

Romans 1:26-27 and the Pauline Condemnation of Homosexuality¹

“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” (Romans 1:26-27, ESV)

If a theological anthropology of human persons is to be comprehensive, it must take detailed stock of human gender. In contemporary Evangelical circles, theology of gender has typically revolved around a couple key issues. The most controversial is that of sexual orientation, and its attendant questions over the normalcy and morality of homosexuality.¹

A comprehensive study of homosexuality in ancient and modern times is beyond the scope of this paper, involving as it does questions of biology, psychology, history, theology, etc. Neither can we address related issues of transgender, androgynous or hermaphrodite persons. Rather, it may be instructive to simply focus on homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27, a passage that is “widely considered to be the linchpin of the [theological] discussion” (Smith 224, cf. Furnish 267, Kuhn 314, White & Niell 110). Coincidentally, my approach mirrors that of Karl Kuhn in that both of us see a discussion of Rom. 1:26-27 as being paradigmatic of how to treat similar passages (1 Cor. 6:9, etc) and our general strategy in engaging the whole subject (313-314). These verses are among D.S. Bailey’s “definite references” on the subject – contrasted

¹ Mark D. Smith’s opening footnote is worth repeating in full: “I employ the term ‘homosexual’ with some misgivings. This etymological anomaly, built of mixed Latin and Greek roots, is the creation of the past century. Ancient Greeks and Romans had no equivalent term. Further, this term is very problematic when used to define persons, groups, or lifestyles... I have here employed ‘homosexual’ in a very specific and limited sense, to refer only to the *behavior* of engaging in sexual activity with persons of the same sex” (223). Robert Gagnon prefers the phrase “homosex” to highlight that “the issue is willful homosexual *acts*,” but I’ve found his phrasing unhelpful and in this paper will employ “homosexual” and “homosexuality” in much the same way Smith does. See Martin Hallett’s “Truth and Love in Our Sexual Feelings” for how this plays out for a homosexually-oriented Christian who nevertheless finds homosexual behavior sinful.

with “possible” and “spurious” references (Thiselton 149) – and so there seems some merit to special, particular treatment of this passage.

Many of the other references, particularly in the New Testament, are often interpreted in light of Rom. 1. Thus if it can be shown that Paul is here either a) *not* condemning homosexuality as we know it or b) *not* delivering an ethical position normative for us today, then the traditional Evangelical case against homosexual acts is likely to fall apart in very key ways. These two questions are essential to both ask *and* keep separate, and it follows the approach of many of the scholars considered. However, a careful review of the scholarly research suggests that in Rom. 1 Paul *is* denouncing all forms of homosexuality – including contemporary forms based on mutuality, love, and monogamy – but that this says little about the passage’s normative claims on churches today.

Our analysis of Rom. 1 must, naturally, make heavy use of certain key presuppositions that may need to be outlined.² Most centrally, this means that I’m approaching the text from a vaguely Evangelical standpoint, treating Scripture as divinely-inspired and authoritative for all Christians (2 Tim. 3:16), and “do not intend a decisive break with orthodox Christianity” (Banner et al. 6).³ The goal is not to “make theology the feeble puppet of cultural whim,” (Smith 223) but neither is it to repudiate cultural trends simply on the basis of prejudice, tradition, or misinterpreted Scripture. As Christians, our primary aim is “to act in ways consistent with [our] vocation as believers in Jesus Christ and members of Christ’s church” (Duff 267), an aim that expressly informs this entire study.

Study of Paul and homosexuality must begin with the text itself, though it is unnecessary to fully explicate the structure, logic, themes, and goals behind the lecture captured in Romans

² Though it’s worth noting that a full “reconstruction of theological presuppositions is virtually unfeasible,” potentially, as it might, involving “the entire field of (systematic) theology” (Pronk 266).

³ This basis is particularly key in the conclusion of this paper, especially concerning Dan Via and then Robin Scroggs, for whom “the concept of biblical authority [should] be abandoned altogether” (qtd. in Smith 251).

