

Essay Series
Homosexuality:
The Case For & Against—Responses

Introduction:
Responses to the 2020 Essays

Stephen M. Vantassel.

INTRODUCTION

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics (ERTP) is dedicated to offering a forum for scholars to debate important issues that impact Christian doctrine and practice. We hope that publishing articles on the biblical warrant for homosexual marriage will garner more critical attention to this topic as well encourage thoughtful and biblically grounded reflection. We are pleased that the authors were willing to write not only the first round on the subject but also rejoinders.

Readers should note that ERTTP gave wide editorial latitude to the authors. We wanted them to speak with their own voice as much as possible. In fact, the rejoinders were only edited for form and style, not content. Some may think that our “hands off” approach has undermined the role peer-review plays in ensuring accuracy and academic rigor. We understand that

objection. However, we believe that too often peer-review or fact checking is little more than censorship by another name as Twitter and Facebook so ably have demonstrated. True, those organizations are not members of the academy. However, the academy is not immune to such behavior. Just ask yourself whether scientific journals would publish articles by scientists espousing intelligent design. We believe that scholarship is strengthened by rigorous and public debate, not paternalistic censorship.

Readers should carefully weigh the arguments made by these authors. As you read, consider the question that was raised previously (<https://www.evangelicalreview.net/page53.html>). To paraphrase Dr. James R. White’s frequently used cross examination question, (<https://www.aomin.org/aoblog/>), “Could the

exegetical method(s) used by these authors to support their view on homosexual marriage be used to support non-controversial Christian doctrine?” Keep in mind the authors were asked to base their view on the Bible. In short, the question the authors had to answer was, “Does the Bible support homosexual marriage?” We hope these rejoinders, along with the original articles, will assist you in your effort to answer this timely question.

Stephen M. Vantassel, Editor.

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A Confutation Humbly Offered

David Martin.

COUNTERCLAIMS AND CLARIFICATIONS

I would like to congratulate J. Brian Huffling and T.J. Gentry (hereafter referred to as my colleagues) on a well-researched and well-written essay. I applaud their avoidance of negative stereotyping, and their faithful yearning to search for truth in our common scriptures. Which is not to say that I agree with their reasoning or exegesis of the passages. They make a strong argument, yet I believe there to be several holes in their reasoning. It is not that they have deliberately misconstrued what the passages say or mean, but rather that I often found myself disagreeing with the basic premise upon which their hermeneutic is founded. As I point out in my essay, the interpretations of these passages are largely influenced by our cultural biases. This is not meant as an insult; I too have a cultural bias. I believe that both men are very fine Christians and dearly care about helping folks on their faith walks, which necessarily includes how we read and understand scripture. With that in mind, I will attempt to respectfully point out where I believe they are mistaken. Point by point refutations are tedious and ineffectual, so I will select a few instances which

I hope will elucidate my position better, and can be applied to the overall argument as well. And in addition, I will attempt to clarify my positions on the matter of God's love and grace in response to sin.

My opinion on the subject might surprise both sides of this debate. The argument over whether homosexuality is condoned or banned is irrelevant. I believe that what is at stake for Christianity today is the loss of religious authority in guiding moral behaviors, and in helping people find meaning in the living of their lives. I am willing to wager that both of my colleagues would agree. The effects of modernity have been a substitution of society's trust in religious authority with an increase in secular authority.¹ Which is not to say that there has been a loss in religious sentiment, just a loss of trust in traditional religious institutions (hence the many people who identify as spiritual but not religious). If our goal in Christianity is to make disciples for Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:16-20) the church has done a poor job in the last

¹ James A. Beckford. *Social Theory and Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 47.

century of accomplishing that objective. I think we all (conservative, moderate, and progressive Christians alike) share in the blame for how we have packaged and communicated the so-called Good News. Christianity is viewed by younger generations as intolerant and bigoted. According to the Pew Research Center, less than 1 in 4 millennials look to religion as a source of moral guidance; they simply don't trust the church.² Hence, what I believe is that a more relevant discussion would be how God's love and grace responds to the sinner (including homosexuals if one believes it a sin), and what it means to live under Christ's law of love. This is the only appropriate response to sin, grace alone.

RESPONDING TO OLD TESTAMENT ARGUMENTS

As in my essay, I refute and reject the natural revelation argument in its entirety. There is sufficient evidence and research of the natural world to show that same sex sexual attraction occurs throughout mammalian and avian species as a statistically significant representation of the population.³ Further, my colleagues argued that the binary representations of sex are an expression of *imago dei*. More accurately in their words, "the diversity of sexes as male and female is an expression of God's intention in imaging himself..." Without too much of a deep dive into broader gender issues, they limit the sexes to two. Clinical geneticist Paul Jones argues that biological sex is more complicated than the

determiners of XX and XY chromosomes. His study has evidenced that there is a spectrum of biological variations that places the sex of a person on a continuum between the binary markers. For example, many children born with ovotesticular DSD, a condition that produces ambiguous genitalia and gonads with both ovarian and testicular tissue, undergo gender assignment (not reassignment) surgery.⁴ If my colleagues are arguing for a Biblical model for sexual relationships via *imago dei*, they are unwittingly arguing for pan-sexuality.

Joe Dallas is indeed correct when he argues, "The Genesis account does not forbid homosexuality; it simply doesn't refer to it, for obvious reasons."⁵ The most obvious reason is that it is a naturally occurring sexual preference. But, if, as my colleagues believe, the purpose of binary coupling is an expression of God's expression of right relationship and God's desire for us to be fruitful and multiply, then what of sterile couples? Should they forgo marriage if they know they are biologically incapable of having children? Surely, they shouldn't get a divorce! Should the non-sterile partner seek fruitfulness outside the marriage bed (a la Abraham) to have children? You see, this Genesis argument is so fraught with logical fallacies and theological inconsistencies that it has no place in this discussion. As for Genesis 19, I reiterate my argument from the original essay, rape is not sex, it is sexualized violence.

With respect to citing two of Robert Gagnon's arguments against homosexuality, I find these arguments without merit. The first being a list of prohibitions on incest and adultery, etc. The

2 2010. "Religious Landscape Study." Pew Research Center. February 10. Accessed April 17, 2021. <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/generational-cohort/younger-millennial/>.

3 Bagemihl, Bruce. 1999. *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 265ff.

4 Clair Ainsworth. 2018. "Sex Redefined: The Idea of 2 Sexes Is Overly Simplistic." *Scientific American*. October 22. Accessed April 18, 2021. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/sex-redefined-the-idea-of-2-sexes-is-overly-simplistic1/>.

5 Joe Dallas. 2007. *The Gay Gospel?* Eugene: Harvest House. Kindle location 2855

passage offers a comprehensive list of sexual acts and behaviors that we would find problematic today. We agree on that. What Gagnon avoids is the critical placement of verse 22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” This and bestiality are placed after the prohibition of child sacrifice and Molech worship. There is a demarcation of behaviors marked by the introduction of Molech worship in both passages. The list does not continue at that point but resolves itself as a condemnation of adopting the practices of foreign religions. There is sufficient counter argument to the conservative view to render a prohibitive use of that passage as problematic. Moreover, all the other vices listed prior to the section of Molech worship can be found in other Old Testament passages, but only in these two Leviticus passages, where Molech is specifically mentioned, do we find the words “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”

The second of Gagnon’s points is also problematic. Labeling a particular act as an abomination neither increases nor decreases the severity of any act in relation to that passage in which it is embedded. In the Old Testament alone, the word abomination in the singular is used 72 times, 74 times in the plural form, and an additional 20 times as an adverb. Here is a brief list of what else the Old Testament labels an abomination: eating shellfish (Lev 11:10), dishonest weighing by a merchant (Duet 25:13-16), oppressing the poor, being *near* a menstruating woman, refusing to feed the hungry, and charging interest are all abominations (Ezek 18:6-13). Should we stand outside of the Golden Corral restaurant and picket them because the hostess is currently menstruating, they serve meat with fat on it, cheeseburgers, shrimp, wear uniforms made of

cotton and polyester blend, and then facilitate payments through interest-charging credit cards? Should we hold up signs that say “God hates shellfish”? Of course not!

