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Nor can there be any illusions that many in the church today fall short of God's expressed will in this area, just as they did in first-century Corinth. When this happens the church of Jesus Christ will not cast the first stone but will extend a forgiving hand of hope and renewal.

Nevertheless, this is still God's word to the church today, as it was to the church at Corinth. The church of Jesus Christ must be bold to proclaim the whole truth regardless of prevailing sexual customs. Its practice and proclamation are God's own word for the prevention of moral error as well as help for lives disoriented, distraught, and destroyed by sexual immorality and anarchy.

As Christians, we cannot separate faith and obedience, love and law, grace and works. The attempt to do so has always led to failure. It is not just that the Bible will not separate faith and obedience, as though obedience were some kind of inheritance tax which God levies on the free gift of salvation. God's love is too deep not to demand commitments p. 42 from his human partners. A God of love without law who makes no demands is an abstraction, indeed no God. The commandments of God are all designed to make us more happy than we can possibly be without them. They are not penalties but blessings.

Human obedience or disobedience, however, is never the final word. The ultimate word of the Christian is grace, through which we are loved, accepted, and forgiven by the cross, and through which we are enabled by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to become new persons in conformity to Jesus Christ, our Lord. p. 43

# Gender and Homosexuality

Harold Turner

*Reprinted with permission of the Editor of Sane Sex (Homebush West, Australia, ANZEA Publishers 1993) pp. 153–179.*

*In this important chapter written in non-technical language, the author argues that the issue in the current homosexual debate is about gender relationships not sexuality; and that morals and rhetoric cannot be separated from theological truth. He shows that the uniqueness of complementary gender relationships must be grounded in the Christian doctrine of the trinitarian understanding of God.*

Editor

## CURRENT SHAPE OF THE QUESTION

Recently there has been intense discussion among Christians in the areas of gender and homosexuality, conducted in terms of 'sexuality', and focused especially on the two forms of hereto- and homo-sexuality. In relation to the latter there are at least three distinct issues and considerable progress has been made since the 1970s in dealing with two of these.

The first, decriminalization of consenting homosexual behaviour, was long overdue. The Christian opposition to decriminalization was based on the belief that such a

procedure implies acceptance of homosexuality in general. In fact, decriminalization was a first step in removing harsh, punitive attitudes in both Church and State.

The second step was the new pastoral attitude that sees homosexuals not so much judgementally but rather as people to understand and relate to lovingly and responsibly. Official church statements and most people in pastoral ministry now express this attitude, even if many church members have not yet caught up.

The discussion now concentrates on a third issue: the acceptance of [p. 44](#) those living in a full homosexual partnership not only into church membership but also into the ordained ministry. Many of those who have campaigned for the above-mentioned first two changes see this as the logical conclusion to the process of change. They, perhaps rather wishfully, assume that the new pastoral attitudes imply the normalization of homosexuality. Others, a majority, have seen these new attitudes as no more than a fully Christian approach to this as to any other aspect of human behaviour, and as having nothing to do with reclassifying homosexuality as 'right'. This unidentified difference of interpretation has bedevilled current discussion.

### **Language and limits for our discussion**

Beyond the current divisions of opinion on these issues the one inescapable feature we all share is the fact of our sexuality, which is given to us in the form of our gender. We must all have parents of the two genders and we are all born either male or female. Some would play down the effect of 'nature', i.e. genetic origins and physical differences. They would emphasize the subsequent influence of 'nurture' in a particular culture in establishing our gender and our sexual orientation. Others argue for the reverse emphasis. There is probably no way of settling the balance of these two groups of factors, either for any individual or as a general rule. Since for the purposes of our exploration here this question does not first have to be settled, we need spend no more time on it.