1:18-32. Suffice to say that a discussion of homosexuality is certainly not foremost on Paul's mind.⁴ The list of sins in verses 26-31, that includes homosexuality, is meant to highlight the result of the Gentile suppression of general revelation. Robert Jewett quotes Ernst Käsemann to point out that "sexual perversion is in Paul's view 'the result of God's wrath, not the reason for it'" (231, cf. 224; Kalin 426). Paul highlights the fact that *all* people are under God's condemnation, though Romans 1 is directed at the Gentiles. This is what makes Romans 2 so potent: to the Jews feeling smug and self-righteous, Paul immediately turns the tables, calls them out, and accuses them of the same behavior as the Gentiles. Thus it is something of a tragedy that a chapter ripe with meaning and nuance is often hijacked as an ideological chair passage.⁵ Everett Kalin in particular, in "Romans 1:26-27 and Homosexuality," has done a particularly admirable job of highlighting Paul's real purposes, and profound applications for the church beyond condemnations of individual behavior.

In this context we find verses 26-27, which have become something of a stumbling block in light of their "plain and literal" condemnation of homosexuality.⁶ "Ex-gay" Joe Dallas admits that "when my gay friends and I would have candid conversations about the Bible, we'd get stuck on Romans 1. We'd begin wondering if there was any way around it" (207). Appeals to the

⁴ Furnish notes that "no specific moral instruction or commandment concerning 'homosexuality' is being issued here... 'homosexual' activity is not even the topic of this sentence" (260). He's technically correct, but his implication isn't: the passage may be, and *is*, highly relevant to the issue even if it's not the primary thrust of the passage. Furnish's point, however, does serve as a (sometimes) helpful reminder to those who over-emphasize homosexuality in Romans 1 to the exclusion of Paul's larger message(s). It is also a sufficient refutation of Greg Bahsen's argument that "if homosexuality could gain divine approval in any sense, Paul would have indicated as much" (50, cf. Springett 155, Bridges 165). (a) There's no reason to assume he would've since to do so would violate the internal logic of the passage, and (b) Paul viewed homosexuality as "a typical sign, a classic example, of paganism *for which he did not have to present special arguments*" (Pronk 277, emphasis mine).

⁵ I concur with Michael Vasey in saying that "in terms of Reformation thought, we are dealing here with adiaphora (non-essentials)" (63). It may be that over-emphasis on homosexuality has robbed Romans 1 of much of its power. For many of us, this issue is "not without importance in its own right but in danger of being over-freighted with symbolic resonances" (Banner et al. 5). Rowan Williams is wise to note that "ours is a time in which it is depressingly easy to make this or that issue a test of Christian orthodoxy in such a way as to make suspect the theology of anyone disagreeing..." (12).

⁶ Cf. Bahsen's language of "straightforward indictment" and "plainly and simply" (49,50). White & Niell call, without solid defense, the traditional reading "beyond question" and "unquestionable" in back-to-back sentences (111). Elsewhere we get phrases like "is not ambiguous" and "no doubt," etc. Suffice to say I find this rhetoric probably untrue, but definitively unhelpful.

“obvious” meaning of Rom. 1 are common and most popular books tend to quote the verses without explication, appealing to something akin to “Paul/God said it; I believe it, that settles it” (Kalin 424).

Anthony Thiselton is helpful in using Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Stanley Fish to note that seemingly literal, face-value readings “may seem to be plain and natural meanings only because of our own subculture has repeated them so often that they form habituated patterns of judgment which readily match our prior horizons of expectation” (155).⁷ Certainly, however, it's significant that “the history of interpretation, Jewish and Christian, bears witness to the 'plainness' of Scripture on” the condemnation of homosexuality – past disagreements among all kinds of denominations have never been over this issue (Seitz 182). This ought to weigh heavily on those who bless Christian homosexuality, yet it's also worth noting the issues of very recent origin to which the Evangelical community enthusiastically supports; for example, the doctrines of dispensationalism and the Rapture.

Does our word “homosexuality” correspond with the concept of “homosexuality” that Paul had in mind in Romans? We must ask with James Barr, “does the lexical stock correspond to the 'concept' stock” (qtd. in Thiselton 159)? Most scholars agree that, put bluntly, “the ancient world has no word for, or concept of, ‘homosexuality’” (qtd. in Thiselton 151, cf. Furnish 254).⁸ Thus we must be particularly sensitive to immediate historical context, and these considerations play a large role for all sides in determining what Paul thought of as “homosexuality” and if, or why, he then condemned it. Paul is heavily dependent on Greek notions of sexuality, and the evidence of his familiarity with their philosophies seems overwhelming (Springett 148-149, 152,

⁷ Contra Lovelace, it is also not the case that homosexual scholars are the only ones finding ambiguities in the Biblical text (91, 100). Beyond its questionable empirical veracity, it's an uncharitable assertion that implies gays and gay advocates are the only ones who approach the passages with biases.

