

# BIBLICAL CONDEMNATIONS OF HOMOSEXUAL CONDUCT

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Much of the world has been rethinking its attitudes toward homosexuality over the past half decade or so. The debate has led most modernized countries to do away with criminal laws concerning homosexual behavior and to enact anti-discrimination measures, and a few to explicitly endorse homosexual behavior through recognizing same-sex marriages or other forms of same-sex relationships.<sup>1</sup> This debate has not been lost on the theological community. While some religious communities have only experienced a peep on the fringes, others have full-fledged movements towards endorsing gay unions and ordaining gay ministers. In many instances, the virtues of tolerance, if tolerance can be called a virtue,<sup>2</sup> are overpowering the vices of sin. There has been, as David Malick writes, a “cultural sweep of theological thought toward leniency with respect to moral absolutes.”<sup>3</sup>

A necessary part of this theological movement to condone rather than condemn homosexuality is to explain away the traditional view that the Bible condemns homosexual acts. The ultimate end may be the undermining of all biblical authority. The Episcopal church, for example, recently debated and ultimately went through with the ordination of an openly gay bishop. David Anderson, president of the American Anglican Council, notes that while the presenting issues in the debate were sex and tolerance, the real issue is “the loss of Biblical authority.” Conservative commentator George Will writes:

Advocates of the gay bishop argue the way some Americans do when finding new rights and social-policy imperatives in a limitlessly elastic “living Constitution.” The bishop’s advocates say Scripture and 2,000 years of church teaching about sexuality and family are being “imaginatively construed in a certain interpretive trajectory.” The Rev. Martyn Minns of Fairfax, Va., an opponent, says that [at the Anglican convention], “When the plain teaching of the

Bible was referenced, eyes rolled, and with expressions of polite exasperation we were told that it was time to move on. The Bible simply hadn’t kept up.”<sup>4</sup>

Justice Holmes once wrote that what was most needed was a defense of the obvious. This paper will address a topic and a conclusion that were once obvious, but have recently come under severe attack. Homosexuality is perhaps the moral issue of our time. It was once well accepted, and I believe still is among the non-elite, that the Bible condemns homosexual conduct. This paper will make that argument anew.

At the outset, it should be admitted that a purely intellectual approach to this subject will ultimately fail, and may in fact be a major cause of our current woes. The problem in the Anglican church, for example, is not a lack of intellectuals, it is an overabundance of intellectuals that have left the spiritual behind and now suppose that they know of themselves. For them, religion has become a purely intellectual exercise. In contrast, the weak and simple people of the earth understand this issue intuitively. So, while this paper will attempt to take an intellectual approach to this issue, it also recognizes the inherent flaws of such an approach.

## THE CREATION AND THE ORDER OF THE CREATOR

Perhaps the most important Biblical pronouncement on homosexuality is the Creation story. The Creation serves as the background for all subsequent Biblical pronouncements on sexuality. The Creation teaches us about the order of God, the nature of gender, the role of men and women, the purpose of sexuality, and the origins of the family. Jesus explicitly links proper sexuality with the Creation (Matthew 19:3–7), and Paul’s teachings on homosexuality in Romans 1:26–27 grow out of the Creation as well.



Genesis 1 tells us that God created all things “after their kind” and commanded them to “Be fruitful and...multiply in the earth...and God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:21–22, 25). This was the order established for all things. “And God said, Let us make man (*adam*) in our image, after our likeness... So God created man (*ha’ adam*) in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male (*zakar*) and female (*neqeba*) created he them.” (Genesis 1:26–27). Having created the two genders, God’s first command to them is the same as it was to all other species, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

Chapter 2 of Genesis gives us more information about the physical creation of Adam and Eve. God tells us that “it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis. 2:18). But while every beast and fowl had been formed “out of the ground” (Genesis. 2:19), Eve was created from the bone of the man. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Genesis 2:21–22).

Adam learned the lesson to be taught by the procedure. “And Adam 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” (Genesis. 2:23). Man and woman were once one, coming from the same bone and the same flesh, and should be one again. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis. 2:24). Thus, there is the biological reality of becoming one as reflected in what John Finnis has called the “natural teleology of the body,” but also the spiritual reality of becoming reunited in the sense that the man and the woman were once one flesh and that a man “shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” again.<sup>5</sup>

Adam and Eve then partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and were cast out of the Garden. Adam names his wife “Eve; because she is the mother all living” (Genesis 3:20). “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Genesis 4:1). Adam and Eve had joined together with God in the divine order of things, had become one flesh, and had gotten a child from the Lord.

Jesus later endorsed this order of things. In Matthew 19 certain Pharisees came unto Jesus “tempting” him by ask-

ing whether divorce is lawful for any cause. “And he answered and said unto them,

Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:3–7).

Had they asked Jesus about homosexuality rather than divorce he could have given the same answer. God created mankind as male and female. This was His order and it is “for this cause,” in other words, because God himself intended it to be so, that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. Thus, man and woman are meant to be together in the divine order of things.<sup>6</sup> As Paul teaches, “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God” (1 Corinthians 11:11–12). God joined man and woman together, and they should not be put asunder by man. “[T]hy desire shall be to thy husband,” Eve was told; this was her natural affection. Thus Paul condemns those who are “without natural affection” and who leave the “natural use [for] that which is against nature” (Romans 1:26).

In sum, the Creation narrative teaches us about the one-flesh nature and sexual complementarity of male and female. God created the woman from the side of the man—they came from one flesh and were commanded to be one flesh again. Adam and Eve’s was the prototypical sexual relationship, the model, if you will, for all of mankind to follow.

## BIBLICAL PASSAGES CONCERNING HOMOSEXUALITY

There are a number of different bible passages that mention or address homosexuality. The following sections examine those passages.

### **Genesis 19: Sodom and Gomorrah**

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is short and ultimately unsatisfying in the search for certainty concerning the Biblical treatment of homosexual conduct. In the ancient literature Sodom is destroyed for reasons as varying as arrogance to pederasty. Nevertheless, some important lessons can be learned from the story.

In Genesis 18 the Lord tells Abraham he will destroy Sodom and Gomorrah “because their sin is very grievous” (Genesis 18:20). What was the sin, or more likely, sins, of Sodom and Gomorrah which led to their destruction? “[E]arly interpreters...were perplexed about the city of Sodom” and all that we are told in the Bible is that their sin was grievous.<sup>7</sup>

The Lord’s own investigation may provide the answer. “I will go down now,” the Lord said, “and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me” (Genesis 18:20–21). Thus, in Genesis 19, two angels, the Lord’s investigators, show up at Lot’s house in Sodom and abide with him. While they are there “the men of the city...both old and young” surrounded the house (Genesis 19:4). “And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out to us, that we may know them” (Genesis 19:5). Lot, knowing their evil designs, pleads with the men “do not so wickedly” (Genesis 19:6). Lot in turn offers to send his daughters “which have not known man” out to the men “and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof” (Genesis 19:8). The two angels, satisfied that their investigation has proven the guilt of Sodom, then pull Lot back into the house and warn him to flee with his family, “For we will destroy this place because the cry of them is waxed great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it” (Genesis 19:13). Lot and his family flee, his wife tragically turning back. “Then, the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities” (Genesis 24-25).

