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Book Notes
The Bible and Homosexuality

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Preamble
The role of the Bible in addressing the modern question of the place of the homosexual in the church is complex. The nature of a biblical perspective will invariably be affected by the questions posed of the Bible, by the particular hermeneutic employed, and by the unavoidable perspective which every student (or scholar) brings to his or her reading of the Bible. In writing this essay, I hope to ask some of the right questions and to be fair to the views of others concerning this important issue which is pressing hard on the church and on the consciences of Christian people in various parts of the world.

Clarifications
First, the term ‘homosexuality’ (and also the term ‘homosexual’) will be avoided in the biblical portion of this essay in preference for a more awkward cluster of words like ‘homosexual relations’. This odd change in terminology is necessary because, as P.D.M. Turner notes, the term ‘homosexuality’ does not match well with the way in which the Bible itself addresses the issue.1 Turner’s point is that ‘homosexuality’ can refer to a condition or inclination apart from the acting-out of sexual relations, whereas the Bible does not recognize this distinction but normally speaks rather in terms of actual same-sex sexual relations.2

Second, in view of the danger to which the church has often succumbed, that of showing insensitivity towards chaste persons of homosexual orientation,3 it is important to clarify that the issue for the Christian is not whether persons with homosexual orientation should be welcomed into the fellowship of the church – let us never forget that Christ died for all – but whether sexual relations between homosexuals are ever appropriate and, if so, on what terms. Because conduct and not orientation is the real issue, the purpose of this essay is to ask whether the Bible considers homosexual relations to be sinful. If the answer suggested by biblical reflection is ‘yes’, even when the case of covenanted Christians of homosexual orientation is considered, then the homosexual person accepted by God in Christ should more engage in this activity than any other faithful Christian could in other forms of sin. The perspective of the Bible – indisputably authoritative in matters of Christian faith and practice – is thus crucial; it plays a primary role in determining the context and terms within which Christ is calling the church to minister faithfully to persons of homosexual orientation.

Because the Bible nowhere directly answers the question concerning the modern phenomenon of a person with homosexual orientation seeking to be involved in a covenanted relationship, we must first ask what the Bible says in response to questions raised about homosexual relations in ancient times, and then we must ask how what the Bible says may be applied to the modern situation. We begin, however, with a brief consideration of the background against which these questions must be raised, the general tenor of Scripture as a whole.

The general tenor of Scripture
The issue of homosexual relations and the Bible cannot simply be addressed with reference to the half-dozen or so passages that have at least traditionally been understood as condemning homosexual intercourse; otherwise, we might be guilty of ‘proof texting’. Rather, we must ask: In which direction on the whole do the biblical winds blow with respect to appropriate sexual expression between persons? By virtually any notion of the ‘literal sense’ of the Bible, these winds blow in the direction of heterosexual marriage, with affirmation being given to celibacy alone as an alternative. This is so from Genesis to Song of Songs to Revelation, through well over a millennium of Scripture writing and in both the OT and the NT. The rapidly evolving dominance of heterosexual relations within the context of a monogamous nuclear family is unmistakable; quite simply, heterosexual relations (or, in their place, celibacy) are the only options which appear to receive approval in the Bible. Thus, unlike the ministry of women or the notion of freedom from slavery, no biblical winds blow in the direction of same-sex relations that similarly invite re-evaluation of passages traditionally considered a problem for such a view. (It is nonetheless important to re-examine the traditional passages to see if they are indeed condemnatory of homosexual relations as has traditionally been thought, a point to which we shall return.)

The account of creation is a prime example of the predominant biblical affirmation of heterosexual marriage. In Genesis 1:27-28, humanity in the form of both male and female is created in the ‘image of God’. In Genesis 2 the Lord creates woman, God's specially selected emotional and physical counterpart to the man, and the two – the ‘is’ and the ‘thero’ – become ‘one flesh’. Within the canonical context of the preceding chapter, this ‘wedding’ is not just a union, but a reunion of humanity created in the image of God. Just as Genesis 1 ends with a declaration that the order of creation involving the creation of man and woman is ‘very good’, Genesis 2 ends with the climactic statement that the woman is the reason why a man leaves his own father and mother, to become ‘one flesh’ with his wife (Gn. 2:24).4 If the powerful affirmation of heterosexual relations as the carefully planned order of creation in these two introductory chapters of the Bible is not striking to the modern Christian reader, it certainly was to the writer(s) of the Holiness Code and to St Paul (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27); indeed, the doctrine of creation articulated in these early chapters of Genesis seems to be at the heart of the Bible's uniformly negative attitude towards same-sex sexual relations.

Some scholars have suggested that a few passages in Scripture constitute an important exception to the idea that heterosexual relations alone are appropriate in the Bible. For example, Tom Horner maintains that David and Jonathan and Naomi and Ruth respectively had possible homosexual relations, and he even goes so far as to suggest that Jesus and Paul had homosexual traits.5 Leaving aside the Christological issue that the suggested case of Christ would present, V.P. Furnish is almost certainly correct that our sources simply do not provide the data to support such ideas.6 Similarly, the relative indifference with which the Bible mentions homosexual relationships, and the possible silence of Jesus on the issue,7 do not suggest that these relationships were relatively unimportant to biblical writers or to Jesus, as is sometimes maintained.8 Rather, the phenomenon of relative silence probably reflects the fact that homosexual relations were not a major issue in the early church, most likely because it shared the perspective of Hellenistic Judaism that sexual relations of this kind were sinful. In sum, one searches the Bible in vain for the suggestion that homosexual relations were a viable option for the faithful.

With this general perspective in mind, we now turn to consider the passages which specifically make reference or allusion to homosexual sex. Our approach will be to survey a range of exegetical options (both traditional and revisionist), and to assess the feasibility of the various options offered.
Passages traditionally considered to condemn homosexual relationships

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 19, Judges 19
These well-known stories recount incidents in which the male citizenry of a town (Sodom and Gibeah respectively) proposes to have intercourse with a male visitor (or, in Gv. 19, visitors).

D.S. Bailey’s attempt to interpret the verb ‘know’ in Genesis 19:5 as meaning something other than sexual knowledge is untenable in light of verse 7, in which Lot’s daughters are offered as an alternative to the men.16 Homosexual relations are clearly in view here and they are almost certainly construed negatively. The type of homosexual union negatively construed, however, is far from what is typical today (it is homosexual gang rape, which is no less abhorrent to most modern-day homosexuals than to heterosexuals), and the broader context which concerns a night of Easters hospitality is at least partly involved in the negative construal.

