

Notes to My Essay “Does the Bible Regard Same-Sex Intercourse as Intrinsically Sinful?” in *Christian Sexuality: Normative and Pastoral Principles*

Robert A. J. Gagnon, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
rgagnon@pts.edu

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The following notes are keyed to the note numbers in: Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Does the Bible Regard Same-Sex Intercourse as Intrinsically Sinful?” in Christian Sexuality: Normative and Pastoral Principles (ed. Russell Saltzman; Minneapolis: Kirk House, 2003), 106-155. The essay uses critically an important essay by Mark Allen Powell entitled “The Bible and Homosexuality” (pp. 19-40 in Faithful Conversation: Christian Perspectives on Homosexuality [ed. James M. Childs; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003] as a springboard for discussing: the male-female prerequisite in the Genesis creation stories; the rest of the case for regarding same-sex intercourse as intrinsically sinful; and why the sexual orientation argument does not diminish the biblical witness against same-sex intercourse (including a discussion of orientation theory in antiquity).

1. There is a one-sentence mention on p. 21: “Sex normally allows people to participate in the divine act of creation and so to fulfill the divine call to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).
2. The narrator of Genesis 1 does not apply the concept of structural compatibility in an unimaginative way. Sometimes the concept is used to keep different things apart and sometimes (as in the case of sex pairing) to make complementary difference the basis for uniting.
3. I make this final point not in reaction to anything that Powell says but rather as an additional point directed at what I refer to as the “misogyny argument”; that is, the contention that the Bible’s opposition to homosexual practice is due primarily to a desire to maintain a strict hierarchical relationship between men and women (men on top, women on bottom—physically and socially).
4. Terence Fretheim, an Old Testament scholar at Luther Seminary, makes much of human freedom in an open-ended process at creation (“The Old Testament and Homosexuality: What Is God Doing?” (*The Lutheran* [May 2001], available in unedited form at: <http://www.thelutheran.org/0105/page55.html>, pp. 1-18). In his discussion of Gen 2:18-25 Fretheim points to the human’s role in naming the animals and in “sending God back to the drawing board” to find some other solution to the problem of being alone (pp. 4-5).

In the end Fretheim goes too far in his effort to stress human freedom and creation unpredictability. In Gen 2:18-25 human decision-making is circumscribed by structural limitations. From the narrator's perspective, God did not present the animals to the human as possible sexual partners, nor would a decision on the human's part to have intercourse with the animals have forced God's acceptance. God's next action of creating woman from man puts significant constraints on all subsequent sexual freedom for humans. When God splits or differentiates the undifferentiated human into two sexes, from that moment on the only way for humans to restore the sexual unity is to bring together the two sexes in a sexual relationship. Same-sex erotic pairing can never, by definition, merge two into a sexual whole. Indeed, it wrongfully attempts to merge what God has never divided. Humans can still opt out of a sexual relationship; but they cannot choose a sexual arrangement at structural odds with the solution worked out by God.

In addition, Fretheim's interpretation of the creation stories stands in tension with Jesus' interpretation. In the view of Jesus—to say nothing of Paul—structural patterns set at creation supplied the prescriptive norm for human sexuality. The time of pandering to human hardness of heart was over, even as Jesus aggressively reached out to reorient the lost who were violating God's demand. Jesus' utterances on sex moved in the direction of *inhibiting* and *constraining* human options in light of higher structural standards set for human sexuality at creation (not only as regards the male-female prerequisite but also as regards monogamy and permanence). Paul too traveled in the trajectory initiated by Jesus, closing sexual loopholes and circumscribing more closely human sexual autonomy, based on his reading of Genesis 1-2. For a better perspective than Fretheim's on Jesus and sex, written by a Lutheran New Testament scholar, I recommend an article by Fretheim's colleague, Craig R. Koester (“The Bible and Sexual Boundaries,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 7 [1993]: 375-90, esp. pp. 379-81).