⁸ Among many others, D.S. Bailey believes that Paul and his contemporaries were unaware of sexual orientation or sexuality as such, and thus could not “distinguish between a condition of inversion and an act of perversion” (Thiselton 151, cf. 158). Boswell, as we will see, makes much of this fact.

Schoedel 43-58).⁹ Plato demanded solely procreative marriages, and disdained “excessive pleasure” (Schoedel 44). According to Schoedel, in light of Paul’s familiarity with these sources, “criticism of pleasure for its own sake may not have been far from Paul’s mind,” so much so that “it is the abhorrence of pleasure for the sake of pleasure or the abhorrence of impurity that provides the real impetus to the rejection of same-sex eros” (48, 49). Philo agrees with Plato’s critique of pleasure, but also adds “feminization of the youth” as a chief concern (Schoedel 50), roughly analogous to the “disease of effeminacy” or “softness” that so often characterized ancient concerns about same-sex love (Schoedel 55).

Softness, naturally, was not supposed to apply to lesbianism. There, condemnations usually stemmed from the in/subversion of traditional active/passive roles (Furnish 263). In other words, it was immoral “mainly because it involved women usurping the dominant place of men” (Jewett 232). Jewett then quotes Brooten in saying that in ancient (even modern?) sexuality, “‘Natural intercourse means penetration of a subordinate person by a dominant one,’ a female by a male” (232).

Further arguments stemmed from the supposed lack of homosexuality in animals – a notion modern science has definitively refuted – and the argument, oft-repeated in most ancient literature, that homosexuality was characterized by insatiability (Schoedel 57, cf. Fredrickson 204). Lastly, there was also the “obviousness of the function of the orifices of the body,” an argument from Philo, Soranus, etc (Schoedel 54, cf. 57) that is still heard today (ex. Lovelace 92, Peterson 46). There is, naturally, some real question about the *actual* obviousness of this (and not simply the power of inherited ways of seeing). Furthermore, Dan Via is probably correct to note the clear Biblical record about drawing inferences from appearances, and that much of Christian theology is counter-intuitive or counter-commonsense (35).

⁹ See Wold for historical context of homosexuality in Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Egyptian cultures (43-61).

Robert Jewett also mentions Paul's conception of homosexuality in light of Nero. He cites Richlin, who describes Nero as "a no-holds-barred omnisexual Sadeian libertine" (236). This immediate context probably greatly colored Paul's view of homosexuality, so that even if he was aware of mutually-beneficial, consensual adult homosexual relationships he nevertheless primarily thought of Nero and the "aggressive bisexuality" (240) that characterized the surrounding culture. It was a culture also marked by extensive slavery, a "prominent feature of the social background of most of Paul's audience in Rome" (238-239). Sexual "use" of slaves, as is well-documented, was a routine and common feature of Roman life, both in male prostitution and as an aside for labor slaves (239, cf. Scroggs 38-39). We must take note, Jewett concludes, of the "vast disparity in the social situation of modern readers as compared with Paul's original audience" (240).

Mark Smith is less convinced than Jewett. While he concedes that "as far as we know, Paul never faced what many churches are facing today: people who claim to be committed, self-affirming homosexuals and also committed Christians," (249) he nevertheless sketches a picture of ancient Greco-Roman sexual habits that bears some strong resemblances with our culture (244). He joins Thiselton in great skepticism over whether a thinker as well-educated and well-traveled as Paul would have "known nothing of same-gender intimacy which was neither violent, commercial, nor pederastic" (184, cf. 160; Smith 246). It might be pointed out, however, that anecdotal evidence would suggest this kind of latent prejudice still exists today among intelligent, culturally-sensitive Christians whom cannot envision a healthy, monogamous homosexual relationship among believers who aim to live lives of quietude (1 Thess. 4:11).¹⁰

¹⁰ Michael Vasey takes the St. Andrew's Day Statement to task for this, accusing its authors of "implying that gay people are to blame for the current 'disagreements' – what one might call the 'uppity nigger' reaction to gay self-assertion" (65).