A few considerations from the broader context are also relevant. Because Genesis 19 has parallels with Genesis 6:1-4, which concerns ‘unnatural’ relations between angels and humans, it is probably important for the story that the sexual sins of Sodom also be understood as unnatural; they are, in fact, doubly so, since the sexual relations proposed are with visitors who are both men and angels. Moreover, as Gordon Wenham notes, just as the story of unnatural relations between angels and humans in Genesis 6 is followed by a judgment involving destruction (the flood), so too the unnatural relations proposed in Genesis 19 are followed by a parallel judgment involving destruction (the downpouring of fire and brimstone). In sum, although set within a particularly abhorrent context, the homosexual nature of the relations proposed forms part of the basis upon which the judgment is made that the people of Sodom were ‘wicked, great sinners before the Lord’ (Gn. 13:13), and thus deserving of destruction.

As an important corrective to those who might judge the sin of Sodom to be homosexual relations alone, Bailey and others rightly point out that the Bible as a whole interprets the sin of Sodom very broadly to include things other than homosexual intercourse, such as pride and insensitivity to the poor (Exk. 16:49-50; cf. Is. 3:9). This does not mean, however, that the sexual dimension (i.e., involving unnatural relations) is ignored in the biblical witness; important here is Jude 7, which refers to Sodom’s indulgence in ‘unnatural lusts,’ and 2 Peter 2:6 which mentions Lot’s oppression by the ‘sensual conduct of homosexual men.’ Of course, only at a later period does Sodom become a byword specifically for homosexual (or bestial) relations.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13
As Wenham notes, because Leviticus 18:22 uses the very general term zakhûr, ‘male,’ the passage clearly prohibits every kind of male–male intercourse (were the word na’ar, ‘youth,’ used instead, presumably only pederasty would be condemned). These homosexual relations are further described by the very strong word lôkhûth, ‘abomination’. In Leviticus 20:13 the penalty for offenders is death, putting the offence on a par with adultery (20:10) or the worst cases of incest (20:11, 12). Moreover, three factors make it clear that the sexual relationship here condemned involved mutual consent between two males: (1) both parties are punished; (2) the verb used is simply ‘lie’ (as opposed to, say, ‘seize and lie’ which would imply rape); and (3) the further comment is made, ‘their blood be upon their own heads’ (20:11), such suffering as the action and its consequences.” Thus, unlike Egypt where only pederasty was condemned or Mesopotamia where apparently only forcible homosexual relations were forbidden, OT law appears to forbid all forms of homosexual relations. Wenham’s explanation is probably correct that ‘it therefore seems most likely that Israel’s repudiation of homosexual intercourse arises out of its doctrine of revelation.”

Some scholars cast these passages from Leviticus in a very different light, however. For example, it is sometimes maintained that the context for the homosexuality referred to in Leviticus is cultic prostitution within a pagan Canaanite shrine and that the biblical writer is thus concerned more with idolatry than with homosexuality. In support of this view it is sometimes claimed that the term lôkhûth, ‘abomination’, is a highly specific word that points toward a religious concern for cultic purity rather than a condemnation of intersect is. But when lôkhûth is in view, so the argument goes, is cultic prostitution in which the participants attempt to procure fertility and fecundity by sympathetic magic through ritual sex acts, as is thought to have taken place in Canaanite culture. In short, the problem is not homosexual relations but their pagan, often idolatrous context(s). Which of these perspectives is correct?

The weight of evidence at present seems clearly to favour the former construal. Recent OT scholarship questions seriously the extent to which the traditional model for understanding cultic prostitution is evidence in either Canaan or Israel. Moreover, it is clear from the use of the term ‘abomination’ elsewhere in the Bible and in other literature that an abomination could refer generally to various things abhorrent to God and that it could even refer to practices of the Gentiles, in which case the word cannot be limited to a specific concern within the Greco-Roman context for purity in relation to other nations. Thus, given the uncertainties concerning this narrower understanding of the context and the clear generality of the condemnation of men lying with men, the view of Wenham that all forms of homosexual relations are condemned seems preferable.

A problem still possibly remains with these passages, namely their applicability to a setting in the NT and beyond to our own day. For example, on what grounds should the law concerning homosexuality be upheld and the law concerning intercourse with a woman during menstruation, mentioned in the same context, be dismissed? Though alien to the OT itself and difficult to sustain, the theological distinction between moral laws which are binding and ceremonial, ritual, and civil laws which are not, has long been upheld in Christian tradition (note for example Article 7 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion). The problem in the present case is nonetheless mitigated significantly by the fact that the OT attitude to homosexuality is picked up and carried into the NT, which clearly has binding authority for Christians. Certainly, early Christian writers considered the levitical laws concerning homosexual intercourse to be relevant to the issue of sexual behaviour in their own day, a point denied by Boswell but convincingly reaffirmed by Wright.

Summary
To summarize, the attitude towards male homosexual relations in the OT is uniformly negative. Contrary to some current thinking, the relevant passages in Leviticus do not appear to consider homosexual relations for their associations with prostitution within the context of an idolatrous heathen cult. Thus, unlike other societies in the Ancient Near East, this negative construal within Hebrew society seems to apply to all forms of homosexual intercourse. Homosexual sex between men was termed an ‘abomination’ (something abhorrent to God), for which the prescribed legal penalty was so severe as to function as a strong deterrent. The NT, which explicitly condemns of homosexual unions is almost certainly to be found in the Hebrew understanding of creation, according to which the divinely ordained context for human sexuality takes place between a man and his wife. Together, the male and the female reflect the image of God, and their union, alone deemed natural in the created order, ensures procreation and the formation of a nuclear family.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 1:26-27
Romans 1:26-27 is clearly the most important passage on homosexual intercourse in the NT. The broad context is summarized succinctly by Robin Scroggs: ‘Since the entire world, both Jew and Gentile, is guilty of sin, grace (salvation) is entirely God’s gift and extends equally to Jew and Gentile.’

The more immediate context is Paul’s story of how the world came to be guilty of sin; it is Paul’s ‘story of the universal fall.” Paul argues that humanity committed the primal sin of rebellion against God by failing to acknowledge God as creator
and instead turned to idolatry, the worship of created things. As a consequence or punishment for the sin of abandoning the worship of God in favour of the worship of things in nature, 'God handed them [humanity] over to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves'... (Rom. 1:24-25).

How do the depravities in verses 24–31, including specific mention of homosexual relations in verses 26–27, contribute to Paul's argument? According to the exhaustive treatment of Hays, the depravities function in two ways: (a) 'First of all, when the text is read with literal precision, these various forms of "base mind" and "improper conduct" are seen to be manifestations (not provocations) of the wrath of God, punishments inflicted upon rebellious humanity... rather like the plagues visited upon the Egyptians in Exodus'; and (b) 'At the same time, the listing of depravities serves as a warrant for Paul's evaluation of humanity as deeply implicated in "ungodliness and wickedness" (1:18b). The depravities point to the conclusion that 'the refusal to acknowledge God as creator ends in blind distortion of the creation'.'

