

JACK ROGERS'S FLAWED USE OF ANALOGICAL REASONING IN *JESUS, THE BIBLE, AND HOMOSEXUALITY*

Dr. Robert A. J. Gagnon

Associate Professor of New Testament, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Nov. 2, 2006

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Jack Rogers, in his multiply flawed book *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality* (Westminster John Knox, 2006), predicates his argument for homosexual practice largely on the use of analogies. He insists—parroting many before him—that slavery and women's roles constitute the best analogues to the issue of homosexual practice. According to Rogers, the church's reactions to homosexual persons follow a similar "pattern" to earlier reactions to persons of African descent and women. The discussion of these matters dominates chs. 2 and 3 of Rogers's book (pp. 17-51, notes on pp. 131-37). It is also the opening salvo in Rogers's online "11 Talking Points . . . And how Robert Gagnon gets them wrong" (<http://www.drjackrogers.com/>) in which he contends:

1. For 200 years leading theologians taught that the Bible supported slavery, segregation, and the subordination of women. The reason they got it wrong is that they were relying on Scottish Common Sense Philosophy (including appeals to "natural law," selective literalism, and proof-texting) and the scholastic theology of Francis Turretin instead of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Many of those who oppose equal rights for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) rely on these same discredited approaches to scripture.

[Note: For part 1 of my response to Rogers's "Talking Points" and the (to date) four part critique of his book go to <http://www.robagnon.net/ArticlesOnline.htm> and scroll down; or, more directly, click [here](#) for my response to "Talking Points," and [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for installments 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively, of critique of his book.]

In contrast to Rogers's claim, I make the following argument: **The New Testament's and the church's opposition to committed sexual unions of three or more persons and to loving adult incest is a far superior analogue to Scripture's and the church's opposition to adult, committed homosexual unions than is support for the oppression of blacks and women by some leading theologians of the past.** I am referring here to *adult, consensual, and committed* incest and polyamory, not incestuous rape, pedophilia, or promiscuity. Rogers never addresses this problem with his argument.

Good analogical reasoning requires an ability to distinguish between near and far analogies. The best analogy is the analogy with the most points of correspondence to the object of comparison and the fewest points of substantive dissimilarity. *Rogers has chosen distant analogues over close analogues because the closer analogies won't get him to where he wants to go: approval of homosexual marriage.* The church still rejects multiple-partner unions and incest, even of an adult, loving, and committed sort. Since these prohibitions are formally and logically related to the church's absolute opposition to homosexual practice (as we shall see), the church's ongoing opposition to faithful incest and polyamory suggests that the church should continue to oppose homosexual unions.

Rogers doesn't like that conclusion so he instead ignores altogether the closest analogues and opts for more distant analogues in order to prop up a predetermined ideology.

Why Slavery and Women's Roles Are Poor Analogues

The bottom line is that alleged analogies from slavery and women's roles are inferior analogies. As regards *slavery*, (1) the Bible nowhere endorses theories of racial inferiority of African persons, while the New Testament rejects distinctions based fundamentally on ethnicity. Although Rogers repeatedly tries to lump together ethnicity and sexual impulses as equally benign—a homosexual “orientation” is nothing more than a sexual impulse—the New Testament categorically rejects such an equation by scrupulously maintaining distinctions between different kinds of sexual impulses.

(2) The biblical witness also offers no compelling witness for preserving the institution of slavery. Yet it does clearly show a strong vested interest in preserving a male-female prerequisite for valid sexual unions. Indeed, there is a great deal of material in the Bible that is critical toward slavery, in both Testaments—and this toward a form of slavery that was in many respects less pernicious than the race-based institution of slavery of the pre-Civil War American South. But there is no indication anywhere in Scripture of the slightest hesitation in rejecting homosexual practice. The two-sex prerequisite for marriage is presented in Genesis 1-2 as a pre-Fall structure; slavery is at best a post-Fall structure. Slavery is a penultimate evil tolerated in ancient societies that lack both a welfare net for the impoverished and long-term prison facilities for criminal offenders. It is not lifted up in Scripture as a wonderful institution. In short, the Bible doesn't provide the kind of witness *for* slavery that it shows *against* same-sex intercourse.

