

**HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION:
EVOLVING REFLECTIONS**

**A Submission to the Anglican Church of Canada's
Commission on the Marriage Canon**

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PREFACE

My original intent in writing this paper is primarily two fold. First to review the development within the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Church of Canada of the traditional thinking regarding same-sex relationships. Second, since Anglican theology has relied on Scripture, Tradition and Reason, to study the scriptural foundation of the position taken by various biblical scholars on the issue and to apply reason to this issue in order to develop further my own thinking on this issue.

Subsequently in July 6, 2013 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada voted to bring to its next meeting in 2016 a resolution changing the church's law to allow same-sex marriage. A Commission on the Marriage Canon was established. The Commission has invited submissions from interested parties. I am therefore submitting this paper to the Commission.

I am especially indebted to the book, *The Anglican Communion And Homosexuality: A Resource To Enable Listening And Dialogue* (2008), edited by Philip Groves, published at the request of the Primates of the Anglican Communion. Its excellent list of references allowed me to read many of the original papers by scholars referred to in the book. Many of those papers are available online.

My Orientation

My evolving perspective with respect to this issue reflects my background as a Canadian Anglican Christian. I am a straight married man with four children. I am a retired psychologist who has worked with homosexuals and have followed the development of our understanding of sexual orientation and gender issues over the past fifty years or so. My thinking reflects the current views of mainstream psychology which views homosexuality as a normal variation of human characteristics not unlike the colour of one's hair or the colour of one's eyes. Therefore I am not only tolerant of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people but I also believe that they need to be respected and supported. Their civil rights as full human beings should be supported everywhere. They are entitled to find full expression of their sexuality as part of a life abundant.

As a Canadian my thinking has followed the development of attitudes among the general public on this issue. Like most Canadians I had supported civil unions between same-sex couples but not marriage between same-sex couples. However, I have been impressed by the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada that extended to same-sex couples the right to marry. I found their arguments very persuasive and now support marriage between same-sex couples.

As an Anglican I had supported the view that holy matrimony was reserved for those in heterosexual relationships. After long study and prayerful reflection I have now changed my thinking about that issue. I now believe that Jesus' message of radically inclusive love is consistent with the full inclusion of homosexuals and would encompass same-sex marriage.

ANGLICAN POSITIONS ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOSEXUALS

The Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1998, “in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union”. They asserted that homosexual behaviour is incompatible with Scripture and that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage and that they cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions.

In recent years there has been an increasing acceptance of homosexuals within the Anglican community. This has taken the form of statements of support and even ordination of homosexuals to the priesthood and episcopate. There has been a strong movement to allow the blessing of same-sex relationships.

In 2002, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Diocese of New Westminster voted to allow the blessing of same-sex unions by those parishes who choose to do so. In August 2003 the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire elected an openly gay priest, Gene Robinson, as a bishop.

Against that background on 15 October 2003, Anglican leaders from around the world met in Lambeth Palace in an attempt to avoid a schism on the issue. They urged those churches not to proceed with those actions.

In 2004, the Lambeth Commission on Communion issued a report on the issue of homosexuality in the Anglican Communion, which became known as the Windsor Report. This report took a strong stand against homosexual practice, recommended a moratorium on further consecrations of actively homosexual bishops and blessings of same-sex unions, and called for all involved in Robinson's consecration "to consider in all conscience whether they should withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican Communion". However, it stopped short of recommending discipline against the Episcopal Church or Anglican Church of Canada.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality_and_Anglicanism)

The Windsor Report proposed an Anglican Covenant with a process to ensure compliance by the constituent churches of the Anglican Communion. Some saw the main thrust of the Windsor Report, as an attempt to assert the authority of the traditional church positions and to attempt to further strengthen the episcopate and the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In 2006, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, established the Covenant Design Group (CDG) to draft a covenant for the Anglican Communion. The final text of the covenant was sent to the provinces of the Anglican Communion in late 2009. That report and the new Anglican Communion Covenant softened the tone of Anglican Covenant. It recognized the independence of the constituent churches within the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Church of Canada is exploring its position on same-sex marriage. In 2004 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada affirmed “the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same-sex relationships.

In 2007, re-affirmed in 2008, the bishops wrote that, “We are committed, as bishops in Canada, to develop the most generous pastoral response possible within the current teaching of the church” to those in same-sex relationships. They offered examples of possible pastoral responses, one of which included celebration of a Eucharist with the couple, including appropriate intercessory prayers, but not including a nuptial blessing.

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Anglicans Who Have Spoken Out Courageously

There are some Anglicans who have spoken out courageously in support of same-sex couples who seek to have their relationships recognized and blessed. Among those who have impressed me are Archbishop Tutu, the former head of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa. Archbishop Tutu has taken a dramatically different position regarding homosexuals from that of the Lambeth Conference. He made these statements at the launching of the book "Sex, Love & Homophobia", published by Amnesty International UK. Mr Tutu has written the foreword to the human rights group's book. “We struggled against apartheid in South Africa, supported by people the world over, because black people were being blamed and made to suffer for something we could do nothing about; our very skins. It is the same with sexual orientation. It is a given.”