We can all agree that cheating people is abhorrent behavior, yet Christians are willing to ignore this behavior. Oppressing the poor is in direct violation of Jesus’ commandment in Matthew 25:31-46. Conservative churches are often silent on the subject, while there are many Christians who actively participate in such behavior. I hope my colleagues do not think I am lumping them in with oppressors, etc., but are able to see this as an illumination of the hypocrisy wherein Bible legalism becomes an excuse to marginalize people whom we find distasteful.

RESPONDING TO NEW TESTAMENT ARGUMENTS

John Wesley wrote, “To begin with the great Creator himself. How astonishingly little do we know of God! — How small a part of his nature do we know! of his essential attributes! What conception can we form of his omnipresence Who is able to comprehend how God is in this and every place...”⁶ My colleagues have exegeted the Romans 1 passage to say, “Thus, whoever can know the world can know God. The point is the universal nature of Paul’s language includes all people.” Contrast this argument with John Wesley’s understanding of a God so vast that we hardly know anything about God. If a theological giant like Wesley can admit that we know so little of the nature of God, then any claim of

6 John Wesley. 2011. “The Imperfection Of Human Knowledge.” *Wesley Center Online*. Accessed April 16, 2021. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-69-the-imperfection-of-human-knowledge/>.

knowing God through natural revelation seems like *hubris*. Anselm's ontological argument of "a being than which no greater can be conceived" has been the standard baseline (though tweaked and expanded upon by the likes of Hegel and Descartes) for subsequent ontological arguments.⁷ Thomas Aquinas argues for a God who is the Grand Designer, as Prime Mover, and as Absolute Being. If we can agree on these things, then by the very definitions, the subjective cannot truly know or comprehend the objective, or absolute. If we agree that God is the Creative Force and Designer, then when we see the evidence (see Bagemihl) of same sex sexual behavior in species other than humanity, we must also admit that this is without question happening under the direction of God, and that humanity is not an exception in this regard.⁸

How can a being as vast as God, and a universe and world so complex be completely understood in black and white terminology? It simply can't. Yes, even we who have spent many years studying and reflecting on the nature of God still know so little. It is an unfortunate argument to use natural revelation as an instrument by which one authenticates scripture. The notion of scripture needing some outside support to prove that it is correct is a contrivance of modernity.⁹ Scripture is self-authenticating; which is not to say that it is literal, or factual in a historical sense, but that it is true when it elucidates the nature of God (to the extent that human beings are capable). I have made sufficient arguments against natural

revelation in the original essay, and supportive arguments here that natural revelation must be disregarded as a "proof."

Understanding Paul's limited understanding of nature, as well as his culture context, God "giving them up" to "unnatural lusts" (those who resist the truth of God) is a punishment meted out by God. Is this merely a case where God gave up on them (reversing word order), or has God seen fit to humiliate them by causing them to engage in same sex behaviors? My colleagues have argued, "Thus, Paul is saying that the exchanging of heterosexual relations for homosexual ones is against the created order. The very passions in view here are said to be degrading." Following my colleagues' argument, God has upended creation to teach a few ignorant and willful folks a lesson. It seems unlikely.

Paul's logic implies that other cultures have had divine revelations in equal quality and quantity as the Hebrew people, and that their rejection of God is born of futility and darkness; thinking they were wise they acted foolishly (Romans 1:21-22). They took up idol worship, exchanging the One God for many gods, and in return, God exchanged in them a right sexual orientation for a wrong one. This lacks a basic sense of rationality and core morality. Would God cause someone to sin? By no means. Would God change the basic nature of a human being out of spite? By no means.

For those who hold a modern inerrancy view (as opposed to the pre-modern point of view) on scripture this conundrum is impossible to parse out. John Wesley reasoned, "Yet when he speaks to us, knowing whereof we are made, knowing the scantiness of our understanding, he lets himself down to our capacity, and speaks of himself after the manner of men. ... But can we possibly imagine that these expressions are

7 Graham Oppy. 2019. "Ontological Arguments." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. February 6. Accessed April 19, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/>.

8 Charles Wallis. n.d. "Thomas Aquinas and the Five Ways." *California State University Long Beach*. Accessed April 19, 2021. <http://web.csulb.edu/~cwallis/100/st2.html>.

9 Robert E. Chiles. 1983. *Theological Transitions in American Methodism*. Lanham: University Press of America. 87-90.

to be taken literally? ... Not so: 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than thy ways.'¹⁰ Wesley argued that God used the language of men, which is inadequate to fully express God's intent. We must accept that Paul was incapable of expressing in human language what God had placed on his heart to write. As Peter wrote of Paul, "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand..." (2 Peter 3:15b-16a NRSV) We must consider this truth in light of the 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Timothy 1 texts as well. Until a 1st Century Greek dictionary is unearthed, we will have to disagree on the interpretation of those passages.

LOVE AND A RELEVANT RESPONSE TO SIN

I must confess being somewhat taken aback by my colleagues' writing, "Love or what appears to be the fruit of the Spirit is not enough to justify a homosexual relationship, as the ends do not justify the means." This was the culmination of a lengthy argument on the nature of love and relationships. Puzzling too was the term "godly love." I get that it is an adjective and requires no capitalization. Considering their usage of "godly" love, I would ask them to then consider G.F.W. Hegel, who wrote, "unification found in [love], can be called a unification of subject and object, of freedom and nature, of the actual and the possible."¹¹ Hegel is arguing that nothing

determinate exists unconditioned. Or as Hegel wrote, the subject and object "exist in and for [themselves] only on the strength of an external power."¹² Love cannot exist without the objective condition of God. This supports Roger's claim to dismiss the cultural conditioning of ancient laws as we respond to Jesus' command to love our neighbor. Hegel agrees that the identity of the subjective and the objective is reflected in self-consciousness. This, however, is not the absolute manifestation of true identity; love is. Love is, in the truest sense (because it is the manifestation of the synthesis of God and human being), the only important (and real) identity we can have.

As we consider identity and relationship, loving one's neighbor as Jesus presents it, was a radical and revolutionary idea. It invited the question in Luke 10:29, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus then proceeds to do the unimaginable. He tells the parable of a good Samaritan. Samaritans and the Jews of Judea were sworn enemies. Not only does he say that a Samaritan can be a good person, but that those listening (Jews) must love them! Outrageous! The command to love finds as its root, an identity with God, hence all love is "godly" love.

I found another objection to my colleagues' argument on the fruits of the Spirit. Straight away, I reject the premise upon which this argument is made. Their argument is that having a desire of the flesh is opposite to fruits of the Spirit. Here is where it becomes problematic. In heterosexual married relationships, sexual desire exists. So, by their reasoning, married heterosexuals (husband and wife) who desire each other must not have the fruits of the Spirit. Their argument fails any basic test of logic; the old maxim applies "what's good for the goose..."

10 John Wesley, 2011. "On Predestination." *Wesley Center Online*. Accessed April 16, 2021. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-58-on-predestination/>.