Although there is a lot more that I could say about Fretheim's piece, I will confine myself to one further observation. Fretheim links the Levitical proscriptions of same-sex intercourse with the stories of Sodom and Gibeah. But rather than using Lev 18:22 and 20:13 as evidence for interpreting Gen 19 and Judg 19 as indictments of male-male intercourse *per se*, Fretheim moves in the opposite direction. Fretheim thinks that the Levitical prohibitions have in view gang rape of males by “heterosexual” males (pp. 8, 11). The obvious problem with this interpretation, however, is that it forces one to interpret Lev 20:13 as requiring a male rape victim to be put to death along with his raping victimizer. Clearly, all the sex laws in Lev 18 and 20 presume consent on the part of *both* human participants (hence the refrain in Lev 20: “their blood upon them”).

5. Obviously I am being a bit facetious here; but it is to make a point that the obvious often gets overlooked in the debate about homosexuality. Incidentally, I have debated female biblical scholars, some of them lesbian, who strenuously deny that men are significantly different from women as regards sexual expectations. The obvious is not equally obvious to everyone.

6. Cf. John Gray, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus: A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Your Relationships* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993).

7. E. Hatfield and S. Sprecher, *Mirror, Mirror: The Importance of Looks in Everyday Life* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986); David M. Buss, *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 73. Another study found—not surprisingly—that women identify as the most common problem experienced on dates “unwanted pressure from men to engage in sexual behavior”; for men the most common problem is communication (D. Knox and K. Wilson, “Dating problems of university students,” *College Student Journal* 17 [1983]: 225-28). Linda Mealey, who cites the aforementioned studies also cites the following: “Buss and Schmitt (1993) asked students how long they would have to know someone before they would consider having sex with them. The response choices on the questionnaire were: 5 years, 2 years, 1 year, 6 months, 3 months, 1 month, 1 week, 1 day, 1 evening, and 1 hour. . . . [T]he average response by women was about 6 months, whereas for men it was about 1 week. Women were very unlikely to express interest after knowing someone for only a week, but a significant number of men expressed interest in having sex with someone they had known for only an hour. . . . Buss now jokes that in order to get better accuracy in his data, his next questionnaire will include a response choice of 1 minute!” (*Sex Differences: Development and Evolutionary Strategies* [San Diego: Academic Press, 2000], 266; citing: D. M. Buss and D. P. Schmitt, “Sexual strategies theory: An evolutionary perspective on human mating,” *Psychological Review* 100 [1993]: 204-32). These are the kinds of studies that might provoke the satirical response, “What would we do without experts?” They confirm what most people can adduce for themselves on the basis of personal experience. Mealey summarizes sex differences in mating strategies across species. (1) In terms of “availability,” “males are typically more sexually available than females.” (2) As regards “arousability,” “males are typically more easily aroused than females.” (3) With respect to “commitment,” “males are typically more likely to seek multiple sexual partners than are females” (p. 76).

8. Cf. Donald Symons, *The Evolution of Human Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

9. I am using the term *structuralist* to describe the view put forward in the previous section; 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.

10. See *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 64-65 for those who support a rape interpretation and those who do not; the case for the former is made on pp. 63-71. Incidentally, it is strange that Powell in the suggestions “for further reading” at the end of his article cites the pro-homosex scholars Countryman, Furnish, and Scroggs but makes no mention of the superior pro-homosex books of Nissinen and Brooten.

11. Powell misreads these texts as having nothing to do with consensual homoerotic behavior.

12. *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 63-110; and, for a shorter synthesis, section IV of my essay in *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

13. For various theories see *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 112 n. 179.

14. Every extant text from early Judaism that speaks about homosexual behavior shows unremitting hostility to it. We also have no record of any Jew engaging in same-sex intercourse in the entire Second Temple period, or in the two centuries following the destruction of the second Temple.

15. There are other pieces of evidence of Jesus' rejection of homosexual practice, in addition to his appeal to Gen 1:27 and 2:24, the background of early Judaism, and Jesus' intensification of sexual ethics generally (closing the law's loopholes and intensifying its demands). Cf. *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, ch. 3 ("The Witness of Jesus") and section VI of my essay in *Homosexuality and the Bible*.

