

Four Myths of Pro-Homosex Propaganda: A Response to Tex Sample's "What Do Bible, Tradition Say About Gay Marriage?"

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On Aug. 12, 2003, the United Methodist News Service posted a commentary by Tex Sample, emeritus professor of church and society at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo (go [here](#)). In the commentary Sample attempts to make a case for same-sex marriage from Scripture and tradition. One can find a thorough rebuttal of every one of Sample's claims in my book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*—a book published by the United Methodist publishing house (Abingdon Press) a full two years ago and only a year or less after Sample himself published a book on homosexuality with the same press. Yet Sample writes as if he were totally unaware of the arguments employed therein. I honestly wonder if Sample was put off by the 467 pages of heavily documented text. If so, he can now read a shorter, 52-page essay of mine entitled "The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Key Issues" in *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Fortress Press, 2003), co-authored with Dan O. Via (see also my six-page response to Via in the same book, as well as online notes [[pdf](#) or [html](#)], and a rejoinder to Via's response [[pdf](#) or [html](#)]). Even Via makes no attempt to rebut my arguments for a pervasive, absolute, and strong opposition in Scripture to all same-sex intercourse. In addition to these materials, Sample can read a 50-page essay of mine entitled "Does the Bible Regard Same-Sex Intercourse as Intrinsically Sinful?" in an edited volume, *Christian Sexuality* (ed. R. Saltzman; Minneapolis: Kirk House, 2003), 106-55 (again, with online notes here [[pdf](#) or [html](#)]) and companion material here [[pdf](#) or [html](#)]). This *Christian Sexuality* essay addresses not only the question raised in the title but also "the male-female prerequisite in the Genesis creation stories" (pp. 106-22) and "why the sexual orientation argument does not work" (pp. 136-48).

In his comments Sample perpetuates four myths.

Myth #1: Because the biblical authors had no concept of sexual orientation or homosexuality, the biblical witness against same-sex intercourse is not binding on the church's deliberations today.

Reality Check #1: So far as the Bible's critique of same-sex intercourse is concerned, a sexual proclivity to homoerotic practice is not particularly new information and, in any case, is quite beside the point.

Here are some facts to keep in mind.

On the creation stories and male-female structural complementarity. The reason for the Bible's condemnation of same-sex intercourse has to do with the *structural* discomplementarity of homoerotic attempts at sexual merger (anatomical, physiological, interpersonal). Issues concerning loving disposition and the exclusive direction of one's erotic desire are as irrelevant to the condemnation of same-sex intercourse as they would be to man-mother union and a sexual relationship between an adult and prepubescent child. Genesis 2:18-24 portrays an originally binary human split down the side into two sexually differentiated counterparts. Clearly, marriage is imaged as a reconstitution, into "one flesh," of the two constituent parts, male and female, that were the products of the splitting. One's sexual "other half" or "counterpart" can only be a person of the other sex. Men and women are complementary sexual beings whose *re-merger* brings about sexual wholeness in the sphere of erotic interaction. This is so obvious a point that it is ludicrous to deny that the author of Genesis 2 had no clue about the negative import of this story for same-sex intercourse—and all the more ludicrous in view of the Ham and Sodom narratives in the same literary corpus. Does Sample really believe that, historically speaking, the absence of the missing sexual complement in same-sex erotic unions would have been inconsequential to the author of Genesis 2? The one prerequisite most stressed in the narrative is the other-sex dimension. Aristophanes' myth of human origins in Plato's *Symposium* (191e-193c) tells of the splitting of primal male-female, male-male, and female-female humans and its effect on same-sex and opposite-sex pairing (see *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 353-54). Paul echoes Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:24 in his critiques of same-sex intercourse in Romans 1:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9 (see 6:16). Obviously, then, the ancients were capable of conceiving of the implications of the kind of account given in Genesis 2:18-24.

