

HOW JACK ROGERS CONTINUES TO DISTORT SCRIPTURE AND MY WORK: PART 1

A Response to Jack Rogers's "11 Talking Points . . . And how Robert Gagnon gets them wrong"

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Jack Rogers, recent author of the book *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality* (Westminster John Knox), has responded (June 14, 2006) to my first four installments critiquing his book: "Does Jack Rogers's Book 'Explode the Myths' about the Bible and Homosexuality and 'Heal the Church'?" (found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for html version and [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for pdf version; Rogers's review is [here](#) (www.drjackrogers.com).

In his response Rogers continues to misrepresent both the subject of "Scripture and homosexuality" and my work on the subject. In addition, by not responding to the vast majority of the arguments that I make against his claims about the Bible and homosexuality, he continues the strategy that he adopted in his book; namely, ignoring the massive weight of evidence against his position.

Jack Rogers talks about "rave reviews" of his book. I haven't seen a single rave review, or any review, by a biblical scholar, let alone by a biblical scholar who adopts a different position than the author's (contrary to what I received for my book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*). Moreover, he says that he has been on an extensive book tour before large audiences. And this is evidence of what? It is certainly not evidence of any fact that he has made strong arguments about Scripture and/or homosexual practice.

Rogers hopes that flash will substitute for substance. It does not. The editors in power at Westminster John Knox and the Presbyterian Publishing House, mostly strong advocates for homosexual practice, and the media outlets in PCUSA circles and elsewhere, are giving a full-court press to push Rogers's book on the church, particularly the PCUSA branch. But this is nothing but an ideologically driven propaganda show for a book that does not merit the attention that it is getting.

Rogers claims that my critique of his book "is filled with personal attacks on me which are simply untrue." What are these "personal attacks" that are "untrue"? Rogers doesn't say. My comments are rather accurate and substantive critiques of major misrepresentations that Rogers makes of my work and of Scripture. The problem lies not with the one who points out these blatant misrepresentations but with the one who makes them.

Here are my 'talking points' to Rogers's response.

1. Rogers's chief charge is that I make no mention, in the first four installments of my critique, of various other arguments in his book. The inference of his charge is that I *can't* respond to these arguments when the reality is that I *haven't yet had time* to respond to them. Rogers makes so many misrepresentations in his book that it takes a long time to give adequate responses to each of them. I have produced 48 pages of critique thus far and more material is coming. I couldn't get the next projected 3 installments out because I had to complete my teaching responsibilities for the term at Pittsburgh Seminary (including getting all grades in) and prepare to come to the General Assembly in order to serve as both a commissioner on the vital Church Orders Committee handling overtures affecting the sexuality standard and an overture advocate for an overture going before the even more vital Ecclesiology Committee handling the sexuality Task Force's Final Report. Now I am at GA and my time is limited. But a more detailed response to all his arguments will come in due time, soon after General Assembly.

2. The deceptive character of Rogers's chief charge is underscored by the fact that I have made repeated responses, in work already published, to each of the issues that Rogers claims that I ignore in my as yet uncompleted critique of his book. Yet Rogers has failed to acknowledge, let alone respond to, much less rebut, these responses. This includes my work on hermeneutical models and why the alleged analogies for accepting homosexual practice, used by Rogers and others (slavery, women's roles, divorce, and the Gentile inclusion analogy), are really not good analogies. As with nearly everything else, Rogers ignores my arguments altogether, hoping to lead his readers to the false assumption that no such arguments exist.

3. As for the scriptural arguments that I do mount against Rogers in the 48 pages put out thus far in four installments, Rogers makes little or no attempt to respond. My conclusion from this is that Rogers has no argument to make. Whereas I have responded to all of Rogers's main arguments--whether in my recent response to Rogers's book or in earlier writings (two of which respond to Rogers's previous online work, plus a 500-page book, etc.)--Rogers has responded to few of my arguments and rebutted none.

