

HOMOSEXUALITY AND SCRIPTURE

EKKEHARDT MUELLER, Th.D.

Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland

Homosexuality is a very controversial issue. Its practice and the ongoing debate affect not only society but also the church. The issue is: how should Christians relate to persons practicing homosexuality including homosexual clergy? While some churches have ordained and/or installed homosexual pastors and bishops, others are reluctant. Church members are divided on the issue of homosexuality, and some denominations are on the verge of splitting or have already split.¹ This article focuses on the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the biblical teaching on homosexuality along with practical implications.

Key words: homosexuality, church, Seventh-day Adventist

1. Defining Homosexuality

Homosexuality is defined in different ways and may include different phenomena. R. E. O. White describes it as "sexual desire directed toward members of one's own sex. Female homosexuality is frequently called lesbianism . . ." ² E. A. Malloy suggests the following definition: a "person, male or female, who experiences in adult life a steady and nearly exclusive erotic attraction to members of the same sex, and who is indifferent to sexual relations with the opposite sex."³ Whereas R. E. O. White focuses on the phenomenon, Malloy directs his attention to the person. In his opinion certain persons are not true homosexuals even if they are involved in homosexual acts, namely teenagers, adults who are bored with heterosexuality and get involved with members of the same

¹ See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical*

² R. E. O. White, "Homosexuality," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 528.

³ E. A. Malloy, *Homosexuality and the Christian Way of Life* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1981), 11.

sex, also called "contingent homosexuals," and so-called "situational homosexuals" who for the lack of heterosexual encounters "resort to homosexual outlets."⁴ Malloy's definition fits the "constitutional homosexuals" or "inverts" whose homosexuality is said to be permanent.

Some scholars suggest that people can be placed on a continuum between the two poles of heterosexuality and homosexuality.⁵ Some are closer to heterosexuality with some homosexual tendencies whereas others are almost exclusively found close to one pole or the other. Normally, "inverts" claim that their homosexuality is preordained, natural, normal, and irreversible.⁶ The suggestion to distinguish between homosexual orientation and homosexual acts and to allow for the first but not for the second, which would mean to live a celibate life, is rejected by the homosexual community "as a grossly unfair consequence of their condition."⁷ Nevertheless, even some within the homosexual community acknowledge a difference between homosexual acts versus a homosexual orientation. Homosexual acts can find expression in pederasty, the involvement with children of the same sex, rape, violence, prostitution, promiscuity, to name some, or in a life committed to one partner of the same sex. It is the latter, a permanent homosexual love relationship or partnership, which is claimed to be in harmony with Scripture.

⁴ Ronald M. Springett, *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures* (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, 1988), 2.

⁵ A. C. Kinsey, W. B. Pomeroy, and E. E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1965), 650-651. See, Springett, 26-27.

⁶ Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, revised and expanded edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 79, notes: ". . . most psychologists 'view sexual orientation as neither willfully chosen nor willfully changed.'" Talking about causes Aubyn Fulton, "Response; Science and Sexual Orientation," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 2, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 47, states: "The evidence about concordance rates for homosexuality in identical twins, discussed by Kemena (P2-14), are significantly higher than the general population, but nowhere near 100 percent (the concordance rates have been reported to be between 20 and 50 percent). This almost certainly means that, although as many as half of the determiners of sexual orientation are genetic; at least half are nongenetic. . . . It is important to understand that this is not the same as saying that sexual orientation is partly determined and partly chosen; rather, it says that some of the causes of sexual orientation are biological and others are nonbiological (for example, psychological or social)."

⁷ Springett, 4.

2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Statements on Homosexuality

Within Christianity today there are three major positions with regard to homosexuality: (1) Only marital heterosexuality is acceptable for Christians. (2) Homosexuality, also called covenant homosexuality, is acceptable for Christians, if the two partners have equal status, are consenting adults, and if the relationship is permanent and monogamous. (3) Casual adult homosexuality, that is, homosexuality in any form is acceptable for any member of society.⁸

The official Seventh-day Adventist Church's position is the first option. In the document "Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality" the Church affirms:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one"' (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace

⁸ Cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 28.

to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.⁹

Another official statement, voted on March 9, 2004, deals with same-sex unions. The statement reaffirms Christian marriage within the context of the debate as to whether or not same-sex unions should be regarded as equal to marriages of heterosexual couples and should receive the same rights and privileges. Since then some nations have legislated that homosexual marriage are equal to homosexual marriage. While the document deals with family and marriage, it does address homosexuality:¹⁰

Seventh-day Adventist Response to Same-Sex Unions – A Reaffirmation of Christian Marriage. Over the past several decades the Seventh-day Adventist Church has felt it necessary to clearly state in various ways its position in regards to marriage, the family, and human sexuality. These subjects are at the heart of many pressing issues facing society. That which for centuries has been considered to be basic Christian morality in the marriage setting is now increasingly called into question, not only in secular society but within Christian churches themselves.

The institutions of family and marriage are under attack and facing growing centrifugal forces that are tearing them apart. An increasing number of nations are now debating the topic of “same-sex unions,” thus making it a world issue. The public discussion has engendered strong emotions. In light of these developments, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is clearly restating its position.

We reaffirm, without hesitation, our long-standing position. As expressed in the Church's Fundamental Beliefs, “marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship.”¹¹ Though “sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family,” “the family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any human relationship,” and thus “families need to experience

⁹ “Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality,” available from http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/main_stat46.html. This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

¹⁰ “Seventh-day Adventist Response to Same-Sex Unions – A Reaffirmation of Christian Marriage,” cited from http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/main_stat53.html. This document was voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee, March 9, 2004.

¹¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe—A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, Doctrine 22 on “Marriage and the Family.”

renewal and reformation in their relationships" (*An Affirmation of Family*, 1990).¹² God instituted "marriage, a covenant-based union of two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as "one flesh." "The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is . . . the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression." "Any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal" (*An Affirmation of Marriage*, 1996).¹³

Homosexuality is a manifestation of the disorder and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by sin coming into the world. While everyone is subject to fallen human nature, "we also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word" (*Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality*, 1999).¹⁴

We hold that all people, no matter what their sexual orientation, are children of God. We do not condone singling out any group for scorn and derision, let alone abuse. However, it is very clear that God's Word does not countenance a homosexual lifestyle; neither has the Christian Church throughout her 2000 year history. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the biblical teaching is still valid today, because it is anchored in the very nature of humanity and God's plan at creation for marriage.

This later document reaffirms the earlier document and quotes it together with Fundamental Belief 23¹⁵ and two other statements. The position of the Adventist Church on the issue of homosexuality is unequivocal. The Church is opposed to any homosexual activity. The Adventist Church does not accept homosexual partnerships although they may be approved by different governments and cultures regardless of whether their status may be equal or similar to heterosexual marriages in certain societies.

Nevertheless, the question is: Do these statements correctly reflect the biblical texts dealing with homosexuality? Before examining biblical

¹² Public Statement, *An Affirmation of Family*, released July 5, 1990, at the General Conference Session, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹³ Statement voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee on April 23, 1996.

¹⁴ Statement voted by the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, October 3, 1999.

¹⁵ Doctrine 22 has become number 23 after a new fundamental belief was added in 2005. See *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (17th edition; Silver Spring: Secretariat of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 17.

evidence, we must first examine why so many different interpretations exist.

3. The Problem of the Diversity of Interpretations

Interpreting the Bible depends on certain presuppositions. The way people view Scripture, culture, science, tradition, and the human being will influence their approach to interpreting the Bible.

3.1. Various Presuppositions

The so-called contemporary historicism stresses that there is no absolute or timeless truth, that there is no divine revelation, and that revisions and reformulation of older beliefs are necessary to fit the prevalent culture. Theology is understood merely as a cultural analysis and critique investigating the evolution of religion.¹⁶

The Bible is considered to be culturally conditioned, that is, it has spoken to a certain situation in the past but must be reinterpreted today.¹⁷ It is held that “. . . our modern world view includes advances and discoveries unknown to ancient peoples, making biblical pronouncements on homosexuality incomplete and even erroneous.”¹⁸ The Greco-Roman culture becomes the yardstick and determines how New Testament texts

¹⁶ See Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Historicism: The Once and Future Challenge for Theology*, (Guides to Theological Inquiry; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 160-164. Walter Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 47, holds: “Where the Bible mentions homosexual behavior at all, it clearly condemns it. I freely grant that. The issue is precisely whether that biblical judgment is correct.” Daniel A. Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* (New Mexico: Alamo Square Press, 2000), devotes an entire chapter to the issue of how to interpret Scripture (29-41), opts for the historical-critical method and concludes: “The Bible does not condemn gay sex as we understand it today” (131).

¹⁷ Cf. Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 35, 42; Rogers, 69-70; Webb, 161. On page 168 Webb points out: “Homosexuality advocates appeal to the menstrual-intercourse law as an example of a sexual taboo that is culturally relative.” Rodgers talks about Lev 18 and 20 as “an ancient culturally conditioned code that is not applicable to them [homosexuals] or their circumstances” (70).

¹⁸ James B. De Young, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in the Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2000), 11. On pages 10-11, he lists a number of views held in favor of a homosexual lifestyle. See also Springett, 49-51. Soards, 55, cautions: “Our cultural perspective is not inherently superior to the worldview(s) and attitude(s) of biblical culture(s).”

must be interpreted.¹⁹ It is said that “the Bible opposes prostitution and idolatry in conjunction with homosexuality not homosexuality, as such”²⁰ and that Scripture does not address the position of monogamous, permanent same-sex relationships,²¹ because supposedly Scripture is not aware of innate or inverted homosexuality²² and refers to exploitive homosexuality only, for instance, pederasty,²³ rape, perversion, promiscuity or excess of passion.²⁴ On the other hand, only those persons of the same gender that are involved in a caring relationship are considered to be homosexuals. In other words, true homosexuals are only inverts, not so-called perverts.²⁵

In addition, it is suggested that the Bible is “pluriform and multivocal,” contains “an irreducible pluralism,” a “biased” conversation, and is “inadequate and distorted” at least in certain aspects.²⁶ Others choose the

¹⁹ Cf. Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 16, 127-128.

²⁰ Springett, 51, although this is not his own position. Gary Chartier, “Love, Subsidiarity, Equality, and Inclusiveness,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 5, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 58, writes: “. . . same-sex sexual relationships that are not exploitative, unfair, or uncaring do *not* qualify as sinful.”

