

Notes to Gagnon's Essay in the Gagnon-Via *Two Views* Book

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The following notes correspond to the note numbers in my essay, "The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Key Issues," in Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views (co-authored with Dan O. Via; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 41-92. For full bibliographic entries to the abbreviations given below, see the "Fuller Bibliography" on this same web page.

1. I am not asserting that the issue of homosexual practice is the most important concern of the church in absolute terms—more important, for example, than the issue of the sole lordship of Jesus Christ over our syncretistic culture. Christology is obviously the heart and soul of Christian faith. Yet attacks on Christ's lordship are rarely frontal assaults. They more commonly occur when positions that would have appalled Jesus and that represent a radical departure from Scripture are foisted on the church. The church's historic stance on a prescriptive male-female paradigm for sexual unions is the current foremost "endangered species" of the church. As such, it demands special attention. Indeed, as noted in points 3 and 4 below, religious freedom itself is at stake. For a riveting and alarming discussion of this, see the aptly subtitled book by Alan Sears and Craig Osten: *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*. No Christian who has reservations about affirming homosexual behavior can read this book and not recognize the extraordinary political dangers that face the church and youth generally from pro-homosex legislation.
2. It is true that the Western church continues to be beset by the problem of materialism and indifference to the plight of the poor. However, I know of no lobby in the church celebrating greed as a positive good or attempting to overturn the dominant scriptural perspective on this issue.
3. For a theocentric and christocentric preface to sexuality, see Gagnon 2001b, 1-3 (for an online pdf copy see <http://www.theologymatters.com/TMIssues/NovDec01.PDF> or <http://www.robgagnon.net/articles/gagnon1.pdf>). There I look at texts from both Paul and John to show that arguments favoring homosexual behavior overturn not only Scripture's explicit teaching on this matter but also other basic principles enshrined in Scripture. In insisting that God and Christ could not possibly deny one whole form of consensual sexual expression, pro-homosex arguments give only subordinate weight to (1) the theocentric posture of Scripture, (2) the basic Christian paradigm of grace amidst cruciformity, and (3) the image of Jesus as the sufficient Answer to all life's desires.

4. Gagnon 2001a, 460-69; Gagnon 2001b, 5-6. Although now widely utilized by pro-homosex advocates, the initial proponents of this analogy were: Luke Timothy Johnson, *Decision Making in the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 96-97; revised as *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 144-48; idem, "Debate & Discernment, Scripture & Spirit," *Commonweal* (Jan. 28, 1994): 12-13; and Siker 1994, 187-90; idem 1996, 145-46; Fowl.

5. Indeed, the Apostolic Decree (15:20, 29; 21:25) specifically enjoined Gentiles not to engage in *porneia* ("sexual immorality") which, given the echoes of Leviticus 17-18, clearly had the sin of homosexual intercourse in view, among others. On the fifth point, see the biblical texts cited in Gagnon 2001a, 466-69.

6. Ancient Israel, early Judaism, and early Christianity did not naively imbibe at the cultural well on this issue; they were distinctly countercultural. We know of no other cultures in the ancient Near East or in the Greco-Roman world that stood more unequivocally opposed to same-sex intercourse. Early Israel, early Judaism, and Christianity had to think long and hard about what they were doing to buck cultural trends elsewhere.

7. Also: mandatory release dates, the right of near-kin redemption, and not returning runaway slaves.

8. Some allege that biblical critiques of homosexual practice today "sound like" defenses of slavery in the pre-Civil War period. This misses the point: Scripture itself does not provide the unequivocal witness *for* slavery that it exhibits *against* same-sex intercourse.

9. In other words, being a woman is a condition given at conception. Homosexual passions, however, are almost certainly not primarily or directly congenital. They can be created, elevated, reduced, and sometimes even eliminated, depending on familial and peer influences and macrocultural sanctions.

10. E.g., Miriam, judge Deborah, Huldah, and Esther among others in the OT; the women involved in the ministry of Jesus; the example of Prisca (Priscilla) and other women who served as Paul's co-workers (Rom 16:1-15; Phil 4:2-3). See also Webb 2001.

11. E.g., pedophilia, zoophilia (bestiality), transvestism, transgenderism, necrophilia, sadomasochism, incestuous desires, and severe sexual addiction. *Sexual orientation* refers merely to the directedness of sexual desire at a given segment of a person's life. The term *sexual orientation* is often treated in pro-homosex literature as some sort of inviolable talisman. As a conversation stopper someone will say: "This is the person's sexual orientation; nothing can be done about that." Although pro-homosex advocates have worked feverishly to promote the view that sexual orientation refers to an unalterable and congenital condition, it cannot have such a meaning because socio-scientific research has not established that homoerotic desire is unalterable and congenital. Pro-homosex advocates have also tried to restrict use of the term to heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgenderism so as to link the last three orientations exclusively to the one sexual orientation endorsed by society, heterosexuality, and to disengage it from a broader list of unacceptable paraphilias. The attempt to make sexual orientation a legal category meriting special protection requires this semantic move; but nothing in the words *sexual* or *orientation* requires it.

12. Charles Cosgrove acknowledges the need to give “greater weight to countercultural voices in scripture” but suggests that Paul has bowed to the “dominant antipathy in his culture against homosexuality” in Rom 1:26-27, whereas in Gal 3:28 Paul “challenges dominant notions of sexual identity” (*Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 43). Cosgrove is wrong. The Greco-Roman culture had a “dominant antipathy” to *some* forms of homoerotic practice but by no means all (see Williams’ *Roman Homosexuality*). Even the occasional Greek or Roman critic of homoerotic practice fell far short of the intensity of opposition expressed in Judeo-Christian circles. Both Jews and Christians recognized that their view of homosexual practice set them apart from the culture at large. The Judeo-Christian view was not merely “echoing the dominant culture” when it opposed all same-sex intercourse; it was critiquing that culture. As noted in 2.d. (p. 46), nothing in Gal 3:28 challenges the root reason for Paul’s opposition to same-sex intercourse.

13. On the one hand the Old Testament allows divorce for men (Deut 24:1-4). On the other hand, anti-divorce currents can be detected: the Old Testament makes no provision for divorce initiated by wives, puts some restrictions on a husband’s right to divorce his wife (Deut 22:19, 29; 24:1), at one point declares “I (Yahweh) hate divorce” (Mal 2:16), and presents a vision of marriage in Gen 1:27 and 2:24 that Jesus understood to be in tension with the Mosaic allowance for divorce (Mark 10:9).

14. Suffice it to say that Paul’s and Matthew’s slight *modulation* of Jesus’ divorce ruling—if that is the right word—gives no grounds for a complete *overhaul* of a core sex-proscription in Scripture such as the one against same-sex intercourse. Paul and Matthew were not saying: we should celebrate divorce and provide cultural incentives for perpetuating a cycle of divorce and remarriage. Indeed, they undoubtedly saw their qualifications as in line with Jesus’ own original intention.

15. Walter Wink has suggested that Jesus was more staunchly opposed to divorce than to homoerotic intercourse, if indeed Jesus was opposed to the latter at all (Wink 1999, 41). Yet shall we claim that Jesus had weaker convictions about bestiality and incest on the grounds that he said not a word about these subjects? In speaking against divorce and remarriage, Jesus was turning his attention to a sexual issue that was a problem in his society; namely, the threat posed by divorce to the indissolubility of the one valid form of sexual union, the matrimony of one man and one woman. Obviously Jesus did not regard the longevity of a given sexual union to be more important than the intra-human, non-incestuous, and heterosexual prerequisites for entering such a union. Illicit sexual unions deserve to be severed.

16. Does it no longer trouble us that the church has become all too lax in its willingness to permit divorce when Jesus Christ himself, the epitome of God’s love, took a different approach? Essentially we have arrived at, and even expanded upon, the Old Testament allowance for divorce that precipitated Jesus’ criticism in the first place.

17. Arguably, sex between a man and his mother would be a comparable offense, slightly more or slightly less offensive depending on the author. Apart from that one possible qualification, however, only bestiality was considered a more severe “consensual” sexual offense than same-sex intercourse. At least four points demonstrate this. (1) Both ancient Israel and early Judaism exhibited extreme repugnance for same-sex intercourse. Such repugnance, of course, is conveyed in the Levitical proscriptions, which specifically tag man-male intercourse as a *to’evah* (an abomination; something particularly abhorrent, detestable, loathsome, repugnant, disgusting). Abhorrence for same-sex intercourse *per se* also factors prominently in three important “kitchen sink stories” of massive human depravity (Ham, Sodom, the Levite at Gibeah) and in the

references to the *qedeshim* (male cult prostitutes) in Deuteronomic law and in the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua through 2 Kings; here too labeled a *to'evah*). The fact that Ezekiel could describe it only by metonymy in 16:50 and 18:12 (as *to'evah*) also points in this direction, as does the absence of a specific recorded case of same-sex intercourse in early Judaism (from the Second Temple period on) prior to ca. A.D. 300. Regarding the possibility of Jews engaging in this abhorrent behavior, a text from the rabbinic Tosefta comments simply: "Israel is not suspected" (*Qiddushin* 5:10). Jews in the Greco-Roman period regarded man-male intercourse as the prime example, or at least one of the top examples, of Gentile impiety (e.g., *Sibylline Oracles* 3; *Letter of Aristeas* 152). In a lengthy description of sex laws, Philo (ca. 10 B.C.-A.D. 45) characterizes male-male intercourse as a "much greater evil than that which was mentioned [above]," referring minimally to sex with a menstruous and barren woman and possibly as well to the preceding discussion of adultery and incest (*Special Laws* 3.7-42; though cf. 3.14: "What form of unholiness could be more impious than [marrying one's mother]?"). Philo follows his discussion of male-male intercourse with one about bestiality (3.43-50), introduced with the words *alla gar* (literally, "but really, certainly"), whose sense may be correctly captured in F. Colson's translation for the Loeb Classical Library edition: "Even worse than this," that is, even worse than man-male intercourse. When Josephus (ca. A.D. 37-100) discusses marriage laws, his very first point, before he even mentions incest and adultery, is: "The Law recognizes only intercourse according to nature, that which is with a woman. . . . That of males with males it abhors and, if anyone attempts it, death is the penalty" (*Against Apion* 2.199-200). At another place, though, he singles out sexual intercourse with one's mother as "the greatest evil" before citing (in no particular order of priority) other forms of incest, sex with a menstruous woman, bestiality, and male-male intercourse (*Jewish Antiquities* 3.274-75). (2) The marriage text in Gen 2:24 marks as the one essential prerequisite of a married union, beyond its intra-human character, that it involves a man and a woman. Incest itself must be ruled out of bounds on the basis of post-Fall developments. Same-sex intercourse is precluded already prior to the Fall. (3) The Old Testament makes limited accommodations to monogamy and longevity, and in the patriarchal period some relationships existed that were subsequently banned by Levitical legislation as incestuous. Yet the Old Testament makes no exceptions for same-sex intercourse. (4) In Rom 1:24-27 Paul highlights same-sex intercourse, along with idolatry, as a prime example of egregious human suppression of the truth about God in creation. This, plus the charged terms with which Paul describes same-sex intercourse in 1:24-27, confirm that Paul's views on same-sex intercourse were as strong as those held by Jews generally of the period. That Paul employs the discussion in 1:18-32 to ensnare the righteous Jew in 2:1-3:8 in no way detracts from Paul's own vigorously negative assessment of same-sex intercourse (Gagnon 2001a, 277-84).

18. Scripture explicitly designates sex between sexual sames as "contrary to nature." In a derivative sense we might speak of the unnatural or bodily incongruous character of incest, bestiality, and pedophilia. Leviticus 18:23 designates bestiality as a *tevel*, "an untoward mixture, perversion." The same term is applied in 20:12 to a father having sex with his son's wife. The term *zimmah* ("depravity, monstrosity") is used in 20:14 of a man who has sex with a woman and her daughter. Of course, *to'evah* ("abomination, detestable act") is specifically attached to man-male intercourse in Lev 18:22 and 20:13; then, by extension, to all sexual offenses in Leviticus 18 (so 18:24-30).

19. The following comments on pedophilia by Dr. Fred Berlin, founder of the Sexual Disorders Clinic at Johns Hopkins, provide an interesting parallel to homosexual orientation: "The biggest misconception about pedophilia is that someone chooses to have it. . . . It's not anyone's fault that they have it, but it's their responsibility to do something about it. . . . Biological factors play into [the development of pedophilia]. . . . We've learned that you can successfully treat people with pedophilia, but you cannot cure them" (*People Magazine*, Apr. 15, 2002).

20. Linda Mealey, *Sex Differences* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000), 244.

21. Jesus did speak against judging others (e.g., Matt 7:1-5 // Luke 6:37, 41-42). However, the context for such sayings, both literary and historical, makes it obvious that Jesus was not advocating that his followers cease making moral distinctions between good and bad behavior. Indeed, one can hardly criticize another for the act of judging without making such a distinction. The point of the anti-judgment sayings was to warn people, particularly the Pharisees, against judgment that is overly punctilious, hypocritical, and loveless. The very next saying after Matt 7:1-5 is about not giving what is holy to dogs or throwing pearls before swine (7:6)—certainly not a non-judgmental statement.

22. Gagnon, “A Rejoinder to Walter Wink’s Views,” 23-33
(<http://robgagnon.net/articles/gagnon5.pdf>).

23. When Paul refers to the law as something abrogated he has in view the law of Moses instituted on Mount Sinai as the ruling power over Israel and thus, by extension, over all Adam’s descendants. In Paul’s understanding the Mosaic law was defective in three key ways: (1) Since it was given to Israel it served as a marker of Jewish identity and therefore as a boundary that tended to keep Gentiles out; in short, it was ethnically exclusive. (2) Even though there was a redemptive component to the law, it did not have as its basis the definitive and climactic redemptive work of God in Christ. Its stress was on human doing rather than divine doing and, as such, it made possible boasting in one’s own self. (3) Most importantly, it was helpless to empower obedience in the face of the strong sinful impulse operating in Adamic flesh, but powerful to curse those who violated its commands.

24. Martin Luther says as much in his comments on Rom 6:14 (*Lectures on Romans*, in *Luther’s Works* [vol. 25; Saint Louis: Concordia, 1972], 316-17): “Hence we must note that the apostle’s mode of speaking appears unusual and strange to those who do not understand it because of its great peculiarity. For those people understand the expression ‘to be under the Law’ as being the same as having a law according to which one must live. But the apostle understands the words ‘to be under the Law’ as equivalent to not fulfilling the Law, as being guilty of disobeying the Law, as being a debtor and a transgressor, in that the Law has the power of accusing and damning a person and lording it over him, but it does not have the power to enable him to satisfy the Law or overcome it. And thus as long as the Law rules, sin also has dominion and holds man captive. . . . Therefore he says in this passage that we can restrain the reign of sin because ‘we are not under the Law but under grace’ (v. 14). All this means ‘that the body of sin might be destroyed’ (v. 6) and the righteousness which has been begun may be brought to perfection.”

25. *Ibid.*, 321. John Calvin made a similar point when he commented on Rom 8:9: “Those in whom the Spirit does not reign do not belong to Christ; therefore those who serve the flesh are not Christians, for those who separate Christ from His Spirit make Him like a dead image or a corpse. . . . [F]ree remission of sins cannot be separated from the Spirit of regeneration. This would be, as it were, to rend Christ asunder” (*The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* [trans. R. MacKenzie; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961], 164).

26. The trip to God’s kingdom is free, all expenses paid by Christ’s death, but one still has to get on and stay on the airplane that God provides to get us there (the Spirit). So long as one lives in the main as a fleshly being, one remains very much on the runway.

27. Faith in Christ for Paul meant an end to a life for self and a beginning to life for Christ who gave himself for us. The one who lives in the main for self does not have faith in Christ. Paul stresses in the theme statement of his letter to the Romans that the Christian life is always characterized by believing in the gospel about Christ, not just at the moment of conversion. “God’s righteousness”—the rightness of God to save through a law-free gospel about Christ, and/or the saving activity that flows from and vindicates God’s rightness—“is being revealed *from faith to faith*,” that is, by faith from beginning to end or from first to last (Rom 1:17a). Paul’s main proof text was Hab 2:4: “The one who is righteous from faith shall live” (Rom 1:17b; Gal 3:11). Faith is concrete. The truth of the gospel daily challenges believers to believe that the message of the gospel about Christ’s death and resurrection for them is more real than anything that can be seen or touched. It calls on them to believe that they can cease living for themselves and instead let Christ live in them. And it urges them to acknowledge that God’s program for their lives, namely to form Christ in them by any means necessary, is better than any immediate self-gratification. Suppose a man wants to have sex with a woman other than his wife. What does faith mean in this context? Does it mean believing that Jesus died for him, knowing that he is going to heaven, and then having sex with the woman? May it not be so. Faith here means: Because I am so grateful for the salvation accomplished through Christ and am convinced that what God has in store for me—forming Christ in me, often through deprivation—is better than the gratification of this sinful impulse, I will not yield to that impulse. In other words, one cannot live primarily in conformity to the self-oriented impulse operating in human flesh and then claim to be living out of the conviction of being justified by faith. To be sure, even when one obeys, it is God who effects “both the willing and the working for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). Yet it is precisely because “God is the one who is at work in you” that one is to “work at your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). One must comply with God’s doing. To do otherwise is to substitute one’s own willing and doing for God’s, living out of one’s flesh rather than the Spirit. The outcome is death rather than life.

28. “Law” (*nomos*) here and in Rom 7:23 and 7:25b has a metaphorical sense. The law of God from Moses is good (7:12, 16) but, unfortunately, it is external and weak. The “law of the mind” that recognizes the goodness of the commands of the Mosaic law is, fortunately, internal but, unfortunately, still weak. There is “another law,” another regulating power, at work in human flesh, the “law of sin (and death), i.e., the sinful impulse. Unfortunately, it is not only internal but also strong, time and again taking prisoner the mind’s desire to do what the Mosaic law commands. A new internal “law” or regulating power that is stronger than the sinful impulse needs to be introduced. That new law is none other than the Spirit of Christ, made available to all who believe and enabling believers to do the essential will of God enshrined in the Mosaic law—without, however, reinstating the jurisdictional authority of the Mosaic law (8:1-17). With most Pauline scholars, I take Romans 7:7-25 (minus the anticipatory cry of deliverance in 7:25a) to be a description of the life of the unbeliever, one who does not have the Spirit and so remains under the regime of Adamic flesh and its Spirit-less jurisdictional authority, the Mosaic law. The prefacing texts, 7:5-6, decisively favor this interpretation. Romans 7:5 (“when we *were* in the flesh the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our members, so as to bear fruit for death”) is a perfect summary of the experience elaborated in 7:7-25. Romans 7:6 (“*but now* we were discharged from the law, having died to that by which we were being held down, so that we might serve in newness of Spirit, and not oldness of letter”) is likewise the perfect rubric for 8:1-17, which also begins with a “now” denoting the new circumstances of the believer in Christ. In short, the difference between “the law of the Spirit” and the law of Moses is threefold, answering to the threefold defect in the Mosaic law cited in n. 23 above: (1) The law of the Spirit does not set up barriers to Gentiles. (2) It is brought into being by the amends-making death of Christ, allowing us to be purified to receive God’s Spirit. (3) It not only commands us to live righteously but also empowers such obedience.

29. A fully sanctified life does not take hold all at once. Even so, in the main, one will serve Christ by the Spirit's power rather than sin by human power. As Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, "with fear and trembling work at your own salvation; for God is the one who is at work in you, [effecting] both the willing and the working for his good pleasure" (2:12-13). Note the wonderful balance here: we are to work at our own salvation but such working is nothing other than letting God work in us. Not to progress in holiness is to resist actively the work of God in one's life. And as Paul says later in the same letter: "not that I have already been made perfect (or: reached the goal), but I press on to make it my own. . . . forgetting what lies behind and straining to what lies ahead" (3:12-14). When we fail, we get up, push on, and forget about the failures of the past. We renew our resolve to crucify the sin-controlled life, not by our own efforts but by the power of God, and thereby to reach the goal of eternal life.

30. The vice list of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 begins with *pornoi* (sexually immoral people), idolaters, adulterers, "soft men," and men who lie with males. The reason that *pornoi* are mentioned separately from other sexual offenders is that the main issue at hand is still the case of the incestuous man, who is designated as a *pornos* in 1 Corinthians 5. Hence, *pornoi* is put at the head of the vice list, leapfrogging over idolatry (which is sometimes placed first in vice lists). Given that the ensuing discussion in 6:12-20 and 7:2 puts sex with prostitutes and sex outside the bond of marriage, respectively, under the rubric of *porneia*, reference to adulterers and participants in male-male intercourse in 6:9 should be understood as further specifying what *pornoi* might include (cf. 5:11 where *pornoi* appears in a nearly identical vice list as the sole designation for various forms of sexual immorality). Similarly, 1 Timothy 1:10 singles out immediately after *pornoi* "men who lie with males" (*arsenokoitai*)—not because *arsenokoitai* are distinct from *pornoi* but because *arsenokoitai* are a particularly egregious instance of *pornoi*.