Robin Scroggs is one who has made an (in)famous appeal to such issues of historical context in arguing that Paul does not condemn homosexuality as we know it. After finding “no suggestions in the [ancient] texts that homosexual relationships existed between same-age adults,” (35) Scroggs argues that Paul condemns “the image of homosexuality as *pederasty* and primarily here its more sordid and dehumanizing dimensions” (126). Mark Smith has provided the most extensive and detailed response to Scroggs.¹¹ Smith critiques him on three primary fronts.¹² The first is the definition of pederasty, in that Scroggs is sufficiently vague to the point where he ends up suggesting that Paul only meant to condemn homosexual relationships with distinct active/passive roles. Smith argues that “such a conclusion is not very significant and does not support the application Scroggs makes of it” (228). His last two critiques show how Scroggs has misconstrued the historical evidence, omitting information about non-pederastic homosexual practices and lesbianism (227, cf. Kuhn 315). Given Scroggs’ thesis, these attacks are devastating because they suggest, as we’ve already noted, a cultural climate that was, in some key ways, similar to ours and *not* one solely consisting of pederastic, violent, manipulative homosexual relationships (cf. Jewett 235). In fact, there is strong evidence that pederasty was *on the decline* in the years just prior to Paul, and that same-age, consensual same-sex relationships were more typical (Smith 233).

David Fredrickson has also made rigorous use of ancient historical evidence to construct a case against traditional interpretations of Rom. 1:26-27. Of the three revisionist readings of Romans under examination (Scroggs, Fredrickson, and then Boswell), Fredrickson’s account is perhaps one of the most nuanced and too often overlooked. He argues that Paul’s condemnation in Romans was of (a) excessive passion or unruly desires and (b) unloving, manipulative, or non-

¹¹ Smith humorously quips that “Scroggs’ book [*The New Testament and Homosexuality*] embodies every virtue save one, that of being right” (227).

¹² Cf. Bridges’ critique of Scroggs apart from historical considerations (164-165).

consensual “use” of others’ bodies. Fredrickson takes as a starting point Mark Golden’s summary of scholarly research in saying that “forms of sexual activity were not a major concern [in ancient practice], that homosexual and heterosexual desire were regarded as identical, [and] that excess (failing to control oneself) and passivity (falling under another's control) were the main forms of sexual immorality for men” (qtd. in Fredrickson 198).

Fredrickson highlights the word *chresis* (“use”), which has often been ignored even in otherwise rigorous studies. He argues that “[Use] does not refer to a relation carried out in the medium of sexual pleasure but the activity of the desiring subject, usually male, performed on the desired object, female or male” (199). There was, in those times, the “pervasive interpretation of sexual activity as *use*,” where “neither the gender of the subject nor that of the object [was] material to the concept” (200).¹³ The “instrumentality of the object of sexual desire,” *regardless of gender*, is the key concept during this period (202, cf. Schoedel 44, 57).¹⁴ It may be that this passage is part of Paul's plan to introduce a new theology of gender, a new model paradigm in which mutuality and respect – not use, mis-use, and abuse – play a key role (cf. Schoedel 72). Since Jewett sees these verses as “connected with a reversal of the proper relationship between the creation and the Creator,” (226) it may be that a synthesis with Fredrickson reveals a key insight: just as men used others in sex, they now also were attempting to *use God* and make Him a servant of their whims.

Furthermore, given that wives (and slaves, boys, etc) were simply objects for use by the dominant (male) sex, they were subject to the same restrictions, namely dispassionate use.

¹³ Cf. Fredrickson’s claim that “...the problem becomes the psychological significance of the act for the subject of sexual desire” (205). When the significance is nearly the same for both persons – in a context of mutual love, respect, tenderness – sex is fundamentally different than the ancient Greco-Roman ideal. It was an ideal that prized “sex which symbolizes and preserves male social superiority to the female (males penetrate/females are penetrated);” our modern rejection of that kind of thinking may thus also include a rejection of homosexual condemnations that originated in that context (205).

¹⁴ Fredrickson again: “The immediate problem is passion, not the gender of the persons having sex” (222).