The key word in the narrative, *yadah*, is translated in the King James Version as “to know.” It is translated in other versions in various manners including “get familiar with,” (Authorized Version, Revised Standard Version), and “be intimate with,” (New Jewish Publication Society Version). Herein lays the major debate: Did the men of Sodom merely want to become acquainted with the two strangers who had entered their city, or did they want to have sexual relations with them? For those who believe the former, the common explanation is that the sin of Sodom was inhospitality. D. Sherwin Bailey is among the most prominent modern writers to suggest this. John Boswell sums up Bailey’s theory as follows:

Lot was violating the custom of Sodom (where he was himself not a citizen but only a “sojourner”) by entertaining unknown guests within the city walls at night without

obtaining the permission of the elders of the city. When the men of Sodom gathered around to demand that the strangers be brought out to them “that they might know them,” they meant no more than to “know” who they were, and the city was consequently destroyed not for sexual immorality but for the sin of inhospitality to strangers.<sup>8</sup>

Lack of hospitality is in fact a common explanation for the destruction of Sodom, both in modern and ancient literature.<sup>9</sup> Kugel, in his commentary, notes that being “stingy and un hospitable, especially to strangers, was no small matter. From ancient times, this had been considered a particularly grave fault.”<sup>10</sup>

The Hebrew word for *yadah*, the proponents of the inhospitality theory argue, means literally “to know” or “become acquainted with,” and has no sexual connotation as used by the men of Sodom. “When the Hebrew Bible does refer to homosexual intercourse or bestiality, it uses the verb *shakabh*, not found in this story.”<sup>11</sup> *Shakabh* is translated “to lie with,” such as the Levitical prohibition that a man not “lie with” another man.

It is also noteworthy that the *Septuagint* (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used by the Jews of Christ’s day) version of this passage implies nothing more than “become familiar with” or “become acquainted with” (*suggenometha autois*). This is in sharp contrast to the verbs the *Septuagint* employs in reference to Lot’s daughters (*egnosan, khresasthe*), which clearly denote sexual activity.<sup>12</sup>

Inhospitality theorists note that the Bible uses *yadah* 943 times, only ten of which have a clearly sexual connotation.<sup>13</sup> To those who would balk at the idea that inhospitality was sufficient wickedness for such punishment, one author notes:

In the ancient Hebrew world, hospitality was not an option but a sacred duty. This was because travel between cities was dangerous and often life-threatening (see Exodus 22:20; Lev. 19:33-34; compare to Matt. 25:35, 38 and 43). In this light, any mistreatment of Lot’s guests would have been seen by the original readers as a serious sin against the obligation of hospitality (cf. Deut. 23:3-5).<sup>14</sup>

The early Christian writer Clement, seeing a hospitality aspect to the story, writes that Lot was saved “[b]ecause of his hospitality and piety.”<sup>15</sup> The text itself may also support the inhospitality argument. When Lot refuses the advances of the men they are upset because Lot himself merely “came in to sojourn” and is now judging the people of

Sodom. Lot also pleads with the men to “do not so wickedly” and to leave the angels alone “for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof” (Genesis 19:8). Some suggest that Lot and his guests were in fact at fault because the visitors, “by not registering with the city...would in almost any circumstance and situation, be considered to be a potential threat to the city.”<sup>16</sup> Some also argue that Jesus himself declared the sin of Sodom to be inhospitality when he tells his disciples that “if anyone does not receive you...it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town” (Matthew 10:14–15).

The inhospitality theory has many flaws, however.<sup>17</sup> Even if we accept that Sodom’s sin was inhospitality, would not their sexual desires concerning Lot’s guests be a major part of their inhospitality? Further, there is much that can be garnered simply from the context of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah which leads fairly confidently to the conclusion that their sins at least included homosexuality. When Lot first decides to settle in Sodom we are told that “the *men* of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord” (Genesis 13:13),<sup>18</sup> and it is the *men* of the city, both old and young we are told, who throng Lot’s house.<sup>19</sup>

More importantly, the story does not seem to bear the interpretation that the men merely wanted to become acquainted with Lot’s guests.<sup>20</sup> Lot clearly sees a more devious purpose in their coming, thus his immediate reaction is to plead “do not so wickedly.” Lot’s use of the word *yadah* referring to his own daughters who “have not known man” also clearly suggests that he saw a sexual motive behind the men’s request. Lot’s statement that his daughters had not known man makes no sense if we interpret the previous *yadah* as the inhospitality theory suggests. Additionally, the Hebrew word *yadah* is used on numerous occasions in the Bible to refer to sexual activity.<sup>21</sup> Nor is the euphemism unique to the Israelites. “The Egyptian word *rh* (“to know”) often carries a sexual connotation... [The] Ugaritic *yd* can also be used in the sexual sense.”<sup>22</sup>

There is also a parallel to the story of Lot and his visitors in Judges 19:22–30. Here, “certain sons of Belial,” men of Gilbeah, beset a house “and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know [*yadah*] him” (Judges 19:22). This man also responds, “do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly” (Judges 19:23). This man, curiously enough, also offers his daughter (and his concubine) to the men to “do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing” (Judges 19:24). The Hebrew *yadah*

has clear sexual connotations in these passages, as evidenced by the man’s response and his request “do not so vile a thing.” What would be vile about merely becoming acquainted with the man’s guest? Further, verse 25 says that the man gave them his daughter “and they knew her,” clearly a sexual reference. As with the story of Sodom, the men here were also clearly inhospitable, but inhospitality and their sexual desires are not exclusive in these stories.