Moreover, would Sample have us believe that the author(s) of Genesis 1—in a chapter that gives special attention to issues of structural congruity or "kinds"—failed to notice that there is anything structurally essential to an other-sex union? "In the image of God he made the *adam* [human]; male and female he made them" (1:27)—as complementary sexual beings. Humans are angled or faceted expressions of the image of God, "male and female." They have integrity as God's image independent of sexual activity. Yet, *when they engage in sexual activity*, they engage another in their particularity, as an incomplete part of a two-faceted sexual whole. Ignoring this particularity by finding one's "sexual counterpart" in a sexual same, effaces that part of the divine image stamped on human sexuality rather than enhances it. Persons who desire to merge sexually with a member of the same sex are erotically stimulated by what they are as sexual beings. This is sexual narcissism and/or sexual self-deception: an erotic desire either for oneself or for what one wishes to be but, in fact, already is. For further discussion see: "Intrinsically Sinful?," 106-22; *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 61-62, 78, 90-91; *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 56-62, 289-97.

On word, heart, and act. Like many, Sample thinks that it is significant that the word "homosexuality" was not coined until the 19th century. There are countless other words for which there is no precise Greek or Hebrew equivalent in the ancient world, including: incest, bestiality, necrophilia, pornography, alcoholism, kleptomania, paranoia, and

addiction. So what? The absence of a particular word tells us little or nothing about conceptual continuity. Sample also suggests that the Bible's prohibition of homosexual practice is deficient because it does not make distinctions based on the intensity, exclusivity, or entrenched character of sexual desire or "orientation." This is akin to arguing that the Bible's prohibition of man-mother sex is deficient because it considers only the act. It is enough to prohibit the act because the act is never good and always structurally incongruous, regardless of the loving disposition or orientation of consensual participants. But Sample can rest assured that homoerotic desire, whenever it is actively entertained, falls under the same strictures as Jesus' warning against "adultery of the heart."

On the sexual orientation argument. Sample thinks that the concept of a "homosexual orientation" is such a radically new thing that the biblical witness against homosexual practice can be discarded. Sample "knows" that Paul thought of homoerotic desire only as excess heterosexual desire. Had Sample read pp. 380-95 in *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* he might have realized how weak his argument is. In the ancient world the label "excess passion" was often a way of demeaning a desire that on other grounds had already been evaluated as abominable; otherwise, how would one know to characterize the passion as excess? Certainly nothing in the language of Romans 1:24-27 suggests that homoerotic desire is a chosen condition of constitutional heterosexuals. The "exchanged" and "leaving behind" in 1:26-27 refer to a choice of homosexual behavior (not desire) over the transparent witness of male-female complementarity in nature. The combination of these terms with the expressions "God gave them over" and "inflamed with their yearning" suggests passions that are preexisting, controlling, and exclusive.

In addition, there were many theories in the Greco-Roman world about a congenital basis for at least some homoerotic attraction. Even prohomosex scholars of early Christianity such as Bernadette Brooten and William Schoedel acknowledge that views akin to "sexual orientation" existed in antiquity and probably would not have made a difference to Paul's critique. Quite simply, many in the ancient world attributed some forms of homoerotic practice to an interaction of biology and nurture, and believed that homoerotic impulses could be very resistant to change. Yet many of the same persons could still refer to the desire of some men to be penetrated by men as "contrary to nature"; that is, as at odds with their essential sex. Paul was probably aware—as was Philo of Alexandria—of the existence of a lifelong homoerotic proclivity, certainly among some men who desired to be penetrated by other males (so the *malakoi* in 1 Corinthians 6:9). As with some Greco-Roman moralists and doctors, Paul undoubtedly could have made a distinction between conditions given "by nature" (e.g., disease, various sinful impulses) and conditions constituted "according to nature." Even exaggerated claims about "homosexual orientation" are compatible with Paul's view of sin as congenital in Romans 5 and 7. For Paul understood sin to be (1) an innate impulse, (2) operating in the members of the human body, (3) passed on by an ancestor figure, and (4) never entirely within human control. See further "Intrinsically Sinful?," 136-48.