Fredrickson sums up a wealth of evidence that during this time, “using sex sparingly was the ideal” (204, cf Schoedel 57). Thus Paul “follows a pattern established by the moral philosophers whose concern was to make passion and its control the core ethical problem in all matters of life” (206).¹⁵

Part of Fredrickson’s argument is weakened, however, when we note that Paul takes pains to mention the mutuality of the passions: individuals who “were consumed with passion for one another,” not simply passive partners nor victims of someone else’s “use.” Karl Kuhn further critiques Fredrickson in two key areas. Firstly, Fredrickson has not proven that the gender-nonspecific term “use” could not have been employed “along with [*para phusin*] to denounce homosexual activity;” he has not proved that “use” *has* to *only* refer to excessive passion/desire (317). Secondly, Kuhn charges that Fredrickson ignores Paul’s Jewish background to wrongly “conclude that Paul had little or no interest in saying anything about homosexuality per se but only about the unbridled passion that was evident in these illustrations he happened to choose” (317). Kuhn is misleading with that last phrase, since Paul didn’t just happen to choose homosexuality as an example – it was a direct appeal to common “vice lists” familiar to his audience. Yet Kuhn is correct otherwise: as Wold points out, “As long as Paul’s thought is alienated from the levitical system,” of which Paul was more than familiar, “errors will continue to be made with respect to his view” (183).¹⁶

Lastly, like Scroggs and Fredrickson, John Boswell is another scholar who has given significant effort in showing that in Rom. 1 Paul was not condemning homosexuality as we know

¹⁵ Jewett notes that “...‘passion’ is a more distinctive term in Greco-Roman ethics than ‘desires’... Paul’s wording conveys the sense of an involuntary state that simply comes over a person” (229, cf. Fredrickson 211). Furthermore Jewett points out that ‘Inflamed with their appetite for one another’ is rare and derogatory language for the New Testament, implying an irrational bondage to an egoistic, empty, and unsatisfying expression of animalistic sexuality” (236).

¹⁶ Kuhn concludes by saying that Scroggs’ and Fredrickson’s “contextualization of the passage unnaturally forces the text to read against the grain of its own semantic logic,” (318) a phrase that ultimately says, with more sophistication, that they’re just essentially contradicting the “plain and literal” meaning.

it. Boswell takes a different approach, using the Biblical text to argue that “the persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons” (qtd. in Smith 225). His arguments are similar to those of Michael Vasey, D.S. Bailey, and Jeffrey John (Peterson 46-48, Lovelace 91-93). All of them emphasize Paul’s use of *metallasso* (“exchanged”) to describe “*heterosexuals* who have deliberately committed *homosexual* acts, thus violating their true nature” (Dallas 204).¹⁷ Boswell has been criticized on a number of levels, even beyond exegesis (see Wold 181,184 for that).¹⁸ Pim Pronk argues that “a distinction in judging the sexual behavior of ‘real’ homosexuals and other homosexual behavior is condescending and, therefore, morally objectionable” (273). Furthermore, Boswell’s “models” suggest an absolute distinction between hetero/homo sexuality that does not square with modern psychology. While “Jews like Philo and the early Christians... rejected the notion of sexuality as a continuum,” (Schoedel 59) most modern clinicians “tend to speak of a spectrum or sliding-scale of [sexual] orientation” (Thiselton 184). In any case, “Boswell’s view is... distinctly a minority opinion among exegetes” (Lovelace 97) and Smith concurs in noting in summary that “most recent scholars agree that Boswell’s interpretation of Rom. 1:26-27 is untenable” (226, cf. Bahnsen 57-58).

Given this careful assessment of the scholarly sources, it should become clear that the traditional picture is correct on this front: Paul is explicitly condemning homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27. In his review of the scholarly materials, Thiselton found that the “major

¹⁷ Before rejecting this view, Schoedel does find at least some historical support that “Paul is speaking only of same-sex acts performed by those who are by nature heterosexual...” (67). Schoedel might qualify that as “*some* (*unconvincing*) historical support,” but it’s worth nothing because Boswell’s interpretation is not as far-fetched as, say, White & Niell would suggest.

