

“This is the fifth and final installment of William Loader’s authoritative, acclaimed series on attitudes toward sexuality in the ancient world…. His other books on sexuality in early Judaism and Christianity are *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality: The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality; The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality; and Enoch, Levi, and Jubilees on Sexuality*” (Back flap, 2012).

William Loader, emeritus professor of New Testament at Murdoch University and member of the Uniting Church in Australia (a union of Methodist, Presbyterians and Congregationalists), is especially known for his books on the background of the LXX (Septuagint), which is frequently and properly referred to for interpreting Paul’s sexual terminology and teaching, since the Apostle cites the LXX more frequently than the Hebrew (MT; see Kathy L. Gaca, 2003). His research was mainly conducted 2005-10 as Australian Research Council professional fellow. I was glad to see that Loader includes in his bibliography and refers (in 2010 + 2012 18 times) to my chapter on Romans (Hanks) in the *Queer Bible Commentary* 2006), a volume largely ignored by scholars who are not LGBTTT. Loader has long advocated gay marriage and other human rights of sexual minorities in Australia. (You can Google the documents, including one for the Australian Senate, conveniently available on his website.) In his 2010 book Loader provided a wonderfully concise summary of most key debating points with endnotes referencing much of the most significant relevant bibliography.

I have found Loader’s work the most helpful overview of the many controversial questions regarding the interpretation of Romans 1 and related biblical texts on sexuality. Perhaps the major weakness in both Loader’s recent volumes (2010; 2012) is the failure to change the question. Loader’s exegesis of the relevant texts usually concludes that they are correctly interpreted by Robert Gagnon, whose two relevant books and website Loader refers to 40 times in his chapter on same-sex acts (2010:7-34; similarly 2012:293-338, 36 references). Loader 2010 contains a respectable sprinkling of alternate voices (e.g. William Countryman, in his newer 2007 edition, 11 times) and Loader 2012 has encyclopedic references to similar alternative views (pp. 1-500, with a 40 page bibliography). Unquestionably Gagnon’s works provide a valuable resource, but Loader’s contribution would have been even greater had he more aggressively challenged the way Gagnon’s ideology drives and distorts his exegesis. Rather than following writers like Gagnon in their desperate effort to find a text that clearly condemns all same-sex acts as sinful, a more revealing question would be to ask whether and how heterosexist and homophobic presuppositions have distorted translations, exegesis and hermeneutics (including contemporary application).

Evidence that such is the case abounds throughout 2000+ years of mistranslation and misinterpretation of the relevant texts. The major example would be the common imposition of the death penalty on “sodomites” throughout most of church history instead of recognizing that Genesis 19 and the 48 related biblical references to Sodom refer at most to an attempted gang rape of two visiting angels, never to sexual love between consensual humans (as if Nathan’s condemnation of David’s adultery with Bathsheba were constituted a condemnation of the king’s “heterosexuality”). A prime scholarly example would be F. W. Danker’s recognition (2000:135) that versions based on earlier editions of the BDAG Greek lexicon erred when they proposed the now widely accepted “translation” of Paul’s *arsenokoitai* as “homosexuals” (RSV 1946, 1 Cor 6:9, 1 Tim 1:10, when, whatever the preferred translation, the term indicates a *male* sexual *act*, not females, nor sexual orientations). By simply changing the question, we get a radically different view of the phenomenon surveyed. When we focus on the “problem” of the Jews, women, persons of color, or the poor, we arrive at very distorted conclusions compared to
when we change the question to study the problems of anti-semitism, sexism, racism, and the rich. Although Loader poses questions using Greek philosophical categories (“moral/ethical”), at one point he recognizes that Paul introduces such philosophical categories (“un/natural”) that the Hebrew Bible and Jesus had avoided.

A second weakness would be the tendency to impose an arbitrary “ethical” unity on the rich diversity of exegetical perspectives regarding sexual matters, which Loader’s work so abundantly documents. For instance, Loader writes: “The early Christian movement as it developed within Judaism was heavily influenced by Jewish assumptions…. Statements by Jesus appeared as the very opposite of loosening the demands of biblical law. They enhanced their strictness even further—such as on divorce and remarriage” (Loader 2012:3-4; similarly, Gagnon 2001:185-93; see Note below). Methodologically, such statements may be questioned on several grounds. Expressions such as “within Judaism” and “Jewish assumptions” encourage readers to forget the enormous diversity characteristic of both the “Judaisms” and “Christianities” of the period. Judaism is identified with the “demands of biblical law” rather than giving full weight to the Wisdom literature (Song of Solomon; Ecclesiastes, Job) and narratives (Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan; see the contrast between the levirate law in Deuteronomy 25 with the divergent narratives about Tamar and Ruth).

Note: Loader (L) // Gagnon (2001:196-209; 2003:71-74; 2003 Note 68) on Jesus’ “sexual strictness”. Texts:

1. L  Divorce (→Mark 10:11-12 // Mat 19:19 // QMat 5:31-32 + Lk 16:18); cf. 1 Cor 7:10-11. Diversity
2. L  Lustful eye, Mat 5:27-30 (29-30, excision saying: right eye, right hand)
3. L  Anger and murder, Mat 5:21-26
4. L  Heart defilement, Mk 7:15; cp. Lk 11:39-41 // Mat 23:25-26
5. L  Excision sayings, Mk 9:42-48 // Mat 18:8-9 “Child abuse is most likely the target” (2012:149)
7. L  Eunuchs for KG, Mat 19:12 (2012:436-44 = celibacy, not “the sexual profligacy of eunuchs”)
8. (Only L) Incest, Mk 6:17-18 John the Baptist to Herod (“presumably/very probable” Jesus in agreement, 2010:34; 2012:143)

#2-4, inclusion of heart’s motives; but no change regarding sexual acts considered sinful: “The texts expand the notion of what is right and wrong in sexuality from acts to attitudes and intent” (2012:149)
#5, hyperbole regarding avoidance of sin; no redefinition of sexual acts considered sinful
#6, text eliminates patriarchal marriage, not sex, in heaven
#7, eunuchs sexually active in a wide variety of ways but without reproducing

The supposed enhanced “strictness” on divorce can only be affirmed by ignoring the fact that no two biblical texts say the same thing (see 5. Divorce and Excursus below; also → Mark, Appendix on Divorce). In a patriarchal tradition where both the dominant Greco-Roman cultures and the Judaisms emphasized marriage for procreation, the option of Jesus and Paul and their circles to prioritize remaining unmarried and avoiding procreation was anything but “conservative”! Would a “conservative” commend three types of eunuchs as paradigms of the new discipleship (Mat 19:12) or give prostitutes priority over religious leaders for entrance into God’s Dominion (Mat 21:31-32; see Hanks 2000a/2008)? Why draw “ethical” conclusions condemning prostitution, using Paul’s perplexing teaching on idolatrous foreign prostitutes in 2 Cor 6:14-16 (Loader 2012:222-26), rather than allow all the positive references to Rahab to have equal weight? (Cf. the diversity regarding eunuchs and widows (to remarry or not—1 Cor 7 vs. 1 Tim 5:14) And why allow a handful of negative “control texts” (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10) to outweigh the strong positive narrative texts on Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Jesus and the Beloved Disciple? Rarely do I differ with Loader’s exegetical conclusions, but attention to the history of homophobia and heterosexism leads me to construct a quite different forest from so many lovely trees.
Both Loader and Gagnon include ample documentation of the diversity characteristic of both the biblical texts and their related cultures, but somehow, when it comes to drawing conclusions, ideology dictates that Judaism, Jesus and Paul be represented above all by Leviticus and Romans 1, not by Song of Solomon. This prejudice is commonly reflected in the elite male written sources cited, but one may suspect that the perspectives of ordinary (illiterate) folk may better be reflected in Song of Songs. Hence the value of employing a more canonical theology in interpreting the familiar negative proof texts of Leviticus and Romans. Susannah Cornwall comments: “I am sympathetic to [Ken Stone’s] position that it might be salient actively to seek out deviant texts and ‘counter-texts’ such as the Song of Songs in order to proactively show a multiplicity of voices and positions as co-existing there [in the Bible]” (2011:65, Controversies in Queer Theology. London: SCM).

1 Sexuality in the Jewish World of the New Testament (3-73).

1.1 Adultery (3-9). Forbidden in the Decalogue (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; cf. also Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22). “As in many other cultures of the region, adultery was widely understood as wrong because it infringed the rights of another man” (4). “Joseph was seen as the model of resisting adultery” (5). In the LXX adultery comes first on the second table of the Decalogue. “Philo used the commandment…as an umbrella under which to address a whole range of other sins of sexual wrongdoing…. The same tendency to cluster sexual sins around the reference to adultery is evident in Mark 7:21-23 and Matt 15:19” (5). “In biblical law those found guilty of adultery, both the man and the woman, were sentenced to death (Lv 20:10; Dt 22:22; Prov 2:16-19; 7:25-27) (6).

1.2 Rape and seduction (9-10; Deut 22:28-19). A man also inflicted on another male’s rights “if he had intercourse with a virgin or woman, including a slave, in custody of another man, such as the father and household head or brother, including with a woman promised in marriage to another man” (9).

1.3 Virgins (10-11; Deut 22:13-21). “For dealing with claims by a husband that the woman he has married is not a virgin, where his charge proves false he must pay her father a fine and remain married to her and never divorce her, but if his charge proves true she is to be stoned to death” (cf. 2 Cor 11:2 = church). See 4.8 below, 1 Cor 7:36-38 on fathers and their virgin daughters.

1.4 Households: Inheritance (11-12); slaves, captive women (13-14). “Where contraception was primitive and largely ineffective, sexual relations could be expected to result regularly in pregnancy” (11), so any extramarital sex threatened to create a chaotic situation (children of such liaisons, called mamzers, could not inherit). “The Law…provides a widow with the option that she marry her deceased husband’s brother, whether he is already married or not, a levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10)” (11; see Tamar; Ruth). “Mark’s account of Jesus’ encounter with the Sadducees (Mark 12:18-27) assumes the practice” (12). Tenants, laborers and slaves, dependent on the households of others, were exposed to both economic and sexual exploitation (13). A householder normally had sexual access to those in his household, even including slaves allotted to his wife (in Genesis see Sarah with Hagar; Leah and Rachel with Zilpah and Bilhah; + the laws in Ex 20:17; Lev 19:20-22; 21:1-11; cf. the right of married slaves to stay with wives who had borne them children, Ex 21:2-6; Deut 15:12; women prisoners of war taken as wives, Deut 21:10-14; Num 31:35; ‘nh in Ex 21:10 and Deut 21:14 probably means conjugal rights (14, note 23).

1.5 Prostitutes (15-18; Rahab, Tamar; Ex 34:15-16; Lev 17:7; 18:19; 20:5; 21:7, 9; Deut 23:17-18 (not “sodomite”); Jer 5:7; Hos 4:14; 9:1; “outsider, married woman,” Prov 2:16-19; 5:3-20; 6:24-35; 7:6-27; 9:13-18). “In biblical law there was no direct prohibition against [males] having sexual relations with prostitutes. Some appear in the biblical story without disapproval, notably Rahab and Tamar. Increasingly, however, prostitution came to be looked upon with disapproval (Lev 19:29; Jer 5:7; Hos 4:14; 9:1)…. Both prophetic and priestly texts depict Israel as engaging in prostitution by developing liaisons with other gods while married to Yahweh (e.g. Hos 9:1; Exod 34:15-16; Lev 17:7; 20:5…[cf. Deut 23:17 MT with LXX])…. The warnings in Proverbs about the
1.6 Intermarriage (18-20). “The concern to prevent contamination of the holy priesthood came to be extended at least in some circles to a prohibition against intermarriage by people as well as priests with peoples outside of Israel” (18; Ezra 9:1-2; Neh 10:28-30; Exod 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-6). “Within Jewish writings of our period authors differed on the extent to which marriage outside Israel was permissible” (20). Philo assumes that Hagar and Tamar were converted (19); cf. Paul in 1 Cor 7:39 on new marriages to believers.


1.8 Infanticide, abortion, miscarriage (33-34, 23, 25; Ex 21:22-23; Lev 18:21; 20:1-5). “Ps.-Phoc. 184-186 warns …about attempts to abort pregnancies, based apparently on [→] Exod 21:22-23 (34; also Josephus).”

1.9 Purity laws and sex (35-36). Included the need for purification after: menstruation (Lev 15:19-24), any irregular blood flow (15:25-30), childbirth (12:2-8; see Lk 2:22-24, 27, 39); intercourse (Lev 15:18) for women and seminal emission (15:16-17) or any other genital discharge for men (15:24; 18:19; 20:18); see Mark 5:1-20, exorcism; 21-43, woman with blood flow. Amy-Jill Levine notes that Jesus and those with him would have been impure at times but are not depicted as outcast because of impurity.

1.10 Sacred space and time (36-37). Jesus and his disciples immersed themselves along with other pilgrims before entering the temple (John 11:55; cf. 13:10). “Paul’s assumption that abstaining from sex is appropriate for special times of prayer (1 Cor 7:5) reflects notions of sacred space and time” (36-37).