²¹ See Springett, 50; Vincent J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality* (2nd edition; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 277, 296. Ellen F. Davis, “Reasoning with Scripture,” *Anglican Theological Review* 90/3 (2008): 518. Rogers, 89, talks about “the wonder . . . that so many lesbian and gay people have formed long-term monogamous partnerships . . .”

²² Cf. Scroggs, 28.

²³ Scroggs, 84, argues: “The homosexuality the New Testament opposes is the pederasty of the Greco-Roman culture; the attitudes toward pederasty and, in part, the language used to oppose it are informed by the Jewish background.” On page 121 he even limits Paul’s statement to certain exploitive forms of pederasty and not to pederasty in general.

²⁴ Cf. David E. Fredrickson, “Natural and Unnatural Use in Romans 1:24-27: Paul and the Philosophic Critique of Eros,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 197-222.

²⁵ See Maria Harris und Gabriel Moran, “Homosexuality: A Word Not Written,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*, (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 74; and Springett, 3. On the other hand, Morton Kelsey and Barbara Kelsey, “Homosexualities,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 64, admit: “There are as many different kinds of homosexual relationships as there are heterosexual. They range from permanent, deeply caring unions to short-term relationships, to one-night stands, to rape.”

²⁶ Phyllis A. Bird, “The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation Concerning Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the*

"christological principle" which they consider to be in conflict with certain biblical statements.²⁷ That means, they start with a specific biblical doctrine which becomes normative and the center of the canon or the canon within the canon that overrules other biblical statements.²⁸ Therefore, it is claimed that the church moved by the Holy Spirit can accept or reject divine laws.²⁹ The biblical text is supposedly in need of the church, and the authority of Scripture is only relative.³⁰ Others go a step further claiming to follow the Holy Spirit individually, even if their conclusions contradict the teachings of Scripture.³¹

"Plain Sense" of Scripture (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 144-145.

²⁷ Cf. Rogers, 15, 53-55. On page 66 he notes that the Bible contains eight texts dealing with the topic of homosexuality. "Together they cover a maximum of twelve pages in the Bible. None of these texts is about Jesus, nor do they include any of his words." See also Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 47-48. William Sloane Coffin, "Liberty to the Captives and Good Tidings to the Afflicted," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 107, points out: ". . . not everything biblical is Christlike."

²⁸ Nancy Duff, "Christian Vocation, Freedom of God, and Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 261-277, shifts the focus to God's freedom as the context of the doctrine of vocation. She suggests that some may be called into heterosexual relationships, others into celibacy, and again others into homosexual relationships. To reject such a call is a kind of sin. Absolute laws cannot dictate our vocation and restrict God's freedom. Scroggs, 124, states: ". . . the Bible is not completely unified in its thoughts, that there are, in fact, contradictions about what is true and right within its pages. . . [This] does allow some space for a search for a center, for the Gospel (as Luther maintained) which might overrule some specific sections of Scripture not seen to be consonant with such a center. And this in turn means that it is conceivable that specific injunctions of the Bible may be disallowed because they do not meet the essential core of the Gospel."

²⁹ Cf. Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 17; Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 42-44.

³⁰ Richard Treloar, "'Come Out and Stay Out!' Hermeneutics, Homosexuality, and Schism in Anglicanism", *Anglican Theological Review* 90.1 (2008): 54-55. On page 58 he writes: "Anglicans can resist the Bible's 'plain teaching' in this matter, as we patently already do with regard to much else. . . 'with' Scripture. . . at times we must read 'against' Scripture." "The Bible . . . is not directly equivalent to God's word . . ." (61).

³¹ Cf. James A. Forbes Jr., "More Light from the Spirit on Sexuality," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 6-8. Ken Sehested, "Biblical Fidelity and Sexual Orientation: Why the First Matters, Why the Second Doesn't", in *Homosexuality and*

Some have a problem with the law and pit the gospel against the law.³² Love is what counts, not the law.³³ It is said that the Spirit of Scripture and the concept of love must be recognized which supposedly override narrow interpretations of a few biblical texts. Being called to love homosexuals would include accepting their lifestyle.³⁴ "The primary question before us today is not whether a sexual deed is right or wrong, but whether the relationship of which it is a part is right or wrong. . . . (1) Scripture everywhere condemns homosexual deeds, and (2) it nowhere addresses those that occur in loving relationships."³⁵

Some regard their personal experience as normative and base on it their decision to reject or accept specific biblical statements. This is a pragmatic approach.³⁶ Others give priority to science, humanities, and reason rather than Scripture³⁷ or suggest that we have to use as final authorities Scripture plus science/reason—e.g., biology, sociology, and

Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 59; Richard Rohr, "Where the Gospel Leads Us," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 85-88.

³² Soards, 17, states, "Grace, not law, governs Christian life."

³³ Cf. Rogers, 61. Lewis B. Smedes, "Exploring the Morality of Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 82, thinks that homosexuals "are called to achieve the best moral relationships of love that are possible for them within the limits of a condition they did not choose."

³⁴ Cf. Thomas Sören Hoffmann, "Zur aktuellen Diskussion um die ethische Bewertung der Homosexualität," *Informationsbrief* 198 (2000): 4-11; Webb, 182. Dale Martin, quoted in Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 37, concludes: "If the church wishes to continue with its traditional interpretation it must demonstrate, not just claim, that it is more loving to condemn homosexuality than to affirm homosexuals."

³⁵ David R. Larson, "Christian Sexual Norms Today: Some Proposals," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 5, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 6, 8.

³⁶ Cf. Paul Wennes Egertson, "One Family's Story," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 23-30; Bird, 143; John B. Cobb Jr., "Being Christian about Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 91-93; René D. Drumm, "Interaction and Angst: The Social Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 3, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 20.

³⁷ Bird, 168; Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 46; Rogers, 35-36.

psychology³⁸–tradition,³⁹ and experience in order to make informed decisions.⁴⁰ Dan O. Via maintains: “I have tried to show that if we look at a number of biblical themes in the light of contemporary knowledge and experience, we can justifiably override the unconditional biblical condemnations of homosexual practice.”⁴¹

Furthermore, it is assumed that the sexual drive in humans must be lived out and cannot be controlled.⁴² Therefore, representatives of this position have also no problem with premarital sexual relations,⁴³ divorce and remarriage,⁴⁴ adultery, and even polygamy.⁴⁵ R. Schwartz goes even

³⁸ Cf. Ben Kemena, “Biological Determinants of Homosexual Orientation,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 2, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 16-19; Harry C. Wang, “Psychiatry, Antihomosexual Bias, and Challenges for Gay and Lesbian Youth,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 2, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 40; Fulton, 48-49; Sherwood O. Cole, “Biology, Homosexuality, and the Biblical Doctrine of Sin,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (July-September 200): 348-361. This view would be opposed to the *solus scriptura* principle and is rejected by Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, “The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Homosexuality Debates,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 120; and Christopher Seitz, “Sexuality and Scripture’s Plain Sense: The Christian Community and the Law of God,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 177-196.

³⁹ Paul G. Crowley, “Homosexuality and the Counsel of the Cross: A Clarification,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 637.

⁴⁰ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 29; Soards, 55, points out: “Experience must inform theological reflection, but a theology of experience is dangerously subjective.” On page 64 she adds: “Reason aids us in our attempt to comprehend the Bible, but reason cannot replace the scriptures in a life of Christian devotion to God.”

⁴¹ Via and Gagnon, 38.

⁴² Springett, 25, stresses that human sexuality is different from “the instinctive reflexive mating of animals” and means “that human beings can control and are, therefore, responsible for their sexual expression.” They have a choice. Cole, 360, notes: “Any attempt to reduce people to genetic or biological entities distorts human identity from a biblical perspective.”

⁴³ Cf. Larson, “Christian Sexual Norms Today,” 13, states: “The guideline of ‘nothing before’ and ‘everything after’ is neither realistic nor wise. . . . We should not ask whether to allow loving heterosexual and homosexual unions to exist; they already do. . . . We should do everything we can to sustain them and to support people who are in them. . . . We should also find ways to honor them in appropriate Christian ceremonies.”

⁴⁴ Rogers, 43-44.

further and talks about “a virulent biblical abhorrence to incest, which resonates with what she describes as the general biblical hysteria about, and its explicit horror of, homosexuality.”⁴⁶

Representatives of an evolutionary origin of Scripture do not only deny direct creation by God and an order of creation, but also the Fall. They claim that God has “created” homosexuals as such and that homosexuality is a gift of God, not a consequence of the general fallenness of humanity.⁴⁷

3.2. An Example for Working with Presuppositions

An example of working with certain presuppositions is Fritz Guy in his article “Same-sex Love: Theological Considerations.”⁴⁸ The article begins with a list of seven theological affirmations: “1. Physical pleasure and sexual intimacy belong to the created goodness of humanness. 2. Sexual intimacy symbolizes a profound personal and moral relationship. 3. The moral quality of physical intimacy does not depend on the sex of the partners. 4. Scripture does not condemn all same-sex love. 5. Same-sex love is not ‘unnatural.’ 6. Antagonism toward same-sex love has deep psychosocial roots. 7. Christians should affirm caring, committed same-sex love.”⁴⁹ Obviously, the first two criteria are foundational to his system, and the others are derived from it. When discussing his third affirmation, he refers back to the previous two and states: “. . . these criteria do not involve the *sex* of the partners.”⁵⁰ This is true, if we follow his first two affirmations exclusively, but the first two criteria are his own criteria based on some biblical statement while omitting others – for instance, the creation account and Jesus’ statement about marriage and creation in Matt 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-9. By disregarding all biblical statements about who is supposed to have sexual relations with whom, Guy can conclude that the gender of those involved in an sexual act does not count⁵¹ and that

⁴⁵ Rogers, 82; Treloar, 50.

⁴⁶ Treloar, 51, referring to Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107.

⁴⁷ Rogers, 81.

⁴⁸ Fritz Guy, “Same-sex Love: Theological Considerations” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 4, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson, Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 43-62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵¹ “. . . the moral quality of physical intimacy is determined neither by the sex of the partner nor by the factors involved in the choice, but only by the moral quality of the intimacy itself, as defined by the kind of criteria identified above.” *Ibid.*

Scripture does not condemn homosexual activity. One also notices that he uses a social-psychological approach.