Likewise we can avoid being embroiled in attempts to stereotype the two genders in terms of different masculine and feminine 'qualities', or to do the reverse, to eliminate differences and see humankind in unisex terms. The biological distinctions between men and women are permanent and pervasive. They can neither be eliminated nor sloughed off after they have served a reproductive purpose for some of us. We live our whole lives as men or women, apart from a tiny proportion of transsexual and transvestites. The holistic emphasis in modern thought points to the interaction of body and mind.

Gender must not be identified with sexuality. The latter may find expression between the genders ('hetero-'), or within either gender ('homo-', and then as either 'gay' or 'lesbian'). The forms of gender expression vary from the implicit and unconscious factor in all relationships between men and women to the more overtly sexual forms. Sexuality as a drive, an activity or an experience is endlessly variable, comes and goes, waxes and wanes. But through all these variations the invariable fact of gender remains, and it is the wider term.

Again gender is presupposed by marriage but does not require marriage, much less parenthood, for its significance. Some men and women may by choice become related as husband and wife, but all men and women *are* related as male and female and here there is no choice between gender or no gender. Transsexual and sex-change operations only illustrate the point. The fact that Jesus was neither married nor a parent, but nevertheless possessed gender enabled him to be thoroughly [p. 45](#) human, and let us say at once no more human than if the incarnation had been in the form of a female.

### **Some ethical theory and basic theology**

The arguments for the radical reclassification of homosexuality have been conducted in terms of sexuality rather than gender. Gender from which sexuality can be distinguished but not separated, has tended to be ignored. Those who oppose any aspect of this comprehensive reclassification have often found themselves discussing the issue in the terms chosen by those who support the new attitudes, even while they feel uneasy in so doing. At the same time they have not found it easy to formulate their own understanding in a way that is convincing to themselves or to others. Although able to explain decriminalization and support a more positive pastoral approach, they have been left with little more than an inarticulate 'gut reaction' against the public acceptance of homosexuals into the Christian ministry.

The fact that this reaction is inarticulate does not mean that it is erroneous. Michael Polanyi, an influential scientist-philosopher dealing with the ways in which we know truth, has taught us that most of our knowledge of truth is in fact implicit or 'tacit knowledge'. We always 'know more than we can tell', much less actually 'prove'. Our knowledge about right and wrong, truth and error, always exceeds our capacity to articulate this knowledge. 'Gut knowledge' is therefore to be taken seriously, even though we should always work at making it more explicit and then critiquing it.

To articulate and examine our implicit knowledge in this area is to engage in moral philosophy or ethical theory, and in Christian theology. This essay aims to help us undertake some fairly simple but basic thinking, to 'do' some ethics and some theology. In acquiring these tools we will also be able to examine the presentation of the homosexual position by its convinced supporters.

## **MORAL ARGUMENTS USED IN THE DISCUSSION**

The presentation of the homosexual position is couched in moral rather than theological language, and upon analysis it reveals at least four features that are subject to criticism.

### **1. Reliance on moral rhetoric to support one position and denounce the other**

In the past, such rhetoric was conspicuous in church criticism of homosexuality, which was described as inevitably associated with all kinds of evil habits and lusts, from which, by implication, heterosexuality was protected. This indiscriminate condemnation contributed to the marginalization and persecution of homosexuals. Decriminalization and pastoral acceptance have not yet entirely eliminated this rhetoric from the language of church members. On the other hand many church reports now lean in the reverse direction and one detects efforts to compensate for the past sins of the churches.

The main examples now occur not among the critics but among the supporters of homosexuality. Here the case presented often consists [p. 46](#) largely of a range of 'good words', mostly moral qualities, associated with the one position and a range of 'bad words' with the other.