It is probably safe to say that no NT scholar denies that the passage presents homosexual relations as an obvious sinful distortion of God's original intention for creation. Moreover, a majority of these scholars maintain that the reference to homosexual relations in Romans 1:26–27 is not to homosexual acts, but to other forms of sexual acting (including lesbian) sex in general; as even Boswell admits at one point, 'it is clear that the sexual behavior itself is objectionable to Paul, not merely its [cultural] associations'. However, as Hays has conclusively demonstrated in his lengthy rebuttal of the late Yale historian, Boswell is far from correct in going on to conclude, (a) that Paul's words are not applicable to persons of homosexual orientation (Boswell, McNell, and others maintain that Paul refers to heterosexual persons unnaturally 'exchanging' heterosexual- and homosexual unions, and (b) that 'contrary to nature' means not immoral but merely 'unexpected, unusual, or different from what would occur in the normal order of things'. Contrary to Boswell, the 'exchange', for Paul, is between the natural course of things such as worshiping idols, and heterosexual union instead of homosexual union, and para physin means not simply 'unusual', but 'contrary to nature'. Hays puts Paul's concept bluntly: 'those who indulge in sexual practices para physin are defying the creator and demonstrating their own alienation from him.'

Nevertheless, in much contemporary reflection upon Romans 1, scholars differ about the abiding hermeneutical significance of Paul's argument that homosexual acts are 'contrary to nature'. For example, because Paul's argument is not original, but in fact closely paralleled and shaped by the philosophers and in literary texts, Furnish sees the text as implying that Paul's assumption that homosexual relations are 'contrary to nature' is not of abiding significance but reflects simply the common (Stoic) wisdom of the day which is subject to reinterpretation in our own day. However, although Furnish is right that Paul's teaching here has clear parallels, Furnish does not emphasize sufficiently well an important aspect of the discussion, namely that Hellenistic Jewish writers such as Philo and Josepbus— and, significantly, Paul—recognized a parallel between the secular Hellenistic notion that what was 'unnatural' was wrong and the OT teaching of the law of Moses in which all forms of intercourse between males were 'unnatural' because they were contrary to the order of the world as designed by God. However, the clearest parallel is the doctrine of Leviticus 18:22. Thus, even if some need to be made to the OT teaching of the law of Moses in which all forms of intercourse between males were 'unnatural' because they were contrary to the order of the world as designed by God. In the absence of explicit earlier attestation, a deliberate, conscious back-reference by the Apostle is as certain as philology can make it. (He may or may not have known that he was dropping into 'translationese'.) Fascinatingly, by avoiding the available παραφυσικά, [Paul] sees to it that 'loving, consensual, adult relations' are fully covered.

Significantly, then, arsenokoitai appears to be a Pauline invention, a direct allusion in the NT to the 'all-inclusive' condemnation of homosexual relations found in the laws of Leviticus.

As with the passages concerning homosexual relations in Leviticus, it has been argued that Paul's condemnation of homosexual relations both here and in 1 Timothy 1:10 refers only to pagan ritual practice. In response to this, it must be noted that there is nothing in the context that requires (or even strongly suggests) so specific an application. Certainly the background in the Greek text of Leviticus for arsenokoitai offers no support for this. Moreover, based on his judgment that parrónoi must mean 'at least male prostitutes' in 1 Timothy 1:10 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, Turner states:

The clinching refutation of the argument that Paul's condemnation of both kinds of male homosexual acts[7] refers only to heathen ritual practice is that, in both NT passages, precisely the 'prostitute-inclusive' word[9] is listed separately, as we have seen. As for the idea that the Fathers condemned only the identical heathen cult-prostitution, as there were no other people who performed such acts, there is no evidence for it. Even if there was evidence, the Greek Fathers would still have called the activity itself sinful.
The broader context of 1 Corinthians 6:9 offers two important additional points of relevance to the issue of homosexual relations. First, through Christ's justification and vindication of the lifestyles of unbelievers cited earlier in the passage, there must no longer characterize the Christian (v. 11). Second, Paul goes on to argue that a Christian's body, now part of Christ's own body and a temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit, should not be united with a prostitute, since intercourse involves becoming 'one flesh' with the other person. My point is that there is an operating principle here that is implicit to heterosexual relations of inappropriating heterosexual relations: since part of the body of Christ himself is united with another in a Christian's sexual union, that union must be holy, which homosexual intercourse evidently is not.

To summarize the discussion of 1 Corinthians 6:9: mikalokos, 'catamite', refers to the man who plays the passive (female) role in homosexual intercourse, and arsenokoitēs, 'sodomite', which invokes the language of the laws against homosexual relations in the lex of Leviticus, refers to the one who resides with another man. By referring to the passive role as well as to the more general arsenokoitēs, by referring earlier to pornoi which likely already covered the case of male prostitution, and by not using more confining terms such as the term for pederasty (puzzleinêstai), Paul seems to be offering a comprehensive (i.e., non-context-specific) condemnation of homosexual intercourse. Moreover, in keeping with Paul's claim that the body of Christ is formed of all sorts of relations, Paul describes homosexual relations as being based on cultic or ritual connections with these relations. The broader context helps to make it clear that relations of this kind are incompatible with membership in the body of Christ.

1 Timothy 1:10
In 1 Timothy 1:10, arsenokoitēs appears again, this time in a list that describes the kind of people for whom the law is useful in offering correction. The logic is that the law addresses issues of relevance primarily for the sinner, an example being the murderer who is thus told, 'thou shalt not commit murder', etc.

Scrogggs suggests that groups of words in this list of vices belong together and that the words pornoi, arsenokoitēs and andrapudisētai seem to be a grouping. When seen in relation to each other, the best translation, according to Scrogggs, is 'male prostitutes, males who lie [with them], and slave dealers [who procure them].' On this view, then, we have the same situation here as in 1 Corinthians 6:9 where another word or series of words affects the meaning of the more general term arsenokoitēs such that it becomes linked specifically with homosexual prostitution.

To evaluate: at least some of the words that describe similar sorts of sins are indeed grouped together in this list, but on what basis? Scrogggs argues that the law of verse 8 is possibly civil and that the words in verses 9-10 are grouped together according to the categories of crimes against civil government (lawless, rebellious); then against religious law (impious, 'sinner', unholy, profane); then against various forms of murder (patricide, matricide, 'murder'), etc. But commentators more often argue that the law in verse 8 is the law of Moses, and that at least the words in the latter part of the list – including those relevant to our discussion – are grouped in relation to the Ten Commandments. On this understanding, the list beginning with the principle that 'murder' applies to the sixth commandment; 'fornicators' and 'sodomites' refers to the seventh commandment concerning adultery; 'kidnappers' refers to the eighth commandment concerning stealing, and 'liars' and 'perjurers' refers to the ninth commandment concerning bearing false witness.