But rather than acknowledge to readers that he was wrong in any of his great claims about Scripture and my work, he once again hopes that by ignoring my arguments he can give readers the false impression that his arguments are basically sound. For example:

- a.* I argued throughout Installment 3 that **Rogers lied when he twice claimed before his readers that I "simply assert, without supporting evidence" that the Bible's opposition to homosexual practice is absolute. I supplied in Installment 3 sixteen pages of documentation of some (not all) of the many arguments that I have made in my published work for concluding that the apostle Paul opposed all forms of homosexual practice, committed or otherwise.** I could have expanded considerably the length of this response in Installment 3 if I had developed the arguments to the extent that they are found in

- my other publications and if I had widened the net to look at biblical texts outside Paul. Rogers's claim amounts to the biggest lie that anyone has made of my work to date or probably could be made to any work. *Nowhere in Rogers's response is there any mention of this, much less any apology to me and to his readers for bearing false witness in an extraordinary way.*
- b. **The above-mentioned lie made by Rogers also underscores the extraordinary distortions about Scripture in Rogers's work. For Rogers insists throughout his book that the view that "the Bible condemns all homosexual relationships. . . . is simply incorrect" (p. 70). Yet in his reply to me he does not respond to even a single one of the 20 pieces of supporting evidence from literary and historical context that I provide for the assertion that the scriptural texts from the apostle Paul categorically reject *all* homosexual relationships.** Surely if Rogers could have rebutted this mountain of supporting evidence, or even one piece of it, he would have done so. But rather than admit anything, *Rogers simply leaves unmentioned that his central contention about the biblical witness being open to committed homosexual unions is contradicted by a mountain of contrary evidence.*
- c. I showed in Installment 1 that **Rogers very selectively quotes from pro-homosex scholars who have worked extensively on the subject of the Bible and homosexuality, citing them only when they support his own position on biblical texts and ignoring them completely when they do not.** Not only does he ignore the vast majority of the main arguments put forward by scholars who do not endorse homosexual practice, but he also conveniently ignores remarks from even pro-homosex scholars that contradict his use of the "exploitation argument" and "orientation argument" (i.e., arguments that the Bible allegedly does not speak against non-exploitative homosexual unions and that the ancient world allegedly had no conception of congenital influences on homosexual behavior, respectively). *Rogers makes absolutely no mention in his reply about my noting this, presumably because his actions here are, from a scholarly viewpoint, indefensible.*
- d. I demonstrated in Installment 2 that **the very examples that Rogers gives for showing the importance of the historical contexts for biblical texts pertaining to homosexual practice actually show that Rogers does not know well the historical context. I demonstrated this for Rogers's (1) orientation argument, (2) idolatrous sexuality argument, and (3) misogyny argument.** (1) Rogers insists in his book that "the concept of an ongoing sexual attraction to people of one's own sex did not exist . . . until the late nineteenth century." But I noted that the ancient world did have a view of homosexuality--as Thomas K. Hubbard notes in his *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (University of California Press, 2003)--"as an essential and central category of personal identity, exclusive of and antithetical to heterosexual orientation." Rogers is strangely silent about this in his response. (2) In direct contradiction to Rogers's assumptions, I demonstrated in various ways that Paul's indictment of homosexual practice was not limited to homosexual acts conducted in the context of worship of false gods and reminded Rogers that I had already given 15 arguments for this point in a previous online rebuttal of Rogers. All of these