A recent example is that of a Presbyterian minister's preaching in his church on the subject of human sexuality. On the one hand he associated homosexuality with liberation, justice, openness, acceptance, freedom, love (indeed 'new heights of loving'), gentleness and truth. Those who disagreed were described as 'hounds of heaven', contravening human rights, obsessed with sex, ignorant and prejudiced, persecutors, with 'chains of oppression'. The sermon concluded with Lowell's moving hymn, 'Once to every man and nation' with its dramatic contrasts between 'strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side'. The good side was then described in terms of 'bloom', 'light', and the 'brave'; the evil side was associated with 'blight', 'darkness', 'cowardice' and 'wrong'. The sermon left

no doubt as to where all these terms applied. This may be regarded as powerful rhetoric, but it is certainly not argument.<sup>1</sup>

Often statements of this kind are, as in this case, followed by an appeal for people to sit down together and listen to one another. It is not surprising if this does not happen when one side monopolizes the language of the moral high ground rather than presenting arguments with substantial moral or theological content. The well-known name for this procedure is 'argumentum ad hominem'—attack the opponent, not the argument.

It is important to abstain from any form of moral intimidation. Neither party in the debate has any moral monopoly, neither today nor in their histories, and this procedure must be exposed for what it is and replaced by real discussion with solid content.

## **2. There is no close correlation between morality and religion**

The above rhetorical method assumes that there is always an inbuilt relation between moral rectitude and religious or theological truth. In this sphere, if moral qualities we all recognize (such as love, loyalty, unselfishness, etc.) are exhibited in the lives of homosexual partnerships, then it is argued that this lifestyle must be acceptable to God, and is indeed as much his gift and blessing as heterosexual marriage. Right morality and true religion, it is claimed, or more often just implied, always go together.

Everyone's experience, in fact, contradicts this assumption. We all know of admirable, morally upright citizens of unblemished character who are atheists or even strongly anti-religious. And we know of the reverse—the sincere and humble Christian who fights an often losing battle against known moral weaknesses or habits, be it alcoholism, kleptomania, a sexual fault, or bad temper, and yet who knows the ever-renewed grace and forgiveness of God in the way that is outside the atheist's ken.

Thus we may recognize that some homosexual partnerships exhibit more qualities of kindness, mutual support, [p. 47](#) etc., than some heterosexual marriages, and of course vice versa. Thus we can also recognize that a homosexual partnership may have helped someone to find acceptance, stability, responsibility, even deliverance from drugs, without this fact 'proving' that such a partnership is theologically acceptable as part of the divine pattern for creation.

I first teamed this clearly when I had to accept the real rescue of a young man from hard drugs by the Unification Church or 'Moonies', in spite of the Christian theological criticism of its Asian syncretist beliefs. I accepted the moral achievement but rejected the associated theology. It would be so much simpler if moral quality always coincided with theological truth, but it doesn't, and any argument involving this assumption is simply invalid. The loving, permanent homosexual relationships of which we are told are irrelevant to the central theological issue.

## **3. We all have moral 'blind spots'**

The presence of the above positive qualities among homosexuals is equally irrelevant to our moral judgement on this type of relationship itself. It is notorious that we are capable of great moral inconsistencies. The more dramatic examples occur when a devoted husband and father, pillar of the church and respected citizen noted for good works, is discovered to have embezzled clients' funds, secretly gambled or maintained a mistress, or otherwise acted 'out of character'. Defence lawyers often play on this very contrast, and the media make much of it. And in varying degrees there is some touch of Jekyll and Hyde

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<sup>1</sup> From the copy of a sermon given in Auckland, New Zealand, in November 1991 by the Rev. David Clark, a prominent supporter of the comprehensive acceptance of homosexuality as a normal Christian position.

in all of us. Which of us good ‘law and order’ people has never deliberately and knowingly broken the speed limit when the law is not looking?

A variation on this fact of inconsistency occurs when a person who is full of the virtues is felt to have a serious blind spot on certain moral issues. The animal rights supporter may approve of capital punishment; the ecological enthusiast may be an example of conspicuous consumer spending; the peace campaigner may adopt openly militant and violent methods. Each issue then has to be discussed on its own merits and it is no argument to point to one’s virtues in other areas. So also with homosexual partnerships—they may be admirable in many other ways, but this has nothing to do with the inherent rightness or wrongness of such relationships.

