Ross's passing reference to a "covenant of works" without further explanation (107 n. 57) seemed out of place in light of his consistent emphasis on the explicit covenants of Scripture. The author has no discussion of normative principles of worship. This raises some interesting questions. For example, though dancing was a part of Israel's liturgy on special occasions, one wonders how the author believes this should be a "part of the praise of the people of God" today (507). Yet these are minor issues in light of the

magnitude of the work. With further clarification, the author could have remedied these concerns, but the volume would have then grown well beyond its current 500+ pages.

Ross gives the reader a helpful 54-page, topically divided bibliography (513-67). Notably absent from the bibliography are John Frame's works on worship and specific volumes from the works of Hughes Oliphant Old, both of whom have made significant contributions to the church's understanding of worship. Ross's work has no author index, but it does have Scripture and subject indexes.

This volume is a major resource that should be on the shelf of every serious student of Scripture. Ross is to be commended for delivering a fine volume that makes a valuable contribution to biblical theology and the church's grasp of worship.

James E. Rosscup. *An Exposition on Prayer: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God*. Bellingham, Wash.: Logos Research Systems, 2008. \$199.95. Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Dr. James Rosscup, the original professor of Bible exposition at The Master's Seminary, has released a voluminous work on prayer as a Libronix (Logos) Bible Software addition. In his introduction the author humbly writes in the opening line, "The writings before the reader are a result of countless hours in the Scriptures since around 1992. And these were outgrowths from former years of meditations in studies and special devotional times." Virtually anyone (included this reviewer) who has had the privilege of sitting under Dr. Rosscup as a student could have written those opening sentences and more, because they so encapsulate his life and are so evident to those who know him, both colleagues and students. He is a man of God who prays. (Can there be a man of God who does not pray?) Jim Rosscup is a gifted and meticulous scholar with decades of teaching experience; but even beyond this, he is a child of God who never got over the fact that God saved him and who exalts God and His Word both in the classroom and in his life. So in essence this study on prayer is a lifetime work in the making of one who has walked with God and truly learned from the Master. The Christian walk of this reviewer changed forever when he had him as a professor, when he began seminary studies twenty-five years ago.

With no lack of books on prayer, why should there be another one? *An Exposition of Prayer* differs from other prayer works in substantial ways. In addition to the important attributes of the author listed above (without which the work would not be nearly as good), two things among others set this work apart. First is the breadth of the work. Rosscup's original intent was to cover every prayer in the Bible, but he notes that only 61 of the 66 biblical books contain prayers. In addition, Psalms was vastly too big to include with the present work. He instead "deliberately chose to write expositions for 21 key, or representative, psalms." Perhaps the body of Christ will be the beneficiary of further work along the same lines in a second

Rosscup volume on prayers in the psalms. In keeping with the current format, it would be a rich and valuable tool to have.

The second distinctive in this prayer work is that it begins with a brief study of each individual book of the Bible, and proceeds to individual prayers in each. In other words, Rosscup studies the Bible books, establishes the setting, audience, and especially the context, and then examines the prayers. Such is vital in a solid, biblical understanding of prayer or any other biblical subject. Many godly individuals who have written on prayer have removed individual verses on prayer and built books and doctrines on them while completely oblivious to whether they are in an OT or NT setting, are in a group or individual, are to the obedient or disobedient. Some take biblical prayers and make straight application to themselves, whether relevant or not. For example, Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 has nothing to do with building a church educational building or a new sanctuary. The context deals with Jerusalem, the destruction of God's temple, and the promised return that Daniel was reading in Jeremiah's prophecy, which concerned the number of years the nation would be in Babylonian exile. In *An Exposition of Prayer*, starting with the book of the Bible (such as Daniel) and leading up to the prayers it contains makes the prayers more understandable because they are viewed in light of their context. This is true throughout the entire work.

