

Praise for Robert Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*
(Abingdon Press, 2001; 520 pages; now in its sixth printing)

Published Reviews and Comments

“The conservative magnum opus” and “the weightiest American treatment” on the subject of the Bible and homosexuality.—**Richard N. Ostling**, one of two religion writers for The Associated Press and former (for 29 years) religion writer and senior correspondent with *Time* magazine. Mr. Ostling has received all seven of the prizes in the religion newswriting field, including the American Academy of Religion and Templeton awards.

“The best single treatment of the issue of [the Bible and homosexuality].”—**Charles H. Talbert**, Professor of New Testament, Baylor University. Comment made in: idem, *Romans* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 78.

Author of: *Reading Luke-Acts in Its Mediterranean Milieu* (Novum Testamentum Supplements, 107; Brill, 2003); *Reading Luke* (rev. ed.; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002); *Reading Acts* (Crossroad/ SPCK, 1997); *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* (Westminster/John Knox, 1994); *Reading John* (Crossroad/SPCK, 1992); *Reading Corinthians* (NY: Crossroad, 1987; rev. ed.: Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2003); and many other works.

“The book is an unemotional meticulous examination of the relevant scriptural texts with a fair and at times devastating evaluation of other modern interpreters and interpretations of the issue. . . . It is ‘must’ reading for pastors and for other Christian leaders.”—**E. Earle Ellis**, Professor Emeritus of New Testament, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Review in *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 44 (Summer 2002): 74-75.

Author of: *History and Interpretation in New Testament Perspective* (Brill, 2001); *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* (Brill, 2000); *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Brill, 1999); *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Mohr-Siebeck, 1991); *Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society* (Eerdmans, 1989); *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Mohr-Siebeck, 1978); and other works.

“I do not, however, know how any reasonable person could read Robert A. J. Gagnon’s 500-page book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Abingdon, 2001), and not conclude that any exegesis evading the clear meaning of Paul is evasive indeed. Nor from now on can I regard anyone as qualified to debate homosexuality who has not come to terms with Gagnon’s encyclopedic examination of all the relevant passages and all the exegetical

hypotheses concerning them. I have not always agreed with James Barr, but when on the dust jacket he describes Gagnon's treatise as 'indispensable even for those who disagree with the author,' I think he is absolutely right."—**J. I. Packer**, Professor of Theology, Regent College. Remarks published in: *Christianity Today*, Jan. 21, 2003.

Author of a 4-volume *Collected Shorter Writings* (Paternoster, 1998-99); *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Tyndale, 1993); *Knowing God* (Intervarsity, 1993); *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Crossway, 1990); and many other books.

"The definitive exegetical treatment [of the Bible and homosexuality] by an author with a high view of Scripture's authority, but some unconservative ideas on its composition."—**Gordon J. Wenham**, professor of Old Testament at the University of Gloucestershire in Gloucester, England. Comment made in a paper delivered at the Fourth National Evangelical Anglican Congress, Blackpool, England, Sept. 22, 2003 and posted at <http://www.neac.info/talks/221915gw.pdf>. Author of: *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically* (T. & T. Clark, 2000); *Genesis* (2 vols.; Word Biblical Commentary, Word, 1987, 1994); *Numbers* (Old Testament Guides; Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); *The Book of Leviticus* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Eerdmans, 1979); and author or editor of many other books.

"In the past decade I have read probably a dozen books dealing with aspects of homosexual identity and practice. This book is worth more than all the others combined. Here's why: (1) Many books and articles deal with only a handful of biblical texts and offer up very sketchy exegesis; this book deals substantively with more than a dozen specific texts, as well as taking seriously the larger historical and literary contexts of these passages. (2) Much of popular and semi-popular writing of the past 30 years is ill-informed about the literature of the ancient Near East (not much) and the Graeco-Roman world (quite a bit) dealing with same-sex intercourse; Gagnon includes lengthy quotations of relevant materials and shows their possible bearing on the biblical texts. (3) The author interacts carefully, critically, and fairly (it seems to me) with scholars who have offered a "revisionist" interpretation of the relevant biblical texts. (4) Gagnon includes in his hermeneutical section substantive discussions about and citations from the technical literature in journals of science on the causes of homosexual behavior and the possibility of change."—**Robert F. Hull, Jr.**, Dean and Professor of New Testament, Emmanuel School of Religion (Johnson City, Tenn.); review in the Mar. 2004 issue of a school publication (*The Clipboard*) for alumni and Board members. Posted at: <http://www.esr.edu/Publications/cb-0403.htm>.