Finally, the suggestion that the Septuagint does not have a sexual connotation in Genesis 19:5 is probably incorrect. The Greek word *syngenometha* is rare in the Septuagint. Other than the story of Sodom, the only other occurrence is at Genesis 39:10 which relates the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife.<sup>23</sup> Joseph refused her request “to be with her,” stating that to do so would be a sin against God (Genesis 39:10). The phrase in the Septuagint is *syngenometha*, the same word the Septuagint uses in the story of Sodom.<sup>24</sup> “It seems impossible” to read the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife “and believe that this is a case of simple hospitality, of ‘getting acquainted.’”<sup>25</sup> The same verb, *syngenometha* “is [also] used of sexual intercourse three times in the apocryphal literature...in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*...in Plato’s republic... and in Herodotus’s recounting of a plot to snare a thief by having a woman go to bed with him.”<sup>26</sup>

Others have seen Sodom’s sin as homosexuality. In the *Testament of Naphtali* 3:4 the author urges his children to recognize order in all of nature “so that you do not become as Sodom, which changed the order of nature.”<sup>27</sup> Augustine, in *City of God* 16:30 writes that the “irreligious city was destroyed [because] lewdness between males had become as habitual as other deeds that the law declares permissible.”<sup>28</sup> Finally, it is important to remember that the angels were sent to Sodom to investigate its wickedness, “to see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it,” as the Lord tells Abraham, and, being convinced of the guilt of the city, they warn Lot to flee before they destroy the city. We must ask whether, as serious as inhospitality may have been in ancient Israel, the Lord would have wrought such destruction on Sodom because its people were poor hosts.

However, it is also important to note that the sins of Sodom clearly included more than homosexuality, as evidenced by the fact that Abraham could not find more than ten righteous people there. And one could even say of the men of Sodom who surrounded the house of Lot that their primary sin was not homosexuality per se, but attempted rape—certainly an inhospitable act.<sup>29</sup> Most persuasive in this matter is Ezekiel, who tells us that the “iniquity” of Sodom was “pride, fullness of bread, and abundance

of idleness...in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me, therefore I took them away as I saw good” (Ezekiel 16:49–50). There may also be a lesson in the actions of Lot’s daughters after fleeing with their father. Seeing that they were without a man, they conspire to make their father drunk and on successive nights each goes in to lie with him “that we may preserve seed” (Genesis 19:31–32).<sup>30</sup> The warped sense of morality and sexuality of the daughters may reflect the moral environment they grew up in.<sup>31</sup>

Early writers also identified more than sexual sin as their downfall. In 3 Maccabees 2:5 the destruction of the “arrogant” Sodomites is noted.<sup>32</sup> Wisdom 19:14 plays up the inhospitality angle noting that the Sodomites “had refused to receive strangers when they came to them.”<sup>33</sup> Josephus notes that the Sodomites were “overweeningly proud,” were “insolent to men,” and “hated foreigners,” and that God “resolved to chastise them for their arrogance.”<sup>34</sup> But sexual licentiousness seems to take prominence in most explanations.

To some interpreters Sodom’s sin seemed clear enough: homosexual practices... [S]ome interpreters attributed to the Sodomites other, heterosexual sins, specifically, adultery and fornication... As a result, Sodom came to be known generally as a place of sexual profligacy.<sup>35</sup>

Jubilees 16:5–6 and 20:5 states that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because they were “wicked and exceedingly sinful, and that they defile themselves and commit fornication in the flesh, and work uncleanness on the earth,” and that Abraham told his descendants that Sodom was condemned for “sexual impurity, uncleanness, and corruption among themselves.”<sup>36</sup> Philo condemns Sodom for “gluttony and lust...licentiousness...[and throwing] off from their necks the law of nature by indulging in strong drink, rich food, and forbidden forms of intercourse. Not only in their mad lust for women...but also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature .”<sup>37</sup>

There is an interesting passage in the Midrash (Gen. Rabbah 1:7) which might offer the best way to understand the story in Genesis 19: “The Sodomites,” the passage reads, “made an agreement among themselves that whenever a stranger visited them they should force him to sodomy, and rob him of his money.” If this were true, Lot surely would have been aware of it, making his response “do not so wickedly” more sensible. This would also explain Lot’s reaction when the angels initially refused his request to abide at his house saying, “Nay, but we will abide in

the street all night. And [Lot] pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him” (Genesis 19:2–3). Perhaps this was a cross-cultural tradition, which would also bring more sense to story of the men of Gilbeah in Judges. This would also explain why the Lord would send the visitors there to investigate. The investigators, seeing the men of Sodom at the door desiring to “know” them, would have ratified the accusation that had come to the Lord, and had reason to destroy the city.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the story of Sodom does not provide absolute moral clarity, especially for the non-LDS reader who may wonder at taking any moral message from a story where the actions of the men of Sodom are condemned, but Lot, who offered his virgin daughters to the men to do with as they pleased, is spared. Of course, in the Biblical account the daughters are rejected, as one might suggest Lot knew they would be because, as one could argue, he was aware that they preferred homosexual relations. Further, Sodom was clearly guilty of more than homosexuality. However, the clearest conclusion from the text of the story is that the investigators of the Lord discovered great wickedness, including the homosexual desires of the men of the city, and thus authorized its destruction.

### **Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13**

The most plain condemnations of homosexuality (at least male homosexuality) are found in Leviticus where we read: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with woman-kind: it is abomination” (Leviticus 18:22), and, “If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Leviticus 20:13). Nevertheless, it is a legitimate question to ask whether Leviticus has any remaining relevance, and if so, whether we can properly pick and choose among its proscriptions to garner those that are still relevant. Were these particular proscriptions based on eternal principles or merely the context the Israelites found themselves living in at the time—part of the temporary ceremonial law, or part of the eternal gospel?

It is important to realize that there are no linguistic ways around the text of these verses. They are a clear proscription of same-sex intercourse between two men, indeed between all males. The Hebrew word *zakar* means “male” and includes all members of the gender, young and old. Neither “man” nor “mankind” would render a correct interpretation. Nor is *miskebe issa* ambiguous—it is clearly a prohibition of intercourse, though some have argued that it may not extend to other sexual activities. But, as one

author has noted, “The issue here is not how sexual intercourse should be practiced between males, but that it cannot be practiced between males under any circumstances. This is clear from the use of the imperative... The legislator expects his audience to understand that same-gender sexual relations are strictly forbidden.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, Israel, unlike its neighbors, prohibited all forms of sex between two males. “In other words the Old Testament bans every type of homosexual intercourse, not just forcible as the Assyrians did, or with youths (so the Egyptians). Homosexual intercourse where both parties consent is also condemned.”<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, the Levitical code must be looked at in context as well. The prohibition against a man lying with a man is found among condemnations of engaging in intercourse during the menstruation of a woman (Leviticus 20:18), men trimming their beards (Leviticus 19:27), eating any food with blood (Leviticus 19:26), and numerous other prohibitions which have not been carried forward into many modern religious practices. Leviticus must either be taken as a whole, or rejected as a whole, or there must be some appropriate means of selecting among its various prohibitions to discover which are still relevant.