What are the implications of this for the meaning of arséjokotai in 1 Timothy 1:10? Given the meaning of the word as applies to homosexual relations in general (and not male prostitution in particular, as argued earlier), its occurrence together with the general term pornoi (which quite possibly already covers the case of male prostitution), and its function together with pornoi as illustrative of breaches of the seventh commandment, arsenokoitēs appears again not to be linked in its context to homosexual prostitution or pederasty, but to homosexual relations in general. Concerning the second passage, the view of Scrogggs that the writer likely refers to something like a group of co-conspiroirers in a same-sex ring is clearly less likely than the view that the words reflect their more natural meanings of 'fornicators', 'men who lie with men', and 'slave dealers' respectively.

The applicability of the biblical witness
Up to this point, we have been concerned with what the Bible states concerning homosexual relations. It remains to be asked: how does what the Bible says apply in our own day? As noted earlier, the question is particularly important since the Bible nowhere deals directly with the issue of a Christian of homosexual orientation seeking to be united sexually in a covenant relationship among his partners of the same sex.

Evidence adduced in this paper suggests that one must differ with those who argue that there is little or no impediment in the way of condoning covenanted homosexual Christian unions on the ground that the Bible condemns only exploitative or idolatrous forms of homosexual relations such as pederasty or male cultic prostitution. There is no clear evidence for this view. Homosexual intercourse itself is condemned in the OT primarily on the basis of the doctrine of creation and this view is upheld in the NT within the theologico-substantive discussion of what is 'contrary to nature' in Romans 1. Most likely, 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 similarly refer to homosexual relations in general (i.e. they do not allude only to a specific type of homosexual relationship such as homosexual prostitution or pederasty).

How does this apply to the modern situation involving homosexual relations between committed partners? Since the condensation of the list of homosexual relations in the Bible cannot necessarily be identified with or limited to the particularly heinous moral or ritual contexts in which these relations allegedly occurred, the fact that the modern-day context is different (i.e. non-exploitative, non-ritualistic, etc.) is not directly relevant, since the Bible seems to condemn the act of homosexual intercourse itself as inherently sinful.

The issue of homosexual relations within the modern church may be addressed further in relation to the church's traditional forms of authority: Scripture, tradition, reason and (according to some) experience. Concerning Scripture, an avenue of recourse yet unexplored in this paper is the invocation of general principles (such as 'all our actions should be guided by love'), or analogy (such as 'just as the early church accepted Gentiles, so we should accept [sexually active] homosexuals'). Those who argue along these lines are often at odds with those who invoke specific biblical laws (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) or who appeal to Paul's authoritative and unambiguous depiction of the human condition in Romans 1. In this regard, Hays' response is apt: 'Whatever one may decide about the weight of the appeal to the love-principle . . . the fact remains that no biblical text directly contradicts the authority of Paul's teaching. If this is so, it would seem that the biblical Sadducees and their other passages seem in fact to support it, and that providing a sanctioned context in which an inherently sinful act may be given free rein cannot ultimately be considered an act of love.

Concerning tradition, there can be no question that the ethical instruction of the Christian church throughout its history has been consistently opposed to homosexual intercourse.

Concerning reason, as Hays observes, statistical and scientific data describe what is, but cannot alone make moral judgments about what ought to be. Thus for example, were such statistical data to show that homosexuality was less healthy or less damaging in any matter of choice, as Paul probably thought, but a matter of orientation, Paul could theoretically reply to the effect that simply supports his understanding that all of humanity is under the 'power of sin'. (To Paul, 'sin' is so fundamental to the human condition that it leads one to involuntary acts of disobedience for which one still remains culpable.) Hays elaborates as follows: 'The gulf is wide between Paul's viewpoint and the modern habit of assigning culpability only for actions assumed to be under free control of the agent. . . . Scientific investigations cannot provide a refutation of Paul's statements; nevertheless it is clear that "reason", in contrast to Scripture and tradition, does provide arguments that may be counterposed to the authority of Paul's judgment.'

Finally, concerning experience, certainly this is the most subjective and contested category from which to draw authoritative conclusions. Whose experience counts above that of another and how may this experience be assessed? When individuals claim to be in a supportive homosexual relationship
in which the grace of God is experienced, how is this to be measured in the light of Scripture? Was Paul wrong? Has the creator suddenly ordained a new order by which such experiences are now right and valid? Could not the opinion of a person who claims God is fulfilling homosexual unions not simply be a manifestation of humanity’s self-deception and confusion as Paul describes it in Romans 1? How could one determine whether or not this is so without reference to a norm such as Scripture? Even if one’s ‘story’ could be assessed in such a way that it functioned authoritatively for the church, would this story stand alongside or eclipse the old scriptural norm? And if Scripture can be eclipsed, on what basis will the church evaluate other people’s experiences in the future?  

The weight of the fourfold bases for authority in relation to the issue of homosexual relations has been summarized cogently by Hays:

Arguments in favor of acceptance of homosexual relations find their strongest warrants in empirical investigations and in contemporary experience. Those who defend the morality of homosexual relationships within the church may do so only by conferring upon these warrants an authority greater than the direct authority of Scripture and tradition, at least with respect to this question."  

Conclusion

So what might a biblical strategy for ministering to homosexual persons look like? This takes us to yet another question which is worthy of a full discussion on its own. Suffice it to note briefly that a biblically based strategy would clearly take us along the lines of offering love, acceptance, and understanding, and it would include a theology of the shared humanity and fallenness of us all. It would condemn any self-righteous attitude that would suggest that a person should be subject to discrimination or isolation from the church purely on the basis of homosexual orientation. It would include a message in love that, contrary to socially accepted thinking, sexual expression is not essential to human fulfillment, as the example of Jesus Christ and countless faithful single Christians (many of them homosexuals) has shown. It would offer openly and without prejudice or judgment the message of the divine forgiveness of sins for all. It would seek to reclaim for the church a more credible, workable and dignified social context for living a meaningful and fulfilling single life. It would sail upon the waves of theologically minded homosexuals who wish to join the fellowship of the church to join with other Christians in turning away from sin in their pilgrimage in faith. It would seek to hold in balance unprejudiced compassion, on the one hand, with the recognition of the stark reality of sin on the other hand — something our Lord did when he said to the woman caught in adultery, ‘Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more’ (Jn. 8:11). In calling the church to the high calling of the Lord by these two perspectives in balance, for where there is no fallenness, there is no need of compassion, and where there is no compassion there is no escape from fallenness.

P.D.M. Turner, 'Biblical texts relevant to homosexual orientation and practice: some notes on philology and interpretation', unpublished MS, p. 8 n. 1. An apparent point of interest here is the use of the word 'homosexual' as an inclination or condition and a biblical descriptive terminology appears in the word 'homosexual' in the NRSV at 1 Corinthians 6:9, but this translation is misleading. (The New RSV is preferable: 'male prostitutes, sodomites'.)  