31. The connection between engaging in a pattern of self-affirmed sexual immorality and exclusion from the eternal life of the kingdom of God is unmistakable in Paul. Thus he could say to the Thessalonian believers, in the earliest extant New Testament document:

For you know what commands we gave to you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God: your holiness, that you abstain from sexual immorality (*porneia*) . . . [and not live] like the Gentiles who do not know God. . . . because the Lord is an avenger regarding all these things. . . . For God called us not to sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*) but in holiness. Therefore the one who rejects [these commands] rejects not humans but the God who gives his Holy Spirit to us. (1 Thess 4:2-8)

And to the Galatian Christians:

The works of the flesh are obvious, which are: sexual immorality (*porneia*), sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*), licentiousness (*aselgeia*) . . . , which I am warning you about, just as I warned you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. . . . Stop deceiving yourselves; God is not to be mocked, for whatever one sows that one will also reap. For the one who casts seed into one's flesh will reap a harvest of destruction and decay from the flesh, but the one who casts seed into the Spirit will reap a harvest of eternal life from the Spirit. And let us not grow tired of doing what is right for in due time we will reap, *if* we do not relax our efforts. (Gal 5:19-21; 6:7-9)

And again to the Corinthians, in the context of how to deal with a practicing, self-affirming Christian participant in an incestuous adult union:

Or do you not realize that unrighteous people will not inherit God's kingdom? Stop deceiving yourselves. Neither the sexually immoral (the *pornoi*), nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor soft men (*malakoi*), nor men who lie with males (*arsenokoitai*) . . . will inherit the kingdom of God. And these things some of you used to be. But you washed yourselves off, you were made holy (sanctified), you were made righteous (justified) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9-11).

In 2 Corinthians Paul expresses deep concern that

I may have to mourn over many who have continued in their former sinning and did not repent of the sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*), sexual immorality (*porneia*), and licentiousness (*aselgeia*) that they practiced. (12:21)

Just as Paul correlated man-male intercourse with sexual immorality (*porneia*) in 1 Cor 6:9 (cf. 1 Tim 1:10), so too he treated same-sex intercourse as the prime example of “sexual uncleanness” (*akatharsia*) in Rom 1:24-27:

Therefore, God gave them over, in the desires of their hearts, to a sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*) consisting of their bodies being dishonored among themselves. . . . to dishonorable passions, for even their females exchanged the natural use (i.e., of the male as regards sexual intercourse) for that which is contrary to nature; and likewise also the males, having left behind the natural use of the female (as regards sexual intercourse), were inflamed with their yearning for one another, males with males committing indecency and in return receiving in themselves the payback which was necessitated by their straying.

Later, in Rom 6:19-22, Paul urged Roman believers to reverse this trend:

For just as you presented your members as slaves to sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*) and to [other types of] lawlessness for the sake of lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for the sake of holiness (or: sanctification). For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with respect to [the demands of] righteousness. What fruit did you have at that time? Things of which you are now ashamed, because the end (or: outcome) of those things is death. But now, since you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit for holiness (or: sanctification), and the end (or: outcome) is eternal life.

The message of Colossians and Ephesians is similar:

So put to death the members that belong to the earth: sexual immorality (*porneia*), sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*), passion, evil desire . . . because of which things the wrath of God is coming [on the children of disobedience], in which things you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now put away all (such) things . . . , because you have stripped off the old humanity with its practices and clothed yourselves with the new, which is being renewed into knowledge according to the image of the one who created it. (Col 3:5-10)

[N]o longer walk as the Gentiles walk, . . . who . . . have given themselves up to licentiousness (*aselgeia*) for the doing of every sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*). . . . Sexual immorality (*porneia*) and sexual uncleanness (*akatharsia*) of any kind . . . must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. . . . Know this indeed, that every sexually immoral person (*pornos*) or sexually unclean person (*akathartos*) . . . has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty

words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming on the children of disobedience. (Eph 4:17-19; 5:3-6)

And so too the Pastoral Epistles:

The law is not laid down for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient, the ungodly and sinners, the unholy and profane, killers of fathers and killers of mothers, murderers, the sexually immoral (*pornoi*), males who take other males to bed (*arsenokoitai*), kidnappers (or: slave dealers), liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to sound teaching that accords with the gospel. (1 Tim 1:9-11)

Many scholars regard Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles as “deuteropauline,” i.e., written by later Paulinists in Paul’s name. As regards the danger of sexual immorality, though, these texts are in complete agreement with the undisputed Pauline corpus.

32. The other main interpretation, that Ham’s offense was voyeurism, does not do justice to the statement that Noah “came to know what his youngest son had *done* to him” (9:24). Nor does it explain adequately the severity of the curse and its placement on Ham’s ‘seed,’ Canaan. It ignores the fact that the expression “see the nakedness of” is used elsewhere with reference to sexual intercourse (Lev 20:17; similarly, “uncover the nakedness of” throughout Leviticus 18 and 20). It also overlooks the background story of incestuous homosexual rape in the Egyptian myth of Horus and Seth. Among those who interpret the story as involving immoral sexual intercourse are: Hermann Gunkel, Gerhard von Rad, Christoph Levin, Thomas Schmidt, Donald Wold, Athalya Brenner, and Martti Nissenen. The Babylonian Talmud records a debate ca. A.D. 225 between two rabbis about the meaning of “had done to him” in Gen 9:24: one suggesting castration, the other homosexual relations (*Sanhedrin* 70a). See Gagnon 2001a, 63-71.

33. Cf. the use of the term “the abominable” in Rev 21:8 (paralleled by “dogs” in 22:15) as a designation for those participating in homosexual cult activity.

34. *Testament of Asher* 7:1 states clearly that the men of Sodom “did not recognize the Lord’s angels” (similarly Philo and Josephus). Hebrews 13:2 may provide an inverted echo of this sentiment when it advises that hospitality be shown to strangers “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

35. According to the *Testament of Naphtali* 3:3-4, the descendants of Naphtali shall not be like the Gentiles who changed “the order” of nature by devoting themselves to idols; instead, they shall recognize in the heavens, earth, and sea “the Lord who made all these things, in order that [they] may not become like Sodom, which exchanged the order of its nature.” Strikingly similar motifs to Rom 1:19-27 make it likely that either Paul formulated Rom 1:19-27 with this tradition in mind or *T. Naph.* 3:3-4 is another Christian interpolation into the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. I think the former is more likely, but either supposition increases the probability that the clause about Sodom exchanging “the order of its nature” refers to same-sex intercourse. This is important because, like Jude 7, the actions of the men of Sodom are compared with the actions of the angels in Gen 6:4, who “likewise exchanged the order of their nature” by copulating with human females. The “likewise” suggests similarity but not identity. How far does the similarity go? Both the Sodomites and the angels acted against “the order of their nature,” engaging in, or attempting to engage in, structurally incompatible forms of sexual intercourse. Both acts involved, or threatened to involve, human-angel copulation. Yet the very concept of “exchange” implies volition, an intentional action—as with the exchange of nature’s order for idols—and that is precisely the point where the analogy between the Sodomites and the angels breaks down. This

volitional element comes across clearly in Rom 1:18-27, which correlates the concept of exchange with a conscious suppression of truth in creation/nature. Consequently, one should probably understand *T. Naph.* 3:3-5 in a way that confirms our interpretation of Jude 6-8: the Sodomites deliberately exchanged the order of their nature as males by attempting intercourse with other males. In the process they got more than they bargained for, unknowingly attempting sex with “other flesh,” angels. The primary exchange is opposite-sex intercourse for same-sex intercourse but the undertone is unintended sex with angels. The latter component solidifies a connection with the rebellious angels—a connection already intimated by the fact that both, in different ways, consciously exchanged the natural for the unnatural. For other early Jewish texts that pick up on the motif of sexual immorality at Sodom, see Gagnon 2001a, 88-89 n. 121.

36. The issue of coercion was secondary. As with Rom 1:24 the language of impurity is applied to *sinful* desires. In a highly tendentious review of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, L. William Countryman charges that my reading of Jude 7 is an example of exegetical carelessness (*Anglican Theological Review* 85:1 [Winter 2003]: 196). Countryman insists that the phrase “in a manner similar to these,” a back-reference to the mention of the angelic “Watchers” in Jude 6, mandates that the sole and exclusive sin of Sodom in Jude’s eyes was attempted sex with angels. All Countryman has demonstrated is his own lack of exegetical precision. Nothing in the wording of Jude 7 dictates an exact correspondence with the sin of the Watchers and, in fact, there cannot be an exact correspondence since the story of Sodom depicts offenders who are unaware of angels in their midst. In my review of Countryman’s review, I expand on my discussion in *Homosexuality and the Bible* by pointing to six indications that *ekporneusasai* (“having committed sexual immorality”) in Jude 7 alludes at least in part to intended male-male intercourse. See <http://robgagnon.net/Reviews/homoCountrymanResp.pdf> (pp. 10-14) or <http://robgagnon.net/RevCountryman.htm>.

37. The Deuteronomistic History is a label that scholars give to the unified work running from Joshua to 2 Kings. “Deuteronomistic” refers to the Deuteronomistic History; “Deuteronomic” to the legal material in Deuteronomy. For a fuller treatment of the *qedeshim* and the story of the Levite at Gibeah, see Gagnon 2001a, 91-110.

38. The Holiness Code (H) is the designation that scholars give to Leviticus 17-26, a block of laws that urge all Israelites to keep the land of Israel unpolluted through obedience to the commands found therein.

39. Whether a capital sentence would have been standard procedure everywhere is not clear. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 110-111 n. 176, 113 n. 181.

40. Gagnon 2001a, 43-56, 347-60, and *passim*. The reason that female-female intercourse goes unmentioned is that it probably was not a problem in ancient Israelite society, given the tight controls on female chastity (cf. also its virtual absence in ancient Near Eastern sources). Note that the reason for forbidding male-male intercourse (“The Necessity of Sexual Complementarity,” pp. 64-65) would also preclude lesbian intercourse, though it is an open question whether the penalty would have been as severe. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 142-46.

Jerome T. Walsh published an article in Summer 2001 issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* claiming: “The man to whom the laws of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 are addressed . . . is the one who performs the ‘lying down of a woman’—that is, the one who acts as the receptive partner. . . . The rkz [zakar, ‘male’] with whom a man is forbidden to lie is the penetrator. . . . Thus the phrase hvā ybkvm rkz-tā bkvy [yishkav eth-zakar mishkeve ishah] is best translated ‘to lie with a male as a woman would’” (“Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: Who Is Doing What to Whom?” *JBL* 120 [2001]: 201-209, here p. 205). Walsh has misunderstood the text.

The phrase “lyings of a woman” has the sense “lyings with a woman.” In other words, Lev 18:22 should be read as “with a male you shall not lie (as though the) lying(s) with a woman,” where the person addressed—20:13 specifies an vya! [‘ish], a man—is told not to lie with another “male” (rkz [zakar]) as though he were lying with a woman, that is, with sexual intent. Walsh is right that the man is doing the lying but incorrect in failing to see that “woman” here is an objective, not subjective, genitive. (For the objective genitive in Hebrew see GKC [= Gesenius’ *Hebrew Grammar*] §128h.)

This is true also of the OT texts that speak of a woman “who has known a man by (or: as to) lying of a male (rk*z* bK^v=m!= vya! [‘ish lemishkav zakar])” (Num 31:17; Judg 21:12) or “who has [not] known lying (i.e. what it is like to lie) of a male” (rk*z* bK^v=m! [mishkav zakar], Num 31:18, 35; Judg 21:11). Obviously, these texts do not refer to women who have sexual experience with (“know”) a man in the sense of “by lying as a man would” (i.e., in the penetrative role?). Most likely, “lying of a male” in these texts means “lying (i.e. sleeping, having intercourse) with a male,” with rk*z* functioning as an objective genitive. All the main modern English translations correctly translate the genitive “of a male” as an objective genitive “with a male” (RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NIV, NAB, NJB, REB; see also, among many commentators, Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36* [AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 448, 456: “through lying down with a male”). The same can be said for the standard dictionaries: “lying down of, i.e. intercourse with, a male,” alongside of “the lyings down of, acts of intercourse with, a woman” for Lev 18:22; 20:13 (“bK^v=m!,” *DCH* 5:27); “in bed with a man” (*HALOT*); “every woman that has [not] lain with a male” (W. Beuken, “bK^v*,” *TDOT* 14:663).

Indeed, Walsh does not argue otherwise for these texts. What he does argue...

It is possible that the sense is: women who have sexual experience with a man “by a male’s lying (with her),” “

Dead Sea Scrolls text

The only comparable instances where, as in Lev 18:22 and 20:13, bK^v=m! is applied to sexual intimacy and with a following genitive, are the occurrences in Num 31:17-18, 35; Judg 21:11-12 cited above. (Ezek 23:17 provides another sexual use of bK^v=m! (*mishkav*) but in an expression that is not germane to Lev 18:22 and 20:13, involving a genitive abstract noun: “the Babylonians came to her to/into the bed of love [ydy]D) bK^v=m!=, *lemishkav dodim*.) As such they are decisive for the objective genitive interpretation of Lev 18:22 and 20:13.

History of Interpretation

Also Lev 20:13, which refers to an ish (man) who lies with a male (zakar), indicates that the reference is to an adult male who lies with a male, whether adolescent or adult. The subject of the lying is the adult penetrator.

41. The one exception is the prohibition of sex with a menstruating woman (18:19). However, there are good reasons for bracketing this out. (1) Even the framers of the Holiness Code regarded

such intercourse as a second-order severe offense, one not requiring immediate civil action (20:18). (2) Elsewhere in Leviticus, outside the Holiness Code, the only ‘penalty’ mentioned for sex with a menstruating woman is that the man is put into a state of ritual uncleanness for seven days (15:24). In fact, of all the sexual transgressions cited in Lev 18 and 20, sex with a menstruating woman is the only one that overlaps with permitted impurities in the Priestly Source (P). Also speaking to the issue of ritual purity is the fact that the main issue is the interaction of fluids (menstrual blood and semen) and not the legitimacy of the sexual union per se (as with adultery, same-sex intercourse, incest, and bestiality). (3) Other than in Ezek 18:6; 22:10, we hear not a word elsewhere in the Old Testament about the problem of sex with a menstruating woman. (4) There is no clear carry-over of this proscription into the New Testament canon. The closest one comes is the Apostolic Decree where abstention from blood is at least distinguished from abstention from *porneia* (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25). Points (1) through (4) above suggest that this particular proscription is not a canonical core value, particularly in the context of the movement from old covenant to new. The next two points speak to additional problems with carrying over this proscription into a contemporary context. (5) Sex with a menstruating woman does not carry quite the same “unnatural” quality of having sex with one’s parents, someone of the same sex, or an animal. It happens inadvertently, in the course of normal sexual activity. Finally, (6) the social-scientific case for avoiding incest, bestiality, adultery, and same-sex intercourse is a world away from the evidence for abstention from sex during menstruation. For further elaboration see Gagnon 2002a, 100-103.

42. Pro-homosex advocates usually cite as analogous quaint and obsolete regulations two sets of apodictic law (of “You shall not” style) in the Holiness Code: Lev 19:19 (against breeding two different kinds of animals, sowing different kinds of seeds in the same field, and wearing clothing made of two kinds of yarns) and Lev 19:27-28 (against rounding off the hair on the temples, destroying one’s beard, gashing one’s flesh, and tattooing one’s body). Since no penalty is attached to the proscriptions, it is hard to know how strongly they were taken. However, Lev 19:19 has a parallel in Deut 22:9-11 and there the penalty for sowing one’s vineyard with a second kind of seed is merely that the yield is forfeited (22:9). By extension it is likely that the penalty for violating the other two prohibitions was merely that the animals (or their offspring) and the clothes, respectively, would be destroyed. Moreover, the prohibition of animal and cloth mixtures was not absolute: the cherubim of the ark were hybrid creatures; and mixtures of linen and wool were enjoined for some Tabernacle cloths, parts of the priestly wardrobe, and the tassel of the laity (the last involving a single blue thread amid linen corner fringes). The reason for the prohibitions appears to be that mixtures symbolized penetration into the divine realm (so Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22* [AB; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 1658-64). This does not mean, however, that all mixing has a sacral quality, for not even priests are permitted to engage in bestiality; nor that all mixing is forbidden, for in one sense *heterosexual* intercourse requires a greater degree of mixing than *homosexual* intercourse. As for the prohibitions in Lev 19:27-28 (cf. Deut 14:1b), at least the hair cutting and flesh gashing were associated with pagan mourning rites for the dead. The aim of the proscriptions was to prevent participation in idolatrous rites. The significance of the tattoo ban is less clear but may have had to do with the abolition of perpetual slavery (ibid., 1694-95). Neither the proscriptions of Lev 19:19 nor those of 19:27-28 are taken up in the New Testament. Their timebound quality is self-evident, possessing as they do a largely symbolic character. Adultery, incest, same-sex intercourse, and bestiality perhaps have a negative symbolic value. Yet their wrongness is hardly exhausted by viewing them as symbols. Yes, adultery can be used as a metaphor to picture the unfaithfulness of God’s covenant people. But it does concrete intra-human harm as well. It is wrong to view the Levitical proscription of man-male intercourse, or of incest and bestiality, merely as a dispensable symbol.

43. The incest laws in Leviticus 18 and 20 do not include a specific prohibition of sex with one's full sister or daughter. The reason is probably that the opening heading in Lev 18:6, "no one shall approach any flesh of his flesh," automatically forbids such relationships, along with sex with one's mother, as the closest kin. Sex with one's mother is explicitly addressed in 18:7 only in order to establish that all other incestuous unions are, in one way or another, a violation of one's mother or father. The remainder of the list in 18:8-18 shows which more distant kin-relations beyond mother, sister, and daughter are forbidden. Cf. Milgrom 2000, 1527-30.

44. The Middle Assyrian Laws, the only other legal corpus in the ancient Near East that penalizes man-male intercourse, stipulates castration and that only for rape (Gagnon 2001a, 45-47, 55-56).

45. See further Gagnon 2001a, 114-115 n. 182; Gagnon 2002a, 91-92.

46. The word "abomination" is elsewhere connected with man-male intercourse in Ezek 16:50; 18:12; Deut 23:18; 1 Kgs 14:24; Rev 21:8.

47. E.g., Milgrom 2000, 1567-68, 1750, 1785-90. Even with the mandate to procreate in Gen 1:28, there is no evidence that the authors of the Holiness Code in particular, much less Scripture generally, treated marital intercourse with a sterile woman as an abomination. Or *coitus interruptus* practiced by married couples or sex during a woman's pregnancy. My critique of Milgrom's strange proposal that Lev 18:22 and 20:13 condemn only *incestuous* man-male intercourse *within Israel* is forthcoming.

48. The prohibitions of child sacrifice and of sex with a menstruant have to do, respectively, with respect for the sacral quality of life emanating from sex and the sacral season of death and renewal in a woman's body. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 135-39.

49. There is an interesting line in the pseudo-Lucianic work *Affairs of the Heart* (ca. A.D. 300) in which Charicles, in the course of defending the superiority of male love for women (19-21), refers to homosexual men as those who "looked with the eyes at the male as (though) at a female. . . . but [saw] themselves in one another" (cf. Gagnon 2001a, 166-67 n. 10 for fuller citation).

50. Cf. the quotes from Mary Douglas and Stephen Bigger, as well as from Plato's *Laws* 838 in Gagnon 2001a, 126-28.

51. L. William Countryman is an exception. He actually argues that the taboo status associated with incest does more harm than good (pp. 257-58).

52. Milgrom 2000, 1400, 1573, 1578, and *passim*. "Calling those involved in improper sexual relationships impure is a way of calling the persons sinful" (David P. Wright, "Unclean and Clean [OT]," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6:734).

53. Cf. Lev 18:20 which refers to the "defiling" of the man who has sex with another man's wife and 19:22 which labels as "sin" (*hatta't*) the similar—in fact, lesser—act of having sex with a slave woman designated for another man. Similarly, the depiction of the "trial by ordeal" of the suspected adulteress in Num 5:11-31 mixes the terms "iniquity" (*'awon*), "defiling herself," "uncleanness," and "unfaithful." Of course, throughout the Old Testament sin is viewed as an agent of defilement and impurity that requires metaphorical and often literal cleansing. Many texts could be cited but it will suffice to mention one: Ps 51 ("cleanse me from my sin. . . . purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean," etc.).