16. Powell accidentally truncates the phrase "becoming one flesh" to "becoming one"; cf. n. 37 above.

17. Cf. also Powell, pp. 19, 22, 30, 35.

18. The other dimension, as noted earlier, is the intra-human character of sexual relationships.

19. Similarly, on p. 26: "while what is considered unnatural or non-normative is not necessarily regarded as wrong, the prohibitions here indicate that, in this case, it is regarded as wrong. In these texts, male-male intercourse is viewed not simply as something exceptional or atypical, but as 'abominable.'" For a full discussion of Lev 18:22 and 20:13, see *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 111-57; for a shorter treatment but with some additional work on purity laws, see my essay in *Homosexuality and the Bible*, section V.

20. The Levitical prohibitions do not mention explicitly female-female intercourse. Nevertheless, Paul's coupling of female and male homosexual intercourse in the indictment of Rom 1:24-27 indicates clearly that Paul regarded female homosexual intercourse as prohibited by extension—applying the same principle operating with male-male intercourse.

21. Curiously, the remark, "Paul's apparent citation of the prohibitions against same-sex activity . . . does make them relevant," appears *after* his caution about basing "moral teaching on an unsure interpretation of Scripture." I do not understand: How can the church both view the Levitical absolute prohibitions as *relevant* and *not* base its moral teaching on the text's view of male-male intercourse as intrinsically sinful?

22. David E. Fredrickson, a New Testament professor at Luther Seminary, has contended at a recent pro-homosex gathering of Lutherans: "Conservative interpreters see that word

'natural' and their minds are taken back to Genesis 1, where God made humans male and female. But the Greek word for natural that Paul is using doesn't actually occur in the Septuagint, which is what Paul would have been familiar with" (reported in: Joel Hoekstra, "Conference urges gay unions, ordination changes," *The Lutheran* [June 2003]: 43; note: the adjective *phusikos*, "natural," does not appear in the Septuagint; the noun *phusis*, "nature," appears only in Old Testament Apocrypha). Fredrickson's argument is extremely weak, indeed desperate: obviously the concept behind a word can be present even when the specific word does not appear. For example, both Philo and Josephus state that Lev 18:22 and 20:13 establish male-male intercourse as "contrary to nature," even though the Greek word "nature" or "natural" does not appear in the Septuagint translation of these texts (Philo, *Special Laws* 3.37-39; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.199-200, 275; cf. n. 41 above). The echo to Gen 1:26-27 in Rom 1:23-27 is so obvious that its denial must be attributed to a determined ideological aversion. See D.5 below for the citation of Gen 2:24 in the context of Paul's discussion of prohibited sexual behavior, including the prohibition of male-male intercourse. For a comprehensive refutation of Fredrickson's article in the Balch volume, see now "A Comprehensive and Critical Review Essay of *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture*, Part 2," *HBT* 25 (2003): 206-39 (click [here](#) for online pdf copy).

23. So its usage in 1 Thess 4:7; Gal 5:19; 2 Cor 12:21; Col 3:5; Eph 4:19; 5:3.

24. It is standard practice to transliterate Greek *upsilon* with an English "y", except in diphthongs. However, there is no good reason not to transliterate with English "u"; it is easier for English speakers and better approximates the sound of the Greek character.

25. The phrase and comparable expressions occur in the following early Jewish literature: Philo, *Abraham* 135-37; idem, *Special Laws* 1.325; 3.37-42; idem, *Contemplative Life* 59; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.199, 273-75; *Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 190-92; *Testament of Naphtali* 3:4; 2 *Enoch* 10:4. For antecedents in Greco-Roman literature, see, e.g., Plato, *Laws* 636a; 836c; 838e-839a; 841d-e; Musonius Rufus 12; Plutarch, *Dialogue on Love* 751d-e; idem, *Whether Beasts Are Rational* 990d-f; Pseudo-Lucian, *Affairs of the Heart* 19-22. The texts are quoted in *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 159-83.

26. For an analysis of the extant uses of the word *arsenokoites* and related terms in antiquity, see *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 317-22.

27. The wording of stepmother prohibitions, "lying with one's father's wife," is too cumbersome to permit a single compound word to describe those who engage in such behavior. However, if there *were* such a word—"father's-wife-bedders" (*gynaikopatrokoiitai*)—would Powell want to argue that it does not carry the absoluteness of the pentateuchal prohibitions? The discussion in 1 Cor 5 indicates clearly that Paul retains the exception-less quality of the pentateuchal prohibitions, irrespective of whether the incestuous man intended the union to be monogamous and committed.