On science. At the same time we should not exaggerate what scientific and socio-scientific data tell us. Congenital factors in homosexual development are not determinate. At most they are indirect and heavily contingent upon macrocultural and microcultural

shaping. Contrary to what Sample apparently thinks, no one is born homosexual (see *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 395-429; also “Theology, Analogies, and Genes,” 9-12, online [here](#)).

On theo-logic. Sample never bothers explaining to readers why the existence of an alleged “orientation” should make any significant difference in the moral valuation of sexual behaviors. Pedophiles have a “sexual orientation” aimed at children, some exclusively so. Should that have any bearing on the question of societal approval, given that some children grow up asymptomatic in terms of negative effects? Would Sample want to sanction a man-mother or adult brother-sister union if it could be established that an “orientation” was involved? A recent massive cross-cultural study by evolutionary psychologists, published in the July 2003 issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, indicates that men have a much stronger desire for multiple sex partners than do women (what would we do without experts?). Given this, should we sanction a certain amount of infidelity for men? Since when did the church decide that the intensity of fleshly impulses should determine what is moral and what isn’t? According to the Scriptures God is in the business of recreating us in the image of Christ, usually in ways that are at odds with our fleshly impulses. Christ is Lord, not any constitutional predisposition that we might have.

Myth #2: Same-sex intercourse is only a minor concern of Scripture and the few texts that speak about it are ambiguous.

Reality Check #2: The biblical proscription of same-sex intercourse is pervasive, absolute, and strong, and it is all those things in opposition to the more “tolerant” milieus out of which Scripture emerged. The biblical witness against same-sex intercourse is as clear as the biblical witness against man-mother sex and bestiality.

Consider the following facts.

On Sodom, Gibeah, and Ham. Contrary to what Sample alleges, the stories of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-11) and the Levite at Gibeah (Judges 19:22-25)—and to these we can add the story of Ham’s incestuous, same-sex rape of Noah (Genesis 9:20-27; see *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 63-71)—are not condemning only coercive forms of male-male intercourse. These are “kitchen sink” stories of ultimate depravity that include a critique of treating males as though they were females with an orifice for sexual penetration. How do we know this? It is self-evident when the Sodom narrative is read *contextually*—that is, in the light of an array of literary concentric circles that fan out from the text itself: (1) other material in Genesis through Numbers by the same author (including Genesis 2:18-24); (2) other material in early Israelite literature (note, for example, the ideological link between the Ham story in Gen 9:20-27 and sex laws in Leviticus 18 and 20; also, the Deuteronomistic Historian’s repugnance for the homoerotic associations of the *qedeshim* or “male cult prostitutes” in Deut 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; compare Job 36:14; Rev 21:8; 22:15); (3) other material in the ancient Near East, which often disparage males who *willingly* play the role of females

in sexual intercourse; and (4) the subsequent history of interpretation, including Ezekiel 16:49-50 (which reads the Sodom narrative through the lens of the Levitical Holiness Code) and Jude 7 and 2 Peter 2:7, 10 (which emphasize the sexual desire of the inhabitants). For the documentation behind the claims made above, I refer readers to *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 43-110 (esp. 63-110) and *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*, 56-68. For the narrators of the stories of Sodom, Ham, and Gibeah the difference between consent and coercion as regards the penetrated partner in male-male intercourse is the difference between a man who willingly dishonors himself and a man who is forcibly dishonored by others.