1.11 Love and marriage; Tobit (37-43). “The most celebrated instance of romantic love which affirms sexual expression in biblical literature is the so-called Song of Solomon, even though its later inclusion in the canon rested primarily on its allegorical interpretation” (40, citing J. Collins 1997:104-62, 136). “Besides the Genesis creation accounts we also have sexual love affirmed in Prov 5:18-19” (40 [in monogamous marriage? → Proverbs]). Otherwise, we hear little of pre-marital romance, since “marriage, especially of the young and first marriages, were apparently under tight control and entailed negotiation between families” (40-41).

1.12 Betrothal (43-44). “In expounding biblical law pertaining to the betrothed (Deut 20:7 on war and chastity; Deut 22:23-27; cf. Exod 22:16-17; Deut 22:28-29), Josephus assumes betrothal’s continual validity” (44). “Satlow suggests that formal betrothal as attested in earlier biblical material gave way to a less formal agreement, in common with practices in the Greek and Roman world….but contemplates that the practice of betrothal may have persisted in Galilee. This would account for the betrothal of Mary and Joseph according to the infancy narratives” (Jewish Marriage, cited 43-44).

1.13 Premarital chastity (44-45). “The story of Mary and Joseph assumes that chastity before marriage was the norm (Matt 1:18-19). The biblical regulation in the case of a man accusing his wife of not having been a virgin allows for the parents of the bride to offer (dubitable) proof of her virginity by producing a sheet showing blood resulting from the rupture of the hymen on first intercourse (Deut 22:13-19)…. Paul’s advice about men
proceeding to marriage where trying to remain celibate is too hard (1 Cor 7:8-9) reflects the same values” (44-45); 
→ Song of Songs.

1.14 Wedding Celebrations (45-48). “The author of Revelation depicts ‘the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband’ (21:2), having earlier informed us that the bride of the Lamb had ‘been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure’ (19:8, probably a bright linen garment, bleached white). The traditional attire of brides on their wedding day will have not changed greatly over two millennia” (323, citing Judg 14:12, 17; Tobit, Pseudo-Philo, Asneth). “The parable of the oil lamps (Matt 25:1-13) depicts the bridegroom’s return to his house accompanied by girls with torches, where presumably his bride already awaits him and where they will consummate their marriage” (323; cf. Gen2:24). Josephus “attributes Jacob’s inability to recognize Leah on his wedding night to his being drunk” (206; Gen 29:25). “Wedding imagery informs the depiction of eschatological hope in early Christian tradition: the invitation to the wedding feast (Matt 22:1-4; Luke 14:7, 15-24), the coming of the bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20 [:]…Matt 9:15; Luke 5:34-35; cf. also John 3:29, developed in John to depict Jesus and so lending symbolic flavour to his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42) and in another way to the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-10)” (47-48).

1.15 Contracts, Mohar (misnamed “bride price”), dowries and ketubba (48-51). “The purpose of Jewish marriage documents was not to create the marriage, but to clarify and codify economic obligations within it” (48, citing Satlow); hence such documents probably reflect only the practices in the literate upper classes. Biblical references and related background documents manifest considerable variety from diverse times and places regarding such practices as “bride price,” dowries and the ketubba (the amount to be paid to the wife in case of divorce and thus a deterrent to divorce; but sometimes simply a dowry).

1.16 Polygyny (51-54). “Provisions in the Law presuppose polygyny” (multiple wives; 52; Deut 21:15-17). “Even where Jesus is portrayed as citing both Gen 1:27 and 2:24 together, this need not embody an assertion of monogyny, as many have claimed” (53, citing Instone-Brewer 138-40; see the patriarchs; Deut 17:17; cf. Gen 6:9).

1.17 Divorce (54-62). Divorce in reality. “Divorce is assumed by biblical writers as a normal part of life and reference to it occurs mostly only in incidental references. This includes in Deut 24:1-4, which deals with a man taking back a divorced wife after she has been married to another and is widowed or divorced again, and uses the language of defilement of the land to attack such behaviour” (citing John Meier 4, 2009:77-95 and Instone-Brewer 1998; see also Deut 22:17, 28-29; Num 30:10). Who divorces whom? Brooten has argued that in Israel either partner could initiate divorce, but this is now contested (56-57). Matt and Luke (= Q) probably assume male initiative, but both Paul and Mark assume that women, too, could divorce, perhaps reflecting Roman influence (57; see 5. Divorce, below). Grounds for Divorce. Regarding Deut 24:1-4, “The words it uses to describe [the grounds], ‘shame of a matter,’ are notoriously vague [a euphemism for human excrement in Deut 23:15] and might originally have meant nothing more than something which a man found shameful (to him)...like being sterile or a bad cook” (58), but would not refer to adultery, for which the Torah legal penalty was not divorce but death (6; Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22; rendered inapplicable under Rome). “On the association of shame with sexual wrongdoing see also Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 7:36; 12:23; Rev 16:15” (59, note 176). Later the discretion to divorce received more critical scrutiny: “Differences of opinion about divorce appear already to have influenced the transmission of the text of Mal 2:14-16. The words, ‘I hate divorce’ (2:16 NRSV) depend on emending the original Hebrew text...‘he hates’) and may well reflect the technical use of the language of hate in the context of marriage and divorce in the Ancient Near East” (60-62, citing John Collins).

1.18 Fertility, conception, pregnancy and childbirth (62-66). “Conception and fertility were major issues both for women and for men, often a cause of shame for the former, and grounds for anxiety about offspring and
the household’s future, and so for divorce, for the latter…. The account of Jesus’ miraculous conception probably reflects the understanding of conception as implantation of the seed by the male. In recounting Sarah’s ability to produce seed, Hebrews reflects the main alternative understanding of Hippocrates, that both man and woman produce seed which mingled to form the fetus…. Labour in childbirth was a common image used to describe times of distress…. Issues of infertility played a role in rivalry between women in polygynous marriages” (62-64).

1.19 **Celibacy** (66-73). “How celibacy relates to future hope…. The notion of a future which has time and space for sexual relations is widely attested” (70).


2 **Sexuality in the Greco-Roman World of the New Testament** (74-108). “In the NT Jewish presuppositions mingle with those of the wider world, especially those of the Greek and Roman world….the diversity of culture among Greek states…. Even much that we find through archaeology belongs to remnants of the well-built by the well-endowed” (74-75).

2.1 **Marriage, divorce and monogyny** (75-82). “The commonality between Jewish and Greek and Roman marriage was considerable” (75, citing Satlow). “In all three cultures marriage was an arrangement between families, negotiated with the woman’s father or guardian by the father of the groom or sometimes the groom himself…. Having a chaste wife was all important…. All three cultures rejected adultery and required that an adulterous wife be divorced” (76, 6-9; see 1.17 above on Torah death penalty for adultery). “Girls married young, from around 14, and men normally around 30” (77). “The entire ancient world is unanimous in its concern for cultic purity. In all cultures sexual intercourse disqualifies a person from participating in the cult, and the same rite is prescribed for purification from sexual impurity – bathing” (80, quoting Milgrom). Notable differences include: “Jews’ acceptance of polygyny, in contrast to the strict monogamy of both Greek and Roman culture” (80). “Slaves did not officially marry, but lived in contubernium, lit. ‘sharing a tent’, but if freed this would then be recognized as a marriage…. Jewish marriage shared with Roman marriage that both encouraged endogamous marriage…whereas Greeks encouraged exogamous marriage…. A major difference from Jewish practice was the treatment of unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children…a target of strong Jewish condemnation” since both infant exposure and abortion were common (81-82).

2.2 **Sex and the philosophers: Pythagoreans and Plato; Stoics; challenging fatalism** (91-99). “As Gaca notes, ‘polytheistic religion in antiquity was intimately connected with sexual and procreative conduct, for people worshipped gods embodying sexual power, such as Aphrodite, Dionysus, Hera, and Zeus’” (Fornication, 3) (97; see Rom 1:25).

2.3 **Sex and society: Roman, Augustan, non-elites** (99-105). “There is no substitute for examining what Paul and Philo say in the context of their own writings. We must avoid simply reading into their texts worlds of thought associated with motifs and concepts which they employ, towards which they may have an ambivalent stance” (100; see “un/natural” in Romans).

2.4 **Love and marriage** (106-108). The NT writings “need to be heard first and foremost in their own terms, within their own structures and sequences and inner webs of meaning” (108; see Romans 1!).

3 **Sexuality in the Gospel Tradition** (109-151).

3.1 **Adultery** (109-119; Matthew 5:27-28). “Everyone who looks at a married woman [gynaika] with a view to/for the purpose of lusting after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (5:28). “The contrast is
best seen not as a contrast between the Law and Jesus’ teaching, but as between what people have been hearing was said in the Law and what it really meant according to Jesus. The antithesis thus exemplifies the claim of Matthew’s Jesus in 5:17-20 that he came not to set the Law and the Prophets aside but to fulfill and uphold them, warning strongly against any who water them down” (110, citing Betz). “It is not…just the feeling that is in focus, but…something more intentional: the man looks with a view to giving rein to his sexual passions and this determines his attitude. Such an attitude can lead to actual adultery, just as anger/hatred can lead to murder. Purposefully developing or embracing sexual desire in relation to a married woman amounts to adultery. That is the assertion” (115-116; assumes all males heterosexual?).

3.2 The excision sayings (Mark 9:42-48; Matthew 18:6-9; 5:29-30). See Appendix 1 below.

3.3 Woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11), textually “secondary” (138; 2012:135-138; 2010:61, 71, 89, 139). “The focus is not the woman, but the attempt to trap Jesus (8:6), presumably by forcing him either to contradict Jewish law, which required stoning or contradict Roman law [which rarely permitted Jews to carry out death penalty], by advocating stoning…. (135-36). “The primary focus is on how Jesus escaped being trapped, not really on how he adjudicated” (137). “Perhaps there is an allusion to God’s finger writing the Decalogue at Sinai here…. Where is the male accomplice?.... The guilt is not doubted but the process is corrupted, making the woman a victim” (136-37). “It can hardly be that only perfect human beings have a warrant to carry out sentences prescribed in the Law…. The narrator does not want us to believe that adultery does not matter…. Even with the story’s many ambiguities, the tradition which sees in it a story of compassion is a fair reading” (137-138).

3.4 Mary and Joseph (139, Mat 1:19, Joseph “just” = upholds the Law but applies it compassionately).

3.5 Mark 7:21-23 // Matthew 15:18-20 (139-141). Both include sexual sins in the list of evils which come from the heart/mind, similar to the references to murder and adultery in the heart in Matt 5:21-22, 27-28 (139). Matthew’s list conforms more closely to the Ten Commandments (LXX order) in selection and sequence (141).

3.6 Porneia (sexual wrongdoing; 141-142). “With porneia...we are dealing, like the Hebrew znh, with a word originally connected with prostitution, but which has taken on a much broader meaning, which can also include adultery, though sometimes they are juxtaposed (Mark 7:22; Matt 15:19; Heb 13:4)…. It is best understood in this expanded sense in Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25 [the apostolic decree], rather than as limited to prostitution or incest…. The narrower meaning of porne [female prostitute] still appears in Matt 21:31, 32; Luke 15:30; Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25; and in the image of Rome as a prostitute in Revelation. Context must determine meaning. Paul, for instance, in 1 Corinthians 5 addresses a case of incest as porneia.”

3.7 John the Baptist and Jesus on incest (2012:143-46, 273; Mark 6:17-18, 2010). “The area of sexual mores is one where the early Christian movement appears rather traditional and not to have been in dispute. The exceptions to this indicate a conservative trend, such as on divorce and celibacy; its vision of the world to come as without sexual relations; and John the Baptist’s (and presumably Jesus’) extremely strict application of the incest laws of Leviticus 18 in relation to Herod Antipas (Mark 6:18)” (Loader 2010:34, citing his 2005:158-60; see 2012:143-46, 273). Note. Mk 6:17-18 “For Herod [Antipas] himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife [actually, mother-in-law], because Herod [Antipas] had married her. 18For John had been telling Herod [Antipas]: ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife’”. Similarly Mat (which, however, in 14:3-4 ascribes intent to kill John to Herod Antipas, not to Herodias). According to Josephus, Herodias is Philip’s mother-in-law rather than his wife: Mk 6:17 “states that Herodias had been the wife of [Herod] Antipas’s brother Philip…. Herodias was the wife of [Herod] Antipas’s (half) brother Herod [Philip?] when Antipas met and fell in love with her…. The explanation is probably that, in the course of oral transmission of the story, there was a shift from the less famous ‘Herod’ [Antipas] to the more
famous ‘Philip’” (A.Y. Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia, 2007:307). Would the Lev prohibitions (18:16; 20:21) apply to Philip’s mother-in-law as well as his wife? No, only to a brother’s wife: “‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; it is your brother’s nakedness’ (similarly 20:2)” (Loader 2012:145). Thus, for Loader “Josephus…helps us correct a detail in Mark. Herodias had been married not to Philip, but to Herod’s half brother, who was also called Herod” (2012:143).