28. One cannot argue that passive and particularly feminized male homosexual partners cease to be males. The Levitical proscriptions oppose homoerotic activity on the grounds that it involves a man doing sexually with another male what should only be done with a woman (“as though lying with a woman”). The act is viewed as heinous precisely because it does violence to the stamp of gender, attempting to convert the male into a sex that he is not and that God never intended him to be.

29. Transgendered persons may make such a claim, though that claim can (and should) be contested. Rare cases of extreme sexual ambiguity (the intersexed) may pose problems. Then again, a number of ironclad proscriptions have ambiguous cases around the edges, including those against pedophilia and incest. Maturity cannot always be connected to specific age demarcations. And whether to draw the incest line at first, second, or third cousins is somewhat arbitrary. However, such ambiguities do not deter the church and society from drawing some exception-less boundaries. Sex with a prepubescent child or with one’s parents and siblings is always wrong. No exceptions.

30. The statement could be phrased more precisely. Technically speaking, the issue is whether Paul would have counseled a homosexual believer to refrain from same-sex intercourse. Paul does not require celibacy; however, he does forbid absolutely some types of sexual relationships.

31. See my nn. 22-24. If Powell’s “or” really means “or,” then he is claiming that we cannot know what Paul would have prescribed for Christians who engage in nonexploitative homosexual behavior, regardless of the intensity of homoerotic desire. If Powell intended an “and,” then Powell makes the issue of loving commitment a factor only in conjunction with an exclusive homosexual orientation. Either way, Powell makes exploitation a significant consideration in assessing Paul’s views on homosexual practice. Cf. Powell’s remark on p. 35: “The simple demonstration that same-sex couples are able to form loving, committed relationships is not sufficient.” “Not sufficient” suggests that commitment is at least *a* necessary factor for Powell. He then goes on to say that “the pressing point for the Church” is whether homosexuals could “find fulfillment of their God-given desires for an intimate life-partner through heterosexual relationships.”

32. Perhaps Powell would underscore the fact that he uses the term “unnatural” rather than “wrong” or “sinful” (cf. p. 28). This distinction would still not rescue Powell’s point. As noted in “C.” above, the operative word is “objects.” If Paul’s *objections* to homosexual acts have nothing to do with consideration of promiscuity or exploitation, why would a committed homosexual relationship play *any* part in satisfying Paul’s objection?

33. The classic defense of male-male intercourse can be found in the speeches by Phaedrus, Pausanias, and Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium* 178C-193D—a defense which, incidentally, Philo of Alexandria was well aware of (*Contemplative Life* 59-61).

34. Plutarch contended that “union contrary to nature with males . . . either unwillingly with force and plunder *or* willingly with softness and effeminacy, surrendering

themselves, as Plato says, ‘to be mounted in the custom of four-footed animals and to be sowed with seed contrary to nature’ [*Phaedrus* 250E]—this is an entirely ill-favored favor, shameful and contrary to Aphrodite” (*Dialogue on Love* 751D-E). For a discussion of these and other texts, see *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 159-83, 347-60. The argument that the authors of Scripture probably had in view only the dominant exploitative form of pederasty is the main contention of Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). Not even Bernadette Brooten, a New Testament scholar and self-identified lesbian, accepts this rationale for Paul’s absolute proscription (*Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], 253 n. 106, 257, 361). John Boswell, another homosexual scholar, also warned against the danger of exaggerating the differences between ancient and modern manifestations of homosexuality (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], 27-30). I refer to their comments in *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 359-60 n. 16.

35. The operative clause here is: “just as he did believers who were involved in incestuous relationships.” I suppose that Powell could contend in the case of practicing, self-avowed homosexuals that there might be circumstances where suspension from community life—I prefer this description to the term *excommunication*—might be postponed, pending time for repentance and thus depending on the perceived obstinacy of the offender. But the same argument could be made for Paul’s response to those participating in incestuous behavior. The point is that *whatever* Paul would have done for participants in incest or adultery he would have done for participants in same-sex intercourse (“just as . . .”). *Eventually* (and probably sooner rather than later), serial unrepentant (obstinate, self-avowed) activity of this sort would have led to ecclesiastical suspension.

