

Neglected References for Sexuality Forum

Homosexuality and the Church:

Resources by Robert A. J. Gagnon

Note: Out of a forum on "Homosexuality and the Church" at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary on Apr. 20, 2008 came a two-page bibliography of references that excluded every book defending the scriptural standard of a male-female prerequisite for sexual relations. It contained 13 books and articles, of which 11 works were devoted exclusively to the homosexualist agenda and two books consisted of articles on both sides of the debate but predominantly the homosexualist side. Not a single mention was made of any of my work. This list circulated privately to some people for further suggestions.

The public revision that has gone out to the LPTS community, which can be viewed [here](#), was allegedly "quite intentional [about] including diverse voices ... so that we as a community might begin to dialogue together on this topic wherever we may be theologically and personally" (so the author of the list who emailed me after my initial posting). However, it added only two pieces defending the historic scriptural position (my first book and a book by Marty Soards), but then added also three more books on the homosexualist side (by John Boswell, Jack Rogers, and Letha Scanzoni/Virginia Mollenkott) and another piece by the Campolos that is mostly supportive of the homosexualist side. So the revision which is suppose to be "intentional [about] including diverse voices" now lists 14 works devoted exclusively to the homosexualist line, 3 that are predominantly supportive of that agenda, and only 2 that are exclusively devoted to uphold a two-sexes prerequisite. How can a list like this be "intentionally diverse" when 90% of what is contained therein exclusively or primarily supports only one side?

The new version continues to single out the work of David Fredrickson as an especially important piece without any mention of the fact that I have an extensive, 34-page critique of Fredrickson's article that refutes every significant argument that he makes (which, incidentally, can be easily viewed online, in addition to the print copy). I have debated Fredrickson in the past and he now refuses to debate me on the grounds that (his words) I am able to "clean his clock." The new version continues to indicate that Dale Martin's work is "brilliant" even though both the email exchange that I had with him and my beginning refutation of his book, both available on my website, would suggest otherwise. The revision continues to cite the work of Myers/Scanzoni (plus an article by Myers and another book by Scanzoni) but again makes no mention of the 110-page critique that I have made of the book, also readily available online. The new version makes no mention of my "Two Views" book with Dan O. Via, despite the fact that many have considered it the best short book representing both sides. The new version adds the book by Jack Rogers but makes no mention of the 60 pages of critique that I have online at my website. The new version continues to cite Stacy Johnson's book and a website piece by him but makes no mention of my recent audio talks at Princeton Seminary (total: 5 hours) critiquing the main premises of Johnson's work. The revision still makes no mention of the works of Webb, Hays, Schmidt, Swartley, Zehnder, Chambers, Jones, or Nolland. Granted, one can't fit everything in a 2-page handout. Yet one could do a lot more to achieve balance than the lopsided 9 to 1 ratio that now exists. Will the theological left ever play fair with the evidence available? I suspect that they know that to do so would show just how weak their case really is.—Robert Gagnon, April 23, 2008.

Books

The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001).

Gagnon, an Associate Professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, has written what is arguably the most comprehensive work on the subject of Scripture and homosexual practice. This 500-page book gives thorough coverage to the Old Testament witness in its ancient Near Eastern context, the witness of early Judaism in its Greco-Roman context, the witness of

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Jesus, the witness of Paul, and the problems with the major hermeneutical arguments used to discount the witness of Scripture, including the misuse of science.

With Dan O. Via, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

In his short book consists of a 40-page essay by Dan O. Via that makes the homosexualist case and a 50-page essay by Robert Gagnon that makes the complementarian case; each then offers a 6-page response to the other's essay. Gagnon's work contains note numbers that key to online companion piece, "Notes to Gagnon's Essay in the Gagnon-Via *Two Views* Book" (2003; 50 pgs.; <http://www.robagnon.net/2Views/HomoViaRespNotesRev.pdf>). See also: "Rejoinder to Dan O. Via's Response" (2003; 29 pgs.; <http://robagnon.net/2Views/homoViaRejoinder.pdf>). This book is a good place to begin an exploration of both sides of the debate.

Articles:

"How Bad Is Homosexual Practice According to Scripture and Does Scripture's Indictment Apply to Committed Homosexual Unions?" (2007; 11 pgs.; online: <http://robagnon.net/articles/HomosexHowBadIsIt.pdf>).

This article is the best short summary of Gagnon's arguments regarding homosexual practice.

"Why the Disagreement over the Biblical Witness on Homosexual Practice? A Response to Myers and Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together?*"

Reformed Review 59 (2005): 19-130 (online: <http://www.westernsem.edu/wtseminary/assets/Gagnon2%20Aut05.pdf>).