However, if Mark is in error about the identity of Herodias, and thus does not accurately reflect John the Baptist’s teaching, then to say Jesus would reflect Mark’s (erroneous) presentation of the Baptist’s strict interpretation only implicates Jesus in Mark’s error, not as being strict about the application of Leviticus’ laws against incest with a brother’s wife (cf. H.W. Hoener, “Herodian Dynasty,” InterVarsity, DJG 1992:323-24; DNTB 2000:490-91; Helen.K.Bond, “Herod, Family” NIDB, Abingdon, 2007:808. Gary Herion, however, prefers the harmonizers’ solution, concluding that the existence of a ‘Herod [Philip?]’ (and the compatibility of Mark and Josephus) “resolves more problems than it creates (“Herod Philip,” ABD, Doubledaty, 1992:III)160-61; pace Loader, but making less objectionable his argument that Jesus shared the Baptist’s “conservative” mores). Given Hebrew Bible texts and dominant Jewish traditions emphasizing marriage for all and maximum procreation, to describe the early Christian movement as “traditional” and celibacy (Jeremiah, Jesus, Paul) as a “conservative trend” is hardly correct. Had sexual mores not been disputed, Paul would not have written 1 Cor 5-7. Moreover, Jesus’ vision of the world to come involves not taking a wife or being given to a male authority, but is not necessarily without sex (Mark 12:25; Matt 22:30; Loader 2005:123-26; 2012:489-90; see 8 Celibacy below). The Baptist’s strict application of Leviticus’ incest laws to Herod Antipas (Mark 6:18; similarly Paul in 1 Cor 5 on the man who married his mother-in-law) provides no basis for similar strictness regarding all the other laws in Leviticus 18 and 20; otherwise the churches would be applying the death penalty for any male who has sex with a menstruant (Lev. 18:19; 20:18; see the HB acceptance of levirate practices, polygamy, concubines and male recourse to prostitutes.

**Marital imagery** (146-147). **Negative:** “adulterous generation” (Mk 8:38; Matt 12:39; 16:4). “In John 8:41-44 John’s Jesus accuses his opponents as having been fathered illegitimately by the devil” (146). **Positive:** “Jesus’ presence is likened to the presence of a bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20; John 3:29). Eschatological hope is portrayed as being like a wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14; see 25:1-13; *John* 2:1-12; 4:1-42, the Samaritan woman, who had many husbands, at a well; John’s prologue, 3:3-6, 13-14; 6:3).

**Conclusions** (148-151). “The earlier texts we considered focus almost exclusively on [heterosexual!] males. It is the [heterosexual!] male lusting intent, the [heterosexual!] male eye, hand and foot, towards another [heterosexual!] male’s wife. It is probably the [heterosexual!] male in relationship to little ones who is the subject of the abusive behaviour…. This…calls these [heterosexuals!] to take responsibility for their own sexuality. Nothing similar is directed to females…. Women are not to be burdened with responsibility for the way men behave…. The texts expand the notion of what is right and wrong in sexuality from acts to attitudes and intent” (148-149).

**4 Sexuality in Paul and Beyond Paul** (152-239).

**4.1 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8** (152-60). “4:3-8 address a common theme…namely, sexual wrongdoing [*porneia*], in particular, adultery. Then *skeuos* [vessel, 4:4] is best taken as a reference to a man’s body or less likely, penis” (160, not to a “wife”). So Paul recognizes that not all are married. The “matter” (4:6) thus refers to “an action based on sexual passion which harms a fellow Christian male” (158; see Rom 13:8-10).

**4.2 1 Cor 5 and Incest (ca. 56-57 CE; 160-166).** “The son is most likely engaging in sexual relations within the household to which he may now have succeeded by inheritance, and where his father’s wife, whom his father will have married, presumably, subsequent to marriage to the son’s own mother, still resided” (161-162). Paul’s “claims about the Gentile world do not…match our current state of knowledge…. Paul is thus best understood as
engaging in rhetorical exaggeration (cf. the similar shaming rhetoric in 1 Thess 4:5)” (163). “It is…instructive that Paul sees a danger here not primarily for the man, but for the whole congregation. The leaven leavens the whole lump” (164; “slippery slope”). “Paul does not cite, but doubtless assumes, the prohibition in Lev 18:7-8 against sexual intercourse with one’s father’s wife” (161) and ends with a reference to Deut 17:7 (166). “It is instructive that Paul’s condemnation seems informed primarily by his biblical heritage, which lends support to seeing his attitudes towards other sexual issues, such as same-sex relations, as similarly informed” (163).

4.3 1 Cor 6:1-8 (166-67). In 6:1-8 Paul “addresses insiders…going in judgement against each other to outsiders’ courts…. In the process he identifies another judging role for believers: in the future they will judge the world, and even judge angels (6:2-3), possibly alluding to the angels who sinned through intercourse with women according to Gen 6:1-4 and 1 Enoch 6-16” (166). 1 Cor 6:9-11 (167-69; see #6 below and review of Loader 2010); 1 Cor 6:12-20 and Prostitution (169-182; see Appendix 2 below).

4.4 1 Cor 7:1-7. Avoiding porneia (7:2) and defending marriage (182-198). In 7:5b “The assumption is that sexual relations and prayer stand in some tension…. Paul doubtless has in mind prolonged periods of prayer (and possibly fasting)…. What surfaces here is an assumption which sees sexuality and the sacred in tension” (193) [note 60 refers to the exhortation to “pray without ceasing” in 1 Thess 5:17], and the Apostle emphasizes the need for “self-control” (akrasía, 7:5; 7:9, verb; cf. Gal 5:22-23; 1 Cor 9:25). Thus Paul, like Jesus (Matt 19:12) affirms a preference for celibacy combined with an affirmation of the place of marriage in the divine order (197; cf. Gen 1:28, which many Jews saw as implying an obligation to marry and procreate). Loader writes that Paul “commends remaining single not only in 7:8 but also in 7:27, 32, 34, 38, 39” (184); and later, Paul “repeatedly expresses preference for celibacy for himself and for others (7:7, 8, 11, 26, 32, 37-38, 40), and consistently allows that this need not be so” (187), thus equating singleness with celibacy (elsewhere defined as sexual abstinence, even from masturbation?). Paul assumes that sexual intercourse “has its place in a consensual context of mutual desire and want. Paul assumes a level of mutual care and concern also in 7:32 that this need not be so‖ (191, in note 154 citing Fitzmyer, whose “attempt to show Paul’s closeness to the Song of Songs (54) reads more into the text than is evident”).

4.5 The unmarried and the widows (1 Cor 7:8-9; 198-200). “For widowers and widows…it is better to be single like Paul, but for people with control problems, let them marry. It is not saying if they cannot, but if they are not [“If they are not practicing self-control, they should marry….aflame with passion”]. Paul acknowledges the power of sexual passion, expressed as burning [Rom 1:27; Prov 6:27-28]….intense and becoming too hard to manage” (198-99). The text “need not entail the conclusion that Paul himself was a widower…. Jeremias uses an anachronistic argument from silence, claiming Paul was a rabbi and so must have been married” (199 note 184).

4.6 The married and divorce (1 Cor 7:10-16; 200-204). “Where the unbelieving spouse is happy to remain in the marriage, whether the wife or the husband, believers should not divorce their partners. This coheres with the dominical prohibition….he assumes they have become one flesh…. The principle of indissolubility overrides concerns with being in a mixed marriage. Paul does not, therefore, follow the line of Ezra, who demanded dissolution…. Paul opposes believers marrying unbelievers because of contamination, but in pre-existing marriages, instead of calling for dissolution, argues the reverse: not contamination but counter-contamination; the holiness affects the whole, including the children” (200-202; cf. 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-18).

4.7 Avoiding mixed marriages (1 Cor 6:14-7:1; 222-226). “The imagery of yoking unequal animals is addressed in Lev 19:19, which along with Deut 22:9-11 served as an image to counter mixed marriages in some Jewish texts…. This makes it likely that marriage is in mind also in 2 Cor 6:14…. The instruction may be more encompassing and include all inappropriate relations with unbelievers, which would certainly include sexual relations…. Paul may have temple prostitution in mind, such as at temple feasts” (224).
4.8 Stay as you are (1 Cor 7:17-35; 204-214). In 7:17-24 Paul expands the concepts of spiritual gift (7:7; charisma) and calling (15, 17-18ab, 20-22, 24), applying them now in non-sexual areas: “The primary argument is that such differences [remaining in marriage, remaining unmarried, slavery] are to be affirmed and to remain in them is to be seen as a calling and therefore not to be given up or changed unless for slaves the opportunity presents itself within the normal course of events (7:21).… While encouraging slaves to grasp the opportunity for freedom if it arises, his emphasis is staying as they are, arguing that effectively before Christ they have the status of freedmen anyway, just as freedmen (like everyone else among the listeners) are also slaves of Christ, purchased by him (205-206; note 213 cites Glancy, Slavery, 67-69, who suggests that Paul may have in mind that such slaves were being exploited sexually). Paul cites the prospect of desperate times (anagke, 7:26), alluding not only to impending hardship, but also to the shortness of time and the transitory character of this world (7:28-34).

4.9 Fathers, daughters (1 Cor 7:36-38). “Paul addresses fathers about their decisions over whether their virgin daughters marry, and men about their decisions on whether to proceed to marry the virgins promised to them—all reflecting male decision-making” (11); “referring to fathers and their responsibility for their virgin daughters,” no sin if such daughters marry but better to keep them unmarried if possible (459; Mary and Joseph); and widows (7:39-40) have a right to marry a believer but best not to remarry (cf. 1 Tim 5:14).

4.10 Romans 1 (227). “Paul sees same-sex intercourse as disorder and sets it in parallel to the disorder when people stop worshipping God and worship idols instead. Not only are the two disorders parallel, one is the consequence of the other. God let people continue their denial of God’s reality into denial of reality in their own lives. So they not only deny reality, they deny their own nature as (heterosexual) human beings, and engage with those of their own sex instead of with the opposite sex. So this is not simply a transgression of a biblical prohibition which Paul assumes (Lev 18:22; 20:13), it is a deliberate perversion of God’s intention and their nature. In addition, Paul links it to shame, which goes beyond simply the shame of sin to include the shame of men behaving as women or having others do so. He also highlights the role of sexual desire and passion, not in order to condemn them as such, but to show how, unchecked and ill-directed, they can lead to such perverted intent and behaviour” (227; neither here nor in dealing with marriage in 1 Cor 7 does Paul mention procreation). According to Loader, Paul erroneously assumes that all humanity originally was monotheistic (adoring only Yahweh) and heterosexual; that women were inferior to men; and that polytheism, idolatry and homosexuality are the result of perverse choice (though Rom 1:24, 26 say sexual impurity was not a human choice but a result of God’s “handing them over,” divine punishment for their idolatry).

4.11 Rom 6–8 and the flesh (227-233). When Paul employs the image of marriage (Rom 7:1-4), Loader says “we do find the motif of procreation as Paul playfully suggests that the new relationship with Christ is…‘in order that we may bear fruit for God’ (7:4)…. This assumes bearing fruit as one of the key purposes of marriage” (227). However, rather than simply being playful, Paul’s image points readers to the fictive family image of the church (similarly, fruit-bearing in Gal 2:21-22; John 15:1-17). Concerning Rom 7:5, Loader asks whether Paul is making comments about human sexuality in 7:7-25: “Might…‘our sinful passions’, lit. ‘passions of sins’, refer to sexual desire…. ‘in the flesh’ to our sexual nature, and …‘in our members’ to our sexual organs?” but concludes that “Nothing in these verses…suggests a sexual theme” (229-230). However, if 7:9-11 refers to Paul’s traumatic adolescent experience of same-sex desires (“discovery of his homosexual orientation” in modern terms; see Loader 2010 Review, Appendix: Was the Apostle Paul Heterosexual?), then we might recognize additional support here for our rhetorical reading of Rom 1:18–2:16. Loader also expounds Paul’s straightforward teaching on sexuality in Rom 13:8-14 (232-33), but fails to note how different is this text from the subtle employment of ambiguity in his rhetorical trap-laying in 1:18-32 (with its relation to the deconstruction of each key element later in the letter).

2 But I praise/commend you because you have remembered me in everything and for holding fast the traditions/instructions just as I handed them on to you.  

3 But I want you to know that Christ is the head/source of every man, and the man/husband is the head/source of [his] woman/wife, and the head/source of Christ is God.  

4 Every man praying or prophesying having anything down from the head [long effeminate hair?] shames his head/source.  

5 But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered/unveiled shames her head/source—for it is one and the same thing with a woman having been shaved [punishment for adultery].  

6 For if a woman is not covered/veiled, then let her [hair] be shorn; but if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered/veiled.  

7 For indeed a man ought not to be covered/veiled, being the image and glory/reflection of God, but the woman is the glory/reflection of man.  

8 For indeed man was not created from the woman but woman from the man.  

9 For indeed not/neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.  

10 Therefore, the woman ought to have [a symbol/sign of] authority on her head, because of the angels [who observe worship and report to God; susceptible to sexual temptation? Gen 6:1-4].  

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord [community of believers] neither is woman without man nor man without woman.  

12 For as the woman [came] from the man, so also the man [comes] through the woman, but everything [comes] from God.  

13 Judge for yourselves: is it fitting/proper for a woman to pray to God [with her head] uncovered/unveiled?  

14 Does not nature/custom itself teach you that if a man wears his hair long, it dishonors him, but that, if a woman wears her hair long, it glorifies her (because long hair has been given to her instead of a cover/veil)?  

16 If anyone wants to be contentious [about this], we have no [other] custom/practice, nor do the churches of God.

(1) Do the multiple references to shame/dishonor (4-6, 14-15) reflect concern to maintain gender boundaries, which many argue are also fundamental in Romans 1:24-27 (2010:24-25, citing Brooten 1996:238, 241)?