#### **4. Reliance on moral arguments in a pluralist culture**

A weakness in the contemporary use of moral considerations to justify the homosexual case is that there is no agreed public moral reference point in modern Western culture. Objective moral standards of right and wrong have been eroded, and any theological or Christian base abandoned. Morality is said to derive from changing ‘cultural values’ and in a pluralist society where all moral standards are relative it reduces to a matter of personal, subjective opinion—my life-style and ethic alongside yours. Indeed this argument is invoked in support of a variety of sexual lifestyles and behaviour, including homosexual relationships, as equally ‘right’ for different people. **p. 48**

The churches themselves are caught up in our own culture more than they know; their pronouncements in the field of sexuality often reflect the values of contemporary society rather than the gospel. This makes it all the more necessary—and difficult—to seek a base beyond the flux of contemporary culture in the classic theology of the Christian faith, and especially in what we believe about God and the pattern for human life that he has created. To this issue we now turn.

### **A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER**

There are two possible views of God, each of which has a corresponding view of humanity and of gender. The Godhead is either

1. a unitary being and so non-relational within itself (i.e. monotheism); or
2. a more complex single being with differentiated (i.e. ‘hetero’) internal relations (as in trinitarianism).

The use of the terms ‘homo’ and ‘hetero’ is perhaps unusual in the theology of God and may seem contrived, but they do apply and serve to show the inter-relation between the theology of God, the theology of creation, especially of gender, and the ethics of our subject, especially of love. Let us now look at each position more closely, and try to spell this out.

#### **1. Non-relational monotheism and a God of love**

God has often been seen as a unitary being, with no internal structure to sustain inherent relationships. This view is called *monotheism*. There is nothing distinctively Christian in such a unitary view of God, for Judaism, Islam and some other faiths would assent to it.

If such a God is to be eternally and inherently loving then this God has no eternal object to relate to in loving apart from himself. Such self-love we call narcissism and regard as unhealthy. To have an object to relate to in love, a unitarian God has to create human beings. This makes God dependent on us in order to be himself, instead of our depending

on him in order to be fully ourselves. God is then less than an absolute, ultimate being who is love in himself; we humans enable him to love and to 'be' love. There is not much security for us in such a God, whose nature we determine.

Humanity, if made in the image of such a God, would also be essentially undifferentiated, unitary and all alike. (The technical terms for this are androgynous and hermaphrodite; nowadays we would say unisex.) Gender difference in this case would be reduced to the level of the biology needed for reproduction; it would have nothing to do with reflecting the nature of God. Therefore, if God is love, gender has no essential connection with the nature of love. Hence there is no real difference in hetero-relationships of love and homo-relationships of love.

Not surprisingly, therefore, supporters of the homosexual position are often monotheistic in their theology, i.e. unitarians rather trinitarians. This first came home to me when I read a paper on Christology (who and what Jesus is), written by a leading homosexual minister. He p. 49 presented Jesus not as essentially divine but only as an outstanding prophet and teacher, whose death had no unique significance.<sup>2</sup> Jesus must then have worshipped a unitary 'God of love'; and there is no room in this view for the trinitarian view of God's nature. This unitarian view would not be accepted by churches associated with the World Council of Churches, by Christians of the Lausanne movement, or by the Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches, but it comports well with the homosexual position.

It is this unitarian or monotheistic God who is usually invoked in statements that support homosexuality by declaring that God loves us all just as we are, no matter what our sexual orientation. We must expose this apparently unchallengeable declaration as most misleading. In the context of the sexuality discussion it always implies that God accepts, even loves, homosexuality itself, which is then declared to be another blessing from God.