¹⁸ His misunderstanding of *para phusin* (“against nature”) takes particular criticism, of which it is impossible to explicate in full. Boswell’s interpretation of the phrase as *personal* natures ignores that Paul is speaking about the Gentiles (and then the Jews; *all* mankind) as a collective whole. Also, most modern scholars reject the previously-popular opinion that “nature” referred to “custom” or “traditions” (Schoedel 59, cf. 63; Jewett 234, Pronk 274, Wold 181,184). Many exegetes probably follow Pronk in concluding that in the end, “Paul’s condemnation [of homosexuality] is no less sharp” regardless of how one interprets *para phusin* (278).

commentaries” all see Paul as referring to homosexuality as we know it, quoting J.D.G. Dunn in saying that “Paul’s attitude to homosexual practice is unambiguous” in condemnation (175). At the end of his excellent treatment, Smith likewise writes, “I do not think there is any avoiding the conclusion that Paul considers homosexual behavior to be sinful” (247).¹⁹ These statements are more significant considering that for both Thiselton and Smith, these condemnations do not provide normative principles for the contemporary church.²⁰

Christopher Seitz helpfully phrases the dilemma thusly: “If it could be shown that [Rom. 1] plainly forbids homosexual acts as an offense to God in Christ, would that be sufficient to constrain the church to proscribe homosexual behavior among its members today” (181)?²¹ Thus while the evidence just considered suggests Romans 1 does forbid homosexuality, it may be that there ought to be openness about how this should inform church life today. Schoedel reads Paul against Paul to argue that his “rejection of the purity rules as they affect food [1 Cor. 8-10] suggests that [Paul’s] insights in this regard could profitably be pushed further in the realm of sexuality. It is surely not unimaginable that a God who seeks the outcast would call those to him whose sexual orientation sets them apart from the majority” (72, cf. 63; Furnish 265). The idea of a calling, or “vocation,” greatly informs Nancy Duff’s assessment of the issue. For her, the idea of the “freedom of God” forces us to recognize that “...what God demands in one situation may be different from what God demands in another” (265).²² Similarly, Kuhn’s “canonical

¹⁹ Cf. Pronk: “To sum up: wherever homosexual intercourse is mentioned in Scripture, it is condemned” (279) or Hart: “It is widely recognized, even by pro-gay students of the Bible, that no Bible text is positive about homosexual behavior” (xi). The use of many “pro-gay” scholars for this research who (unbeknownst to me when I began) nevertheless confirm the traditional interpretation (if not application) has been deliberate and helps, in my estimation, to avoid the poor interpretations of the overly prejudiced treatments – Joe Dallas and WouldJesusDiscriminate.Com being prime examples from opposite sides.

²⁰ So too with most of the scholars represented in this paper, such as Schoedel and Jewett whom have concluded that “Paul mistakes custom for nature,” much as, they say, he also does in 1 Cor. 6:9 (Schoedel 59, cf. 63; Jewett 234).

²¹ Cf. Smith: “...once [Romans 1] is carefully interpreted, was Paul correct, on an ethical level?” (250) or Pronk: even if “these texts unanimously reject homosexual behavior... is it possible for Christians to arrive at a positive assessment of homosexual relations” (265)?

²² Contra *casuistry*, or “the application of principles or norms to specific cases,” (Duff 265) where these norms are eternal and unchanging (cf. Bridges 151). To re-appropriate Schliermacher’s phrase, I would tend to argue that casuistry (and absolutism) is a “miserable love of system” (Thiselton 146), and Duff sees it as “antithetical to divine

reading” suggests that “the development of God’s instruction portrayed in Scripture can extend beyond the confines of the canon itself,” (324) and thus it’s possible that God is presently calling the church to affirm loving, monogamous homosexual relationships.²³

Many of these models may be profitably combined and in total may serve as a compelling argument for the idea that “the Bible’s moral rejection of homosexuality cannot simply be taken that any and all homosexual behavior is forbidden for us” (Hart *xiii*). Thus Pronk astutely notes that “A difference in one’s position regarding homosexuality proves to be linked with a difference in one’s view of revelation” (290). For that reason and others (namely, space constraints) a full exploration of these avenues isn’t presently possible and the brief preceding sketches will have to suffice.²⁴ In the end, however, a robust understanding of Romans 1:26-27 provides a crucial starting point for exploring these issues. An understanding that’s committed to historical and textual context will find, contra the revisionists, that Paul does condemn homosexuality after all.

freedom” (265). Casuistry is almost directly opposite Hart’s view when he writes, “[The Bible’s] concrete morality is not and cannot be ours. It is not a moral text. Christian faith is not moralistic...” (xiii).