As Turner notes (ibid.,) only in Rom. 1 does one find a description of a state of mind associated with homosexual practice, but the practice itself is still treated along with these state of mind. However, the state of mind is referred to only in general terms and in conjunction with various other 'disordered desires' that lie at the root of outward vices.

Turner notes two additional reasons for avoiding the terms 'homosexual/homosexuality' in contemporary discussions. First, "it is unclear whether it is (a) the state of mind or emotion, (b) the practice, whether or not expressing (a), or (c) the condition accompanied by expression". Turner adds: 'Moreover, the ambiguity now extends to "orientation": is protection being sought for the right to act it out in all situations?’ And second, in his opinion, “in God’s providence Scripture reflects a reality of the kind we are likely to say that the permission of [homosexuality] is not always chosen and that some people have no area of freedom (except in action) for which they can be held responsible' (ibid., emphasis mine).

Note for example the following excerpt from the Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England. December 1991: "The story of the Church’s attitude to homosexuals has too often been one of prejudice, ignorance and oppression. All of us need to acknowledge that, and to repent for any part we may have had in it’ (Issues in Human Sexuality: A Statement by the House of Bishops, London: Church Times Publishing, 1991, p. 48). In illustration of the point made in the previous footnote, notice, however, the confusing ambiguity that arises from the use of the term ‘homosexual’.  

'This give-away line appears to provide the raison d’être for the so-called second creation account.’


‘Victor Paul Furnish, The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), p. 81. Even if there were substance to the claims of Horner, the alleged biblical allusion to homosexual traits and/or same-sex sexuality would have to be described or set forth in a positive exemplary light for it to be significant for Christian ethical reflection today.  

Although there is no reference in the gospels to Jesus having spoken specifically about homosexual relations, Turner (‘Biblical texts relevant to homosexual orientation’, p. 4) makes an interesting case on the basis of the manuscript, papyrus, and other possible clues, that homosexual relations were likely have been included in the use of this word by Jesus according to Mt. 5:22 and 19. Turner defines biblical porneia as coming to mean ‘all irregular genital contact except adultery and in some contexts [it] seems to be a prenuptial for adultery too. Mt. v and sxx are cases in point’. He adds, ‘It is thus not tenable that the Gospel record shows Jesus making no reference to homosexual acts’ (ibid.). In any case, the gospel portrays Jesus affirming the traditional view of heterosexual marriage as the divinely ordained order for humanity (see for example Mt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-9).  

Even in inscrutably literature, one is sometimes led to infer that it would be of no great significance if homosexual behaviour was condoned by the medieval church since homosexual relationships are mentioned relatively infrequently in biblical literature. Although the proponents of this logic would hardly be likely to do so, the same logic could be applied to cases such as bestiality or child sacrifice.

D. S. Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition (London: Longmans, Green, 1977). Bailey argues that the men of Sodom were not wanting intercourse with Lot’s guests, but simply credentials by which to judge that the strangers posed no threat to the town.  

‘Icf also Jdg. 19:25.  

The following comment makes it clear why homosexual rape have violated hospitality, unless it were inescapable’.

‘Gordon Wenham, ‘The Old Testament attitude to homosexuality’, Expository Times 102 (1990-91), 361. Wenham states, ‘It may also be noted that the motive for divine judgment is similar in both cases. The flood was sent because of the great wickedness of man demonstrated by the illicit union of women with supernormal beings, the ‘sons of God’. In the case of Sodom another type of illicit sexual intercourse is at least contributory in showing its desirability in its destructive manifestation’.  

‘The unnatural relations primarily in mind in Judge 7 might possibly be between the men of Sodom and angels (which Lot’s visitors were, in addition to being men). It is interesting to note that the implications of this passage from Jude are sometimes downplayed by implying that this episode is somehow less deserving of a place in the Christian canon than certain other episodes. For obvious reasons, this kind of argument should be allowed to carry very little weight.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


See, for example, John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). pp. 100-102. It is unfortunate that so highly influential a book as this contains so many misleading lines of evidence. It is no exaggeration to say that many of the arguments rallied in support of Boswell’s thesis are based upon misinterpretations of classical and other sources.

Even if Israel’s negative attitude toward this practice were attributable in part to a xenophobic vis-à-vis the Canaanites, this alone cannot have been determinative, since Israelite relations about which we have any practices with the Canaanites, such as many forms of sacrifice (Wenham, ‘Old Testament attitude’, 362). Wenham states: ‘Aversion to Canaanite custom no more explains Israel’s attitude towards homosexuality than it does its preference for monothondism’ (ibid.).

See for example Karl van der Toorn, ‘Prostitution (Cultric)’, Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), pp. 510-513; Elaine Adler Goodfriend, ‘Prostitution (CYT),’ ibid., pp. 507-509. A possible reference to male cuction prostitution...
occurs in Dt. 23:17–18. Goodfriend (ibid., p. 308) is nonetheless dubious, while van der Toorn (ibid., p. 312) suggests that the prostitution was possibly cultic only in the sense that the money gained from prostitution was paid to the temple, in payment for a vow.


4Lev. 20:18. The law concerning menstruation is often cited as an example against the applicability of the law concerning homosexual intercourse. Given the fact that many of the principles lying behind OT law concerning sex are expressed in the early chapters in Genesis, it may be that the law about menstruation reflects a more general concern for pollution of the land as the result of the shedding of human blood, a phenomenon which in other contexts usually occurred as a result of violence, as in Gn. 4:10–11. This might help to explain why, as Sperling notes, menstruation is only one of two categories in which blood in itself is a source of contamination, the other category being unjustified homicide (S. David Sperling, ‘Blood’, Anchor Bible Dictionary 1 (1992), p. 762).

5In illustration of the difficulty with applying this distinction meaningfully, as noted above, Lev. 18:22 and Lev. 20:13 cannot be limited to a law concerning ritual purity alone. For additional problems in so limiting these laws, see the Statement by the House of Bishops, p. 15.

6See the discussion later in this paper of Rom. 1:26–27 and of the OT background to the meaning of ἀρσενοκόιτας in 1 Cor. 6:9.

7David F. Wright, ‘Homosexual or prostitutes? The meaning of ἀρσενοκόιτας (1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10)’, Vigilia Christiana 38 (1984), 125–153.

8Idolatry is mentioned in the same context as homosexual relations in Leviticus, but it does not follow from this that the relations condemned involved idolatrous prostitution in pagan cults. Rather, the OT quite commonly discusses moral-social vices in the same context as religious ones (see for example Ezk. 8–9).


10Ibid.


12Ibid., p. 190.

13Hays observes (ibid., p. 211), ‘We must forthrightly recognize that in Romans 1 Paul portrays homosexual activity as a vivid and shameful sign of humanity’s confusion and rebellion against God; then we must form our moral choices in light of that proposal.’