Consequently, same-sex love "is neither a sin nor a sickness. It is not a psychological, moral, or spiritual aberration, much less a 'perversion.' It is a 'problem' only because of the widespread and profound prejudice against it."⁵² Homophobia "leads to social contempt and moral condemnation. . . . same-sex love is often felt . . . as profoundly threatening to the social order . . . The primary . . . locus of vulnerability is the almost universal tradition of hegemonic masculinity . . ."⁵³ He also suggests that one should take "as morally normative broad scriptural principles rather than specific prescriptions."⁵⁴

3.3. Presuppositions Shared by the Majority of Seventh-day Adventists

Typically, Adventists believe that "the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. . . . The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history"⁵⁵ (Isa 8:20; 66:2—*sola scriptura*). Adventists accept the self-testimony of Scripture and regard the Bible as reliable revelation of God. Although written by human beings, it is not only the word of humans, but also the Word of God. Principles of interpretation have to be derived from Scripture and should not be forced upon it. Deductions from the fields of philosophy, psychology, and sociology that contradict Scripture have to be rejected. In addition, tradition and natural sciences should not be allowed to determine matters of faith. Scripture is its own interpreter. There is agreement, harmony, and clarity in Scripture. Clear texts may shed light on difficult texts. The Holy Spirit is needed in the process of interpretation, but the Holy Spirit does not override previous revelations.

3.4. Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged that the real issue in the homosexuality debate is the nature, authority, and interpretation of Scripture.⁵⁶ W. Wink

⁵² Ibid., 50.

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 9.

⁵⁶ Cf. Rogers, 1-65; Helminiak, 29-41; Soards, 1-14; Via and Gagnon, 2.

has correctly stated: "The real issue here, then, is not simply homosexuality, but how Scripture informs our lives today."⁵⁷ J. White talks about "a controversy about the authority and interpretation of the Bible"⁵⁸ and Rogers about the problem that nothing separates the Presbyterian Church as much as the question on how to interpret Scripture.⁵⁹ M. Soards reminds us: ". . . the decision one makes about the validity of homosexual behavior for members of the Christian community is effectively a decision about the authority of the Bible in the life of the church."⁶⁰ An awareness of the divergent premises used in interpretation affect the outcome. Such an awareness of presuppositions helps maintain consistency of interpretation and avoid the pitfall of misinterpretation of the biblical text.

4. Homosexuality in Scripture

4.1. Homosexuality in the Old Testament

The Old Testament contains several texts, which refer directly to homosexuality. Indirect references are also found.⁶¹ Among the direct references to homosexuality two or three passages occur in legal material, whereas the others are found in narrative/historical accounts.

Israel did not live in isolation but was surrounded by the nations of the Ancient Near East. These nations were idolatrous. Sexuality and fertility cults played an important role. The Old Testament historical background has been described by a number of authors. They deal with sexuality and homosexuality among the Egyptians, the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Hittites, and the Canaanites.⁶² Sacred prostitution, homosexuality between

⁵⁷ Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 33.

⁵⁸ Cf. James R. White und Jeffrey D. Niell, *The Same Sex Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2002), 15.

⁵⁹ Jack Rogers, "Presbyterian Guidelines for Biblical Interpretation: Their Origin and Application to Homosexuality," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 37.4 (2007): 179. He also mentions four models of biblical interpretation (174-175) and five different views on inspiration in Presbyterian circles (180).

⁶⁰ Soards, 73.

⁶¹ Cf. Springett, 69-88.

⁶² See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 134-142; Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 44-56; Springett, 33-48; Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 43-61.

consenting partners, transvestite behavior, and bestiality, all of this can be found among Israel's neighbors. However, the Old Testament is opposed to all these practices. It challenges the other gods and rejects homosexuality.⁶³

4.1.1. Old Testament Narratives

Genesis 1-2. Although the creation account (Gen 1-2) does not talk about homosexuality, it sets the stage for all subsequent sexual relations. Webb comments by saying: "Obviously, this pattern does not sit well with homosexual relationships, whether the covenant or casual type."⁶⁴

God created the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve, and joined them in marriage. The creation account does not only point to the beginning of marriage, it also portrays the ideal for human sexual relations. However, authors supporting homosexual partnerships suggest that the male-female combination was chosen, because the multiplication of the human race was divinely commanded (Gen 1:28) and was necessary in the beginning. Yet, because the situation has changed and overpopulation is rampant, it is claimed that homosexual partnerships are even more in tune with the needs of the world today than are heterosexual relationships,⁶⁵ and therefore—supposedly—Gen 1 and 2 cannot be used to proscribe one form of human sexuality.

The problem with this argument is that heterosexual relationships are reduced to the function of procreation only. Gen 1 and 2 does not portray this idea. Man and woman are created in the image of God. It appears likely that the image of God has to do with humanity being God's representative on earth as well as standing in an intimate relationship with God. In addition, Gen 5:1-3 may also suggest that the image of God included a resemblance of human faculties and the entire human being with the Lord of the universe. This image of God is found in both genders who are blessed (Gen 5:2) and is expressed in different kinds of relationships, not only procreation.⁶⁶ Springett states: "Mankind as male and female are not created simply for the purpose of procreation.

⁶³ Cf. Webb, 81.

⁶⁴ Webb, 131.

⁶⁵ Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 4, suggests: "In an age of overpopulation, perhaps same sex-orientation is especially sound ecologically!"

⁶⁶ Cf. Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Image of God in Gen 1:16-17," *Reflections: A BRI Newsletter* 3 (2003): 5-6; Miguel Gutierrez, "L'homme créé à l'image de Dieu' dans l'ensemble littéraire et canonique - Gen 1-11" (Th.D. dissertation, Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, 1993).

Procreative ability is carefully removed from God's image and shifted to a special word of blessing."⁶⁷

The creation account is also interested in the concept of complementation. When Adam noticed his lack of a companion, God created for him the woman "suitable to him." Adam and Eve complemented each other. This complementation is holistic because God is holistic. Its expression is found in heterosexual marriage.

According to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus affirmed the creation account and the permanence of marriage. Jesus understood Gen 1 and 2 not only as a historical account but also as a text, which is normative for humanity at all times, disapproving all homosexual relationships. Genesis 1 and 2 remains as the foundational text to describe divinely ordained human sexual relationships.

Genesis 19 and Judges 19. Whereas narratives that deal with homosexuality such as the Sodom narrative (Gen 19:4-10) and the outrage in Gibeah (Judg 19:22-25) are interpreted in such a way as to avoid homosexual connotations, homosexuality is read into other passages such as the stories of Ham's sin (Gen 9:20-25),⁶⁸ the friendship of David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18, 20, 2 Sam 1), and the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship between Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1).

Some theologians suggest that the story dealing with Sodom is about a lack of hospitality⁶⁹ rather than homosexuality and that the term "to know" means "to get acquainted" rather than "to have coitus with." "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them" (Gen 19:5). The NASB translates "to have relations with them" (cf. Gen 4:1, 17, 25) which seems to be the meaning required by the passage, especially verse 8, the context in Genesis with the various sexual problems, and the intertextual connections with Judg 19 and Ezek 16.⁷⁰

Although homosexuality was one of the sins of the inhabitants of Sodom, it was not the only one, and the city was destroyed because of its many and grievous sins including homosexuality. The text is rarely cited by Christian homosexuals today because they suggest that the problem with Sodom was not with homosexuality *per se* but with a violent type of gang rape, which has nothing to do with covenant homosexuality. This is

⁶⁷ Springett, 53.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of this incident see Davidson, 142-145; Wold, 65-76.

⁶⁹ See Rogers, 67; Helminiak, 43-50.

⁷⁰ Wold, 89.

also true for the story that happened in Gibeah.⁷¹ Yet “. . . the authors of Jude and 2 Peter undoubtedly understood a key offense of Sodom to be men desiring to have sex with males.”⁷²

Alleged Homosexual Relationships. The interpretation of David's relation to Jonathan or Ruth's relation to her mother-in-law as a beautiful expression of homosexuality is far-fetched at best.⁷³ Men embracing and kissing each other and holding hands is common even today in the Near East. This has nothing to do with homosexuality. "In this context it is not out of place to suggest that the word love has political rather than sexual overtones."⁷⁴ The transfer of clothes from Jonathan to David has royal overtones suggesting a legal symbolism relegating the privilege of succession willingly to David. In this setting Jonathan moves beyond personal feelings of a friendly disposition and makes a solemn 'covenant' . . .⁷⁵ Scholars are aware that arguments from silence may be extremely weak and should be used in exceptional cases only. Nevertheless, F. Guy does not only speculate about physical intimacy between David and Jonathan but also about the Roman military officer who asked Jesus to heal his boy, thereby suggesting that this boy was a valuable slave and sexual partner of the officer, and about the Ethiopian eunuch as a potential homosexual.⁷⁶ He adds: "These possible instance are, of course, highly conjectural . . . None of the stories contains an explicit recognition, much less an endorsement, of same sex love."⁷⁷ So far so good, but then Guy turns around and asserts: "Given what we know about human nature and same-sex love, statistically it is highly probable that *some* of the figures in the scriptural narratives were participants in same-sex erotic relationships."⁷⁸ Such an approach has nothing to do with sound biblical interpretation.⁷⁹ While homosexuality is read into texts that do not speak

⁷¹ For a more detailed discussion of both passages, see Davidson, 145-149, 161-162; White and Niell, 40-51, Köstenberger, 204-208. Davidson concludes his passage on Sodom by saying: "That the opprobrium attached to the Sodomites' intended activity involved not only rape but the inherent degradation of same-sex intercourse is confirmed by the intertextual linkages between Ezekiel and the sexual 'abominations' mentioned in Levitical legislation" (149).

⁷² Via and Gagnon, 59.

⁷³ See Davidson, 164-167.

⁷⁴ Cf. 1 Kgs 5:1.

⁷⁵ Springett, 73. This is supported by Webb, 102.

⁷⁶ Guy, 52-53.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Davidson, 165, speaks about speculation.

about it, it is explained away or limited to violent types of same-sex relations only in texts that address homosexuality.