The Levitical prohibitions of homosexual conduct are found in what is considered the “Holiness Code,” comprised of chapters 17 to 26. While Leviticus 20 largely mirrors the proscriptions of Chapter 18, there are differences. Leviticus 20:13 is casuistic, the subordinate clause “if a man” followed by the main clause “have committed an abomination.” In the casuistic style the penalty immediately follows the proscription—in the case of Leviticus 20:13 the penalty is death. Leviticus 18:22 is in the apodictic style characterized by the Ten Commandments, “You shall not lie with a man.” The penalty in Leviticus 18 does not immediately follow the proscription, but is a later verse that includes the penalty for all of the abominations listed in the chapter. The prohibitions in Chapter 18 provides for the *karet* penalty—being cut off from the people. “For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people” (Leviticus 18:29). Some authors have made arguments based on these distinctions, such as by arguing that the casuistic style was never used for ceremonial sins. However, this is clearly not the case as in Exodus the apodictic and casuistic styles are used interchangeably. There is one important distinction between the two verses: Leviticus 20:13 prescribes the death penalty for *both* participants in the act, whereas Leviticus 18:22 leaves this unclear.

Further, Chapter 18 begins with a warning that the Israelites are not to do “after the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt...and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I will bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances” (Leviticus 18:2). Israel is to be a people set apart from their neighbors and are not to engage in the wickedness they see around them but rather, “Ye shall do my judgments and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 18:4). Chapter 20 begins with concerns that the Israelites not give their seed over to Molech and then commands the Israelites, “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you” (Leviticus 20:7–8). These verses are commonly pointed to by those who argue that Leviticus does not condemn homosexuality *per se*, but is rather concerned with the idolatry of the Israelites surroundings.

Most of the debate over these passages surrounds the word “abomination.” Both verses in Leviticus describe the conduct at issue as “abomination,” coming from the Hebrew *toebah*. Boswell argues that the word “does not usually signify something intrinsically evil...but something which is ritually unclean for Jews, like eating pork or engaging in intercourse during menstruation, both of which are prohibited in these same chapters. It is used throughout the Old Testament to designate those Jewish sins which involve ethnic contamination or idolatry.”<sup>41</sup> Boswell’s conclusion is that lawgiver is prohibiting cultic temple prostitution rather than same-sex intercourse in general.<sup>42</sup>

Frederick Ide argues that the concern is not the sexual activity *per se*, but the fact that it might lead to idolatry. “[T]he objection to homosexuality [in Leviticus] was an objection not to two men having sex together, but rather an objection that the homosexual act was seen by some as a form of apostasy.”<sup>43</sup> The Hebrews saw themselves as surrounded by “pagans,” Ide argues, and wished to avoid any practice associated with their neighboring groups, including homosexuality and cultic religious practices involving homosexuality including cult prostitution, which was “repudiated so as to further set apart the Hebrews from their neighbors.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Hebrew word for abomination, *toebah* “more precisely translates as ‘idolatry’ and is used repeatedly throughout the Torah and the Old Testament to designate those Hebrew sins which involve ethnic contamination or idolatry.”<sup>45</sup>

G.J. Wenham rejects this argument. Given that, unlike their neighbors, the Israelites prohibited all forms of ho-

mosexual intercourse, even if between consensual unrelated adults, “To ascribe this to Israelite reaction against the customs of their neighbors is too simple, for such an explanation in fact explains nothing. Israel did not reject all the religious and moral practices of Canaan.”<sup>46</sup> Wenham attributes the difference to the Israelites understanding of the Creation because the

most fundamental principles of Old Testament law are expressed in the opening chapters of Genesis... When Genesis comes to man’s creation, it states that God deliberately created mankind in two sexes in order that he should ‘be fruitful and multiply.’ This is the first command given to man and is repeated after the flood; contrast the gods of Babylon who introduced various devices to curtail man’s reproduction... It therefore seems most likely that Israel’s repudiation of homosexual intercourse arises out of its doctrine of creation... St. Paul’s comment that homosexual acts are ‘contrary to nature’ is thus probably very close to the thinking of Old Testament writers.<sup>47</sup>

It should also be remembered that Israel was a kinship society, the fundamental unit of which was the nuclear family. The order for such a society is set forth in the Creation account with two major principles: The creation of man and woman as separate entities and their being placed together and commanded to procreate. All of the sexual taboos listed in Leviticus violate this order. “It is not accidental that the law against homosexuality is placed in proximity to the laws on incest and bestiality...for all prohibit a sexual relation that is against the principle of order: incest violates the order of kinship, homosexuality violates the order of gender...and bestiality violates the order of species.”<sup>48</sup>

When viewed in context of the Creation account, the homosexual acts prohibited in Leviticus can indeed be looked at as eternal prohibitions because they violate the order and nature of God. Paul’s prohibition against homosexual acts in Corinthians also incorporates the Levitical prohibition, as is discussed below, further suggesting that these passages have continuing relevance.

David Greenberg argues that the “distinction between acts that are truly evil and those that are mere ritual violations is completely extraneous to the authors of Leviticus, for whom everything prohibited by Yahweh is totally wrong. That intercourse with a menstruating woman is also classified as an abomination along with homosexuality is an indication not...that the latter offense was considered trivial, but rather that the former was considered extremely grave. However silly they may seem to contemporary

rationalists, menstrual taboos are taken very seriously in many primitive societies.”<sup>49</sup>

In the end, whatever relevance one may give to Leviticus for modern times, the known fact is that Levitical law prohibited all intercourse between two males, regardless of their motives, and proscribed the death penalty for both participants violation of the law, which puts it on a level with adultery (Leviticus 20:10) and the worst forms of incest (Leviticus 20:11–12). Contrast this with Middle Assyrian law of roughly the same period which punished only the aggressive male in the act and not his passive partner.<sup>50</sup> Iconographic evidence from 3000 BC to the Christian Era also suggests that homosexuality was an accepted practice in Mesopotamia. Hittitologist H.A. Hoffner puts forth that homosexuality was also “not outlawed among the Hittites.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, regardless of modern machinations in one direction or another, the clear lesson to be learned from Leviticus is that the ancient Israelites viewed homosexual relations as an abominable sin worthy of death. While other cultures prohibited certain forms of homosexuality, such as pederasty, Israel was apparently alone in its condemnation of all male homosexuality.<sup>52</sup> Continuing relevance can perhaps be argued but it simply cannot be argued with any intellectual honesty that these passages do not absolutely condemn sexual relations between males.

### ***1 Corinthians 6:9-10***

In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul, like the law in Leviticus, condemns both participants in the homosexual act, telling them that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God.

However, to understand this passage in full, it is important to understand the terms employed by Paul as they would have been understood by the Saints in Corinth. Paul’s point is to contrast God’s law with Roman law and custom by making it clear that all homosexual acts were unrighteous and that those who engage in them are not worthy of the kingdom of God.