On Counting and Scripture's Pervasive Opposition. The constellation of texts that one can bring to bear on the interpretation of Ham, Sodom, and Gibeah stories underscores an important point. The Levitical prohibitions of male-male intercourse are not isolated texts but cohere with a broad-based opposition to same-sex intercourse in Scripture. Texts that *implicitly* reject homosexual unions run the gamut of the entire Bible, including not only the creation stories in Genesis 1-3, the Apostolic Decree in Acts (15:20, 29; 21:25) and other *porneia* (“sexual immorality”) texts, and texts that reject overt attempts at blurring sexual differentiation (e.g., cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5 or hairstyles in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16), but also the whole range of narratives, laws, proverbs, exhortations, metaphors, and poetry that presume the sole legitimacy of heterosexual unions. Nowhere is there the slightest indication of openness anywhere in the Bible to homoerotic attachments, including the narrative about David and Jonathan. To assert, as Sample does, that same-sex intercourse was only a minor concern to the authors of Scripture is ridiculous. The truth is that, so far as extant evidence indicates, every biblical author would have been appalled by any same-sex intercourse occurring among the people of God. And we have not yet touched on the unequivocal witness of early Judaism (*The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 159-83).

Sample not only miscounts when he refers to “only five passages” as evidence of same-sex intercourse being a “minor issue,” he also misconstrues frequency of mention with importance. A form of sexual behavior regarded as even more extreme than male-male intercourse is mentioned *less* in Scripture: bestiality (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:22; 20:15-16; Deuteronomy 27:21; not at all in the New Testament). Does Sample want to argue that sex with an animal was also a “minor concern” to biblical authors? How about incest, particularly man-mother incest? Texts pertinent to this issue are no more numerous than those having to do with same-sex intercourse. Indeed, if not for the case of a Corinthian believer having intercourse with his stepmother, there would not be a single mention of incest in all of the New Testament. I suppose that we can be grateful for the occurrence of this act at Corinth. Without it Sample and others might be contending that Scripture treats consensual adult incest as a minor matter. What Sample and those who share his views do not stop to think about is that some acts in ancient Israel and early Christianity were regarded as so heinous, with the incidence of violation among God’s people so rare, the degree of societal consensus so great, and the scriptural stance so unequivocal that it was not necessary to give frequent expressions of disapproval. Same-sex intercourse was one such act. See further: *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 432-41.

On Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Sample dismisses the Levitical prohibitions too easily by noting their placement within the Holiness Code. The case is actually quite strong that these prohibitions remain relevant. First, as noted above, they are part of a broader Old Testament witness. Second, they are grouped with prohibitions of other sex acts that largely remain in force today. Third, they treat male-male intercourse as a first-tier sexual offense, unlike some of the now defunct elements of the Holiness Code. True, we no longer treat male-male intercourse, adultery, incest, and bestiality as capital offenses. We do not, however, discard the emphatic prohibition. Fourth, these prohibitions contain an implicit rationale that is compatible with creation accounts: a man shall not lie with a male “as though lying with a woman.” In other words, a man must not do with the same sex what God has designed to be done with the other sex—have sexual intercourse. Fifth, Sample seems not to understand the important role that purity taboos play in curbing illicit sexual behavior. Sixth, these prohibitions are clearly picked up in various ways in the context of Romans 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10—not the least of which is the formation of the word *arsenokoitai* (“men who lie with a male”) from the Levitical prohibitions. The unqualified and absolute character of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 make it difficult to restrict the biblical witness only to certain exploitative forms of male-male intercourse, as Sample would like to do. See further: *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 111-46; *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 62-68.

On 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. Sample dismisses the references to participants in male-male intercourse in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 as ambiguous and as targeting only particularly exploitative forms. Nothing could be further from the truth. The evidence is overwhelming that the combination of *malakoi* (literally, “soft men,” i.e., effeminate men who play the sexual role of females) and *arsenokoitai* (see above) is correctly appropriated for our contemporary context when applied to every conceivable type of male-male intercourse (an indictment of female-female intercourse is implied). Ample grounds for this conclusion can be found in *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 303-36 and now also in *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 81-88 (with online notes). Sample’s dismissal runs up against the specifically Judeo-Christian formation of the word *arsenokoitai* from the *absolute* prohibitions of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 (note too that the term in 1 Tim 1:10 appears within a vice list explicitly formulated from “the law”). It finds no justification in extant usage of the word *arsenokoites* and related forms in antiquity, nor in the fact that the term *malakoi* and related words were applied to consenting adults with a predisposing condition and without connection to prostitution or to cultic activity. It ignores what Paul finds wrong about same-sex intercourse in Rom 1:24-27 (i.e., its same-sexness). It overlooks the analogue with the case of the incestuous man that dominates 1 Cor 5-6—a form of sexual immorality that likewise involves structural incompatibility due to too much sameness, regardless of degree of consent and commitment. It disregards the other-sex requirement for sexual behavior enunciated in Gen 2:24, which Paul cites in the immediate context (6:16). Finally, it sidesteps the relevant discussion of marriage in very next chapter (1 Cor 7), which presumes, as everywhere in Scripture, the sole legitimacy of other-sex marriage.