4.1.2. *The Mosaic Laws*

Leviticus 18 and 20. Leviticus contains two texts that clearly address homosexuality. Lev 18:23 reads: "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." Lev 20:13 goes farther by warning against the consequences of homosexual activities: "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

One theologian suggests that "the Old Testament limits the prohibitions against same-gender sexual behavior in Leviticus 18 and 20 to the ritual or cult of Israel . . . These passages have no impact on the New Testament/Christian moral code."⁸⁰ Rogers concludes that "our challenge is not to maintain culturally conditioned law, but rather, with Jesus, to love God and love our neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40). When these texts in Leviticus are taken out of their historical and cultural context and applied to faithful, God-worshiping Christians who are homosexual, it does violence to them."⁸¹ "It is also proposed that the context is purity and holiness, which supposedly is irrelevant to the New Testament church – Israel had to separate from the pagan neighbors."⁸² And Helminiak asserts: "The single text in the Hebrew Scriptures that talks about homogeneity forbids it—but precisely because it is 'unclean,' not because it is wrong in itself. The Christian Scriptures insist that cleanness and uncleanness do not matter."⁸³

It is true that in the immediate or larger context terms referring to purity and holiness as well as idolatry occur. Still, the question must be asked whether or not these references limit the warning against homosexuality to specific situations only? I argue ten reasons why this is not a valid interpretation:

- a. *These two texts describe and condemn male homosexual activity.* No exceptions are mentioned. Obviously they are opposed to any homosexual activity.⁸⁴ However, it is very likely that they also

⁸⁰ De Young, 10.

⁸¹ Rogers, 69. In the context of Lev 18 and 20 and the discussion on homosexuality, Helminiak, 66-67, calls people to break away from conventions and taboos because they are "unreasonable and oppressive" (67).

⁸² See Rogers, 69.

⁸³ Helminiak, 72.

⁸⁴ Cf. Springett, 63.

included lesbianism. "The Mosaic legislation in general is considered from a man's (male's) perspective. Even the Decalogue is addressed in the masculine singular, but this certainly does not mean that it applies only to the male gender. The masculine singular is the Hebrew way to express gender-inclusive ideas . . ." ⁸⁵

- b. Although they are found in the context of holiness and purity, *they have a moral quality as seen, for example, by their usage in the New Testament*. Kaiser states: ". . . there is a category of temporary ceremonial laws, but I do not agree that homosexuality is among them. Nothing in its proscription points to or anticipates Christ, and the death penalty demanded for its violation places it in the moral realm and not in temporary legislation."⁸⁶ R. Gane dwells on this point by showing that there is a difference between ritual impurity, which can be done away with by ritual purification, and moral impurity, which is not remediable. ". . . the impurity of homosexual practice was not ceremonial, but moral. . . The laws of Leviticus 18 and 20 are not like circumcision, the temporary ethnic covenant marker. This is confirmed by the fact that in Acts 15, which releases Gentile Christians from circumcision, the 'Holiness Code' prohibitions against meat offered to idols, sexual immorality (*porneia*; not only adultery, and meat from which the blood is not drained at the time of slaughter (vv. 20, 29; compare Lev. 17-20) remain in force for Gentiles."⁸⁷ "Any attempt to draw hard distinctions between sin and impurity is doomed to failure. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the Holiness Code is that it incorporates ethics under the rubric of purity; that is, sin and impurity merge" (Lev 18:24-30; Eze 18:22, 26).⁸⁸
- c. *They deal with more than exploitive situations*. The two persons involved in these acts of immorality are men, obviously not an adult and a boy. Both of them were to be punished because both of

⁸⁵ Davidson, 150.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus* (The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 247. Similarly, Webb, 177.

⁸⁷ Roy E. Gane, "Same-sex Love in the Body of Christ?," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), part 4 - 67-68.

⁸⁸ Via and Gagnon, 66; and Wold, 119, adds: "The sex crimes of Leviticus 18, with the possible exception of Molech worship, were not cultic in nature. . . . the term *tô: bâ* [abomination] shows no distinction between intrinsic wrong and ritual impurity as suggested by Boswell."

- them are responsible for their acts. It is an abomination.⁸⁹ Obviously, both were involved in this activity by mutual consent.⁹⁰
- d. *These laws extend beyond the Israelite community and were also applicable to the stranger (Lev 18:26).*⁹¹ W. Webb points out that the lists of Lev 18 and 20 together with other vice and virtue lists “reflect transcultural values.”⁹² They are also based on the creation order and therefore not limited to the people of Israel.⁹³
- e. *“The reason why male-male intercourse is wrong is implicit in the proscription itself: ‘lying with a male as though lying with a woman.’ Male-male intercourse puts a male in the category of female so far as sexual intercourse is concerned. Because sexual intercourse is about sexual completion, it requires complementary sexual others.” In addition people should not have “sex with too much of an ‘other’ (bestiality) or too much of a ‘like’ (incest, male-male intercourse), and not disrupting the one-flesh bond of a legitimate sexual union (adultery).”⁹⁴ The violation of this law is an abomination. “. . . in the entire Pentateuch, the only forbidden sexual act to which the word *tôbâ* is specifically attached is homosexual intercourse.”⁹⁵*
- f. *W. Webb provides a reason for the inclusion of child sacrifice in the list of seventeen intercourse prohibitions in Lev 18: The fifteen prohibited sexual relations preceding child sacrifice may all produce offspring, the following two, homosexuality and bestiality, do not. The chapter is concerned with appropriate sexual boundaries between male and female. “Such a structural perspective speaks against any type of homosexuality today.”⁹⁶*
- g. *The context of the law against homosexual activity in Lev 18 and 20 includes to some extent Lev 19. In Lev 19:18 the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself is found. This commandment is not abolished, although others in the immediate context are or may be (Lev 19:21-25, 27). It is stressed again and again in the New Testament. Therefore, when a decision has to be made whether or not a specific regulation is still normative for Christians, it has to be*

⁸⁹ The term *bdelygma* is discussed by Wold, 118.

⁹⁰ See Davidson, 149.

⁹¹ See Davidson, 154-155; White and Niell, 68

⁹² Webb, 196. See also pages 192-196.

⁹³ See Wold, 130.

⁹⁴ Via and Gagnon, 64-65.

⁹⁵ Davidson, 151.

⁹⁶ Webb, 200. See also pages 197-200.

made on a one at a time basis and by consulting the New Testament. The law against homosexuality cannot be discarded easily.

- h. *In Rom 1:26-27 and 1 Cor 6:9-10, Paul alludes to Lev 18 and 20 and makes his own statement about homosexuality.* The law was still valid in Paul's time, and Paul did not indicate that it was abolished, on the contrary.
- i. *A specific case of fornication, namely incest, is related in 1 Cor 5.* The act of having sexual intimacy with one's stepmother is called *porneia*. The case of 1 Cor 5:1 is clearly spelled out in Lev 18:8. Leviticus 18 discusses unlawful sexual relations. First of all, it is evident that Paul considered Lev 18 or at least parts of it as still valid for Christians. So do we in the case of incest and bestiality as well as child sacrifice. Secondly, the term *porneia* clearly stands for incestuous relations and may include all unlawful sexual activities spelled out in Lev 18, that is, different forms of incest, sexual relations with a woman during her period, sexual relations with the wife of another man, homosexuality, and sexual relations with animals.⁹⁷ As incest is still to be shunned, so is homosexuality.
- j. *The issue of fornication was discussed and decided upon at the Jerusalem Council – Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25.* Gentile Christians were ordered to abstain from fornication. Obviously, the Jerusalem Council did not discuss the validity of the Decalogue. The term that they dealt with was *porneia*, whereas the Ten Commandments use the verb *moicheu* (LXX). The other three items from which the gentile Christians had to abstain from were things polluted by idols, from what is strangled, and from blood. All four activities that were to be avoided by gentile Christians remind of similar prohibitions for Israelites and strangers in Lev 17:8-15 and 18:24-27.⁹⁸ It seems quite certain that the delegates to this Council and especially James had

⁹⁷ Oftentimes, the New Testament when it alludes to or quotes an Old Testament text does not only refer to the specific text but also to the entire context. When, for example, in Rev 12:5 the male child is mentioned, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, the reference is not just Ps 2:9 but the entire Ps 2. This principle, so often found in the New Testament, may apply also to 1 Cor 5:1 and its Old Testament source, Lev 18.

⁹⁸ Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols., The International Critical Commentary; London: T & T Clark International, 2006), 734; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 506-507; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 253.

in mind Lev 18.⁹⁹ Paul then followed the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem in the case of the Corinthian man. *Porneia* was referring to a broad range of sexual deviations, including incest, prostitution, and homosexuality.

Deuteronomy 23. Deut 23:17-18 states: "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God." Springett suggests that homosexuality may have been involved in the terms used in these verses, namely the terms translated "cult prostitute" and "dog."¹⁰⁰ The term "dog" may, in contrast to the cult prostitute, describe non-cultic male prostitution. Davidson points out that it "is found in the section of Deuteronomy that elaborates upon the seventh commandment; this indicates that any homosexual activity is a violation of the Decalogue."¹⁰¹

4.1.3. *Summary*

The Old Testament contains clear texts, especially in the legal material, rejecting any form of homosexual activity. These texts were referred to in the New Testament and considered binding. Other texts are not as clear, and one should be careful not to read wishful thinking into Old Testament narratives and exploit texts, which say nothing about homosexual activities in order to support a homosexual agenda. However, Wold is correct, when he affirms: "All the references to homosexual acts in the Old Testament are negative—wether in narrative (Gen. 9:20-27; 19; Judg. 19) or law (Lev. 18; 20)—and carry heavy sanctions . . ."¹⁰²

4.2. Homosexuality in the New Testament

The New Testament contains about three explicit texts dealing with the issue of homosexuality. Before we approach them, we will take a look at the position of Jesus.

⁹⁹ This is, for example, supported by the margin of Nestle-Aland's Greek New Testament as well as their list of Old Testament quotations and allusions. When discussing the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, Bruce refers back to Lev 18. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 315.

¹⁰⁰ Cf., Springett, 63-65.

¹⁰¹ Davidson, 160.

¹⁰² Wold, 162.