This lengthy 112-page article synthesizes and updates Gagnon's previous work through critical interaction with the Myers/Scanzoni book. This is the place to go for arguments against a homosexualist reading for someone who wants more documentation than the 11-page article above without reading 500 pages. Also provides an updated discussion of science issues.

"Does the Bible Regard Same-Sex Intercourse as Intrinsically Sinful?" in *Christian Sexuality: Normative and Pastoral Principles* (ed. R. E. Saltzman; Kirk House, 2003), 106-55.

This 50-page article makes the case for Scripture's absolute, exceptionless indictment of homosexual practice. It focuses mainly on the use of the creation texts and on Paul's views in relation to orientation theories in the Greco-Roman world. The article interacts critically with an essay by Mark Allen Powell (a Lutheran NT scholar) entitled "The Bible and Homosexuality," which appeared in *Faithful Conversations: Christian Perspectives on Homosexuality* (ed. J. Childs; Fortress, 2003), 19-40.

"A Comprehensive and Critical Review Essay of *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture, Part 2,*" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 25 (2003): 179-275 (also online: <http://www.robagnon.net/articles/homoBalchHBTRReview2.pdf>).

This 97-page article critiques the articles by Christopher Seitz, Robert Jewett, and David Fredrickson, along with a critique of David Balch's criticism of Gagnon's work. Especially important here is the critique of the important article by Fredrickson on pp. 206-39. For a critique of the rest of the Balch volume (except for Phyllis Bird and William Schoedel), see "Part 1" in *HBT* 22 [2000]: 174-243 (also online, at: <http://robagnon.net/articles/homoBalchHBTRReview1.pdf>).

Neglected References for Sexuality Forum
Homosexuality and the Church:
Resources by Robert A. J. Gagnon

“Old Testament and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of the Case Made by Phyllis Bird,” *Zeitschrift für Altestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117 (2005): 367-94.

This published article critiques one of the best homosexualist readings of the Old Testament, the article by Phyllis Bird in the Balch volume (cited above). Good for Gagnon's views on the creation texts, Sodom and related stories, homosexual cult figures (the *qedeshim*), and the Levitical prohibitions.

“Dale Martin's Poststructuralist Persona and His Historical-Critical Real Self: An Exchange Between Robert Gagnon and Dale Martin over Martin's Critique of Gagnon in *Sex and the Single Savior*” (2006; online:

<http://robgagnon.net/DaleMartinRobertGagnonExchange.htm>).

An interesting e-mail exchange between Martin and Gagnon about the inconsistency in Martin's approach as someone who puts on a hat that says all textual meaning is indeterminate but writes about Gagnon's work as though he knows not only what Gagnon's writings mean but also what Gagnon's motives are in writing. See also Gagnon's beginning response to Martin's book in the online article: “Dale Martin and the Myth of Total Textual Indeterminacy”

(<http://robgagnon.net/DaleMartinResponse.htm>).

“Are There Universally Valid Sex Precepts? A Critique of Walter Wink's Views on the Bible and Homosexuality,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 24 (2002): 72-125 (also online: <http://www.robgagnon.net/articles/homoWinkHBTResp.pdf>).

This 53-page article critiques the work of Walter Wink on homosexuality, both his article “Homosexuality and the Bible” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith* (ed. W. Wink; Fortress, 1999), 33-49, and his review of Gagnon's book in *Christian Century*. The article focuses on Wink's argument that there are no universally valid sex precepts and nearly all of the Bible's sexual standards are merely cultural mores that must be critiqued by the love commandment. Gagnon investigates each of Wink's alleged analogies to the Bible's stance on homosexual practice (including divorce/remarriage, polygamy, and sex with a menstruant) and shows why they are bad analogies. See also the exchange by Wink and Gagnon in *Christian Century* 2002, online: <http://robgagnon.net/Reviews/homoWinkExchanges.pdf>.

“Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24 (2005): 293-303.

Discusses the difference between biological orientation and Christian identity from a scriptural perspective and proposes three scriptural principles for clinical practice.

“Sexuality,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (eds. K. J. Vanhoozer, et al; SPCK / Baker Academic, 2005), 739-48.

Uses Jesus' sexual ethics as a basis for examining sexual ethics in Scripture generally and Scripture's treatment of homosexual practice in particular.

“Homosexuality” in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics* (eds. C. Campbell-Jack, et al.; Intervarsity Press, 2006), 327-32.