(2) Does Paul here use “nature” (14) simply in the sense of dominant social custom, or does it imply a reflection of God’s creating and is thus not only descriptive but prescriptive (cf. Romans 1:24-27; 2010:23-24)?

(3) Does Paul’s initial emphasis on hierarchy (God-Christ-husbands-wives, 11:3, 8-9), contrasting with his emphasis on interdependence and equality (11-12), reflect the kind of “deconstruction” of dialectically expressed tensions that we have traced in Romans (where the four pejorative elements of uncleanness, unnaturalness, shame and change are first affirmed in 1:24-27 in the laying of his rhetorical trap, but then later deconstructed and treated as positive)? “A consistently egalitarian reading of the passage is…excluded by the undeniable patriarchalism of the argumentative framework” (Gundry-Volf 1997:165).

(4) Greek kephale, head/source? (2010:57; 2012:369, note 75; Rom 11:8-9; Col 2:10; Eph 1:22; LXX, Philo). “Either way, Paul’s opening statement in 11:3 depicts an order of being which includes authority: from God to Christ to man to woman; for ‘source’, too, would imply such order given the common value system of the time which honoured the earlier over the later” (2012:369; cf. animals created before humans and Paul’s argument in 1 Timothy 2:11-15). “Gen 3:16…reinforces the hierarchy when it declares that a woman needs to be in subjection to her husband” (2012:370 [but as a result of the Fall, not creation]). “Paul’s statements are to be understood against that background, but his focus here is not on trying to argue for such submission, which for him is beyond question, but on attire, and the way it reflects what he sees as the order of being established by creation” (370). Okland, Women, notes that “the issue is not primarily about women’s subordination, otherwise Paul would have no need to mention men’s appearance, but about gender boundaries (191)” (2012:370 note 80).

5 Divorce (240-292). “The Greek word generally means ‘release’ or ‘dismiss’ and reflects the fact that the woman is released or dismissed/sent away from the man’s house. Like Deuteronomy 24, Matt 5:32 assumes it is the male who initiates divorce and does not mention an initiation of divorce on the part of a woman” (242; see Abraham dismissing/divorcing Hagar at Sarah’s behest and with God’s approval; Gen 16; on the certificate of divorce in Deut 24, see below, Excursus: Divorce). In Matthew “The exception reads in 5:32: ‘except regarding a matter of porneia…’ and in 19:9 ‘not for’ or ‘except for/apart from porneia’” and the words in 5:32 “almost certainly allude to Deuteronomy 24 [‘shame of a matter’], which has just been summarized in 5:31…. It is better…to see both in 5:32 and 19:9 a statement which stands in contrast to what Matt believed Deut 24 allowed” (245). “Matthew is thus….stating something over against [the Shammai position]…. In doing so Jesus would not, however, be understood as revoking Torah, but as upholding it more rigorously [see oaths in 5:33-34]…. He does, however, acknowledge grounds which legitimise divorce and for this uses the word porneia” (245-46). “There are three major possibilities for the meaning of porneia in our context: 1. ‘Extra-marital sexual intercourse’…adultery on the part of the wife…. 2. ‘Premarital intercourse’…. 3. ‘Incestuous relations’…. The first option, which understands porneia in 5:32 to mean ‘extra-marital sexual intercourse’…makes best sense in context” (246-49).

5.1 Mark 10:2-12 (253-56). In 10:2-9 Jesus declared “that to divorce is to rend asunder what God has yoked. It is an act against God” (253). Jesus’ reply in 10:11-12 “elucidates 10:9 further. Not only is divorce strictly forbidden; if a man then marries another person, that constitutes an adulterous act against his former wife… What applies in 10:11 to the husband applies equally, according to 10:12, to his partner if she so acts. This assumes a context where women could also initiate and carry through a divorce. Mark clearly assumes that women could also divorce” (254; the Roman, not the Jewish tradition). “The assumption is that marriage is not only a divinely created permanent order but also that marriage partners may expect love and loyalty…. The saying also assumes monogynous marriage as the norm, because otherwise marrying another wife would be deemed acceptable” (256).

5.2 Mt 19:3-12 (256-59). Lacks reference to wife divorcing (writing in strongly Jewish context) (257).

5.3 QLuke 16:18 and Matthew 5:32 (259-64). “Luke brings his version of the saying about divorce and remarriage in the context of discussion of the Law and the abuse of wealth…. The immediate issue being addressed is greed…. To illustrate the Law’s continuing validity [6:17] by citing the logion about divorce and remarriage may at first seem out of place until we realize that one reason for divorce in those times was greed: divorcing one’s wife in order to marry one who would bring a more substantial dowry, especially once polygyny had fallen out of favor…. ‘Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another’ is then to be understood in this context as ‘Everyone who divorces his wife in order to marry another’…. Standing in isolation…the saying need not imply divorce on its own is forbidden; the focus is on divorce for remarriage. That constitutes an act of adultery” (258). “The fact that Matthew has two versions of the divorce saying probably reflects the use of…two sources [Mat 5:32 from Q // Luke 16:18; Mat 19:3-9 a reworking of Mark 10:2-12]” (259; p. 263 note 90 indicates Loader’s change of mind from 2005:87, where he saw Matthew’s form as more original).

5.4 Paul: 1 Cor 7:10-11 (264-69). “Paul uses different language to describe men and women in relation to divorce. He uses…‘to separate’, for women and …‘to dismiss’ for the man….the difference probably derives from what would actually have happened: either the man sent the woman from his house or the woman decided to leave [Judges 19:2]. The language becomes interchangeable. This is reflected in the verses which follow where Paul uses [“leave”] of both (7:12-13)…. Clearly Paul knows of teaching by Jesus about divorce. It is not clear what exactly he knew…. Why is remarriage forbidden her explicitly although the same would apply to men?…. The failure to add that a man not remarry may indicate that Paul assumes the validity of polygynous marriage, as perhaps the tradition behind Matt 5:32 had” (Loader 2012:264-67).

1. Mark in Canonical Context: Divorce to Remarry as Adultery  Jesus condemned men who had dismissed their wives in order to marry a more attractive spouse. However, it proves impossible to extract an “absolute ethic” (a Greek philosophical concept) against all divorce from his words, since (a) important variations exist (diversity) in the preserved teachings in the Gospels (Luke 16:18 [Q?]; Mark 10:12; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-9); (b) Paul adds another important variant (1 Corinthians 7:10-16); and (c) the Hebrew Scriptures contain other more radical differences: not only the Deuteronomic law (24:1-4, which permitted males to divorce), but also the divorce of Abraham (paradigm of faith and father of all believers), the divorces mandated by Ezra, and the teachings of Isaiah, Hosea and Jeremiah that even God had to “divorce” Israel!

2. Luke (16:18, Q?).  Luke’s version of the Sermon “on the Mount” (6:17-49) does not include Jesus’ teaching about divorce, and his Gospel has only this isolated verse on the subject. In this context Jesus teaches against economic oppression and points out the dangers of riches (16:10-15, 19-31), which makes sense, since, as indicated above, “one reason for divorce…was greed: divorcing one’s wife in order to marry one who would bring a more substantial dowry, especially once polygyny had fallen out of favour” (Loader 2012:258). Although the attribution to Q is still debated, Luke 16:18 may represent the most original version:

“All divorcing his wife and marrying another commits adultery, and the man who marries a woman who has-divorced-from / been-divorced-by her husband commits adultery.” Thus in Luke:

- perhaps only the man has the right to divorce (verb ambiguous; cf. the woman’s right in Mark 10:12);
- what Jesus condemns as “adultery” is not the divorce itself but the act of remarrying (cf. Mark);
- there are no exceptions (see Mark; but also cf. Matthew 5:19 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-16);
- Jesus adds that even a man not divorced who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery (presumably against her original marriage, still in force; without parallel in Mark and Matthew).

3. Mark (10:1-12).  “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (10:11-12). Because they are stricter versions, Luke and Mark appear to be earlier. In Mark, however:

- the woman also has the right to divorce (in accord with Roman law but not with Jewish law in Palestine); with this right the woman also shares the responsibility and becomes guilty of adultery if she remarries;
- the man who divorces a woman and marries another commits adultery against her (the first wife), not against the man of the other woman, which was common in patriarchal societies, including in Hebrew Scriptures;
- the sin of “adultery” is committed only by remarrying, not by the act of divorce alone. Only in Mark and Luke does Jesus appear to condemn all divorce accompanied by a new marriage as “adultery” without exception. Consequently, many understand this as hyperbole, such as “cut off your hand” (Matt 5:29-30), “sell what you own” (Mark 10:21), etc.

4. Matthew (Q5:31-32; Mk 10:12; ⇒ Matthew 19:1-9).  In both versions Jesus includes an exception that deals with a case where divorce and remarriage are not explicitly considered “adultery,” but a case of porneia, originally meaning simply “prostitution” but later extended to cover other sexual misconduct: relations with unmarried persons or “incestuous,” illicit relations (Lev 18:6-18), or even as a synonym for adultery. Interpreters commonly conclude that Matthew’s exception (in any sense) represents his adaptation of Jesus’ teaching. The ambiguity of porneia is notable, since the law concerning divorce in Deuteronomy (24:1-4) also includes an ambiguous word (“something objectionable/indecent”). If God inspired the Bible to provide raw material for constructing a coherent legal code or an absolute ethic for the church/society, how can we explain the use at key points of such ambiguous terms and the great diversity (each text says something different)?

5. 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.  Paul aims to transmit Jesus’ teaching (“not I but the Lord”), but creates another exception: divorce and remarriage are not considered adultery—if a believer is abandoned by a pagan he/she is free (15, to remarry; Loader 2012:264-69). In his context outside of Palestine, Paul follows Mark and recognizes the right of a woman to seek a divorce. And, most significantly, the Apostle proposes another fundamental norm to take into account in such decisions: the “peace/total well-being” of the home (7:15)—a norm that might reflect Paul’s personal experience of being abandoned?
6. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (Loader 2012:241-51). To protect women from the arbitrary abuses of men in their patriarchal society, Moses’ Law includes the measure of giving a legal document to a woman who is sent away because of “something objectionable/indecent about her” to her husband. This ambiguity provoked the question to Jesus in Mark 10:2 and Matthew 19:3. Notably, Jesus insisted on discernment for the interpretation and application of the Scriptures, since he appealed to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 (canonical context: the purpose of marriage) to indicate the correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Deuteronomy 22:13-19 and 28-29 indicate two other cases in which males had the right of divorce.

7. Even God commands divorce in certain cases. In Genesis 21:8-14 in response to Sarai’s complaint God commands that Abraham dismiss/divorce Hagar, his slave-spouse and mother of his first-born son Ishmael, when the home’s peace is destroyed because of rivalries between Hagar and her mistress Sarai (see also Exodus 21:10-11; 1 Cor 7:15).


9. Malachi 2:10-16 (460 BC/E). The text is obscure: the MT reads “he hates divorce,” with reference to the husband, while the LXX reads: “If you hate and dismiss/divorce [the wife of your youth],” v. 15; modern versions unanimously (but with no textual basis!) translate: “I hate divorce” with reference to God (NRSV, indicating emendation; NIV without note). Moreover, any reference to a covenant between the couple is highly improbable, since marriage in the Hebrew Bible involved an agreement between the groom and the father (and the New Testament never refers to marriage as a covenant). The prophet Jeremiah (3:1-8) taught that even God had to divorce Israel, God’s unfaithful, idolatrous people (see Isaiah 50:1; Hosea 2:2; David Petersen interprets “the wife of your youth” to refer to Yahweh; 1995:201, Malachi). Andrew Hill cites Qumran text 4QXIa, which “furnishes a variant reading…‘but if you hate [her] send [her] away’” (AB 1998:249), thus commanding, rather than prohibiting divorce and further multiplying the biblical diversity on divorce (also Loader 2012:60-62; 2010:82).

10. Conclusions concerning divorce. When we compare the variations in Jesus’ teaching, and that of the entire Bible, we note that the texts always reflect concrete historical and cultural contexts, and hence never designate universal “ethics” or “morals” (Greek philosophical categories totally absent from the Bible). Although the traditional teachings of the churches (dominated by Greek philosophical concepts) seek to establish an ethic and a legal code (not only for the churches but for all of society), if we take the Bible seriously the texts should teach us to think and pray for DISCERNMENT to be sensitive to each person and relationship in its individuality. Perhaps for this purpose the greatest variant among the Gospels concerning this theme is in the Gospel of John, which omits all prohibition against divorce and limits Jesus’ teaching about the conduct of his followers to the New Commandment of mutual love (John 13:34-35). A similar diversity of teaching occurs in Jesus’ commissioning of the Twelve, where Mark’s version permits taking a staff and wearing sandals (6:8-9), while Matthew’s version forbids them (10:10; cf. Luke 9:3). Although scholars offer different explanations for this diversity (Mark’s longer international journeys but on paved Roman roads vs. Matthew’s mission within Palestine but on Rocky local paths), they agree that local conditions led to the adaptation of Jesus’ instructions to specific historical contexts.