Numerous theories have been set forth attempting to explain away Paul’s statements to the Corinthians. The gist of all of these theories is that Paul was only condemning

certain forms of homosexuality, such as cult prostitution or pederasty, or was condemning lustful, as opposed to loving, acts of homosexuality. Frederick Ide, for example, argues that Paul was preaching against those who “give up self-worth,” the effeminate who allow themselves to be abused and who were looked down upon in Roman society, and those who abuse them “for the sake of a temporary and uncaring moment of physical orgasm.”<sup>53</sup> The sin, then, is in the motivation, according to Ide, and not the act. Boswell, on the other hand, argues that Paul is condemning male prostitution,<sup>54</sup> while Robin Scroggs argues that Paul is concerned only about pederasty.<sup>55</sup> “One should not assume uncritically,” writes Ralph Blair summing up the arguments,

that there is in the Corinthian passage a proof-text against all homosexuality or even all homosexual acts. Of course, homosexual behavior can be perverted and sinful and exploitative just as heterosexual activity can be...but this is not the same as rejecting either sexual orientation or specific acts as sinful as such.<sup>56</sup>

As will be shown, all of these theories rest on assumptions and logical leaps that simply cannot be maintained.

The King James Version of 1 Corinthians 6:9 says that neither (1) the “effeminate” nor (2) “abusers of themselves with mankind” will inherit the kingdom of God. The underlying Greek words are *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. *Malakoi* means literally “soft” or “soft ones.” It is used elsewhere in the New Testament in just this innocent sense (see Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25). The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* defines *malakos* as “soft, effeminate, esp. of catamites, men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually.”<sup>57</sup> *Arsenokoitai* comes from two words, *arseno* meaning “male” and *koitai*, which literally means “bed” and is used at times as a euphemism for sexual intercourse as in Numbers 5:20 and in the modern word *coitus*. *Arsenokoitai* is used twice in the scriptures, once here in Corinthians and again by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:10 for the same purpose. Indeed, Paul is the first person known to have used the word and some suggest that he in fact made it up. As we shall see, Paul uses these two words, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* to refer “to the passive and active partner in homosexual intercourse because Roman society and literature observed such a distinction.”<sup>58</sup>

To understand these words it is important to understand how Paul’s audience would have understood them. Roman law and culture made two distinctions, both in favor of elite citizens, when it came to homosexual activity.<sup>59</sup>

First, Roman citizens could penetrate non-Roman citizens, indeed, some slaves were held just for this purpose, while Roman criminal law punished those who penetrated Roman citizens. So, one distinction was between the citizenship of the participants: “There was something sacred about the person of a Roman citizen.”<sup>60</sup> The other distinction Roman law made was between the “passive” participant, the effeminate one, and the “active” participant.<sup>61</sup> The passive participant was looked down upon by Roman society. These distinctions help understand why Paul uses the words he does—Paul proscribes both aspects of homosexuality. Just because one was a Roman citizen, all things were not lawful.

*Malakos* is properly translated as soft or effeminate, or as Paul means it “a soft person.” The Romans had borrowed the word from the Greek; it is a “loanword.” “Forms of perversion [to the Roman mind]...tend to be ascribed particularly to foreign people, and those perversions may be described by a word from the foreign language in question. Various words to do with homosexuality in Latin are of Greek origin (*pedico*, *pathicus*, *cinaedus*, *catamitus*; cf. *malacus*). . . . But the sexual organs and ordinary sexual behavior did not attract loanwords.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the Romans’ use of the word *malakos* to describe the passive partner indicates that he was looked down upon. The word is also in the masculine form which “in the semantic field of sexuality is significant because the ‘transfer to a male of terms strictly applicable to a female suggest effeminacy of the referent with extreme forcefulness.”<sup>63</sup>

Thus, Corinth would have clearly understood *malakoi* to refer to the passive partner in the homosexual act, a role which, as mentioned, was looked down upon. The Roman attitude toward homosexuality reflects “the importance of masculinity in Roman culture.”<sup>64</sup> Lucian, for example, echoes this attitude “when he wrote in a dialogue that it would be better that a woman invade the provinces of male wantonness (homosexuality) ‘than that the nobility of the male sex should become effeminate and play the part of a woman.’”<sup>65</sup> Plutarch also used the word *malakoi* to refer to the passive partner,<sup>66</sup> and Periplectomenus boasted of having “offered his services ‘in every situation [and]...paraded himself as a receptive homosexual, using the terms *cinaedus* and *malacus*.”<sup>67</sup> In sum, in using the word *malakoi* Paul was using a word with which his audience would have been familiar and would have understood to refer to the passive partners in the homosexual act. Such persons, says Paul, are not worthy of the kingdom of God.

Had Paul condemned only the “effeminate” we might surmise that he, too, was simply reflecting Roman at-



itudes toward homosexuality, or merely condemning pederasty, since the “soft ones” were often younger boys. Robin Scroggs, for example, argues that the word *malakos* “would almost certainly conjure up images of the effeminate call-boy, if the context otherwise suggested some form of pederasty.”<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately for Scroggs, the context Paul uses does not suggest that he was referring only to pederasty.

As noted above, Paul is the first person known to have used the word *arsenokoitai*.<sup>69</sup> If Paul did indeed make up the word, what was he trying to say? Though one cannot be sure, the most likely answer to that question is in the Septuagint’s version of Leviticus 20:13. In the Septuagint Leviticus 20:13 reads in part *kai hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gynaikos* (“and whosoever may lie in bed with a man as with a woman”). One cannot help but notice the two words *arsenos* (the Septuagint’s version of the Hebrew word *zakar* or “male”) and *koiten*, which Paul combines to form his word *arsenokoiten*. If this is indeed the root of Paul’s phrase, which seems the most likely and logical conclusion, we can surmise that Paul was using God’s law as found in Leviticus to condemn, as Leviticus did, all homosexual intercourse between males, thus creating a contrast for the Corinthian saints with Roman law and custom.

In sum, Roman law and custom permitted some homosexuality. While looking down on the “soft ones,” or passive participants, and prohibiting the penetration of Roman citizens, homosexual acts were otherwise an accepted part of life. Hence, the familiar aphorism of the Roman citizen that “all things are lawful unto me.” But for the citizen of God’s kingdom, all things are not lawful. This explains why Paul used two different terms to condemn homosexual persons. For those who desire to be citizens of the kingdom of God, all things are not lawful and neither the *malakos* nor the *arsenokoitai* shall inherit the kingdom of God.

### **Romans 1:26–27**

In Romans 1 we get the most theological of all the passages on homosexuality. Whereas in Leviticus and Corinthians homosexual conduct is merely listed among a number of other sins without any particular explanation of why it is sinful, Romans provides a theological background for the biblical condemnation of homosexual conduct.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” Paul declares, for it is in the gospel that “the righteousness of God is re-

vealed” (Romans 1:16–17). But there are those who know the truth “for God hath shewed it unto them” and yet they “hold the truth in unrighteousness” and act contrary to the order of God (Romans 1:18–20). How do they know the truth? It is revealed in the order of God’s creation. It is through this order that the “invisible things” of God are revealed so that those who would reject God’s order “are without excuse.”