He continued, “Churches say that the expression of love in a heterosexual monogamous relationship includes the physical, the touching, embracing, kissing, the genital act - the totality of our love makes each of us grow to become increasingly godlike and compassionate. If this is so for the heterosexual, what earthly reason have we to say that it is not the case with the homosexual?”

When speaking of the persecution of homosexuals Archbishop Tutu said, these "destructive forces" of "hatred and prejudice" are an evil. "A parent who brings up a child to be a racist damages that child, damages the community in which they live, damages our hopes for a better world. A parent who teaches a child that there is only one sexual orientation and that anything else is evil denies our humanity and their own too." I applaud Bishop Tutu's courage.

Other Anglicans have taken similar positions. Among those are John Shelby Spong, former Episcopal Bishop of Newark, New Jersey and The Rev. Edward J. Mills III, Anglican rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Kingsport, TN, and contributor to Integrity, a publication in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Episcopalians. Similar positions are taken by Integrity Canada.

These positions supportive of homosexual relationship and same-sex marriage are, in part, rooted in biblical scholarship and the authors insist that their positions are compatible with scripture.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Historically, the conclusion of established Bible scholars has been that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures only allow sexual relations within heterosexual marriage, while requiring celibacy outside marriage, with homosexual acts always being intrinsically immoral.

In recent years there has been a reassessment of the Bible's apparent references to homosexuality. An Anglican theologian Derrick Sherwin Bailey (1910–1984) was a Christian theologian, whose 1955 work *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* on homosexuality paved the way for the production of the 1957 Wolfenden Report and for the Parliament of the United Kingdom's decriminalization of homosexuality in England and Wales a decade later. In 1975 he wrote *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* in which he challenged the traditional interpretation of Bible passages purported to condemn homosexuality. In 1980 Boswell wrote a major work on homosexuality and Christianity in which he challenged traditional views. He was followed by Scrogg (1986), Peterson (1986) and Spong (2007). The views of these scholars will be summarized in the sections below.

There has been a reaction to these reassessments. Notable defenders of the traditional interpretation of scripture have been Hays (1986), DeYoung (1988 and 1992), Wright (1984), Gagnon (2009), and others. Again, the views of these scholars will be summarized in the sections below.

What does the Old Testament say about homosexuality?

There are clear prohibitions of homosexual acts in the Holiness Code of Leviticus.

The traditional King James Version (1611) translation of these verses reads,

*Leviticus 18:22 **Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.***
*Leviticus 20:13 **If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.***
KJV

The traditional view is that the Levitical prohibition was accepted by Paul as having continuing application to Christians. (See discussion of views of Wright (1984) below.)

There is a modern challenge to that traditional view. Steve Schuh (2007) in an important essay called *Challenging Conventional Wisdom: How A Conservative Reading Of The Biblical References To Homosexuality Fails To Support Their Traditional Interpretation* wrote, “Many Christians – including a growing number of evangelicals – are finding that a close, conservative reading of the biblical texts, aided by the best evangelical scholarship, suggests that the popular, disapproving summary of ‘what the Bible says’ about homosexuality is not supported by the Bible itself.”[1] He asserted, “In fact, idolatry is not just the primary context in which homosexual acts appear in the Old Testament – it is the only context. The homosexual acts prohibited in Leviticus 18 and 20 are described in the immediate context of idolatry and therefore very likely refer to ritual acts of male homosexual prostitution, as evidenced by at least five historical, biblical references. They appear beside other examples of idolatry intentionally, for they were, like child sacrifice, idol worship, and the sex rites of fertility cults, primary expressions of pagan religion.” [6]

Schuh concludes, “Simply put, a truly conservative reading of the Bible passages said to address homosexuality does not support their traditional interpretation. The conventional wisdom about the Bible and homosexuality, therefore, must be challenged, and a closer reading of the Bible itself is a good place to start.” [14] This view has been refuted by a number of traditionalists on a number of grounds.

An important question is, "What does "abomination" mean?" Did it refer to ritualistic prohibition only? Boswell contended that the Hebrew word "*to'ebah*" (or "*tow`ebah*") usually translated "abomination" seldom refers to something intrinsically evil, like rape or theft, but something which is ritually unclean for Jews, like eating pork or printing marks on one's flesh, or against mixed fabrics. . . . Instead of *to'ebah*, Boswell asserted that the the Hebrew word "*zimmâh*" would have been used if the prohibitions of Lv. 18:22; was not a mere form of "ethnic contamination," (*Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality. p. 100*) like laws against unclean foods, or that of strange haircuts. . . .