Similarly, Mark’s divorce text may reflect his eventual location in Rome, where women were more liberated than in Palestine. The Bible thus portrays God as Lord of history who wisely adjusts guidelines for praxis in accord with varying historical contexts and different human situations. To take an extreme case, it is difficult to imagine that Jesus would have wanted to condemn a woman as an “adulteress” who initiates a divorce to protect her life against her husband’s violence or to rescue her daughters from their father’s sexual abuse. In such cases, divorce would rather be an act of courage and solidarity with the weak (the daughters)—divine liberation, not sin. Some churches thus now include liturgies of blessing for divorced persons, seeking to minister positively in times of personal crisis and need, instead of heaping up false guilt with unjustifiable and cruel condemnations. However, Jesus’ explicit words about divorce make it difficult to understand how so many churches now often accept divorced persons without condemnation (including divorced pastors) but continue condemning other sexual minorities, citing only ambiguous texts by Paul and/or the Hebrew Scriptures (misinterpreted) but with no basis in Jesus’ teaching. In addition, many of these same churches accept the equality and ordination of women, even though two patriarchal Pauline prohibitions appear much clearer than the texts cited against sexual minorities. Such churches obviously misinterpret the Bible with a selective literalism (common in fundamentalisms of all sorts) to support an ideology predetermined on other grounds (pace William Webb, Slaves, Women & Homosexuals [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001]).
6 Same-sex intercourse (293-338; 22-33; see “clobber texts” reviewed, Loader 2010 + 2012)

7 Men and Women in Community and Leadership (339-429).

7.1 The Jesus tradition: the challenge of the Kingdom (339-44). Reconstructions of Jesus’ teaching agree that “he proclaimed good news of an alternative ordering of society to be brought about by God’s reign” and “as having both a future and a present dimension” (339). Sex in the alternative society (341-44). “We have in Mark 12:25 a statement attributed to Jesus according to which in the age to come there will be no marrying or being given in marriage…. When fully realized, the new society will be one without marriage and without sex” (341).

7.2 Women: “ Outsider” women (346-52; Mk 2:15-16; Mt 11:19 // Lk 7:34; Lk 15:1-2; 19:10; Mt 21:31b-32; the extraordinary additions contained in Mt’s genealogy, 1:1-17; Jn 4:4-42, the Samaritan woman). “Among ‘the sinners’ would have been women who engaged in illicit sexual practices, including prostitution and related forms of entertainment” (347). Tax collectors often managed brothels, so “sinners” may be a euphemism for prostitutes (347-51, citing Corley).

The woman anointing Jesus (344-46; Mk 14:3-9 // Matt 26:6-13 //? John 12:1-8?; Lk 7:36-50). “There are four accounts of a woman anointing Jesus…. Only in Luke is the woman designated as a woman known in the city as a sinner (7:37, 39, 47). Her many sins (7:47) probably included prostitution….[she] would have possessed such [expensive] oils as part of her equipment” (344). “In John’s [account] it is Mary, Martha’s sister, who anoints Jesus (12:1-8). She anoints his feet, not his head” (cf. Mark 14:3-9, where “nothing suggests her act was sexual, although it was clearly sensual and tactile,” 346).

Women in Jesus’ ministry (352-61). “Jesus appears to have included women among his ‘followers’; that is the group which traveled with Jesus included women. The evidence is too meager to describe the situation as egalitarian…. Certainly Jesus, himself, exercised authority and control. His was not a democratic itinerant commune (352).… In the case of the Syrophoenician woman, she is portrayed as a conversation partner who is able to persuade Jesus to change his mind” (357). “The Jesus tradition does at times highlight model discipleship behaviour of women in contrast to men” (359)

7.3 Men and family power (361-68; see 8.3, Radical discipleship, 444-47, below). “In some ways the change for men in the alternative society is more radical than for women. Making them responsible for their own sexuality removes from the traditional self-understanding that they must control women and can blame them…. Jesus did not abandon traditional male images of God, such as king and father, but he emphasized those aspects of Jewish tradition which focused less on power than on compassion and less on debt than on generous forgiveness. The image of father seems based more on human models of the caring parent, and the image of king, at least under the image of the kingdom, more on benefits than on submission…. The tradition thus invites males to an alternative understanding of masculinity and leadership” (361-62, citing the redemptive role of liberator messiah in service and suffering, with Jesus’ washing his disciples feet as a model; John 13:1-17).

“Jesus…challenged his followers to be prepared to abandon home and family” (362; Mark 1:16-20; 10:29-30; Matt 8:18-22; 10:37-38; Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-26). “The result is a subversion of traditional values…. Jesus’ true family, “mothers, brothers, sisters, were those who did the will of God (Mark 3:20-21, 31-35; 6:1-6)” (362). The assumption is that the new family of faith will replace the old biological family…. All these texts set the loyalties of the new fictive family ahead of the biological family. In relation to the married, then, the fictive [= metaphorical] family, or more especially, the vision and agenda of the kingdom, must override family priorities” (366-67).
7.4 Paul (368-83)


[1 Cor 14:34-35 “Men and Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36” (2012: 383-89; see also 1 Tim, 417-29) and Loader 2010:55-56, 1 Cor 14:33b-36. In both 2010 and 2012, after summarizing major alternatives, Loader rejects the conclusion that 1 Cor 14:34-35 (commanding women/wives to maintain silence in the house church assemblies) represents a later scribal interpolation inserted into Paul’s original text. Following Gordon Fee (1987) and Philip Payne (2009), I have repeatedly argued for recognition of such an interpolation (Hanks 2000/08:99-102; 2010:168-70)].

Gal 3:26-28 Men and women in Gal 3:26-28 (368, 389-94). “Gal 3:28 has been widely used as evidence that Paul rejected discrimination on the basis of race, social status and gender…. In using the formulation…‘male and female’ rather than matching the way he speaks of the other pairs: Jew or Greek, slave or free, Paul…is doubtless standing under the influence of Gen 1:27, which used exactly that formulation…‘male and female’. As we have seen in 1 Cor 6:12-20; 7:1-5; 11:2-16; 14:33-36 [textual emendation?], and also Rom 1:18-31, Paul uses the Genesis creation stories as a key starting point for his understanding of male-female relations…. One might then read Paul as affirming something quite revolutionary, namely that such differences between people should from now on be ignored and everyone treated equally. Slaves must accordingly be set free, household and marriage norms subverted to be replaced by genuinely equal partnerships between men and women. This appears not to be the case” (389-90). “The assumption …in most depictions of androgyny is that a return to origins means not really a return to being both male and female but to the original perfect male form” (392).

Men and women in this Age and the Age to Come (394-401). “Paul will have understood the oneness of male and female in Christ as consistent with their keeping the roles assigned to them by divine creation, even extending this to assumptions about hair and coverings and to the requirement that women keep their questions till after worship and deal with them later with their men [1 Cor 14:33-34, text?]. On the other hand, while the roles and hierarchies remain, there is an overriding value which derives from their belonging to Christ, that affirms their worth and belonging, and can sometimes promote women into leadership roles, a phenomenon by no means without precedent in Paul’s world” (394). “Analogous to ethnic identity formation, we see in Paul little attempt to change existing social structures, including the norms of marriage and gender roles, but at the same time we see an ethic of love and belonging in Christ which has the potential to override such distinctions” (395). “Nothing suggests an ideal androgyny informs his eschatology. Equality is not identity” (396). “Underlying Paul’s response to the challenge to his masculinity is a theology which embodies the different values of grace. To this extent Paul’s new model of masculinity is God in Christ” (400).

7.5 Beyond Paul (2012:401-29)

The unity saying in Col 3:9-11 (401-03). Unlike Gal 3:28, in Col 3:11 “Jew” comes after “Greek” and is “then expanded in a chiasmic structure: circumcision and uncircumcision; then the second item expanded still further with barbarian and Scythian,” (402) with “slave and free” coming last in Colossians, omitting the concluding reference to “no male and female” of Galatians. Thus in both 1 Cor and Col “there are grounds for speculation hat the male-female pair is deliberately omitted to counter misunderstanding” (403).

Household codes (403-17) reflect a time when “the expectation of Christ’s imminent coming had waned and people were needing to come to terms with what it meant to live within society” (403).
**Colossians 3:18–4:1** (403-06, 416). “The instruction to wives to be submissive to husbands… is… a norm that… Paul would have affirmed” (405, citing Daniel Darko 2008:81). Loving leaves no room “for exercising the authority… in ways that harm, damage or dishonour the wife. That… falls short of recognizing that the institutionalised inequality, itself, needs change if love and respect as we understand it to be realized” (406). “Colossians urges slaves: … obey your earthly masters in everything’ (3:22)… It is difficult to contemplate tolerance of abuse of any kind here, though some, including slaves, may not have seen sexual relations in those terms…. Biblical law… prohibits only sex with someone else’s slave (Lev 19:20; 18:8)… The stories of Abraham and Jacob assume such rights” as access to one’s own slaves (416; see above, 5 Divorce and Excursus).

**Ephesians 5:21–6:9** (407-11). The Ephesians code depends on Colossians but is prefaced with a generalizing participial clause, “being subject to one another in reverence for Christ” (21), which grammatically closes the sentence (17/18-21) and thus should not be read as applying to all the following, including parents and children, slaves and masters (5:22–6:9): “The mutuality which 5:21 appeared to promise has been explained as submission by the wife and love by the husband, which should ensure her well being, not least because the husband’s love is to be modeled on Christ’s, but this all takes place within an unequal relationship, where the man is head…. The relations are not reversible: Christ is the head of the church, as the husband is the head of the wife. For the author it would be unthinkable to depict Christ as like the wife, not only because Christ is male, but also because the author’s version of mutuality did not suppose that a wife could be head of her husband nor that a husband be subject to her” (410). Slaves were to obey and not be abused (416).

**Titus 2:1-10; 3:1-2** (411-12, 417; ca. 100 BC/E). “Offers instruction to men and women which differentiates ages” (411); older men to be “prudent” (sophronas) “might include sexual self-control” (2:2; 412); similarly, older women to be “self-controlled, chaste” which “probably have sexual connotations” and may reflect allegations about Cretan lifestyle (citing Bruce Winter); and younger men also to be “self-controlled,” which also suggests sexual references, especially since they would be almost 30 before marrying. “The author then has instruction to slaves which enjoins submission (2:9-10 [including sexual service]), but nothing about masters [presumably non-Christians], and urges subjection to rulers and authorities and courteous behavior (3:1-2)” (2012: 412, 417).

**1 Peter 2:13–3:7** (235-38; 412-416; “late first century”). Although Loader does not cite Betsy J. Bauman-Martin’s important article on the women addressed in 1 Peter 3:1-6 (2004; “Women on the Edge: New Perspectives on Women in the Petrine Haustafel” [Journal of Biblical Literature 123/2, 253-279]), he does indicate her principle point: “The lengthy instructions for wives begins with the standard exhortation that they submit to their husbands… but addressed here in the problematic context of mixed marriages (cf. 1 Cor 7:12-16)” and Loader correctly notes that the text is most accurately described as “Aspects of household code, rather than a complete code” (412-13); similarly, regarding slaves he points out “1 Peter almost certainly deals with slaves of masters who are not believers: they are suffering unjustly through beatings they did not deserve (2:18-20)” (417). And he cites Osiek (2006:117): “The lingering question with regard to sexual abuse is whether or not, contrary to accepted custom, Christian teachers would have thought from the earliest years that making use of the sexual availability of one’s slaves was abusive and wrong” (417, citing also Glancy 2006:140-51).

**1 Timothy (416-29; slaves, elders, women; order of widows—425-29): Slaves and households** (416-17). 1 Tim does not contain a domestic code but in 6:1-2 urges slaves to honor their masters, whether unbelievers (1) or “believers and beloved” (2; see 5:3-16, widows; 17-20, elders). **Men and Women in Church Order** (417-29). 1 Tim 2:8-15 addresses behavior in worship; see 1 Tim 2:11-12 (→ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35?) on restraining women. In 1 Tim 2:9-10, not limited to wives, “the primary concern is women making themselves look attractive, which surely includes a sexual component” (418; see the wives of unbelievers in 1 Peter 3:3-4). Since Loader accepts 1 Cor 14:34-35 as authentic, he believes it influenced 1 Tim 2:11-12 and not vice versa (either way, the two texts have much in common, emphasizing “silence” and prohibiting women from “speaking/teaching”; 419). However,
“one should not read the injunction to silent learning and prohibition of teaching to imply absolute silence…. The focus is rather on speaking in the context of learning or teaching…. The context appears to encompass any activities where a woman’s speech might call into question a man’s authority or status, her husband’s or another’s, such as in argument or in expressing views or questions” (421).

The three following arguments in 1 Tim 2:13-15 are based on the reference to submission in Gen 3:16 and “may be applicable primarily to wives…but not exclusively so” (420): (1) “What is earlier is better: Adam was created first,” forgetting that the Christian movement advocated the superiority of the new covenant (421), not to mention the creation of the animals before Adam; (2) “The second argument points to Eve’s deception and transgression, using a kind of reverse logic, that the first to sin is worse than the second to do so (422); (3) “The third argument is more obscure…. (‘Yet she will be saved through childbearing’)…. The author rightly assumes that the words to Eve are in effect to all women. In this he ignores the many women who do not give birth” (422). Some try to rescue the text by claiming that it ultimately refers to the birth of Christ, who alone can bring salvation, “but this is contrived” (423). More likely: “Gen 3:16, especially in its Greek version, indicates that it is the process of bringing children to birth which provides security for the woman. That process includes her following the urge to return to her husband and giving birth again and again. The author sees that giving her security. That includes then that she keeps returning also in submission to him, as Gen 3:16 indicates” (423). However, Howard Marshall (469, cited 423, note 281) rejects this interpretation since “saved” is used in the Pastoral epistles in a spiritual sense and “safety” in childbirth is irrelevant in that context; similarly Philip Payne 2009:422). Loader, regarding 1 Tim 2:9-15, thus concludes: “The biblical rationale extrapolates from the Genesis text in a way that reflects but also reinforces and entrenches the inferiority attributed to women and sees their place and security as wives and mothers in the home. The rationale leaves little room for exceptions” (424). The following treatment of the order of widows (5:3-16), however, provided a space and in later years a basis for women’s ministry (Hanks 2000/08:169; Bonnie Thurston, Widows in the New Testament, New York: Crossroad, 1998).