The latter half of Romans 1 is a theological discussion of what happens to those who reject this created order and “change[] the truth of God into a lie, and worship[] the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). There is a created order of things, Paul says, which reveals the glory of God and those who reject this order are given “up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” (Romans 1:24). Then appear the main passages dealing with homosexuality:

For this cause [because they rejected the created order of God and changed the truth of God into a lie] God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (Romans 1:26–27).

Richard Hays, a theologian from Duke University, writes that

Paul singles out homosexual intercourse for special attention because he regards it as providing a particularly graphic image of the way in which human fallenness distorts God’s created order... When human beings engage in homosexual activity, they enact an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality: the rejection of the Creator’s design.”<sup>70</sup>

Homosexuality, in Paul’s mind, embodies this attitude of changing the truth of God into a lie and worshipping the creature more than the Creator. In the end, they are given over to this “reprobate mind” so that in worshipping the creature they not only engage in these acts against nature “but have pleasure in them that do” the same (Romans 1:32). This is the true relation between the sin of homosexuality and that of idolatry. Homosexuality is an inherently idolatrous act. It is important to note that Paul explicitly condemns in these passages the women who “change the

natural use” also. Lesbianism, just as much as homosexual conduct between men, is a rejection of the created order of God.

Yet, like the previous passages discussed, there is far from a dearth of literature attempting to explain that in Romans Paul is not condemning homosexuality per se, but merely certain aspects of homosexual conduct. Boswell, for example, argues that the “natural use” Paul refers to is essentially a person’s sexual orientation, so that Paul is not condemning homosexuals but “homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons.”<sup>71</sup> Though Boswell does not explain why heterosexual persons would be “burn[ing] with lust” for persons of the same sex. In other words, according to Boswell, Paul is condemning those who “abandon” their natural orientation. Ide believes that a person abandons natural use when he or she engages in sex for “a lustful, totally self-centered manner, for the sake of physical gratification... It is the act without purpose other than self-gratification that is condemned—not the individual.”<sup>72</sup> Others suggest that Paul condemns homosexuality because he sees it as associated with the surrounding pagans.

Homosexuality, then, is seen as an avenue away from the Christian community—not away from Christ. It is a threat to the Christian only inasmuch as it is a way to lead a believer into pagan theologies... If a Christian could also be a homosexual, and vice versa, without loss of faith and community consciousness, then that person . . . would be a part of the diversity of God’s magnificence.<sup>73</sup>

These rationalizations all seem to read a lot into the passage that simply is not there.

The primary debate in this passage is over Paul’s use of the words “natural” (*physikos*) and “nature” (*physis* or *phusin*). Paul describes those who have given in to lust “to dishonour their own bodies between themselves” and who “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” Because of this, God gave them over to their *pathe atimas* (“vile affections” or “degrading passions”). Even the women have changed the *physiken chresin* (“natural use”) for that which is *para phusin* (unnatural or against nature). The men have also left the *physiken chresin* (“natural use”) of the woman, and committed *aschemosynen* (“indecent”) acts with each other.

Boswell argues that *para phusin* is referring to “the personal nature of the pagans in question.” To read it otherwise, Boswell suggests, conflicts with God’s own actions

“against nature” in his grafting of olive branches from wild olive trees into a good olive tree (Romans 11:24).<sup>74</sup> This proves, Boswell argues, that something may be “unnatural” but not necessarily “immoral.” Richard Hays, on the other hand, argues that “it is clear that in this passage Paul identifies ‘nature’ with the created order... Those who indulge in sexual practices *para physis* are defying the creator and demonstrating their own alienation from him.”<sup>75</sup>

Hays says that in Paul’s time “the categorization of homosexual practices as *para physin* was a commonplace feature of polemical attacks against such behavior, particularly in the world of Hellenistic Judaism.”<sup>76</sup> Hays is clearly correct. For one thing, Paul and those of his day had no conception of a homosexual orientation—of a person being naturally homosexual. Plato, for example, also says that homosexual acts are *para phusin*. “When male unites with female for procreation the pleasure experienced is held to be natural, but unnatural when male mates with male or female with female, and those first guilty of the enormities were impelled by their weakness for pleasure.”<sup>77</sup> Gregory Vlastos, in his book *Platonic Studies*, says that by *para phusin* Plato meant something “far stronger” than “against the rules” noting that Plato compared homosexuality with incest.<sup>78</sup> Vlastos, Dover, and Price, three prominent students of the writings of Plato, “All judge that *para phusin*, as used by Plato in the Laws, must be understood as the core of a very firm and unqualified condemnation of homosexual conduct.”<sup>79</sup>

Likewise, Josephus and Philo both speak of homosexual sex as *para phusin*.

It turns out that the idea of certain behavior being immoral because ‘against nature’ (*para physin*) was very well known in St. Paul’s day both in Greek and in Hellenistic Jewish circles. It was an important concept in Stoic philosophy which had its roots as far back as Plato. Moreover the very words ‘para physin’ were a stock phrase at the time.<sup>80</sup>

Hays notes also that Plutarch in his Dialogue of Love has a dialogue in which Daphnaeus disparages homosexuality as a “union contrary to nature with males” (*he para physin homilia pros arenas*) contrasting it with the love between men and women.<sup>81</sup> This condemnation of homosexual acts as *para phusin* “was adopted with particular vehemence by Hellenistic Jewish writers, who tended to see a correspondence between the philosophical appeal to ‘nature’ and the clear teachings of the Law of Moses. ‘The Law recognizes no sexual connections,’ writes Josephus, ‘ex-

cept for the natural (kata physin) union of man and wife . . .<sup>7</sup> Paul's contemporary Philo uses similar language."<sup>82</sup>

Hays concludes that for Paul, homosexual conduct was "a sacrament (so to speak) of the antireligion of human beings who refuse to honour God as Creator. When human beings engage in homosexual activity, they enact an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality: the rejection of the Creator's design."<sup>83</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There is simply no question that the Bible, from the Creation through the New Testament, condemns homosexual conduct. Single passages may be explained away to the satisfaction of some, but one can only explain away so much before the entire foundation has been removed. I suppose one could explain away biblical condemnation of bestiality just as effectively, if not more effectively, than one could explain away the passages dealing with homosexuality. In the end, one is left wondering whether the Bible has any modern relevance at all. Yet, the whole purpose of scripture and religion is to provide some authoritative guidance. Those religions that fail to provide authoritative guidance on such matters are like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Eventually the floods will rise and they will be swept away.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See William Eskridge, *Equality Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert .K. Chesterton, for example, called tolerance a "negative virtue" and reminded that a society that tolerates everything believes in nothing. (Charles Krauthammer, "Will It Be Coffee, Tea or He?" *Time* (June 15, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> David E. Malick, "The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October–December 1993), 479.