4.2.1. Jesus and Homosexuality

Although Jesus has not made a direct statement dealing with homosexuality, his position on the issue is recognizable.¹⁰³

Jesus and the Law. Jesus did not abolish the law but pointed out its real meaning and its implications. The Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5 contains a long section in which Jesus discusses the law. In Matt 23:23 he talks about the "weightier matters of the law" but does not let go of the principle of tithing. R. Gagnon makes an interesting comment on Mark 7: "The saying in Mark 7:15-19 about what defiles a person is often cited as proof that Jesus abolished the food laws. It is more likely that Jesus intended a hyperbolic contrast: what counts most is not what goes into a person but what comes out . . . If Jesus did not abrogate even such things as food laws and meticulous tithing, then it is impossible that he would have overturned a proscription of sexual immorality as serious as that of male-male intercourse."¹⁰⁴

Jesus and Sexuality. Jesus was not tolerant with regard to various forms of sexuality other than a marriage relation between one man and one woman. Although he mingled with sinners and cared for them, he did not condone their behavior. This is quite clear in the cases of three women who had committed sexual sins, the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 who anointed him, the Samaritan woman with her different life partners in John 4, and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:3-11. "Go. From now on sin no more" (John 8:11). Their lives were turned around. The prostitutes believed him and will enter the kingdom of God (Matt 12:31-32). In the Sermon on the Mount he spent two antitheses on dealing with sexual issues. He deepened the law. Adultery would already begin with our thought processes. The bill of divorce is abolished and divorce and remarriage are no longer options apart from the possible exception of fornication. In Matt 19:18 and Mark 10:19 Jesus again confirmed the seventh commandment. "Jesus was virtually without peer in his radical insistence on limiting the number of lifetime partners to one."¹⁰⁵

Jesus and Homosexuality. According to Matt 19 and Mark 10 Jesus had a discussion with the Pharisees on the question of divorce. In this context he referred back to the creation account and quoted Gen 1:27 and 2:24.

¹⁰³ Gagnon has devoted a number of pages to Jesus and the issue of sexuality. Cf. Via and Gagnon, 68-74. Wold, 161-175, devotes an entire chapter to "Christ and the Homosexual."

¹⁰⁴ Via and Gagnon, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Via and Gagnon, 71.

Two human beings, male and female, become one flesh. Unity is stressed, but a unity, which consists of a marriage between one husband and one wife. In the Hebrew text the term "two" is missing. It is found in the LXX. By stressing that only two beings and beings of the opposite sex become one, Jesus rejects polygamy as well as homosexuality. Obviously, for Jesus the creation account is not only descriptive but also prescriptive. A little later, Jesus mentioned three groups of eunuchs (Matt 19:12): (1) those who are eunuchs from birth,¹⁰⁶ (2) those who have been made eunuchs by men, and (3) those who for the sake of the kingdom of heaven have made themselves eunuchs. The last group probably does not refer to literal eunuchs but to people such as John the Baptist who remained unmarried for the sake of their ministry. This would imply that humans have the ability to postpone sexual intercourse indefinitely, which is true for persons with heterosexual as well as those with homosexual inclinations. According to Matt 19:1-12 Jesus allowed for two alternatives only, namely being married to a person of the opposite sex or staying single. As for Jesus divorce is not an option, neither is homosexuality.

In Mark 7:21-23 Jesus mentioned that out of the heart comes evil, and he specifies among other sins three sexual transgressions, namely *porneia* (fornication), *moicheia* (adultery), and *aselgeia* (sensuality, licentiousness, wantonness).¹⁰⁷ *Porneia* has a wide range of meaning as mentioned above, including homosexuality. "No first-century Jew would have spoken of *porneiai* (sexual immoralities) without having in mind the list of forbidden sexual offenses in Leviticus 18 and 20, particularly incest, adultery, same-sex intercourse, and bestiality."¹⁰⁸ Jesus also mentions Sodom (Matt 10:15; Luke 10:12).¹⁰⁹

Jesus is concerned with keeping the commandments, which includes following a Christian lifestyle that also includes proper sexual

¹⁰⁶ Some attempt to read into this phrase the issue of homosexuality. Rogers, 78-79, refers to M. Nissinnen who "suggests that in our contemporary context those who are eunuchs from their mother's womb might well include people who are homosexuals, because they simply lack sexual desire for people of the opposite sex." This statement seems to be carefully crafted, not claiming that in biblical times eunuchs included homosexuals. The emphasis seems to fall on the "contemporary context" in which some people would like to include homosexuals with the eunuch. In this case, "eunuch" had to be understood figuratively.

¹⁰⁷ Wold, 167-170, shows that *aselgeia* may include homosexuality.

¹⁰⁸ Via and Gagnon, 73.

¹⁰⁹ However, his use of the term "dogs" in Matt 7:6, although reminding us of the dogs of Deut 23:17-18, that is homosexuals, does not seem to refer to homosexuals in this context.

relationships. Indirectly, homosexuality is addressed and rejected. Soards comes to the conclusion: "Thus, judging from both Jesus' words and actions, we may conclude that marital heterosexual unions and abstinence from sexual involvement are the options for human sexual behavior that accord with the will of God."¹¹⁰

4.2.2. Paul and Homosexuality

The three major Pauline texts dealing with homosexuality are Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; and 1 Tim 1:10.

Romans 1:26-27. "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

Whereas a number of Christian theologians hold that these texts describe homosexuality, which they reject in all forms. Still others acknowledge that the text is dealing with homosexuality. They suggest that the issue in Paul is idolatry or pederasty, and that Paul could not have taken in account sexual orientation as we know it today.¹¹¹ In other words,

¹¹⁰ Soards, 29.

¹¹¹ Cf. Everett R. Kalin, "Romans 1:26-27 and Homosexuality," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30 (2003): 423-432. Scroggs, 121-122, states: "Only in Romans 1 is there a negative judgment made on both female as well as male homosexuality which could be considered a general indictment. Even here, the entire cumulative evidence we have looked at throughout this book suggests that despite the general language Paul, with regard to the statement about male homosexuality, must have had, *could only have had*, pederasty in mind. That Paul uses here the argument from nature might, mean, of course, that he would have made the same judgment about *any* form of homosexuality. No one can legitimately conclude, however, that he would have done so. We just do not know." This is a remarkable statement by a scholar who obviously superimposes the Greco-Roman culture on Paul and still has to acknowledge that Rom 1:26-27 sounds like "a general indictment." Wold, 185-186, briefly summarizes the "revisionist interpretations" and draws his own conclusions which differ widely from Scroggs' conclusions. Similar but more elaborate Springett, 121-122. Soards, 48, asserts: "Yet Scroggs' contention that pederasty was the only model of homosexuality known in antiquity is simplistic and misleading." Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 36, claims: "No doubt Paul was unaware of the distinction between sexual orientation, over which one has apparently no choice, and sexual behavior, over which one does." Cf. John R. Jones, "In Christ There Is Neither . . . : Toward the Unity of the Body of Christ," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 4, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 23.

Paul did not know about inverted homosexuals. Furthermore, it is argued that the reference to nature should be understood in the following way:

In describing homosexuality as 'against nature' (Rom 1:26 KJV), Paul does not condemn homosexual orientation or any committed mutual relationship. Instead, he condemns perversion of what comes naturally. It is 'against nature' for homosexuals to practice heterosexuality or for heterosexuals to practice homosexuality. Paul does not condemn people for having been born homosexual, nor does he condemn the homosexual orientation (inversion).¹¹²

Therefore, the issue is whether or not Paul talks about homosexuality at all and whether or not homosexuality in Romans 1 includes all forms of homosexuality thus achieving universal scope. The answer is found in the context of the text.

- a. *The larger context is universal in nature.* Whereas Rom 1 shows that all Gentiles are sinners—Paul presents a catalogue of vices (Rom 1:21-32)—and Rom 2 points out that the Jews are also sinners, Rom 3 concludes that all people are sinners and all are dependent on God's grace as revealed in Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. Rom 5 elaborates on the fact that all of us have been slaves to sin but in Jesus are free from it. Also the Fall is clearly referred to in Rom 5:12-19. Paul's argument is not limited to humanity in the first century A.D. but encompasses people at all times while dealing with creation, the Fall, sin, and salvation.¹¹³ Therefore, the list of vices, including homosexuality, is not limited to a special period of time either but is still applicable today.¹¹⁴
- b. *Paul's background for the discussion of idolatry and homosexuality is creation.*¹¹⁵ In Rom 1:20 the creation of the world and God's created

¹¹² De Young, 10; Cf. Rogers, 74.

¹¹³ Cf. Springett, 124.

¹¹⁴ White and Niell, 134, note: "The basis of Paul's discussion in Romans 1 . . . gives us no hint that the author intends his words to be limited geographically or temporally. The concepts he present reach back to creation itself, apply over and beyond all cultural boundaries, and speak to men and women at the very level of their existence, not merely in their cultural climate."

¹¹⁵ Rogers, 76, argues that "Paul's condemnation of immoral sexual behavior is not appropriately applied to contemporary gay or lesbian Christians who are not idolaters. . ." Even if idolatry should be the overarching theme of Rom 1, the statements on homosexuality have to be taken seriously and cannot be discarded. Furthermore, it would be wrong to contend that "idolatry, the worship of statues or images, is the necessary prerequisite for homosexuality," so Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 285. Although idolatry may find an expression in homosexual activity, sinful passion does not need to grow out of idolatry. It comes out of humanity's sinful nature. The problem is that some advocates of a homosexual

works are referred to. Evidently Paul's argument is that God can be known through creation. But although the Gentiles "knew God, they did not honor him as God" (Rom 1:21). They "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Rom 1:23). God was replaced by gods which were nothing more than images of created beings, whether humans or animals. The list of animals, the mention of humans, and the concept of "likeness"/"image" suggest that Rom 1:23 echoes Gen 1:24-26. In addition, Rom 1:25 points out that the Gentiles worshiped created things instead of the creator. Furthermore, Rom 1:26-27 seems to echo Gen 1:27 by concentrating on the same terms, namely "male" (*arsen*) and "female" (*thelys*), instead of using the terms "man" and "woman."¹¹⁶ Since creation is so clearly referred to in the preceding verses homosexuality must be understood in the context of creation. "Idolatry and same-sex intercourse together constitute an assault on the work of the Creator in nature"¹¹⁷ no matter which form of homosexuality it is. The creation account points out God's intention for man and women, which is monogamous heterosexual marriage.

lifestyle deny that the Fall occurred or that the Fall is related to homosexuality. Rogers, 77, points to homosexual animals and claims that "examples from the animal kingdom seem to show that God pretty clearly did intend to create homosexual animals. Furthermore, the best scientific evidence also seems to show a genetic influence on sexual orientation, as well as biological differences between homosexual and heterosexual people. This data suggests that homosexuality is indeed part of God's created order" (81). Genesis 2:20 indicates that the cattle, the birds, and the beast of the fields had "helpers," while Adam did not have "a helper suitable to him." For Adam this "suitable helper" was Eve, the missing female partner. Similarly, the Flood story mentions male and female animals only: "You shall take with you [into the ark] of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female" (Gen 7:2). Genesis does not indicate that God created homosexual beings. D. Martin, "Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32," *Biblical Interpretation 3* (1995): 338, complains: "Modern scholars read the Fall into Romans 1 because it renders the text more serviceable for heterosexist purposes." Although the Fall is not directly mentioned in Rom 1, creation is, and the Fall's mention in Rom 5 reveals that it forms part of the background of Paul's theology, even in Rom 1.

