

PERSPECTIVES ON HOMOSEXUALITY: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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Although much has been published—in journals and books—on the Christian approach to homosexuality, the steady stream of publications continues. This article reviews six recent books that deal with the topic.¹ The content of these books reflects the diversity of opinion in the church today about the biblical teaching on homosexuality and about what the attitude of the church should be toward homosexual orientation and practice. In my view, some are better at dealing with the topic than others. I will begin with those that I find least helpful and conclude with those that are most helpful.

All book reviews reflect the views of the reviewer, and it is no exception with this review. My own views are evangelical—I accept the Bible as the verbal revelation of God, authoritative for Christian belief and practice, and I accept the biblical teaching as universal and constant, while recognizing that it must be embodied and applied in different contexts. Even as I evaluate the authors' views in light of my assumptions, I will also strive to present fairly the opinions and arguments of the contributors to these books. The first three books that I review are all collections of articles by various authors, predominantly with a revisionist perspective on homosexuality; the last three are works by evangelical authors in which they defend the traditional perspective on the issue. I begin by examining the works containing various contributors.

The Loyal Opposition: Struggling With the Church on Homosexuality, edited by Sample and DeLong, contains articles written by members of the United Methodist Church (UMC) who disagree with the decision of the General Conference of the UMC in 1996 concerning homosexual practice and unions. The 1996 decision added the following directives to the UMC Book of Discipline: that homosexual unions shall not be conducted by UMC ministers, nor shall they be conducted in UMC churches; that homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian teaching; that self-avowed homosexuals

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¹ Tex Sample and Amy E. De Long, eds. *The Loyal Opposition: Struggling with the Church on Homosexuality* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000); Walter Wink, ed. *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); David L. Balch, ed. *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000); Stanton L. Jones, Stanton and Mark A. Yarhouse. *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

cannot be accepted as candidates, ordained ministers, or appointed to serve the UMC; and that no board, committee, commission, or council shall give UMC funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality. Along with these directives, the General Conference affirmed that God's grace is available to all, including practicing homosexuals, that the church is committed to supporting rights and liberties for homosexuals, and that the church supports efforts to stop violence and coercion against homosexuals.

The tone of this book is clear in the remarks by the two editors in their introductory articles. Sample notes that all the authors struggle with how to be loyal to the UMC while believing the 1996 decision to be wrong. Their strategy is to resist and change the UMC, and the larger culture, in the attitude toward practicing homosexuals. DeLong accuses the UMC of being sick with the diseases of "heterosexism, hatred and prejudice," thereby legitimizing homophobia and discrimination (p. 25). She not only believes that the UMC has little desire to serve homosexuals equally, lovingly, or compassionately, but she contends that the church is judging and condemning, teaching homosexuals to hate themselves.

The contributors to this book clearly do not seek dialogue nor are they open to correction in their own views. The shared assumption about the Bible seems to be, as Sample states in his introductory article, that "the preponderance of scholarly opinion no longer supports the official position of the UMC" (p. 20). In fact, one of the common themes that runs through the various articles is that the thrust of the gospel, in its emphasis on God's love and grace, should result in an inclusive church, embracing homosexual persons. Thus, the goal that unites the various contributors is to change their denomination to bring it into line with the grace and inclusiveness of the gospel. Various arguments and strategies are suggested to bring about this change.

There is one dissenter to this. John Kruse in "Friendly to Liberty?" argues that he has decided to leave the UMC because it "has come down on the side of oppression and persecution" (p. 185). The 1996 decision limits and undermines the ministry of pastors and the churches to homosexuals. In fact, he argues that by prohibiting the celebration of homosexual unions, ministry by homosexual pastors and elders, and funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality, this creates a "witch-hunt mentality in the church," with the threat of discipline and trials hanging over dissenters (p. 189). Of course, what the inclusion of this article in the book implicitly argues is that the UMC will lose good people like John Kruse if it does not change its position. This also is a strategy for moving the church toward change.

The first section of the book, "Homosexuality, Resistance, and Scripture," has two articles that deal with key biblical passages. In "The Loyal Opposition and Scripture" Victor Furnish examines Lev 18:22 and 20:13, and Rom 1:26-27. He does so primarily to confirm the main point of his article, which is that the specific rules, laws, and teachings of Scripture are time-bound and culturally conditioned. For example, in Romans 1 Furnish maintains Paul claims that homosexuals are perverted heterosexuals, that all homoerotic acts are inherently lustful, and that such acts are unnatural because

some males assume the female role, and some females assume the male role. Since we no longer accept these assumptions today, Furnish insists that Paul's prescriptions in Romans 1 no longer apply. What we need to embrace from these biblical faith communities, argues Furnish, is their understanding of God and of living out of his grace.