Others who are familiar with the Libronix system have noted that this work is a perfect match for the Libronix format. *An Exposition on Prayer* contains literally thousands of biblical cross-references that one can locate by moving the cursor and going directly to the corresponding Scriptures. Just a quick "heads up" for those who will be doing this: it is such a rich study by itself, even without checking every Bible verse noted; so plan to "be there a long time," and I mean that in the best sense of the words. Though this work is easily usable even when one is hurried, it contains so much valuable and worship-evoking—and at times convicting—information, that the reader will most likely want to come back and study the passage in more detail.

An individual, a pastor, or a group may use *An Exposition on Prayer* in many ways. With the Libonix Bible Software, once this component is installed, any verse on prayer that one comes across will bring up a link to Rosscup's book. Second, "the fine wine study" would take a person slowly through a particular book of the Bible—perhaps in a month or two—reading the prayers and related commentary with them. Sometimes Bible software makes it hard to tell what page one is on; many times, the chapter and verse divisions mark the pages instead of a page number. But one could study, for instance, Genesis, as an individual or in a group, and then carefully study each prayer that is there. As mentioned, working through the material from start to finish would take a while, but the trip would be delightful trip. Third, another means of using this work is studying a particular book of the Bible without focusing on the prayers in it (or perhaps even noticing that prayers are there). Once a prayer is noticed, almost a reflexive action will be to see what Dr. Rosscup wrote about that prayer in *An Exposition on Prayer*. Truly, if studied by one seeking a closer walk with the Lord and desiring to know more about

this often mysterious component of the Christian walk, the work will hopefully ignite “the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God.”

Ronald F. Satta. *The Sacred Text: Biblical Authority in Nineteenth-Century America*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2007. xv + 116 pp. \$16.00 (paper). Reviewed by Robert L. Thomas, Professor of New Testament.

The author of this work is senior pastor of Webster Bible Church of Webster, New York. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Rochester. In this work on *The Sacred Text*, he builds on a foundation laid by John D. Woodbridge and Randall H. Balmer in their article “The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal” (in *Scripture and Truth*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge [Baker, 1994]) by “offering a broader assessment of biblical authority in nineteenth-century America” (xii n. 10). The author intends his work to fill partially the void of “a detailed analysis of biblical authority in the nineteenth-century” (xiii).

By pointing to scholars of various backgrounds—including Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists—who strongly held to that doctrine at the beginning of the nineteenth century and even earlier. Satta thoroughly eradicates Ernest R. Sandeen’s notion that biblical inerrancy was invented by Princeton theologians in the late nineteenth century. Satta’s book is of interest to this reviewer because of his recent article “The Nature of Truth: Postmodern or Propositional?” (*TMSJ* 18/1 [Spring 2007]:2-21), in which he reached conclusions similar to those of Satta. Satta’s work offers abundant documentation that demonstrates that biblical inerrancy was the dominant position of mainline denominations throughout the nineteenth century in this country. The position was held so stringently that many twenty-first century evangelicals, some of whom profess to be inerrantists, would never have passed muster in the nineteenth century. His discussion is extremely enlightening.

Satta organizes his book into four chapters. Chapter one traces the position that ties inerrancy to the original manuscript as it came from the hand of the author, showing that it was not a late nineteenth-century teaching originating at Princeton. Throughout the century, the mainline denominations “maintained that the Bible, in its original autographs, in every part, including matters of history and science, was divinely composed and protected from all error, right down to the very words” (1). Satta buttresses this fact with many quotations from primary sources.

Chapter two notes the growing criticism in support of a partial inspiration theory and how conservatives rebutted that position by harmonizing Scripture’s alleged discrepancies and inconsistencies. Nineteenth-century inerrantists harmonized Mark 15:25 and John 19:14 regarding the time of Jesus’ crucifixion

(26), varying reports of the inscription on the cross in the four Gospels (27), differing reports about the number of Israelites who died in the plague of Num 25:9 (28), and many other facets of the biblical record. They defended the Bible's accuracy in matters of history, geography, and geology.