On Romans 1:24-27 and idolatry. Sample holds to the nonsensical assertion that the only kind of homosexual practice that Paul rejects in Romans 1:24-27 is the kind that “grows

out of idolatry.” In *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* I specifically address the question “Did Paul think only idol worshipers could engage in same-sex intercourse?” (pp. 284-89). The obvious answer is “No.” If we follow Sample’s reasoning we would have to conclude that the rest of the vice list which is filled out in Romans 1:29-31, as well as the vices contained in other Pauline vice lists (including 1 Corinthians 6:9-10), refer only to actions perpetrated by persons who worship statues of pagan gods—a point that Paul emphatically denies in Romans 2:21-24. In Romans 1:18-32 Paul is speaking in terms of collective entities, not individuals, and in terms of the widespread effect, not origin. Sin is more likely to be rampant in cultures that do not profess the one true God—obviously—but that does not preclude the same sinful impulses from operating among God’s people. Later in Romans 6:19 Paul warns Christian believers—not just pagan idolaters—against returning to a life of slavery to “sexual uncleanness.” This is an obvious back-reference to the “sexual uncleanness” of such things as same-sex intercourse in 1:24-27. Paul knew full well that rejecting Christ for idols was not a necessary prerequisite for desiring and engaging in same-sex intercourse. The whole presumption of the discussion regarding the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5-6 is that confessing Christians are quite capable of acting on immoral sexual impulses—including impulses to have sex with close kin, someone other than one’s spouse, a person of the same sex, or a prostitute.

On Romans 1:24-27 and exploitation. Sample thinks that Paul was not opposed to same-sex intercourse *per se* but only to forms of same-sex intercourse with an added exploitative dimension such as idolatry, prostitution, or “some kind of economic exploitation.” All that Sample has to do is read carefully Romans 1:26-27 in context to discern that what bothers Paul about female-female or male-male intercourse is the absence of a gender complement and the narcissistic and/or delusional attempt at merging with a sexual same. Both here and in 1 Corinthians 6 the creation stories are the subtext. Paul was not just looking at how well or poorly same-sex intercourse was done in his cultural environment but at God’s prescriptive norm for male-female sexuality in Genesis 1-2. The nature argument that Paul employed is of the same order: Even “pagans” who do not have access to the Scriptures of the Jews have enough evidence of male-female complementarity in material creation to realize that God intended sexual unions to be other-sex pairings. Sample also operates on the assumption that the ancient mind could not conceive of non-exploitative homoerotic unions. This is patently false. Had Paul wanted to endorse a nonexploitative form of same-sex intercourse, he could have chosen from a range of options available to him in his cultural environment. Sample seems to be confusing the position of Paul, and of early Christianity generally, with the positions of some Greco-Roman moralists sympathetic to one or more forms of homoerotic behavior. See further: *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 254-97, 347-60, 369-80; *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 76-81.

Myth #3: Jesus’ citation of Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 in the context of discussing divorce and remarriage in Mark 10:6-7 tells us nothing about Jesus’ views on same-sex intercourse. Indeed, we cannot know whether Jesus was opposed to homosexual practice because he did not speak to it directly.

Reality Check #3: Jesus' reference to a prescriptive male-female norm at creation, combined with other sayings of Jesus interpreted in their cultural context, provide overwhelming evidence that Jesus was opposed to all same-sex intercourse.