¹¹⁶ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 37, states: "With every indication of his loathing, the apostle now pictures how the Gentiles profane themselves (in a sinful reversal of Gen. 1:27f.) in lesbian love and sodomy. . . . What the Gentiles do is contrary to creation and characteristic of their fallen state of guilt."

¹¹⁷ Via and Gagnon, 78.

- c. In dealing with the historical context, *the question is raised as to whether or not it is possible that the ancients may have had an idea of inverted homosexuality?* If the number of invert homosexuals among the general population amounts to somewhere between three to ten percent¹¹⁸ and “has remained relatively constant for hundreds, even thousands of years,”¹¹⁹ as it is claimed, it would be quite strange, if loving and caring homosexual relationships were formed only in the 20th and 21st centuries and that the ancients were completely ignorant of this phenomenon.¹²⁰ References to homosexuality are not only found in sources dating back to centuries before Christ, but also in Greco-Roman society and the church fathers. The ancients did not only know what has been called “contingent homosexuality” and most probably “situational homosexuality,” but most likely had some idea or concept of “constitutional homosexuality.” At least the notion that a person is attracted to the same sex because of his or her constitution is found in Plato’s androgynous man-woman myth as summarized by Springett:

In this myth Plato explains that primal man was dual. He had four hands, four feet, two faces and two privy parts, that is, like two people back to back—the faces opposite directions. Some of these dual, primal creatures were male in both parts, others were female in both parts and yet others (a third sex) part male and part female. These primal creatures were so strong that they became insolent, attacking the gods. Because of their continued insolence, Zeus divided these dual four-legged creatures into two-legged creatures. A dual male became two males, a dual female two females and the male-female (androgynous) became a male and a female. On this basis he accounts for the differing sexual desires apparent in society, for each creature searches out its own or opposite kind, according to its original orientation. When dual parts encounter each other they fall in love. By the creation of this myth Plato attempts to explain the attraction some men and women have for persons of the same sex.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ See Kemena, 10; and Fulton, 48.

¹¹⁹ Mitchell F. Henson, “Ministering to Gays within the Church Community,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 5, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 27.

¹²⁰ Cf. White and Niell, 128-129.

¹²¹ Springett, 97-98. Cf. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 353-354. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (The New International Greek Testament

It is hardly possible that Paul, who was an educated man and who even quoted Greek authors (e.g., Acts 17:28; Tit 1:12) would not have known Plato's myth and the concept of innate homosexuality.¹²² Therefore, to suggest that Paul was referring to violent or exploitative homosexuality or pederasty only but not to a permanent caring one-partner same-gender relationships because they supposedly were not known at his time, cannot be shown.¹²³

- d. *Finally to the text itself.* Although Paul lived hundreds of years after the giving of the law through Moses, obviously this law is – in his opinion – still applicable during New Testament times. The mention of the adult-adult homosexual intercourse in Rom 1:27 is dependent on Lev 18:22 and 20:13.¹²⁴ Leviticus 18 and 20 are in view in Acts 15 and are declared binding for gentile Christians. Paul refers to Lev 18:8 when he sharply criticizes incest in the church of Corinth (1 Cor 5), indicating that for him Lev 18 and 20 are still valid. Paul goes even a step further by including female same-gender activity (Rom 1:26), which was not directly spelled out, though included among male homosexuality, in the Old Testament.¹²⁵
- e. *Dealing with the suggestion that Rom 1 "identifies a temporary Jewish purity rule rather than a universal moral principle,"* De Young remarks: "God cannot consign the Gentiles to punishment for breaking a Jewish purity law."¹²⁶ Since he does bring about punishment or

Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 452, declares: "Paul witnessed around him *both* abusive relationships of power or money *and* examples of 'genuine love' between males. We must not misunderstand Paul's 'worldly' knowledge."

¹²² White and Niell, 128, 129, state: "Therefore, the assumption that he [Paul] did not know of people who professed to be homosexual as their primary 'orientation' is simply farfetched unless one is willing to say that in essence no one really 'knew' about this until the past few decades or centuries. . . . Plato's writings make reference to male homosexuality, lesbianism, the claims of some to be born as a willing mate of a man, the concept of mutuality, permanency, gay pride, pederasty, 'homophobia,' motive, desire, passion, etc. One would have to assume Paul a very poor student *and* a very poor observer of the culture around him to be unaware of these things."

¹²³ See Via and Gagnon, 81.

¹²⁴ These chapters are also found in a kind of universal context. See Lev 18:24-30; 20:2,23.

¹²⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 76, notes: "That Paul simply takes it for granted that the Jewish abhorrence of Gentile sexual license is still the appropriate ethical response of the Gentile believer in Christ means that he recognizes at least one distinctive element of Israel's covenant righteousness which remains unchanged within the wider freedom of the new covenant."

¹²⁶ De Young, 159.

permits negative consequences (Rom 1:27), the laws of Lev 18 and 20 must have a moral quality and be universal in nature. This is what Jones denies. He strongly argues for Lev 18 and 20 to be culturally and nationally bound and overcome in Jesus.¹²⁷ He also distinguishes between a level of “moral evil” and a level of “ceremonial impurity” in Rom 1, assigning vv. 24-27 – the passage dealing with homosexuality – to the ceremonial level. He builds his argument on the use of *adikia* (unrighteousness), *poneria* (evil), and *asebeia* (godlessness, wickedness) in Rom 1:18, 29¹²⁸ and *akatharsia* (uncleanness) in Rom 1:24, reasoning that the former three terms have a moral quality, while *akatharsia* is ceremonial in nature. His point seems to be: Homosexuality belongs to the level of ceremonial impurity, not to the level of sin. It does not affect Paul’s original audience, and it does not affect us today, because Paul uses a rhetorical device. He speaks with a pre-Christian voice in order to drive his point home with the Jews, that is, to help them realize that they are also sinners.¹²⁹ In his review of Jones’ article, Gane points to the problem of defining impurity as cultic or ceremonial only. Already in the Old Testament impurity had at times a moral quality.¹³⁰ However, a closer look at the New Testament reveals that *akatharsia* (impurity) is found next to terms such as *anomia* (lawlessness, Rom 6:19), *aselgeia* (licentiousness; Eph 4:19), and *porneia* (fornication; Eph 5:3). According to 2 Cor 12:24 people should have repented of their *akatharsia*. The deeds of the flesh include among others, such as idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, also *porneia*, *akatharsia*, *aselgeia* (Gal 5:19-20). “. . . those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21). A similar list occurs in Col 3:5 and includes *akatharsia*. “For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.” Thus, *akatharsia* has a moral dimension with Paul. Christians are called to stay away from it, because a lifestyle of practiced *akatharsia* excludes people from the kingdom of God (see also 1 Thess 4:7).¹³¹

¹²⁷ Jones, 4-7.

¹²⁸ These terms are found in a longer list of vices, but are not a heading or summary of these other vices.

¹²⁹ Jones, 13-22.

¹³⁰ See discussion above; and Gane, part 4, 66-68.

¹³¹ White and Niell, 120, add: “. . . the fact that a ‘penalty’ or ‘punishment’ is attached to the ‘error’ of performing these ‘shameful deeds’ reinforces the understanding that these are sinful deeds . . .”

- f. The argument that the phrase “the natural intercourse” and its opposite “against/contrary to nature” (*para phusin*) in Rom 1:26-27 are describing what is natural to an individual is unsubstantiated.¹³² Nowhere is the term *phusis* used in such a sense. In Romans itself the noun is found seven times,¹³³ however, the phrase *para phusin* just twice (Rom 1:26; 11:24). In Rom 11:24 there is a wild olive tree “by nature” (*kata phusin*). From this wild olive tree, branches were cut off and “against nature” (*para phusin*) grafted into the cultivated olive tree. *Kata phusin* means to exist in harmony with the created order. On the other hand, *para phusin* refers to what is in contrast to the order intended by the Creator.¹³⁴ This corresponds with Rom 1, where creation is clearly the background for the discussion of idolatry, homosexuality, and other vices. Here, activities and behavior described as being “against nature” imply a negative moral judgment. “. . . homosexual practice is a violation of the natural order (as determined by God).”¹³⁵ Obviously, this includes all forms of homosexuality.¹³⁶ Jones’ attempt to explain what is natural on “conventional grounds,” which was located in the Greco-Roman world of the first century A.D.,¹³⁷ does not fit well Paul’s argument, who argues biblically rather than from the perspective of the Greco-

¹³² See the quotation above.

¹³³ Rom 1:26; 2:14, 27; 11:21, 24.

¹³⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (The Anchor Bible 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 286, suggests: “. . . in the context of vv 19-23, ‘nature’ also expresses for him [Paul] the order intended by the Creator, the order that is manifest in God’s creation or, specifically in this case, the order seen in the function of the sexual organs themselves, which were ordained for an expression of love between man and woman and for the procreation of children. Paul now speaks of the deviant exchange of those organs as a use *para phusin*.” Wold, 182, concurs: “. . . according to Paul, nature is the created order of male and female in the image of God, regulated by conscience and law.” Cf. De Young, 156-157; and Köstenberger, 48.

¹³⁵ Dunn, 74; Cf. Via and Gagnon, 79-80.

¹³⁶ Springett, 130, 131, declares: “If homosexual acts could gain divine approval in any sense, surely Paul would have indicated how and drawn the distinction . . . An interpretation of his words that allows homosexual activity would have to allow also any sin in the list of vices which follows.”

¹³⁷ Jones, 17; Smedes, 80-81, first seems to argue for a cultural understanding of “unnatural,” but then admits “to be a traditionalist; I do believe that having babies is the teleological bent of sexuality. And my traditionalism leads me to suppose that homosexuality is a product of nature sometimes gone awry. But this, in turn, leads me to assume that God wants gay people to make the best life they can within the limits of what errant nature gives them. . . . Would not God also see same-sex partnerships as a morally worthy improvisation on the ‘unnatural’?” (81).