Rather, the Bible's countercultural witness on slavery moves in the direction of greater critique than what prevails generally in the ancient world—the same direction in which Scripture's countercultural critique of homosexual practice moves. **Both when we reject slavery and when we reject homosexual practice we follow Scripture's countercultural trend.** This is where the analogy should take us—not a rejection of slavery and an endorsement of homosexual marriage (*contra* Rogers). *Endorsement of homosexual practice, not its rejection, is actually closer to an endorsement of slavery in that it supports the continued enslavement of persons with homosexual desire to passions that run counter to God's clearly expressed will in Scripture* (cf. 1 Cor 7:23: “You were bought with a price; don't become slaves of human beings”). Romans 6:16-21 makes this very point:

Don't you know that . . . you are slaves of that which you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience [to God] leading to a verdict of acquittal? . . . Having been freed from sin you were enslaved to righteousness. . . . For just as you once presented your members as enslaved to sexual impurity [*akatharsia*, the term Paul uses to describe same-sex intercourse in Rom 1:24-27] and to [other forms of] lawlessness [cf. Rom 1:29-31] leading to lawless behavior, so now present your members as enslaved to righteousness that leads to holiness. For

when you were slaves of sin . . . you bore as fruit . . . things of which you are now ashamed [cf. Rom 1:27], for the outcome of those deeds is death.”

As regards women’s roles, (1) the attempt to equate being a woman with experiencing homoerotic impulses is a gross confusion of categories, as is the attempt to equate ethnicity with homosexual orientation. For one thing, sex (gender) is 100% congenitally determined (i.e. by chromosomes), unlike same-sex attractions. Despite what Rogers alleges or infers, no scientific study has ever demonstrated that same-sex attractions are 100% congenitally determined; indeed, a number of studies—for example, the biggest and best twin studies—suggest that same-sex attractions are not even 50% congenitally determined, much less 100%. If Rogers thinks otherwise, let him cite the study that proves his belief. To date he has cited none. Another category-confusion on Rogers’s part is that **being a woman is not a direct or primary desire for behavior strongly and absolutely prohibited by Scripture.** An impulse to have sexual intercourse with persons of the same sex is precisely such a desire.

(2) As with the matter of slavery, there are many biblical texts critical of the oppression of women but absolutely none that are critical of a categorical rejection of homosexual practice. Indeed, the subordination of women is presented as a post-Fall curse (Gen 3:16), not a pre-Fall blessing like the reemerging of man and woman. Yet as regards homosexual practice the witness of Scripture expresses complete revulsion. The direction of Scripture’s countercultural witness is once again toward a greater affirmation of women than generally prevailed in the ancient world, just as Scripture’s countercultural witness toward same-sex attractions is decidedly toward liberation *from* the oppression of such impulses. As with slavery, the analogy points us in the direction of rejecting homosexual practice rather than, with Rogers, affirming it.

For more extensive discussion of the use of analogies (other than the Gentile-inclusion analogy, which I will deal with [again] in connection with Rogers at a later time), see my treatments in: *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Abingdon, 2001), 441-52; *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Fortress, 2003), 44-50 (with online notes, 7-20 [pp. 2-4] at <http://robgagnon.net/TwoViews.htm>); “Slavery, Homosexuality, and the Bible: A Response” at <http://www.robgagnon.net/articles/homoKrehbielResponse.pdf>, and “Slavery, Homosexuality, and the Bible, Part II” at <http://www.robgagnon.net/articles/homoKrehbielResp2.pdf>; “Bearing False Witness: David Balch’s Effort at Demonization and His Truncated Gospel,” 4-9 at <http://robgagnon.net/articles/homoBalchFalseWitness.pdf>; “Are There Universally Valid Sex Precepts? A Critique of Walter Wink’s Views on the Bible and Homosexuality,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 24:1 (June 2002): 72-125 (also online at <http://robgagnon.net/articles/homoWinkHBTResp.pdf>); “Why the Disagreement over the Biblical Witness on Homosexual Practice?” *Reformed Review* 59:1 (2005): 80-82, 90-101 [online]. While there is some overlap, each of the above treatments provides some new or different insights not found in any of the other treatments. See too: William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Intervarsity, 2001).