36. If one replaced “might” with “would,” would Powell hold to the rest of the statement?

37. In his article Powell exegetes and summarizes the biblical teaching on same-sex intercourse and then draws interpretive conclusions from this exegesis. Is there any part of this that Powell would regard as “determinative for the Church’s deliberations” on the homosexuality issue? For example: That the Bible regards the male-female dimension of human sexuality as (merely) “the normal state of affairs” rather than as a prerequisite? That, conversely, the Bible regards same-sex intercourse as intrinsically unnatural but not as intrinsically sinful? That Genesis 19:1-9 (Sodom), Judges 19:22-25 (the Levite at Gibeah), Ezekiel 16:49-50, and Jude 7 “have little to offer” regarding “current questions concerning homosexuality” (p. 23)? That Scripture does not operate with a concept of homosexual orientation or of caring homosexual unions? That Gen 2:18-25 indicates that God wants *all* persons to have at least the *opportunity* to form intimate life partnerships? None of these views is “actually written in Scripture”—indeed, I regard all of them as either inaccurate or misleading—and yet they constitute the heart of Powell’s case that the church should favor, or at least be open to, allowing for exceptions to the Bible’s stance against homosexual behavior. Does he regard any of these views as “determinative” for understanding what Scripture says about same-sex intercourse and

thus for shaping the ELCA's deliberations on the homosexuality issue? My point at the moment is not to critique each of these views but merely to observe that they are not "actually written" in Scripture itself. Yet, Powell makes them the centerpiece for his overall presentation of what the Bible says.

Particularly "determinative" within Powell's overall presentation is his conclusion that the Bible's stance on same-sex intercourse is not *necessarily* absolute—an observation nowhere "actually written" in Scripture. Paul acknowledges as much when he says: "Paul *seems to say* that 1) all instances of homosexuality are unnatural; and that 2) [only] the instances of homosexuality known to his Roman readers are [necessarily] *both* unnatural *and* wrong" (p. 28; first emphasis added). To arrive at this conclusion Powell has to put together various pieces of information and fill in what he perceives to be obvious—but still only implied—connecting links. If these unwritten links are not "determinative for the Church's deliberations," then neither is the resulting conclusion. Ultimately, to say anything meaningful about Scripture for the church's deliberations one has to acknowledge that there are some unwritten messages sent by Scripture that are so obviously implied as to function, for all intents and purposes, as though they were written. I contend that what Paul "*might* have thought" about Christians who were engaging in consensual same-sex intercourse for whatever reason is really an obviously implied "*would* have thought" that can be considered "determinative for the Church's deliberations" and so function, for all intents and purposes, as though it were "actually written" in the canon of Scripture.

38. Compare Powell's appeal to this "traditional approach" on p. 24. Another point: Had there not been an incestuous man in the Corinthian community Paul would have said nothing explicit in his extant letters about sex between a man and his stepmother. Yet it would be a monstrous miscarriage of interpretation to have concluded from silence that obvious but unwritten convictions in the New Testament about sex between a man and his (step-)mother would have no determinative bearing on church deliberations today.

39. Of course, the silence of the New Testament can also lead us to conclusions in the opposite direction (e.g., as regards sex with a menstruating woman or levirate marriage).

40. See n. 27 for a discussion of the meaning of "intrinsically sinful" as used by Powell and understood by myself.

41. Among the many biblical scholars who promote this argument are Walter Wink ("Homosexuality and the Bible," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith* [ed. W. Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], 33-49 [especially pp. 36-37]) and Dan Via (in his essay in our co-authored book, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*). In his presentation before the ELCA Studies on Sexuality Task Force in April 2003, Ralph Klein (Old Testament professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago) claimed that the authors of Scripture did not grasp the concept of "sexual orientation." "Paul assumes people are making a choice [about their orientation]" (cf. n. 4 for source).