Leaving aside the matter of Paul's assumptions in Romans 1 (concerning which I think Furnish is wrong), Furnish's position leaves us with an unbiblical opposition between the biblical laws and the scriptural theme of grace. This has two consequences. First, the church has no guidance from Scripture in applying the themes of love and grace in specific practices and issues. It becomes very open-ended and relativistic. Secondly, it undermines the specific practices that the contributors to this book consider to manifest love and grace to homosexuals today. How do they know that their prescriptions are not time-bound and culturally conditioned as well?

The article by Bishop Roy Sano argues that the biblical prohibitions of homosexual acts are based upon the biblical authors' assumption that God's goodness results from living according to the heterosexual ordering of creation. Sano declares that we now know that there is another sexual ordering of creation—the homosexual ordering. Thus, there is a divinely given goodness that can result when homosexuals live according to that ordering. To force homosexuals to change to the heterosexual ordering not only fails to acknowledge the homosexual ordering, but also forces them to go against their nature. Sano draws a parallel with Jews and Gentiles concerning circumcision. If Gentile Christians were not required to be circumcised, then neither should the church require homosexual Christians to act contrary to their nature. Sano provides no biblical grounds for this argument other than very general comments about the goodness of God's creation order.

The rest of the articles in this collection suggest various ways of resisting the UMC position and various strategies of changing this position. Dwight Vogel's article suggests how the church's position can be changed by appealing to the Methodist quadrilateral—Scripture, tradition, reason, and Christian experience. As one would expect in this book, his appeals in each of these are to the general themes of love, justice, liberation, healing, and forgiveness. Dale Dunlop's article appeals to the principle of inclusiveness, based upon the grace of God, to embrace practicing homosexuals. He argues that, if same-gender orientation is not self-chosen, then its practice is not sin (p. 85). But the obvious question is: How does one determine what is a "natural orientation" without Scripture? Is it merely something that arises from within oneself? If so, would he apply the same principle of acceptance and grace to pedophiles?

A variation of the argument from inclusiveness is found in the article by L. Edward Phillips. Since the UMC includes members who hold to both pacifism and just war, the UMC should allow for the celebration of unions by both heterosexuals and homosexuals. Igancio Castuera views the struggle in the church as between those who compartmentalize and codify behavior (the legalistic tradition) and those who enable people to act justly in response to a loving and caring God (the prophetic tradition). The tension between

these two traditions is evident in the teachings of different books in the Bible. But God's new work in Christ, he claims, should move us beyond legalism to embrace God's universal love, as the apostle Paul himself came to understand. This compels us to embrace homosexuals. The article by Joretta Marshall uses the theme of liberation to promote the calling of the church to liberate Christians from heterosexism and injustice to lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. This requires Christians to disobey their church if it does not embody the love and justice of liberation, so that systems and structures may change. The article by J. Philip Wogaman supports such a struggle for liberation either by using loopholes to get around church law, or by engaging in direct ecclesial disobedience, such as conducting ceremonies that bless homosexual unions.

This collection also contains a number of sermons exhorting church members to resist UMC policy and support their homosexual brothers. Perhaps the most shocking one is by Jean Powers. She draws a parallel between the Nazi treatment of the Jews and the heterosexism and homophobia evident in the treatment of homosexuals by straights (pp. 113–15). Then she advocates lying, deception, and operating under false pretenses as the most faithful responses to promoting life-giving activities in the church. In other words, the end justifies the means.

Something that struck me in reading this book is that a number of the contributors refer to "bisexuals," along with lesbians and gays, as included within the church. But none of them explains what this means for the UMC. Are they implicitly suggesting that bisexual behavior should be embraced as a divinely ordered good by the church? Would this lead to ceremonies that bless such unions between (three or more) such members of the church? None of the authors elaborate upon this orientation, but by including bisexuals with homosexuals they are implying that those "internally ordered" to bisexual behavior should also be included within the communion of the church.

In conclusion, this collection of essays gives a presentation of the arguments used by modern liberal Christianity in its support of homosexual practice. The arguments do not take the biblical texts on the subject seriously, but rather appeal to the general themes of grace, love, and inclusiveness. The authors are not interested in any dialogue with those who disagree, for they are certain, as DeLong says in her concluding chapter, that they are "part of the Divine movement, where God's vision of grace and justice is prevailing" (p. 194).

Homosexuality and Christian Faith, edited by Walter Wink, contains articles by those who also generally embrace the perspective of modern liberal Christianity. It is a very short book—only 133 pages. The majority of the articles are quite brief, from four to six pages in length. Thus most of the articles merely introduce themes and arguments without developing them adequately. The themes and arguments are similar to the ones mentioned in the Sample and DeLong book: love and compassion are more important than rules and laws; the leading of the Spirit overrules any biblical regulations; the Bible says little about homosexuality and nothing about same-sex

love and orientation; because of the new situation, we need to go beyond the Bible as the Spirit leads us; human flourishing can occur within long-term monogamous homosexual relationships; the church needs to accept and bless such same-sex relationships; homosexuals' biggest problem is the reaction of heterosexuals to them. In addition, Bishop Paul Egerton (ELCA) provides guidance and aid to families who have homosexual members by chronicling the seven stages that he and his family went through in response to their eldest son's revelation that he was gay.