54. Countryman is again an exception (see note 77 below).

55. The reference to the incestuous man having his “father’s wife” (1 Cor 5:1) echoes both Levitical (18:7-8; 20:11) and Deuteronomic (27:20) proscriptions of sex with one’s “father’s wife.” Paul’s word for “nakedness, indecent exposure, indecency” (*aschēmosunē*) in Rom 1:27 is used 24 times in the Septuagint translation of Lev 18:6-19; 20:11, 17-21. Paul’s word for “uncleanness, impurity” (*akatharsia*) in Rom 1:24 appears in the Septuagint rendering of Lev 18:19; 20:21, 25. “Worthy of death” in Rom 1:32 may also have called to mind the capital sentence pronounced on man-male intercourse in Lev 20:13. Even Bernadette Brooten, author of the best pro-homosex work on lesbianism in antiquity, and herself a self-professed lesbian, acknowledges that Rom 1:26-32 “directly recalls” Lev 18:22 and 20:13. However, she contends that this is a good reason for disavowing Paul’s views (281-94). For a rebuttal of the latter point, see Gagnon 2001a, 122-28.

56. Three points are pertinent here.

(1) Despite making the most vigorous case for the Mosaic law’s abolition among New Testament authors, Paul saw significant continuity across covenants on a host of moral issues. Generally the “big ticket items” in the Old Testament understanding of illicit sexual activity remained in place for Paul: adultery, incest, same-sex intercourse, sex with prostitutes, fornication, and, presumably, bestiality. Although bestiality is not mentioned in Paul’s letters, a number of considerations establish that Paul’s “silence” indicates complete agreement with the Old Testament proscription: the fact that Gen 1:27 and 2:18-24 presuppose the humanity of both participants; the fact that bestiality was probably the most extreme behavior in the Old Testament pantheon of sexually immoral acts (Exod 22:19; Lev 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut 27:21); the fact that early Judaism continued to show extreme repugnance for bestiality (e. g., Philo who described bestiality as the worst case of sexual immorality); the rarity, perhaps virtual nonexistence, of actual cases of bestiality in early Judaism and early Christianity (hence, no need to mention it); and the exceedingly unnatural quality of bestiality, a concern that would not have been ignored by Paul given his argument from nature in Rom 1:24-27 and elsewhere.

(2) Within this broad continuity, Paul accepted some discontinuity between the two covenants over sexual issues. It is unlikely that Paul would have been overly concerned about intercourse during menstruation. Furthermore, as with the church generally, Paul did not carry over the civil penalties prescribed by the Mosaic law for various offenses, including sexual offenses. However, this hardly meant that Paul regarded sexual offenses less seriously than did ancient Israel. Christian churches were voluntary associations with no authority from the state to implement civil sanctions. More importantly, the Christian worldview was oriented toward the establishment of a new creation, governed by the Spirit rather than the flesh and more concerned with preparing for the coming kingdom of God than with preserving the institutions of this passing world. In accord with Jesus’ teachings, the early church gave high priority to core values of outreach, compassion and forgiveness. Yet it also in Jesus’ name believed that the church should make use of community discipline, up to and including expulsion from the community of believers (recommended by Paul for the case of incest in 1 Cor 15; cf. Matt 18:15-20). Paul’s teachings on the consequences of serial unrepentant sexual immorality were in line with Jesus’ teachings: such behavior risked exclusion from God’s eternal kingdom. This does not seem like a softening of capital offenses but rather a projection of death onto an eternal eschatological landscape. Jesus and Paul’s key concern was to bring about repentance from immoral behavior before the Day of the Lord (dead men don’t repent), not to express tolerance for immoral activity.

(3) Generally the elements of discontinuity were in the direction of *exceeding* the sex-ethic demands of the Mosaic law. This approach is consistent with the one taken by Jesus himself. Women were given greater equality with men as regards expectations of sexual purity—not so much by loosening the constraints on female sexuality but rather by tightening the constraints on

male sexuality. The Old Testament exhibits some degree of laxness on matters involving male sexuality, particularly concerning the option of polygyny, but also as regards fornication and prostitution. Paul followed Jesus in making the options for divorce and remarriage by men as limited as the options that women always had. Jesus' implicit principle, namely that sex with someone other than one's single living spouse constitutes adultery, was accepted by Paul, which in turn made polygyny impossible (polyandry had always been an impossibility). All sex outside of marriage was firmly held to be illicit fornication, not only for women (1 Cor 7). Male sex with prostitutes was treated as a grave offense (1 Cor 6:12-20). At the same time, while raising the bar on sexual purity for men, Paul also made explicit the implicit Levitical proscription of lesbian relations (Rom 1:26).

57. Non-Christian Jews, too, could make this distinction. For example, the Jewish author of *The Letter of Aristeas* (ca. 200-100 B.C.) understood the Mosaic food laws to be symbolic of a deeper moral purity found, for example, in the laws against homosexual intercourse and incest (151-52).

58. The same observation applies to the language of defilement used by Jude 7 and 2 Pet 2:10 to describe the actions of the Sodomites.

59. This misuse of the centurion story is so far-fetched that I did not even bother addressing it in my book. However, since a number of pro-homosex advocates have continued to cite this story—and some have communicated to me that it is an “important” missing element of my book—I now think that there is a need to address it. Some contend that because sex between Gentile masters and slaves was quite common, and because too Jesus did not warn the centurion not to have sex with his slave, Jesus did not have a problem with male-male intercourse. Four main points tell against this conjecture.

(1) Not every provincial or Roman officer was having sex with his slave so Jesus could hardly have assumed such behavior was going on. Moreover, we know that the form much master-slave homoeroticism took included not only coerced sexual activity but also forced feminization, up to and including castration. By the reasoning of those who put a pro-homosex spin on the story, we would have to conclude that Jesus had no problem with this particularly exploitative form of same-sex intercourse inasmuch as he did not explicitly tell the centurion to stop doing it.

(2) The fact that Jesus healed the centurion's “boy” (*pais*) in Matt 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 communicates nothing in the way of approval of any potential sexual intercourse that the centurion may have been engaging in, whether with his “boy” or anyone else. Jesus also reached out to tax collectors. Yet he certainly was not commending their well-deserved reputation for collecting more taxes from their own people than they had a right to collect. Jesus reached out to sexual sinners yet, given his clear statements on divorce/remarriage, he certainly was not condoning their sexual activity. Why should we conclude that Jesus' silence about the centurion's sexual life communicates approval? Luke adds the motif that Jewish elders interceded on the centurion's behalf (7:3-5). Should we argue that these Jewish elders had no problem with same-sex intercourse, when every piece of evidence that we have about Jewish views of same-sex intercourse in the Second Temple period and beyond is unremittingly hostile to such behavior?

(3) There can be no question of Matthew or Luke (or the Q source before them) reading into the story a positive view of same-sex intercourse on the part of Jesus. If even Paul, the most vigorous Jewish proponent in the Bible of the abrogation of the Mosaic law, was strongly opposed to same-sex intercourse, what chance is there that Matthew, the most vigorous proponent in the New Testament of the retention of the Mosaic law, would have recognized in this story a pro-homosex element? Even less likely would be a positive spin on same-sex intercourse by the Q community—still more conservative on the question of the law than Matthew's community. Luke's reference to the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15, with its prohibitions drawn from those enjoined on the resident alien in Lev 17-18, including the one against *porneia* (sexual

immorality), could not have read an affirmation of homosexual behavior in the story. So if three of the earliest extant interpreters of the story, those in closest proximity to Jesus' views and time, did not detect any pro-homosex content in it, it is likely that contemporary interpreters who do are simply reading their own biases into the story.

(4) The final blow to all pro-homosex theories is that, from a tradition-historical point of view, the earliest recoverable version of the story probably did not contain the requisite elements for a pro-homosex spin. Here I refer the reader to my forthcoming work on the tradition history of the story of Jesus and the Capernaum official. It is likely that the "boy" (*pais*) originally meant a "child" or "son" of the Capernaum official. The Q and Matthean versions are equivocal. They mention only a *pais*, which could mean "boy" in the sense of "child, son" or in the sense of "slave." Luke interprets the *pais* to be a "slave" (*doulos*), but this is a product of later Lukan redaction and cannot tell us what Q or Matthew understood the *pais* to be. John 4:46-54 represents an independent variant version of the same account and there the *pais* is viewed as a "son" (*huios*) of the official. For a number of reasons this is likely to be the earliest version. In fact, my own reconstruction of the story suggests that the earliest core speaks about Jesus meeting a non-descript Capernaum official who was probably neither a military officer nor a Gentile but a Galilean Jew in the employ of Herod Antipas (so John's version). If that is so, then it is certainly improbable that a Jewish official would be having sex with his son. If one is concerned with historical Jesus issues, this text lends absolutely no support for a pro-homosex view on Jesus' part. And there is obviously no support for a pro-homosex reading from any of the subsequent trajectories of the story's tradition history (Johannine Signs Source to John, Q to Matthew, Q to Luke).

Even further into the realm of fantasy is the position that Jesus himself may have been a homosexual, given his singleness and close relationship with the "beloved disciple." Martti Nissinen, who in my view has written the best treatment of the subject of the Bible and homosexuality from a pro-homosex perspective, acknowledges this (118-22). Unfortunately, he never gets much beyond this point to ask what Jesus might have thought about same-sex intercourse.

A critique of the recent book by Theodore Jennings, *The Man Jesus Loved*, is forthcoming.

60. Consistent with the powerful witness of the Scriptures of Israel against same-sex intercourse, Jews in the period from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200 viewed same-sex intercourse as a prime example—most often *the* prime example—of Gentile sexual depravity. Cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 152; *Sibylline Oracles* 3:184-87, 596-600, 764; 5:166, 430; *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 190-92, 212-14; *Wisdom of Solomon* 14:26; Philo, *Abraham* 135-37, *Special Laws* 1.325, 2.50, 3.37-42, *Contemplative Life* 59-62; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.200-201, *Against Apion* 2.199, 273-75; *Testament of Levi* 17:11; *Testament of Naphtali* 3:4; *Second Enoch* 10:4; 34:1-2; *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 7:4. See Gagnon 2001a, ch. 2.

61. If there is any historical veracity to the story of Jesus and the adulterous woman, found in Bibles at John 7:53-8:11 but not an original part of John's Gospel, it may be that Jesus reinterpreted capital sentences on immoral behavior in the Old Testament to apply to eschatological judgment. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 188-89.

62. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 190-92. Hyperbole is a characteristic feature of many of Jesus' sayings; for example, "The one who does not hate father and mother cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26), where the Matthean parallel replaces "hate" with "love more than." In the saying about defilement, Mark does parenthetically remark that Jesus' saying about what goes into a person had the effect of "cleansing all the foods" (7:19b). The Matthean parallel, however, strikes this conclusion, probably in disagreement with Mark. The subsequent disputes in early Christianity over dietary matters are difficult to explain on the assumption that Jesus clearly abolished food

laws (cf. Gal 2:11-14; Romans 14). We can, of course, say that Jesus' comments were suggestive of the kinds of rules that might become invalid in moving, after Jesus' death and resurrection, from the jurisdiction of the Mosaic law and of the old Adam to the jurisdiction of the law of the Spirit and of the new Adam.

63. Paul was more "liberal" on the inclusion of Gentiles, circumcision, Sabbath and festival observances, and food laws. He also provided a very limited option for divorce not contained in his inventory of Jesus sayings.

64. Undoubtedly, had Paul heard of a specific case of a homoerotic relationship going on in one of his churches, he would have said the same thing that he said in the case of the incestuous relationship at Corinth; namely, "in the name of the Lord Jesus" remove provisionally the perpetrator(s) from the life of the community (1 Cor 5:4; cf. 5:11 with 6:9). It is important to note that Paul probably did not have an explicit saying of Jesus on incest. Yet he could emphatically advocate policy "in the name of the Lord Jesus" because, Jesus saying or not, there was no doubt about Jesus' view on incest. The same can be said about Jesus' view of same-sex intercourse. And what of Jesus' closest followers during his earthly ministry, including Peter and John, and Jesus' brother James? Certainly the leadership in the Jerusalem church, which was still debating the relevance of food laws and Sabbath observance, never would have drawn the conclusion from anything that Jesus had said during his life on earth that same-sex intercourse was acceptable under certain circumstances.

65. The sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 was so grateful for forgiveness that she put herself entirely at Jesus' service. The woman caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11 was protected from stoning not because adultery was a minor matter but because stoning was an immediate terminal punishment that closed off repentance. Jesus' parting words to her, "from now on sin no more," indicate the point of this show of mercy: deterrence from further acts of adultery. Two verses in the story—"Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (8:7) and "Neither do I condemn you" (8:11)—are often interpreted metaphorically to mean that people should not be critical of the behavior of others, especially sexual behavior. Yet in the context of the story, *condemn* means to "execute the sentence of stoning," and *throw a stone* refers to real stones, capital punishment, not a moral judgment about adultery. The Samaritan woman in John 4 first had to be converted to the recognition that Jesus was, in Johannine terms, the true Well (or Spring) from which flowed the living waters of the Spirit. The consequent transformation of her life is implied by her subsequent role as an evangelist (4:39) and by the later insistence of John's Jesus that "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15; cf. 14:21; 15:10).

66. The parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and particularly the lost (prodigal) son in Luke 15 illustrate these points. The saying about sinning seven times a day or sinning seventy-seven times (cf. Gen 4:24) indicates that the community of believers must forgive even chronic offenders, so long as each act of sin is followed by repentance. With respect to the issue of homosexual practice, this means that, as far as the church's forgiveness is concerned, the key issue is not whether someone engages in same-sex intercourse but whether someone fails to express repentance for such acts. The church should extend grace to the penitent almost to the point of absurdity but it cannot tolerate serial unrepentant sin of a clear and serious nature. That requires church discipline (Matt 18:15-20). For a discussion of the role of repentance in Jesus' teaching, see Gagnon 2001a, 219-27.

67. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 226-27; idem, "A Second Look at Two Lukan Parables: Reflections on the Unjust Steward and the Good Samaritan," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 20 (1998): 1-11.

68. Matthew places the saying about cutting off body parts between the sayings about adultery of the heart and divorce. The sexual connotation resonates with a similar tradition found in the Babylonian Talmud (*Niddah* 13b; cited in Gagnon 2001a, 208 n. 34). A doublet of the saying appears in Mark 9:43-48 (parallel in Matt 18:8-9) in close proximity to Mark's divorce text. The mention of cutting off body parts is obviously hyperbole, but it is hyperbole for taking strenuous measures to overcome temptations to sexual sin. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 197-209.

69. The placement of Gen 2:24 immediately after Gen 1:27 gives the impression that, in Jesus' view, the "for this reason" refers back to 1:27; that is, *because* God made humans male and female, *only* the complementary sexual pairing of a man and a woman makes possible an indissoluble one-flesh bond. As Gordon P. Hugenberger so effectively shows, Malachi makes a similar normative allusion to Gen 2:24 in his discussion of divorce (*Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* [VTSup 52; Leiden: Brill, 1994; reprint: Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 151-67, 341-43). Hugenberger renders the MT of Malachi 2:15: "Did he (God) not make [you/them] one, with a remnant of the spirit belonging to it? And what was the One seeking? A godly seed! Therefore watch out for your lives and do not act faithlessly against the wife of your youth." The first line underscores that "divorce constitutes an offense against one's own life"—an allusion to "the profound communion of life which God effects between a man and his wife as established in Gen. 2:24" (p. 342; cf. p. 166). Sexual union is "ideally suited to depict the 'one flesh' reality which is definitional of marriage in Gen. 2:24." Consequently, it is understood "at least by some biblical authors" (including Malachi), "as a complementary covenant-ratifying oath-sign" (p. 343). Hugenberger gives various reasons why Malachi "was justified in his understanding of the Adam and Eve narrative as providing a normative paradigm for marriage" (pp. 151-56). Malachi too undoubtedly recognized the male-female pairing as an essential prerequisite of Gen 2:18-24.

70. Gagnon 2001a, 190-92. Paul makes a similar point to Mark 7:21-23 in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20—indeed, one may even be justified in seeing an intertextual echo. Sex is not like food, which involves only the stomach (6:13). Sex involves the whole body, and it is the body as a whole that is now being, and will be, reclaimed by God (6:14-15). Consequently, immoral sexual intercourse uniquely defiles the whole body, the temple that houses the Holy Spirit (6:18-20). It matters not whether the sexual intercourse is relatively impersonal (sex with prostitutes, 6:15-17), born of an intense desire for some other committed relationship (adultery, 6:9), or undertaken with a loving heart (incest, ch. 5; man-male intercourse, 6:9). Such behaviors, violating as they do the standard for human sexual behavior willed by God in Gen 2:24 (cited in 1 Cor 6:16), are forbidden in all circumstances. The desire for them is inherently sinful, *regardless of the disposition of the consensual participants*.

71. Elements of the "Western" manuscript tradition (D k; Irenaeus) operated with this understanding when they added to the command "Do not commit adultery" in Mark 10:19 the command "Do not commit *porneia*."

72. Or: "consecrated / sanctified man, a man dedicated to the deity." This would, of course, be the self-designation of the *qedeshim*, not one made up by the Deuteronomistic Historian.

73. The negative construal of such cult figures would hold even if Jesus were using them as a cipher for any wicked persons who mock holy things. On the question of whether Mark 9:42 ("causing one of these little ones to sin") originally referred to homoerotic pederasty, or whether *raka* in Matt 5:22 refers to "the soft," see Gagnon 2001a, 185-86 n. 1.

74. Further confirmation that these so-called “Noahide laws” included the commandment against man-male intercourse can be found in *Sib. Or.* 4:24-34 and *b. Sanh.* 58a. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 435-36.

75. Reading the Bible in its historical context would be jettisoned for a flat “gnostic” reading of the text, attributing non-mention to a lack of concern for the issue when all the historical evidence suggests a universal consensus against homosexual practice. This consensus was so strong that it served as an effective deterrent against potential violators in the community of faith, which in turn made it generally unnecessary to broach the subject explicitly. One might say that it just happens that Paul has the most significant single statement on same-sex intercourse in the canon. By *just happens* I mean that Paul wrote letters, and enough of them, with enough of them surviving, in a cultural environment where the occurrence of man-male intercourse might merit some mention. That Paul did not speak against same-sex intercourse more often in extant letters was undoubtedly due to the fact that he did not encounter concrete cases of such offenses in his churches. Based on Rom 1:24-27 and 1 Cor 6:9 (cf. 1 Tim 1:10), there can be no doubt that had Paul encountered a case of homoerotic behavior he would taken the same stance as the one manifested against the incestuous believer in 1 Cor 5. It is worth noting that, had there not been a concrete case of incest in the Corinthian church, there would be *no* explicit mention of incest anywhere in the New Testament. Surely no reasonable person would argue that New Testament authors were not particularly concerned about incestuous relationships. Similarly, bestiality, mentioned in just three literary strata in the Old Testament (Exod 22:19; Lev 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut 27:21), receives not a single mention in the New Testament. Who would contend that the “silence” of the New Testament indicates little or no interest as to whether humans have sex with animals? By the same token, there are no credible historical grounds for arguing that one or more New Testament authors were unconcerned about same-sex intercourse or that there is a relative canonical indifference to the subject.

76. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 251-53. The plot structure of 1:18-32 can be diagrammed as follows:

Stage 1: God’s invisible transcendence and majesty is visibly manifested in creation (1:19-20).

Stage 2: Despite this ample evidence regarding the true God, humans knowingly and thus foolishly “exchanged” this God for manufactured gods of their own making, idols (1:21-23, 25, 28).

Stage 3: God withdrew his guidance and “gave over” humans to the overpowering, self-degrading desires of their unfit mind (1:24, 26, 28). Seeking to master God, humans were turned over by God to passions that mastered them. Among the range of “improper” and evil behaviors to which humans were subjected and in which they acquiesced (1:28-31), Paul focuses at the outset on a particularly self-evident, appalling, and ironic instance of human suppression of the truth about God in nature: the “exchange” of opposite-sex intercourse, which he defines as “natural,” for same-sex intercourse, which he defines as “contrary to nature” (1:24, 26-27).

Stage 4: The sins of humans are then heaped up and, in turn, call forth the ultimate recompense of “death” (1:32).