“This is the most comprehensive and up-to-date treatment of the biblical texts that are generally associated with homosexual practice and of the arguments used to interpret them. Its treatment of the pertinent Old Testament, early Jewish and New Testament texts places before the reader the full dossier of ancient textual evidence, the various interpretive possibilities and full references to modern scholarly debate.”—**Daniel J. Harrington**, S.J., professor of New Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA, and editor of *New Testament Abstracts*; review in *America: The National Catholic Weekly*, March 11, 2002.

“[Gagnon’s] scholarship is mature and exacting: it persuasively enunciates the conventional interpretation and relentlessly assails the liberal camp. . . . an impressively learned study driving home that those few Biblical texts and authors that allude to or mention homosexuality condemn it. . . . an extraordinarily useful repository of information and sources. . . . He has undoubtedly galvanized the debate: the book will be welcomed and hated, praised and blamed, but it should be read. . . . [It is] a valuable contribution to the issue.”—**John Barclay Burns**, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, George Mason University; excerpted from review in *Journal of Religion and Society* 4 (2002).

“This thoughtful and well-documented study makes the case that Christians should not endorse homosexual relations. Written in a clear but non-inflammatory style, the author engages a remarkable range of contemporary biblical, theological, and pastoral scholarship. Divergent viewpoints are summarized and critiqued in a balanced way so that readers can understand the various sides of the debate. The care with which Gagnon engages various points of view strengthens his case. . . . The breadth and balance in this work make it a valuable guide through the maze of studies on the topic of homosexuality and Christian practice. . . . Those who agree with the position taken by Gagnon will welcome the care with which he develops his argument, and those who disagree will find in Gagnon a worthy conversation partner, who takes challenges seriously and responds thoughtfully.”—**Craig R. Koester**, Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minn.); excerpted from review published in *Word & World* 22/1 (Winter 2002): 94-96. Author of *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; Doubleday), *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Eerdmans), and *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Fortress, 1995).

“[Gagnon’s] massive tome, written in non-polemical tone, is the first comprehensive exegetical treatment of this intractable issue of homosexuality. . . .

Gagnon's book may also be the *last* of its kind, since it does so much, and further work likely will address only aspects of the issue, rather than seek so complete a treatment. . . . Gagnon's thorough work excels in 1) careful textual analysis and intertextual considerations; 2) exacting detail in historical-critical investigations, taking into account cultural backgrounds and ideological contexts of relevant contemporary literature cited, whether Ancient Near East, Greco-Roman, or early Judaism; and 3) extensive engagement with most all scholarly contributions to date. . . . Virtually no stone is left unturned on this topic. . . . The range of arguments considered and his careful analysis [of Paul and Deutero-Paul] sets a bench-mark for all further study of these texts. . . . Whether we agree or disagree with Gagnon's views, his arguments are clear, cogent, and persuasive."—**Willard M. Swartley**, Professor of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary; excerpted from review in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 76:2 (April 2002): 215-22. Author of: *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment* (Herald Press); *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Hendrickson); *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Herald); editor of: *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Westminster) and *The Meaning of Peace: Biblical Studies* (Westminster).

"Future debates in the church and the academy will have to take into account this major work on Scripture and homosexuality. Using historical-critical and literary-critical tools, biblical scholar Robert Gagnon has done meticulous exegetical work on the key passages, engaging a range of contemporary scholars with very diverse opinions. . . . The Bible and Homosexual Practice has arrived at a moment when questions about the ordination of gays and lesbians, the performance of rites for same-sex unions, and related matters, are high on denominational agendas. It should be an indispensable resource for dialogue and decisions. Especially so because it casts the issue in theological terms rather than in culture-war categories. . . . [T]his book has made an impressive case for a common thread of biblical teaching on the purposes of human sexuality. It should be a standard reference work for years to come."—**Gabriel Fackre**, Abbot Professor of Christian Theology, Emeritus, Andover Newton Theological School; excerpted from a review published in *Pro Ecclesia* 11:3 (Summer 2002): 377-79.

Author of *The Christian Story* (Eerdmans) and 18 other books.

"Regardless of one's views, it is no longer possible to preach, teach, speak or write on this subject with integrity before carefully considering this magisterial work. . . . It is a must for every pastor and church library. . . . [Gagnon] has given the English-speaking Christian world an unmatched encyclopedic work on homosexual practice and the Bible. I recommend it highly."—**Kenneth E. Bailey**,

Research Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies, the Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem; excerpted from review in *Presbyterian Outlook* (Nov. 5, 2001).
Author of *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Eerdmans), and many other works.