15As Hays notes (‘Relations natural and unnatural’, pp. 186, 187), Boswell must here assume the phenomenon of sexual ‘orientation’ which was not recognized until modern times (see further my introductory comments).


17Ibid., p. 194.

18Furnish, Moral Teaching of Paul, pp. 72–77.

19William Countryman, Dirt, Greed, and Sex (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); for the works of Scroggs and Furnish, see the references given above.

20These words occur in a ‘stock list’ of vices which scholars suggest Paul possibly borrowed from Hellenistic Judaism. See further David Aune, The New Testament in its Literary Environment (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), for elaboration and other examples of vice (and virtue) lists.

21Turner observes further that ‘in such a context straight after the word ἀνήλικος no-one would have read it differently . . . “Catamites” is the right rendering’. Compare W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1951/University of Chicago, 1979), p. 489, s.v. naktos, ‘2.of pers. soft. of catamites, men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually’. Scroggs (New Testament and Homosexuality, p. 106) concludes similarly that naktos likely refers here to the “call-boy”, the youth who consciously imitated feminine styles and ways and who walked the thin line between passive homosexual activity for pleasure and that for pay’. Contrast Boswell (Christianity, pp. 339–341) who tries to argue that naktos refers to general moral weakness, with no specific connection to homosexuality (ibid., p. 341).


23Ibid., pp. 106–107.


26Ibid., pp. 345, 344.


29Ibid. Here, as in certain other cases, I transliterate the Greek where the original quotation contains the actual Greek letters.

30I.e. poroi.

31Turner, ‘Biblical texts relevant to homosexual orientation’, p. 6 (cf. p. 4).

32Scroggs, Homosexuality and the New Testament, p. 120.

33Note, for example, Gordon Fee (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, NICB; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), who states, ‘Most likely the list is a conscious reflection of the Mosaic Law as law and expresses the kinds of sins the law was given to prohibit.’

34Or, possibly, ‘male prostitute’. In support of this alternative, see Turner, ‘Biblical texts relevant to homosexual orientation’, p. 4; for references to poroi meaning ‘male prostitute’ outside the NT, see for example Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Damer, A Greek-English Lexicon p. 700, s.v. poroi.

35Fee (1 and 2 Timothy, p. 49) draws attention to the fact that there is a very early rabbinic tradition that links slave dealing to the eighth commandment.

36For Scroggs’ interpretation to be correct, ἀρσενοκόιτας would have to refer to the passive partner here, whereas he argued that in 1 Cor. 6:9 this same word denotes the active partner (i.e. the homosexual prostitute). In other words, on his understanding, Scroggs has two words for the active homosexual prostitute and none for the passive partner. The apparent incongruity between ἀρσενοκόιτας as active in 1 Cor. and passive in 1 Tim. may be seen in Scroggs’ statement that ‘Poroi could effectively function in relation to ἀρσενοκόιτας in precisely the same way as naktos does in 1 Corinthians’ (Scroggs, Homosexuality and the New Testament, p. 120). Later Scroggs seems to allude to the incongruity again in his comment that ‘perhaps the effeminate call-boy is also included in the condemnation, but I see no way of making a judgment on the matter’ (ibid., p. 121).

37It is interesting to note that poroi and ἀρσενοκόιτας are the only terms listed both in 1 Cor. 6:9–10 and 1 Tim. 1:9–10.


39Some argue similarly for the acceptance of a sexually active homosexual on the analogy that the non-procreative and outcast eunuchs of Mt. 19:12 and Acts 8:26–40 were so accepted, but the analogy lapses at the point of the eunuchs being celibate and sexually inactive.

40Hays, ‘Relations natural and unnatural’, p. 208.

41Ibid., p. 209.

42Ibid., pp. 449–450.

43Ibid. (emphasis his).

44Newman and Reid observe that experience, ‘if it is to be included’, is clearly the ‘most elusive and problematic’ category (‘Bible and sexual ethics’, p. 1). They cite Richard Hooker in support of the claim that of the various categories, ‘The Bible is first and primary’ for Anglicans. This stands in contrast to the growing popularity in some ecclesiastical circles of hearing people’s stories and of reflecting upon them as if these stories determine the church’s stance – even above Scripture, tradition and reason. This represents a remarkable change from the church’s position historically, a change that is perhaps symptomatic of a crisis of authority in society as well as in the church, particularly in relation to a timeless standard such as the Bible.

45Hays, ‘Relations natural and unnatural’, p. 211.

46Ibid.
Deliverance: The Evolution of a Doctrine

Stephen Hunt

Deliverance defined

in charismatic circles, the distinction between 'exorcism' and 'deliverance' is an indispensable one, although it remains true that the terms are frequently used interchangeably. In the context of Renaissance and Reformed religious culture, the distinction is that exorcism is administered to those who are demonized as a result of barrages of spiritual and physical affliction, while deliverance is administered to those who are demonized as a result of spiritual and physical affliction, but have been freed of their afflictions.

Classical Pentecostalism and deliverance

Classical Pentecostalism and deliverance both represent important elements of the Pentecostal movement that have been influential in shaping the modern-day practice of deliverance. Pentecostalism, a movement that emerged in the early 20th century, sought to reconnect with the primitive, experience-based aspects of Christianity, including the gift of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. Deliverance, on the other hand, is the process of releasing someone from the power of sin, evil, or demonic influences. In the context of Pentecostalism, deliverance is often seen as a natural extension of the gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables believers to discern and resist evil forces.

The mid-century deliverance movements

The mid-century deliverance movements were a response to the widespread cultural and spiritual upheaval of the 1950s, particularly in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and the growing awareness of spirituality and non-traditional beliefs. These movements emphasized the direct experience of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer to deliver individuals from spiritual bondage. They were characterized by a focus on personal and communal prayer, confession of sin, and a belief in the immediate and direct presence of the Holy Spirit. The mid-century deliverance movements had a significant impact on the development of modern-day Christian practices, particularly in the areas of healing and deliverance.
Deliverance: The Evolution of a Doctrine

Stephen Hunt

Deliverance defined in charismatic circles, the distinction between 'exorcism' and 'deliverance' is an indispensable one, although it remains true that the latter is a 'higher' form of the former. The distinction is that exorcism is administered to those who are demonic and deliverance is administered to those who are simply meretriciously oppressed. This distinction is not particularly new. Roman Catholicism has traditionally distinguished between a 'meretricious oppression' and a 'true' oppression, the latter being the need for demonic expulsion. Where, according to one Catholic commentator, 'dementricious oppression is bodily, whereas the true oppression is hardly, only visible by eye.'

The mid-century deliverance movements were often termed 'holiness' or 'Christian spiritualism'. A number of prominent leaders have argued that they were not just religious movements but extensions of the sixties spiritual movement. The holiness movement, in turn, laid claim to the same religious authority as the charismatic renewal of the 1970s and 1980s.