The two longest articles in the book deal with the biblical witness. Wink's article, "Homosexuality and the Bible," examines all the relevant passages in Scripture but gives the familiar liberal explanations of them. He argues that they cannot be used to condemn same-sex monogamous relations between homosexual adults. Even granting that the Bible condemns homosexual behavior (which he reluctantly does), the issue for Wink is "whether that biblical judgment is correct" (p. 47). Since the Bible contains a great deal of sexism, patriarchalism, violence, and homophobia, we must interpret the Bible through the grid of the love ethic of Jesus to determine what is relevant to us today. After all, the same Bible that permits slavery condemns homosexuality; if we reinterpret the former, why not do so for the latter? Besides, Wink maintains, the Bible has no sexual ethic but a variety of sexual mores, many of which change over the thousand-year span of biblical history. Thus, Wink is essentially arguing for an ethic of love according to which the church today deems to conform to the contemporary social norms of equality and freedom from domination (p. 56).

The article by Ken Sehested, "Biblical Fidelity and Sexual Orientation: Why the First Matters and the Second Doesn't," examines the biblical texts to support the argument presented in his title. He dismisses the applicability of these texts to our modern context because they relate to different issues in ancient contexts, that is, humiliation and domination, idolatry, ritual purity, and pederasty. He argues that the account of the early church in Acts 10–15 in its embrace of Gentile Christians instructs us to follow the leading of the Spirit over against the regulations of the Bible in embracing those with same-sex orientation. Neither Wink's nor Sehested's article interacts with those interpretations that present the traditional interpretations, nor do they respond to those criticisms that have been leveled at their own exegesis.

This collection contains the same certainty as the Sample and DeLong book that the general position of the authors—acceptance of those with same-sex orientation—accurately reflects the mind of Jesus for today. Wink's "Afterword" insists that God is confronting both sides of this controversy with an opportunity "to learn to love, cherish, and value those whose positions are different from our own" (p. 133). Given the fact that this volume contains articles that promote only one position on this issue, Wink really implies that those rejecting same-sex relations need to "love, cherish and value" those who accept such relations. He does not envision that the opposite could be the case. But of course, should one "love, cherish and value" those whose position—rejection of same-sex relations—reflects that in the

Bible which is sexist, patriarchal, violent and homophobic? This really only seems to be a one-way street.

Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture, edited by David L. Balch, is the best of the books that contain the contributions of various authors, in two ways. First, in their length and argumentation the articles are the most scholarly of the three collections. Second, there is a diversity of opinion expressed between revisionists and traditionalists concerning homosexual practice, although it is clear that the majority of essays (including the "Concluding Observations" by the editor) is contributed by revisionists. The major weakness of this collection is that it does not contain any articles presenting close examination of biblical passages on homosexuality by traditionalist exegetes. The only exegetical articles are contributed by revisionists.

In "Muddling Through: The Church and Sexuality/Homosexuality" Mark G. Toulouse surveys the current state of the discussion on sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular among both liberal (mainline) and evangelical churches. He rightly notes certain trends common to both groups: an appreciation of the positive place of physical sexuality within marriage, the affirmation of the essential equality of men and women as sexual beings, the decriminalization of homosexual practice, and the granting of civil rights to homosexuals. His revisionist leanings lead him to attribute incorrectly the following trends to both groups: from a rule-orientated to a relational sexual ethic, and from viewing homosexuality as sin to viewing it as a disorder. What Toulouse fails to grasp is that, while evangelicals have certainly appreciated the latter emphasis in each of these trends, their commitment to the authority of Scripture has caused them to continue to affirm the laws of Scripture and the biblical designation of homosexual practice as sin. Evangelicals do not consider sin and disorder, law and relationships, to be incompatible.

Nancy Duff's article, "Christian Vocation, Freedom of God, and Homosexuality," defends homosexual relations on the basis of the Christian doctrine of vocation and of the Barthian ethic of freedom. The former means that Christians must be able to pursue their individual callings as they determine these before God. The latter means that this calling is directed by the demands of God, which differ from situation to situation. This also involves, argues Duff, a rejection of the application of principles and norms to specific cases. In true Barthian fashion, she defines such application as casuistry and, therefore, as inconsistent with a life lived in dynamic relation to the living God. Duff seems oblivious to the dangers in the false dichotomy between norms and relationships, and to the danger of relativism in the Barthian approach. My problem with this perspective can be summarized in the question: On what basis would she reject someone's claim to have a vocation as a pedophile?