To be sure, there are some pro-homosex apologists who acknowledge something akin to sexual orientation in antiquity. Note William R. Schoedel's comment: "Both [Bernadette] Brooten and I find problematic the common view that sexual orientation was

not recognized in the ancient world” (Schoedel, “Same-Sex Eros: Paul and the Greco-Roman Tradition,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* [ed. D. Balch; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 47 n. 5). Schoedel, however, does not consistently apply the logic of this crucial admission to Paul (cf. my critique in *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 392-95). Occasionally, too, one encounters proponents of a pro-complementarity view who buy into the notion that sexual orientation was beyond the conception of Paul. The most prominent case in point is Richard B. Hays. Hays charged John Boswell with anachronistically reading back into Rom 1:26-27 the view that Paul distinguished between *natural* homosexuals who had desires exclusively for persons of the same sex on the one hand and *unnatural* homosexuals who were really overstimulated heterosexuals on the other hand. According to Hays, Paul supposed homosexual behavior to be “the result of insatiable lust seeking novel and more challenging forms of self-gratification” (“Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell’s Exegesis of Romans 1,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 [1986]: 184-215, referring here to pp. 200-201; idem, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* [New York: HarperCollins, 1996], 388-89). Actually, Boswell argued that Paul was *unaware* of such a distinction and that Paul simply assumed that everyone who engaged in same-sex intercourse was capable of satisfying their desires through heterosexual intercourse (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], 109, 112-13). On this point Hays and Boswell were in agreement. They differed only in what to do with this knowledge: Boswell intimating that Paul might have arrived at a different conclusion about the “unnaturalness” of homosexuality if he had known what we know, Hays contending that it would have been irrelevant to Paul’s point.

42. Readers should regard this section as supplementing substantially the discussion in *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 353-54, 384-85, 392-94.

43. Aristophanes underscored that marriage for those homoerotically-oriented 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 the law/custom (*nomos*).” For English translation and discussion see *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 353-54, 384. The Roman poet Phaedrus in his *Book of Fables* (mid-first century A.D.) gives a different story, one that describes how “tribads” (*tribades*, women who stimulate other women by rubbing [*tribein*] the genitals) and “soft men” (*molles mares*) came into being. The Greek Titan Prometheus “spent a whole day fashioning” male and female genitals “so that he could later attach them to the appropriate bodies.” Unfortunately, he drank too much at a dinner party and “in a drunken stupor attached the maiden’s organ to the male sex and male organs to women. And so it is that lust now enjoys its depraved pleasure” (4.16). Unlike Aristophanes’ myth, Phaedrus’ fable assumes that soft men and tribadic women have intersex features; moreover, the fable describes the origin only of receptive males and insertive females whereas Aristophanes’ myth portrays the origin of all those who are homoerotically inclined. In any case, the creation of feminized males and masculinized females is said to lie in the mythical past. For English translation and discussion see Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 211-12; Judith P. Hallett, “Female Homoeroticism and

the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3 (1989): 209-27, here pp. 209-11; discussion also in Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 45-46.

44. *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 384-85 n. 52; Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 168-70; Boswell, *Homosexuality*, 49-50; Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 149 n. 17; Schoedel, “Same-Sex Eros,” 53-54; text and translation in the Loeb Classical Library series. Schoedel notes that “Philo believes that feminized behavior prevents the natural development of the male heat that leads to the consequent loss of courage in the individual as he matures” (p. 54).

45. Cf. Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 157-58 n. 43; Schoedel, “Same-Sex Eros,” 58-59.

46. Cf. Hallett, “Female Homoeroticism,” 213-14; Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 44. Neither draws the two inferences that I do here.

47. Text and English translation in: I. E. Drabkin, *Caelius Aurelianus: On Acute Diseases and on Chronic Diseases* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950). For a more conservative edition of the Latin text, with German translation and commentary, see: P. H. Schrijvers, *Einer medizinische Erklärung der männlichen Homosexualität aus der Antike: (Caelius Aurelianus De morbis chronicis IV 9)* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1985). Cf. particularly Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 146-62, 170-73; also Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 212-15; and Schoedel, “Same-Sex Eros,” 54-57. Brooten (relying on Schrijvers’ German translation), Williams, and Schoedel also supply English translations of sections.

48. According to Brooten, “These medical thinkers must have seen male passivity and female desire for other women as arising from something analogous to a mutated gene” (*Love Between Women*, 158).