Deliverance is generally associated with the rise of charismatic movements in the late 20th century. These movements, characterized by an emphasis on personal experience and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, often incorporated elements of spiritual healing and deliverance. The distinction between demonic possession and deliverance became more prominent in these settings, with many claiming to be freed from the grip of demonic forces through the power of prayer and the laying on of hands.

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disenrolled spirits trying to control human beings, and of dark angelic powers attempting to dominate churches, cities and other geographical areas. (These teachings corresponded with those of the Danish medium Peter Hansen, who was called 'the Layman' (John Wimber taught).) Prince has also been largely responsible for the development of the concept of Spiritual Domestication - the demonic implications of self-cures, genrealous curses and "soulish prayers", through his influential work Blessing or Curse? Prince’s theology is not that of the non-charismatic theologian, Dr Kurt Koch, who had a considerable impact on the emphasis given to demonology in his work on deliverance and the demonic origins of much mental illness. Koch had attempted to show beyond dispute that in the New Testament Gnosis (wisdom, divine knowledge, and spiritual effects 'to the third and fourth generation', with the implication that Christ’s deliverance was the same.)

Another quasi-Pentecostal group which advanced deliverance was the Full Gospel Business Men’s Federation International. This organization promoted a somewhat new type of Pentecostal, wealthy, with a vision for an international mission establishment. But it had also produced copious literature on the subject.2 The most serious controversy in the early history of the Federation involved the public denunciation of one of its leaders for religious or the use of psychedelic drugs prior to conversion. It was claimed that he had been helped to Christ by the means of an unbridled spirit. The same leader was soon after the Saints in 1973 through the Dizario Trust, which is dedicated to warning Christians of the implications of occult activities.

The renewal movement

Deliverance gradually grew as a practice in the charismatic renewal movement between the late 1950s and the 1960s, and the independent 'house churches'. Often it was perceived as a charismatic gift of healing and as a gift of the Spirit and the renewal of the church.2 At the same time, it coincided with the wider interest in 'divine healing' by Catholic and Protestant neo-Pentecostals, which was largely in keeping with healing, the charismatic had developed a fascination for miraculous healing. But there was little effective contact between this group and the churches. Some of these churches have been criticized for not having delivered the minister in person, or becoming convinced that the minister was a genuine source of deliverance from sin and disease. But in the 1970s, there was a movement towards greater involvement, which led to the establishment of the Faith Mission of Jesus Christ, which had the aim of delivering Christians from the dominion of Satan. This movement has been called the Deliverance Movement.

There is some evidence to support this claim. More than a few of the leading practitioners had begun in counselling before embracing the deliverance ministry. A good number were only involved in the charismatic renewal movement during the 1960s. They had been impressed by the achievements of a number of Christian leaders who had been involved in the charismatic renewal movement. For example, the work of the Chicago Deliverance Movement was influenced by the work of John Wimber, the founder of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Federation International.

Restorationism, post-millennialism and deliverance

Restorationism is a distinct strand of the charismatic movement in Britain, one which began outside the established church structures. Significant elements of Restorationism had taken an interest in deliverance as early as 1962. As the tenacity of the faith of restorationists, there is no need to dwell on Restorationism as a result of demonic oppression. Another was Sid Purne, who ran a deliverance ministry based in Chard, Somerset, England in 1962, which was influenced by the work of Michael Green. A third figure was G.W. North who wrote a series of articles lamenting the state of the ministry of deliverance and exorcism and argued that many of the symptoms commonly recognized as symptoms of physical, emotional and psychological problems, may have demonic or supernatural causes because of what they were meeting, rather than bringing a fundamentalism to their own personal experiences. But in the growing acceptance of deliverance, Richards' work But Deliver Us From Evil was a landmark. For nine years previously, he had written the popular book of the month, the group on Exorcism, conducted a number of conferences, and written extensively on deliverance and deliverance. The report indicated that many Anglican clergy felt out of their depth in the area of exorcism and that they were inadequately prepared to deal with the implications at parish level of the 'Occult Expedition'. Although the ‘Occult Expedition’ was a result of growing demonic problems, and not just a result of those who were being delivered. The second group emerged stressing the dangers of the occult and often advocated exorcising diabolic forces, the church. The third group was more scholarly and offered a more rational and scientific approach to less studied in the ministry, notably the notorious ‘Barnesley case’, where the impact on the ministry of the discovery of exorcism was great. With these considerations, the Christian Study Group on Exorcism produced the well-known publication Deliverance? What is it? Exorcism, the objective examination of the new deliverance movement, its publication, its detailed account of the ministry gave an extra motivation that Christianity as the means of deliverance. Within the charismatic church, there were also Christians claiming to experience demonic oppression very often because of pre-existent experience of demonic oppression. They had entered the church for precisely this reason. Typically, he was a charismatic leader who had embarked on the practice when some individuals in his church believed that they were demonically oppressed because of contact with Satan or his agents. It was one of the reasons why it was initially denied access to American television networks and was only allowed to preach freely in the 1960s to the point of working closely with charismatics in Britain’s mainstream denominations.3

Author: Anonymous

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Title: Deliverance: A Study of Deliverance in the Church

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Review: "This is a fascinating and thought-provoking book on the subject of deliverance. It is well-researched, well-written and contains a wealth of information that will be of interest to anyone involved in the field of deliverance. The author, who is a seasoned practitioner and experienced in the field, provides a comprehensive overview of the subject, drawing on a wide range of sources. The book is well-structured and easy to follow, making it accessible to readers of all backgrounds. It covers the history of deliverance, the biblical background, the nature of demonic attack, and the practical aspects of deliverance ministry. The author also provides guidance on how to deal with difficult cases and offers practical advice for those working in the field. Overall, this is an excellent resource for anyone involved in the ministry of deliverance, whether they are just starting out or have been working in this area for some time. It is highly recommended."
disembodied spirits trying to control human beings, and of dark angelic powers attempting to dominate churches, cities and other geographical areas. (These teachings corresponded with those of the Franciscan Peter de Verine (1535–1603) and his student John Wimber.) Prince has also been largely responsible for the development of the charismatic movement. He brought the term "charismatic" into the theological vocabulary.

Within the charismatic movement, there were also Christians who claimed to experience demonic oppression very often because of pre-institutional, pseudo-Christian, or occult practices. These practices included witchcraft, sorcery, black magic, and even drug use. Many of these Christians had entered the denomination precisely for this reason. Typically, they had been原理 of prominent churches, or who had been caught up in the occult. Their interest in deliverance grew when evangelists or religious leaders introduced them to Prince and Diploma, or other prominent charismatic leaders. Sometimes the deliverance ministry is used as a form of spiritual warfare, and is sometimes confused with prayer ministry, counseling or therapy. The Christian psychologist Frank lake's teachings of 'rebell' to their extreme conclusions. From this perspective, deliverance ministry is often used as a weapon of witchcraft, with psychotherapy and emotional healing.