An excellent article in this collection is "The Use and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Homosexuality Debates" by Stanton L. Jones and Mark J. Yarhouse. This article is a summary of the content of their book, which I re-

view later in this article. They deal with three issues concerning same-sex orientation. First, by referring to mainline denominational documents they demonstrate that the purposes to which proponents of change in the moral evaluation of homosexual behavior put the findings and theories of the behavioral and physical sciences are of questionable legitimacy. Revisionists often set up a caricature of the traditionalist view and then appeal to science to demolish the caricature. Second, they summarize the status of the major scientific findings demonstrating that these findings are more complex and puzzling than is usually acknowledged. The authors survey both the findings on the factors contributing to same-sex attraction and the findings concerning the possibility of changing one's orientation. Third, they argue that the findings of contemporary scientific research, when properly interpreted, have no formal relevance to the moral debate. Even the strongest possible findings imaginable from current findings neither entail nor logically support the ethical conclusions that are being drawn from them. They emphasize that traditionalists are just as guilty of making questionable use of scientific findings as are revisionists. In their handling of the research Jones and Yarhouse demonstrate an integrity and fairness in their assessment of the findings. They conclude the article with the important point that the church's moral concern is not fundamentally with the causes of homosexual orientation or the efficacy of change. They rightly note that Christian morality has to do with what one does with one's tendencies and situation.

There are several articles that deal with biblical passages. In "Same-Sex Eros: Paul and the Greco-Roman Tradition," William R. Schoedel sets Paul's comments on same-sex attraction in the context of three ancient authors: Plato, Philo, and Clement of Alexandria. He claims that Paul rejects same-sex relations for the same reasons that Plato and Philo did, namely, that the purpose of sexuality is only for procreation, thereby viewing any sex relations primarily for pleasure as unacceptable. (Schoedel refers to Clement of Alexandria because he supposedly reflects the same reasons for condemning such relations.) This argument is highly implausible for two reasons. First, Schoedel admits that Paul never explicitly states that sexuality is only for procreation (which Schoedel attempts to explain away by appealing to Paul's view of the imminence of the end of the age). Second, Paul's primary source for his ethical views is the OT, not pagan philosophy.

Christine Gudorf's article, "The Bible and Science on Sexuality," examines the relevant biblical passages in the light of key themes in biblical theology. Although she appeals to the theme of the covenant as the basis for rejecting a biblical condemnation of homosexual behavior, she provides no explanation of how this applies to one's interpretation of the relevant biblical texts. Her interpretation to support acceptance of same-sex relations is quite superficial. In any event, she argues that the biblical injunctions are not timeless and universal, because many Christians today do not accept biblical teaching on issues such as the role of women and slavery. Science sheds light on this matter in important ways—the nature of same-sex

attraction and the non-pathological nature of homosexual relations. Inexplicably, she argues that science, like Scripture, requires interpretation, but she does not indicate how this plays a role in the scientific studies on homosexuality. This article is superficial, confusing, and contradictory in many of the points and arguments that it makes.

Phyllis Bird's article on the contributions of the OT toward Christian ethical deliberations concerning homosexuality consists in a series of reasons why the teachings of the Bible have little or no relevance for Christians today. She claims that divine revelation is a dynamic process that continues today. Biblical revelation is not only culture-bound, but it represents only the elite, male voices. These voices express "an irreducible diversity" which is only held together by the believing community (pp. 144–45). The key factors that determine the church's ethic today are: the theme of love of God and neighbor in the context of contemporary demands for social and economic justice, the findings of contemporary science (which Bird considers a means of divine revelation), and the personal experience of homosexuals. Given this view, one wonders what Bird could possibly mean when she says that the testimony of the Bible is "true in its essential message, and sufficient . . . to direct us in the way we must travel" (p. 145).

Two articles claim to explain Rom 1:24–27 by placing Paul's arguments in his cultural context. David Frederickson alleges that Paul is reflecting the cultural view that condemns the lack of self-control of passion. (He also contends that the term *malakos*, "soft," in 1 Cor 6:9 describes one who lacks such self-control.) Thus, Paul's argument is not a condemnation of homosexual relations as such, but a condemnation of inordinate desire by the subjects of sexual acts, whether heterosexual or homosexual, which become excessive and irrational. Robert Jewett's article argues that Paul defines sin in Rom 1:24–27 according to the systems of gaining honor in Greco-Roman society. Any unnatural or polluting behavior violates the "natural" order, which involves penetration of a subordinate person by a dominant one. The natural order is that a female be penetrated by a male. Because homosexual relations involve men taking subordinate roles and women taking dominant roles, they are unnatural. Jewett contends that Paul presents such relations as the rejection of the creation order and, therefore, of the Creator. Thus, Frederickson and Jewett share the erroneous assumption, which I noted for Schoedel's article, that Paul was more influenced by pagan thought than by scriptural teaching. Furthermore, both authors' exegesis of the terms Paul uses in Rom 1:24–27 and 1 Cor 6:8 will simply not bear close scrutiny.