Rogers’s “Pattern of Misusing the Bible to Justify Oppression”

Rogers gives a paltry three sentences (six lines) to laying out the case that I and others have made against the use of slavery and women’s roles as appropriate analogues for the endorsement of homosexual behavior (p. 17). He then contends,

All of these arguments miss the point. The issue is not what we *now* think about slavery and women. The issue is, What did American Christians think about these subjects for more than 200 years when the accepted view was completely different than what we now think? (p. 18)

Here it is clearly Rogers who misses the point. Essentially *Rogers is asserting that it doesn't matter whether or not an alleged analogy is in fact an accurate exegesis and application of Scripture*. The only thing that matters is that an analogy was attempted, which makes all “similar” analogies wrong, even those that do accurately interpret Scripture. In short, **Rogers’s reasoning treats as functional equivalents both inaccurate interpretations of Scripture and accurate interpretations of Scripture**. Yet, although this is what Rogers argues, his own repeated (but failed) efforts at insisting that there are *no* biblical texts that condemn absolutely homosexual practice suggests that Rogers himself knows deep down that his whole case hinges on what Scripture clearly and consistently does say. For Rogers insists (wrongly) that the view that “the Bible condemns all homosexual relationships. . . . is simply incorrect” (p. 70).

According to Rogers, support for oppression of blacks and women in the church followed a similar “pattern” to today’s rejection of homosexual practice:

In each case, leaders in the church claimed that (1) the Bible records God’s judgment against the sin of people of African descent and women from their first mention in Scripture; (2) People of African descent and women were somehow inferior in moral character and incapable of rising to the level of full white male, “Christian civilization”; and (3) people of African descent and women were willfully sinful, often sexually promiscuous and threatening, and deserved punishment for their own acts. (p. 33)

Problems with the First Element of the “Pattern”: First Mention in Scripture

There are insurmountable problems with this alleged pattern and today’s rejection of homosexual practice. Let’s start with the problems associated with his first element of this “pattern”; namely, the claim by some leaders of the church over the past centuries that the “sin” of blacks and women appears in Scripture the first time that they are mentioned. **Rogers’s implicit rationale here is untenable: if something is viewed negatively in its first mention in Scripture then this is a good indication that it ought not to be viewed negatively (!)**. So, by this reasoning, since Cain commits the first murder and Scripture views this murder negatively, we should rethink whether murdering one’s brother out of envy is wrong? Rogers’s “logic” here leads to absurd results. Contrary to Rogers, we would *expect* Scripture to view as wrong the first mention of something that is, in fact, wrong. So it is very silly to cite this as an element that should make one suspicious of the use of the biblical text.

This is all the more so since **the first mention of people of African descent and of women is not in fact a judgment story**. As already noted, the *first* mentions of women in Genesis 1-2 are quite positive; the sin of woman does not appear until Genesis 3. **The story of Ham’s offense against Noah in Gen 9:20-27**, which pro-slavery/segregation forces in previous periods of American history liked to cite and which Rogers now likes to throw back at proponents of a two-sex prerequisite for marriage—is **not a general indictment of people of African descent** but rather an indictment of the indigenous and