11 Jon Stewart, ed. 2002. *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*. Evanston: Northwest University Press. 119.

12 Hegel, G.F.W. 1971. *Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T.M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 304.

Paul does discriminate here. In fact, he offers this, “For you were called to freedom, brothers, and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.” (Gal 5:13 NRSV) Paul’s point is that one must not become consumed with desire, nor delight in it; not that one cannot have a desire. If sanctions based on the list of “works of the flesh” were to be applied even-handedly in Christian churches (as they have been towards homosexuals) the pews would be empty on Sunday morning, and the pulpits for that matter too. It is disingenuous to use phrases like “or the presence of attributes similar to the fruit of the Spirit,” (emphasis mine) as it is a form of judgement. Moreover, they are reasoning upon the assumption that a homosexual person cannot exhibit actual fruits of the Spirit; an assumption which has been unproven. Jesus commands us to not judge, unless of course we want to be judged ourselves (Mt 7:1). James wrote, “For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.” (James 2:13 NRSV)

My own clarifications of grace responding to sin necessitate the notion that Christ is indeed the fulfillment of law. This is an orthodox traditional doctrine based on Jesus words (Mt 5:17), and what the apostle Paul wrote, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14 NRSV). Paul is careful to point out in other Romans passages that being under grace does not relieve us entirely of moral obligations; we are just freed from condemnation and spiritual death. We exchange our slavery to sin for slavery to righteousness (Romans 6:16). Paul means here that power of sin does not own us, but the law of love (righteousness) owns us. We place ourselves, via faith, under the law of Christ,

which shifts the emphasis of righteous behavior from careful abstinence of fleshly things, to bearing one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2). The law of Christ, in the words of Christ himself, are,” I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34).

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9) Paul wrote in Romans, “if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9) There are no preconditions of “right” behavior for forgiveness. Confess, and find forgiveness, because it is by grace through faith that we find salvation. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9 NRSV) Yet, we place demands of “righteousness” on homosexuals that we do not demand of heterosexuals. This is unjust, and it ignores the Biblical witness of God’s unfailing love.

It’s simple, really. “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:16b-19 NRSV) We are called to love, without pre-condition, without judgment.

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Essay Series
Homosexuality:
The Case For & Against—Responses

**Does the Bible Sanction Homosexuality:
A Response to David Martin**

Brian Huffling & Thomas J. Gentry

INTRODUCTION

We would like to thank David Martin for his article in which he argues that the Bible does not claim that homosexuality is a sin.¹ In this response, we will examine his overall position and offer a rebuttal. His article examines the same biblical passages we have already examined ourselves, so the reader can see our arguments there for more detail.² This debate topic is, “Does the Protestant Bible restrict divine-sanctioned human sexual relations to monogamous male-female relationship’s?” Martin’s article argues, per the title, that there is “A lack of Biblical evidence against homosexuality.”³ It is important to be clear about the parameters of this debate. Thus, the question is, does the Protestant Bible ever restrict sex to monogamous heterosexuals? It is important to note that it never explicitly endorses anything other than such, even though it records behavior

such as polygamy (e.g., Gen. 4:23). We are sure that Martin would agree that the Bible further does not openly endorse homosexuality. The question is, does it ever condemn it? Therefore, if there is any biblical evidence that restricts homosexuality from being divinely sanctioned, then the debate question will be answered, at least as it concerns homosexuality. Martin confidently writes: “My contention is that homosexuality as we understand it was never condemned by scripture.”⁴ While we examine all of the six passages that Martin argues do not condemn homosexuality, it is our contention that Martin’s admission in his section on Romans that Paul states homosexuality is unnatural, dehumanizing, and a form of judgement is tantamount to such an admission on its condemnation. However, Martin simply argues that Paul was wrong in saying that

1 David Martin, “Unjustified Exclusion: A Lack of Biblical evidence against homosexuality,” *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* Vol 8 (2020): ES3-ES19.

2 Brian Huffling and Thomas J. Gentry, “A Biblical Case Against Homosexuality,” *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* Vol 8 (2020): 21-37.

3 Martin, ES3.

4 Ibid., ES4. To be clear, since the debate is about the Bible “sanctioning” certain types of sex and since the word “condemn” is also used, for Scripture to condemn homosexuality would amount to its not sanctioning it. Thus, to say that the Bible condemns homosexuality is to say that it does not sanction it.

homosexuality is unnatural.⁵ Logically, to be successful in this debate, Martin would have to demonstrate that the Bible nowhere condemns homosexuality. To maintain that Paul did not condemn homosexuality raises the question of why he would describe it as unnatural, dehumanizing, and a punishment from God. For Martin to say there is no condemnation of homosexuality in Romans, then, is to deflate God's judgment as not really being a judgment. Such would be a contradiction.

Martin is then in the awkward position of maintaining a difficult position: that Paul's letter to the Romans is part of the Bible and it shows homosexuality to be a negative and dehumanizing activity as a judgment of God that does not invoke condemnation. Martin appears to qualify that Paul does not condemn homosexuality "as we understand it today." However, Paul condemns acts of homosexuality, which all homosexual relationships would engage in (unless homosexuals were abstinent); thus, given that the acts themselves are condemned, Paul does not leave the door open to any appropriate contexts for such acts.⁶ Thus, Martin's point fails. In short, if a biblical author, even according to Martin himself, says homosexuality is unnatural and a judgment of God (that is by most accounts a condemnation and is hard to see what a condemnation would be), then the point of debate is over. Having said that, we shall now consider Martin's article.

5 Cf. *Ibid.*, ES11-ES13.

6 The response that what was unnatural was for heterosexuals to be given over to homosexuality is completely without textual warrant, and goes against the other prohibitions, such in Leviticus, regarding homosexual behavior.

A WORD ABOUT HERMENEUTICS AND MEANING

In both the abstract to Martin's work as well the final page, Martin questions the very possibility of understanding the text even in principle. In his abstract he states, "Context matters when considering the meaning of a passage, as such there can be *no plain reading of a text that is 2000-3000 years old*, translated from an ancient language into modern contexts."⁷ If this is the case, i.e., that we cannot have a plain reading of the text, then one cannot know the meaning of the biblical text. Why would context even matter? The next sentence states, "This paper looks at the context, word choices, and the placement of words and phrases as an integral part of a whole."⁸ But why? If there cannot be a plain reading, what is the point? If there can be no plain reading, what other kind of reading is there? At the very end of his essay, Martin writes, "Using scripture as proof texts to support a predisposed belief, *regardless of what the text does or does not say*, is irresponsible. It relies on plain readings of passages that cannot and should not be read plainly."⁹ Regardless of what the text says? One cannot use a proof text (a text used to prove something) *regardless of what it says*? Then this entire venture is completely moot. Further, if one cannot or should not read the text plainly, how else should he read it? Martin does not explain that. It seems that Martin thinks that the reader simply cannot know what the Bible really says. But why texts that are 2000-3000 years old? Why not texts that are 20-30 years old, or 2-3? Again, Martin does not explain, other than to insinuate that it is because it is translated from ancient languages.

7 Martin., ES3 (emphasis added).

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*, ES17 (emphasis added).

However, if such is the case, one should not care what the Bible says at all, because he could not know what it means anyway. This sort of hermeneutical skepticism is unwarranted and leads to an inability to know what the Bible actually says about anything. However, it is in fact the case that one can know what the text says, which evidently Martin really believes, since he wrote an article about what the Bible does and does not say.