Chapter three investigates the growing controversy over inerrancy that arose between 1860 and 1900 because of the rise of Darwinism, the encroachments of geology, the beginnings of liberal theology, and the challenges of text critical theories. Some less rigid theories of inspiration emerged during this period, but proponents of the high view held their ground. During this period, some viewed science as primary with Scripture becoming a secondary consideration. Some even viewed "Scripture as hopelessly riddled with errors" (45). Charles Hodge waged an ongoing battle with Darwinian evolution, though he wavered in admitting that theistic evolution was a possibility. Hodge's position on evolution itself remains somewhat vague, though Satta defends him strongly. A lower theory of inspiration represented a growing minority of scholars toward the close of the nineteenth century. In the face of opposition from a few scholars—e.g., Lessing, Herder, and Schleiermacher—the longstanding doctrine of biblical inerrancy remained firmly entrenched in the last decades of the century.

Chapter four details one principal debate that climaxed the issue, the heresy trial of Charles A. Briggs, who was defrocked by the Presbyterian church in 1893 because of his debunking of biblical inerrancy. "Briggs served as the archetype of the modern critical theory opposing the Princetonians and modern fundamentalism" (79), sowing the seeds that have more recently sprouted again in the likes of Ernest Sandeen. Satta takes the reader through various stages of Brigg's trial, through the final decision of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which declared Briggs guilty of heresy.

The author has done a great service to church of Jesus Christ in his thorough treatment of nineteenth-century inerrancy. His work is highly commended by this reviewer, though a few suggestions for improvement are in order. This reviewer found terminology related to textual criticism a bit puzzling. Satta does not clarify what he means by "lower textual criticism" and "higher textual criticism" (cf. 4, 43 55, 61, 69, 71, 72, 89). The reviewer is quite familiar with "textual criticism," but a distinction between "lower" and "higher" is unclear to him. He would also suggest the use of primary instead of secondary sources in Satta's description of some opponents of inerrancy such as Lessing, Herder, and Schleiermacher.

Indexes of authors, subjects, and Scriptures would also be a great addition. All that being said, this work is one that the church has needed for a long time.

Stephen Sizer. *Zion's Christian Soldiers? The Bible, Israel and the Church*. Nottingham, England: InterVarsity, 2007. 199 pp. \$18.00 (paper). Reviewed by Michael J. Vlach, Assistant Professor of Theology.

While reading Stephen Sizer's *Zion's Christian Soldiers?*, the thought crossed this reviewer's mind, "Here we go again! Another book intended to save the world from the dispensationalists."

Much like Hank Hanegraaff's similar book, *Apocalypse Code*, also printed in 2007, Sizer argues that dispensational theology is not only wrong—it is dangerous! Even to the point of threatening the survival of our planet. For example, Sizer states, "The movement [dispensationalism] as a whole is nevertheless leading the West, and the church with it, into a confrontation with Islam." But wait, it gets worse: "Using biblical terminology to justify a pre-emptive global war against the 'axis of evil' merely reinforces stereotypes, fuels extremism, incites fundamentalism and increases the likelihood of nuclear war" (19).

So not only are those who are dispensationalists wrong in their theology, they are pushing the world towards global annihilation. But that is not all. After the statement above, Sizer goes on to declare: "It is not an understatement to say that what is at stake is our understanding of the gospel, the centrality of the cross. . . ." (19) Thus, in addition to threatening world peace, dispensationalists are also threatening the gospel. Can the stakes get any higher?

Sizer also informs the reader that belief in a secret rapture of the church is to blame for many of the world's problems: "Sadly, the mistaken idea of a secret rapture has generated a lot of bad theology. It is probably the reason why many Christians don't seem to care about climate change or about preserving diminishing supplies of natural resources. They are similarly not worried about the national debt, nuclear war, or world poverty, because they hope to be raptured to heaven and avoid suffering the consequences of the coming global holocaust" (136-37). Thus, just about everything wrong with the world can be blamed, at least partly, on the dispensationalists, according to Sizer. Those looking for an explanation or even a footnote to substantiate such a claim will be disappointed.