²³ Furnish articulates this kind of thinking well: “Revelation is not an inert ‘subject matter’ that can be ‘deposited,’ ‘learned,’ ‘taught,’ and ‘believed.’ It is an occurrence, an event. It is, as the Greek word itself indicates, an ‘unveiling,’ a ‘dis-closing’ and ‘dis-covering’ of a reality that is otherwise hidden from view. Of course revelation reveals *something*, it does not just ‘occur.’ But what it reveals can never be defined apart from the act of perceiving, thus never without reference to those for whom the dis-covering takes place. They are necessarily part of the revelation event” (269).

²⁴ Further avenues of research may include an exploration of Tony Jones’ model of dynamic orthodoxy, Pauline concepts of Christian liberty, or larger wholistic textual considerations (sometimes derogatorily referred to as arguments from “the gist of the thing”).

Works Cited

- Bahsen, Greg L. *Homosexuality: A Biblical View*. Grand Rapids: Baker House Publishing, 1978.
- Banner, Michael et al. "St. Andrew's Day Statement: An Examination of the Theological Principles Affecting the Homosexuality Debate." *The Way Forward? Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*. Ed. by Timothy Bradshaw. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 1997.
- Bridges, Carl. "The Bible Does Have Something To Say About Homosexuality." *Gay Rights or Wrongs?* Ed. by Michael Mazzalongo. Missouri: College Press Publishing, 1995.
- Dallas, Joe. *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1996.
- Duff, Nancy J. "Christian Vocation, Freedom of God, and Homosexuality." *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture*. Ed. by David L. Balch. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 2000.
- Fredrickson, David E. "Natural and Unnatural Use in Romans 1:24-27: Paul and the Philosophic Critique of Eros." *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture*. Ed. by David L. Balch. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 2000.
- Furnish, Victor P. "Homosexual Practices in Biblical Perspective." *The Sexuality Debate in North American Churches, 1988-1995: Controversies, Unresolved Issues, Future Prospects*. Ed. by John J. Carey. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995.
- Hart, Hendrik. "Foreword." *Against Nature? Types of Moral Argumentation Regarding Homosexuality* by Pim Pronk. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 1993.
- Jewett, Robert. "The Social Context and Implications of Homoerotic References in Romans 1:24-27." *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture*. Ed. by David L. Balch. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 2000.
- Kalin, Everett R. "Romans 1:26-27 and Homosexuality." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30.6 (December), 2003.
- Kuhn, Karl A. "Natural and Unnatural Relations between Text and Context: A Canonical Reading of Romans 1:26-27." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 33.4 (August), 2006.
- Lovelace, Richard F. *Homosexuality: What Should Christians Do About It?* New Jersey: Fleming H Revell Company, 1978.
- Peterson, David. "Same Sex Unions and Romans 1." *Holiness & Sexuality*. Ed. by David Peterson. Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2004.

- Pronk, Pim. *Against Nature? Types of Moral Argumentation Regarding Homosexuality*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1993.
- Schoedel, William R. "Same-Sex Eros: Paul and the Greco-Roman Tradition." *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture*. Ed. by David L. Balch. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.
- Scroggs, Robin. *The New Testament and Homosexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Seitz, Christopher. "Sexuality and Scripture's Plain Sense: The Christian Community and the Law of God." *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture*. Ed. by David L. Balch. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000.
- Smith, Mark D. "Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26-27." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64.2, 1996.
- Springett, Ronald M. "What Does the New Testament Say About Homosexuality?" *The Crisis of Homosexuality*. Ed. by J. Isamu Yamamoto. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990.
- Thiselton, Anthony. "Can Hermeneutics Ease the Deadlock?" *The Way Forward? Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*. Ed. by Timothy Bradshaw. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Vasey, Michael. "Travelling Together." *The Way Forward? Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*. Ed. by Timothy Bradshaw. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Via, Dan O. "The Bible, the Church, and Homosexuality." *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.
- White, James R. and Niell, Jeffrey D. *The Same Sex Controversy*. Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2002.
- Williams, Rowan. "Knowing Myself in Christ." *The Way Forward? Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*. Ed. by Timothy Bradshaw. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Wold, Donald J. *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.