A RESPONSE TO MARTIN'S INTRODUCTION

Martin notes that there are many sins that plague the church, such as lying, Sabbath breaking, and divorce. He further claims that "Christianity, and the church's response to sin, has changed in response to increased secularism."¹⁰ This is certainly true; although, it is the case that as a whole, the church has become more open and accepting to homosexuality in the last few decades. Along these lines, Martin asks, "If one operates under the assumption that homosexual behavior is sinful, then why is it worse than divorce?"¹¹ As argued in our previous article, homosexuality has been condemned in all its instances in the Bible and is called an "abomination" (Lev. 20:13), "unnatural" and "shameless" (Rom. 1:26-27), and a sin that will prohibit one from entering "the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:10).¹² Homosexuality is against nature and that is not the case with divorce.

10 Ibid., ES4.

11 Ibid.

12 Martin may retort that since divorce is said to lead to adultery, it too would be a sin that would keep one out of the kingdom of God. However, not all instances of divorce are equated with adultery since both Moses and Jesus allowed for it in instances of sexual infidelity (Dt. 24:1-4; Mt. 5:31-32). It should also be noted that in Dt. 24:2-4, it was an abomination for women to remarry her first husband after being another man's wife. In short, divorce per se is not adultery.

Martin declares, "Jesus never condemns homosexual behavior, but he does condemn divorce and subsequent remarriage."¹³ In response, a couple aspects of this claim should be addressed. First, to say that an act is permissible because Jesus never explicitly condemned it would certainly prove too much. For example, Jesus never condemned rape, incest, or bestiality; however, it is agreed by biblical scholars, and by most in general, that such are immoral. Second, it is likely the case that homosexuality was not a prevalent issue among the Jews as divorce was, so Jesus did not need to address it. It is arguably the case that the Jews in Jesus' day saw homosexuality as an abhorrent sin that was so evil that it was not prevalent in their culture.

Martin's next point is that according to James 2:10, breaking any sin makes one a sinner. Further, "If grace (and the graciousness of the church) is offered to the remarried divorcé, then why is this grace and hospitality not offered to homosexuals?"¹⁴ To Martin's point, we agree grace should be offered to homosexuals, *as long as they stop practicing homosexuality*.¹⁵ One cannot stop practicing being divorced; it is a state that one can never change (except for remarriage). However, to his point, it is good for the church to offer grace and forgiveness to divorcés, and the church should offer the same to those who have once been homosexuals; but the latter can stop practicing such lifestyles while one who is divorced must remain divorced (again, unless remarriage). Once that has been the case, they should be afforded the same grace as other sinners as homosexuality is not an unforgivable sin. Having said that, Martin's

13 Martin, ES4.

14 Ibid.

15 As noted, not all instances of divorce are unbiblical. In some instances, repentance or restoration with the church may be necessary for forgiveness.

point about comparing homosexuality to other sins is really irrelevant. The point of the debate between us is whether or not the Bible sanctions homosexual monogamous relationships. If it does, then we are wrong. If it does not, then such is a sin, and comparing it to other sins does not make it any less of a sin.

Martin's main "contention is that homosexuality as we understand it was never condemned by scripture" is indeed the crux of the debate.¹⁶ At this point, he defines homosexuality as "a sexual orientation where the sexual attraction and romantic attraction is oriented towards members of the same sex." Further, this "orientation of a person isn't one of personal choice, but a defining characteristic of behavior and personality."¹⁷ Homosexuals, according to Martin "enter relationships seeking companionship, love, romance and yes, sex. In this they are no different than heterosexuals..."¹⁸ Finally, he says, "The bias against homosexuality is a result of cultural ideology, [sic] and is not supported by good exegesis."¹⁹

Martin's definition is problematic in that the notion of "orientation" is irrelevant in the Jewish writings. As James De Young states, "Homosexual orientation is not discussed in Scripture, but prohibitions are broad enough to cover the lustful inclination as well as the act."²⁰ Further, to say such an orientation is not one of choice is wholly without evidence. There is no genetic or biological evidence to date that a person is born homosexual. Even if there were such evidence, if homosexuality

is indeed a sin, being born that way would not justify it. Such would commit the is/ought fallacy. So, even if a genetic link were proven for a sin, such as violence, anger, alcoholism, pedophilia, etc., a genetic link alone would not prove the action to be morally acceptable. It is consistent with original sin that humanity's gene pool has been severely affected over time because of sin. It should be further pointed out that the biblical texts in question never mention *when* homosexual acts are permissible. They also never talk about appropriate homosexual relationships. (As noted, there are in fact acceptable instances of divorce.) The texts simply say that homosexual *acts* are sinful.

The notion that homosexuality is seen in a negative way due to "cultural ideology" is simply not the case. Cultures since the creation of man have taught that homosexual actions are wrong. The biblical texts say they are wrong. Further, Martin offers no defense of his cultural claim.

Let us now examine the specific "clobber verses" that Martin alludes to, which, not incidentally, are the same verses examined in our earlier article.²¹

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES

In responding to Martin's argument from the Old Testament, we offer an engagement with his treatment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19, and Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. These represent the Old Testament portion of the so-called "clobber verses" Martin alleges "critical traditionalists have misused and misinterpreted to justify their cultural bias."²² Martin's allegations of misuse, misinterpretation, and cultural bias against us and others notwithstanding, our argument will

16 Martin, ES4.

17 Ibid., ES5.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 James B. De Young, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 61.

21 Martin, ES5.

22 Ibid.

demonstrate why we conclude that it is Martin who misuses and misinterprets the Genesis narrative and the Levitical Holiness Code based on his own cultural and theological biases. To demonstrate this, we will offer Martin's own summary analysis of the passages and then critique accordingly.

GENESIS 18-19

Concerning Genesis 18-19 and the account of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction, Martin concludes (with language that exudes a decided and unhelpful lack of epistemic humility) that, "one *cannot offer a credible argument* that homosexuality was the sin that destroyed Sodom. *No reasonable reading* could lead one to conclude that Sodom was destroyed because of homosexuality, and as such should not be considered as a sanction against consensual same sex relationships."²³ Martin's unwarranted claim notwithstanding, we find that it is both credible and reasonable to draw just such a conclusion. Sadly, rather than making his point from the text of Genesis, Martin errs by importing into his interpretation his guiding presupposition that the text cannot condemn homosexual activity, leading him to ignore any substantive engagement with the homosexual behavior the text actually describes, and other biblical authors identify as the primary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Martin's problem is three-fold on this issue. First, he conflates the context of the sin of Sodom (its decidedly inhospitable response to the visitors which, though the locus of Martin's argument, is not mentioned even once in the text) with the substance of the sin (the homosexual behavior that demonstrated the depth of the depravity of the men of Sodom and

gave expression to their willingness to try and rape Lot's guests). For the sake of argument, we will agree with Martin that to attempt the rape of Lot's guests was inhospitable (!), but we do not overlook the sexual perversion associated with the inhospitality, and neither does the broader Old and New Testament discussion of the sin of Sodom. Incredibly, Martin explains the men of Sodom's attempt at the homosexual rape of Lot's guests in what are ultimately unhelpful and dismissive terms, stating that "Genesis 19 is a study of violence, arrogance, selfishness and inhospitableness. Rape is not sex; it is sexualized violence."²⁴ We respond that rape most certainly is sex, and a violent and reprehensible expression of it—but rape is sexual, nonetheless. Martin appears guilty of obfuscating the issue of the type of the sexual sin of Sodom (homosexuality) with the context of that sin (inhospitableness magnified by rape), and he falls into the error of special pleading at this point (or he is at least guilty of making a distinction without a difference). Would Martin have found it acceptable and within the limits of his hospitality argument to conclude that if only the men of Sodom had been involved in consensual relationships with their would-be sexual partners all would have been well? This seems to be the case, based on the trajectory of his argument. Along this line, he also offers that "a selfish attitude that prevailed with that community might very well be the motivation behind such repugnant behavior towards guests and travelers."²⁵ It is at this point precisely, however, that the contradictory implication of this statement in view of Martin's basic dismissal of the homosexual behavior's condemnation is difficult to ignore when Martin's words are taken seriously. To wit, Martin admits that the

²⁴ Martin, ES8.