To be sure, Sizer deals with some important theological and hermeneutical issues. As an admitted "covenantalist" Sizer argues that the church is the fulfillment (not replacement) of Israel. He argues that the dispensational approach of a literal hermeneutic of the OT cannot work because the NT is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Those interested in hermeneutics will want to note that Sizer believes that "Jesus and the apostles *reinterpreted* the Old Testament" (36, emphasis added).

Sizer argues strongly that nationalistic expectations concerning a kingdom for Israel in the OT have been replaced by universalistic expectations for all people who believe in Christ. Sizer appears to miss the point that nationalistic and universalistic implications for the kingdom is not an either/or situation—it is a both/and. God can and will fulfill his promises to national Israel while bringing believing Gentiles into His covenant and kingdom program. Interestingly, Sizer claims that the disciples were "confused" when they asked Jesus, "Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Sizer's claim is problematic, especially since the disciples had already received forty days of instruction about the kingdom from the risen Jesus (Acts 1:3). It should also be noted



that Jesus does not correct their understanding; instead, He says that they cannot know the timing of this restoration (Acts 1:7).

What Sizer promotes in his book is pretty standard fare from a covenantal/supersessionist perspective. But as this reviewer surveys various books and articles that critique dispensationalism, nothing within this book is especially helpful or insightful that has not been stated as well or better by others. Sadly, because of the extreme statements within it, this work contributes to the increased polarization between covenantalists and dispensationalists.

In the end, this reviewer finds it difficult to take this volume seriously when reckless statements accuse dispensationalism of contributing to about every imaginable evil in the world. It also seems that such books have no ability to distinguish statements from certain individuals like John Hagee (with whom I have serious theological problems as well) and the beliefs of dispensationalists as a whole. Unless someone is interested in tracking the battle over dispensationalism and covenant theology, this work has little usefulness. This reviewer cannot recommend it.

David L. Turner. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. 828 pp. \$49.99 (cloth). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This work rates as perhaps in the top three among exegetical efforts on Matthew so far. W. D. Davies and Dale Allison contributed the best detailed work (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark 1988, 3 vols.). And the much older detailed work by John Broadus (*Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, American Commentary Series, Valley Forge, Pa., 1988) was of explanatory quality to rank with Turner for second or third. Ratings are given in this reviewer's book, *Commentaries for Biblical Exposition* (The Woodlands, Tex.: Kress Publications, 2004).

Turner received his Th.D. at Grace Theological Seminary and completed course work for a Ph.D at Hebrew Union College. He is professor of New Testament and systematic theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. In this work, he has furnished a vast panorama of bibliographic literature (cf. xiii-xvii; 693-762), including commentaries, journal articles, essays, and ancient writings. He has 51 pages of introduction, a lengthy commentary with a careful grammar/word study and synthesis, a comprehensive yet compact treatment, and insight into history of interpretation and details of exegesis of literary and theological concern.

In prophecy, he commits to a progressive dispensational approach. He sometimes accepts dispensational ideas and at other times favors different views on details. He thinks this Gospel narrates reliable words and works of Jesus, and opts

for a narrative-critical perspective rather than a source-critical approach. One is constantly aware that he regards the details as true.

Turner argues the possibility of the traditional Matthew as author and an early date, before A.D. 70. He treats the text verse by verse, handles most interpretive problems, and is usually but not always clear-cut as to his own view.. He uses good charts on Matthew's references to the Hebrew Bible (18-19), and Bible texts Matthew cites in his ten citations "that it might be fulfilled" (22). He has other helpful charts.

A good discussion resolves the problem of "fourteen" generations in the genealogy of Matthew 1 (cf. 25-27). He also treats various phenomena in the genealogy, e.g., mention of women, a comparison with the genealogy of Luke 3, and theological matters in the two genealogies. Later he argues as untenable a distinction between "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" (38-44); in his understanding, the phrases refer to the same reality. He cites, for example, Synoptic parallels and the Jewish custom of having "heaven" refer to "God." He differs from some dispensationalists in seeing the kingdom as already inaugurated, present in the dynamic rule of God, but future as to its full display on earth (43). He lays out a detailed outline of the book (cf. 47-51).