However, conservative scholars have pointed out the word is not used in Leviticus for dietary violations, and is only used 2 or 3 times elsewhere to refer to such things as abominable for Israel, and in contrast, *to'ebah* is the word most often used for abomination in reference to grave moral sins, including those which are unmistakably universally sinful. Collectively it is used for all the sins of Lv. 18 + 20. (Lv. 18:27,29) (Dt. 32:16) (Se Wikipedia on abomination.)

What does the New Testament say about homosexuality?

Jesus says nothing directly about homosexuality. (Although conservative bible scholars link statements by Jesus to a broad prohibition of homosexual behaviour and prohibition of same-sex marriage.) The apparent relevant references to homosexuality are found primarily in Paul's epistles.

What does Paul say about homosexuality specifically? If we are referring to homosexuality as we understand it to be today then Paul has nothing of relevance to say. There are passages in Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 1:21, 26-27) and his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9) that have been interpreted to refer to homosexuals or homosexual behaviour.

Romans 1:21, 26-27

The traditional King James Version translation of these verses reads,

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . . . 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (KJV, 1611)

A modern translation perhaps is more understandable. The New International Version reads,

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened . . . 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Historically this passage is often interpreted as an absolute condemnation of homosexuality. This is the position of many Christian denominations today – Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Reformed, Pentecostal, etc.

However other Christians have challenged this traditional interpretation of this passage. Because those who have challenged the interpretation of these verses emphasize that they must be read in the context of the whole passage Romans 1:18-32 (NIV) is reproduced here,

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

*21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.***

*24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They **exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things** rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

*26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women **exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.** 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

The **first challenge** to the traditional view is the view that this passage **only refers to idolatrous, pagan worship which included temple prostitution and has no relevance today**. As quoted above, Steve Schuh (2007) wrote, “In fact, idolatry is not just the primary context in which homosexual acts appear in the Old Testament – it is the only context. The homosexual acts prohibited in Leviticus 18 and 20 are described in the immediate context of idolatry and therefore very likely refer to ritual acts of male homosexual prostitution, as evidenced by at least five historical, biblical references. They appear beside other examples of idolatry intentionally, for they were, like child sacrifice, idol worship, and the sex rites of fertility cults, primary expressions of pagan religion.” He concludes his review of biblical references to homosexuality by saying, “The Bible refers only to homosexual acts between men, and every mention of them is in the immediate context of pagan idolatry, usually male homosexual cult prostitution. A generalized statement about ‘what the Bible says’ about homosexuality that fails to include this context violates the integrity of the biblical text itself. . . .” The plain sense of these texts – in their historical, cultural, biblical contexts – is so unlike the current situation that equating them makes no sense at all. He wrote, “As one writer summarized it, 'Biblical judgements against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate . . . not because the Bible is not authoritative, but simply because it does not address the issues involved.'” . . . “Equating homosexual gang rape, prostitution, and idolatry with sexual love expressed within committed same-sex unions is irresponsible

biblical interpretation, and it is understandably offensive to gay and lesbian people.”

Schuh concludes, “Simply put, a truly conservative reading of the Bible passages said to address homosexuality does not support their traditional interpretation. “

The **second challenge** to the traditional view is the view that **the definition of 'natural' is misunderstood**. Boswell was an important biblical scholar who was one of the first to attempt a new approach to Romans 1. According to DeYoung (1988), professor of New Testament language and literature at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Boswell (1980) had argued that the meaning of the word “nature” (*physikos*) is limited to “what is natural to me”. Boswell had argued that Paul does not refer to those whose own nature or primary orientation is homosexual. Hence Paul condemns heterosexuals acting as homosexuals in a context of idolatry and lust. Paul's only he does not condemn true homosexuals, homosexuals born such, for practising homosexuality.

Following his review of the use of the word *physikos* in many different contexts DeYoung refuted Boswell's view. He concludes the view of those who see *physikos* as meaning “what is natural to me” and thus try to justify inversion or orientation is wrong. He said never does the term have such a meaning in Greek literature or Biblical contexts. He said that *physikos* refers to what is the constitution of man, his being, as derive from the Creator (Genesis 1-2). He notes how the Creator and creation immediately precede in the context (Rom. 1:19-23).

Richard B. Hays (1986), Dean and the George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School, a conservative biblical scholar, also has interpreted Romans 1 with particular attention to the issue of “natural” and “unnatural” in response to the views of Boswell. Hays concluded his analysis saying, “A careful exegesis of the passage shows that Paul unambiguously describes homosexual behavior as a violation of God's intention for humankind.” [184]

Hays wrote, “I have cited these texts at some length because they demonstrate that in Paul's time the categorization of homosexual practices as *para physin* was a commonplace feature of polemical attacks against such behaviour, particularly in the world of Hellenistic Judaism. When this idea turns up in Romans 1 (in a form relatively restrained by comparison to some of the above examples), we must recognize that Paul is hardly making an original contribution to theological thought on the subject; he speaks out of a Hellenistic-Jewish cultural context in which homosexuality is regarded as an abomination, and he assumes that his readers will share his negative judgement of it. In fact, the whole design and logic of his argument demands such an assumption. Though he offers no explicit reflection on the concept of “nature,” it is clear that in this passage Paul identifies “nature” with the created order. The understanding of “nature” in this conventional language does not rest on empirical observation of what actually exists; instead, it appeals to an intuitive conception of what ought to be, of the world as designed by God. Those who indulge in sexual practices *para physin* are defying the creator and demonstrating their own alienation from him.” [194]