Develops a philosophic nature argument for why homosexual practice is wrong.

Neglected References for Sexuality Forum
Homosexuality and the Church:
Resources by Robert A. J. Gagnon

“Case Not Made: A Response to Prof. John Thorp’s “Making the Case” for Blessing Homosexual Unions in the Anglican Church of Canada” (2007, 30 pgs.; online: <http://www.robagnon.net/articles/homosexThorpCanadaResp.pdf>). Published in *God, Gays, and the Church* (ed. L. Nolland; Latimer Trust, 2008).
A refutation of a paper written by a classics professor for the Anglican Church of Canada. Presents a relatively brief overview of arguments against affirmation of homosexual practice.

“Does Jack Rogers’s Book ‘Explode the Myths’ about the Bible and Homosexuality and ‘Heal the Church’?” (2006; in four installments totaling 45 pgs.; begins online at: <http://robagnon.net/articles/RogersBookReviewed.pdf>).
A critique of a work that has received a lot of play in the PCUSA (it is written by a former theology professor at Fuller and San Francisco Theological Seminary and moderator of the PCUSA) but is characterized by great misrepresentation of the work of others, particularly that of Gagnon, and a distinct lack of knowledge of Scripture in its historical and literary context. See also: “How Jack Rogers Continues to Distort Scripture and My Work” (2006; 5 pgs.; online: <http://robagnon.net/articles/RogersBookRespToRogersReply1.pdf>); and “Jack Rogers’s Flawed Use of Analogical Reasoning” (2006; 12 pgs.; online: <http://robagnon.net/articles/RogersUseAnalogies.pdf>).

“Rowan Williams’ Wrong Reading of Romans [1:24-27] (...and John 14:6)” (2007, 11 pgs.; online: <http://robagnon.net/articles/homosexRowanWilliamsResp.pdf>); abridged version published in *The Church of England Newspaper* (May 4, 2007), 22-23).
Critiques the Archbishop of Canterbury’s argument that Paul’s primary point in Romans 1-2 was to critique the self-righteous who judge others, a point that challenges the position of persons today who judge those engaging in homosexual relations. Gagnon’s article shows that Paul never held that believers should not judge sexual immorality committed by those inside the church.

“Did Jesus Approve of a Homosexual Couple in the Story of the Centurion at Capernaum?” (2007, 8 pgs.; online: <http://robagnon.net/articles/homosexCenturionStory.pdf>).

“Was Jesus in a Sexual Relationship with the Beloved Disciple?” (2008; 8 pgs.; online: <http://robagnon.net/articles/HomosexBelovedDisciple.pdf>).

Audio Resource:

“The Bible and Homosexual Practice: A Critique of Stacy Johnson’s *A Time to Embrace*.” Obtainable through media@ptsem.edu.
Three lectures Delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary (Mar. 4-5, 2008) on CD or through online download. *Talk 1*: “Did the Apostle Paul Reject Only Hedonistic and Exploitative Forms of Homosexual Practice?” *Talk 2*: “Genesis and Jesus on a Male-Female Prerequisite for Sexual Bonds.” *Talk 3*: “What Nature Arguments and Science Have to Say about Homosexuality.” For more information go to <http://robagnon.net/ArticlesOnline.htm>.

More Online Material

Go to www.robagnon.net for additional online material. For Gagnon’s “Answers to E-Mails” go to <http://robagnon.net/AnswersToEMails.htm>.

Neglected References for Sexuality Forum
Homosexuality and the Church:
Resources by Robert A. J. Gagnon

Resources by Other Authors:

Markus Zehnder, "Observations on the Relationship between David and Jonathan and the Debate on Homosexuality," *Westminster Theological Journal* 69.1 (Spring 2007): 127-74.

William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Intervarsity Press, 2001).

Willard M. Swartley, *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment* (Herald Press, 2003).

Richard B. Hays, "Homosexuality," in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 379-406.

Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Intervarsity, 1995).

Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Westminster John Knox, 1995).

Lisa Nolland (ed.), *God, Gays, and the Church: Human Sexuality in Christian Thinking* (Latimer Press, 2008).

Alan Chambers (ed.), *God's Grace and the Homosexual Next Door: Reaching the Heart of the Gay Men and Women in Your World* (Harvest House, 2006).

Stanton L. Jones and Alex W. Kwee, "Scientific Research, Homosexuality, and the Church's Moral Debate: An Update," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24.4 (2005): 304-16.

Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-gays?: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Intervarsity, 2007).

Alan Sears & Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* (Broadman & Holman, 2003).