There are three uses of the word “exchanged” (*[met]ēllaxan*) in 1:18-32 but only two of these (1:23, 25) refer to the same basic act in Stage 2: the foolish human exchange of God for idols. The second of these, in 1:25, appears in the midst of the mention of same-sex intercourse (1:24-27) and provides a flashback to 1:21-23. It is designed to remind the reader that the punishment of same-sex intercourse fits the crime of idolatry. The same intent, apparently, comes across in the third use of “exchanged,” in 1:26—but referring not to the exchange of God for idols (Stage 2) but rather to a disoriented human exchange of natural sexual intercourse for unnatural sexual intercourse (Stage 3). The foolish and self-degrading *exchange* of the truth about God in creation leads to a foolish and self-degrading *exchange* of the truth about human sexuality in nature. The

reference in 1:28a to “failing to acknowledge God” restates, without repeating the precise word “exchanged,” the same essential act of exchanging God for idols charged in 1:23 and 1:25 (Stage 2). Paul states the back reference in 1:28a in order to preface the resumption of a list of vices (1:29-31) already begun with the extended discussion of the particularly shocking vice of same-sex intercourse (1:24, 26-27).

The word “gave over” (*paredōken*) is used three times in 1:18-32; all three occurrences refer to the same basic action by God (Stage 3). The occurrences, in 1:24 and 1:26, immediately follow the references to the human exchange of God for idols (1:23, 25): the divine “giving over” is a response to the human “exchange.” The third occurrence, in 1:28b, does not correlate with the third reference to “exchanged” in 1:26 (now applied to the human exchange of natural sex for unnatural sex) but rather with the synonymous reference to failing to acknowledge God in 1:28a.

One should note here that while the “wrath of God” is initially revealed in God’s stepping back and allowing humans to be mastered by self-degrading passions, it is not exhausted in this semi-passive act. By continuing in their sinful deeds, humans heap up their sins and render themselves liable to the climactic manifestation of God’s judgment on the “Day of Wrath” (2:3, 5, 8-9, 12). Therefore, it is not quite right to say that same-sex intercourse is not a cause, reason, or provocation of God’s wrath but *only* a consequence or result of it (e.g., Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 47; Hays 1994, 8-9). Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that God’s judgment is not limited to striking people with thunderbolts or other climactic acts. Judgment starts with allowing humans to engage in the self-dishonoring behaviors that they want to engage in. Engaging in same-sex intercourse, Paul argues, is its own initial “payback” (1:27) because it distorts the stamp of gender given at creation.

77. Some contend that Paul did not regard same-sex intercourse as sin, or that Paul thought only idol worshippers could engage in same-sex intercourse. Rarely it is argued that Paul in Rom 1:24-27 regarded same-sex intercourse as “dirty” and/or as an unfortunate byproduct of the Fall (like pain in childbirth) but not as sin (so Countryman, 104-23). This view is easily dispatched: (1) The heading and conclusion of Rom 1:18-3:20 underscore that Paul is making a case for universal sin and unrighteousness. (2) The parallel between idolatry in 1:19-23 and same-sex intercourse in 1:24-27 indicates that Paul conceives of same-sex intercourse as sin. (3) The two synonymous “giving over’s” in 1:24 and 1:26 to sexual uncleanness/same-sex intercourse parallel the third “giving over” in 1:28 to unrighteousness and wickedness. In fact, the reference to sexual uncleanness in 1:24-27, specifically same-sex intercourse, is simply the initial element, after idolatry, of the broader vice list that follows in 1:29-31. We have already seen at the end of section III above that a reference to sexual sins, sometimes along with idolatry, normally starts Paul’s vice lists. (4) The terms used to describe same-sex intercourse in 1:24-27—sexual uncleanness, the dishonoring/degrading of their bodies, dishonorable/degrading passions contrary to nature, indecency/obscenity, error/wandering—are terms employed elsewhere in Paul and/or early Jewish literature to denote sin. (5) In Rom 6:19-21, “slaves of uncleanness” parallels “slaves of sin,” which in turn is defined in ways quite similar to Rom 1:24-27, 32 (doing “things of which you are now ashamed” and leading to death). (6) All Jewish authors of the period, and even some Greco-Roman moralists, treated same-sex intercourse as a moral evil. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 273-77.

Another weak argument for disallowing hermeneutical weight to Rom 1:24-27 is the contention that Paul thought only idol worshippers could engage in same-sex intercourse (so Martin 1995). Of course, by the same reasoning one would have to assert, falsely, that only idol worshippers could engage in the vices mentioned in Rom 1:29-31 (e.g., covetousness, envy, and murder). Indeed, by this reasoning there could be no non-idol-worshipping Christian *pornoi*—a point manifestly contradicted by the case of the incestuous believer in 1 Cor 5 and the warning against believers’ involvement in man-male intercourse, adultery, or sex with prostitutes in 1 Cor 6:9-20 (note too that in the vice list in 6:9-10 idolaters are listed as a category distinct from

pornoi, adulterers, and participants in same-sex intercourse). Also inexplicable would be Paul's warning in Rom 6:19-23 not to return to the sexual uncleanness of their pre-Christian life, which certainly has in view, among other things, the same-sex intercourse cited as a prime example of sexual uncleanness in Rom 1:24-27. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 284-89.

78. On "payback" and "straying," cf. Gagnon 2001a, 260-63.

79. For this point and a comparison with Wisdom of Solomon 13-14 (cf. 14:26: "change of birth" or "interchange of sex roles"), see Gagnon 2001a, 246-53.

80. Some scholars seek to deflate the force of Paul's indictment of same-sex intercourse in Rom 1:24-27 by pointing to the trap that Paul lays for the Jewish interlocutor in 2:1-3:20: the real sin is not homosexual practice but the religious bigotry of those who judge others (so, for example, Furnish 1994, 29; idem 1985, 78-80). In addition to the points made in the paragraph footnoted here, the following can be said. Paul contends in Romans that God's goal is to transform the lives of believers into holy sacrifices (12:1-2; 15:16) for an "obedience of faith" (1:5; 15:18; 16:26). That Paul was not especially concerned with homosexuality is unlikely in view of his highlighting it, along with idolatry, as a vivid instance of the deliberate suppression of the truth about God accessible to Gentiles in nature. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 277-84.

81. The limited threefold combination of birds/animals/reptiles in Rom 1:23 appears in Gen 1:30.

82. In Rom 1:18-27 the distinction between creation (*ktisis*, 1:20, 25) and nature (*phusis*, 1:26; "the natural use" [*tēn phusikēn chrēsin*] in 1:27-28) collapses because Paul means here by "creation" the way things turned out after the initial act of creating. What is "contrary to nature" is at one and the same time contrary to divinely created structures (cf. Gagnon 2001a, 258-59 n. 18). Some deny that Rom 1:18-32 has any reference back to the Genesis creation accounts on the ground that this passage has in view a decline-of-civilization narrative, not the origin of sin. The latter point is correct—I make it myself in Gagnon 2001a, 246, 285-86, 291—but it does not prove the former point. Obviously an event can be both post-Fall and a tacit repudiation of pre-Fall decrees and structures. In Rom 1:18-27 Paul characterizes the post-Fall sins of idolatry (in a non-generic sense of worshipping images of other gods) and same-sex intercourse as a rebellion against God's will for humankind established at creation and set in motion in nature. Indeed, all subsequent rebellions against the will of God can be so described.

83. Some contend that Paul's opposition to same-sex intercourse can be traced primarily to its non-procreative character (so, for example, Davies; Ward). This line of reasoning stumbles over the fact that not even "pagans" in the ancient Near East, Greece, or Rome regarded the sterile nature of same-sex intercourse as the sole or main reason for its disapproval—to say nothing of ancient Israel and early Judaism. Moreover, in 1 Cor 7 Paul validated marital sexual intercourse in its own right as a means of providing an outlet for sexual passion that might otherwise spill over into sexual immorality (7:2-5). The issue of procreation barely factors in the discussion (cf. 7:14)—precisely what one would surmise from someone who suspected that the time for Jesus' coming was near (7:29). The problem with same-sex intercourse could no more be limited to issues of procreation for Paul than could the problems with bestiality, incest, and adultery be so limited. The absence of procreative potential in homoerotic relationships served for Paul as one among several clues from nature of the non-complementary quality of homoerotic relationships, one and only one aspect of what it means to be man and woman. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 270-73.

84. Cf. Rom 7:1 ("I am speaking to those who know the law") and the numerous biblical citations and echoes found throughout the letter to the Romans (e.g., Rom 1:23, which alludes to the story

of the golden calf as told in Ps 106:20: “and they exchanged their [or: his] glory for the likeness of a calf feeding on grass”).

85. Cf. Wisdom of Solomon 13:1, 5: “For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works. . . For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”

86. The short flashback to 1:19-23 in 1:25 and the two analogous uses of “exchange” (1:23/25 and 1:26) confirm a deliberate coupling on Paul’s part. God *handed over* those who absurdly *exchanged* the truth about God perceptible in *creation* for a lie to an absurd desire to *exchange* the truth about proper sexual intercourse perceptible in *nature* for a lie. The latter, second lie is the belief that the bodily complementarity of male and female can be dispensed with in human sexual relationships.

87. To use an anachronism: it is not, and was never intended by God to be, the equivalent of rocket science or brain surgery.

88. Gagnon 2001a, 254-58, 264-68. Similar arguments appear in Greco-Roman and Jewish texts (ibid., 164-76). According to Williams, “some kind of argument from ‘design’ seems to lurk in the background of Cicero’s, Seneca’s, and Musonius’ claims: the penis is ‘designed’ to penetrate the vagina, the vagina is ‘designed’ to be penetrated by the penis” (p. 242). Williams goes on to say that “comments like theirs represented a minority opinion” (p. 243). Yet that this would be a “minority opinion” among Roman moralists is precisely what one would expect given the fact that few Romans, unlike Jews, believed that same-sex intercourse should be proscribed absolutely. The second-century physician Soranus (or his “translator” Caelius Aurelianus) referred to *molles*, “soft men” eager for penetration, as those who “subjugated to obscene uses parts not so intended” and disregarded “the places of our body which divine providence destined for definite functions”(On Chronic Diseases 4.9.131).

89. Even today homosexuals generally do not define themselves as something other than the biological sex into which they were born, although they do try to redefine *gender* as a cognitive and social construct distinct from a biologically given *sex*. “Transsexuals,” however, do perceive their sex to be other than the one given them through physical characteristics (compare transgenderists). It is evident from Paul’s condemnation of the *malakoi* (“soft men”) in 1 Cor 6:9—males who go to great lengths to turn their masculinity into femininity—that Paul would have regarded deliberate efforts at changing nature’s stamp of sex on the human body as a grave affront to the Creator, risking exclusion from God’s coming kingdom. Even if there were some partial and indirect biological influences contributing to the development of transsexualism and transgenderism—this remains to be proven—the main contributing factors are probably individual and social. The body is a more secure indicator of sex than a self-perception largely confused by abnormal childhood experiences. Finally, there is a group known as the “intersexed” (hermaphrodites). Usually an allegedly intersexed person has a genital abnormality that does not significantly straddle the sexes; for example, females with a large clitoris or small vagina, or males with a small penis or one that does not allow a direct urinary stream. Extreme instances of sex ambiguity are rare. They no more constitute adequate grounds for doing away with proscriptions of same-sex intercourse than do ambiguities in defining pedophilia or incest constitute grounds for eradicating rules against these.

90. Complementarity is not just a question of parts fitting. It is also about moderating extremes in, and filling in the gaps of, the sexual “other.” For example, the fact that women on average

manufacture only about one-seventh the amount of the sex-hormone testosterone each day that men do accounts for significant interpersonal differences between men and women, such as the intensity of the sex drive and the kind and amount of interpersonal communication needed. Putting two testosterone-driven males together in a sexual union, or two females not so driven, significantly changes the dynamics of the sexual relationship—usually for the worse. Sexual gaps are not filled and extremes are not moderated.

91. A few claim that Rom 1:26 refers to heterosexual anal or oral intercourse rather than lesbian intercourse (e.g., Miller). However, the parallel phrasing of 1:26-27 leaves little doubt that same-sex intercourse was intended: “even *their females exchanged the natural use* for one contrary to nature, and *likewise also the males, having left the natural use of the female*, were inflamed in their yearning for one another, males with males.” For the “likewise also” of 1:27 to be appropriate, both the thing exchanged and the thing exchanged *for* must be comparable—here sex with members of the same sex, not non-coital sex. Male and female homoeroticism are paired often enough in ancient sources for there to be nothing surprising about such a pairing in Rom 1:26-27. In addition, while it was commonplace to refer to female homoeroticism as “unnatural,” I know of no explicit references to anal or oral *heterosexual* intercourse as unnatural. Even Bernadette Brooten criticizes those who interpret Rom 1:26 as something other than female homoeroticism (pp. 248-52). Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 297-99.

92. Cf. Brooten, 361: “The ancient sources, which rarely speak of sexual relations between women and girls, undermine Robin Scroggs’s theory that Paul opposed homosexuality as pederasty.”

93. That passive homosexual partners experienced sexual gratification from intercourse with men is evident from a number of sources (e.g., Soranus in *On Chronic Disease* 4.9.131-37). Reciprocal homoerotic love was acknowledged in the ancient world (e.g., Pausanias and Agathon and the myth of the origin of erotic desire spun by Plato, cited in Gagnon 2001a, 351-54; cf. Brooten for instances of reciprocal lesbian love). In the pseudo-Lucianic *Affairs of the Heart* (ca. A.D. 300) Callicratidas makes the point that when “the beloved” reaches manhood, “the one who for a long time was a recipient of affectionate regard gives back reciprocal expressions of love, and it is difficult to perceive which of the two [males] is a lover of which, as though from a mirror” (48; Gagnon 2001a, 357; cf. *ibid.*, 165 n. 10).

94. The biblical prohibitions of same-sex intercourse were no more limited to pederasty than were those of incest limited to adult-child incestuous activity.

95. To reject pederasty was to reject the best, not the worst, in the homosexual practice of the day. The prime matter of concern with respect to same-sex intercourse was gender deviance, not how well gender deviance was done.

96. Philo uses the following terms: *malakia* and *malakotēs*, “softness”; also: *anandria*, “unmanliness,” *hoi paschontes*, “those who are ‘done’” [as opposed to the “doers,” *hoi drōntes*], and *androgynoi*, “men-women” afflicted with *thēleia nosos*, “a female disease” (cf. *Special Laws* 3.37-42; *On Abraham* 135-36; *Contemplative Life* 59-61; translated in Gagnon 2001a, 172-75).

97. Cf. Williams, 127-32, 142-53, 172-78; and pp. 179-229 *passim*. The Greek word *kinaidos* (Latin transliteration *cinaedus*) probably meant originally “butt-shaker,” an effeminate dancer who wiggled his buttocks to signal a desire for anal penetration. It came to be more commonly applied, as an insult, to any man (not boy) who deviated significantly from masculine standards, usually one with “a proclivity for playing the receptive role in anal intercourse” (Williams,

Roman Homosexuality, 178). The Latin word *pathicus* (derived from the Greek substantive adjective *pathikos*) made a more direct reference to a person who engaged in receptive anal intercourse. It meant the same thing as the Greek substantive participle *ho paschōn*, “the one who is ‘done’ or acted upon, the ‘doee’”—used often in Greek texts for the passive male partner in homoerotic intercourse (cf. the preceding note on Philo). *Mollis* (“soft man”) was a broader term than *cinaedus* and *pathicus*, alluding to the effeminate or unmanly man generally. On occasion the term *mollis*, and even *cinaedus*, could be applied to male womanizers who thereby exhibited a loss of sexual self-control. Yet it would be erroneous to conclude from this that every mention of “soft men” had this broader range in mind. Even Williams admits that, given the context, the Romans could employ *mollis* as a metonym for the receptive partner in man-male intercourse (ibid., 142-43). For example, in Caelius Aurelianus’s “translation” of Soranus’s work *On Chronic Diseases* (early 2nd century A.D.) the section on men who desired to be penetrated (4.9.131-37) is entitled “On the *molles* or *subacti* (subjugated or penetrated partners, pathics) whom the Greeks call *malthakoi*.” The *Suda*, a lexicon dating to medieval times but incorporating older material, defines *malthakos* as synonymous with *kinaidos* and *malakos* (cf. Schrijvers, cited below). An earlier Aristotelian text similarly refers to those who are anatomically inclined toward the receptive role as *malakoi* (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems* 4.26). Astrological texts that speak of males desirous of playing the penetrated female role also use the term *malakoi* (Ptolemy, *Four Books* 3.14 §172; Vettius Valens, *Anthologies* 2.37.54; 2.38.82; cf. Brooten, 126 n. 41, 260 n. 132). Paul likewise did not mean by *malakoi* all merely effeminate males but rather the feminized/receptive male sex-partners of the *arsenokoitai*—the receptive male partners indicted in Lev 18:22 and 20:13. Cf. also Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 116-20.

98. A number of theories in the Greco-Roman world posited innate causation factors behind the desire that some men had for penetration by other men, and yet still regarded the desire as “contrary to nature.” I allude to these in my response to Via (p. 102). For a more extended discussion see Gagnon 2001a, 384-85, 392-95; and now especially Gagnon 2003a, 136-48, which in many respects supercedes my earlier treatment. The latter was originally intended for *Homosexuality and the Bible* but, because of length, could not be included in it.

99. Williams repeatedly emphasizes that for Roman sensibilities—Williams deals only with Latin literature—the sex of the participants was generally not of concern. Male attraction toward males was not a problem. The issue was rather one of deviance from accepted gender roles, of which the most extreme examples would be a receptive male or an insertive female. The masculinity of a man who penetrated another male would not be called into question, at least so long as the one being penetrated was not a freeborn Roman (foreigners, prostitutes, and slaves were acceptable candidates). Even consenting penetrated males, although they experienced social ridicule, did not encounter vigorous legal prosecution or loss of full civic rights. Although I think that at points Williams understates the degree to which a line dividing male-male, female-female, and male-female intercourse mattered in at least some Roman circles (but note his own qualification on p. 228), the main point to be made here is that in Judeo-Christian understanding Greco-Roman arguments criticizing receptive males and insertive females were extended to cover all homoerotic activity and ratcheted up in terms of degree of severity. Philo, for example, could say: “Nearly the whole of Plato’s *Symposium* is about erotic love, not simply about men mad after women or women after men—for these desires pay tribute to the laws of nature—but about men after males, differing from them only in age” (*Contemplative Life* 59). For Philo, as undoubtedly for Jews and Christians generally, desire to penetrate another male was an “abominable lust,” “a polluted and accursed passion,” and “a pleasure that is contrary to nature” (*Special Laws* 2.50; 3.39). In this ethos the sex of the partners did indeed make all the difference, even if the receptive partner was the primary one charged with demasculinization. Then, too, it is unlikely that Paul

regarded *only* the passive partner as compromising his masculinity. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus, a contemporary of Paul's, thought both partners did injury to their sexual identity: "What does the one who undergoes (*ho paschōn*) the things of the *kinaidos* lose? His manhood. And the one who performs the act? In addition to many other things, he too (loses) his manhood, no less (than the passive partner)" (*Discourses* 2.10.17). As for female homoeroticism, although active female partners came in for particular criticism in the Greco-Roman world, there is "no positive evidence that passive sexual behavior by adult women in relations with other adult women was societally acceptable" (Brooten, 161 n. 54).

100. The singular suffix *-tēs* denotes a masculine noun of the 'actor' type; hence, "a *man* lying with (i.e., who makes a practice of penetrating) a male."

101. Occurrence of the Greek word or its cognates in extant Jewish literature is limited to one text whose dating (whether pre- or post-Paul) and even provenance (whether Jewish or Christian) is debatable: *Sibylline Oracle* 2.73. For discussion and other qualifications see the data in Gagnon 2001a, 317-23. However, the rabbis, at least in a later period, used the Hebrew phrase *mishkav zākūr* ("lying with a male")—drawn from the Hebrew text of Lev 18:22 and 20:13—to designate man-male intercourse. For them the man who laid with a male (the active partner) "exclude[d] a minor," but the male with whom he laid (the passive partner) could be "an adult or minor" (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 54a)—one more piece of evidence that the word *arsenokoitai* is not limited to pederasts.

102. Allusions to the Levitical proscriptions in early Jewish literature, including Josephus and Philo, apply the proscriptions to all male-male intercourse. The same is true of patristic and rabbinic literature.

103. The fact that *arsenokoitai* appears alone in 1 Tim 1:10, without *malakoi*, may indicate an application to both active and passive homosexual partners. More likely, however, it implies an indictment of the passive homosexual partner, as a comparison of Lev 18:22 with 20:13 suggests (20:13: "a man who will lie with a male as though lying with a woman, *they* have committed an abomination, *the two of them*"). Regarding the structure of the vice list in 1 Cor 6:9 see Gagnon 2001a, 306-307, 316.

104. Cf. Gagnon 2001a, 312-24 (and, since the second printing, the brief postscript on p. 339). The only problematic occurrence is in a work falsely attributed to John the Faster and dated very late, to the 9th–10th century. Yet even this instance can be explained by giving the abstract noun *arsenokoitia* its usual sense (Gagnon 2001a, 322-23 n. 119). It is also worth noting that, had Paul wanted to limit his condemnation to pederasts, he could have employed the more restrictive term *pederastai*.