Two articles defend the traditional Christian position on homosexuality and critique the revisionist position. Greene-McCreight rightly notes that the opposing conclusions of traditionalists and revisionists are due to differences in hermeneutics. She and Christopher Seitz note the assumptions of the revisionist position: there is a pluriformity of the biblical witness on homosexuality (with OT law set over against NT love); the expression of sexual orientation cannot be prohibited without diminishing one's humanity; those affirming homoerotic relationships have received a new revelation of the Spirit (which may contradict the revelation of the NT), and those rejecting

this are deprived of the Spirit. Greene-McCreight and Seitz both defend the plain sense of Scripture, because this is supported by the traditional assumptions about the Bible: that it forms a coherent unity and that it should be approached with trust (not suspicion), so that the biblical story unfolds in its own terms and in its own categories. Greene-McCreight rejects the modern view, not only because it relies more on Enlightenment views of equity and tolerance rather than on biblically shaped views of the righteousness and grace of God, but also because it betrays an arrogant confidence in our eschatological privilege over all those in the church who came before us. She rightly states that “our eschatological location is in no position of superiority to that of the New Testament writers” (p. 257). She concludes with the contention that the contemporary church faces an “Athanasian moment,” a fork in the road, where there can be no place for happy resolve or compromise. Her essential point is that the church must repent of its revisionist ways and return to the rules that form the logical structure of traditional Christian discourse, rules inherited from believers who have gone before us. How bold and refreshing to hear such a call! This article alone is worth the price of the book.

In *Welcoming but Not Affirming* Stanley J. Grenz presents, as the book’s subtitle states, an evangelical response to homosexuality. In the “Introduction” Grenz presents what he believes is the mandate of Christ to the church: to welcome homosexuals in the same manner that all people are to be welcomed, but not to condone homosexual behavior and unions. Because there is great pressure from homosexual Christians on the church to accept practicing homosexuals as members and leaders and to bless same-sex unions, he deals with the central question for this issue: Are same-sex relationships a God-given way of sexual expression, or are they contrary to God’s law? He answers this question by examining the three “voices” that contribute to any ethical issue: the contemporary culture, the biblical message, and the heritage of reflection on church tradition.

In the first chapter, Grenz surveys the contemporary culture. Specifically, he surveys the various causes that have been studied to account for the causes of homosexuality by the natural and social sciences. The conclusion, which is also the general consensus of the scientific community, is that there is no definitive cause of homosexuality, but that there may be factors, likely the result of both nature and biology, which provide a *tendency* toward same-sex attraction. What studies have made clear is that change from homosexuality to heterosexuality is difficult, though Grenz notes the psychological and social factors that make change more likely. He rightly notes that in Western societies the growth of postmodernism and social constructivist theories of identity and normativity create a receptive context for homosexuality by rejecting any sexual normativity and human sexual identity.

In the second chapter Grenz deals with the biblical texts. He examines the new exegesis of the relevant Scriptural passages and indicates how these new interpretations all fail. Drawing upon the exegetical work of others, Grenz defends the traditional exegesis of these texts that condemn same-sex relations.

In the third chapter Grenz surveys church history primarily in response to John Boswell's influential book, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980). Boswell argues that, apart from isolated incidents, homosexuality was not condemned in the first thousand years of the church. Grenz presents abundant evidence that Boswell's claim is wrong—that the church has consistently condemned homosexual relations for 2,000 years.

In the fourth chapter Grenz returns to Scripture by dealing with the issue of the authority of the Bible for Christians today. Here he deals with those arguments that acknowledge that the biblical authors did indeed condemn same-sex relations, but that their condemnations do not apply to Christians today. The reasons given are that the biblical writers were affected by their heterosexual patriarchal culture, or that they did not have as complete a knowledge of homosexual orientation as we do today, or that the gospel message as a whole—with themes of love and liberation—allows us to go beyond the biblical prohibitions to embrace homosexuality today. Grenz analyzes and refutes these arguments quite well.

There is one type of argument dismissing the specific biblical injunctions against homosexual behavior with which Grenz does not deal: the argument that appeals to a redemptive or eschatological ethic that overrules and supercedes the creational ethic found in the Bible. This redemptive ethic appeals to passages like Matt 7:12 and Gal 3:28 to argue that the coming of the kingdom in Jesus Christ inaugurates a new reality of loving social relations in which equality and mutuality are the key features. The analogy is made with slavery and the role of women in the NT. The NT teaches support for slavery, inequality of roles for women in marriage and the church, and condemnation of homosexual behavior. But, just as many Christians today would condemn slavery and support equality of roles for women on the basis of an eschatological ethic, so also homosexual behavior—within lifelong monogamous relationships—should be accepted. The basis for this is the principles and norms of the eschaton, which the church is called to reflect in the social relations of its members.