idolatrous Canaanite population. Martti Nissinen—whose book *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* (Fortress, 1998) Rogers loves to cite but only when it suits his purposes to do so—and I both agree, following Hermann Gunkel, Gerhard von Rad, and many others, that Gen 9:20-27 tells the story of Ham’s incestuous, same-sex rape of his father. (Rogers doesn’t even mention this interpretation in his book, let alone refute it, even though he claims to have read thoroughly both my work and Nissinen’s.) **Here is the first explicit mention of incest in Scripture**, as well as of same-sex intercourse and rape. **Should we then conclude**—as Rogers’s logic seems to suggest that we should—**that sex with one’s parent is not, after all, a bad thing**, at least not if it is loving relationship?

What about polyamory or polygamy? Rogers contends that it “is simply not true” that Gen 1:27 (“male and female [God] made them”) **and Gen 2:24** (“For this reason a man shall . . . become joined to his woman and they [or: the two] shall become one flesh”) **contain a monogamy principle** (p. 86). **This would have been news to Jesus** who argued for the monogamy principle precisely on the basis of these two texts (Mark 10:6-9 par. Matt 19:4-6). In Jesus’ opinion the derivation of something from pre-Fall creation is precisely what gives the twoness of the male-female bond precedence over any subsequent watering down of the Creator’s will—even if that watering down should be from Moses (“but from the beginning it was not so”: Matt 19:4, 7-8; cf. Mark 10:5-6). So, if we accept Jesus’ view of things rather than Rogers’s, we must conclude that **a prohibition of polyamory or polygamy is implicit in creation and that this is a good argument for retaining the prohibition, not (as Rogers’s thinks) for eliminating it**. And let us remember that a monogamy principle was always incumbent on women in ancient Israel. The inconsistency was with the Mosaic allowance for men, which Jesus attributed to human (chiefly male) “hardness of heart” and then revoked.

This matter of polyamory or polygamy is also particularly relevant for our discussion of homosexuality, for two reasons. First, one could attempt to justify “polyfidelity”—incidentally, the theme session of the Gay Men’s Issues in Religion Group at the 2003 American Academy of Religion national meeting—**by appeal to a sexual orientation**, just as Rogers and others attempt to justify committed homosexual unions by just such an appeal. Many people—certainly most men—are “oriented” toward sex with more than one person. In other words, they are “polysexual,” experiencing strong and frequent sexual desires for more than just one other person in the course of life. Yet this does not mean that God “created” them to live out their polysexual orientation, nor that this orientation is “natural” in the sense of being ordained by God—though Rogers reaches precisely these conclusions for homosexual orientation, which he thinks (falsely) is an immutably predestined congenital condition. **Second**, it is evident that **Jesus preached his view of marital twoness**—the limitation of sexual unions to two people—**on the creation of two sexes**. There was no reason for Jesus to cite “male and female [God] made them” except to assert the self-contained twoness of the sexes as a foundation for the twoness of the marital bond. A third party is neither necessary nor desirable because the only two sexes that exist, the two sexual complements or counterparts created by God, have merged to reconstitute the sexual whole out of which two sexes emerged. Two sexes may become one flesh in a sexual bond because out of one flesh two sexes emerged (so the picture in Gen 2:21-24). These connections strangely

escape Rogers's notice, despite my previous publications on the matter. For openness to multiple-partner sexual unions in the homosexual movement (Andrew Sullivan, William Countryman [Episcopal], Marvin Ellison [PCUSA], the Metropolitan Community Church, high-placed Unitarian Universalist officials, and others, see my "Why the Disagreement over the Biblical Witness on Homosexual Practice?" [*Reformed Review*](#) 59:1 (2005): 35-43 [online]).

All of this is to say that the first element of the "pattern" identified by Rogers is unworkable as an indication of improper exegesis or hermeneutics. By it one would have to justify incest, adultery, polyamory, murder, and dozens of other sins.