On most aspects a user will find a good grasp of things presented in a readable way, even though they are at times concise. In the use of Isa 7:14 in Matthew 1, Turner decides for a *typological* explanation rather than a *prediction* or *multiple fulfillment*. Not all will concur with his idea that a predictive view in Isaiah 7 really needs to be at tension with the historical context (71). Nor will they agree with his decision that Isa 7:14 should be rendered as "a young woman," not as "a virgin." Candidly, the present reviewer believes that the evidence rightly sifted points to an outright prediction fulfilled only in Matthew 1.

Turner devotes a careful discussion to the Matt 2:15 use of Hos 11:1 and the 2:23 link with the "prophets" and Jesus' being called a "Nazarene." Turner is also astute on Jesus' fulfilling all righteousness (3:15), and the Sermon on the Mount as giving personal ethics for the lives of Jesus' people then and in the present age. To him, the Sermon was delivered at one time in one place; he also holds that Jesus repeated some facets in this teaching in other venues at different times and places.

Though comments are sparse on divorce in 5:31-32, the commentator goes into detail on the topic in 19:12. He favors the view that "fornication" there covers a wide sweep of wrongs that violate fidelity to one's married partner. On "let the dead bury their own dead" (8:21-22), some will be surprised at his quick dismissal of the view that Jesus refers to eventual secondary burial of the bones of the deceased in an ossuary. Turner sees the Messianic Kingdom as having already begun (e.g., 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28; and chapter 13; 334, 345). In 13:23 he views fruit as an indispensable test of genuine discipleship, meaning of real salvation. However, he qualifies that the truly saved are at various stages in the maturing process and one cannot always fairly decide from lack of fruit that another is unsaved. Like most commentators, he forthrightly rejects the view of some (not all)

dispensationalists that the treasure refers to redemption of Israel and the pearl to redemption of those in the church. Instead, he sees these as picturing a real sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom in light of its value and the resulting joy. In the famous “rock” context (16:18), Turner follows many in saying Jesus means Peter is the rock, though apart from any acceptance of popery or papal succession.

It is not easy to grasp his view in 21:43 that the kingdom is taken from Israel and given to another nation, the apostles, who are a part of Israel. He does this while arguing against the “nation” referring to a transfer from Israel to the church. But since the apostles are key persons representing in effect the church in its earliest stage (cf. Eph 2:20), how is this essentially different really from just saying the transfer is to the church?

Turner in his brevity seems not to make a clear commitment on Matt 24:40-41. He leaves a reader uncertain about what his precise view is. Is the one Jesus says is “taken” an unsaved person removed from the earth in judgment, and the one “left” a believer kept safe on the earth to enter the earthly kingdom? Or is the one “taken” a child of God in the rapture, and the person “left” abandoned on earth to rejection in judgment? Turner does not deal with details to show how this problem is resolved.

No matter how careful a commentator is with space to which a publisher restricts him, readers will inevitably isolate instances where not enough is said. Or what is said falls short of clarity. All in all, Turner has fulfilled his assignment with a diligent awareness in many cases. His work should take its place among detailed evangelical works, which in most passages pretty consistently offer well-seasoned comment.

Wolfee, John. *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney*. A History of Evangelicalism: People Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World, Volume 2. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007. 280 pp. (cloth). \$23.00; and David W. Bebbington. *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*. A History of Evangelicalism: People Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World, Volume 3. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005. 288 pp. \$23.00 (cloth)., \$23.00. Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Director of the Seminary Library.

In 2001 the annual meeting of The Evangelical Theological Society had as its theme “Defining Evangelicalism’s Boundaries,” apparently driven by the problem of defining exactly how the term was to be understood. In the revised article on “Evangelicalism” in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Books, 2001), the author stated, “The very nature of Evangelicalism never was a unified movement but a collection of emphases based on a common core of belief—a core that itself is now under discussion” (409).