In the same way, the charge that these fallen humans have 'exchanged natural relations for unnatural' means nothing more nor less than that human beings, created for heterosexual companionship as the Genesis story bears witness, have distorted even so basic a truth as their sexual identity by rejecting the male and female roles which are 'naturally' theirs in God's created order.” [200]

However, if Schuh's and Boswell's views are correct that this whole passage relates to idolatrous, pagan

worship which included temple prostitution, the conservative view expressed by DeYoung and Hays may be irrelevant today.

A **third challenge** to the traditional view is the view that objects to this passage because it portrays **God as using homosexual urges to punish idolaters**. Bishop Spong (2007) said of this passage, “This is the most overt and, I might add, the strangest condemnation of homosexual acts in the New Testament. . . It is a text frequently quoted to justify blatant homophobia. Yet its obvious meaning is simply ignored or dodged. Let me state that meaning boldly. Paul is asserting that homosexuality is the punishment given by God to those who fail to worship God properly! Homosexuality for Paul is not a sickness or the result of a choice which one has freely made; it is a punishment for the sin of not attending to the details and practices of proper worship. In other words, Paul is saying that God infects people with homosexual desire if they engage in improper worship or use improper images of God. It is both a startling and an ill-informed claim. Imagine what it must be like to live in fear that God will turn your sexual desire "from the natural use of a woman," making the recipient burn with lust toward one of his own gender! If God could or would do that, would God be worthy of anyone's worship? Would God not be an ogre, a demon or something worse?”

Hays looked at this issue differently. He wrote, “The genius of Paul's analysis, of course, lies in his refusal to posit a catalogue of sins as the cause of human alienation from God. Instead, he delves to the root: all other depravities follow from the radical rebellion of the creature against the creator” and (quoting another scholar), “paradoxically reverses the cause and consequence: moral perversion is the result of God's wrath, not the reason for it”. [“189]

Hays said the diseased behaviour detailed in vv. 24-31 is symptomatic of the one sickness of humanity as a whole. Because they have turned away from God, "all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin" (3:9). [190]. . . These and the following sentences, in which the refrain "God gave them up" occurs three times (1:24,26, 28), repeatedly drive home Paul's point: idolatry finally debases both the worshipper and the idol. God's judgement allows the irony of sin to play itself out; the creature's original impulse towards self-glorification ends in self-destruction. The refusal to acknowledge God as creator ends in blind distortion of the creation.” [190]

A **fourth challenge** to the traditional view is the view that Romans 1:21, 24, 26-27 **only applies to exploitative and hedonistic forms of homosexual practice such as sex with slaves, prostitutes, and adolescents**. Scroggs (1983) held that Paul “must have had, could only have had, pederasty in mind.” [122, italics his) DeYoung refutes Scroggs. DeYoung points out that Paul refers to “males” with “males”, not men with boys. He points out a number of other indications that Paul was referring to mutual “men with men” activity and that they “burned with their desire”. [439-440]. DeYoung cites numerous Greek, Roman and Jewish writers who wrote about consenting homosexual relationships. Clearly documenting that such behaviour was well known in the ancient world.

Robert A. J. Gagnon (2009) examined various claims made about this passage. He concluded that “Each piece of evidence that can be culled from the text’s literary and historical context confirms that the Bible’s prohibition of homosexual practice, like its prohibition of adult incestuous unions, is absolute, rejecting all forms of homosexual practice regardless of consent and commitment.”

Among Gagnon's arguments was that, “Paul in Rom 1:24-27 rejects homosexual practice because it is a violation of the God’s creation of “male and female” as a sexual pair in Genesis. In Rom 1:24-27 Paul

intentionally echoed Gen 1:26-27, making eight points of correspondence, in the same tripartite structure, between the two sets of texts (humans/image/likeness, birds/cattle/reptiles, male/female). Paul was rejecting homosexual practice in the first instance because it was a violation of the male-female prerequisite for sexual relations ordained by the Creator at creation, not because of how well or badly it was done in his cultural milieu.” [3]

He also said, “For Paul contended that female-female and male-male intercourse was “contrary to nature” because it violated obvious clues given in the material structures of creation that male and female, not two males or two females, are each others' sexual “counterpart” or “complement” (to use the language of Gen 2:18, 20) in terms of anatomy, physiology, and psychology. What Paul says regarding the vertical vice of idolatry (1:19-23) is equally true of the horizontal vice of same-sex intercourse: male-female complementarity is “clearly seen, being mentally apprehended *by means of the things made*” (1:19-20). [3]

Gagnon noted that Paul in Rom 1:27 “specifically indicts male homosexual relations that involve mutual, reciprocal affections—males, having left behind the natural use of the female, were inflamed with their yearning for one another”— and this precludes any supposition that Paul is thinking only of coercive relationships. [3]

Once again, if Schuh's and Boswell's views are correct that this whole passage relates to idolatrous, pagan worship which included temple prostitution, the conservative views expressed by DeYoung and Gagnon are irrelevant today.