8 Celibacy (430-490).

8.1 Marriage in the Age to Come (Mark 12:18-27, Matthew 22:22-33 and Luke 20:27-40; 430-36). The texts present an account of “Sadducees embarking upon a reduction ad absurdum of belief in resurrection, which they might easily have also used against Pharisees…. The account is based on the practice of levirate marriage found in Deut 25:5” (430-31). In Mark 12:25 “The assumption appears to be not only that marriages will not take place…but that no such thing as marriage (and so sexual activity) will exist” (433). “Luke offers an explanation which reflects the view that sex and marriage are solely for procreation. As a consequence, where people no longer die, reproduction is no longer necessary to keep the species going; therefore sex and marriage are obsolete” (434). “Comparing the resurrected people to angels could be problematic. Angels are male…. [but] It is the fallen angels who were sexually active [Gen 6:1-4]…. Elsewhere, the Jesus tradition, however, can envisage an eschatological feast, which presupposes a level of corporeality (Mark 14:25; Matt 8:11-12). The focus may, therefore, be more at the level of being holy like the angels where sacred space leaves no room for the sexual. This is more likely than that the answer of Jesus implies that sexual activity is independent of marriage in the life to come, implying unrestricted sexual activity” (435, note 18 citing J. Harold Ellens, Sex in the Bible, who writes “Jesus’ implication was that she would be the partner of all seven brothers. Obviously Jesus was clear on the fact that heaven is a setting of holy promiscuity, where we shall enjoy total union with everyone who really delights us” (46).

8.2 Eunuchs for the Kingdom (Matt 19:10-12; 2012:436-44: 65-66, see 1.20 Eunuchs, above). Surprisingly, in 8.2 Loader treats Jesus’ saying about the three types of eunuchs (Mat 19:12) as part of his chapter on “Celibacy,” arguing that the third type, those “who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven,” uses a category that described unclean persons (Lev 21:20; 22:24; Deut 23:15), shameful and frequently despised, but “shifts to metaphor” (442). Thus, by treating eunuchs as part of his chapter on “Celibacy” Loader emphasizes
his own conclusion that Jesus does not intend any association with the reputation of eunuchs with “sexual wrongdoing of various kinds” (441) or the “sexual profligacy” for which they were famous (443). Loader cites scholars who emphasize the positive texts about eunuchs (Isa 56:3-5; Daniel; Acts 8:26-40) and concludes that Jesus’ saying was formulated “in response to personal ridicule for not being married or ridicule of the lifestyle to which he called some of his disciples, matching his own” (443). Loader also refers to Paul’s valuing those without wives and children who could thus “devote more time and energy to the task of proclaiming and working for it [the kingdom]” (444; 1 Cor 7:32-35), which for Loader implied celibacy.


8.4 The celibacy option (a): Jesus (QMatt 8:20 // Luke 9:58), John the Baptist (447-59). “Was Jesus celibate, like many who...abandoned their homes, parents, spouses, children and land? Or was Jesus married, like Peter? (448; note heterosexist assumptions). “The women who followed Jesus are named and include famil...

8.5 The celibacy option (b): Paul and the Corinthians (1 Cor 7; 453-67; cf. Paul on marriage, 182-222; on divorce, 264-69). “Why should periods of prayer require sexual abstinence?... The background informing Paul’s values here derives almost certainly from the notion that in sacred space and time sexual engagement has no place” (454; note 64 cites Exod 19:15; Lev 15:18; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 11:4 + non-canonical texts). In 1 Cor 7:32-35 “Paul does not...entertain the possibility that marriage, and, not least, procreation, may also be a way of serving
the Lord” (458; see Priscilla and Aquila!). Paul’s reasons for preferring celibacy: (1) the proximity of the eschaton, 7:29; (2) impending or present adversity; (3) the passing away of the forms of this world; (4) divided affections (459). Paul’s preference for celibacy likely derived especially from the options of John the Baptist and Jesus (461).

8.6 No “male and female” (Gal 3:28; see 7.2-3 above) and later oneness traditions (467-76). Examines extra-canonical texts, such as Gospel of Thomas 114, where Jesus tells Peter he will make Mary Magdalene male and thus qualify her to enter the kingdom of heaven (472-73).

8.7 Virgins, widows and the sacred (Matt 1:23 + Isa 7:14 LXX; Luke 1:34-35; 476-78). “People valued virginity because it assures the future husband...that no illegitimate heir would be brought into the family line...and misbehaviour would also be less likely to occur in the future” (476); see Anna (Lk 2:36); Philip’s four virgin daughters with their gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). Cf. widows (1 Tim 5:9), if over 60, enlisted in some kind of women’s order (478); 144,000 male virgins “who have not defiled themselves with women” (Rev 14:4, 7:4, 9; 478-81; with p. 480 cf. 2010:210-12, 144,000 “not to be taken literally”). 7:1-8, Authentic Israel = Jewish Christians; 7:9-17, the martyrs, who refused to prostitute themselves with imperial idolatry; see 14:1-5 male virgins/celibates, kept clean from the idolatry symbolized by prostitution with women.

Conclusion (491-500). “The current order of creation as portrayed in Genesis [male with fem] also influences Paul’s stance on same-sex relations [as unnatural].... [His rhetorical strategy was to use] a worst case instance to impress critics, only to trip them up over their own sin [so] we have his few comments about sex between men and between women. Paul sought to win his hearers by finding common ground...in condemning such behaviour, just as other Jews of his time had done. It was another mark of pagan depravity. Their perverted sexual desire and behaviours reflected their perverted understanding of God. So God abandoned them to their perversion. If Paul had heard...that for some this was their natural orientation, we may suspect he would have treated them with the same derision as did Philo in scorning Aristophanes’ bizarre aetiology of sex in Plato’s Symposium about originally androgynous humans being split apart and so now seeking their other halves. We may assume that Paul included such depravity...when he spoke of sexual wrongdoing elsewhere and probably alluded to its active and passive partners as in the list of 1 Cor 6:9-10. It is not that Paul targets only heterosexual men or only homosexual acts. His stance is typical and almost offhand because he assumes agreement. Not all then and certainly not all now would share Paul’s anthropological presuppositions about sexual orientation and so be able with him to deem all such desires and all such acts as perversion, but we can assume that this would have been the stance of his Jewish and Christian colleagues and of many others in the wider community” (496). “I am also convinced that Paul’s anthropology in relation to sexual orientation needs supplementing with the reality that not all who engage in sexual intimacy with those of their own kind are engaging in perversion. Those who are not should not then stand under the same judgment, but like all, be challenged to exercise the expression of their humanity in a way which is conformed to and informed by the generosity and goodness of God who confronts our reality and challenges us to authentic fulfillment” (499-500).

Note 1 Gaca, Kathy L. (2003). *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* [Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press]. (“[S]taggering erudition,” Chris Frilingos, Review JBL 123/4 2004:756-759). Cf. the Greek porneia, “prostitution, unchastity, fornication” (BDAG 2000: 354). Gaca concludes that for Paul, based not on Greek philosophy or popular culture but on his reading of the LXX, fornication [porneia] implies heterosexual relations in a context of idolatrous religion and worship: “Polytheistic religion in antiquity was intimately connected with sexual and procreative conduct, for people worshipped gods embodying sexual power, such as Aphrodite, Dionysus, Hera, and Zeus” (2003:3). Since Hellenistic culture accepted prostitution/porneia, the term was not included in its vice lists; Jesus, addressing fellow Jews in Palestine, had little occasion to refer to porneia; but Paul, addressing non-Jews elsewhere, made it a major concern: “Paul’s cardinal dictate [is] that God’s people must avoid sexual fornication in worship of other gods” (2003:14). “The vice of porneia is entirely absent from the [vice] lists in Hellenistic philosophy, but occurs frequently and near the beginning of the Pauline lists, Gal 5:19-21; Col 3:5; 1 Cor 12:20-
21, Eph 5:3-5” (2003:14, note 38); rare (twice) in Jesus’ teaching (2003:13 note 36, 139 note 52; see Matt. 5:32 // 19:9; 15:19 // Mark 7:21). However, fornication/porneia in Paul, following the LXX, is “a heterosexual deviance” and does not refer to homoerotic acts (2003:143, 158). “Biblical porneia refers to acts of sexual intercourse and reproduction that deviate from the norm of worshipping God alone. ... In the non-biblical Greek sense, however, porneia means ‘prostitution’ and has nothing to do with worshipping God alone” (2003:20).

Appendix 1. Male Sexuality in Three Excision Sayings:
Mark 9:42-48; Matt 18:6-9; 5:29-30 (cf. B.Nid. 13b)

Adela Yarbro Collins (2007:449-56) has added her voice of support to the conclusion of Will Deming (1990) that Mark 9:42-49 be interpreted in the light of a text from the Babylonian Talmud (B.Nid.13b, 3rd-5th centuries CE/AD; see below) as presenting four metaphors (1-4) for sexual prohibitions. However:

1 If the “scandalizing/causing to sin” of “little ones” in Mark 9:42 be interpreted as a euphemism for male-male pederasty, then the references to hand, foot and eye in 9:43, 45 and 47 may also refer to pederasty, thus strengthening the case that Rom 1:27, 1 Tim 1:12 and 1 Cor 6:9 condemn only male-male pederastic abuse, especially of young slaves (see Scroggs 1983 and Miller 1997 on Rom 1:27) and not as general, universal condemnations of same-sex eroticism or “homosexuality.” Moreover, if Mark 9:42 is limited to pederasty, then sexually abused youths may also be viewed as contaminated (rather than victims of sexual violence), and thus condemned to eternal punishment along with their abusers (see B. Brooten 1996 on Lev. 20:13 and Rom 1:27).

2 If the “hand” in Mark 9:43 is interpreted only as a metaphor for male masturbation, then we have Jesus condemning to eternal punishment all males guilty of masturbation, while female masturbators remain innocent (see the absence of condemnation of female homoeroticism in Rom 1:26, as indicated by James Miller and the Church Fathers until around 400 AD). Also, we would then have the further anomaly of Jesus inventing a new ethic that condemns male masturbation, when his authoritative Hebrew Bible contained no such condemnation of males, but did prescribe cutting off the hand of women who damaged the sacred male genitals during a brawl (Deut 25:11-12). Collins indicates that the motive for the condemnation of male masturbation would be the same as the condemnation of male-male anal sex in Lev 18:22 and 20:13, namely the wasting of male semen in the avoidance of procreation (2007:451, following Milgrom; see 451, note 97). This leaves us with a Jesus who is captive to extreme patriarchal ideology with its emphasis on procreating male property heirs, yet who personally felt free to ignore the demand to procreate, leading a single lifestyle, as did his disciple Paul and their male followers.

3 As Robert Gundry points out, “Jesus…speaks of having two feet over against being lame. Thus is lost the euphemism of a foot for the penis” (1993:524), since he hardly would have intended to suggest that a man with two penises cut off one and keep the other. Moreover, if the “foot” in Mark 9:45 be taken simply as a metaphor for male genitals in adulterous sex, then we have the anomaly that Jesus extended to women both the right to and the prohibition of divorce, but here exempts them from guilt for adultery—hardly the perspective of the Hebrew Bible that often condemned female initiatives in adultery (see the female prostitutes in Proverbs).

4 If the male “eye” in Mark 9:47 be limited to the lustful heterosexual male gaze condemned in Mat 5:27-32 (which Collins extends to any “erotic gaze,” 2007:454), then we have a Jesus who is reduced to the sexual negativism common in neoplatonic and stoic philosophies, totally contradicting all the delight in erotic gazing so often detailed in the Song of Songs (see especially the four wasfs that describe with enthusiastic detail the beloved’s anatomy; yet only Mark details Jesus’ own loving gaze at the Rich Young Ruler, Mk 10:21).

If the metaphors of hand, foot and eye and the scandalizing little ones in Mark 9:42-43, 45 and 47 are all interpreted as referring only to male sexual sins and condemned to a fate worse than drowning (42b) or suffering
the eternal fires of hell (43, 45, 47-48), then we have a Jesus apparently obsessed with sexual sins as the gravest sort, utterly at odds with his major emphasis on economic abuses elsewhere in the gospels and his teaching on eternal punishment for lack of solidarity with the weak and needy in Mat 25:31-46; cf. Mk 9:41. Thus a preferable alternative hypothesis is that the progression from Mark 9:42-49 to Matthew 18:6-9 and 5:27-32 to the Talmud (B.Nid. 13b) reflects the growing impact of neoplatonic and stoic negativism regarding human sexuality, and that Mark’s four metaphors are best interpreted generically as discouraging “sin” (not sex) in continuity with sex-positive perspectives of the Hebrew Bible, especially → Song of Songs, functioning to facilitate a sex-positive canonical theology (appropriately, since it is the only canonical book on sexuality).