105. Evidence that the vice list in 6:9-11 links up with ch. 5 includes the following: First, the vice list in 6:9-10 recapitulates the same offenders mentioned in 5:10 and 5:11 and merely adds four more groups, three of which have to do with sex. Second, offenders known as *pornoi*—the same term applied to the incestuous man in 5:8 (cf. 5:1: *porneia*)—once again head up the list in 6:9-10, appearing before "idolaters, adulterers, *malakoi*, and *arsenokoitai*." The separation of *pornoi* from the other sexual vices indicates that this category of sexual offenders, here with primary reference to incest, is being put at the head of the list because it is still the main subject of the discussion. Third, the material immediately following the vice list, namely 6:12-20, introduces a hypothetical example of *porneia* (sex with a prostitute) that illustrates Paul's point that sex is not like food. This confirms that the case of *porneia* or sexual immorality dealt with in ch. 5 is still the issue at hand, despite the excursus in 6:1-8. The subject of believer hauling believer before

pagan law courts can be readily understood as a brief excursus. Paul's exasperated question in 5:12, "Is it not those inside the church that you are to judge?," diverts him momentarily to an instance where not only did the Corinthians shirk their responsibility to be arbiters of internal affairs but they also handed over such authority to the very pagans over whom they would one day stand in judgment.

106. The point of the Holiness Code provision that includes sex with one's stepmother as incest, as does Paul in 1 Cor 5, is not to undermine the principal that incest is intercourse with "the flesh of one's flesh" but rather to gather some fictive kinships created through marriage into the orbit of blood relations.

107. In context, Paul cites Gen 2:24 to substantiate his point that "the man who joins himself to the prostitute is one body" with her (6:16a); that is, to show that sexual intercourse *per se*, not just intercourse in the context of a marital commitment, has a bonding effect on the participants. A Christian engaged in unholy sexual intercourse thus brings the indwelling Christ into the act. Given the intertextual echo to Gen 1:27 in Rom 1:26-27, it is inconceivable that Paul would not have recognized the import of Gen 2:24 for the proscription of adultery and man-male intercourse in 1 Cor 6:9.

108. Even in 1 Cor 11:2-16, where Paul speaks about man as "the head of woman" and woman as "the glory of man," there is a liberating dynamic at work. Paul insists that, while "woman is from man," "man is not without woman in the Lord" and "man comes through woman" (11:8-12). The overall objective appears to be to secure the prophetic ministry of women in the church without eliminating all cultural symbols of gender differentiation.

109. It is a mistake to conclude that this was all that Paul thought sex in marriage was good for. First Corinthians 7 probably does not record everything that Paul believed about marriage. There are no substantial grounds for assuming that he dispensed with the vibrant image of marital intimacy and companionship put forward by Gen 2:18-24; 29:9-30; Exod 21:5; Deut 24:5; Prov 5:15-23; Mal 2:13-16; and the Song of Solomon. Paul did give top priority to an unencumbered life, for evangelistic reasons. In that context all desires, including sexual desires, took a back seat. Nevertheless, Paul was not a strict ascetic: "I know what it is like to have both little and a lot; in any and all circumstances I have been initiated into the secret of being well-fed and hungry, having a lot and being in want" (Phil 4:12).

110. Cf. my critique of Gudorf's article in Gagnon 2000, 196-216.

111. Romans 1:24-27 establishes that the mention of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor 6:9 implies a condemnation of lesbian intercourse, for Rom 1:26 not only speaks disparagingly of female-female intercourse but also refers to it as something rare and unusual ("for *even* their females . . ."). This rarity, certainly relative to male-male intercourse, accounts for why Paul did not feel a need to mention lesbianism explicitly in 1 Cor 6:9 (note also that the offenders in 6:9-10 are all described with Greek nouns in the masculine gender). The same point was made in n. 40 above from the ancient Near Eastern context for why female-female intercourse was not explicitly cited in Lev 18 and 20. Vice lists in particular designate only representative types of sins and are not exhaustive (cf. 1 Tim 1:10 which, unlike 1 Cor 6:9, leaves out a reference to *malakoi*). Explicit indictments of homoerotic behavior among Greco-Roman moralists and early Jewish and Christian authors usually critiqued only male-male intercourse. Yet there are enough negative references in antiquity to female-female intercourse to indicate that the part (proscription of male-male intercourse) stands for the whole (proscription of all same-sex intercourse). Broten stresses that, while male-male intercourse found significant approval in the Greco-Roman world, female-

female intercourse found none. The argument is one made from the lesser to the greater: if man-male intercourse is wrong, how much more female-female?

112. I stress the phrase “so far as the erotic dimension is concerned” because, as with every form of nonviolent sexual relationship, homosexual relationships can otherwise exhibit sacrifice and concern. The church has no objection to intimate, non-erotic same-sex relationships. We call them friendships. It is only when an erotic dimension is introduced that problems for the church develop. If one protests that there is only a fine line between *intimate* and *erotic*, another may respond: parents who do not maintain a clear distinction between intimate and erotic in dealings with their own children are candidates for criminal prosecution.

113. While I was still finishing up my essay and before working on a response I inquired with editor Michael West whether Via and I might have a significantly longer response to each other’s essay, followed by a 1000-word rejoinder. West was agreeable to this but Via rejected it on the grounds that it was not part of the original deal. Via sought to limit the engagement between our essays; I had hoped to expand it.

114. Contrast my discussion on pp. 41-42; Gagnon 2001a, 341-46, 487-89.

115. His appeal to the books of Job and Ecclesiastes (p. 23) does not constitute a method, nor is it a particularly apt justification for overturning the united witness of Scripture against same-sex intercourse. In the end Job recognizes that he has overstepped his bounds in questioning God, even before the closing prose section, while the author of Ecclesiastes does not, in the end, give way to complete moral relativism. The idea that the Deuteronomistic Historian had no sense that bad things happen to good people is vastly overdone. There are many stories in the Deuteronomistic History that show the righteous suffering—and not just in the alleged exilic redaction. Neither Job nor Ecclesiastes overturns a fundamental tenet of Scripture. Neither gives Via or other pro-homosex advocates the kind of unrestricted license to deviate radically from a pervasive, strong, and absolute witness of Scripture against homosexual practice that they need to justify their position. It is important to remember that no less a figure than Jesus himself made appeal to the creation texts for defining normative and prescriptive sexual relations (Mark 10:6-9). As we show on pp. 68-74, Jesus himself upheld the creation prerequisite of other-sex unions. In justifying his radical departure from Scripture, Via also brings considerations from science into the mix but, as we shall see, he confuses both what science tells us and how to assess its import for Scripture’s prohibition of homosexual practice.

116. See pp. 61-62, 65, 71-72, 77-78, 85-86, 89; Gagnon 2001a, 193-96, 289-93.

117. See pp. 68-76; Gagnon 2001a, 185-228, 432-41.

118. Briefly, the Levitical Holiness Code (1) specifically refers to the forbidden sex acts in chs. 18 and 20 as “iniquity” or “sin” (18:25), (2) does not penalize persons without willful intent, (3) does not permit absolution merely through ritual acts, and (4) gives an implicit rationale for each prohibition. Via largely overlooks the fact that purity taboos often function as an additional support for moral rules, especially in the secretive and pleasurable area of sexual intercourse. See pp. 66-67. Regarding (2), Via says that uncleanness is “a non-intentional, automatic contagion.” That is true of ritual uncleanness. Even accidental contact with an impure contaminant (e.g., disease, corpse, food, semen, childbirth) can render one unclean. That is manifestly not what is at issue here. Intent to violate the prohibition is presumed and raped persons are not penalized; hence the phrase “their blood is upon them,” which denotes culpability for willful acts (20:10-13, 16). Regarding (4), each prohibition has an implicit rationale. For example: Incest was sex with

the “flesh of one’s flesh” (18:6). Adultery was an obvious tearing apart of another man’s one-flesh covenant bond with his wife. Bestiality was a revolting “mixing” of two structurally incongruous creatures. How much explanation does Via want? These are “prime numbers” of human sexual ethics that do not require extended explanation, especially within the genre of a list of laws. On issues surrounding the prohibition of sex with a menstruating woman, see nn. 41 and 48 above.

119. Indeed, he describes the active male homosexual partners with a term drawn from these prohibitions (*arsenokoitai*, 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10) and characterizes same-sex intercourse as the epitome of sexual “uncleanness” (Rom 1:24). In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul adopts a similar exceptionless policy toward the case of incest with a stepmother, even picking up the phrase “father’s wife” from Lev 18:8 and Deut 22:30 (LXX). On what grounds, then, can Via maintain the equation “absolute rule = antiquated purity code” for Leviticus but not for Paul or, for that matter, all other New Testament authors and Jesus? It seems that the entire New Testament witness has correctly understood the Levitical proscriptions of incest, adultery, same-sex intercourse, and bestiality as moral in scope. Early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism take the same view of the matter, as evidenced by such texts as the *Letter of Aristeas* (152) and the so-called “Noahide laws.”

In attempting to explain why Paul is not “arbitrary . . . in reinterpreting homosexuality as sin,” Via has to admit things that he neglected to tell readers when dealing with the Levitical prohibitions; namely, that sin and uncleanness “are not totally disparate,” that already Leviticus mixes together ethical rules and purity rules, and that the Hebrew word for “abomination” is normally applied to gross violations of *ethical* norms in the Old Testament (pp. 10-11). In view of these considerations, it seems that Paul is not “reinterpreting homosexuality [read: same-sex intercourse] as sin” but rather maintaining the Levitical stance on same-sex intercourse as moral uncleanness or sin.

Via claims that Paul “reinterprets homosexuality as sin rather than uncleanness” because for him it “issues from a distorted mind . . . and is personal, chosen, . . . and against God” (p. 10). (Note: Paul regarded the *act* of same-sex intercourse as chosen, not necessarily the sinful impulses motivating the act.) Via makes a similar point about Mark’s Jesus: “Uncleanness is not a matter of an automatic physical contagion but of a deformation of the will and understanding” (ibid.) I keep wondering: What in these descriptions would the author(s) of Leviticus 18 and 20 not agree with? Obviously they were prohibiting willful acts, whose commission they declared to be “iniquity” and “detestable acts” against God, deserving of severe punishment. Did they think of a man who engaged in sex with his mother, with another man’s wife, or with an animal as someone with a *well-adjusted* mind? Preposterous. Did they not have any inkling why these acts were wrong? Of course they did (see n. 118 above). It is true that the Holiness Code is more rigorous in maintaining distinctions of categories and classes than other texts, often for symbolic reasons (see n. 42). However, this does not mean that *all* such distinctions are outdated. In fact, there is no dissenting opinion anywhere else in Scripture as regards the categorical character of a number of sex proscriptions. The church throughout history has agreed. Via’s views are out of step with this historic consensus.

120. In other words, it involves doing with another male what God intended by creation design to be done with a woman. Even Via admits that in ancient Israel there is a rationale behind this rule: It treats a male as something other than the gender that God made him to be, namely, as a female. This, in turn, violates masculine honor. Via wrongly tries to make this into a purely misogynistic consideration. Yet even Via’s distortion is still a rationale and, as such, it shows the falsity of Via’s label “pre-rational sensibility.” The author(s) of the Holiness Code had a reason for proscribing male-male intercourse. The reason given, albeit in very concise formulation, is not unlike the rationale utilized by Paul for proscribing same-sex intercourse, a rationale that Paul

partly derived from the view of male-female sexuality put forward in Gen 1:26-28 and 2:18-24 (pp. 64-65).

121. Incidentally, Via's attempt to impugn *all* nature arguments on the basis of 1 Cor 11:14 (p. 22) is way off the mark; see Gagnon 2001a, 373-78. To turn Via's argument around: If nature—that is, structural design in material creation—gives *no* authoritative directions about allowable sexual behavior, does Via want to regard also prohibitions of man-mother incest and human-animal sex as baseless?

122. That is why having sex with a person of the same sex invariably compromises the integrity of one's own sexuality. The *malakoi* that Paul mentions in 1 Cor 6:9—effeminate males who play the sexual role of females—are merely an extreme and overt example of persons who, tragically, try to play the role of that missing other half. A disordered “homoerotic orientation” can never alter the fact that the other sexual half or counterpart necessary for sexual reintegration is missing. Issues of “orientation” *may* affect pastoral care strategies in deterring persons from engaging in homosexual behavior. But they do not lead to a different moral valuation of the non-complementary and incongruous character of same-sex intercourse. Again, sex is not just more intimacy. It is intimacy with one-flesh merger in view. If it were otherwise, then sex with one's parent or sibling, with a child, or with an animal would be acceptable. A sexual counterpart can neither be too much alike (incest, same-sex intercourse) nor too much other (bestiality, pedophilia). Structural considerations take precedence over intimacy needs, even when measurable harm cannot be proven in all circumstances. Sexual relations require regulation in areas where non-sexual relations go unregulated. Jesus wants us to love everyone but not to have sex with everyone. The Bible does have a distinctive sex ethic (contra Wink 1999, 44; idem 2002a, 33).

123. I am using the term *structuralist* to describe the view put forward in the previous paragraph; namely, that proper sexual pairing requires a binary relationship between the sexes—a relationship based on the structural complementarity of maleness and femaleness that transcends issues regarding the directedness of human sexual desire. I am not using the term in the different ways that it is employed in cultural anthropology, psychology, or linguistics.

124. Our position agrees with that of Paul. Paul understood, in line with the entire scriptural witness from Genesis 1 on, that same-sex intercourse necessarily constituted a dishonoring and degrading of the complementary sexual integrity of men and women. *I agree with that witness.* Neither Paul nor any other authors of Scripture made exceptions for the loving disposition of the participants. (Even Via admits that the prohibition is not limited to particularly exploitative forms of same-sex intercourse.) *I agree with that witness.* Paul thought that the desire for same-sex intercourse could be an overpowering force for some. He also believed that humans could be held culpable for the behavior that they committed because, in spite of any preexisting sinful sexual impulses, humans still have responsibility for what they do with their feelings. *I agree with that witness too.* Consequently, if Via acknowledges that Paul placed same-sex intercourse in the realm of sin—in agreement with the Old Testament witness, I might add—then Via is *logically* compelled to characterize my view and that of Hays, Jones/Yarhouse, and many others in similar terms.

Via also accuses us of ignoring “the integrated wholeness of the persons” when we adhere to absolute rules (p. 18). The opposite is the case. It is precisely because of the lack of a structurally integrated wholeness in same-sex erotic unions that Scripture rejects homosexual behavior. The absence of the opposite sex in a union of sexual merger establishes *by definition* an absence of “integrated wholeness” to the union. A sexual union of two persons cannot be whole, sexually speaking, if one of the two sexes is missing.

Via argues against us that we have formulated an ethical rule about homosexuality from a “few” biblical texts and isolated it “from its literary and historical contexts.” According to Via, the “choice to absolutize the rule and to nullify the force of context . . . is a move not required by the Bible itself. It is a position one brings to the Bible” (p. 20). No, it is a position that the Bible brings to us—except that having absolute rules does not “nullify the force of context.” Literary and historical context often confirms the absoluteness of a scriptural rule. Via is confusing two things here: (a) *examining* literary and socio-historical contexts of the biblical text to determine if the biblical author regarded the rule as absolute and if new circumstances warrant overturning the biblical authors absolute stance; and (b) *insisting* that consideration of literary and socio-historical contexts must always overturn an absolute biblical prohibition. Since I have done much more extensive research than Via has on these context concerns for the homosexuality issue, his charge rings hollow. The difference between Via and I is not over *whether* the contexts should be examined to explore questions of absoluteness but rather over the *results* of that exploration. I believe the evidence is overwhelming that in this particular case the literary and historical contexts justify retaining the absoluteness of the biblical prohibition rather than eradicating it. For example, the allegedly “new knowledge” about homosexual orientation is not radically new (i.e., it was anticipated in the ancient world); nor does it address the main reason why the biblical authors rejected homosexual practice.

Ironically, Via himself employs the historical context to show that Paul’s indictment of homosexual practice was not limited to pederasty but rather applied to all homosexual acts, *including those that were lifelong and committed* (pp. 11-12). If Paul himself “absolutized the rule” by prohibiting homosexual and incestuous relationships that were otherwise loving, non-promiscuous, and nonexploitative, how could I and others be charged with incorrectly bringing the notion of absolute rules to the Bible and of making a move not required by the Bible itself? It makes no sense. Later, as a basis for eliminating the prohibition of same-sex intercourse altogether, Via tries to argue that Paul was ignorant of a homosexual “orientation.” But this claim, however misguided, does not contravene the fact that *Paul* absolutized some rules, including the one on homosexual practice. Via can try to argue that Paul was mistaken to do so in this particular case and that we should no longer treat the rule as absolute—it is a bad argument but he has a scholarly right to try to make it. Yet he cannot reasonably argue that I and others are importing absolute values into the New Testament.

125. As for Mark 7:14-23, while the food that enters a person “from outside” does not defile, every intention to engage in sexual behavior that God categorically forbids—including the “sexually immoral acts” (*porneiai*), “adulterous acts,” and instances of “licentiousness” or “sexual unrestraint” (*aselgeia*) mentioned in 7:21-22—automatically defiles a person “from within,” *irrespective of claims to loving intent*. In context, the point of Rom 14:14—“nothing is common (i.e., profane, unclean) in itself, except to the one who considers something to be common”—is that diet should be held as a matter of communal indifference. Sexual misbehavior, however, was a matter of importance (Rom 1:24-27; 6:19; 13:9, 13). As Paul made clear in 1 Cor 6:12-20, the food-sex analogy is simply bad hermeneutics. Paul suspected that the Corinthians were making such a flawed analogy to justify approval of an adult (and presumably committed) incestuous union (1 Cor 5). Via’s views more closely approximate those held by some of the Corinthian leadership than they do Paul’s.

It is ironic that Via interprets Jesus’ sayings about knowing people “by their fruits” (Matt 7:17-18; 12:33-35; 23:26) to mean: “So if the heart is loving, the acts that flow from it *cannot* be evil” (my emphasis; p. 20). These sayings actually move in the opposite direction. People’s hearts are to be judged by their behavior, not their behaviors by their hearts—for who but God knows a person’s heart? “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16). Rather than absolutizing intentions—something that Via comes close to doing—Jesus absolutized and intensified God’s core moral imperatives and gauged human dispositions by obedience to such imperatives. Jesus

did not adopt a different policy for sexual ethics (see pp. 70-74). A case in point: Jesus was a strict monogamist. He even treated serial monogamy (remarrying after divorce, for example) as adultery, if any former spouse was still living. Apparently he did not much care what the internal rationalizations of humans might be. But perhaps he too was stuck in a Levitical uncleanness mode?

126. Some time ago distraught parents shared with me that their daughter was involved in a “threesome.” She was having sex with her husband and a live-in female lover; the husband was having sex with both women and produced children by both. They insisted that their relationship was nobody’s business but their own; that they loved each other and were committed to one another. Now what can Via say to that? He cannot say that there is anything structurally incongruous to such a relationship because he does not believe in such a principle. He cannot appeal to creation precedent—as Jesus did in Mark 10:6-8 and Paul in both Rom 1:24-27 and 1 Cor 6:9-20—because he has already disregarded the even clearer witness of the creation accounts to a heterosexual prerequisite (pp. 61-62). He cannot contend that there is no “sexual orientation” involved because they can claim that they, unlike others, are not “wired” for monogamous unions. Moreover, the daughter of the distraught parents claims to be bisexually-oriented. She does not want to deprive herself of the joys of both homosexual and heterosexual bonds. Via cannot say that such a relationship inevitably harms the children because he has no scientific proof for anything but, at most, a disproportional rate of harm. The children are okay with the relationship; it is the “polyphobic” society that they live in that could potentially cause damage. In all this, one should bear in mind that Scripture regards same-sex intercourse as a far more serious offense than multiple-partner unions. Polygamy, like divorce, is treated in the Old Testament as a concession to human (male) hardness of heart—a concession that both Jesus and Paul implicitly revoke. However, nowhere in Scripture are any exceptions made to same-sex intercourse. If Via does not feel any obligation to maintain the heterosexual prerequisite, why should the limitation to two partners at any one time be considered sacrosanct?

The *only* criteria that Via mentions for a legitimate sexual relationship is that it be: (1) consensual; (2) loving; and (3) faithful/committed (pp. 25, 29, 36, 39). All three conditions are satisfied by “threesomes” and by adult incestuous unions. Tacking on additional conditions, such as “monogamous” or “non-incestuous,” would appear to be disallowed by the priority that Via gives to the loving intentions of the participants.