Problems with the Second Element of the "Pattern": Inferior in Moral Character

The second element of the alleged pattern is also problematic; namely, that blacks and women have been characterized in the past, and homosexual persons have been characterized now, as "inferior in moral character and incapable of rising to the level of full white male, 'Christian civilization.'"

First, as we noted above, there is nothing in Scripture that suggests that people of African descent are any more inferior in moral character than humanity generally. While some texts in Scripture suggest that women are more susceptible to certain types of sin (as are men with other types of sin), **Scripture also provides many positive portrayals of the high moral capacity of women** (Deborah, Esther, Mary, the women co-workers cited by Paul in Romans 16, among many others). But Scripture *categorically* rejects gratification of desires for same-sex intercourse, like desires for incest within the nuclear family and desires for more than one sexual partner concurrently (by women in both Testaments and by men in the New Testament), whether "loving" and "committed" or not. **It is not "beside the point" to point out that the evidence from Scripture is weak as regards one claim** (the alleged moral inferiority of persons of African descent and women) **but strong as regards another** (rejection of gratification of homosexual impulses). **That is the point. One claim is not a justifiable appeal to Scripture, the other clearly is.**

Second, Rogers is also once again mixing apples and oranges. Ethnicity and gender cannot be compared with specific impulses to do what Scripture pervasively, strongly, absolutely, and counterculturally forbids. Rogers does not seem to understand the distinction. Quite simply, ethnicity and gender are:

- 100% heritable
- absolutely immutable
- primarily non-behavioral
- inherently benign

Homosexual "orientation," like many impulses, especially sexual impulses, is:

- not 100% heritable
- not absolutely impervious to outside influences
- primarily behavioral
- thus not necessarily benign

A case in point, with which even Rogers would hopefully agree, is pedosexuality (pedophilia), which Dr. Fred Berlin of the Sexual Disorders Clinic at Johns Hopkins refers to as a sexual “orientation” that nobody chooses to have (“United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Interview with Frederick S. Berlin, M.D., Ph.D.,” 1997, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/comm/kit6.shtml>; retrieved 10/25/06). It is not 100% heritable in the way that ethnicity and sex (or eye color) are, though there probably are indirect congenital influences and significant socialization factors in very early childhood that create risk factors for its development. Though it is very difficult to eliminate altogether pedophilic impulses from a pedosexual person, change still has a limited role to play. For micro- and macrocultural factors can have some impact on the incidence of pedosexuality in a population; moreover, some hope exists for at least a reduction of intensity of the impulse over time for some. It is a primarily behavioral condition insofar as it is fundamentally a desire to do something. Therefore, whether it is benign has to be evaluated on the basis of factors other than claims to being “born that way.”

A pro-pedophilic movement like the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), which does not advocate coercion but loving sexual relationships between a man and boy, could latch onto the second and third elements of Rogers’s “pattern” and then charge Rogers himself with portraying pedosexuals (pedophiles) in exactly the same light that he castigates others for allegedly portraying homosexual persons. Doesn’t Rogers consider pedophiles to be “somehow inferior in moral character,” “willfully sinful, often sexually promiscuous and threatening, and deserving of punishment for their own acts”? So I suppose if one follows the second and third elements of Rogers’s “pattern,” one would have to adopt a different stance toward pedophiles and their practices, learning to distinguish between loving pedophilic associations and non-loving ones. For a number of scientific articles have been published over the last ten years, in American Psychological Association journals no less, that acknowledge, if not affirm, that a sexual relationship with an adult often does not produce scientifically measurable harm in a child. Perhaps, too, we could add the first element of Rogers’s “pattern” inasmuch as the creation of man and woman for sexual pairing in Gen 2:21-24, not children, implicitly rejects sexual intercourse with a child.