The Three Excision Sayings + B.Nid.

1 Mark 9:42-50 (ca 69-70 CE/AD). “42 And whoever gives offense to/causes one of these little ones who believe/trust [in me] to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed and with two hands to go to gehenna/hell, to the unquenchable fire [44 text?]. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into gehenna/hell [46 text?]. 47 And if your eye gives you offense/causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into gehenna/hell, 48 where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

2 Matthew 18:6-9 (ca. 85 CE/AD). “6 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [scandalizes, causes to stumble], it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world for temptations to sin [scandals, stumbling blocks]! For it is necessary that temptations [scandals, stumbling blocks] come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation [scandals, stumbling blocks] comes! 8 If your hand or foot causes you to stumble [scandalizes you], cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to stumble [scandalizes you], tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the gehenna/hell of fire.”

Matthew here closely follows his source (Mark 9:42-50) and avoids specifying any sexual sins. Since the child was to be “received” into the community (18:5), presumably the scandal in 18:6 would involve a refusal of hospitality, not sexual abuse (see Sodom, Gen 19). As in Mark, the reference to “two feet” would seem to rule out any interpretation of the foot as a metaphor for the male penis (see above).

3 Matt 5:27-32 (ca. 85 CE/AD). “27 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ [Ex 20:14; Deut 5.18]. 28 But I say to you that every one who looks at a married woman lustfully [epithumesai] has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into gehenna/hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into gehenna/hell.

Just as Matthew’s Jesus specifies the heterosexual male’s lustful gazes (see Rom 1:27), he assumes a universal righthandedness, specifying the right eye and the right hand. He thus takes over two of Mark’s four categories, but omits Mark’s reference to the foot and the scandalizing of “little ones.” However, Matthew links the sin of the right eye to the covetous look of the adulterer, condemned in the 7th and 10th prohibitions of the Decalogue and also by Paul in Romans 13:8-10 as acts that threaten harm to the neighbor and viable community. Nothing in

22
Matthew suggests condemnation of all erotic gazing (exalted in the Song of Songs) nor does Matthew suggest that the potential sin of the right hand would be male masturbation.

As Robert Gundry points out (1993:524), examples from Mark and elsewhere in Scripture suggest multiple alternatives to the sexual sins indicated in the Talmud, Deming and Collins:

1. “stumbling/being scandalized” in Mark refers to apostasy (4:17), unbelief (6:3) and cowardice (14:27, 29);
2. the “hand” may engage in theft or violence;
3. the “foot” may run to do evil and consort with the oppressors;
4. the “eye” may indicate covetousness and stinginess.

4 Cf. B.Nid. 13b commenting on m. Nid 2:1 (from the Babylonian Talmud, 200-500 CE/AD):

“The hand that oftentimes makes examination [of the private parts] is among women, praiseworthy [because it is necessary to determine menstrual cleanness]; but among men—let it be cut off.” The commentary includes an interpretation of Isa 1:15 as a reference to “those that commit masturbation with their hands”; an interpretation of the seventh commandment as prohibiting adultery with the “hand” or the “foot”; and a statement from R. Tarfon that the hand that touches the male member is to be “cut off upon his belly,” which is preferable to going “down into the pit of destruction” (as cited in Robert Gagnon 2001:208, note 34). Gagnon correctly acknowledges: “Certainly Jesus’ own unmarried status and his itinerant day-to-day lifestyle would have set him off from his own culture as someone with ascetic tendencies” (2001:209, note 37), but also affirms that “Jesus’ views on sex represent on the whole a staunchly conservative position” (37). Gagnon obviously has a very queer notion of what is “conservative” (not patriarchal procreationism)!

Conclusion. Loader points out that Matthew’s excision statement referring to the right eye in 5:29-30, which follows immediately on the prohibition of the lustful gazing of heterosexual males (5:27-28), focuses on [hetero]sexuality, but this is not true of his excision saying in 18:6-9 (2010:68-71; 2012:127-35). Loader says, “The warning about causing little ones to stumble (Mk 9:42) may have alluded to pederasty, despite its later application to believers” (Loader 2010:33-34, citing Gagnon 2001:185-87 and Loader 2005:21-22, referring to disciples as “little ones who believe in me,” Mk 9:42; see 2012:119-135). Loader recognizes, however: “The rabbinic account is from centuries later and the attributions [to sources around 50 CE/AD] may not be secure enough to assure a first century dating” (2005:30). The Talmudic materials contain no reference to the lustful eye. Jesus’ metaphor of two feet would hardly suggest a male with a spare penis. So instead of concluding that Jesus uncharacteristically becomes obsessed with sexual sins and formulates his teaching by imitating rabbinic neoplatonism and sexophobia, it would be preferable to interpret Jesus’ teaching in continuity with the sex-positive perspective of Song of Songs and consistently with his emphases on non-sexual sins in Mark and the other Gospels. This is not to say that sexual sins should be totally excluded from the metaphors. As Gundry indicates (1993:524), the wayward “foot” may take a man into the house of a harlot or another man’s house (Prov 5:1-20; 6:20-35), but the Marcan Jesus here “is interested in the explosive force of Jesus’ teaching [to avoid all sin], not in its [specific] ethical content” (525). Like Paul (in Rom 13:8-10), Jesus focused on those sins that harm the neighbor and make viable community impossible; hence the concluding references to covenant salt and the exhortation to “be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50 with 33-34; Mat 18:1-5, 10-35).

Appendix 2. 1 Cor 6:12–7:7 Christian males tempted by idolatrous pagan prostitutes [f.].

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Why Christian males should avoid porneia with idolatrous prostitutes [f.]. 12[“]For me all things are authorized/permitted[“]—but not all things are beneficial!; [“]For me all things are authorized/permitted[“]—but I will not be mastered/ruled by anything! 13[“]Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods[“]—but God will destroy both these and that! The body, however, is not for [heterosexual] porneia-prostitution, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. 14And God both raised the Lord and through his power will also raise us. 15 Don’t you [pl] know that your bodies are members of Christ? Therefore, taking Christ’s limbs and organs, shall I make [them] members of a [fem., idolatrous] harlot? May it not be! 16 Or don’t you [pl] know that he who clings to a [fem., idolatrous] harlot is one body [with her]? For he/it says “The two [m. + f.] will become one flesh” [Gen 2:24]. 17 But the one clinging/being joined to the Lord is one spirit [with him]. 18 Flee [heterosexual] porneia-prostitution [10:14; see Joseph in Gen 29]! Whatever [other] sin that a man may commit is outside the body; but he who commits [heterosexual] porneia-prostitution sins against his own body. 19 Or don’t you [pl] know that your body is a shrine/temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price? So glorify/honor God in/with your bodily life.

7:1-7 How Christians [m. + f. ] may avoid [heterosexual] porneia. 1 Now concerning the things you wrote about: [“]It is good for a man not to touch [have sex with] a woman[“]; 2 but because of porneia, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should pay [fulfill] his [marital] debt to his wife; and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife has no authority over her own body, but the husband; and likewise the husband has no authority over his own body, but the wife. 5 Don’t deprive one another unless by agreement [mutual consent] for a time in order that you may have leisure for prayer and then come together lest Satan tempt you for [your] lack of self-control. 6 Now this I say as a concession, not as a command. 7 To be sure, I wish all men were as I am; but each man has his own gift [chaisma] from God, one this, another that.

Introduction (Loader 2012:169-182). According to Michael Harper: “Ultimately Christian understandings of porneia develop out of Paul’s letters, especially 1 Corinthians 5–7” (2012:376-77) and “1 Corinthians 6:12-20 must be the crux of any interpretation of Pauline porneia” (378). However, in 1 Cor 6:12-20 Paul has not composed a rationalistic philosophical ethical exposition but a letter employing emotional rhetoric that seeks to persuade male readers not to seek out pagan (idolatrous) female prostitutes. As in all his letters, the Apostle addresses a specific historical situation (heterosexual prostitution with idolatrous pagan females; 10:14) and employs generalizations, even hyperbole, that should not be misinterpreted as philosophical or scientific absolutes without exceptions. What is the theme and most appropriate title for 1 Cor 6:12-20? Cf. NJB and NIV (“Sexual Immorality”); NRSV (“Glorify God in Body and Spirit”).

Note. Two roots dominate 6:12-20:

1. Body (gr. soma): 8 times (6:13a, 13b, 15, 16, 18a, 18b, 19, 20); not the neo/platonic prison of the soul; Paul uses soma to denote the whole person, the “interpersonal, social, public mode of being a Christian.... The Christian
lifestyle is *more than a private ‘inner’ state*; it manifests itself in ‘bodily’ action and behavior in the public domain” (Thiselton 2006:94); related words, stomach, 6:13, 2 times; members, 6:15, 3 times; flesh, 6:16.

2. **Prostitution:** (1) gr. pórneia: 3 times (6:13, 18a, 18b); (2) gr. pórne, 2 times, “[idolatrous, female] prostitute /harlot” (6:15, 16); (3) gr. pornéo: 1 time, “have relations with a prostitute” (6:18); the same root a total of 5 times.


6:13 Does 6:13 cite another of their maxims/slogans? Cf. 8:8. How did the Corinthian believers understand the meaning of sexual relations? Is a similar materialist interpretation common among us today? With what arguments does Paul respond to the reductionist maxims/slogans? See 6:13, 14, 15-16, 17, 18, 19, 20. Does Paul agree with the maxim/slogan in 6:13? **Note.** Fee (1987:255) agrees that sex and food have something in common, but says Paul emphasizes the differences: food is a thing, but sexual relations are between persons created in God’s image with spiritual implications and consequences. See NJB note 6:14 h.


6:16 How does Paul understand “one flesh” in Gen. 2:24, which he cites? See Appendix 3 below.

6:18 See 2 Tim 2:22; Gen 39:12; cf. 1 Cor 10:14, “Flee idolatry.” How should we interpret Paul’s affirmation that “Whatever [other] sin that a man may commit is outside the body; but he who commits [heterosexual] porneia-prostitution sins against his own body” (6:18). The Word “other” of the NIV is not in the original text, but in the Greek sometimes is only implicit (Mat 12:31; cf. NRSV). What would Paul say, then, of the person who is drunk/alcoholic (6:10; 5:11); see gluttony, drugs, cigarettes, suicide, etc.; Phlp. 3:19.

6:19 Who represents the image of the Temple here—the individual? Or the Christian community? (as in 3:16; 12:12-30; 2 Cor. 6:16; with Christ the “head” in Col 1:18; 2:19 or the corner stone in Eph. 2:20-22).

6:20 What are the characteristics of the slave market reflected here? Does the change in ownership result in freedom? See 7:22; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Rev. 5:9; 14:3. “Glorify God…” (see Mat 5:14-16; Rom 1:21, 23; 15:6, 9; 2 Cor 9:13; Gal 1:24). Does praise complete the enjoyment? (WCF and Shorter Catechsim Q.1).

**Limited Horizons?**

1. Paul’s warning to Corinthian males/husbands tempted to visit idolatrous female prostitutes gives the impression of despising prostitutes as persons (6:15-16). Is Paul’s attitude toward prostitutes coherent with the Hebrew Bible (Tamar, Gen. 38; Rahab, Jos. 2 with James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31; Hos 1–3) and Jesus’ example and teaching? See Rahab in his genealogy in Mt 1:5; cf. Mt 21:31-32.

2. Is 6:18 simply hyperbole? Does it fail to take into account other sins committed against our bodies? Bruce N. Fisk affirms that 1 Cor 6:18 “declares sexual sin to be profoundly (and even uniquely) self-destructive….Sexual sin, as a bodily act….forges a bodily union…. Other sins may be physically destructive (e.g. suicide, gluttony), corporately destructive (e.g. gossip, divisiveness), or spiritually defiling (e.g. idolatry) but for Paul, because sexual sin is uniquely body-joining, it is uniquely body-defiling” (1996:557-58; cited, Gagnon 2001:296).

3. Could the logic of 6:16-17 also be used to eliminate marriage and all sexual relations?

4. If all sex must be limited to permanent, exclusive marriage, how should we evaluate masturbation, the levirate practices, concubines, polygamy, etc.? How should contemporary medical and scientific perspectives (psychology, sociology, economics) contribute to our sexual ethics?