A **fifth challenge** to the traditional view is that, **whatever Paul meant by this passage, that it is irrelevant given our understanding of homosexuality today. This is based on the supposition that Paul had no concept of committed homosexual unions.** Gagnon (2009, p. 4) asserts however, there is plenty of evidence for the conception and existence of loving homosexual relationships, including semi-official “marriages” between men and between women in Paul's time. Gagnon cites quotes from numerous Greco-Roman moralists, Church Fathers, and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus to support his view.

But, once again, if Schuh's and Boswell's views are correct that this whole passage relates to idolatrous, pagan worship which included temple prostitution, the conservative view expressed by Gagnon is irrelevant today.

A **sixth challenge** to the traditional view is that of Marcus Borg (1994) who has suggested that these verses may have been a part of a “rhetorical strategy” in which Paul attempts to win the good will of his Jewish-Christian readers by painting Gentiles as idolatrous and impure. Borg suggests these verses should not be taken as “law” but as part of a larger rhetorical strategy by which Paul addresses an early Christian community.

Conclusion Regarding Romans 1:18-32

Hays (1986) concluded his paper saying, “We must forthrightly recognize that in Romans 1 Paul portrays homosexual activity as a vivid and shameful sign of humanity's confusion and rebellion against God; then we must form our moral choices soberly in light of that portrayal.” [211]

Even the ECUSA statement in response to the Windsor Report “To Set Our Hope on Christ”, while asserting that the issues of blessing of same-sex relationships and ordination of homosexuals must be addressed in a very broad context, states, “When we read in Leviticus or Romans that a specific behavior is proscribed, it is helpful to acknowledge from the first that the biblical writer’s words are neither unclear nor irrelevant. St. Paul, as a first century Jewish male steeped in the tradition that includes Leviticus, was strongly opposed to same-sex relations . . .”

But, once again, if Schuh's and Boswell's views are correct that this whole passage relates to only idolatrous, pagan worship which included temple prostitution, the conservative view expressed by Hays and others may not be valid.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams Williams said in an interview that Romans 1 favors neither side in the debate over equal treatment of gays and lesbians in the Anglican Communion: It would not help liberals because it states that homosexual behavior was "as obviously immoral as idol worship or disobedience to parents." It would not help conservatives, who have been "up to this point happily identifying with Paul's castigation of someone else," and challenge them to ask whether they were right to judge others. He concluded: "This does nothing to settle the exegetical questions fiercely debated at the moment" in the Anglican Communion.

1 Corinthians 6:9 (and 1 Timothy 1:10)

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9 and see also Timothy 1:10) there is another passage that has been used to condemn homosexuality. Like Romans 1:21, 26-27 historically this passage is often interpreted as an absolute condemnation of homosexuality. Most modern translations of the Bible use the term “homosexuals” in translating words in Paul's 1 Corinthians 6:9. The King James Version (KJV) of 1611 did not use the term. The KJV was written long before the word “homosexual” was invented in 1868. The 1611 KJV reads,

“ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (malakoi), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (arsenokoitai)”.

The two Greek words -- *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* -- used by Paul require close attention. It appears that in using these words he may be referring to homosexuality; but these terms may not, in fact, refer to homosexuality as we know it. According to some the meaning if these terms is unclear. By contrast to the KJV, some commonly used modern translations use the term “homosexual” or “homosexuals” others to not.

- The Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1946) reads “homosexuals” (for *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* combined).
- The Good News Bible (GNB, 1966) reads “homosexual perverts” (for *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* combined).
- New International Version (NIV, 1973) reads “men who have sex with men” (for *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* combined).
- New International Version (NIV, 1984) reads male prostitutes

(for *malakoi*) and homosexual offenders” (for *arsenokoitai*).

- The New King James Version (NKJV, 1983) reads “homosexuals” (for *malakoi*) and “sodomites” (for *arsenokoitai*).
- The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989) reads “male prostitutes (for *malakoi*) and sodomites” (for *arsenokoitai*).
- The Catholic New American Bible (NAB, 1992) reads, boy prostitutes (for *malakoi*) and sodomites (for *arsenokoitai*).
- The English Standard Version (ESV, 2001) reads “men who practice homosexuality” (for *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* combined).

What a *wide* range of views are reflected here in how the words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* are translated and what is being condemned! So what do these Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* mean? It is clear that the teams of biblical scholars who translated these words had different views on what the words meant.