Although Jesus in Mark 10:2-12 focused on the indissolubility of marriage, he clearly *presupposed* as the one essential *prerequisite* that there be a male and female, man and woman. The wording of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 make this quite obvious: “*Male and female he made them*” and “*For this reason a man . . . shall be joined to his woman/wife and the two shall become one flesh.*” Only a “man” and a “woman” are structurally capable of becoming “one flesh” through a sexual union because, as we noted above, the creation stories depict gender differentiation as the *only* differentiation created by the splitting of an original sexual whole. On the level of erotic intimacy, sexual wholeness requires the restoration of the constituent parts. The fact that Jesus cites Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 back-to-back suggests that Jesus understood the “for this reason” introducing 2:24 as alluding to the gender differentiation established in 1:27. *For this reason*—namely, because God made them male and female, complementary sexual beings (1:27)—man and woman may be joined in a permanent one-flesh union (2:24). For Jesus, then, the Creator ordained marriage—it is not just a social construct—as a lifelong union of one man and one woman for the purpose of forming an indissoluble sexual whole. Both the Scriptures that Jesus cited with approval and the audience that Jesus addressed—indeed the whole of early Judaism so far as extant evidence indicates—presumed the male-female prerequisite. Jesus clearly agreed.

Sample expects us to believe that Jesus picked up from Genesis 1-2 inferences regarding monogamy and permanence but nothing regarding the sex of the participants. This is historical lunacy. When Jesus cited Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 to address the issue of divorce, he was not divesting them of their implicit proscription of all homoerotic behavior. He was narrowing further an already narrowly defined understanding of normative sexuality, drawn in part from these creation stories, to mandate the indissoluble character of marriage as well. Jesus was not making lifelong monogamy a more important consideration for sexual relations than the heterosexual dimension. The latter remained for Jesus the unshakeable prime prerequisite for all considerations of fidelity and longevity. Certainly no reasonable person would argue that Jesus prioritized monogamy and permanence over the intra-human and non-incestuous character of normative sexual relationships. Because Jesus' conviction about a male-female prerequisite at creation was shared throughout early Judaism, he could focus on other facets of sexual relationships over which disputes existed in his cultural context.

Sample thinks that, because Jesus left his parents for a celibate life rather than for married life, Christians today “must be open to other possible options.” This is a bad analogy. Genesis 2:18-24 does not treat singleness as sin. A structurally incompatible relationship is not formed by a life of sexual abstinence. But the biblical witness is eminently clear that same-sex intercourse *is* sin. Had Jesus thought that he was violating Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 by remaining celibate, he would have undermined his entire position before the Pharisees. His whole argument is predicated on the line “But from the beginning of creation . . .” (Mark 10:6). In other words, precedent established by God at creation trumps everything else. Jesus rightly understood the creation texts to be saying,

“If sex is to be had, this is how it is to be done: a man and woman in lifelong monogamous union.” Anything else is sin.

If space permitted, we could extend the discussion further to demonstrate Jesus’ opposition to same-sex intercourse by pointing to:

- The univocal and intensely strong rejection of same-sex intercourse in the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, and early Christianity—including by Paul, who was a far more vigorous critic of the law of Moses than Jesus.
- Jesus’ view of the law of Moses generally, in which Jesus prioritized “the weightier matters,” amended the law to close loopholes, and intensified many of its demands, without abrogating any portion thereof (Matt 5:21-48; 23:23).
- In particular, Jesus’ general intensification of sexual ethics, including divorce and remarriage (Mark 10:2-12; Matt 5:32 and Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-11) and adultery of the heart (Matt 5:27-28), and the application of the saying about cutting off offending body parts to sexual behavior (Matt 5:29-30).
- Other sayings of Jesus that implicitly forbid same-sex intercourse: sayings on “sexual immoralities” (*porneiai*; Mark 7:21-23); on the Decalogue command against adultery (Mark 10:17-22); on Sodom (Luke 10:10-12 and Matt 10:14-15); and on not giving what is holy to the “dogs” (Matt 7:6).