5. How does ἠγαπη-love is fundamental for all of life and especially for Christian sexual praxis (1 Cor. 13), then why does Paul fail to refer to love in 1 Cor. 5–7? See 7:3-5 and the couple’s eager desire to please one another (7:33-35); cf. Eph. 5:25-35. In 1 Cor 5–7 does Paul substitute “holiness” (purity) for love as the basis of marriage and sexual praxis (see 6:19)? How would you relate these two norms for human sexuality?
Permanent values for the church in Paul’s teaching:

1. Paul’s critique of the reductionist “sex = food” analogy (cf. likenesses + differences).
2. The eternal significance of our bodies and their praxis in the light of (a) the resurrection (14); (b) our redemption (19-20); (c) our creation in God’s image (13b + the Hebrew Bible, Gen 1–2; Psalm 104).
3. Prostitution as an institution appears generally incompatible with God’s Kingdom, which faults it as: (a) a system of exploitation, violence and domination of prostitutes; but cf. 6:18; (b) tending to promote impersonal sexual relations, lacking love (6:12; 7:4), treating other persons as things (like food).
4. Such sexual acts may establish relations between persons and idolatrous spiritual “powers” that transcend the purely physical (6:16; Gen 2:24; Fee 1987:253; Martin 1995:176-77; Garland 2003:233).
5. The development of a sexual praxis in a positive context of love (1 Cor 13) and the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15); the rejection of idolatry (1 Cor.8-10) as the ideology of oppressors (especially empires).
6. The (imperfect) analogy between God or Christ (Eph 5) in relation to the believer (or the church) and the ethical ideal of an exclusive, permanent sexual relation (6:13, 15-17; 7:1-4). Such an ideal commonly is promoted as a norm, but should we accept this common tradition and interpret it an “absolute law”?
7. The Christian’s body belongs to our resurrected Lord (13c, 15a, 17) and should glorify God (20).

Conclusions Fee (1987:266) proposes two basic applications:

1. Against contemporary sexual failures, “Sexual immorality is still sin, even though it has been justified under every conceivable rationalization…. Our bodies belong to God through the redemption of the cross; and they are destined for resurrection.”
2. Greek dualism “would negate the body in favor of the soul…. In the Christian view there is no dichotomy between body and spirit that either indulges the body because it is irrelevant or punishes it so as to purify the spirit.” Fee concludes that such a dichotomy is reflected in the tendency of those who would “save souls” while ignoring people’s material needs. See 1 John 3:16-18; James 2:14-17.

Which elements in Paul’s argument are of greatest permanent value for Christian theology and contemporary sexual ethics? Does the text contain other elements of limited historical (contextual) value but which we cannot accept literally in their original form as universally valid today? How would a poor secular prostitute (not idolatrous) react to Paul’s teaching in 6:12-20 today? Could this text be of help in sharing Jesus’ Good News with prostitutes? Or would it only be helpful for a church that included no prostitutes? Which elements in Paul’s address to [heterosexual] Christian males seeking idolatrous, pagan harlots might be applicable to same-sex (non-hierarchical) exchanges of sex for pay or other material reward (a place to live, as in marriage)?


Introduction (1-36) cites Renate Kirchhoff (1994): “She concludes that the terms [porne, porneia] have different connotations in Jewish/Christian texts than they do in so-called pagan texts. In the first place, non-Jewish/non-Christian Greek texts rarely use the terms porne and porneia. Secondly, when these texts do make use of these terms, they possess a narrower meaning than that found in Jewish and Christian literature: for the Greeks a porne was a prostitute, a pornos was a man who prostituted himself, and porneia was sexual intercourse between a man and a porne or pornos. While some Jewish or Christian texts might restrict themselves to these narrow meanings, for the most part they use the term porneia/zonoth to denote various kinds of forbidden sexual activity; it can sometimes also stand for the specific sexual crime of [adultery]. According to Kirchhoff, Paul is standing firmly within the Jewish tradition when he uses porn- words in 1 Cor 6:12-20…. Porneia is any…forbidden [heterosexual] activity” (19). Von Thaden also cites Kathy Gaca’s study Fornication, but does not refer to her limitation of porneia to heterosexual relations in a context of idolatrous religion and worship (276-77; see www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar/ingles/ingles.html, “Reviews”, Gaca Excursus). Questioning Paul’s purported “slogans”, we need to take into account “the paradoxes that are endemic to Paul’s reasoning” (196; see 198, 202).
1 A Cognitive Turn: Conceptual Blending within a Socio-Rhetorical Framework (37-75). “In 6:12-20 [Paul] relies mainly on rhetography which evokes images to show the Corinthians why they ought to avoid porneia, while in 7:1-7 he relies more on rhetology, which evokes logical reasoning to explain to the Corinthians the various ways [how] they can achieve this goal” (35; see also 186). On Method (38, 53, 68); “rhetorolect” = rhetorical dialect (69; 70-71); definitions of rhetography and rhetology (187).

2 Wisdom (76-108). “Wisdom is a slippery category to engage” (76; like “un/natural”!; see 84-85).

3 Jewish Resource Zones (109-158) cites Margaret Mitchell (1991) who “maintains that most analyses…‘which have depended with too much certainty on presumed historical factors have tended to downplay Paul’s own creative role in fashioning his letter of response’” (16; → Romans 1!).

4 Setting the Wisdom Context: 1 Cor 1-4 (159-185). “The paradox of God’s wisdom demonstrated through the crucifixion of God’s Christ reveals, according to Paul, the very structure of the universe as God had planned it before creation” (35). “God’s true wisdom…comes through the paradox of God’s crucified Christ. The cross…lays bare the true structure of the universe as God had intended it in the non-temporal realm of eternity before creation (2:7)” (160).… “The perceptible world cannot, according to Paul, teach the Corinthians the principles of God’s eternal wisdom since this wisdom is hidden” (177). Cf. Rom 1:18-27 and Robert Gagnon!; on cultic impurity in Rom 1:24 (183, 189).

5 The Wisdom of Fleeing Porneia: Introducing 1 Corinthians 6:12–7:7 (195-205). This pericope should be extended to include 7:1-7; see similarly Rom 1:18-32 + 2:1-16 (191-95). On soma (body), 202-05.

6 Why Porneia Should be Avoided: The Rhetography of 1 Cor 6:12-20 (206-262, see 248, 254).

   On 6:12, see Loader 2012:166-82, esp. 168-174.

   On 6:13-14 (225-33). “Destruction of the Belly, Resurrection of the Body…: Wisdom-Apocalyptic Blended Rhetorolect….The saying about meats and belly continues a discussion of self-mastery” (225; see 6:12). “Although 6:13-14 have the form of wise sayings, the comments on each saying introduce images of destruction (6:13b) and resurrection (6:14)” (227). “The de of 6:13c….marks ‘something new or different, but not opposed to what precedes… two sides of the same apocalyptic coin’” (228).

   On 6:15-17 (233-34). “Member of Christ, Member of a Whore; Union with a Whore, Union with Christ….Wisdom-Priestly-Apocalyptic Blended Rhetorolect…. In…(6:15), Paul discusses the bodies of believers not as analogous to the body of Christ, but rather as members of the body of Christ” (234).

   On 6:15 (234-240). “Believers’ Bodies as ‘Members’….The logic of Paul’s argument in the first rhetorical question of 6:15 stresses that the soma of the believer is not for sexual immorality because it, not one’s soul or spirit, is a member of Christ. Thus Paul compresses the relation of Analogy between the believer’s body and Christ (vv. 13-14) into a Part-Whole relation” (234-35).

   On 6:16-17, “clinging” that leads to union” (240-52). “Not only does a sex act between a believer and a sexually marginal woman join a member of Christ to such a low status and religiously impure figure, but the one who engages in this sex act himself becomes identified with the whore according to Paul’s conceptual blend in 6:16, becoming, in effect, a whore himself…. Paul’s rhetography argues that the man who has sex with a whore is a whore” (248-49).
On 6:18-20, “Temples, Slaves, and Glorifying God: Wisdom-Priestly Blended Rhetorolect” (252). According to Paul, *porneia* has particular significance because it is a special kind of sin that does something to destroy the integrity of the sanctified body” (252). “Fleeing *Porneia*,” 6:18 (253-54). Bruce Fisk’s contention that “for Paul, because sexual sin is uniquely body-joining, it is uniquely body-defiling’ makes conceptual sense…. In 6:18 Paul urges the Corinthians to flee *porneia* because it destroys the sanctified Christian body which Paul will describe as a temple (6:19)” (254-55).

On 6:19-20, “Temples and Slaves” (255-60): “In the fourth and final rhetorical question of the pericope, Paul unites the concern about the believer’s body and the spirit…. Whatever the Corinthians do with their bodies reflects upon their estimation of the holy spirit whose temple their bodies are…. The conceptualization of the Corinthians as both temples and slaves works because of the emergent structure of the blend…. Being temples of God’s holy spirit means that the Corinthians are no longer masters of their own bodies…. Rather than being mastered by their bellies and desires, the Christian body is to be a sacred space that is the locus, not for sexual immorality, but for praising God on account of what God has done for the Corinthians” (255-60).


(1) (Heterosexual) Males abstain from sexual relations with women (7:1, 6-7).
(2) (Heterosexual) Marriage: monogamy with sex when either desires (7:3-4).
(3) (Heterosexual) Marriage with brief, temporary, consensual abstinences for prayer (7:5).

**Note:** Paul believes abstinence from heterosexual relations is the best option (7:6-7), but recognizes the diversity of gifts and thus allows for two kinds of marriage alternatives; cf. alternative arrangements for gay couples today (“open/closed” etc., avoiding a single universal “ethic” for all; see Tina Tessina, *Gay Relationships* [New York: Penguin Putnam, 1989], 111-132).

**Conclusion** (293-301). **Summary:** Paul’s didactic discourse pushes toward the position that “sexual immorality is the worst of all possible sins one could commit with one’s body. To achieve this rhetorical goal Paul’s discourse draws on the conceptual resources from apocalyptic and priestly rhetorolects. These rhetorolects are invited into the host environment of wisdom to create a more powerful argument than could be achieved by the resources of any one rhetorolect on its own” (261).

**Bibliography** (see review of Loader 2010).
“We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths—that all of us are created equal—is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall…. It is now our generation’s task to carry on what those pioneers began…. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law—for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well.”

President Barack Obama’s inaugural address, Jan 21, 2012

In the historic ceremony during which he declared these words, Barack Obama also took his inaugural oath with his hand placed on two Bibles, using treasured personal copies of Abraham Lincoln and of Martin Luther King—despite the fact that so many who honor the work of Lincoln to end slavery and King to end discrimination against African Americans continue to cite texts from the Bible to justify and rationalize their opposition to equality for sexual minorities. Was Obama being self-contradictory to thus exalt the authority of the Bible while at the same time advocating same-sex marriage? Or are his opponents misusing the Bible when they use it to promote heterosexism and homophobia? How about adding Troy Perry’s Bible next time?

Did you ever notice that the seven negative “texts of terror” or “clobber texts” commonly used against sexual minorities (“homosexuals”) refer only to abusive sexual acts perpetrated by idolatrous males? Although through most of church history, the judgment of Sodomy (Genesis 19) was used against “sodomites,” biblical scholars for decades have recognized that this was a gross misuse of the text, which describes an attempted gang rape of two visiting angels—and no one would use the similar reference to the gang rape of a woman in Judges 19 as a basis for condemning “heterosexuality”! Similarly, the reference to the “strange flesh” (of angels) in Jude 7 refers to the attempted gang rape in Genesis 19. The reference to arsenokoitai (male-beds) in 1 Tim 1:10 occurs in a context of slave trade involving sexual abuse of slaves. And when the same Greek economic term is used in 1 Cor 6:9, the vice list is headed up with a reference to the “oppressors/unjust” (adikoi) who cannot inherit God’s kingdom (see also 6:1, 7-8) and includes “idolaters” (6:9). The male anal same-sex acts prohibited in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are described as commonly committed by non-Jewish idolaters (Lev 18:1-3, 24-30) who also practiced child sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:1-5). Similarly, the negative references to anal sex acts in Romans 1:27 (1:26 heterosexual) occur in a context that proclaims God’s wrath against “all impiety/idolatry and oppression/injustice” (1:18; for idolatry, see 1:19-23, 25; for oppression/injustice, 1:29).

Such negative texts condemning idolatrous sexual abuse, however, must be balanced against other texts on sexual minorities that are quite positive. The condemnation of idolaters who castrate themselves (Deut 23:1) provides no basis for condemning Israelites who suffered castration as prisoners of war (Isa 56:3-5; see also Jesus’ reference to three types of eunuchs in Mat 19:12). The domestic codes that encouraged slaves to be obedient to their masters (Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:21-6:9; Tit 2:1-10; 1 Tim 6:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-3:7) must be interpreted in the light of other texts, beginning with the book of Exodus (1–15), that encourage liberation of slaves (1 Cor 7:21; Phil: 2011:4:10). The many texts that reflect patriarchal customs of women submissive to their husbands must be balanced by other texts referring to women leaders (Deborah; Jael; the “apostle” Junia in Rom 16:7). The stories of Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1–4), David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18–2 Sam 1), and Jesus and his beloved disciple (John 13–21) provide eloquent examples of loving same-sex relations that are neither idolatrous nor abusive. Sadly, in recent decades, many acknowledge the scientific limitations of the Bible manifest in the debates over Galileo and Darwin, the cultural limitations of the Bible in the controversies involving government by monarchies vs. democracies, and the great diversity in biblical teaching regarding slavery, women and divorce—yet they continue to espouse misinterpretations that promote harm, discrimination and violence against sexual minorities.

Such simple observations, demonstrating that no “clobber text” refers to or condemns consensual, committed, loving same-sex relations, often are neglected or even belittled by academic writers. They, however, have entire semesters to introduce students to the complexities of biblical hermeneutics, while pastoral efforts often involve a brief exchange with a visitor limited to a few minutes. For a full comprehension of biblical teaching on sexuality, obviously both exegesis and hermeneutics are essential, but we do well not to neglect the contribution to interpretation that comes from exegesis, since outside of controlled academic contexts, votes may be won or lost, suicides avoided and lives saved simply by taking advantage of all that exegesis offers.