<sup>4</sup> George Will, *Nuclear Fallout at the Anglican Communion*, at [www.townhall.com](http://www.townhall.com) (October 14, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> John Finnis, "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation,'" *Notre Dame L. Rev.* 1049 (1994), 69. Finnis writes, "The union of the reproductive organs of husband and wife really unites them biologically (and their biological reality is part of, not merely an instrument of, their personal reality); reproduction is one function and so, in respect of that function, the spouses are indeed one reality, and their

sexual union therefore can actualize and allow them to experience their real common good. . . . But the common good of friends who are not and cannot be married (for example, man and man, man and boy, woman and woman) has nothing to do with their having children by each other, and their reproductive organs cannot make them a biological (and therefore personal) unit. So their sexual acts together cannot do what they may hope and imagine. Because their activation of one or even each of their reproductive organs cannot be an actualizing and experiencing of the marital good-as marital intercourse (intercourse between spouses in a marital way) can, even between spouses who happen to be sterile-it can do no more than provide each partner with an individual gratification."

<sup>6</sup> "While Jesus is not reported to have spoken on homosexuality or homosexual behavior, his one recorded statement about human sexuality reveals that he understood males and females to be created by God for mutual relations that unite and fulfill both male and female in a (permanent) complementary union." [Marion L. Soards, "Scripture & Homosexuality," *Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (1995), 28.]

<sup>7</sup> James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible the Was it Was At the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 331.

<sup>8</sup> John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980), 93–94. Donald Wold writes however that "[s]tudy of the term *elder* in the various ancient Near Eastern languages, including Hebrew, reveals no support for Bailey's idea that Lot failed to satisfy the custom of obtaining permission from the city elders before a guest might be welcomed." [Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 82.] This may be further evidenced by the fact that it was not merely the elders who came to check on Lot's guests but all the men of the city young and old (Genesis 19:4).

<sup>9</sup> See e.g., Rabbi Don Rossoff, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, at <http://uahc.org/ask/homosexuality.shtml> (visited October 15, 2003) ("Although the sin of Sodom and Gemmorah is apparently homosexuality, later Jewish tradition, including the Biblical prophets, makes no reference to homosexuality and see the sins of Sodom and Gemmorah as cruelty and lack of hospitality to the 'stranger'—xenophobia, as it were."); Rick Fernandez, *A Discussion Guide for Latter-day Saints in Understanding the Bible and Homosexuality* at <http://www.affirmation.org>

org/learning/bible\_and\_homosexuality.asp (visited October 15, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 334, note 7. Kugel contrasts the inhospitality of Sodom with Abraham, who was “celebrated among early interpreters for his generosity, especially to strangers.” *Ibid.* See Genesis 18:1–8.

<sup>11</sup> Fernandez, *A Discussion Guide for Latter-day Saints in Understanding the Bible and Homosexuality*, note 9, citing Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans Greens & Co., 1975), 181.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, 2–3, note 11. Wold argues that the Septuagint does in fact corroborate the sexual connotation of *yadah* in verse 5 (Wold, *Out of Order*, 82, note 8).

<sup>13</sup> Wold, *Out of Order*, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Fernandez, *A Discussion Guide for Latter-day Saints in Understanding the Bible and Homosexuality*, note 9.

<sup>15</sup> Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 336, note 7, citing 1 Clement 11:1.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Frederick Ide, *The City of Sodom & Homosexuality in Western Religious Thought to 630 CE* (1985), 43.

<sup>17</sup> As one writer has noted, “It calls for a strange mentality to see (1) how a simple desire of the townsmen to get acquainted would be a breach of hospitality, (2) how it could be deemed seriously wicked..., and (3) why it would be so vile as to warrant dramatic divine punishment.” [Greg L. Bahsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1978), 33.]

<sup>18</sup> The *Targum Onqelos* of Genesis 13:13 reads: “Now the men of Sodom were wicked with their wealth, and they were sinful with their bodies before the Lord, exceedingly.” The *Targum Neophyti* of Genesis 13:13 reads: “And the people of Sodom were wicked toward one another and sinful with sexual sins and bloodshed and idolatry before the Lord, exceedingly.” Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 334, note 7.

<sup>19</sup> Jude 1:7 equates Sodom with “going after strange flesh.” The word *strange* may be better translated as “other” flesh, so it is difficult to explicitly equate this passage with homosexuality. However, it is clearly possible that this is what Jude was referring to. Ide argues that the “strange flesh” refers to “supernatural (or non-human) beings” and

that strange flesh (*hetera sarx*) refers to heterosexual sex. Thus, to “go after” strange flesh refers to heterosexual rape.

<sup>20</sup> See Wold, *Out of Order*, 81, note 8, where Wold argues that the inhospitality interpretation of *yadah* “can be supported by neither linguistic nor contextual evidence.”

<sup>21</sup> See Genesis 4:1, 17, 25; 19:8; 24:16; 38:26; Numbers 31:17, 18, 35; Judges 11:39; 19:25; 21:11, 12; I Samuel 1:19; and I Kings 1:4.

<sup>22</sup> Wold, *Out of Order*, 83, note 8.

<sup>23</sup> Wold, *Out of Order*, 86, note 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 332, note 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>29</sup> See Ide, *The City of Sodom*, 18. Ide writes that “[A]t best it was an attempted rape, proving only that the people were depraved, degenerate and lustful with violent intentions. It does not prove that they were homosexuals.” Ide further explains that “Among people of the ancient world, anal intercourse, or sodomy, was a way a victorious opponent provided his superiority over a conquered enemy—by treating him with the greatest possible contempt... by forcing captive men to ‘take the part of the woman’...” (*Ibid.*, 19). Ide’s tract should be taken with a grain of salt since it is clearly a political tract. He writes, for example, that Ezekiel’s condemnation of Sodom makes it sound “close to the America of Reagan... where the rich get richer, the poor increasingly poor, and hunger intensifies as social programs are slashed” (*Ibid.*, 24).

<sup>30</sup> The Joseph Smith Translation tells us that in taking these actions “they did wickedly” (JST Genesis 19:39).

<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the actions of Lot’s daughters may not be as awful as at first appears. Philo writes that Lot’s daughters, “because of their ignorance of external matters and because they saw those cities burned up together with all their inhabitants, supposed that the whole human race [had been destroyed at the same time], and that no one remained anywhere except the three of them.” [Kugel,

*Traditions of the Bible*, 339, quoting Philo, *Questions and Answers in Genesis 4:56*.] Josephus gives the same explanation; see *Jewish Antiquities* 1:205.