²⁵ Ibid., ES6.

²³ Ibid. (emphasis added).

inhospitality led to “repugnant behavior,” yet he does not acknowledge that the homosexual act is what he is finding repugnant (rather, he wants to isolate the forceable nature of the would-be sexual sin, but not the type of sexual sin – distinctions the text does not make). If inhospitality is the context of the sin (and again, just to be clear, this is nowhere mentioned in the text; our inclusion here is to simply argue from Martin’s perspective), and the homosexual behavior is the substantial sin, then where does Martin find the justification for the conclusion that only the inhospitality is the issue, not the homosexuality? As already noted, his argument is based on eisegesis, whereby he must import the issues of inhospitality and rape into the text; all the while avoiding the particulars about the homosexual perversions that are mentioned in the text and elsewhere in the biblical canon. Our point here is not to diminish the rape, but to speak of it in terms the Bible uses—Sodom acted wickedly in a sexual way, in a homosexual way. The Bible does not limit, or even focus, Sodom’s sin to inhospitality, but it does (as will be shown in the next point) speak of the sin of Sodom in singularly focused sexual terms based on the homosexual acts themselves.

Second, Martin also errs in his treatment of the Bible’s teaching in Ezekiel 16:47-50, where Sodom’s sin is described as an “abomination” done before the Lord. Whereas Martin states that an attempt to identify Ezekiel’s condemnation with a sexual sin is “thin at best, and still leaves the exegete with the problem of the actual words Ezekiel wrote,”²⁶ it is precisely at the point of the wording in the text that the issue of sexual perversion is made clear. To reiterate what we stated in our original discussion of the text in Ezekiel, “the word for abomination is *toebah*, the same word used in Leviticus 18:22 and

20:13 to address homosexual sins. As De Young explains, ‘Several sins in the Holiness Code of Leviticus are described as abominations, but only this one is singled out by itself as an abomination. The use of *toebah* in Ezekiel, with reference to Sodom’s sin, is an echo of Leviticus 18 and 20. Sodom’s sins were many: pride, social injustice, and pursuing homosexual behavior.’²⁷ Additionally, Jude 7 speaks of Sodom’s sin as sexual perversion: “Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”²⁸ We are surprised that Martin does not reference this passage in his original article, neither in his treatment of the New Testament teaching regarding homosexuality nor in its relationship to his discussion of Gen. 18-19 and the sin of Sodom. Nonetheless, the connection between Sodom and the sin of homosexuality is Jude’s primary concern in describing the false teachers of his day against the backdrop of the Old Testament condemnation of homosexuality in the account of Sodom. Jude 7 describes those Jude is concerned to confront in unequivocal condemnatory language. How could Jude have made the connection any clearer? Sodom’s sin was sexual, and the result was eternal judgment. This may not fit with Martin’s approach to Genesis 19 and the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the Bible connects the two in unambiguous language. As De Young states regarding the plethora of texts about Sodom (many not mentioned here), “Sodom’s sin must have been of great variation and enormity—greater than that of practically any other pagan

27 Huffling and Gentry, ES23. Italics in original. Cf. De Young, *What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?*, 35, Kindle).

28 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). All Scripture will come from the NRSV.

26 Martin, ES6.

society. Indeed, Sodom's destruction amounts to a microcosm of the utter destruction of the Flood.²⁹

Third, Martin fails to discuss that according to Genesis 18-19 the decision to condemn Sodom and Gomorrah was already made (assuming that the minimum number of righteous men would not be found; cf. v. 32) based on what God tells Abraham was a great outcry and a grave sin (v. 20). (Genesis 13:13 also states, "Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.") Once Abraham hears of this, God elaborates further by explaining that he will visit Sodom to "see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it" (21). The rest of the narrative reveals Abraham's pleading for mercy on the city, and then God departs from Abraham and makes his visit. The result of the visit is that God's concerns are verified, and he "rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah ... overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground" (19:24-25). Key points regarding these verses are: (1) Sodom was set to receive divine judgment before what Martin alleges was ultimately a matter of egregious inhospitality expressed in an attempt to rape Lot's guests; and (2) does Martin really want us to accept that such a total judgment was to be attributed to inhospitality? Regarding this latter concern, when considering that the capital crimes in the Old Testament never include inhospitality but certainly include numerous sexual sins, and that the use of both means of capital punishment (stoning and burning) are included in Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction, Martin's claims about hospitality fall into the realm of absurdity (3). On top of this is Jude 7 which directly states that Sodom had "indulged

in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust."³⁰ Were the men of Sodom inhospitable? Of course, but the justification for their judgment was something far, far greater than not being gracious to visitors. This much we know from the other biblical texts already discussed that focus on Sodom's sexual sin, and specifically the practice of homosexuality.

LEVITICUS 18:22 AND 20:13

Martin begins his discussion of the two passages from Leviticus with an interesting presupposition concerning the nature of the texts, stating that "many scholars believe this section of Leviticus was a later 'P' source addition that arose in response to behaviors and practices that were adopted during the Babylonian exile."³¹ Why is this important for Martin's argument? It is because he is going to try to make the case that after Israel had been in captivity in Babylon, she adopted corrupt practices; so, the later redactors of Leviticus added in the material in the holiness code out of concern for syncretism that has nothing to do with the actual issue of homosexual practice beyond specific religious instances. Aside from the confusion Martin introduces here surrounding a text that was given to Israel after their Egyptian captivity and well before the Babylonian captivity, we see this tactic is an overt attempt to color the debate in a way that reveals a penchant in Martin's overall argument to move away from the topic at hand and try to reshape the discussion. At this point, we simply note that Martin's claim about an alleged P

30 It will not do to simply retort that the sexual immorality and unnatural lust are referring to rape. Rape is not unnatural. Is it egregious sin? Certainly, but the sexual act involved in rape is not unnatural in the sense that homosexual acts are unnatural.

31 Martin, ES6.

29 De Young, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims*, 47.

source has nothing to do with the parameters of the debate, which is specifically concerning what the Protestant Bible teaches concerning homosexual practices. Martin may think the texts of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 were added later and not part of God's actual original words to Moses, but the words are in the Protestant Bible as part of the Levitical corpus, part of the text Martin agreed to engage at face value. Further, and quite ironically, whereas Martin strains to argue that the specific language of homosexuality as he understands it is not present in Genesis 18-19, he appears to switch course in Leviticus by giving significant weight to conjectural sources. This reveals what we suspect is a presuppositional commitment to his position that is the lens by which each text in the discussion is viewed by him, thus his willingness to insist on concreteness in Genesis and then appeal to conjecture in Leviticus. Recognizing this shortcoming in Martin's approach, we can now engage his treatment of the Levitical texts under discussion.