The nature and definition of evangelicalism is certainly no clearer seven years later and is perhaps more muddled than ever. The emergence of the new “Evangelical Left,” the recent “Evangelical Climate Initiative” to combat so-called global warming, a leading evangelical pastor moderating a forum for the 2008 presidential candidates, the embracing of Open Theism, the New Perspective on Paul, and Federal Vision theology (among other sub-biblical systems) by evangelicals leaves one wondering how the evangelical movement has reached a point of weaving down a road, seemingly searching for the nearest ditch to crash into.

The best way to find out how a movement has reached a certain point is, of course, to study its history, i.e., the path it has taken over the years. To that end, this review of a new series of books, *The History of Evangelicalism*, under the editorial direction of David W. Bebbington and Mark A. Noll (being produced in five volumes) is undertaken. The first volume, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*, by Mark Noll (InterVarsity Press, 2003) has already been released, and fourth and fifth volumes are planned for the future. This review will deal with the second and third volumes in the series.

In his volume, Wolfee, professor of religious history at the Open University in England, notes that all of the authors in the series, “take as its starting point David Bebbington’s definition of evangelicalism in terms of four ‘special marks’” (19). These defining marks are,

1. Conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed;
2. Activism, the expression of the gospel in effort;
3. Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible;
4. Crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (19-20)

Though not an inaccurate definition of evangelicalism, one might argue that it is somewhat incomplete, a historical definition without a sufficient emphasis on the theological definition.

The authors in this series face the daunting task of creating a narrative that is continually crisscrossing the Atlantic between Great Britain and the United States while enabling the reader to keep the people, places, and events together in a coherent whole. In this aspect of the task Wolfee achieves the goal with great skill. His writing style is clear, concise, and he is able to strike a balance between listing the necessary facts and figures without forfeiting excellent prose in the process.

The author lists an impressive and highly useful bibliography of primary and secondary sources, but with a notable absence of any reference to the works of Iain Murray, particularly his *Revival and Revivalism* (Banner of Truth, 1994)—even though Wolfee’s chapter 2 uses the same name—and *A Scottish Christian Heritage* (Banner of Truth, 2006), in which Murray has a long and well-written section on Thomas Chalmers. The book also omits Archibald Alexander (1772-1851), who was a notable figure in Calvinistic revivalism as well as the first professor at the new Princeton Theological Seminary, one of the most important evangelical institutions

in 19th-century America. A general apathy or even antipathy toward Calvinism and contributions of Calvinistic evangelicals by the author is a decided lack in this work.

A somewhat useful, if incomplete, index of subjects and persons is included. Although neither stated nor indicated, the index is clearly not meant to be exhaustive. For instance, it has only 9 page references for Charles G. Finney, who is mentioned in at least triple that number of pages.

The author's handling of Finney is uncritically favorable. Though the initial controversies about Finney's methods are discussed, Wolfee concludes that between Finney and his opponents (who met at New Lebanon in July 1827), "it was indeed apparent that their theological differences were not substantial" (74). This conclusion is fairly simplistic and again the author never details Finney's theology or even that of the opposing Calvinistic revivalists. He talks instead about methods and techniques. He states at one point that the rising dominance of Finney and his methods meant "the real loser in the process was Asahel Nettleton, whose conservative Calvinism and particularly low-key approach to revivalism were now decidedly out of fashion" (ibid).

Wolfee's strength is his handling of evangelicalism in Great Britain and his emphasis on the social action of Wilberforce and others. Of particular note is the section on "Politics: Freeing Slaves, Saving Nations" and the role that evangelicals and their influence had on ending the slave trade in England and ultimately in the United States. However, even here, Wolfee's emphasizes a sociological, political, and cultural impact without discussing the underlying, theologically distinctive features of evangelicalism.