Endorsements submitted for book jacket and/or inside book

“This is a brilliant, original and highly important work, displaying meticulous biblical scholarship, and indispensable even for those who disagree with the author.”—**James Barr**, Regius Professor of Hebrew, Emeritus, Oxford University, and Distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible, Emeritus, Vanderbilt University.
Author of *The Concept of Biblical Theology* (Fortress), *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford University), *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Westminster), *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford University), and seven other books.

“This work contains the most sophisticated and convincing examination of the biblical data to date and puts the data in the context of ancient culture. The implications for the present are drawn in a prudent and well-argued manner. The book thus makes an essential contribution to defusing the emotionalism that surrounds the discussion. Even someone who advocates a different position will be able to appreciate this advantage of the book.”—**Jürgen Becker**, Professor of New Testament, Christian-Albrechts University (Kiel, Germany).
Author of *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Westminster/Mohr-Siebeck), *Jesus of Nazareth* (de Gruyter), and four other books.

“No Christian concerned with homosexuality can afford to ignore this book. Agree with the conclusions or not, it presents a meticulous scholarly account of biblical and post-biblical traditions about same-sex relationships, and shows the weakness of many modern discussions.”—**John Barton**, Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford, England.
Author of *Ethics and the Old Testament* (Trinity Press), *Oracles of God: Prophecy in Israel After the Exile* (Oxford University), *Reading the Old Testament* (Westminster), and many other books.

“Gagnon's incisive logic, prudent judgment, and exhaustive research should make this book a dominant voice in the contemporary debate on an extremely sensitive subject.”—**Jerome Murphy-O'Connor**, O.P., Professor of New Testament, Ecole Biblique, Jerusalem.
Author of *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press), *1 Corinthians* (Doubleday), *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (Oxford University Press), and several other books.

“Gagnon has offered a learned, judicious, and comprehensive examination of the biblical testimony. He makes a genuine contribution to the continuing debate by critically evaluating a host of theories developed by defenders of same-sex practices. His book is fair and compassionate, and should become a major resource for those taking the scriptural witness seriously.”—**Brevard S. Childs**, Sterling Professor of Divinity (Old Testament), Emeritus, Yale Divinity School. Author of *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Fortress); *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Fortress); *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Fortress), and 7 other books.

“Gagnon makes his point clear in defending the non-acceptance of homosexual relationships on biblical grounds. In its learnedness, his book will without doubt be in the vanguard of its position and cannot be ignored in future debate even by proponents of discordant views.”—**Martti Nissinen**, Professor of Hebrew Bible, University of Helsinki, Finland. Author of *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* (Fortress) and *Prophetie, Redaktion und Fortschreibung im Hoseabuch* (Neukirchener).

“Gagnon's work provides in my judgment the most thorough and satisfying analysis and evaluation of the biblical texts yet produced. It is abreast of the latest literature, scrupulous in its exegesis and sensitive to hermeneutical questions. It is a study that no serious scholar will want to ignore.”—**David F. Wright**, Senior Lecturer, Ecclesiastical History, The University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Editor of *Martin Bucer, Reforming Church and Community* (Cambridge University Press); co-editor of *New Dictionary of Theology* (Intervarsity); and author of a number of scholarly articles on homosexuality.

“Gagnon's book is an extremely valuable contribution to the current debate and deserves to be read very widely. The biblical exegesis is distinguished by rigorous scholarship, while the discussion of how the biblical material speaks to the modern church and to secular society is characterized by balanced and sober judgment and by a sympathetic understanding of the present situation. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.”—**C. E. B. Cranfield**, Emeritus Professor of Theology, University of Durham, England. Author of the 2-volume International Critical Commentary (T&T Clark) on *Romans* and six other books.

“This is probably the fullest and best presentation of the conservative position. Amid the many publications on the Christian attitude to homosexuality, Gagnon's

book stands out by reason of its wide learning and rich detail which characterize it as a serious work of scholarship, expressing the case against same-sex intercourse sympathetically and convincingly.”—**I. Howard Marshall**, Professor of New Testament Exegesis, Emeritus, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

Author of the new International Critical Commentary on *The Pastoral Epistles, Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Eerdmans), and 16 other books.

“This is the most thorough examination of the scriptural and theological (and a variety of other) perspectives on same-sex relations that I have seen, a *tour de force* that cannot be easily set aside by anyone who reads it and reacts to it in anything other than a superficial and prejudiced way. It has the potential to bring discussion of this topic to a new level.”—**Marion L. Soards**, Professor of New Testament, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Author of *The Speeches in Acts* (Westminster), *Scripture and Homosexuality* (Westminster), and *The Passion According to Luke* (JSOT).