In saying all this, I am obviously not contending that we should endorse pedosexual practice or even that pedosexual practice equates with homosexual practice. Rather, I am asserting that **Rogers’s “pattern” for detecting faulty hermeneutics is of no practical use for discriminating between good and bad arguments because it cannot even distinguish between improper applications to blacks and to women on the one hand and proper applications to pedosexuals (and polysexuals) on the other.**

Third, those who experience homoerotic passion are “inferior in moral character” only if they act on desires to engage in behavior that is contrary to the will of God.

This is true for all other sinful desires. The mere experience of sinful impulses (i.e., an impulse to do what God deems sinful) is not sinful; nor does it necessarily define a person's identity unless a person chooses to construct an identity around a particular desire. A person who experiences involuntary arousal for multiple persons is not a "polysexual" unless he (or she) chooses to be identified in this way.

***Problems with the Third Element of the "Pattern":
"Willfully sinful, promiscuous, threatening, and deserving of punishment"***

Finally, multiple problems apply to Rogers's third element in the alleged pattern; namely, portraying people of African descent and women, and now homosexual persons, as "willfully sinful, often sexually promiscuous and threatening, and deserv[ing of] punishment for their own acts."

What the Bible Actually Says about Women and Africans

The Bible often portrays men as more sexually promiscuous than women and, as stated above, does not offer a single text that suggests that people of African descent are more sexually promiscuous than other people groups. For example, in the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12; cf. Ps 51), it is not Bathsheba that is blamed for David's fall, but rather David himself. The same point comes across in the story of Tamar and Judah (Gen 38) and in countless other biblical stories.

Rogers's Attempt at Confusion with the Phrase "Willfully Sinful"

Rogers attempts to confuse by his use of the phrase "willfully sinful," for he regularly lumps together under this phrase both (a) the mere experience of unwilled impulses and (b) willful behavior consonant with such impulses. For example, he portrays me as claiming both "that *homosexuality* is a willful choice" (p. 83; emphasis added)—the blatant falsity of which I have demonstrated in [Installment 4](#) of my online piece "Does Jack Rogers's New Book 'Explode the Myths'?"—and "that all people who are homosexual have willfully chosen that *behavior*" (p. 82; emphasis added).

Well, unless behavior is in some way externally coerced (for example, if someone puts a gun to one's head) or someone is out of his or her mind (does Rogers pejoratively imply that homosexual persons are insane?), all behavior is at some level always willful. For example, a polysexual is not compelled to have sex with multiple persons. A pedophile is not without the will to resist having sex with children. A greedy person is liable for exploiting others materially. A hyper-aggressive person is responsible for perpetrating violence on others. Conversely,

all behavioral differences will on some level be attributable to differences in brain structure or process. Thus, no clear conclusions about the morality of a behavior can be made from the mere fact of biological causation, because *all* behavior is biologically caused. (Brian Mustanski and J. Michael Bailey, "A therapist's guide to the genetics of human sexual orientation," *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 18:4 [2003]: 432; emphases added)

So Rogers’s reference to characterizing persons as “willfully sinful” is virtually meaningless. All behavior is at some level biologically caused and all non-coerced sane persons are morally culpable for their behavior—obviously. Persons may not have had a choice in experiencing any given impulse but they are responsible for what they do with their impulses.

Rogers’s Misguided Remarks about Sexual Promiscuity and Homosexuality

Rogers’s attack on those who refer to homosexual males as “sexually promiscuous” is misguided on several counts.

First, the fact of homosexual males having significantly higher number of sex partners lifetime than homosexual females or heterosexuals is well documented.