Roman culture. The same is true for J. Boswell's effort to explain "unnatural" as unexpected or unusual but not immoral behavior.¹³⁸ Gagnon suggests: ". . . Paul in effect argues that even pagans who have no access to the book of Leviticus should know that same-sex eroticism is 'contrary to nature' because the primary sex organs fit male to female, not female to female or male to male."¹³⁹ ". . . Paul was thinking of 'nature' not as 'the way things are usually done' (i.e., cultural convention) but rather as 'the material shape of the created order' . . ."¹⁴⁰

- g. *The fact that Paul adds lesbianism to male homosexuality supports the previous point.* "Lesbian intercourse in antiquity normally did not conform to the male pederastic model or entail cultic associations or prostitution."¹⁴¹ It was not exploitative. Therefore, non-exploitative but caring homosexual partnerships are included in the sins mentioned in Rom 1. However, there are those who hold that Rom 1:26 does not talk about lesbianism. Rogers writes: "The text does not say that women had sex with other women. They could have been condemned for taking the dominant position in heterosexual intercourse, or for engaging in non-procreative sexual acts with male partners."¹⁴² Helminiak suggests that Rom 1:26, referring to "female sexual relations that are 'beyond the ordinary' could mean many things. It might mean sex during menstruation, sex with an uncircumcised man, oral sex, heterosexual anal sex, having sex while standing up, or anything that would not be considered the standard way of having sex. . . . There is no need to read homogeneity into the *para physin* of verse 26."¹⁴³ In other words, according to these authors Rom 1:26 may describe any sexual deviation, but not lesbianism. However, v. 26 is linked to v. 27 by the term "likewise," and the homosexual male behavior is

¹³⁸ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 112.

¹³⁹ Gagnon, 254; Cf. Gane, part 4 - 65.

¹⁴⁰ Gagnon, 256. He shows that this conclusion is valid by elaborating on the context in Rom 1. Discussing Rom 1:18-20 he reasons: "In other words, *visual* perception of the *material* creation that God has made . . . should lead to a mental perception about the nature of God and God's will. Similarly, the reader should expect that the appeal to nature in 1:26-27 has to do, at least primarily, with the visual perception of male-female bodily complementarity . . ." (257).

¹⁴¹ Via and Gagnon, 80.

¹⁴² Rogers, 75

¹⁴³ Helminiak, 87.

compared to the female behavior. The case is very clear.¹⁴⁴ Since gay males are mentioned in v. 27, so there are also lesbians mentioned in v. 26. In order to avoid this conclusion, the term “likewise” has to be reinterpreted. Gagnon has dealt with this issue extensively.¹⁴⁵ But even Helminiak himself concedes that his interpretation may not be correct: “But even if this interpretation is wrong, even if verse 26 is a reference to lesbian sex, the general conclusion argued below must still apply: Romans may refer to same-sex acts, but it intends no ethical condemnation of them.” We have argued that he is even wrong in his last assertion.

- h. *That Paul was not so much concerned with coercion in a homosexual relationship can be derived from Rom 1:27: “. . . men . . . burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”* Obviously in such a homoerotic union, both partners lust for each other.¹⁴⁶ Both of them consent to the homosexual relationship, both are responsible for their actions, and both of them receive the penalty. God is not unfair that he would punish a boy who has been forced to play the female in a homosexual relationship, whether by being raped or by being forced into a pederastic relationship.¹⁴⁷ However, if the Paul is even opposed to a relationship of consenting

¹⁴⁴ Cf. White and Niell, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 297-299. James E. Miller, “The Practices of Romans 1:26: Homosexual or Heterosexual?” *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995): 1-11, has argued that “likewise” in Rom 1:27 does not force us to parallel male same-sex intercourse with lesbianism. He quotes *T. Naph.* 3:4-5 in order to show that “likewise” can be used in a loose way (3-4): “. . . [do] not become like Sodom, which changed the order of their nature. And likewise also . . . the Watchers changed the order of their nature.” The inhabitants of Sodom engaged in homosexual behavior, the angels in heterosexual. But Gagnon, 298-299, correctly points out: “Neither clause [in *T. Naph.*] specifies what the ‘order of nature’ was changed for, which makes possible a loose comparison. However, Rom 1:27 is quite explicit about what “the natural use of the female” was exchanged for: sex with members of the same sex. For the ‘likewise’ of 1:27 to be appropriate, both the thing exchanged and the thing exchanged *for* must be comparable.”

¹⁴⁶ Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 36, claims: “Likewise the relationships Paul describes are heavy with lust; they are not relationships between consenting adults who are committed to each other as faithfully and with as much integrity as any heterosexual couple.”

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 80-81; De Young, 158.

adults, it can safely be assumed that he would be opposed to all other homosexual relationships.¹⁴⁸

Homosexuality in Rom 1 is not limited to a certain time, culture, or even limited to certain homosexual forms. Paul clearly understands it as sinful behavior.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." Again it is claimed that Paul does not refer to monogamous homosexual relationships of mutual respect but condemns pederasty, homosexual prostitution, and exploitive and dehumanizing forms of homosexuality.¹⁴⁹ If this is true, not all male-male intercourse would be prohibited.¹⁵⁰ This does not seem to be the case. We will not go in details in this section, because similar arguments were already discussed in the passage dealing with Rom 1.

- a. *The immediate context of 1 Cor 6:9-10 reaches from 1 Cor 5 to 1 Cor 7, dealing with the issue of human sexuality.* In chapter 5 Paul mentions a case of incest in Corinth. Paul accepts as binding Lev 18, which discusses incest and homosexuality, and urges the Corinthian church to disfellowship the church member involved in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother. Toward the end of chapter 5 he presents a short list of four different categories of people involved in vices (v. 10), the first one being fornicators. This list is enlarged in the next verse by two additional groups of people. Christians must separate from church members who practice such vices. In 1 Cor 6:9-10 Paul expands his list to ten groups of people.¹⁵¹ This list seems to consist of two parts.¹⁵² The first five groups of

¹⁴⁸ Köstenberger, 217, argues: "There was a clear and ambiguous Greek word for pederasty, the term *paiderastis*. We have every reason to believe that if Paul had wished to condemn, not homosexuality at large, but only pederasty, he would have used the appropriate Greek term for this practice. . . . The attempt to limit Paul's condemnation to pederasty . . . is contradicted by Paul's reference to the male partner's *mutual desire for one another* in Romans 1:27 ('consumed with passion for one another')."

¹⁴⁹ Cf. the examples listed by Köstenberger, 216.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. De Young, 10-11.

¹⁵¹ In all these lists *porneia* is mentioned first.

¹⁵² The following outline of 1 Cor 6:9-10 indicates that the unrighteous, who will not inherit the kingdom of God are the same as the subsequent ten groups of evildoers, who also will not inherit the kingdom of God. It is possible that the ten groups of

people are idolaters and sexual offenders discussed in 1 Cor 5-7. The problem with the next five groups is to some extent addressed in 1 Cor 11. In the first part, probably two groups describe persons involved in heterosexual misconduct, while the next two describe people engaged in homosexual misconduct. "Adulterers" applies to married people, while "fornicators" may refer to singles, if the term is not used in its broader sense encompassing all other groups of sexual misbehavior. The rest of chapter 6 warns against a relationship with a prostitute. In 1 Cor 6:16 another creation text is quoted, namely Gen 2:24. Chapter 7 goes on to describe heterosexual marriage, singleness, and divorce.¹⁵³ In order to avoid *porneia*, "each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). There is no room for homosexuality. If people "do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." Paul is clearly referring to heterosexual marriage.

1 Cor 6:9-10 is part of this larger context, which is based on Lev 18, the creation account, and Jesus' exposition of it. Although the Corinthian church with its problems pertaining to sexuality is addressed, the issue is broader. The interconnectedness of 1 Cor 5-7 as well as its Old Testament background imply a universal dimension, again not limited to time, culture, or certain forms of homosexuality only. The entire passage is prescriptive and not just descriptive. Thus, Thiselton suggests that 1 Cor 6:9-10 is "an even more important and foundational passage than Romans 1. . ."¹⁵⁴

vv. 9b-10 can be divided in two major parts, because four of the first five evildoers are committing sexual sins.

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous	<i>will not inherit the kingdom of God?</i>
Do not be deceived;	
(1) neither fornicators,	
(2) nor idolaters,	
(3) nor adulterers,	
(4) nor effeminate,	
(5) nor homosexuals,	
(6) nor thieves,	
(7) nor the covetous,	
(8) nor drunkards,	
(9) nor revilers,	
(10) nor swindlers	<i>will inherit the kingdom of God."</i>

¹⁵³ Cf. Thiselton, 447, 451; Via and Gagnon, 84-87.

¹⁵⁴ Thiselton, 447,

Practicing homosexuality permanently excludes people from the kingdom of God, as does any of the other vices mentioned by Paul.

- b. The two terms dealing with homosexuality in 1 Cor 6:9 are *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*.¹⁵⁵ *Malakoi* has been rendered "effeminate," "those who make women of themselves," "boy/male prostitutes," "(pervert) homosexuals," and "catamites." The term normally means "soft" or "luxurious" and appears four times in the New Testament (Matt 11:8 [2x]; Luke 7:25; 1 Cor 6:9). The Gospel references depict the same event and describe persons in soft clothes. The word must be determined by its context. Jones points to later Christian literature (1 Cor 6. Polycarp) where the term describes an unworthy person and could easily be seen as effeminate¹⁵⁶ and admits: "None of this, of course, negates the possibility that the term *malakos* included male homosexual behavior."¹⁵⁷ Those called *malakoi* are not just soft, mild, or weak men. The majority of the interpreters agree that in 1 Cor 6:9 this term refers to homosexuals, especially to partners who play the female role in a homosexual relationship.¹⁵⁸ In v. 9 *malakoi* is surrounded by other terms referring to sexual and homosexual behavior, which makes it clear that this word also has a sexual meaning. However, to restrict it to children and pederasty is quite speculative.¹⁵⁹

The term *arsenokoitai* helps to define the *malakoi*. It is a unique term and in the New Testament found with Paul only.¹⁶⁰ It may actually have been invented by Paul. It clearly goes back to Lev 18:22 and 20:13 (LXX). There the two terms *arsen* and *koitai* that Paul

¹⁵⁵ They have been hotly debated. Example, David F. Wright, "Homosexuals or Prostitutes: The meaning of ARSENOKOITAI (1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10)," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 38/2 (1984): 125-153, has shown that John Boswell's claim in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* that *arsenokoitai* means male prostitutes, not male homosexuals, is groundless. William L. Petersen, "Can ARS_ENOKOITAI Be Translated by 'Homosexuals' (I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1.10)," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 40/2 (1986):187-191, has responded to Wright. Basically, he hold that the modern concept of homosexuality does not correspond with the one prevalent in the antiquity.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, 9.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Fitzmyer, 287, and Springett, 134. See also Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 93, understands *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* as "the passive and active partners in homosexuality."