My main point is Via’s logical inconsistency. Probably—hopefully—Via would not approve of *any* adult incest and multiple-partner unions—to say nothing of ephebophilia (attraction to adolescents), pedophilia (attraction to children), and bestiality—no matter the self-justifying motives and intentions of the participants. Would disregarding loving intent here mean that Via is “instantiating” such phenomenon “in the realm of unclean/clean rather than in the realm of sin/righteousness (the moral realm),” as he accuses me, Hays, and Jones and Yarhouse of doing with homosexual practice (p. 27)? Or does it mean that Via is coming “into conflict with those important strands in both Testaments that maintain the reciprocal interaction between actions and the dispositions of the heart” (ibid.)? The obvious answer to both questions is “No.” Scripture itself proscribes absolutely quite a number of behaviors, in matters of sex (including same-sex intercourse) and in other areas (for example, idolatry). There is no conflict or even tension between such categorical prohibitions and the claim of God on one’s heart. Take again the example of the absolute rule against sexual intercourse between a man and his mother. The dispositions of the acting person’s heart play no role in *overriding* the prohibition, no matter how loving the intent and motive might be, as Paul’s handling of the incest case in 1 Cor 5 makes clear. These dispositions do play a role, however, in *obeying* “from the heart” the proscription given by God (Rom 6:17). God puts a claim not only on an outward show of obedience but also on an interior compliance with the will of God.

127. This seems to be an affliction that many pro-homosex scholars suffer from. This is the same problem with Nancy Duff and Walter Wink (see “Fuller Bibliography” at my website for references to their work and my critique of it). See also the quote from Epictetus at the start of my rejoinder to Via.

128. These comments occur in Via’s discussion of four positions that one may take regarding rules and contexts (pp. 20-21; relying on Gene Outka). Via derides the fourth position, which he attributes to Jones/Yarhouse, Hays, and me: “There are no contextual situations that could override a rule forbidding an act that the rule, by prior determination, has designated as intrinsically immoral.” Apparently for Via there is *no* behavior that Scripture and the church should *always* forbid. Perhaps Via might argue that a prohibition of rape cannot be applied absolutely because then the one raped would be punished alongside the rapist. But this objection confuses rule and culpability. If somebody is raped, church and society do not suspend the rule—they apply it—against the victimizer. The victim is obviously not punished but the act committed against her remains wrong, sinful, immoral—intrinsically so. Even in the case of a number of consensual and “loving” sexual relationships, Scripture and the church (and sometimes society) refuse to sanction any exceptions. I have no problem with affirming that there are rules for which exceptions can be made under certain circumstances (the third position, which Via says he adopts). In fact, there are also times when rules can be discarded (the second position)—any Christian who acknowledges a shift from old covenant to new has to affirm this. It all depends *which* rules are under discussion. For Via to assert that position four (no absolutes) *never* applies to *any* rules is ethically irresponsible.

For many persons who regard themselves as liberal on issues of sexual ethics, the main concern expressed about sexual behavior is that there not be a power imbalance. That concern often leads to absolute rules that do not factor in the loving intentions of the participants; for example, no sexual relationship between faculty and students, even on a graduate school level (this is an absolute policy at my seminary), and no sexual relationships between a psychologist/psychiatrist and a patient. The justification for such rules is that absolute power tends toward abuse. Yet power imbalance does not automatically produce measurable harm to participants; increased risk of such harm but not universal harm. Does Via support absolute rules that arise out of concerns for a potential abuse of power? For example, would he have voted, at his former place of employment, for an absolute rule that made a sexual relationship between a professor and an adult student cause for dismissal? If so, how would he explain his support for an absolute rule? By virtue of its absoluteness, is it not the equivalent of an outdated purity rule in Via’s thinking?

Although Via adopts a “one size fits all” approach to the four positions, he himself unknowingly adopts two of the four positions. Here’s how Via puts it: “I take the third [position for all rules]. . . If one takes this way [i.e., the third position], it can lead to two different conclusions”: (1) exceptions are made to the rule; and (2) the rule itself is invalidated. “With regard to many issues I would take the first of these, but with respect to homosexuality I will argue for the second.” In other words, Via seems to be saying that a person taking the third position could choose one of two options. However, the second option for the third position—namely, that “there are cases in which comprehensive contextual factors are powerful enough to invalidate the rule in principle”—is merely a restatement of the second position—namely, that “if there is a conflict between rule and context, the rule can simply be discarded.”

129. The Bible’s intense opposition to homosexual practice cannot be attributed primarily to a desire to keep women down. In Genesis 1-3, God’s blessing of opposite-sex unions and establishment of the institution of marriage for such unions are depicted as pre-fall developments. The rule of a husband over his wife is depicted as part of God’s curse in the Fall (3:16). The implication is that gender differentiation cannot be collapsed into gender stratification. The

former precedes the latter as a requisite feature of sexual unions, not only in terms of time but also in terms of existential significance. The story in Gen 2:20-24 does not emphasize male dominance but rather the complementarity of two sexual counterparts, each yearning to re-merge with the missing sexual half into a reconciled whole. Similarly, the story in Gen 1:26-31 stresses structural compatibility, not male dominance. “Male and female” combined express God’s image and both share in managing God’s creation.

While Paul believed in a husband’s authority over his wife—conceived in terms of self-emptying service—he also did much to undermine conventional, subordinate roles for women: laboring alongside numerous women co-workers (Romans 16; Phil 4:2-3); insisting on the mutuality of conjugal rights (1 Cor 7:3-4); maintaining that in the new creation in Christ there is “neither male and female” (Gal 3:28); and affirming women’s prophetic roles, but in such a way that women did not need to become men or androgynes in order to be spiritual beings (11:3-16). Yet, despite all this—or, better, because of it—we find no reduction in his resolve that sexual intercourse requires two sexually differentiated people, male and female. If misogyny were the driving force behind Jewish opposition to same-sex intercourse, we might have expected Paul to let up a bit in his views on same-sex intercourse, given his relatively liberating views on women. Yet we find nothing of the sort, probably because Paul’s views on same-sex intercourse were motivated in the first instance by something other than a desire to keep women down.

In early Judaism maintaining hierarchical gender roles was, to be sure, a concern in the critique of homoeroticism. Yet even this concern was a part of a broader critique of the anatomical, procreative, and interpersonal discomplementarity of same-sex intercourse. Homoerotic behavior first and foremost constituted a complaint against the gendered material body that God bestowed in nature (Gagnon 2001a, 164-83).

130. The writers of Scripture and undoubtedly Jesus were more uncompromising than their Gentile contemporaries in their opposition to homosexual intercourse. If their main reason for rejecting same-sex intercourse was their concern to preserve male dominance, then one has to argue, in effect, that the biblical authors were more misogynistic than their unbelieving contemporaries. One would have to assume, rather implausibly, that Jesus, Paul, and the whole gang of biblical writers were bigger women-haters than the mass of people in the ancient Near East, ancient Greece, and the Roman Empire who had little or no problem with one or more forms of homoerotic behavior. It is far more likely that their primary concern was gender differentiation, viewed not as a tool for holding women down as social inferiors but as a structural design divinely imbedded in creation for the health and vitality of the human race. In fact, if promoting male dominance over women had been Paul’s sole or main concern he could have adopted one of the pro-homosex positions prevailing in the Greco-Roman world on homoerotic love; namely, that males, at least blossoming young males, were the apex of nobility and intelligent beauty and therefore the best recipients of male desire. Indeed, when one reads the arguments for and against the love of males in the pseudo-Lucianic *Affairs of the Heart* (ca. A.D. 300), one finds that the least misogynistic arguments are those *against* love of males. Among Greco-Roman views generally, where status differentiation was the main concern, ways were found of promoting male homoerotic love while simultaneously condemning lesbian eroticism. Such options were not available in ancient Israel, early Judaism, and early Christianity precisely because the issue of sex or gender, not status, was the critical concern.

The misogyny argument simply does not give the broader issue of structural compatibility its due. Asserting that issues of male dominance constitute the main reason for Scripture’s categorical rejection of homoerotic behavior is like arguing that Scripture’s main complaint with incest or bestiality had to do with status issues. In reality, degrees of structural similarity or dissimilarity are matters of decisive importance for determining appropriate sexual partners. By *structural* similarities or dissimilarities I do not mean whether two people share a similar like for root beer floats or have an uncanny knack for not clashing with each other’s wardrobe. Having an

intimate sexual relationship with someone is not just an extension of the kind of intimacy that one can obtain in close friendships. A sexual relationship merges and melds two people into one who, as *beings*, are neither too much structurally unlike nor too much structurally like. Here one transcends issues of personality, preferences, and tastes. A close relationship between a mother and son or between two siblings is a healthy thing. And a dog is a human's best friend (or so the saying goes). However, throw sex into the mix and something very disturbing is created, something so structurally incongruous that in most people—unfortunately, not all—it generates an immediate intuitive and visceral response.

It is a reaction that is not easily put into words. Try explaining to others sometime why you should not have sex with your mother. It almost defies description. More than likely, the initial attempt at explaining will be on the order of: “Because she’s my mother!” Then, searching for a more rational explanation, one might babble about not wanting to produce children with deformities or about the age difference. But one soon realizes that these are not ultimate answers; they merely describe significant risks of harmful side effects. The real answer why adult incest is wrong is so basic, like a prime number of human sexuality, that if it can be described at all, it can only be described briefly. Why should one not have a sexual relationship with one’s mother? Because one’s mother is already one’s “flesh.” What sense does it make to try to merge with her in sexual union? Leviticus 18:6 puts it succinctly: one must not have sexual intercourse with “the flesh of one’s own flesh.” What more need be said? The challenge to defining the root evil of homoerotic unions is similar. Why is it wrong for a person not to have a sexual relationship with another person of the same-sex? “Because it’s a person of the same sex!” Men and women are not complete sexual beings—the simple fact of two sexes cinches this point. What a man lacks as a sexual being is not another man. Likewise, what a woman lacks as a sexual being is not another woman. A man cannot be a sexual “one flesh” with another man, nor a woman with another woman.

The circumstance becomes even more tragic when the same-sex sex-partner tries to take on the features of the opposite sex—for example, the *malakoi* in Paul’s day. Then a person becomes a sad parody of the true sexual self. A man cannot fake being a woman, or a woman a man. It is about being more than becoming. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 put it nicely: a man should not have a sex with a male “as though having sex with a woman.” By its very nature sex is about integrating with a sexual other, not a sexual same. It is about two interlocking pieces, in the sexual realm, becoming a single sexual piece. Anatomy and physiology (particularly procreative potential) are two obvious indicators of complementarity but maleness and femaleness run deeper still. The bottom line is: A person ought not to have sexual relations with his/her parent. A person ought not to have sex with an animal. And a person should not have sexual relations with a person of the same sex. This is not about status. It is about the structural integrity of human sexuality.

131. Obviously consensual behavior is always, by definition, chosen. The relationship between choice and the impulses behind behaviors is more complex. It is also important to state at the outset that Rom 1:18-32 does not picture idolatry—in the literal sense of worshipping statues—as a necessary prerequisite for homoerotic passion any more than it does for any other form or “sexual uncleanness” (1:24) or for covetousness and envy (1:29). The whole passage refers to collective entities, not individuals, and to widespread effect, not origin (for the origin of sin, see 5:12-21). The possibility of non-idolatrous believers engaging in “sexual uncleanness” (*akatharsia*), including same-sex intercourse, was a prospect that Paul vigorously warned against (6:19-22; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

Via states: “Given what we now know about the genetic, social and psychological causes of homosexuality, and the graciousness of God’s creative intention . . . , it is difficult to accept Paul’s view that universal human rebellion and God’s wrath, in their mutual interaction, are the primary cause of homosexuality” (p. 14). Via misunderstands the argument in Romans 1:24-27.

The sense in which Paul addresses the issue of causation for homoerotic desire in 1:24-27 is the same as that for the continuation of the vice list in 1:29-31 (including greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossip, slander, arrogance, and disobedience to parents). All that Paul is saying is that persons who suppress the truth about God transparent in the created order are more likely to suppress other truths transparent in the created order, including the truth about male-female sexual complementarity. Certainly a comparison of the numbers of people engaged in homoerotic behavior among the Greco-Roman “pagan” population and numbers of those within the nation of Israel underscores this point. The issue in 1:24-27 is not so much origination of homoerotic desire as the gratification of preexisting sinful desire in spite of the transparent structural evidence in creation/nature advising against such gratification. At the same time, there is evidence in our own day that cultural incentives can increase the incidence even of homosexuality (Gagnon 2001a, 401-29). As for “the graciousness of God’s creative intention,” of course God is gracious. But Paul, Jesus, and the rest of the witness of Scripture also make quite clear that God does judge those who rebel against the truth and refuse to repent. Then, too, homoerotic desire does not originate at birth, to say nothing of establishment at creation. And is Via unable to think of *any* congenitally-based sinful desires?

132. Persons engaging in same-sex intercourse knew, or should have known, based on natural revelation, that males and females were designed as complementary sexual fits. Instead they suppressed this truth, justified to themselves their homoerotic desires, and engaged in same-sex intercourse. Even Bernadette Brooten acknowledges this sense for *exchanged* and *leaving behind*. “Paul could have believed that *tribades*, the ancient *kinaidoi*, and other sexually unorthodox persons were born that way and yet still condemn them as unnatural and shameful. . . . I believe that Paul used the word ‘exchanged’ to indicate that people knew the natural sexual order of the universe and left it behind. . . . I see Paul as condemning all forms of homoeroticism as the unnatural acts of people who had turned away from God” (Brooten, 244).

133. The words *exchanged* and *leaving behind* suggest exclusive homoerotic attachments rather than a bisexual life. A prior experience of heterosexual attraction is not implied. The threefold reference to God *giving over* rebellious humans to sinful desires—with reference to the sexual in 1:24 and 1:26 and the asexual in 1:28—assumes that these desires are preexisting and self-mastering. This image is conjured up again in Rom 6:15-23—a passage that looks back on 1:18-32—when Paul speaks of the pre-Christian life as enslavement to “sexual uncleanness” and to other acts of “lawlessness.” The word for *desire* (*epithumia*, 1:24) is picked up in Rom 7:7-23 to refer to an innate power in the human body beyond complete human control. The language of being *inflamed with their yearning* for homosexual relationships (1:27) also suggests exclusive and controlling homoerotic desires.

One also cannot argue that Paul misconstrued homoerotic desire as excess heterosexual desire, as Via apparently does (so also Fredrickson, Martin, and Furnish, among others). In antiquity “excess passion” never constituted an independent critique of sexual immorality. Passion was judged as excessive on the basis of other criteria about behavioral limits. Otherwise, how could one determine which passions were in excess? Paul viewed any shocking transgression of God-ordained boundaries to be—by definition—an overheating or excess of desire. In short, Paul did not indict same-sex intercourse because it was excess passion but instead referred to passion that exceeded boundaries ordained by God in creation as necessarily excessive. Via asks: “Are homosexuals as a whole more consumed with lust than heterosexuals?” (p. 14). The answer is that those who experience homosexual urges are overtaken by a sexual desire that is at extreme variance with God’s standards for human sexual expression ordained at creation and in nature. The issue is not so much “more lust” as “extreme lust”—sexual desire for an extreme form of sexual intercourse relative to God’s designs and natural structures.

134. See also: Gagnon 2001a, 353-54, 384-85, 392-94. The discussion in Gagnon 2003a, 137-41, along with accompanying online notes, significantly adds to the treatment of sexual orientation in antiquity in Gagnon 2001a. These theories ran the gamut from essentialist to constructionist, from nature to nurture, including nurture-becomes-nature. They comprise more than the “small circles” that Via suggests (p. 15).

135. Some of these theories are closer to contemporary speculations about homosexual causation than others. In addition, most of them focus more on passive receptive roles for males and active (sometimes penetrative) roles for women. Even so, the relevance of these theories cannot be discounted. First, passive receptive roles for males and active roles for women were commonly expressed in homoerotic activity. Second, a couple of the theories do suggest a primary homosexual orientation for some or all active males and passive females as well. Greek and Roman literature also makes reference to exclusive same-sex attraction on the part of some males, even among the married. For example, the figure of Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium* underscores that marriage for the homoerotically-inclined was a façade: “And when they reach manhood, they become lovers of boys and are not inclined *by nature* toward marriage and the procreation of children, yet are compelled to do so by law/custom (*nomos*)” (192A-B). Third, the distinction between roles and orientation would carry less significance in a Judeo-Christian framework that held *all* homoerotic activity to be contrary to nature, not just homoerotic behavior practiced by women and by feminized passive males (see n. 99 above).

136. Richard Hays’s otherwise fine work on the subject of the Bible and homosexuality errs at this point. Hays argues, against Boswell, that all talk about sexual orientation is anachronistic. However, Boswell’s point was not that Paul was distinguishing between natural and unnatural homosexuals but rather that Paul assumed all people who engaged in same-sex intercourse had a heterosexual nature. Via (p. 24) adopts Boswell’s argument and supplies the rebuttal to Hays that I had already anticipated (Gagnon 2001a, 382-83). However, Hays, Boswell, and Via are all wrong on this score. The new trend, in my work and in the work of Schoedel and Brooten (albeit with differences), is to recognize that something akin to a concept of sexual orientation already existed in antiquity.

137. Also with Philo, Paul at least understood such a proclivity to be “hard to fight against,” a condition which socialization could work into the soul from early childhood and so lessen individual choice over time (cf. Philo, *Abraham* 136; *Contemplative Life* 60; *Special Laws* 3.37). Even William Schoedel, who writes from a pro-homosex perspective, acknowledges that Philo would not have permitted any homosexual behavior, whatever the influence of congenital factors: “Since Philo stresses the overwhelming power of pleasure..., a similar conception [to Plato’s *Timaeus*] of a psychological disorder socially engendered or reinforced and genetically transmitted may be presupposed. . . . The suggestion that Paul is speaking only of same-sex acts performed by those who are by nature heterosexual is a possibility that finds some support in at least one of the passages from Philo . . . (cf. *Ab* 135). But such a phenomenon does not excuse some other form of same-sex eros in the mind of a person like Philo. . . . Paul’s wholesale attack on Greco-Roman culture makes better sense if, like Josephus and Philo, he lumps all forms of same-sex eros together as a mark of Gentile decadence” (“Same-Sex Eros: Paul and the Greco-Roman Tradition,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* [ed. D. L. Balch; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 56, 67-68). Schoedel had earlier in the same article commented: “Both [Bernadette] Brooten and I find problematic the common view that sexual orientation was not recognized in the ancient world” (47 n. 5). Schoedel, however, does not consistently apply the logic of this crucial admission to Paul (cf. my critique in Gagnon 2001a, 392-95).

138. According to Via, “there is [no] clear evidence” that Paul conceived of some forms of homoerotic attraction as relatively exclusive, persistent, and controlling, with some influence from biology early in life (p. 16). I would rephrase the matter as: I see no clear evidence proving the obverse but rather good indications that he did have such a conception. Moreover, there is an even stronger indication that modern-day theories of sexual orientation are compatible with Paul’s concept of sin. In the end, the biblical objection to homosexual behavior is framed so absolutely and strongly, with a conception of male and female as uniquely complementary sexual halves, that the burden of proof is on Via to justify a massive departure from the scriptural witness. If the Bible is “the highest authority for Christians in theological and ethical matters,” as Via admits, then it is up to Via to establish: (1) that Paul could not have conceived of a relatively entrenched and exclusive form of homoeroticism; and (2) that knowledge of such would have been enough to cause Paul and all the other writers of Scripture to do a complete about-face on homosexual practice. As it is, Via has not demonstrated either point.

139. The arguments adduced up till now strongly suggest the implausibility of Via’s view; namely, that Paul’s absolute and intense proscription of homosexual behavior rests *entirely* on the mistaken conviction that homoerotic attraction is *always* freely chosen, *always* coexistent with strong heterosexual desire, and *always* susceptible to complete change. Uncertainty on *any* of these assumptions destroys the credibility of Via’s attempt at a *biblical* argument for same-sex intercourse. Otherwise, a core value of Scripture on any ethical matter could be overturned merely on the basis of highly questionable assumptions about what the biblical writers were or were not thinking.

140. This was particularly the case with males who desired to be penetrated. Cf. the Aristotelian texts, the medical text by Soranus, and the astrological texts.

141. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1148b. We still recognize the validity of such a distinction. Nature makes mistakes that are not in accord with its well-working processes; for example, severe congenital defects, disease, a predisposition toward alcoholism, and biologically related sexual attractions for children. Now, if these texts could make such a distinction within a cultural milieu that did not indict severely *all* participants in homoerotic behavior, what is the likelihood that Paul would have stopped calling same-sex intercourse “contrary to nature” had he only known of a homosexual orientation? The idea is inconceivable, given that Paul operated within a scriptural and cultural milieu that regarded all same-sex intercourse as contrary to God’s creation design. Does Via want to argue that Paul would have ended up more open to homosexual activity than his Greek and Roman counterparts when the latter started with a more affirming, or at least equivocal, view of some homosexual activity?