49. ET Schoedel (p. 55).

50. It is not clear whether the reference to “divine providence” and the purposeful character of body parts goes back to Soranus or was added by Caelius Aurelianus; cf. Schrijvers, *Einer medizinische Erklärung*, 18-24.

51. ET Brooten.

52. Schoedel notes that Plato (*Timaeus* 86b-87b) also drew a distinction between diseases of the body and diseases of the mind without discounting altogether biological influences on the latter. For Plato traces diseases of the mind “to bad upbringing or a defective inherited constitution of the body, and blames society at large rather than individuals (since ‘no one is willingly bad’) without at the same time denying the need to attempt to set things right again” (“Same-Sex Eros,” 56).

53. Cf. the discussion by Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 162-71.

54. Cf. Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 115-41. In addition to Dositheos and Ptolemy (cited below) Brooten refers to Manetho (1st century A.D.), Vettius Valens (2nd century A.D.), Hephraistion of Thebes (early 4th century A.D.), and the *Book of Hermes Trismegistos*. Brooten acknowledges that “the astrological sources demonstrate the existence in the Roman world of the concept of a lifelong erotic orientation” (p. 140).

55. For Ptolemy, a penetrative role by males, whether with females or males, is “natural”; a receptive role by males or an active role by females is “contrary to nature.”

56. *Matheseos libri viii* 3.6.6; 3.6.9; 7.15.2; 5.2.11; 3.5.23; 7.25.1; 3.6.15.

57. According to Williams: Firmicus “clearly does not assume that *all* men are innately either “lovers of women” or “lovers of boys,” neither does he consider these propensities to be fundamentally opposed in nature.... We can call these ‘orientations’ if we wish, but they are not the same as the ‘sexual orientation’ of today: Firmicus is not working within a conceptual framework that pigeonholes *all* human beings as innately and permanently homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual” (*Roman Homosexuality*, 171; cf. 333 n. 58). Williams (cf. Brooten) is right that there are differences between Firmicus’s views on homoerotic attraction and modern views—not the least of which, I might add, is the assumption of astrological causation. Yet for our purposes the main point is that Firmicus treated at least *most* forms of homoerotic attraction as congenitally innate (perhaps all forms, *pace* Williams), and most, if not all, of these as permanent, and some of the permanent ones as exclusive (i.e., not bisexual). Certainly these forms of homoerotic attraction meet the prerequisites, and then some, of contemporary definitions of “sexual orientation.” Moreover, Firmicus does indeed appear to view same-sex intercourse *per se* as wrong (cf. 3.6.20) and perhaps *per se* as against nature (again, *pace* Williams). Finally, Williams seems to be assuming, wrongly, that modern science has proven that homosexual and bisexual orientations are congenital and impervious to cultural modulation. In this he is as much a captive to cultural ideology as Firmicus was.

58. Because Philo of Alexandria did not directly address in extant writings the issue of how homoerotic impulses originate, one can only speculate about his views from bits and pieces of tangential information. We do know that he rejected, as any Jew in the ancient world would have, the “mythical fiction” of “the double-bodied people” put forward by Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium* as incompatible with “Moses” (the Pentateuch). At the same time he acknowledged the “seductive” quality of the story, which was “capable of enticing the ears by means of the newness of the idea” (*Contemplative Life* 63). In discussing the actions of the men of Sodom, Philo attributed their erotic desire for penetrating males to a satiety arising out of economic prosperity. This satiety spilled over not only into illicit sex with women but also into unnatural intercourse with other males (*Abraham* 135; cf. also Philo’s views on bestiality in *Special Laws* 3.43). We cannot deduce from this interpretation of the particular events at Sodom, constrained as Philo was by both the biblical story and the history of interpretation, that Philo would have attributed *all* active homoerotic desire to such a cause. Certainly he did not think that *only* the prosperous could develop such attractions. Furthermore, he must have been aware of the fact that some men in his cultural world exhibited an exclusive propensity for sex