Leviticus 18:22 declares what the holiness code is, stating, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination." Leviticus 20:13 prescribes the consequence for violating the code, stating, "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them." Aware of the explicit sexual language used in these passages, Martin's approach is two-fold. First, he relegates the passages to an association with the worship of Molech in 18:21, thereby reducing the prohibition to a matter of cultic sexual practice. He states that, "one must conclude that the writer's intent here is to tie the actions that follow this mention to the various acts of Molech worship. It is reasonable to conclude that some form of temple prostitution, or other

sexual acts used as religious rites were being referenced here."³² Second, Martin seeks to delimit the language of the passages concerning homosexual behavior to a concern only for "anal intercourse between men" and having nothing to do "other homosexual behaviors. Homosexual sexual acts," Martin argues, "are not strictly defined by this one act.... There is no direct injunction against same sex relationships between women."³³

To summarize his approach, Martin both isolates the discussed behavior to a cultic aspect, and he concludes that the mention of homosexual acts is not about homosexuality, per se, but about men having anal intercourse with men. According to his presuppositions, therefore, Martin confidently concludes that "none of these Old Testament passages are clear condemnations of same sex sexual relationships as we understand them.... This is not to say that there wasn't a sentiment then that same sex sexual relationship were sinful. It just simply isn't supported by any clear reading of the text."³⁴ Oddly, in coming to these conclusions Martin attempts to make significant the LXX's reading of Leviticus 18:5 as "the Lord your God" rather than "the Lord," and he looks to translations of 18:22 in German Bibles from the 1800s which render the text as "Man shall not lie with young boys as he does with a woman" as evidence for his claim.³⁵ Frankly, these instances are indicative of the tenuous nature of Martin's claims and reveal to us both a confusion (once again) of the topic and a reliance upon irrelevant matters. Such choices by Martin weaken his basic argument considerably.

32 Martin, ES7.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., ES8.

35 Ibid., ES7.

Such oddities and irrelevancies notwithstanding, we offer two responses to Martin concerning his treatment of the Levitical passages. First, and primarily, contrary to Martin's attempt to isolate the condemnation of homosexual practice to only men and only in corrupted worship scenarios unique to the situation of the Israelites vis-à-vis Egypt and the later Babylonian captivity, the Levitical holiness code cannot be treated in such an atomistic or fractured fashion without introducing a host of other problems for Martin. We observe that the broader context of Leviticus 18 prohibits incest (v. 6), adultery (v. 20), child sacrifice (v. 21), and bestiality (v. 23), as well as homosexuality. Does Martin deny that these other prohibitions "continue to have universal validity in contemporary society," or are they, too, culturally delimited to Israel's past?³⁶ We shudder to think of the type of culture that Martin's approach to these matters would ultimately produce when his position is taken to its logical conclusion.

Second, what Martin attempts by way of drawing sharp distinction between male homosexual intercourse and any other homosexual activities (e.g., lesbianism) is at best an argument from silence that is ultimately baseless. Such an attempted distinction is never made about heterosexual concerns in Scripture. Rather, heterosexual issues are considered generally as a whole, so that when heterosexual matters are addressed the individual concern is reasonably applied to the whole; this is also the rational way to consider the condemnation of homosexual practices in the holiness code. In language that Martin is fond of using, we conclude that no reasonable interpreter of Leviticus 18:22 or 20:13 would force a

distinction into the language in the way that Martin does unless there was a presupposition driving the interpretive agenda. Sadly, what Martin does with his handling of the Levitical texts is nothing short of an instance of his attempt to "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matt. 23:24).

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

Martin writes, "There are no restrictions, apophatically speaking, on same sex sexual behaviors in any of the gospels. In other words, The [sic] New Testament passages never address homosexuality as we understand it today."³⁷ It is not clear why Martin makes the fallacious move from "the gospels do not condemn homosexuality" to "the New Testament does not." The New Testament *contains* the gospels, but there is more to the NT than just the gospels. If that is meant to be an argument for his position, then it is incomplete. As already mentioned, the gospels also do not prohibit rape, incest, or bestiality, so to argue from the absence of a discussion to the conclusion that such is permissible would lead to the logical conclusion that anything that is not mentioned is permissible. Martin admits that Paul's list of sexual vices (which includes homosexual acts) contains "actions or characteristics [that are] *inconsistent* with people of faith."³⁸ Martin notes that "in Romans" homosexual behavior "is not mentioned in a favorable light, but it does not carry the weight of restriction."³⁹ He next mentions that there is a particular word in both 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and 1 Tim 1:9-10 that is integral to this debate: *arsenokoitai*. Martin explains that "this word is a hapax legomena"; however,

37 Martin, ES8.

38 Ibid. (emphasis added).

39 Ibid.

36 Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 78, Kindle.

he then in the next statement states that it is *repeated* one other time “by a deuterio-Pauline writer.”⁴⁰ The reference to a deuterio-Pauline writer is to 1 Timothy. By definition, then, the word is not a hapax legomena. Martin’s reason for calling this term a hapax legomenon is because it, according to him, is taken from 1 Corinthians 6. However, even if such were the case, it would not be a hapax legomenon as such means a word that occurs only once in a given corpus.⁴¹ Martin makes a subtle shift in logic from saying that it “is likely” not Paul and “is likely” from 1 Corinthians 6, to “it is ‘recycled’ material.”⁴² He has gone from the realm of possibility (that it “is likely”) to the realm of fact (“it is”) from one sentence to the next without any argument. It should be noted that it is completely irrelevant for this discussion as to who wrote 1 Timothy since the topic for this debate is whether the “Protestant Bible” allows for anything other than monogamous heterosexual relations. Since 1 Timothy is part of the Protestant Bible, it really does not matter who wrote it, except to say that this word in question may have been borrowed. However, if that were the case, then we have *two* NT authors arguing against homosexuality instead of just one. At this point he looks at 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy separately to examine their context.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9

The main issue in 1 Corinthians 6, according to Martin, is the meaning of the terms ‘malakoi’ and ‘arsenokoitai’. As Martin notes, the latter is a term seemingly made up by Paul. Martin’s first

40 Ibid., 10.

41 Perhaps Martin means the Pauline corpus and since he does not believe 1 Timothy is written by Paul, then they would be in two separate *corpora*; however, such would be reaching as the NT is seen as the corpus in question.

42 Martin, ES10 (emphasis added).

mention of this word says that it “is likely a vulgar slang for men who are having intercourse.”⁴³ However, on the following page in his discussion on 1 Corinthians 6, he says that “arsenokoitai would be one who practices pederasty, or who buys young *boys* for sexual slavery.”⁴⁴ Martin thus goes from saying it is about “men” to “young boys.” Given the admittedly difficult nature of these terms, such seems to beg the question. Since we have already provided a discussion on the definitions and usages of these words in our previous article, such is not necessary here.⁴⁵ However, Martin’s point is based on an admittedly difficult and ambiguous set of terms, except for one major point: given the “surely inescapable” link between these words and the Levitical law, Paul is not going to say anything against such law.⁴⁶ This argument was made in our previous essay.⁴⁷ Further, as David E. Garland notes regarding the kind of interpretation Martin makes here: “But this interpretation collapses on itself. Had he wished to limit his critique to pederasty, he could have used the term “pederast” (παιδεράστης, *paidērastēs*).⁴⁸ Further, BDAG notes, “Paul’s strictures against same-sex activity cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of alleged temple prostitution . . . or limited to contract w. boys for homoerotic service.”⁴⁹

43 Ibid., ES9 (emphasis added).

44 Ibid., ES10 (emphasis added).

45 Cf. Huffling and Gentry, ES30-33. The interested reader should consult David F. Wright, “Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ἀρσενοκοῖται (1 Cor 6:9, 1 Tim 1:10),” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Jun 1984): 125-153 for an in-depth discussion of this issue.