Grenz himself appeals to the eschatological ethic in his major work on ethics, *The Moral Quest*. He also argues in his recent book on theology, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (co-authored with John Franke), that eschatology is theology's orientating motif—that both the articulation of Christian beliefs and the church's mission as the current sign of God's kingdom are shaped by the age to come. Given this emphasis, not only by Grenz but also in many other evangelical writers, on the primacy of the eschaton for shaping church theology and morality today, it is imperative for Grenz to demonstrate why a similar appeal cannot be used to justify dismissing the biblical injunctions concerning homosexuality (parallel to those concerning slavery and the role of women), so that homosexual practice can be accepted today in the community of the kingdom. It is an unfortunate omission in this fine book.

In chapter five Grenz discusses homosexuality in the context of human sexuality. He presents the biblical understanding of human sexuality as the good gift of God for procreation and the expression of interpersonal loving relationships, noting the ways in which heterosexual relations reflect the

unity that God intends out of diversity. He analyzes the ways in which homosexual relations not only fail to conform to God's norms for human sexuality but also are unable to express the union of a sexual bond of two who are "sexually other." The call to those who are sexually attracted to members of the same sex is to exhibit God's intentions for human life and to express their sexuality in ways consistent with God's norms. Grenz rightly emphasizes not only the call to abstinence for all non-married Christians, but also the expression of sexuality in the broad sense of the relations each of us have in our human bonding and social life in community with others.

In the final chapter and in his "Epilogue" Grenz argues for the church maintaining a stance of welcoming those experiencing homosexual attraction while also not affirming homosexual practice or same-sex unions. While there is strong social pressure on the church to bless same-sex unions, he presents good biblical and theological arguments for the church's not embracing such unions as the equivalent of marital unions for homosexuals. At the same time, Grenz urges the church to support homosexuals and their families to deal with their situations in constructive, God-honoring ways, as well as to ensure justice and human rights for them in the public realm.

Grenz's book serves as a good introduction to the issue of homosexuality from an evangelical perspective. He answers the question he poses in the "Introduction"—Are same-sex relationships acceptable or contrary to God's intention?—in the negative, but does so in a manner that is scholarly and irenic. I would recommend this book for both Christians and non-Christians—for the former to gain a balanced biblical perspective on this issue, and for non-Christians to understand how evangelicals approach this issue in the context of modern culture and society.

James B. DeYoung's book is a defense of the traditional Christian view of homosexuality in the light of the Bible and other ancient literature and law. His material engages in more detailed examination of the relevant biblical passages than does Grenz's book, in response to the hermeneutics and exegesis of revisionist authors. He also presents and analyzes extra-biblical texts that relate both to the context of biblical authors and to the arguments of contemporary revisionist arguments.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one deals with the OT literature and its setting. Responding to revisionist interpreters such as Sherwin Bailey and John Boswell, DeYoung carefully examines the texts in Genesis 19, Judges 19, and Leviticus, arguing convincingly that the key words employed, the literary forms, the penalties prescribed, and the context and cultural setting all support the exegesis that views these as universal condemnations of homosexuality. This is supported by the references to these texts as found in the Mishnah and in the NT. DeYoung also has two chapters in which he examines the witness of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha concerning homosexuality, and the terms used to translate relevant passages in the Septuagint. These reinforce the traditional understanding of OT passages on homosexuality.

Part two deals with the NT literature and its setting. Again responding to revisionist interpreters, DeYoung examines the NT passages in detail. He demonstrates that the Greek terms used indicate that Paul clearly condemns

homosexual practice in general, and not merely perverted heterosexual behavior, or pederasty, or homosexual prostitution, or cultic homosexuality, or homosexuality as physical impurity for Jews. DeYoung refers to a number of extrabiblical sources to support his contention that there was a prevailing knowledge of a wide variety of homosexual behavior in classical Greek and Roman society. This is reinforced by a brief excursus that contains a number of quotations from Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* indicating that the Greeks knew of the homosexual condition as well as of various forms of homosexual behavior.

This section also contains a chapter on implicit references to homosexuality as found in Jesus and the NT. DeYoung presents a fairly strong case when he argues that in 2 Pet 2:6–10 and Jude 5–7 the divine condemnations of Sodom and Gomorrah are implicit condemnations of the homosexual practice there, given the terms used in these passages and the account in Genesis 19 to which they refer. But his case is weaker when he appeals to other references in the NT.

Let me give two examples of DeYoung's going further than the biblical evidence allows. He argues that Jesus implicitly condemns homosexuality because of his references to God's judgment on Sodom and his presentation of heterosexual marriage as the divine ideal. I think this is a weak argument. If I say to my teenage son that I want him to follow all the rules of the road and to drive under the speed limit when I give him the keys to my car, this has indirect implications for the manner in which he drives a friend's all-terrain vehicle in the open country. But it would not have direct implications, because it is a different vehicle in different circumstances. The fact that Jesus only teaches heterosexual monogamous marriage as God's good gift that should never be broken does not necessarily imply condemnation of homosexuality. After all, Jesus does allow divorce on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness (*porneia*; Matt 19:9). If we are confining ourselves to the biblical account of Jesus' life and ministry, we could argue that he might also allow homosexual marriage for those who have same-sex attraction. But we are not confined to Jesus' words in the Gospels. We know the mind of Christ on homosexuality because he sent his Spirit to guide the apostles in their inspired writing of NT books that speak to the issue. It is a weak argument to find an implied condemnation of homosexuality in Jesus' silence on the subject in order to support the clear statements of condemnation in Paul's letters.