These various translations reflect various views about how these words should be interpreted. Just as in the case of Romans 1:21, 24, 26-27, challenges have been raised to the traditional interpretations of this passage. Some of these challenges are analogous to the challenges raised to Romans 1:21, 24, 26-27.

The conservative, traditional view of Corinthians 6:9 (and 1 Timothy 1:10) is that homosexuality is absolutely prohibited – both homosexual activity and homosexual urges. This view is reflected in the RSV, GNB, and NKJV) which use the term “homosexuals” which would seem to condemn even those homosexuals who remain celibate. This is James DeYoung's (1992) point of view. “English translations are justified in their use of words such as 'homosexuals' or 'sodomists.' Besides, these terms should not be limited to acts or behavior. Just as an adulterous orientation or condition is wrong, so is a homosexual one.” That being said he adds in a footnote, “It may be that one should distinguish between sexual feelings (amoral) and sexual lust or desire (immoral).” [217]

A challenge to the conservative, traditional view is that the words would limit the condemnation of homosexuality to homosexual behavior, thus would not condemn homosexuals who remain celibate. This seems to be the view taken by other translations (e.g. NIV and ESV).

D.S. Bailey (1975) was an Anglican theologian who wrote a number of papers on homosexuality. According to DeYoung, Bailey took the term *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as denoting males who actively engage in homosexual acts, in contrast to *malako* (*malakoi*, "effeminate"), those who engage passively in such acts. Hence Bailey limited the term's reference in Paul's works to acts alone and laments modern translations of the term as "homosexuals." Bailey wants to distinguish between "the homosexual condition (which is morally neutral) and *homosexual practices*" [italics in source]. In Bailey's judgment Paul is precise in his terminology and Moffatt's translation "sodomites" best represents Paul's meaning of *arsenokoitai*.

According to DeYoung, Bailey insisted that Paul knew nothing of inversion [i.e. homosexuality] as an inherited trait, or an inherent condition due to psychological or glandular causes, and consequently regards all homosexual practice as evidence of perversion. DeYoung said Bailey clearly denied that the homosexual condition was known by biblical writers.

Bailey would see both “passive” and “active” homosexual activity as condemned by Paul but raises question about the relevance of this prohibition to homosexuality as we understand it today.

A challenge to the conservative, traditional view is that the words would limit the condemnations to practices in the ancient Greco-Roman world and of no specific relevance to homosexuals today. This is the view reflected in the Roman Catholic NAB. There is a footnote that explains, “The Greek word translated as boy prostitutes may refer to calamites, i.e., boys or young men who were kept for purposes of prostitution, a practice not uncommon in the Grec-Roman world. . . . The term translated sodomites would then refer to adult males who indulged in homosexual practices with such boys.”

Boswell (1980) cited "linguistic evidence and common sense" to support his conclusion that the word means "male sexual agents, i.e. active male prostitutes." It is clear throughout Boswell's extensive discussion of his research on this term that Boswell defines *arsenokoitai* to refer to male prostitutes. Boswell suggested that Paul would probably not disapprove of "gay inclination," "gay relationships," "enduring love between persons of the same gender," or "same-sex eroticism" (112, 116-17).

David F. Wright, New College, Edinburgh, was a distinguished evangelical church historian and theologian in the Church of Scotland. He wrote (Wright, 1984) a detailed, lengthy rebuttal of all of the claims of Boswell. He concluded that in using the word *arsenokoitai* Paul was quoting the Greek Septuagint Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. And that, “It is surely a safe presumption that [this word] refers to the Levitical proscription of male homosexual activity.” [p. 353] Among other observations Wright makes is that very early translations into Old Syriac and Coptic make it clear that the Greek word was rendered “lying (or sleeping) with males”. He cites Jewish writers from that period who had used the word itself and comparable phrases to speak generally of male activity with males rather than specifically categorized male sexual engagement with a teenager. He said it is difficult to believe this word was intended to indict only the commonest Greek relationship involving an adult and a teenager.

Robin Scroggs (1983), professor of New Testament, Union Theological Seminary, argued that *arsenokotaia* was of Hellenistic Jewish coinage, perhaps influenced by awareness of rabbinic terminology." He had concluded the term is derived from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 where the the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew scriptures juxtaposes the two words *rsenow* (*arsenos*, "male") and *kothn* (*koitn*, "bed"), and represents the Hebrew *mikab zkr*, "lying with a male". Yet, according to DeYoung, Scroggs understood the general meaning of "one who lies with a male" to have a very narrow reference. With the preceding *malakoi* (1 Cor 6:9), which Scroggs interprets as "the effeminate call-boy," *arsenokoitai* is the active partner "who keeps the *malakos* as a 'mistress' or who hires him on occasion to satisfy his sexual desires" (108). Hence *arsenokoitai* does not refer to homosexuality in general, to female homosexuality, or to the generic model of pederasty. It certainly cannot refer to the modern gay model, he affirms (109).