I sincerely hope God does not love, and so approve, any of us as we are in this indiscriminating fashion. There are things about myself that I regret, even hate. The Christian gospel is that God loves me *in spite of what I still am* in so many ways, that he is ready to forgive all this, and knows what he will yet make me through Christ with whom my future is hidden. That is the 'amazing grace' of God, the forgiveness that is misrepresented or entirely omitted in the common claim for the way God loves homosexuals and their homosexual activity. This sort of claim would support not only homosexual behaviour but every kind of human wrong-doing. It must be exposed for the distorting and dangerous half-truth that it is.

## **2. Hetero-relationship trinitarian God: eternal love in its fullness**

In turning to the heterosexual view we shall find that we are operating not in the moral categories of the homosexual supporters but in basic structural and relational categories both for God and for mankind i.e. in terms of how we are actually made.

The classic Christian position sets forth an internal self-differentiation within the Godhead, with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This distinctive Christian doctrine of the Trinity is no mere speculative or archaic option to be discarded if we are to relate to modern culture. The present century has seen a massive re-discovery of the centrality of this understanding of God and today many of our major theologians have been producing substantial studies of the Trinity, the crown of Christian reflection about the faith. We

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<sup>2</sup> A paper on 'Who Jesus is for us today', submitted in New Zealand in 1991 by Dr David Bromell to a Methodist Church committee on doctrine. Through the media Dr Bromell has become nationally known as a homosexual minister. He is a former Baptist pastor seeking admission to the Methodist ministry.

have discovered that in the Christian view of persons we are *constituted by* our relations with others, our belongingness. We are not self-contained atomistic ‘marbles’ as modern individualism would have it; our critique of this false view derives from recognizing that we are made in the image of our maker, a trinitarian God who is essentially relational. p. 50

Likewise, and for the same reasons, we reject the current political and economic views that society arises from a voluntary social contract between free individuals acting in their own interests. We can critique what has gone so manifestly wrong in Western societies only on the basis of an organic understanding of society as *constituted by* a network of relationships. Leonardo Boff, a leading Catholic exponent in South America of what is known as liberation theology, has a whole volume on *Trinity and society*. In it an impressive exposition of the classic doctrine of God is the basis for his radical critique of the oppression and poverty around him, and of both capitalism and socialism.

It is also of great significance that due to twentieth century developments in the science of physics, physicists no longer see the material world as made up of basic building blocks called atoms but rather in terms of interacting complexes. This is another sign that the hetero-relational or trinitarian view of God can provide the most comprehensive reference point and model for all thinking about the creation—the physical world, human society, and the human person.

In the trinitarian view God is not a three-in-one partnership of equal divine individuals, but one single divinity with internal self-differentiation into three ‘persons’—differences for which we lack adequate human language but which we describe as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These differences provide opportunity for a new form of love. This is not only reciprocal love between parties who are like each other; it goes further by reaching across the real and basic differences between the parties. This love is richer and deeper because it has the added dimension of complementarity. The parties now depend upon each other for their own completeness; each is actually *constituted by* relation in love with the two other different yet equal partners in the Godhead. They do not first exist and then have the option of loving; and they do not love their own mirror-images. What we have called ‘hetero-relationship’ goes beyond ‘homo-relationship’ into a mutual interweaving in love of the very being of each different ‘party’ with the basic reality of the two other ‘parties’.

### **Co-humanity in the image of the Trinity**

There are immediate and profound implications for our understanding of how this trinitarian God has created the human race. We now have the model for an internal differentiation basic to created humanity, seen in gender as male and female, and maintained in heterosexual but not in homosexual relations.

This is set forth in the first creation story in [Genesis 1:26–27](#) where we read, ‘God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” ... So, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’ This is repeated in [Genesis 5:1–2](#). Here our likeness to God is not spelled out in terms of sharing in his spirituality, rationality, creativity, moral nature or righteousness, self-consciousness, power, free-will, knowledge or any other distinctive features that separate us from the animals. It is the fact p. 51 of complementarity through gender that affirms the likeness.