The other weak argument in this chapter is DeYoung's appeal to related Greek terms as implying a similar condemnation. Noting the fact that *porneia* is the term used most frequently in the twenty-seven lists of vices in the NT, he suggests that it can refer to homosexuality in these lists. But standard Greek lexicons do not give homosexuality as one of the definitions of *porneia*, and the citations that DeYoung gives where the term does refer to homosexuality are extrabiblical. He also reads references to homosexuality into other terms in the NT lists, because these terms are associated with homosexuality. But this again goes too far. For example, if I condemn "arrogant homosexuals" and later condemn all the "arrogant," I am not necessarily condemning homosexuality when I use the term "arrogant." I am condemning the attitude of arrogance, which can be found in heterosexuals

as well as homosexuals. DeYoung's argument is a weak one that adds nothing to the force of the clear biblical passages elsewhere that speak directly to the issue.

Part three of the book contains a chapter on the legislative precedents found in the ancient world concerning homosexuality. DeYoung points out that in both Jewish and Christian case law homosexuality is both a sin and a crime. Although ancient Greek society tolerated such practice among adults, it enacted laws that protected children and slaves and that prohibited male prostitutes from holding public office. Roman society inherited widespread homosexuality from the Greeks in the second century BC but increasingly enacted legislation to condemn sodomy and to restrict homosexual practices within society. Under the Christian Roman emperors laws were enacted to proscribe and punish all forms of homosexuality. DeYoung rightly notes that the ethical stance of Jews and Christians is unique in that they alone prohibited all forms of homosexual behavior by law. But he also concludes the chapter with the observation that, although no other ancient society had such a blanket condemnation of homosexuality, all of them had legal proscriptions and regulations of some forms of homosexuality. No known society has given unrestricted freedom for all forms of homosexual practice, nor has any such society afforded protected minority status to homosexuals. (This chapter is followed by a brief excursus that presents quotations of the opinion and statutes found in Philo, John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, Codex Theodosius, and the Justinian Laws.)

The final chapter presents a helpful summary of the conclusions of the book in the form of twenty questions and answers. I have one additional critique here. In response to each of the twenty questions, DeYoung gives what he calls *The Revisionist Answer* and *The Biblical Answer*. I think the format is good, but he should have called the latter *The Traditional Answer* or some similar expression. Although evangelicals may disagree with the revisionists, many revisionists also believe that their answers to these questions are biblical. It is clearly biased to describe only one position (one's own) as "biblical."

DeYoung's book is a very good presentation of the evangelical view of homosexuality. It is most helpful for those interested in examining the biblical texts in the original languages, the texts of the Church fathers, and the texts of the relevant authors in the Greek and Roman cultures that provide the broader cultural context for the NT and the early church. Each chapter contains a summary of the key conclusions of the chapter, along with a list of the implications that result from these conclusions. This is helpful in leading the reader to grasp the significance and implications of the detailed textual study done in each chapter.

Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate by Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse is an excellent analysis and evaluation of the scientific research that has been done on homosexuality. In the introductory chapter the authors confess that they are defending the historic position of the church, grounded in Scripture, which considers homosexual behavior as immoral. Since many people today—both within the church and without—appeal to scientific findings to promote acceptance of

practicing homosexuals, Jones and Yarhouse argue that “the best science of this day fails to persuade the thoughtful Christian to change his or her stance” (p. 13). The book is an extended argument that nothing in the scientific material even remotely constitutes persuasive evidence to reject the historic Christian judgment that homosexual practice is immoral. They seek to show what the scientific research actually says and to examine the logic by which these findings may or may not be relevant to the moral issue.

Jones and Yarhouse review the scientific findings under four major headings. First, they examine the question of the prevalence of homosexuality. The numerical figures presented are important for the pro-homosexual argument because, if it can be shown that the percentages are significant, then it is harder to argue that homosexuality is a rare, immoral occurrence. The authors rightly note, by introduction to this question, that while the prevalence rates have no bearing on the morality of a behavior, the question of prevalence has a bearing on people’s perception of homosexuality. From the mid-twentieth century on, the figure of 10% has been accepted by many as the percentage of the population that is homosexual. This is the result of the studies of Alfred Kinsey in the 1940s and 1950s. But Stanton and Yarhouse point out Kinsey never actually stated that 10% of the general population is homosexual; rather, he reported a range of different statistics on homosexual behavior. The origin of the 10% figure likely comes from his report that a total of 10% of white males were “more or less” exclusively homosexual for at least a three-year period between the ages of 16 and 55. (He also reported that 4% of white males were exclusively homosexual after adolescence.) What Jones and Yarhouse, along with numerous other authors, point out is that Kinsey’s sample from which he derived his figures was not representative of the general population, because he oversampled from prison inmates and homosexual-affirming organizations. Recent studies based on more representative samples lead to the conclusion that 2 to 3 % of men are homosexually active in a given year, and that 1 to 1.5 % of females are homosexuals.