Rogers conveniently ignores the largest, most long-term, and most representative studies. He simply asserts that “comparative studies of gay couples and heterosexual couples show virtually no difference in the stability of their relationships” and offers a brief footnote that says this:

George Chauncey, *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today’s Debate over Gay Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 133: “One study had shown that of couples together for ten years, breakup rates were 4 percent for married heterosexual couples, 4 percent for gay men, and 6 percent for lesbians. Other comparative studies show virtually no difference in the quality of relationships between gay couples and heterosexual couples. (p. 146 n. 1)

Not only does Rogers not provide any bibliographic referents to the studies themselves—there is no evidence anywhere in Rogers’s book that he ever read a single scientific study for himself (the few he cites are picked up from secondary literature)—but also the one study specifically referred to by Chauncey does not demonstrate what Rogers (or Chauncey) claims that it demonstrates. Once a researcher limits a study of this sort by pre-selecting only “couples together for ten years,” the behavior of the vast majority of homosexual persons who have not been able to attain to a 10-year relationship is ignored. If 85% or more of married heterosexual couples are able to stay married for 10 years but only 15% or less of homosexual couples stay together for the same period—for this is what the best studies to date do indicate—then there is indeed a vast difference in the sexual behavior of the two groups. Nor is there any information here about the sample size, the representative nature of the study, or even what percentage of the male homosexual couples remain monogamous during the ten-year interval (studies indicate a significant percentage of long-term male homosexual unions are not strictly monogamous). So this is what Rogers bases his categorical assertion of “virtually no difference”? And he castigates *others* for making poor use of scientific data (pp. 98-101)?

For studies see my online “[Immoralism, Homosexual Unhealth, and Scripture: Part II: Science](#),” pp. 5-13; and *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 453-58).

Second, the significantly higher rate of sex partners among homosexual males is primarily attributable not to a particular moral depravity—though violating one major societal standard may increase the propensity to violate other norms—but rather **to basic differences between men and women as regards sexual stimulation patterns.** This is a point that I make in *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (pp. 459-60) but which Rogers ignores. (These patterns are incidentally present in the animal world as well; see, for example, Linda Mealey, *Sex Differences* [San Diego: Academic Press, 2000], 244.) Putting two men together in a sexual union is not normally a recipe for lifelong monogamy. As I noted in Part 1 of my response to Rogers’s “Talking Points,” even David Myers, whom Rogers normally loves to cite, has to admit in his recent book with Letha Scanzoni that high rates of sex partners on the part of homosexual males exists and is attributable, in the first instance, not to homophobia but to unbridled male sexuality that does not have to negotiate its interests in relation to women (*What God Has Joined Together?* 124-25). The homosexual male population experiences disproportionately high rates of sex partners because they interact with other males rather than with females, who generally have a different set of relational expectations.

Third, the sexual promiscuity that typifies male homosexuality is not the root problem but a symptom of the root problem: sexual arousal at the distinctive features of one’s own sex and engaging in a form of intercourse whose logic presupposes that one is only half of one’s own sex. Incest is not wrong in the first instance because of disproportionately high rates of scientifically measurable harm that attend such activity. The deep-structure harm comes in the form of attempting sexual merger with what one essentially already is, here on a familial level. So arguing that a small minority of homosexual couples are able to achieve long-term monogamous unions is no more effective than the argument that some adult incestuous unions can express love and commitment in an intentionally non-procreative bond.

Is Homosexual Advocacy “Threatening”?

As regards the perception of homosexual persons as “threatening,” does Rogers think that societal approval of sex between a man and his mother/sister or of a committed sexual union involving more than two persons is “threatening”? I presume he does because it fundamentally changes the definition of marriage with consequences for society as a whole. At least I *hope* he thinks this. **Homosexual persons are not necessarily “threatening” but advocacy for homosexual unions is. Among the effects of cultural endorsement of homosexual practice, some intended, some not, will be:**

- 1) **The erosion of any formal or structural prerequisites for sexual unions** (first the limitation of unions to two persons, then prohibitions based on close blood relations, and so on), owing to (a) the rhetoric for justifying homosexual unions (which stresses the quality of affective bonds over formal prerequisites), (b) the jettisoning of the logical link that exists between a two-sex prerequisite and prohibitions of polyamory and incest, and (c) the non-monogamous and short-term character of the overwhelming majority of homosexual bonds.