This is Scrogg's interpretation of the term in 1 Tim 1:10 also. The combination of *prnoi* (*pornoi*, "fornicators"), *arsenokoitai*, and *andrapodista* (*andrapodistai*, "slave-dealers") refers to "male

prostitutes, males who lie [with them], and slave dealers [who procure them]" (120). It again refers to that specific form of pederasty "which consisted of the enslaving of boys as youths for sexual purposes, and the use of these boys by adult males" (121). Even "serious minded pagan authors" condemned this form of pederasty. He then uses these instances of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy to interpret the apparently general condemnation of both female and male homosexuality in Romans 1. Consequently Paul "must have had, could only have had pederasty in mind" (122, italics in source). According to Scrogg, "We cannot know what Paul would have said about the "contemporary model of adult/adult mutuality in same sex relationships" (122). Both on the basis of the meaning of the terms and of the literary phenomenon of a "catalogue of vices," Scroggs argues that the Scriptures are "irrelevant and provide no help in the heated debate today" (129). The "model in today's Christian homosexual community is so different from the model attacked by the New Testament" that "Biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today's debate. They should no longer be used in denominational discussions about homosexuality . . . should in no way be a weapon to justify refusal of ordination . . ." (127).

Wright's rebuttal to Boswell would apply equally to Scrogg's interpretation.

DeYoung, (1992, p. 207) in a rebuttal to Bailey, Boswell, and Scroggs wrote, "Biblical support for homosexual inclination in the contexts where homosexual acts are described adds to the case for the ancient distinction. In Rom 1:21-28 such phrases as 'reasonings', 'heart', 'become foolish', 'desires of the heart', 'lie', 'passions of dishonor', 'burned in the desire', 'knowledge', and 'reprobate mind' prove Paul's concern for disposition and inclination along with the 'doing' or 'working' of evil. Habits betray what people are within, as also the Lord Jesus taught (cf. Matt 23:28). The inner condition is as important as the outer act; one gives rise to the other (cf. Matt 5:27) . . . historical evidence demonstrates that ancient concepts of homosexuality, though primarily understood as sexual acts, cannot be limited to acts alone. It is plausible, then, that the term *arsenokoitai* may include both acts and orientation or desire at least in the contexts of Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1. Paul knew about the immorality of Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus (note the similarity of Eph 4:17-24 and 5:3-12 with 1 Timothy 1 and 1 Corinthians 6)." [p. 207-208]

DeYoung continued, "In surveying those who have written on the meaning of the term, Bailey, Boswell, and Scroggs have erred or have been incomplete when they, respectively, define the term as "perverts," "male sexual agents" or "active male prostitutes," and "pederasts." It is more credible that historical and cultural evidence supports the conclusion that the term is broad enough to include both the various forms of homosexual acts and the homosexual condition, inversion or orientation. The studies by Wright and others supply the linguistic evidence for the more general sense of 'homosexuals.'" [p. 213]

Conclusion Corinthians 6:9 and 1:10

But, once again, if Schuh's, Scrogg's and Boswell's views are correct that this whole passage (1 Corinthians 6:9 and also Timothy 1:10) relates to idolatrous, pagan worship which included temple prostitution, the conservative view of this passage is incorrect and the passage is irrelevant to the discussion of the legitimacy of same-sex relationships today. However, it seems to me that Wright and DeYoung make compelling arguments to show that Paul's condemnations are broader than that and include any homosexual behavior – or probably any homosexual impulses or thoughts.

Conclusion the Old and New Testament Views of Homosexuality

Conservative biblical scholars such as Wright, Hays, Gagnon, DeYoung express the traditional view that in both the Old and New Testament there is an absolute condemnation of homosexuality.

But, once again, if Schuh's and Boswell's views are correct that all passages in the Bible which seem to condemn homosexuality actually relate to idolatrous, pagan worship which included temple prostitution, the conservative view of these passages is incorrect and the passages are irrelevant to the discussion of the legitimacy of same-sex relationships today.

However, it seems to me that Hays, Gagnon, DeYoung make compelling cases for the view that Paul would reject any sexual practice outside of marriage – considering it fornication – and would regard any homosexual practice with abhorrence.

I understand that those who believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God would have difficulty accepting any view that would question any position on faith and practice that would contradict the clear text. Likewise, those caring, sincere, loving Christians with conservative views would have difficulty accepting a position that accepts homosexual behaviour as anything other than sinful. Those people need to be respected and understood.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Reason, along with Scripture and Tradition, is one of the three principle authorities for Anglican theologians. The book *The Anglican Communion And Homosexuality* recognizes science as a contributor to our understanding of and approach to homosexuality. As a retired psychologist who has worked with gay and lesbian people I believe that marriage is helpful to their health and well-being. I am aware of the great damage done sexually to children in the care of the church by church people and the inaction of church officials. The Anglican Church's response to gay and lesbian people often has been a reflection of that type of harmful attitude.