The second issue examined by Jones and Yarhouse is the cause of homosexuality. The pro-homosexual movement appeals to the findings of science to demonstrate that homosexuality is not freely chosen. If this is so, then any argument that expressions of homosexuality are freely chosen is refuted as scientifically naïve, uninformed, and false. Jones and Yarhouse survey various psychological/environmental theories (psychoanalytic theory, childhood experience, etc.) and biological theories (adult and prenatal hormones, direct and indirect genetic factors) and the scientific evidence that purports to support them. They conclude that the research for the biological theories is inconclusive. However, they note that there is a substantial amount of research on psychological/environmental factors which appears promising but which is being ignored today due to the emphasis on the biological factors. (They note that this neglect is likely due to political forces.) Jones and Yarhouse embrace an “interactionist hypothesis,” also held by many other experts in this area, where various psychological, environmental, and biological factors, together with human choice, contribute to homosexual orientation. This hypothesis recognizes that there may be predispositions and experiences that provide a “push” in the direction of homosexuality; but no push

by itself causes one to be a homosexual. In other words, human choice is the decisive factor, even if there is mounting evidence supporting causal influence. Human actions are never simply the result of deterministic causes. Jones and Yarhouse rightly insist that inclinations and predispositions never render human choice irrelevant, nor do they remove the need for the moral evaluation of human actions.

The third scientific issue that the authors examine is the question of whether homosexuality is a psychopathology. The decisive event to which pro-homosexual groups appeal is the decision in 1974 by the membership of the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of pathological psychiatric conditions. But Jones and Yarhouse note that this decision did not result from new scientific or clinic studies but from a hastily organized vote of the membership of the APA in response to explicit threats made against it by gay rights groups. The authors point out that when studies are done of samples of homosexuals that are representative of *all* homosexuals (not merely the “healthy” ones), one finds higher rates of personal distress, psychiatric disorder, and maladaptiveness among homosexuals than among heterosexuals. Male homosexuals also show a reduced capacity for long-term relationships and a greater propensity for promiscuous behavior.

The fourth scientific issue that Jones and Yarhouse examine—one that is highly charged politically and ideologically—is whether homosexuality can be changed. Pro-homosexual groups tend to deny that any change of true homosexuals is possible, whereas some Christian groups teach that change for Christians is always possible. The authors survey the various studies that have been done, noting that there is good evidence that some level of change can be expected for homosexuals who pursue therapy, on average about 33%. It is certainly clear that, given the reports of successful change examined by various studies, the position that homosexuality is unchangeable is untenable. But what Jones and Yarhouse rightly conclude is that the issue of change is irrelevant for the issue of Christian obedience. Even if homosexuals were not able to change from same-sex preferences or attraction, God’s standard requires sexual abstinence for them, just as it does for unmarried heterosexuals.

In their concluding chapter Jones and Yarhouse give a brief presentation of human sexuality *via* the biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification. They also present a brief account of the Christian sexual ethic that sanctions sexual intercourse in marriage and celibacy for singles—both homosexual and heterosexual. Scripture is clear in condemning behaviors that transgress these clear biblical guidelines. The authors briefly note challenges to this traditional Christian position by those who appeal to arguments that either offer alternative interpretations of the biblical texts, or that appeal to general theological themes that would support accepting homosexual practice. The three examples they present are not the strongest challenges that have been presented to the traditional position. Given the brevity of this chapter, it would have been better either to omit this discussion or present the challenges in very general terms. The authors’ concluding comments reinforce the comments made throughout the book; namely,

that the scientific knowledge about homosexuality cannot be used to reject the traditional Christian position; that the origins of homosexuality are still unknown; and that the findings on the origin and possibilities for change are irrelevant for Christian ethics. The pursuit of a holy life demands sexual purity as God has revealed in his Word.

In conclusion, this book is a superb survey and evaluation of the scientific research on homosexuality. The authors manifest scientific integrity in dealing with the evidence of science, the possibility for change, and the therapeutic evaluation of the condition of homosexuality, thereby debunking the arguments of those who attempt to use science to make improper claims and to refute the traditional Christian moral position. Jones and Yarhouse clearly understand that, even if the scientific evidence were other than it presently is, it would be irrelevant for Christian ethics. The issue remains what it always has been, namely, the call for a life of sexual purity as revealed in the Scriptures. This book serves as an important work, both to refute the improper use of science to advance the homosexual cause, and to expose the illogical and tortured logic whereby the supposed findings of science are brought to bear upon the ethical issue.