<sup>32</sup> Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 333, note 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1:194–195.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 332, citing Jeremiah 23:14. (“They commit adultery and deal falsely and encourage evildoers, so that no one repents—they are all like Sodom to me.”) To Jeremiah, the homosexual practices of Sodom may be included in adultery and fornication.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Jubilees 16:5–6, 20:5.

<sup>37</sup> Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 334, note 7, citing Philo, *Abraham*, 134–135).

<sup>38</sup> The Midrash passage makes the most sense out of the Biblical account of Sodom, especially when one considers the Joseph Smith Translation. If the passage from the Midrash is accurate, it would be natural for the men of Sodom to have some means of enforcing their custom against hosts like Lot who admit strangers into their home. I believe that when hosts like Lot refused to allow the men of Sodom to enforce their custom they would then threaten the homeowner, or his family, with similar treatment. Hence, the men of Sodom threaten Lot “now will we deal worse with thee, than with them” and Lot, knowing what the men will do to him for refusing, pleads with them to leave his daughters alone also, telling them that they are virgins. The JST gives us the illuminating phrase that “this was after the wickedness of Sodom,” reflecting the fact that this was indeed their custom. Lot also reflects that this was their custom when he pleads with the men that “this once only” that they would leave his visitors alone as in, “I know what you want but please, this once only, don’t enforce your custom.” If this custom and its enforcement by threatening the family of the host had spread it would also better explain the reaction of the host in Judges in immediately offering his daughter and concubine to the men at his door. Consider the full text of the JST in this light. “And they said unto [Lot], Stand back, And they were angry with him. And they said among themselves, This one man came in to sojourn among us, and he will needs now make himself to be a judge: now we will deal worse with him than with them. Wherefore they said unto the man, We will have the men, and thy daughters also; and we will do with them as seemeth us good. Now this was after the

wickedness of Sodom. And Lot said, Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, plead with my brethren that I may not bring them out unto you; and ye shall not do unto them as seemeth good in your eyes. For God will not justify his servant in this thing; wherefore, let me plead with my brethren, this once only, that unto these men ye do nothing, that they may have peace in my house; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.”

<sup>39</sup> Wold, *Out of Order*, 105–106, note 8.

<sup>40</sup> G.J. Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” *The Expository Times*, Vol. 102 No. 12 (September 1991): 362. The Bible also condemns homosexual cult prostitution in Deuteronomy 23:17 which was apparently introduced into Israel by the Canaanites (1 Kings 15:12; 1 Kings 22:46). Interestingly, Deuteronomy 23:18 refers to a male prostitute as a “dog,” a reference also found in Mesopotamian texts and perhaps in Revelations 22:15. These male prostitutes also wore women’s clothes which may explain the prohibition of that activity in Deuteronomy 22:5.

<sup>41</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 100, note 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>43</sup> Ide, *The City of Sodom*, 5, note 16.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* N.H. Snaith also argues that “the word *to ‘ebah* has to do with idolatrous actions, actions committed within the cult of other gods... Thus homosexuality here is condemned on account of its association with idolatry.” Tom Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1978), 73.

<sup>46</sup> Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” 362. Evidence of the Egyptians and Canaanites views is more ambiguous but we can surmise from the passage in Leviticus 18:3 telling the Israelites not to do as the Egyptians and Canaanites do that each may have tolerated homosexual practices.

<sup>47</sup> Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” 362–363.

<sup>48</sup> Wold, *Out of Order*, 131.

- <sup>49</sup> David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 195–196.
- <sup>50</sup> Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” 361.)
- <sup>51</sup> H.A. Hoffner, “Incest, Sodomy, and Bestiality in the Ancient Near East,” *Orient and Occident: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon* (Germany: Neukirchen Verlag, 1973), 83.
- <sup>52</sup> Wenham, “The Old Testament Attitude to Homosexuality,” 360 (“The Old Testament Rejection of all kinds of homosexual practice is apparently unique in the ancient world.”). See also, David F. Wright, “Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of arsenokoitai,” *Vigilae Christianae* 38 (1984): 125–153.
- <sup>53</sup> Ide, *The City of Sodom*, 69, note 16.
- <sup>54</sup> John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Boswell argues that *arsenokoitai* should be translated as “male prostitutes.”
- <sup>55</sup> Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for a Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1983).
- <sup>56</sup> Ralph Blair, *An Evangelical Look at Homosexuality* (1977), 6.
- <sup>57</sup> Catamite comes from the name Ganymede who, in Greek mythology, was raped by Zeus.
- <sup>58</sup> Bruce W. Winter, “Roman Homosexual Activity and the Elite,” *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2001), 119–120.
- <sup>59</sup> Bruce Winter notes that the Argive petition tells us that the Corinthians followed the Roman ‘custom.’ (Winter, “Roman Homosexual Activity and the Elite,” 113.)
- <sup>60</sup> L.P. Wilkinson, *Classical Attitudes to Modern Issues: Population and Family Planning; Women’s Liberation; Nudism in Deed and Word; Homosexuality* (London: Kimber, 1979), 136–137.
- <sup>61</sup> Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classic Antiquity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 225–226.
- <sup>62</sup> James N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 228.
- <sup>63</sup> Winter, “Roman Homosexual Activity and the Elite,” 116, quoting Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, 116.
- <sup>64</sup> Winter, “Roman Homosexual Activity and the Elite,” 113–114, note 55. “A man who actively penetrates others, whether male or female, is still a man.” The passive partner is the effeminate one in Roman culture. [M.W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Preservation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 65.]
- <sup>65</sup> Winter, “Roman Homosexual Activity and the Elite,” 113, note 55.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 116–117.
- <sup>68</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 65, note 62.
- <sup>69</sup> See Malick, “The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9.”
- <sup>70</sup> Richard B. Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell’s Exegesis of Romans 1,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* (Spring 1986): 211.
- <sup>71</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 109, note 8.
- <sup>72</sup> Ide, *The City of Sodom*, 29–30, note 16.
- <sup>73</sup> Ide, *The City of Sodom*, 28–29, note 16.
- <sup>74</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 111–112, note 8.
- <sup>75</sup> Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural,” 196, note 67.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Plato, *Laws I*, translated by R.G. Bury (Loeb Edition, 1926), 41.

<sup>78</sup> Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (1981), 25. Plato “saw anal intercourse as ‘contrary to nature,’ ... a degradation not only of man’s humanity, but even of his animality.”

<sup>79</sup> Finnis, “Law, Morality, and ‘Sexual Orientation,’” 1060, note 5, citing Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), 165–168; Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*; and Anthony W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 89–94.

<sup>80</sup> Steven Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

<sup>81</sup> Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural,” 211.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 386.



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