“I know of no comparable study of the texts and interpretive debates that surround homosexual behavior. Gagnon's approach to the issue grasps the complexity of the debate, and does so with much compassion. Although the work is not polemical in tone, it also becomes clear that some widely-quoted authorities and contemporary advocates of sexual liberation in this area have misread the historical and textual data to enhance their cases and misused contemporary scientific, classical argument and pastoral evidence.”—**Max L. Stackhouse**, Stephen Colwell Professor of Christian Ethics, Princeton Theological Seminary.

Author of *Covenant and Commitments* (Westminster), *Christian Social Ethics in a Global Era* (Abingdon), and six other books.

“Gagnon's book is extraordinarily satisfying.”—**Bruce M. Metzger**, Professor of New Testament, Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary.

Author of *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford), *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford), and over a dozen other books.

“Thorough...and very well informed.”—**James D. G. Dunn**, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, University of Durham.

Author of *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Eerdmans), *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism* (TPI), *Christology in the Making* (Westminster), a 2-volume commentary on Romans for the Word Biblical Commentary series (Word), and over a dozen other books.

“The book anticipates every question that I thought to ask about this subject and provides an extensive answer. I believe that this volume will become a classic in the ongoing discussion of the church's understanding of and response to homosexuality.”—**Duane F. Watson**, Professor of New Testament Studies, Malone College.

Author of *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible* (Brill) and *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (Scholars Press).

“Gagnon’s book is well written, well organized, well and closely argued. I hope it will be widely read.”—**C. K. Barrett**, Emeritus Professor of Divinity (New Testament), Durham University, England.

Author of the new International Critical Commentary on *Acts* (2 vols.); *Paul: An Introduction to his Thought* (Westminster); commentaries on Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, John, and 16 other books.

“This is one of the very best exegetical/theological treatments of the issue now available. All who are concerned with the issue will need to reckon with it.”—**Douglas Moo**, Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College.

Author of the commentary on *Romans* for the New International Commentary of the New Testament series (Eerdmans) and three other books.

“Gagnon's study—impressively informed but not pedantic, passionate in its defense of traditional Christian views but detailed in its summary of other positions, closely argued without any sacrificing of clarity or forthrightness—represents the kind of contribution that can only elevate the discussion. Readers on both sides of the issue, and those yet undecided, will learn much from a careful study of his argument.”—**Stephen Westerholm**, Professor of Biblical Studies, McMaster University.

Author of *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Eerdmans); *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (Lund: Gleerup); *Preface to the Study of Paul* (Eerdmans).

“In its comprehensiveness and rigor, Gagnon's book gives a most helpful, much needed, timely, and novel contribution. The book is so well organized that ministers can easily use it as a reference work, and it is so clearly written that interested laity can follow the argument.”—**Ulrich W. Mauser**, Emeritus Professor of Biblical Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary.

Author of *The Gospel of Peace: A Scriptural Message for Today's World* (Westminster) and two other books.

“This is an impressive study that moves the discussion forward in an important and hotly contested area of Christian ethics. It articulates and defends the traditional view, but is delightfully free of tired traditional arguments. Nothing is taken for granted. The book is at one and the same time hard hitting, carefully nuanced, irenic, practical and fair. It is a necessary read for any who are seriously concerned with Christian sexual ethics.”—**John Nolland**, Professor of New Testament, Trinity College, Bristol, England.

Author of the 3-volume commentary on *Luke* for the Word Biblical Commentary series.

“A thorough, irenic and socially-concerned book. Here you will find the most up-to-date survey of the evidence and arguments all wrapped into a hard-hitting, unflinching commitment to Scripture which at the same time is sensitive both to pastoral and counseling issues. The trend today is to duck the issue or to offer non-evaluative remarks; Gagnon stands against the trend with uncommon grace and insight.”—**Scot McKnight**, Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies (New Testament), North Park University.

Author of *New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Eerdmans) and *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Fortress).

“This is the most complete treatment of the biblical passages relevant to this subject known to me. In addition to his thorough exegesis, Dr. Gagnon persuasively pleads for the depoliticization of exegetical work on these passages. He mounts a convincing case that everyone involved in the discussion of this emotion-laden topic should face the sober reality of the Bible's unequivocal and univocal disapproval of same-sex intercourse.”—**Frank Thielman**, Presbyterian Professor of Divinity (NT), Beeson Divinity School, Samford University.

Author of *Paul and the Law* (Intervarsity) and *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework to Understanding Paul's View of the Law* (Brill).