46 Wright, 61.

47 Huffling and Gentry, ES32-33.

48 David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 213.

49 William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. ἀρσενοκοίτης.

The point that Martin wants to make, that Paul does not condemn homosexuality, would surely be against Paul's entire training as an orthodox Pharisee. Given the "surely inescapable" connections between his newly coined term and Leviticus, as well as the point made by Garland that Paul could have used a specific word for pederasty, as well as the point made by BDAG, Martin's point is unlikely.

Martin argues that "Paul is right to condemn" prostitution, "but one should not interpret this to mean that he condemns consensual same sex behavior between two loving, monogamous consenting adults in a committed relationship."⁵⁰ Even if Martin were right about only prostitution or pederasty being in view here, such a comment in light of Paul's orthodox training in Levitical law and what he says (and admitted to by Martin himself) in Romans makes such a statement by Martin incredulous. It is important to note that such conditions as loving, monogamous, and being consenting adults are not sufficient conditions for biblical morality. Such can also be the case for heterosexuals and still be sin. Two non-married heterosexuals could be in a loving, monogamous, consensual relationship, and sex between them would be sinful since they would not be married.

1 TIMOTHY 1:10

Martin's comments on 1 Timothy basically mirror those of 1 Corinthians as the same word (*arsenokoitai*) is the one in question. He argues, however, that this text offers a stronger case for pederasty as it is found between "fornicator" and "followed by slave trader." However, as mentioned above, BDAG (and other sources) disagree with this. For example,

50 Martin, ES11.

I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner state that in classical Greek "it could mean a male prostitute, but this specialised reference is excluded here. ἀρσενοκοίτης . . . is a rare word meaning 'homosexual.'"⁵¹ Martin states, "Since *arsenokoitai* is hapax legomena [which is false since it is used twice], and only Paul truly understood what he meant, there is no 'correct' translation for this word."⁵² However, if such is the case, then Martin cannot know what it means, and he has lost his argument for it meaning pederasty (both here and in 1 Corinthians).

ROMANS 1:26-27

Even if one were to grant Martin's points above, Romans 1 is clear in its condemnation of homosexuality. In fact, this passage is so clear, that Martin admits it is seen as unnatural and a dehumanizing punishment from God: "Paul too believes in natural revelation [sic], and he sees same sex sexual behavior as unnatural."⁵³ However, Martin is quick to diminish Paul's view of nature. He opines, "Yet Paul's sample size of nature is fairly narrow; mostly limited to animal husbandry, and domesticated animals. There is a mountain of research evidence that is contradictory of Paul's natural revelation."⁵⁴ In other words, Paul is simply wrong. The content of Martin's evidence is animal behavior. He claims, "Same sex sexual behavior is quite common in the animal world. And as animals do not have the ability to sin, the behavior cannot

51 I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, International Critical Commentary* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 380. Again, Wright's work is pertinent here.

52 Martin, ES11.

53 Ibid., ES12.

54 Ibid.

be negatively sanctioned nor considered to be unnatural.”⁵⁵ Martin states that “in mammals same sex sexual behavior occurs in 8 to 10% of the total population, and for some species of bird (mallards) it can be as high as 19%.”⁵⁶ He further maintains, ““If Paul is making the argument of natural revelation in Romans 1, then he is unwittingly making an argument for same sex sexual behavior, as it is a common occurrence in nature.”⁵⁷

There are a lot of assumptions by Martin here. For one, why does he think Paul’s knowledge of nature is simply based on animal husbandry? On the contrary, Paul demonstrates a knowledge of Greek philosophy (Acts 17) and is a very educated man as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), and in one way or another “was caught up to the third heaven and given “visions and revelations of the Lord” that he also described as “exceptional . . . revelations” (2 Cor. 12:1; 7). Martin evidently thinks Paul was a rather uneducated man and does not give much weight to these “visions and revelations” that were “exceptional.” However, a good argument can be made, if one believes the Scriptures (admittedly by taking a plain reading), that Paul is in a better position than Martin to discuss nature and how homosexuality fits into it.

Another assumption Martin makes is that animals engage in homosexual acts for the same reasons humans do. In animal biology there are a myriad of hypotheses as to why animals engage in homosexual behavior.⁵⁸ An examination of animal behavior would take

this work into a direction that it cannot take; however, it will be stated that Martin’s attempted justification for animal behavior as a foundation for human morality is both unconvincing as there is no argument for it—it is merely stated—and irrational. Even assuming, as Martin does, that animals engage in homosexual behavior for the same reasons as humans, such commits the is/ought fallacy. Just because animals do such things (and even because humans do such things), it does not make them right. One cannot derive a moral *ought* from the fact that something simply *is*.

Martin also confuses teleology with frequency. It is not the frequency of an act that makes it unnatural; rather, it is the act itself. If a creature were created to mate with a member of its species of the opposite sex and instead mated with a member of its species of the same sex, that would be unnatural in the sense that it goes against the telos of the created being. It would not matter how frequently such acts happened or with how many. For example, bestiality is unnatural regardless of how many times it happens. Martin’s logic can easily be reduced to absurdity in at least two ways. First, it appears that Martin wants to maintain that homosexuality in humans is morally permitted, or natural, since other animals engage in such activity. However, other animals eat their young. Yet surely Martin would not advocate humans eating their young; although, the logic he maintains would allow for it. Second, if frequency were all that mattered for an act being natural, then the most heinous acts would be considered natural if they were committed often enough. This commits the is/ought fallacy which says that because something *is* a certain way, that it *ought* to be. Martin commits this fallacy in his argument here. Further, Paul is not talking about nature as such, but the nature of humans.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 12. (emphasis in original).

58 For example, cf. Cyril C. Grueter and Tara S. Stoinski, “Homosexual Behavior in Female Mountain Gorillas: Reflection of Dominance, Affiliation, Reconciliation or Arousal?” *PLoS ONE* (May 2016):1-13 (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0154185>).

Humans have a decidedly different nature than other mammals or mallards. This point is completely missed by Martin. One cannot base human morality on other animals. Humans are rational animals created in God's image; other animals are not.

At this point Martin admits what cannot be denied given the clarity and force of this passage, viz., that "God allows them to be dehumanized," giving "these people up to degrading sexual behavior (same sex sexual behaviors) and describes it as receiving 'in their own persons the due penalty for their error. (1:27)'"⁵⁹ He adds, "In this context homosexual behaviors are a punishment from God."⁶⁰ Martin explains that awareness of YHWH is what is the real issue. Martin states Paul "assumes" that natural revelation means that all cultures have an awareness of God as well as the moral code he has given them.⁶¹ According to Martin, this premise is "as faulty as the argument of natural revelation itself."⁶² Again, Paul is simply wrong. However, a basic moral law across cultures has indeed been recognized. For example, the religious teachings in the great world religions teach a similar religious code (such as the Ten Precepts as compared to the Ten Commandments). Cultures across time and geography recognize that murder and rape are wrong (homosexuality is actually in this category as well).⁶³ Further, if there were no moral code or human nature, then such things as the Nuremburg trials would have no objectively right status as it would just be one culture against another saying it is wrong to extinguish races for whatever reason. This is to

say nothing of the fact that the very next chapter in Romans talks about such a law; although, this is not likely to affect Martin since he has already said multiple times that Paul is simply wrong about natural law. Thus, it appears for Martin to make his point he must do so at the great cost of human morality as such. He also offers no argument as to why some cultures would not have such a law. The bottom line here regarding natural revelation is that Paul is arguing that all humans have a knowledge of the true God. Martin simply rejects this as "faulty" but does not offer any reasons for it being so.