My reading of the Bible tells me we should not make distinctions between people based on their inherent characteristics. In Galatians 3:28 (KJV) Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

My reading of the Bible tells me that our approach to homosexuals should reflect the Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." and "Love thy neighbors as thyself."

Peter Steinke (2006) has written [in a context not related to homosexuality], "When we ask what is the intended or essential character and vocation of the creature [i.e., human being] Christian theology turns to the symbol of the *imago dei*. As reflection of the divine form of life, humans are responsive, relational creatures. To be created in the likeness of God means God created someone who corresponds to him -- to whom God can speak and give, to whom God can invite and bless. The creature is created for relationship and specifically the relationship designated by the biblical word *love*. In loving God and one another we image God. The creature's vocation, given and enabled by God, is to relate to God as a partner in covenant . . . and to join in compassion with the human family to reflect the love of God."

As I reflect on this passage by Steinke it seems important to recognize that homosexuals too are human beings created in the image of God. They too are responsive, relational creatures who are created for relationship and specifically the relationship called love and to join in compassion with the human family to reflect the love of God.

My further reflection on the theme of Genesis centres on Genesis 2:18 “The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'“ It is not good for a man or woman to be alone – even if that person is a homosexual. It is healthier to be in a committed relationship than to be alone. It is healthier for society if homosexual persons are in long-term committed relationships than alone. If we are committed to the health of people, we should encourage marriage. The partner that is suitable for a man or woman who is homosexual is another person of the same sex. There are many tragic stories of homosexual persons who have given in to pressure to marry a heterosexual partner only to have the marriage collapse in the face of sexual frustration. This is unhealthy for the partners and the children in the family (American Psychological Association, undated), (Buffie, 2011).

Paul, too, recognized the importance of marriage. When speaking of unmarried persons he wrote, “But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” (I Corinthians 7:9) I believe this is true of homosexuals as well.

In the past the Church has changed its stance on other important issues, including acceptance of slavery, prohibition of remarriage of divorced individuals, and the prohibition of women from speaking, teaching or being ordained. The Church has a sad history of rejecting scientific findings, including the fact that the earth goes around the sun and evolution takes place. It no longer burns scientists at the stake or demonizes them as it did in the case of Charles Darwin but it seems to me that the Church's continued attitude toward homosexuals is another example of its anti-science stance. I believe it is time for the Anglican Church to change its stance toward homosexuals.

The official position of the Anglican Communion is that, while we should be supportive of homosexuals, they should remain celibate. I believe this is an unreasonable position. Most of us would not want to be condemned to a life of celibacy against our inclinations and wishes; therefore we should not condemn homosexuals to a life of celibacy. The position that expects homosexuals to remain celibate is sometime cast in terms of an equivalent position with regard to heterosexuals. Heterosexuals too are expected to remain celibate outside of marriage. Reason tells me that this is *not at all* an equivalent position. It is a false analogy. The heterosexual who is not married can hope for marriage that is blessed in the eyes of the church. The homosexual person is denied that hope under the official position of the Anglican Communion. This position strikes me as being equivalent to the odious doctrine of “separate but equal” that justified segregation and intolerable conditions on black people in the Southern United States prior to the Civil Rights movement – and which was largely supported by Southern Anglicans. Reason tells me the official position of the Anglican Communion position in respect to homosexuals has parallels with that odious doctrine of “separate but equal”.

I believe the committed, loving relationships of same-sex couples should receive the full blessings of the church for same sex-marriages in the form of the rite of Holy matrimony. They are entitled to find full expression of their sexuality as part of a life abundant. My interpretation of scripture and reason tells me that Jesus' message of radically inclusive love is consistent with same-sex marriage.

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Timothy 1.10)', Vigiliae Christianae 38, 1984

External Sites

Anglican Church of Canada Commission on the Marriage Canon.

<http://www.anglican.ca/about/ccc/cogs/cmcc/>

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Advent Letter 2007

www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2007/12/14/ACNS4354 International Anglican conversations on Human Sexuality

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terminology_of_homosexuality#Early_history and

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bible_and_homosexuality

On the meaning of malakoi and arsenokoitai See www.gaychristian101.com/Malakoi.html and

www.gaychristian101.com/Define-Arsenokoites.html and www.religioustolerance.org/homarsen.htm

www.equip.org/articles/is-arsenokoitai-really-that-mysterious- This is a fundamentalist article that asserts that Paul was condemning any homosexual acts.

Extensive discussions and references are available in the following web sites:

<http://www.clgs.org/> The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS)

<http://integritycanada.org/> Integrity Canada is a national network of local Integrity chapters, members, and friends working toward the full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the life and ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada.

<http://dignitycanada.org/sin.html> Canada's organization of Roman Catholics who are concerned about their church's sexual theology. Anglican Bishop Spong and many others are sited.

Blessing Same-Sex Unions: Theological Reflection and Resources for Dialogue and Parish Study:

<http://integritycanada.org/blessing.html#reflection>

Wikipedia on abomination [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abomination_\(Bible\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abomination_(Bible))

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