This likeness, moreover, is not a point-to-point correspondence so that we start looking for a male and a female member within the Trinity and then proceed to impose gender or sexuality on God. It is, rather, an analogy where the complementary relationship between the genders is likened to the complementary relationships within the Trinity. Both God and human beings are essentially differentiated and relational in

nature. This is the first and most important thing the story says about humans as the image of God; note that it is not simply identified with sexuality and reproduction, which are mentioned further on in the narrative. These are aspects of gender but not its essence, which is complementary relationship in wider dimensions than the sexual.

It is also important to note that whereas the animal world is created 'each according to their kind' or species, mankind is not divided into various species of race, cultures or societies, but simply into the two genders. These are not equivalent to two different species, since in their complementarity they need each other to form the one human species. It might be said that the homosexual position breaks this co-humanity up into two different species, 'hereto' and 'homo', each with its own 'sexual' orientation and practices, although only the former is able to fulfill the associated Genesis duty to be fruitful and multiply.

The complementarity between man and woman is at the heart of the second more detailed creation story in [Genesis 2:15–25](#), where again there is creation of community between man and woman, as equals but different. The key concept is in [Genesis 2:18](#) where it is declared that it is unsatisfactory for man to be alone. His incompleteness is remedied not by the creation of another man like himself, but by the creation of a woman as a complementary being. Here again marriage and sexuality come later in the account, and are not to be confused with the gender that they presuppose.

In the light of the profound insights in these two creation accounts it might be said that the main task of the current feminist movement is to affirm the place of woman as the original, equal, distinctive, complementary and indispensable 'other' of man. The ultimate model for this is the Trinity.

Strangely, this relation of gender to exposition of the image of God eluded the great theological minds of the past. Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin all tend to subsume gender under reproduction and marriage and to see the divine image in terms of our differences from the animals, as in the moral and intellectual categories we listed above. Only since the great German theologian Karl Barth took a major step forward in the middle of our century and related gender to the image of the Trinity have we been equipped to articulate a theology of gender, sexuality and marriage.

### **The complementarity of gender**

It is of course true that there are many other kinds of complementarity between people especially where there is close friendship or [p. 52](#) love between man and man, or woman and woman. There are many forms of complementary relationship—between manager and staff, oarsmen and cox, surgeon and anaesthetist, architect and builder, home-keeper and wage-earner, extrovert and introvert personalities, the practical and the thinker, the Marys and the Marthas. Any of these and many more may exist between the partners in a homosexual relationship, and may serve to support and enrich the quality of relationship. What then is so special about the complementarity of gender?

There are at least six dimensions in which gender stands apart from all other forms of complementarity, and we have already alluded to a number of these:

1. It is a given fact, unchangeable, and in no sense voluntary.
2. It is biologically necessary and every human being originates in gender, with a father and a mother. Here it serves that basic concern for survival at the heart of all societies; the sterile state of homosexuality ignores this concern and is in fact parasitical on a life-affirming society.
3. It is anatomically appropriate both for initial attraction through different kinds of beauty and for the fullest expressions of lovemaking. In comparison the options

open to homosexuals are inadequate, often contrived, and in some of the commonest forms actually dangerous (will any medical school support anal intercourse?).

4. It touches every aspect of the psyche. In the words of the nineteenth century philosopher Feuerbach, it is 'a distinction which pervades the entire organism, which is everywhere present, which is infinite, and whose beginning and end are beyond discovery'. Somewhere here lies the mystique, the wonder, of what exists between a man and a woman in all relationships, in all degrees, whether married or celibate, from the brief polite encounter at a ticket office to the ecstasies of love-making.
5. It is presented at the heart of both biblical creation accounts as we have examined them, and it runs through the Bible as a norm in counterpoint with the story of the destruction of complementarity through the effects of sin, and of its restoration through Christ.
6. It is theologically at the heart of the Christian doctrine of humanity as made in the image of the distinctively trinitarian God. Any theology of homosexuality will have to come to terms with this position. It would, however, seem impossible to present a homosexual partnership as an 'equally valid' alternative image of the Christian God without basic distortion of the rich trinitarian view into the inadequate monotheism of a 'God of love'.