arguments Rogers conveniently ignores. Particularly interesting is the fact that Rogers excises from his personal narrative of how he came to change his views on homosexual practice a “significant occasion” for such change mentioned in an earlier Covenant Network article: his visit to Corinth. Could this excision have anything to do with my 2004 criticism of his false assumption that Paul derived his negative view of homosexuality from homosexual temple prostitution at Corinth? All scholars of Corinth agree, I pointed out, that there never was any homosexual temple prostitution in Corinth, either in Paul’s day or in the classical period. Rogers does not acknowledge to readers this basic error. He prefers to keep quiet about it and alter his own personal history. (3) I cited three insurmountable problems with Rogers’s use of a misogyny argument--the assumption that Scripture’s opposition to homosexual practice can be attributed primarily to a male desire to keep women subjugated--and showed that Rogers didn’t even realize that his use of such an argument directly contradicted his exploitation argument. If Scripture were opposed to homosexual practice on the grounds that such practice would challenge male supremacy over women, then clearly Scripture would be opposed to all homosexual practice, not just homosexual practice conducted in an exploitative or idolatrous manner. Again, Rogers doesn’t mention to readers this fundamental problem with the central contentions of his book.

- In Installment 4 I showed how **Rogers lied to readers about my views on same-sex attractions when he twice stated that “Gagnon claims . . . that homosexuality is a willful choice.”** I further showed that Rogers operated with the mistaken notion that the only two choices for explaining homosexual development were (1) complete willful choice or (2) complete congenital determinism; furthermore, that Rogers didn’t realize that scientific studies to date point to multiple causation factors, including congenital influences (genetic, intrauterine), familial and peer influences, physical environment, societal restrictions or openness, demographics, education, personal human psychology, and incremental choices. In his only comment on the scientific evidence (his “talking point” 7), Rogers completely ignores the issue of causation/origination of homosexuality on which he places so much emphasis in his book. Instead he diverts readers’ attention to a different claim; namely, that “homosexuality is not a mental disorder and there is no need for a ‘cure.’”

Rogers doesn’t seem to realize that the claims of professional organizations that homosexuality is not a “mental disorder” or that “there is no need for a ‘cure’” are largely political advocacy statements by politicized health organizations. Few conditions create *intrinsic* distress or *intrinsic* harm. But a large number of studies show significantly high rates of distress and harm, for which a significant and likely factor appears to be the absence of a gender complement in same-sex unions. For example, even David Myers, whom Rogers loves to cite, has to admit in his recent book with Letha Scanzoni that high rates of sex partners on the part of homosexual males is attributable, in the first instance, not to homophobia but to unbridled male sexuality that does not have to negotiate its interests in relation to women (*What God Has Joined Together?* 124-25).

Rogers claims that I “quote from a research paper or academic journal when it suits [my] interest but [try] to dismiss the broad consensus” of health organizations. The fact is that I quote in various works that I have written the biggest and most important research studies, not a small number of peripheral studies. Rogers, however, cites virtually no studies--indeed, just one, which he got from reading Myers. The declarations of politicized health organizations, whose ethics subcommittees are often staffed and led by self-identified “gays” and lesbians, are meaningless in the absence of specific studies that prove claims. If Rogers wants readers to assume (and it appears that he does) that the disproportionately high rates of relational and health problems associated with homosexual activity have everything to do with “homophobia” and nothing to do with the absence of a sexual counterpart, let him cite the studies that prove this. He might consider, for starters, the famous 2001 Dutch study which showed that high percentages of psychiatric disorders persisted in male and female homosexuals in spite of the considerable tolerance for homosexuality among the Dutch (T. Sandfort, et al., “Same-Sex Sexual Behavior and Psychiatric Disorders: Findings from the Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study (NEMESIS),” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 58.1: 85-91).

What I find particularly interesting about Rogers’s response to my critiques is that, though he is riled up (he says, “I’ve heard enough”) and claims that he will “highlight some of the principle themes in my book and the ways in which Gagnon gets them wrong in his review,” he in fact offers no rebuttal to any of the points that I have thus far made in my four installments of critique. What he attempts to do is take me to task for “ignoring” or “making no comment about” things that I haven’t yet had time to rebut *again* but soon will (and, in any case, already have in previous work). In “Part 2” I will respond briefly to each of these erroneous “talking points” made by Rogers.