142. Paul did not characterize all biologically related impulses as existing *according to nature*. He distinguished between, on the one hand, innate passions perverted by the fall and exacerbated by idol worship and, on the other hand, that part of material creation least likely to be marred by human sin. The latter would be the best indication of God’s intended structural design for human sexuality. Immediately following his reference to same-sex intercourse, Paul gives a list of other vices that certainly have some innate basis—for example, covetousness, envy, and arrogance—and yet do not for that reason accord with nature (1:29-31). Innate desires are notoriously unreliable indicators of God’s will, as an array of sexually impure impulses also proves. Paul would never have described as *according to nature* a sexual orientation that, from a scriptural standpoint, was incompatible with essential embodied existence as a gendered being. There are two sexes, each structurally configured and open-ended to the other. Neither male sexuality nor female sexuality represents, by itself, whole sexuality. If a sexual merger with another is to be had, it must be with “the other half” in order to become a sexually whole, “one flesh” being. The

absence of a gender complement in same-sex intercourse and the attendant violation of the stamp of gender on the sexual self (of which the *malakoi* are an extreme case in point) are nature's primary clues.

143. Why then would the notion of biological causation for some homoerotic attraction have made any difference to Paul's view of same-sex intercourse? If Paul could be transported into the twenty-first century and told that homoerotic desires have (at most) a partial and indirect connection to innate causation factors, he doubtless would have said either "I could have told you that" or at very least "That fits well into my own understanding of sin." I think the former is more likely, with some fine tuning, than the latter. At any rate, either response produces the same hermeneutical result. In short, Via has no basis for supposing that one of today's understandings of "homosexual orientation" would have caused Paul to approve of homosexual activity. To that extent, Via has no real hermeneutical basis for doing an end run around the authority of Scripture.

144. Via's comments appear on p. 19. Here is what Jones and Yarhouse have to say, near the end of their article, about the relationship of science and ethical decision-making:

We would reject . . . the utter independence of science and ethical analysis. Good science should inform ethical analysis. Ethical and theological analysis should proceed in the context of the best understandings of the subject matter under consideration, and science can provide us with valuable insights and understandings. While science can and should inform our ethical analysis, it will not determine the outcome of that analysis. (2000a, 118)

Jones and Yarhouse elaborate on these points extensively in their subsequent book (2000b, 13-16, 45-52, 88-91, 113-14, 149-50, 180-82; note: though both the article and book were published in the same year the article was based on material published in 1997). Strangely, Via appears to be unaware of this book. Had he read it, he might have spared readers of *Homosexuality and the Bible* of his misrepresentation of the position of Jones and Yarhouse. I say "might" because Via did have the article by Jones/Yarhouse, as well as my book, and yet he still misrepresented our use of scientific data.

Simply put, Via misses the point that, while science can *inform* (and thus plays a significant part in deciding) it cannot ultimately *make the decision for us* as to whether a given behavior is moral or immoral because science is about what "is," not what "ought to be." There are some behaviors that produce personal distress and are chosen but that are nevertheless moral (e.g., enduring a difficult marriage and maintaining chastity during a long life of singleness). There are also behaviors that may not produce personal distress and are chosen but that are nonetheless immoral (e.g., adult incest, sex with prostitutes, greed). There are other behaviors that may not produce personal distress for some, have a strong biological component, and are exceedingly difficult to cure but that are still immoral—even when those who are acted upon are asymptomatic for harm (e.g., pedophilia and various forms of sexual activity practiced outside the bounds of monogamy).

It is disconcerting to see what for Via suffices as the catalyst for a sea change in Scripture's view of homosexual behavior: the mere fact that there may be *a* biological contribution to some homosexual behavior (though not the determinative cause, we might add); or that not every single homosexual relationship produces scientifically measurable harm (though even Via admits harm is disproportionately high, with only a small percentage of unions being healthy, monogamous, and lifelong); or that the elimination of all homoerotic impulses is probably not the norm (though change is possible for all at one level or another). In my view, *that* is an inappropriate use of science in relation to the revelatory authority of Scripture.

145. For his discussion of the scientific evidence Via appears to rely almost exclusively on an article by Christine Gudorf entitled “The Bible and Science on Sexuality” (2000; cited by Via on pp. 15-17). I had previously identified a number of serious problems with Gudorf’s article (Gagnon 2000, 196-216; on science, 199-201, 205-7), though Via seems unaware of such problems. Via can be misleading, if not inaccurate, even in citing Gudorf. Via writes on p. 17: “Studies on homosexual and heterosexual persons who are not psychiatric patients suggest that there are no significant differences between the two with regard to psychological health, criminality, dependability or social responsibility. This implies that homosexuality in itself is not pathological (Gudorf, 128).” Most readers will not pick up the crucial phrase “persons who are not psychiatric patients.” Even Gudorf acknowledges that the studies to which she refers are “not necessarily representative of the [homosexual] population, and thus one cannot conclude that the heterosexual and homosexual populations are equal in character or adjustment.” In fact, her phrase “not necessarily” is also misleading. There are enough studies to indicate disproportionately high rates of sexually transmitted disease, mental illness, numbers of sex partners, and failed sexual relationships. One can debate the reasons for the disproportionately high rates of harmful side effects—societal “homophobia” and/or the same-sex quality of the relationships—but one cannot debate the high rates themselves. In the end, too, societal stigmatizing of homosexual behavior cannot explain the various disparities between heterosexuals and homosexuals. See n. 167 below. Via also cites a Kinsey statistic from Edwards on p. 16, seemingly unaware of the flawed nature of Kinsey’s research.

146. For example, the most recent (2002), and largest, representative study of same-sex attraction in twins, done by researchers from Columbia and Yale (2002), concluded that “less gendered socialization” in childhood, not genetic or hormonal influences, plays the dominant role in the development of same-sex attraction. “If same-sex romantic attraction has a genetic component, it is massively overwhelmed by other factors” (Peter S. Bearman and Hannah Brückner, “Opposite-Sex Twins and Adolescent Same-Sex Attraction,” *American Journal of Sociology* 107:5 [2002]: 1179-1205).

An example of the kind of indirect and secondary character to congenital influences might be the following: (1) Genetic, neurological, or intrauterine hormonal influences may code for traits that (2) may lead to a sense of gender nonconformity and difference that (3) may lead to a distancing from one’s same-sex parent or peers that (4) may create an intense longing for love and affirmation from one’s own sex that (5) may become eroticized. Correlation is not causation. Whether an individual develops a dominant homosexual attraction depends on the interaction of an individual’s incremental choices (indirect and direct, proactive and reactive) with personal biology and psychology, family dynamics, peer socialization, early sexual intimacy, and cultural sanctions and indoctrination.

Edward Stein, a pro-homosex scholar, challenges deterministic models of homosexual development and posits instead a nondeterministic model that incorporates a significant role for indirect choice: *The Mismeasure of Desire: The Science, Theory, and Ethics of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Like various forms of sexual disorders (paraphilias), the degree to which a homosexual “orientation” becomes fixed in an individual’s brain can be related to lifestyle choices regarding fantasy life, the extent of participation in homosexual activity, and degree of self-motivation for change. Cf. Jeffrey A. Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 132-45.

147. Via talks this way even though he once refers to sexual orientation as a condition “fixed relatively early in life” (p. 16). To be sure, this too is a misleading generalization but at least it does not go so far as to assume that sexual orientation is determined at birth. In linking homoerotic proclivity with creation and nature Via ignores the significant divide between *being* and *becoming* and between a *fait accompli* and a mere *possibility*.

148. Significant childhood gender nonconformity is widely recognized as a risk factor for, or indicator of, later homosexual development. See Gagnon 2001a, 408.

149. Intervention by therapists and/or parents can reduce the risk of developing an exclusive homosexual orientation. The goal of such intervention is often to treat legitimate needs for intimate, but nonsexual, gender identity affirmation from persons of the same-sex Cf. Joseph Nicolosi and Linda Ames Nicolosi, *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

150. This is true even of those who identify as having an exclusive homoerotic attraction (Kinsey's category 6). As one homosexual minister-scholar who left his marriage for a homosexual partnership put it to me (paraphrasing): "For most gays having sex with a woman is like a right-handed person playing tennis left-handed; it can be done with some satisfaction but it is not nearly as satisfying as it might be." Lesbians are even more prone to heterosexual stimuli.

151. Cf. Satinover 1996, 179-95; Jones and Yarhouse 2000b, 117-51; Warren Throckmorton, "Attempts to Modify Sexual Orientation: A Review of Outcome Literature and Ethical Issues," *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 20 (1998): 283-304 (online: <http://www.narth.com/docs/attemptstomodify.html>); idem, "Initial Empirical and Clinical Findings Concerning the Change Process for Ex-Gays," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 33/3 (June 2002): 242-48. That sexual orientation change is possible is confirmed in: 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 (2003): 403-17. Spitzer concludes: "Thus, there is evidence that change in sexual orientation following some form of reparative therapy does occur in some gay men and lesbians" (abstract). Cf. J. W. Robinson, "Understanding the Meaning of Change for Married Latter-Day Saint Men with Histories of Homosexual Activity" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1998). Among older literature, see especially: D. Barlow, "Increasing heterosexual responsiveness in the treatment of sexual deviation: A review of the clinical and experimental evidence," *Behavior Therapy* 4 (1973): 655-71; idem, "Fading to Increase Heterosexual Responsiveness in Homosexuals," *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* 6 (1973): 355-66; A. E. Bergin, "A Self-Regulation Technique for Impulse Control Disorders," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 6 (1969): 113-18; J. Wolpe, *The Practice of Behavior Therapy* (2d ed.; New York: Pergamon Press, 1978). (I am grateful to Warren Throckmorton for some guidance here. Throckmorton is Director of College Counseling at Grove City College and a past president of the American Mental Health Counselors Association.)

152. *Change* for homosexually aroused persons can range from (1) a significant reduction or elimination of homosexual behavior; to (2) a reduction in the intensity and frequency of homosexual impulses; to (3) an experience of some heterosexual arousal; to (4) reorientation to predominant heterosexuality. Step (1) is possible for every believer through the empowerment of the Spirit of Christ (and probably step [2] for most). Some would claim that step (1) does not involve a change in sexual "orientation." But it really does involve such a change since one's life has been reoriented away from satisfying one's own desires and toward the doing of God's will. The Spirit, not sin, is in control of that person's sexual behavior and objectives.

153. Even alcoholism and pedophilia do not always produce scientifically measurable, significant, and lasting harm in all circumstances (on the former, see Satinover 1996, 49-50; on the latter, see Gagnon 2002a, 81 n. 14). Via dismisses an analogy to alcoholism with the remark: "Everyone knows that it is harmful for an alcoholic to drink." (p. 24). However, it would have

been more accurate for him to say: Everyone knows that persons predisposed toward alcoholism have a disproportionately high risk of doing significant and measurable harm to themselves or others if they take a drink.

Via admits that “consensual, committed, loving [homosexual] relationships. . . do not compose an impressively large population”; “but,” he adds, “that is not a moral reason to throw them to the wind” (p. 25). On the contrary, if homosexual behavior is likely to do harm, and if it has an unnatural quality to it, and if the united witness of Scripture proscribes it completely—if all these elements apply—then the church would have plenty of warrant for continuing to proscribe it absolutely. Otherwise the church encourages persons to behavior that:

- Will probably do harm to the participants
- Makes it more likely that sexually confused young persons will develop homosexual identities
- Makes it logically impossible to deny approval to any sexual union based on structural considerations (e.g., number, longevity, blood ties, even species)
- Annihilates all gender norms
- Destroys a meaningful authoritative status for Scripture
- Sets in motion a very intolerant and intimidating political agenda that will forcibly indoctrinate our children and deny some civil rights to persons who publicly express disapproval of the behavior

Regarding the second bullet, see the study by G. Remafedi, et al., “Demography of sexual orientation in adolescents,” *Pediatrics* 89:4 (Apr. 1992): 714-21. Here is the authors’ abstract:

This study was undertaken to explore patterns of sexual orientation in a representative sample of Minnesota junior and senior high school students. The sample included 34,706 students (grades 7 through 12) from diverse ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic strata. . . Overall, 10.7% of students were “unsure” of their sexual orientation; 88.2% described themselves as predominantly heterosexual; and 1.1% described themselves as bisexual or predominantly homosexual. . . Gender differences were minor; but responses to individual sexual orientation items varied with age, religiosity, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Uncertainty about sexual orientation diminished in successively older age groups, with corresponding increases in heterosexual and homosexual affiliation. The findings suggest an unfolding of sexual identity during adolescence, *influenced by sexual experience and demographic factors*. (emphasis added).

If adolescents experiment in homosexual behavior, those whose sexual identity is still somewhat in flux will probably experience a higher incidence of homosexual proclivity than if they had never participated in such behavior. We also know now that the brain rewires in accordance with experiences in life; in short, nurture can become nature (Gagnon 2001a, 398-99).

Via claims: “If it cannot be demonstrated that homosexual practice is harmful in itself—in mutual, consensual, committed relationships—then it cannot be shown, in Pauline terms, that it is sinful” (p. 25). Of course, if that were the case, then Paul would never have reacted as he did to the incident of adult—and, presumably, committed—incest in 1 Corinthians 5. Nor could Paul have maintained an implicit prohibition of polygamy in 1 Corinthians 7, consistent with the implications of Jesus’ sayings on remarriage as adultery. Via states that Paul simply “assumed homosexuality to be harmful” (ibid.). But Paul did *not* assume that all acts of same-sex intercourse led to the kind of harm that Via is talking about; namely, sexual unions that were non-consensual and non-committed, exploitative in some manner other than their inherent same-sexness. Indeed, Via

contradicts himself at this point since he admits elsewhere in his essay that Paul's critique of same-sex intercourse was not limited to particularly exploitative forms (p. 11-13). Paul's indictment of same-sex intercourse was obviously not generated because homoerotic behavior often involved sex with an adolescent, slave, or foreigner. It was generated because homoerotic behavior was homoerotic, sex with someone who was a sexual same in structural terms. See my discussion in pp. 76-88.

154. This is the point of 1 Cor 6:9-11; Rom 6:19-22; 2 Cor 4:7-5:10; and many other biblical texts.

155. Via's efforts on pp. 29-39 to present this "opposing biblical material" fare as badly as his earlier claim that nothing was "intrinsically immoral" for Jesus and Paul. Clearly, Via and those who agree with his views are the ones who are importing philosophical positions at variance with Scripture. A person would be hard-pressed to find a more clear-cut and strongly held stance on behavior in the entire Bible than the one on same-sex intercourse. What Via puts forward as "opposing biblical material" is either material that he has misunderstood or material that, far being opposed to a homosex prohibition, actually coexists harmoniously with such a prohibition. Via is beckoning the church to return to the pagan view of old, a view that did not require for legitimate sexual unions the two halves of a sexual whole.

156. A distinction between *body (soma)* and *flesh (sarx)*, in the Pauline sense, is critical for a discussion of homosexual impulses, though Via ignores it. *Flesh* is a Pauline way of talking about this earthly body minus the energizing activity of the Spirit of Christ. It represents "Adamic" humanity, a humanity governed by the regulating principle of sin operating since the fall. *Body* can be used in Pauline thought for both earthly and resurrection bodies. Jesus, for his part, distinguished between the body of this life and the animate essence of humanity that would one day be clothed with a new, resurrection body: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but who are not able to kill the soul; fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matt 10:28; Luke 12:4-5).

157. More precisely, whether or not "sexuality is a defining feature of human being" (Via's emphasis) depends on what one means by *sexuality* and *defining feature*. If all Via had meant was that *how* humans behave sexually is an integral part of their life before God, then I could concur (and I am sure Hays would as well). But that is not all that Via meant. Via presumes that God/Scripture grants to all humans an inalienable right to engage in sexual intercourse consistent with the dominant directedness of their sexual desires. All structural considerations are inconsequential so long as "the relationship is loving, consensual, non-manipulative and faithful" (p.29). This is patently false from a biblical perspective and it is precisely the kind of view that Hays and I have both criticized (Gagnon 2001a, 431-32, 451-52). Jesus was quite clear when he stated with respect to sexual expression that it was better to go into heaven maimed than to go to hell whole-bodied (Matt 5:29-30). In other words, one must take up one's cross, lose one's life, and deny oneself in the sexual facet of life as indeed in all facets of life (Matt 16:24-26, from Mark 8:34-37; cf. Matt 10:39 // Luke 17:33; Matt 10:38 // Luke 14:27 // *Gosp. Thom.* 55.20; John 12:25). Denial of strong sexual urges, even to the point of abstaining from any sex that does not conform to New Testament standards, can feel like a near-death experience. Such is the the road of discipleship, the way of the cross.

158. The Yahwist in Genesis 2:18-24 conceptualizes marriage as the reunion of the two constituent parts, man and woman, of an originally undifferentiated human. This "one flesh" cannot be restored in a homosexual pairing. Via treats as inconsequential a consideration that was obviously essential to the biblical authors' definition of acceptable sexual expression. To use the

creation texts as among the key “opposing biblical material” that allegedly offsets the biblical prohibition of same-sex intercourse, when in fact these texts strongly support an other-sex prerequisite, is exegetically and hermeneutically grotesque. The same applies to Via’s use of texts from 1 Corinthians 6-7. The context for Paul’s remarks in ch. 6 is that of *denying* sex to an incestuous man in a relationship that is presumably “loving, consensual, and committed.” Not only is incest the closest analogue to same-sex intercourse, but also Paul categorically prohibits same-sex intercourse in his remarks in 6:9. Moreover, Paul cites Gen 2:24 in 1 Cor 6:16, which Paul viewed as the prescriptive background for normative sexuality, including for a heterosexual prerequisite.

Yes, Paul in the very next section, ch. 7, declares sex to be a positive good in its own right (though Via misreads Paul a bit here) and warns against requiring celibacy *for persons who otherwise meet the requirements for marriage*. It is important to remember that the key emphasis throughout ch. 7 is that the Corinthians not do anything that could lead to sin (7:2, 5, 9, 10-11, 15, 28, 36, 39); or, more positively stated, that the Corinthians “keep the commandments of God” (7:20). Paul was adamant about prohibiting the incestuous union in ch. 5 and quite willing to take his chances about the man’s passions “burning” (cf.7:9). The reason is obvious: Regardless of commitment, the man was involved in a union that did not meet the structural prerequisites of marriage. Incest was a far worse sin than fornication (as we still recognize today; cf.1 Cor 5:1). In 7:11 Paul could also recommend that a woman who was separated from her husband remain unmarried if she chose not to be reconciled back to her husband (7:11)—the context suggests that she may have prodded her husband for a divorce or otherwise initiated a divorce through direct or indirect legal means. Again, for Paul the consideration of passions “burning” was secondary to meeting the requirements for sexual activity and not sinning. There is absolutely no doubt what Paul would have responded had the community at Corinth followed up with the question, “Is it acceptable to be an *arsenokoites*—a ‘lying-with-a-male’ man (1 Cor 6:9)—if a man’s sexual desires for a male are not replaced with desires for a woman?” Undoubtedly Paul would said something like: “May it not be so! It is no sin to refrain from sex. But it is a grave sin to engage in same-sex intercourse.” This is why Gudorf’s position, cited favorably by Via on p.17, is ridiculous from a Pauline perspective. A committed homosexual union cannot be held up as a means to averting *porneia* (sexual immorality) because same-sex intercourse is a more severe instance of *porneia* than just about any other consensual sexual act. In short, none of Via’s principles for human sexuality can be abstracted from the most basic requirement of all; namely, that sex be between the two halves of a sexual whole.

I originally wrote, following the reference to “N158”: “Via is not reading Scripture contextually.” Michael West of Fortress Press at first deleted this line and later, after my protest, allowed me to substitute a passive formulation. But my point is not just that the creation texts and 1 Cor 6-7 should be understood contextually but, more, that Via is not reading these texts contextually. See also n. 163 below.

159. Via also refers four times to homosexual orientation as “inalienable,” a term that most readers will associate with the Declaration of Independence: humans “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” However, “rights” and innate desires are two very different things. Scripture never grants an inalienable right to the consensual exercise of all controlling innate passions; nor for that matter does the Declaration of Independence.

160. That human “orientations” are often at odds with the purposes and plans of God becomes most evident in the paradigm of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The destiny that God lays out for us is not a continuation of what we *were* or even of what we *are*. Our destiny is what we *will be* as those who have died to a self-gratifying existence at odds with God’s purposes in creation—the kind of existence illustrated by Paul in Rom 1:18-32. The life of the age to come and the heavenly realm above, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is here to empower this reorientation.