For elaboration of these points I refer readers to *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, ch. 3 (pp. 185-228) and *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*, 68-74. When referring to the “silence” of Jesus regarding same-sex intercourse, “silence” has to be put in quotes because, in so many ways, Jesus was not silent about same-sex intercourse—any more than he was silent about incest or bestiality.

Myth #4: “The ends of marriage as understood in the tradition of the church are ends that homosexual marriage can fulfill”; namely, procreation (loosely defined), fidelity, and, chiefly, “loving companionship.”

Reality Check #4: The purposes of marriage cited above apply only after the prerequisites for marriage are met: prerequisites regarding age, degree of kinship, number of partners, and, most of all, the sex or gender of the participants. The chief end of marriage is to find sexual wholeness, on the level of erotic intimacy, through re-merger with one’s sexual “counterpart” or “other half.”

Sample and others would have us believe that the church over centuries held a view of marriage that involved no structural prerequisites—from Augustine to the great Reformers and down into our own time. This is manifestly false. The church has always believed that certain prerequisites had to be met before aims such as “loving companionship” could come into view. Chief among these—apart from the non-bestial aspect—has been the other-sex prerequisite. Does Sample really think that, when John Wesley looked at human sexual relationships, he viewed the sex of the participants as irrelevant to the aims of marriage? Obviously, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Barth,

and all the great figures of the church down through the ages thought that the male-female dynamic was an inviolable element of all legitimate sexual unions.

A sexual relationship is about much more than intimacy in the context of lifelong commitment. It is about merging (interlocking, fusing) with another who is structurally complementary (congruous, compatible), “becoming one flesh” through a sexual relationship, and learning to integrate holistically with another who is neither too much like oneself, nor too much unlike, *on a structural level*. Intimacy with one’s parent, child, a wide circle of friends, or even beloved pet is a wonderful thing. Adding sex to the mix, however, changes completely the dynamics of such relationships. It is not just a matter of more intimacy. An erotic element turns intimacy into a desire to merge sexually.

When Sample tells us that homosexual unions can fulfill all the ends of marriage—“raising children for the kingdom of God,” “fidelity,” and “loving companionship”—he appears oblivious to the fact that a consensual adult relationship between a man and his mother is also capable of fulfilling all these ends. The same applies to an adult brother-sister union and a sexual union of three persons or more. It could even be stretched to include some adult-child and human-animal unions. This underscores the absurdity of maintaining that the purposes of marriage outlined by Sample can be isolated from a number of structural prerequisites. Like most pro-homosex arguments, this one completely unravels in the face of applying apt analogies. The extent to which Sample does not view the reconstitution of male and female into a sexual whole as the central, indispensable feature of “becoming one flesh” is the extent to which Sample deviates from the creation texts, the entire witness of Scripture, and two millennia of church tradition.

Conclusion. When Sample and others claim that homosexual marriage “is not in violation of Scripture or tradition,” they foist a monumental lie on the church. “Homosexual marriage” is a gross violation of Scripture and church tradition—to say nothing of being a structural oxymoron. No appeal to “sexual orientation” can change this. The bottom line is: Sample has not done his homework well. Appended to his comments is the note that he is “indebted to the work of Daniel M. Bell, Jr.” (I presume, from an internet search, he is referring to an assistant professor of theological ethics—not biblical studies—at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.) My advice to Dr. Sample is to read a bit more widely and more critically before he passes himself off to others as someone with the expertise to state that same-sex intercourse is “not in violation of Scripture or tradition.” He especially needs to examine carefully the most recent literature in biblical studies on the pro-complementarity side. If he is not capable of mustering solid arguments to rebut that position, it is probably best that he acknowledges the severe limitations of his viewpoint rather than misrepresent to others the biblical witness. The one and only position of Scripture remains: Love the person with homosexual temptations by reaching out in supportive friendship and caring enough to warn of the eternal risk of serial, unrepentant homoerotic behavior.

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