with other males. Even in the very same speech of Aristophanes to which Philo refers, mention is made of the fact that some men marry and procreate only out of legal coercion; their sexual interest is exclusively in other males. Philo gives every indication that he would have regarded such people as gripped by an even greater “damaged understanding” and sinful passion than those who retained some sexual desire for women (again, cf. his remark on bestiality in *Spec. Laws* 3.43: “from the consequences of a damaged understanding they *no longer* begin to . . . be mad after people, whether males or females, but even after unreasoning animals”). Philo also recognized an uncontrollable quality to homoerotic impulses. He says regarding the men of Sodom that “they were conquered by a more forcible desire” (*Abr.* 135-36) and speaks generally of the active male partner as consumed by passion for a beloved male (*Cont. Life* 61). Regarding effeminate males who desired to be penetrated by men, Philo blamed in part the active male partners who socialized them as females (“little by little accustoming those who had been born men to put up with feminine things, they equipped them with a female disease,” which gradually “works in their souls”; *Abr.* 136; *Cont. Life* 60). But he blamed in part also the males themselves for willingly submitting to such socialization and carrying it further (“who, accustoming themselves to be infected with a female disease, drain away both their souls and their bodies, leaving no ember of the male gender to smolder”; *Spec. Laws* 3.37). He viewed this “disease of the soul” as an “evil that is hard to fight against” and one having a degenerative effect on the body that lessened choice over time (*Abr.* 136). Philo’s views on the receptive male partner appear to approximate most closely the view expressed by Soranus of a “disease of the mind” that interacts indirectly with innate bodily impulses. Yet his views are also compatible with a theory that Soranus acknowledged as prevailing in other medical schools of thought; namely, that the condition originated for some with bad socialization but ended up being heritable for others. Indeed, the Aristotelian and Hippocratic theories cited above are not incongruent with Philo’s views so long as one does not infer from them that congenital influences are direct and primary causes for a *fait accompli*. Philo probably would have rejected the notion that anyone was fated from birth to develop a homoerotic orientation. Current socio-scientific knowledge still leads us today to a similar rejection. Clearly, biological influences on homoerotic desire would not have led Philo to consider them as “in accordance with nature,” that is, in accordance with the stamp of gender differentiation imposed by the Creator on the human body—a theme that Philo stressed over and over again in his criticisms of male homoerotic behavior. My conclusions are not too dissimilar from the conclusions of Schoedel:

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. (“Same-Sex Eros,” 56, 67-68)

59. Even if Paul had believed that same-sex intercourse first originated in the world with the onset of idolatry—compare the Jewish narratives in *Wisdom of Solomon* 13-14, *I Enoch* 6, and *Jubilees* 11 (with caveats in *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 249, 285-86), as well as the “pagan” argument of Charicles in the pseudo-*Lucianic Affairs of the Heart*

19-21 (translation and commentary in *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 165-66 n. 10)—such a belief would not mandate that idol worship was a necessary prerequisite for all future development of homoerotic attraction. Indeed, it obviously did not mandate this conclusion for Paul, given Rom 6:19 and 1 Cor 6:9. Cf. too the theory of socialization-becomes-heredity espoused by leaders of medical schools in Soranus' day.

60. Philo makes a similar point in *On Abraham* 135-36: "In the process of trying to beget children [from other males, the men of Sodom] were given convincing proof of their error.... Yet this proof was of no help, since they were conquered by a more forcible desire."

61. Similarly Brooten: "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" (*Love Between Women*, 244).

62. E.g., David Fredrickson, "Natural and Unnatural Use in Romans 1:24-27," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*, 197-241 (particularly pp. 202, 205-7, 222). Cf. *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 387-88.

63. Cf. *Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 395-429; Gagnon, "The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Theology, Analogies, and Genes," 9-12; Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 2000); idem, "The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Homosexuality Debates," *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*, 73-120; Merton P. Strommen, *The Church and Homosexuality: Searching for a Middle Ground* (Minneapolis: Kirk House, 2001); Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); Thomas P. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1995), 131-59; and Neil and Briar Whitehead, *My Genes Made Me Do It! A Scientific Look at Sexual Orientation* (Lafayette, La.: Huntington House, 1999).

64. J. Michael Bailey, et al., "Genetic and Environmental Influences on Sexual Orientation and Its Correlates in an Australian Twin Sample," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78 (2000): 524-36 (quote from p. 534). 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).

65. David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 487.

66. Edward O. Laumann, et al., *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 308.

67. Mealey, *Sex Differences*, 244.

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