More than this, Martin castigates Paul's passage here as being "so problematic in its logic, and assumptions that one cannot readily condemn homosexuality as we understand it today; as between two loving, consenting adults. Arguments like this, gleaned from Paul's rhetoric, are the fuel which deeply dehumanizes people, in a similar fashion as slavery or prostitution."⁶⁴ He continues, "It argues that the entire being of a person is defined by the 45 minutes a week they might engage in sexual activity, reducing their humanity to acts, and dismissing the whole of the being."⁶⁵ What Martin is saying is that Paul is simply being rhetorical and does not take into account loving, monogamous homosexuals. However, Paul has argued, and Martin has admitted that this is what Paul argues, that homosexuality is unnatural. They are not unnatural in certain circumstances; they are unnatural acts as such. Martin's point about the length of time taken to commit the acts can further be reduced to absurdity by simply changing the act to something else, such as rape or murder. Such acts can take even less time, but they are still condemned. The amount of time is completely irrelevant.

59 Ibid., ES12.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., ES13.

62 Ibid.

63 For a defense of natural law, cf. J. Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

64 Ibid., ES13.

65 Ibid.

Martin next inquires as to what happens to homosexuals who do not commit idol worship as described in Romans 1. “Does God give them up to same sex sexual behavior,” he asks. He answers, “This is another logical flaw in Paul’s rhetoric. He is operating from too small a sample size to make sweeping claims about divine revelations through nature.”⁶⁶ Once again, Paul is wrong. It appears that Martin does not believe that Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote Romans, since Paul is clearly fallible, according to Martin. Further, Martin does not provide what an adequate sample size would look like or how one would go about discovering this. Also, how does Martin know how Paul based his claim? We are not told by either Paul or Martin, except to hold that Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit to write his letter to the Romans. He recognizes that “Romans 1 was not written as a sanction, but in context defines particular behaviors as a just punishment for a different offense.”⁶⁷ It appears that the desires *qua* desires are what are unnatural. Why would it be a punishment to give people up to homosexuality if homosexuality is itself not immoral? Why not give them up to a heterosexual sin? If Martin were right, then Paul’s condemnation of it would not make sense. Paul would be saying that God gave them up to something that is in itself completely permissible. What Paul is saying is that when creatures reject the Creator and worship creatures, they are getting the order backwards. Thus, God makes creatures operate in their order in a backward manner, one that is unnatural, *viz.*, homosexual. Paul is saying that homosexuality as such is an unnatural and backward activity mirrored by rejecting the Creator.

Martin’s only recourse would be to say that

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

they were given in lust and were not in “loving” and “monogamous” relationships. However, that would seem to go against the very wording of Paul’s text, *viz.*, that same sex activity is unnatural as such. Paul is saying, along with the rest of Scripture, that homosexual *acts* are unnatural. There is no mention of any appropriate way for homosexuals to practice homosexuality as the very acts themselves are unnatural.

In short, Martin recognizes, repeatedly, that Romans 1 does not “sanction” homosexual behavior. In his estimation, Paul is simply wrong. However, the debate in question is whether or not the Bible allows for homosexual activity. It clearly does not. Romans is clear about this, and Martin’s only way out is to simply say that Paul is wrong. However, Paul being wrong is completely irrelevant to this debate. While the authors of this article believe in divine inspiration and inerrancy, the debate is not about such matters. Romans is a book of the Bible and denounces homosexuality as unnatural. Martin admits this. Thus, the Bible does not sanction homosexual activity. The qualifiers Martin wants to add such as “loving” and “monogamous” are irrelevant since, according to Romans, the *acts qua* acts are unnatural. No amount of love or monogamy can make that otherwise.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND GRACE

In his section titled “Grace Responds to Sin,” Martin attempts to demonstrate how Christians should respond to homosexuality. Before examining what he says, we agree that Christians should show the love and grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In our experiences, the authors have known many people who are homosexual. This author in particular has had many homosexual students and he treated each

one exactly the way he treated heterosexual students: with dignity, respect, and love. On that, we agree with Martin. Having said that, does that mean that homosexuality is not a sin, and if it is, how should Christians respond? Let us examine what Martin says and offer a response.

Here, like the opening section, Martin compares homosexuality to divorce.⁶⁸ He again asks why Christians are ok with giving those who are divorced grace but not homosexuals. As mentioned before, there is grace for both; however, being divorced is not something that can be stopped. Once divorced, the two people are divorced (unless they remarry). However, homosexuals can stop being homosexuals. Once they have stopped and repented, they should be granted the same grace and forgiveness as other people, including those who are divorced. However, if homosexuality is a sin, as we have argued, then per church discipline, homosexuals should not be treated as if nothing is wrong. It would be like allowing two unmarried people in church to go on living in sin or allowing adultery to be left unchecked. The church actually has an obligation to practice church discipline.

Martin next quotes Eph. 2:8-9, saying that they are written "so that no one may judge another's sins."⁶⁹ There are two problems with this. First, Martin is judging those who are not giving grace to homosexuals (to say otherwise is to make his assertions meaningless). Second, the NT does not teach that one should not judge. It teaches that one should judge righteously (more on this below).

Martin further states, "There are no supporting Biblical verses that teach that one must be perfect in thought word and deed to have salvation, only that one must have faith in

Christ."⁷⁰ Agreed, but that is not what is being debated. There are in fact sins that keep people from the kingdom of God. The list of sins given in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 says just that. Regardless of the meaning of the words in question, there are in fact deeds that will keep one out of the kingdom. Thus, one should strive to avoid doing those things. It has been argued that homosexuality is on that list.

Martin's main point in this section is that one should offer forgiveness to all and not judge. He offers Matthew 7:1-3 as support, which says: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. 2 For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?" However, it is important to notice the next verses: "4 Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." Jesus is not condemning judging others. He is condemning hypocrisy. The very next verse iterates this as well: "6 Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you." One has to judge who are the dogs and swine. Further, Jesus' statement about church discipline reinforces the necessity of judgment:

¹⁵ If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If the

68 Ibid., ES14.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., ES15.

member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matt. 18:15-17)

Thus, judgment is not condemned, or one could not perform the commands given here by Jesus. What is at stake is hypocritical judgment. The NT is full of places that talk about being against sin. Martin's call to forgive sin without repentance is unfounded. It is more loving to tell a person that he is out of step with the moral and biblical commands of God.

CONCLUSION

In Martin's closing section he states, "There are no 'clear' passages that condemn homosexuality or same sex sexual behaviors as we understand them today."⁷¹ It has been argued here and in our previous article that such is false. It should be pointed out, again, that Martin is right that the NT did not discuss homosexuals "as we understand them today." That is likely because the NT writers already knew that homosexuality is wrong. They knew this both from natural law (Rom 2) and from their Jewish Scriptures. There simply was no need to give examples of when homosexuality was ok and when it was not. The context was not what was at stake—the acts are what are wrong. For the biblical writers, there is no context for the unnatural act of homosexuality. If it is a sin, it would not matter if one did have an orientation to be homosexual. The acts themselves are what are said to be unnatural.

In short, Martin has admitted that Paul is against homosexuality in that Paul sees it as unnatural. Martin's response is that Paul is simply wrong. However, since the

debate concerns whether the Bible allows for homosexuality, it should be clear that it does not. Martin evidently sees and admits that Paul does not allow for it in Romans 1. Martin's only recourse is to simply say that Paul is incorrect in his views.

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