Destiny is eschatological and christocentric. Via's definition of destiny is stuck in the interregnum between creation and recreation. Taking a theocentric definition of *destiny* as reason no. 1, we can proceed with seven other reasons for rejecting Via's equation of immutable desire with destiny.

2. We have already seen that there is little reason for supposing that the concept of an immutable "sexual orientation" would have magically turned Paul's abhorrence of same-sex intercourse into acceptance. All the historical evidence pushes strongly in the direction that it would not have made any difference to Paul. Via proclaims: "This is where rational scientific knowledge comes in" (p. 32), as if no one ever realized until our day and age that some persons would live out their last breath with homoerotic desires still in place. There is not a human being alive who does not experience multiple forms of persistent sinful impulses that must be managed for life. Issues regarding so-called "immutable" sexual passions are quite irrelevant to the central consideration of Gen 1-2: the reconstitution of male and female into a sexual whole.

3. The concept of "immutability" has to be so significantly qualified that it necessitates the use of quotation marks. See p. 103.

4. Via claims that it makes no difference whether these "immutable" desires are primarily "essential" or "constructed." In fact, it makes considerable difference. If it is more constructed than essential, then societal approval of homosexual activity will probably have a significant, deleterious impact on the number of people who develop homoerotic proclivities. If it is constructed, then we have more reason to have hope of deconstructing the constructed.

5. An argument for a new outlook on homosexual desires, based on their "immutability," is unworkable. When, prior to the end of life, will the church know whether a given individual who claims "homosexual orientation" will have passed the point of no return, never to have an experience or experiences that might move the "orientation" to a category 5 or better (almost entirely but not exclusively homosexual)? After all, waiting for shifts on Kinsey's spectrum of sexual preferences is not like waiting for a person's sex, race, or eye color to change. Nor is it so easy to determine the "immutability" of one's sexual "orientation." What is Via suggesting? That there should be a mandatory period of therapy before classing someone's condition as "immutable"? No, he is not suggesting that. So Via makes an appeal based on a simplistic notion of immutability but knows, in the end, that if homosexual behavior is accepted for some it will invariably be accepted for all who claim any significant homosexual desire. What starts in theory as an argument for acceptance based on "immutability" ends up in practice as an argument for acceptance based on personal preference. The immutability argument is a red herring.

6. Via asks, "Why should the homosexual . . . be singled out as not having the moral freedom to actualize the only orientation he/she has?" But "homosexuals"—to some extent it is even a mistake to define them by the rubric of immoral impulses—are not being singled out. There are other sexual "orientations" that are rejected by the church. The pedophile's urges are every bit as "immutable" and "inalienable" as the homosexual's, if one uses these terms in the same sense that Via uses them. Is this his *destiny*? In addition, many people, especially among males, are not oriented toward monogamy and find little or no satisfaction in it. Some lose sexual interest for their partner in relatively short time. We might call them *polysexuals* or *polyphiles*. That is who they are—in the flesh. Is it their *destiny* and *inalienable right* before God to live out of this "orientation"? What they are in the flesh is not what God intends for them in the Spirit. Their destiny is a life lived for God. What of non-sexual "orientations"? Is it a person's *destiny* to be anxious about material possessions? A drunkard? Self-centered? Short-tempered? These are not impulses that can be turned on and off like a faucet; some of them have to be struggled against every day of a person's existence.

7. The question is not: "How can the homosexual destiny . . . not be regarded as a part of God's creative intent, just as the heterosexual destiny is so regarded?" (p. 33). Rather: How can anyone reasonably think that it was God's "creative intent" to make a sexual counterpart irrelevant to the sexual merging in marriage? Via's attempt to equate heterosexual orientation and

homosexual orientation works only if one ignores (1) the overwhelming testimony of Scripture that God's "creative intent" is for heterosexual intercourse and emphatically against homosexual intercourse; (2) the obvious structural incongruities and narcissism of same-sex intercourse; (3) the disproportionately high rates of harm that affect homosexual activity; and (4) the existence of other "immutable" conditions that are not accorded legitimate status, even when harm cannot be proven in all circumstances.

In the natural realm what is it about homosexuality that lends itself to being associated with God's design in creation? One can think of several characteristics inherent in maleness and femaleness that make a sexual connectedness for opposite-sex unions obvious. But homoerotic unions are left just with homoerotic "orientation"—which science indicates is not determined at birth, let alone creation—and the disturbing fact that the persons involved are sexually aroused by their own sex, by what they are, in essence, as male or as female. With respect to the issue of structural compatibility, I am still left wondering: Will Via admit that there is something incompatible, structurally or essen(ce)tially—i.e., in terms of essential sexual being—about a man-mother union? (We will leave to one side the obvious case of bestiality.) If not, is he ready to announce that there is nothing wrong with man-mother unions that are "consensual, loving, and committed"? But if he is ready to admit the inherent incompatibility of man-mother unions, why will he not accept the same concept for homosexual unions? Surely his argument cannot be that the latter may entail immutable and exclusive desires while the former normally does not. Would he want to say that man-mother incest would be one's "inalienable destiny" if it were associated with immutable and exclusive desires? Should we not rather say that issues of structure or essence, coupled with disproportionately high rates of harm, take precedence over all other considerations?

8. Where are the biblical texts stating that persistent fleshly desires—desires that are not even primarily or directly congenital—must be accorded the status of "part of God's creative intent"? Of course, even congenital desires are not necessarily accorded the status of being "part of God's creative intent." But the claim for noncongenital desires is even less secure. Where are the biblical texts that declare that consent, love, and commitment are the *only* criteria for sexual unions?

161. The theme that Jesus himself is life, not an array of earthly or fleshly substitutes, is found frequently in Johannine literature:

"In him was life." (John 1:4)

"I am the bread of life." (John 6:48)

"I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)

"I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6)

"And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3)

The life was made visible, and we have seen and bear witness to and proclaim the eternal life that was with the Father and became visible to us. (1 John 1:2)

And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:11-12)

[Jesus Christ] is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:20-21)

In the last mentioned text, "idols" means Christ-substitutes: something besides Jesus that an individual thinks must be had to experience life to its fullest, even if having it means violating the commands of God.

162. According to the Fourth Evangelist, what people really want in life is Jesus. They just do not know it—thinking falsely that life’s quest can be satisfied by food, sex, power, wealth, or status. What Via’s discussion misses is that the abundant life of Christ is often most profoundly experienced in moments when we do not get what we think we need to be happy. It is then, in these death-like experiences of great deprivation, that the life of Christ—the life that is Christ—is formed in us: “The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me” (John 12:25-26). Consequently, there is absolutely no contradiction between closing off options for homosexual practice and making it possible for those beset by strong homoerotic urges to experience abundant and eternal life. Indeed, there is no historical doubt that the Fourth Evangelist would have abhorred any attempt to equate abundant/eternal life with same-sex intercourse. He would have insisted that abundant life is actually blocked by engaging in a form of behavior that runs counter to God’s purposes for human sexuality at creation. To assert that persons must have a right to homosexual behavior in order to experience the fullness of life deserves to be exposed for the lie that it is.

163. I originally wrote: “Via again fails to read contextually.” Once again, Michael West deleted this line but allowed me to substitute a passive formulation. Again, my point is not just that the Gospel of John “should be read contextually” but, more, that Via fails to read the Gospel of John contextually (see n. 158, end). If Via wants to appeal to John’s Gospel for the concept of full, abundant, and eternal life, he has a moral responsibility to use the concept in a manner consistent with the use of the Fourth Evangelist. Unfortunately, Via has truncated the biblical concept of fullness to a point that Christians should find alarming. Does he really want to infer that fullness of life depends on the gratification of deeply embedded impulses of the flesh? I am not pushing for deliberate asceticism. But I am arguing that the rigorous call of discipleship quite often requires that we forego the satisfaction of many desires and wants in order to fulfill God’s will for our lives and the lives of others. Those who are homoerotically inclined do have a cross to bear. I have no desire to minimize that. At the same time, I would not paint the situation in the bleak colors that Via chooses, for reasons already stated. Joining them are millions of heterosexual persons who also, for one reason or another, have to forego a satisfying, sexually intimate union. We all bear crosses. It is inevitable. If it is not sex it will likely be something else. Sometimes when it comes to doing God’s will the flesh goes only kicking and screaming. So be it. It must go. The experiences of Christians worldwide and across centuries confirm the testimony of Jesus that it is in our interest to take up our crosses. What emerges from that obedience is beautiful forming of Christ in us, the hope of our glory.

164. Here I pause to make two points. First, it is not just “Gagnon’s appeal to the complementarity of the male and female sex organs” (p. 35). My contention is that this is *Paul’s* appeal. Of course, it would be problematic for Via both to criticize Paul for not factoring the unexpected into his theology and to cite Paul as an authority for the theme of the unexpected (Via cites 1 Cor 1:26-29; 13:3 for the latter).

Second, by this point of his essay Via has truncated my view under the rubric “the prohibitions against violating the complementarity of the male and female sex organs” (p. 35). Earlier on in his essay Via acknowledged the broader perspective of my complementarity argument (p. 26) but by the time he gets to this part of his essay he constricts it. The complementarity of the sex organs is a very important dimension of the whole, as is evident from the health hazards and repulsive quality of men who eroticize the anal cavity for penetration and even oral activity. Anatomy is also a clue not easily falsified, unlike the malleable character of many human desires. Christians are not anti-body gnostic dualists. At the same time, the matter is about more than sex organs. It is about essential maleness and femaleness. In effect, Paul is

saying in Rom 1:24-27: Start with the obvious “fittedness” of human anatomy. When done with that, consider procreative design as a clue. Then move on to a broad range of interpersonal differences that define maleness and femaleness. The image behind this is the splitting and remerging of the two sexual halves in Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:21-24. See further: Gagnon 2003a, 106-22.

165. For example, the image of salvation through the cross of Christ, cited by Via as a case in point, may have been unexpected for many in the first century. But strong antecedents to the theme of suffering redemption exist in the Old Testament; it is not all that unexpected from a scriptural standpoint. Then, too, *turning* human evil (crucifying Christ) into the greatest good (salvation) cannot be equated with *calling* evil good. There is also a big difference between things not always being what they seem to be (Via: “wolves can look like sheep”) and things being other than what God declares them to be throughout both Testaments. If the New Testament witness is as unreliable as Via makes it out to be, then any appeal to Scripture becomes an exercise in absurdity. The Bible would cease to have any meaningful authority in the life of the church. The result can only be exegetical and hermeneutical anarchy. Anybody at any time can claim regarding any deeply held scriptural view that the time for a new and unexpected work of God has arrived (precisely what Via is doing here).

Of course, Via’s partiality for the unexpected can be turned around. If Via is looking for surprises and the unexpected, then he has one: The idea of a persistent homosexual orientation is immaterial to Scripture’s prohibition of same-sex intercourse; God’s creative intent and structural design take precedence over human desire.

166. In the context of Via’s comment comes a dismissive remark about my “final appeal . . . to the absolute *rule*” (p. 36). Here is the remark in context:

There is no way to demonstrate that [homosexual intercourse] is a bad thing, in and of itself. Gagnon tacitly acknowledges this in that his final appeal is to the absolute *rule*. Same-sex intercourse is absolutely forbidden in all cases (450). “Gratifying a desire for same-sex intercourse is always inherently immoral because the biblical prohibitions are against some-sex intercourse *per se*” (462).

The statement on p. 450 of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* to which Via refers comes in the context of a discussion about “what makes the biblical mandate concerning homosexuality so hard for Christians to ignore or downplay” (p. 449). One consideration is that, contrary to some attempts to argue otherwise, the biblical proscription of homosexual activity is absolute. The exegetical case for this position is made throughout my book, but most notably on pp. 347-61. Via appears to agree with this assessment in his essay (p 11) but later he seems to forget this point when he argues, repeatedly, that a loving, faithful, and committed homosexual relationship is something different from what Paul was proscribing. Nevertheless, Via’s hermeneutical inconsistency does not overturn his exegetical conclusion: the proscription in Paul is not limited to exploitative homosexual behavior such as pederasty and short-term relationships. Recognizing this point should indeed make it “hard for Christians to ignore or downplay” the biblical prohibition—that is, presuming one cares about Scripture and does not forget to carry over the conclusion to hermeneutical discussion. The point that I make here is unassailable.

The second reference cited by Via (p. 462) comes in the context of a discussion of the Gentile inclusion analogy. I contend that one of the reasons that this is not a good analogy for the issue of same-sex intercourse is that there was no prohibition in the Old Testament against being a Gentile. Jews could, and did, distinguish God-fearing Gentiles from godless Gentiles. Consequently, affirming one’s Gentile ethnicity is only incidentally linked to sinful behavior (Gentiles are typically sinful but not inherently so). This is very different from the Bible’s

approach to same-sex intercourse: “the biblical prohibitions are against same-sex intercourse *per se*.” As I note, “The existence of ‘righteous gentiles’ might have been a rare or unusual phenomenon in the eyes of the first generation of Jewish Christians, but the concept of a righteous participant in same-sex intercourse . . . would have been a complete oxymoron to all first-century Jews” (p. 462). The point is again unassailable: *To first-century Jews and Jewish Christians* “gratifying a desire for same-sex intercourse is always inherently immoral because the biblical prohibitions are against same-sex intercourse *per se*.”

So it is obvious that when Via finds something wrong with these remarks he is taking them out of context. In the first instance my “appeal to the absolute rule” is not “final” but correctly points out that the absoluteness of the prohibition makes it difficult to dismiss the prohibition today on the grounds that it does not apply to nonexploitative homosexual unions. In the second instance “appeal to the absolute rule” is “final” but is presented as an appeal that first-century Jews and Jewish Christians would make.

The question then arises: Do I make a “final appeal to the absolute *rule*”? The answer is a qualified “yes”: Yes, but not in isolation to, first, other arguments and, second, contextual and hermeneutical considerations.

On the first qualification: Of course my “final appeal” is to Scripture, within a larger combined appeal to Scripture, nature (structural compatibility), and high rates of negative side effects. Via himself refers to Scripture as “the highest authority for Christians in theological and ethical matters” (p. 2). It is a combination argument with the elements placed in order of importance for Christians. As regards the third element, I have already stated clearly that, so far as consensual behavior is concerned, it is unreasonable to limit absolute proscriptions only to those behaviors that one can prove measurable harm to all participants in all circumstances. If Via wants to establish such an unreasonable standard as his own, he will have to accept some forms of incest, bestiality, plural unions, prostitution, and even pedophilia, as well as a host of non-sexual sins, including idolatry (perhaps he does accept some forms). For most people a high incidence in negative side effects is adequate for an absolute prohibition, especially if accompanied by a structural argument from nature. Each argument has its merits and demerits. The argument from a high risk for bad side effects can be established empirically but it does not cover every circumstance for the behavior in question. The nature argument does cover every circumstance but it leans more heavily on intuitive perception than empirical evidence (though there is an empirical component). The Scripture argument can be made effectively for an absolute prohibition of homosexual behavior. However, the extent of its influence on decision-making will depend on the degree of authority that one accords Scripture in a new setting. The three arguments work best in tandem, with the highest priority given to Scripture (see Gagnon 2000, 193-95).

On the second qualification: Of course the phrase “biblical prohibitions” (p. 462; Via calls it “the biblical rule”) means: the biblical prohibitions examined for contextual and hermeneutical issues and for rationale. I supply this examination in the preceding 450 pages of my book. My appeal is not to a rule only in the sense of saying: It’s in Leviticus, so do it. My appeal is to an entire biblical perspective on human sexuality from the Genesis creation texts on. It is an appeal that not only covers the full literary breadth of Scripture but also takes into account a full range of considerations from the socio-historical context and from hermeneutical concerns. That broader context is behind any appeal that I make to Scripture’s absolute prohibition. My complaint with Via’s work is not that he does too much with context matters but rather that he does not do enough, or do it well enough, to justify the conclusions that he reaches.

I am surprised that Via thinks this approach is odd, or that it concedes something.

167. For example, let pro-homosex advocates prove in the face of studies like the ones that I cite in Gagnon 2001a, 476-78 that higher rates of psychiatric disorders, including suicide ideation, are due exclusively or even primarily to societal “homophobia.” As J. Michael Bailey notes (see

citation in the next paragraph), one study that “found higher rates of mental problems among gay men was conducted in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is probably the most tolerant country in the world toward homosexual people. But gay men there were still about three times as likely as straight men to have been depressed during the past year” (p. 82).

Let them prove that high rates of nonmonogamy and sexually transmitted disease among male homosexuals even in homosex-affirming areas (but not so much among female homosexuals) are attributable exclusively or primarily to societal homophobia (ibid., 452-60). A recent study of over 16,000 persons around the globe concluded that, on average, men want more sex partners than women do and are far more willing to have sex with persons whom they have known for only a short time. These differences between the sexes were maintained irrespective of sexual orientation. Cf. David P. Schmitt et al., “Universal sex differences in the desire for sexual variety: Tests from 52 nations, 6 continents, and 13 islands,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85 (2003): 85-104. No wonder studies like these generate the wry observation, “What would we do without experts?” Of course, men and women are significantly different as regards sexual arousal patterns. Of course, when two men are paired in a sexual relationship they will act like men—unfortunately without the restraining influence of females. One of many who argue this view is J. Michael Bailey, chair of the department of psychology at Northwestern University, author of the most significant identical twin studies regarding sexual orientation, and a pro-homosex essentialist. Bailey writes:

Because of fundamental differences between men and women, the social organization of gay men’s sexuality will always look quite different from that of heterosexual men’s. Regardless of marital laws and policies, there will always be fewer gay men who are romantically attached. Gay men will always have many more sex partners than straight people do. Those who are attached will be less sexually monogamous. And although some gay male relationships will be for life, these will be many fewer than among heterosexual couples. . . . I suspect that regardless of the progress of gay rights, gay men will continue to pursue happiness in ways that differ markedly from the ways that most straight people do. This will be true even as society becomes increasingly tolerant of them. Both heterosexual and homosexual people will need to be open minded about social practices common to people of other orientations. (*The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism* [Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry Press, 2003], 101-102; online: <http://books.nap.edu/books/0309084180/html/>).

Bailey tries to assure his readers that this development is not so bad because (1) “gay male couples do not often have children”; (2) “men feel much less psychic conflict than women about casual sex”; and (3) negative health consequences can be minimized by “proper precautions” (ibid.). Even on secular grounds the rationale is specious. There is nothing stopping male homosexuals from using “proper precautions” in the present time; yet three-quarters of all AIDS cases in the United States that are attributed to a known sexual cause are attributed to males having sex with males (which, in any given year, only 2% of the population engages in). In homosex-affirming San Francisco, somewhere between a quarter and a third of all homosexual men are HIV-infected; and, from 1997 to 2000, HIV infection rates doubled and the percentage of men who “always” use condoms during anal sex went down by half (Gagnon 2000, 211 n. 68). So much for the long-term effectiveness of “safe-sex” education. Homosexual men continue to contract other sexually transmitted diseases several times higher than heterosexual men. Moreover, the more the male homosexual life is “normalized,” the more society will have to accommodate to homosexual lifestyle differences, which in turn will further erode heterosexual standards of monogamy and permanence. As Bailey himself notes, society will need to become more “open minded” about typical male homosexual practices. Furthermore, with increased “normalization” will come more “gay families” with children, caught in the crossfire of the “gay” lifestyle patterns. Of course, too, Christians have to think about more than the negative utilitarian

effects. That homosexual men may feel “less psychic conflict” about promiscuous and multiple-partner sex is hardly a moral justification for behavior that Jesus would have found appalling.

Let pro-homosex apologists prove that cultural incentives for homosexual behavior do not, over time, increase the incidence of homosexuality. The evidence indicates otherwise (Gagnon 2001a, 404-23; Gagnon 2003d, 14-17).

Let pro-homosex apologists prove that the overwhelming testimony of Scripture, which includes the testimony of Jesus, got it so drastically wrong. Let them prove that the allegedly “new knowledge” about orientation is really so radically new. Let them prove that this knowledge would have made a difference to the reason that the authors of Scripture had for rejecting same-sex intercourse. It is nigh impossible to overestimate Scripture’s disapproval of same-sex intercourse. Contextual considerations do not permit a limitation of this disapproval to exploitative forms (as even Via admits) *or to bisexual expressions*. In referring to the “testimony of Jesus” I am relying on the historical and exegetical arguments made on pp. 50-53 and 68-74 in my essay and in Gagnon 2001a, ch. 3. I include Jesus’ explicit embrace of the male-female prerequisite in Gen 1-2, Jesus’ acceptance of the Hebrew Bible as Scripture, Jesus’ intensification of sex-ethic demands, and the beliefs of those who knew Jesus best.

Finally, let pro-homosex apologists prove that being erotically aroused by one’s own sex constitutes a healthy and mature conception of human sexuality.

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