- 2) **An increase in the incidence of homosexuality and bisexuality** in the population, with its disproportionately high negative side-effects for health.
- 3) **The “dishonoring” or “degrading” (as Paul puts it) of the integrity of maleness and femaleness** as complementary facets of a sexual whole (this is an intangible quality but no less real than the harm that comes from endorsing sexual bonds between close blood relations).
- 4) **An infringement on the civil liberties and livelihood** even of those who express loving opposition to cultural endorsement of homosexual unions, ranging from forced indoctrination in schools and workplace, to forced “affirmative action” hiring of homosexual persons, to penalties for “discriminatory speech” (fines, termination of employment and loss of career opportunities, and, perhaps with time, imprisonment).

In Rogers’s thinking, we are supposed to pretend that these threats do not exist.

For points 1-4, see my discussion of “Why ‘gay marriage’ is not good for society” on pp. 125-30 of “Why the Disagreement over the Biblical Witness on Homosexual Practice?” *Reformed Review* 59:1 (2005): 35-43, online. For civil liberty threats that have already taken place in public and private sectors in some Scandinavian countries, in Canada, and even in parts of the United States, see: my online critique of David Balch, “[Bearing False Witness](#),” pp. 9-19; my online “[Open Letter Regarding the Current Hate Crimes Amendment](#)”; and Alan Sears and Craig Osten, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today* (Broadman & Holman, 2003).

The Question of “Deserving Punishment for One’s Own Acts”

Rogers’s pejorative reference to persons “deserv[ing] punishment for their own acts” overlooks a few elementary points. (1) All persons who sin—in other words, all people—**are deserving of divine judgment.** This is Reformed Doctrine 101. **(2) All people who** accept Jesus’ death as atoning or amends-making for their sins and who, by God’s grace through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit, **live a life of ongoing faith in Christ**—which includes dying to self and orienting one’s self to a life lived for God—**are assured of inheritance in God’s kingdom. (3) Persons who experience homosexual desires**, like any persons who experience deeply engrained desires to do things that God expressly forbids, **are to be won over to the kingdom of God, not consigned to hell.** This pattern of outreach was exemplified in Jesus’ outreach to “sinners and tax collectors.” Jesus’ primary aim was to recover people for the kingdom who, by virtue of their behavior—especially people grossly exploiting others for material gain and people committing serious sexual offenses—were at risk of not inheriting the very kingdom that Jesus proclaimed (see *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 210-28). What would Rogers’s have the church do? Have people continue in patterns of behavior that put them at eternal risk? Such would not be love in Jesus’ view.

That’s why Augustine formulated the saying, “Love, and do what you want” (*Dilige, et quod vis fac*; in *Homilies on First John* 7.8), to show that love cannot be watered down to mean permissiveness and tolerance. His illustration for the saying? A father disciplines rigorously his child, while a “boy-stealer” caresses a boy. Which expresses love? The one who disciplines. So if you act out of love you can do what you want, **meaning that you can implement disincentives to commit sinful behavior.** Perhaps it is best to conclude with Augustine’s own words on the subject:

If any of you perhaps wish to maintain love, brethren, above all things do not imagine it to be an abject and sluggish thing; nor that love is to be preserved by a sort of gentleness, nay not gentleness, but tameness and listlessness. Not so is it preserved. Do not imagine that . . . you then love your son when you do not give him discipline, or that you then love your neighbor when you do not rebuke him. This is not love, but mere feebleness. Let love be fervent to correct, to amend. . . . Love not in the person his error, but the person; for the person God made, the error the person himself made. (7.11; *NPNF*, slightly modified)

In a subsequent essay I will critique Rogers's flawed critique of Scottish Common Sense philosophy and Francis Turretin (specifically, his reference to "appeals to 'natural law,' selective literalism, and proof-texting"), treat Rogers's flawed use of hermeneutical guidelines, and finally address the alleged divorce/remarriage analogy.