In Bebbington's volume, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, the story of evangelicalism moves in a somewhat chronological manner. One problem in this series is that the works center on nebulous "ages" rather than on distinct chronological breakdowns. For this reason, some important events seem to fall through the cracks between the two volumes. One important omission is a discussion of the Layman's Prayer Revival of 1858, except for a mention of it (194) when Bebbington refers to it by the lesser-known title of "Businessman's Revival." This was a revival that even Charles Finney admitted, "put him in the shadows." This evangelical revival was one of the most unique and perhaps longest lasting of notable revivals.

Bebbington, professor of history at the University of Sterling in Scotland, has written extensively on evangelicalism, mainly in Great Britain. His writing style is, like Wolfee's, quite readable and engaging. He has included an extensive bibliography and useful subject-person index (as with the previous volume, it is apparently not designed to be complete). Here the author expands the discussion of his four "special marks" of an evangelical that Wolfee noted.

In discussing the first point, The Bible, he rightly notes that "allegiance to the Bible was one of the deepest convictions of evangelical Christians of all stripes" (26). However, he also states that the consequences of their position on the Bible, "could be intellectually restrictive" (23). This author does make an attempt to discuss the theological issues, but displays clear prejudice toward an errantist view

of the Bible. In his discussion of the theological controversies of the late 19th century he gives much space to the leading errantists and their views, and then essentially dismisses the extensive intellectual and literary efforts of A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield in defending the traditional inerrantist view by stating that they “produced a reasoned critique of the critical enterprise” (177).

As the sub-title notes, Bebbington’s main examples of evangelicalism are Charles H. Spurgeon in Great Britain and D. L. Moody in the United States. He has excellent overviews of both (Spurgeon, 40-45 and Moody, 45-51) and their influence both during and afterward. One significant critique would be in the author’s presentation and interpretation of the Downgrade Controversy of Spurgeon (1887-1894). The facts that the author presents in his summation of the controversy (260-61) are incorrect or misleading at several important points (see this reviewer’s “The Down Grade Controversy and Evangelical Boundaries,” *Faith and Mission* 20/2 [Spring 2003]:16-40, for a detailed review and analysis of the facts of the controversy and their effect on evangelicalism). His conclusion that Spurgeon’s views led to the emergence of a narrow fundamentalism is dubious at best.

Bebbington does have some excellent sections, including the chapter “Conservative Theological Trends” (184ff.), in which he particularly details the resurgence of premillennialism within evangelicalism. Although even here, he neglects important personalities, such as the Presbyterian Nathaniel West (1826-1906). He does have a good overview of the Keswick Movement, viewing it along with Wesleyan Holiness as a lead into the emerging Pentecostal Movement (207ff.).

Like Wolfie, Bebbington spends much time discussing the fourth of his “Special Marks” of evangelicalism, Activism. Here the author contributes an excellent section on “Race Relations” (227-33) and evangelicals during this time. He is caught seemingly in a conflict, though, as he speaks more or less favorably of Darwin’s view of evolution and the evangelicals who embraced it; but he finds exceptionally problematic the concomitant “Social Darwinism,” which some evangelicals also embraced, and its effect on both race relations and other social and economic issues.

Many of the omissions of individuals and events in these volumes can be accounted for by editorial constraints in terms of space (the volumes are all uniformly about 280 pages), like the initial volume by Mark Noll, but this series demonstrates a tendency to redefine evangelicalism more or less in terms of activism, particularly social activism, rather than as a theological movement.

The aforementioned article in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* states that, “Theologically it [evangelicalism] begins with a stress on the sovereignty of God, the transcendent, personal, infinite Being who created and rules over heaven and earth” (406). Bebbington’s “Special Marks” make no mention of any aspect of this point at all. The author in this series may not agree with this position, but the only intellectually honest manner to deal with it is to prove why this definition is incorrect or inconsequential. Neither volume does this (nor does Noll’s); instead,

the sovereignty of God and its results as defining features of evangelicalism are ignored.

Why and how evangelicalism is in the condition it currently finds itself is perhaps seen as much in what these volumes neglect as what they present. They are certainly important contributions to the literature, but are rather marked as much by their omissions as by their inclusions.