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Thiselton, 449.

¹⁶⁰ In his book, De Young devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of the term. De Young, 175-214.

has joined together, now forming one term only, are found separately.¹⁶¹ A literal translation would describe a man lying with a man in bed/homosexual intercourse. Its meaning is not restricted to pederasty. The *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor 6:9 may be the active partners in any kind of homosexual relationships.¹⁶²

- c. *The severe penalty* for being a *malakos* or an *arsenokoitos*, namely exclusion from the kingdom of God, indicates that the two terms refer to adult males who of their own free will – whether by innate orientation or not – have homosexual intercourse with each other.¹⁶³

The backgrounds of creation and Lev 18 and 20 in 1 Cor 6 as well as the other reasons mentioned above suggest that in 1 Cor 6:9 homosexuality includes all forms of homosexual activity and transcends application to the Corinthian church only.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Cf. Köstenberger, 216.

¹⁶² Cf. Thiselton, 448-450; Via and Gagnon, 83. Springett, 136, suggests: "If Paul was condemning only a crude form of homosexual activity here, by implication allowing other types, he surely would have been more explicit." Paul comes from a Jewish background, and the Jewish verdict on homosexuality is unequivocal. On the other hand, Jones, 12, acknowledges that *arsenokotai* "almost certainly" has to do with homosexuality, however, "of an exploitive sort." David E. Malick, "The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993): 479-492, summarizes his article on page 492 by saying: "While Paul's choice of the words *ἀρσενοκοίτης* and *μαλακός* allows for an application to the abuse of pederasty in his day, the words actually denote a broader field of reference including all men who have sexual relations with men. The illogical presuppositions that (a) all sexual relationships are equal before God, (b) Paul's descriptions are of excessive practices, and (c) homosexuality is a biblically approved expression of sexuality, are necessary prerequisites to the popular conclusion that Paul was discussing only 'abuses' in homosexual behavior. The Apostle Paul condemned all homosexual relationships in his vice-list in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as he addressed the need for the Corinthians to judge those within their midst."

¹⁶³ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 82. De Young, 192, states: "Such researchers as Wright and Henry Mendell have definitely shown that *arsenokoitai* must be defined broadly. One cannot limit *arsenokoitai* to pederasty or to active male prostitution. It also includes same-gender orientation, condition, and mutuality."

¹⁶⁴ Thiselton, 452, writes: "On the basis of the distance between the first and twentieth centuries, many ask: 'Is the situation addressed by the biblical writer genuinely comparable to our own?' The more closely writers examine Greco-Roman society and the pluralism of ethical traditions, the more the Corinthian situation appears to resonate with our own. . . What is clear from the connection between 1Cor 6:9 and Rom 1:26-29 and their Old Testament backgrounds is Paul's endorsement of the view that idolatry, i.e., placing human autonomy to construct one's values above covenant commitments to God, leads to a collapse of moral values in a kind of domino effect."

1 Timothy 1:8-10. "But we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."

The same term *arsenokoitai* is found in 1 Tim 1:10 that has already occurred in 1 Cor 6. The same background of Lev 18 and 20 is prevalent. This time, however, the term seems to be broader than in 1 Cor 6 because the *malakoi* are not mentioned. A distinction between passive and active partners is not made. Probably, the *arsenokoitai* are all those who are involved in any type of homosexual activity.¹⁶⁵

The contribution of 1 Timothy to this discussion is that homosexuality is set in the context of the law, and this law remains binding. Furthermore, "homosexuals" are part of one of the longest lists of vice in the New Testament with a total of fourteen vices. Within these fourteen vices, eight form four pairs of two, whereas the remaining six describe individual categories of sinners.¹⁶⁶ "On closer analysis, the organization of the vices on this list is determined by the order of the precepts of the Decalogue."¹⁶⁷ At least the last half of the list of vices corresponds clearly with the Ten Commandments: "those who kill their fathers or mothers" – fifth commandment, "murderers" – sixth commandment, "immoral men and homosexuals" – seventh commandment, "kidnappers" – eighth commandment, and "liars and perjurers" – ninth commandment.¹⁶⁸ The phrase "whatever else is contrary to sound teaching" may relate to those commandments that are not directly referred to. Understood in this way, homosexuality is also a violation of the seventh commandment.

The Pauline passages that deal with homosexuality show that homosexuality is not limited to just violent and promiscuous activity, nor is it restricted to pederasty. All homosexual activity is against the creation order and therefore against the divine law and is thus sin, which needs to be repented of, forgiven, and given up. Both Old Testament and New Testament address the present situation.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 87.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus* (The New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 31.

¹⁶⁷ Collins, 30.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 87.

4.2.3. Other New Testament Texts on Homosexuality

There are other New Testament texts, which seem to include homosexual activity. For this discussion they are less important than the previous texts. 2 Peter 2:6-10 goes back to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and their sins. Lot is mentioned, who suffered from the lifestyle of the inhabitants of Sodom. Among others, licentiousness, lawlessness, and corrupt desires are mentioned in this passage, obviously encompassing all sexual sins, including homosexuality.¹⁶⁹

In Jude 7-8 the Sodom episode is referred to again. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah "indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh . . . Yet in the same way these men [the heretics of Jude's time], also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties." Again, more than homosexuality seems to be included.¹⁷⁰

In Rev 22:14-15, "dogs" are mentioned among those who will not enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. "Dogs" may refer to gentiles (Matt 15:26), Judaizers (Phil 3:2), heretics (2 Pet 2:22), or male prostitutes (Deut 23:18).¹⁷¹ Aune suggests: "It may be that . . . 'dog' . . . is used more specifically here for male homosexuals, pederasts, or sodomites since the term on the parallel vice list in 21:8 . . . is . . . 'those who are polluted.'"¹⁷²

Rogers compares the numbers of references to the concern for the poor and oppressed in Scripture with those on homosexuality. Whereas the first category contains several thousand references, homosexuality has only few, and—according to Rogers—none of them refer to contemporary Christian homosexuals.¹⁷³ It seems that he wants to point out that the topic "homosexuality" is irrelevant. While such a conclusion does not fit with the biblical data, we acknowledge that indeed there are not many direct references to homosexuality in Scripture. Such a statement is misleading at best. Biblical doctrines are not determined by the quantity of direct references. There is no biblical principle that would require a certain number of texts to be reached in order for an issue to be relevant.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Springett, 142-144.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Springett, 144-148.

¹⁷¹ Cf. David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (Word Biblical Commentary 52C; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1223; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, (New International Commentary on the Old Testament, rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 408; and Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 701; Springett, 148-150.

¹⁷² Aune, 1222-1223.

¹⁷³ Rogers, 86.

Footwashing and Millennium occur clearly only once each in Scripture. This does not hinder stop the practice of footwashing or change the concept of the Millennium. The references on homosexuality in Scripture are enough to reveal to us God's will.

5. Summary

The situation in the New Testament is comparable to that of the Old Testament, and the two parts of Scripture agree with one another. The Old Testament contains texts that clearly deal with homosexuality, as does the New Testament. Both sets of texts are not limited in scope and time and include all homosexual activity across all times. They spell out that homosexual behavior is a sin that needs to be repented of and forgiven. The Pauline text in 1 Cor 6:9-10, especially v. 9, demonstrates that Scripture condemns all forms of homosexual activity. Verse 11 adds: "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." After this list of vices, Paul concludes that some of the Corinthian church members have been involved in these sinful activities, including homosexuality, but they have given that up and live a different life. Such an interpretation affirms the voted statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

6. Implications for the Church

6.1. Suggestions

Where should the Church go from here? Köstenberger, professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, suggests for the Christian church in general:

To be sure, the church's clear proclamation of the biblical teaching on homosexuality must be coupled with the proclamation of God's love for all people, including homosexuals. . . . Homosexuality is not the unpardonable sin, and forgiveness is always available (1 Cor. 6:11). But forgiveness implies repentance, and repentance implies admission of wrong.¹⁷⁴

R. Rice has listed five different possibilities and discusses their problems, pointing out that options 2 and 5 are opposed to the biblical witness:

¹⁷⁴ Köstenberger, 223.

1. Same-sex relations are sinful and so is same-sex attraction. People with same-sex orientation should seek to reverse it.
2. Same-sex relationships are perfectly natural. They fulfill the essential purpose of sexuality just as well as heterosexual relationships do. . . . The Church should welcome into membership people who are involved in loving, committed same-sex relationships.
3. Although the Church must condemn same-sex behavior, it should not exclude people simply because they have a same-sex orientation. To the contrary, it should welcome them into membership and open to them positions of leadership, with the important proviso, however, that they remain celibate. . . .
4. Homosexuality is not part of the order of things that God intended, and the Church cannot give to same-sex relationships the official approval it gives to heterosexual marriage. Nevertheless, people in committed relationships should not be excluded from Christian fellowship. . . .
5. . . . let's affirm each other as fellow believers and together pursue a clearer understanding of this difficult issue.¹⁷⁵

He comes to the conclusion that approach 3 "may have the widest appeal in the Church" and can see approaches 4 and 5 as a middle course, although it may leave those opposed and those affected unsatisfied.¹⁷⁶

6.2. Adventists and Homosexuals

Adventists respect all people, whether heterosexuals or homosexuals. They acknowledge that all human beings are creatures of the heavenly Father whom he loves and whom they also want to love. Each person is extremely valuable in God's sight. Therefore, Adventists are opposed to hating, scorning, or abusing homosexuals. They distinguish between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity. Although they do not condone the sin of homosexual activity, they treat each individual with respect and compassion, knowing that all people are sinners and are dependent on God's grace, yet are also called to serve Christ and separate themselves from sin. While upholding the biblical witness, they support those who wrestle with homosexuality. Of Rice's five options, approach 3 comes the closest to the Adventist position.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Rice, "Is the Church Ready for Same-sex Sex?" in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*, (ed. by David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), part 4 - 82-83.

¹⁷⁶ Rice, 84-85.