Any one of these six features would be sufficient to establish the uniqueness of gender complementarity; taken together they present an overwhelming case for the special status of gender and of heterosexuality. Here there is an interlocking or bonding abundantly provided for in male and female as [p. 53](#) created that is absent from relations between two men or two women. No emphasis upon moral features or quality of relationship can replace this essential feature of complementary difference, lacking in the homosexual position.

The homosexual position, on the contrary, either ignores all that we have said about gender or regards it as of no importance and therefore separates it from sexuality and from both heterosexual marriage and homosexual partnership. But in practice gender often reasserts itself; in a gay or lesbian relationship it sometimes happens that one partner begins to assume the role or the appearance and behaviour conventionally associated with the opposite gender. And of course the unconscious ramifications of gender in the life of the homosexual person since birth cannot be escaped.

We now ask those who support the normalization of homosexuality to avoid dependence on rhetoric or irrelevant moral considerations and to engage with the trinitarian understanding of God that defines the distinctively Christian position. Only in this way can there be a meeting of Christian minds in the current discussions.

## RECOMMENDED READING

D. S. Bailey, *The man-woman relationship in Christian thought* (Longmans, 1959). An older but comprehensive study.

The House of Bishops of the Church of England, *Issues in human sexuality: a statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England*. (London: Church House, 1991). The most recent, and perhaps the best, of the church reports.

P. K. Jewett, *Man as male and female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). A solid theological study.

Janet Martin Soskice (ed.), *After Eve* (Marshall/Pickering, 1990). See especially the essay by Paul Fiddes on Barth's position.

Samuel Terrien, *Till the heart sings: a biblical theology of manhood and womanhood* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). A leading Old Testament scholar's charming account of gender and sexuality.

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# The Source and Meaning of the translation 'Homosexuals' in Biblical Studies

James B. De Young

*Reprinted with permission from The Masters Seminary Journal, Fall 1992, pp. 191–215. (Abridged)*

*This detailed and scholarly linguistic article is rewarding for those who persevere with it! The author seeks to show how the pro-homosexual lobby in our mainline church councils have been influenced by the arguments of John Boswell, R. Scroggs, William Petersen and others that Paul's use of malakai and arsenokoitai refers to male prostitutes, sodomites and men who make use of call boys; therefore scriptural injunctions have no relevance to homosexuality as now practised by Christians, lay and ordained. This study argues that Paul coined the term arsenokoitai, deriving it from the LXX of [Leviticus 20:13](#), and used it to refer to both homosexual orientation and practice.*

Editor

## INTRODUCTION

Coincident with the rise of the gay rights movement in recent years has been an increasing focus on the biblical statements regarding homosexuality or sodomy.<sup>1</sup> As part of this focus, the meaning of the term ἀρσενικοῖται (*arsenokoitai*, 'homosexuals'), used twice by the apostle Paul ([1 Cor. 6:9](#), [1 Tim. 1:10](#)), has received vigorous scrutiny.<sup>2</sup> This **p. 55** issue is particularly crucial to contemporary society since so much of modern ethics is shaped by

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<sup>1</sup> For convenience sake, the term 'homosexual' is used to encompass both same-sex orientation and same-sex behaviour. The meaning of this term is one of the main considerations of this study.

<sup>2</sup> These times are different from just over a century ago. Then P. Fairbairn (*Pastoral Epistles* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874] 891) could write of ἀρσενικοῖται that it is a 'term for which fortunately our language has no proper equivalent'. Unknowingly he thereby touched upon the basis for the contemporary debate and study. The present writer endorses the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles on the basis of internal and external evidence (see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, [4th ed.; Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 1990] 621–649, for an extensive discussion and citation of supporters of the Pauline authorship).