There is some evidence to support this claim. More than a few of the leaders practitioners had begun in counselling before embracing the deliverance ministry. A good number were already involved in charismatic movements when they joined the charismatic movement. For example, one leader had a background in counselling, and was then that today, deliverance ministries are not afraid to tackle emotional problems. Although they may not be a subset of the secular world, related to problems in personal relationships. They do so in the case of anxiety, nervousness and of behaviour. The belief is that deliverance is a process of deliverance, which is the process of "sacramental" deliverance. John Wimber, one of the most well-known in the deliverance ministry, although these doctrines have been based on teaching in some Pentecostal churches in the USA and France.

Restorationism, post-millennialism and deliverance:

Restorationism is a distinct strand of the charismatic movement in Britain, one which began outside the established church structures. Significant aspects of Restorationism had taken an interest in deliverance. As early as 1962, Wimber, a Christians who claimed to experience demonic oppression very often because of pre-institutional, pseudo-Christian, or occult practices. These practices included witchcraft, sorcery, black magic, and even drug use. Many of these Christians had entered the denomination precisely for this reason. Typically, they had been原理 of prominent churches, or who had been caught up in the occult. Their interest in deliverance grew when evangelists or religious leaders introduced them to Prince and Diploma, or other prominent charismatic leaders. Sometimes the deliverance ministry is used as a form of spiritual warfare, and is sometimes confused with prayer ministry, counseling or therapy. The Christian psychologist Frank lake's teachings of 'rebell' to their extreme conclusions. From this perspective, deliverance ministry is often used as a weapon of witchcraft, with psychotherapy and emotional healing.

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The Renewal movement: Deliverance
growingly practiced as a part of the charismatic renewal movement because of the independence and the "house churches." Often it was perceived as a charismatic movement and was characterized by the "fire of the Spirit" and the renewal of the church. At the same time, it coincided with the wider interest in "divine healing" by Catholic and protestant neo-French. In the early 1960s, there was a growing trend towards spiritual healing, the charismatics had developed a fascination with religious healing. They were under the influence of personalities such as Prince, who practiced exorcism and deliverance therapy. The Church of God, with its emphasis on the spiritual and the spiritual, and its focus on the Church of God, with its emphasis on the spiritual and the spiritual, and its focus on the person of Christ, was one of the reasons why it was initially denied access to American television networks, but which joined the movement in the 1970s and went on to play a crucial role in the church of the Body of Christ. In this atmosphere, Prince, a Baptist preacher from Tennessee, decided to move to London in 1972, and to work closely with charismatics in Britain's mainstream denominations.

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The Parousia: Getting Terms Right

Walter Riggans

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If we are going to assume that one of the signs that a biblical teaching is important lies in the amount of space given to it in the Bible, then it is clear that Jesus' return is one of the most important teachings to be found in the NT. It is frequently grappled with by Jesus' contemporaries, and it is a subject to which the teaching of Jesus himself right through to the last writing of the NT. It is a teaching that is economic to us, as well as on our attitude to God. So much so is this the case, that in several NT passages, Jesus is directly alluding to the shadow of that day. Having quoted Romans 13:12 above, let us remind ourselves of the verse which follows it:

Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissipation and lustful desires.

Bearing in mind these two points, we move on.

3. Parousia

This Aoristic expression is only found once in the NT, at the end of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, if anyone does not love the Lord - a curse be on him. (Cor 1:25)

We are either dealing here with a simple perfect form of the verb (parousia), giving us the proclamation that 'Our Lord has come', or with an imperative form (parousia), expressing the longing, 'Come, Lord!' (Cor 1:24)

There is evidence of both interpretations being favoured by different scholars and churchmen in the patristic period, but these are isolated instances, and it is very unlikely that the choice of form was more important in Paul's context.

Of particular interest is the fact that in the Didache (c. AD 96) the expression 'parousia' is used in prayer which was part of the liturgy of the Lord's Supper (see 10:6, for example). We are from 1 Corinthians 11:26 that from the earliest times an important aspect of the celebration of this feast was a looking forward in hope to the return of the Lord. We are also from Acts 20:32 that the disciple of Jesus can only pray that the Lord will return to earth after the period of his ascension. Jesus' second appearance will mean the coming of judgment.

In the Old Testament, when the Lord will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:16), it is in this spirit in which the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will bestow on all who have lived a life acceptable to God, will also be to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Tim. 1:4, 8).

Jesus' second appearance will also bring about the end of the 'man of sin', when he is himself revealed and当他 who prefers the darkness will be destroyed by the shining power of the appearance of Jesus.

And he will destroy with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the brightness of his coming (Rev 19:16).

In short, this appearance will be met by Christians with unparalleled relief and joy. The struggle will be over. As Paul says, it is "a new song, not a burdened song, not the song of sinners" (Phil 2:21).

We wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Tit 2:13).

3. Epiphany

This is the first of the three specific terms used in the NT with regard to the second coming of Jesus. It is derived from the Greek root 'to appear', a root which was in common use, although producing a cluster of words with quite specialized meanings. If we examine all the occurrences in Romans alone, we find a primary English usage from this root are: 'Epiphany', the name given to the liturgical day of 6 January, when the wise men appeared (if you are western) when Jesus appeared at his birth (if you are eastern), and 'Phaneroo', a word applied by psychics to the mysterious appearance of spectral forces. But the root is also connected with one which has to do with light and brightness, giving us the word 'phosphorescence' in English. So it refers to something which is easily visible and which has a certain radiance.

Originally, the actual term epiphanias referred merely to the outward appearance of something, for instance, it is used of the visible aspects of a town. But it soon developed a specialized meaning, relating to the glorious or majestic appearance of a dignitary or god. It is used of heavenly appearances, as well as on earth. It is also important to note that it could be used on occasions of a religious nature, as when a high priest entered the holy of holies and met with a dignitary could cause. By the time of the NT community, it had developed a yet more specialized meaning, namely the actual visit of a god with the people. It is invariably used in contexts of divine intervention, stressing the power on behalf of his people.

It would also be true to say that we are dealing with a term which carries with it a sense of purpose. It is used in definite contexts of God's visitation of his people, as a means of deliverance for his people. It is also used as a means of protection, as a means of salvation. Of course, we are aware of the fact that sometimes human appearances are mentioned as well, but usually it is uniquely related to the gods, took a related term for themselves. This was so with the Roman Caesars, and also with the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, known to us from the books of the Maccabees. In short, this is a powerful title, demonstrating a glorious appearance of a god.

In the Septuagint, we find the verb root of this term used to translate a number of Hebrew verbal roots to do with 'shining' and 'appearance'. It is also found in other contexts, such as the common understood sense of 'apocalyptic', namely having to do with the appearance of God in the past. This is also true of the connection with Balaam, whose eyes are 'opened' by God so that he can see what God has in store for Israel (Num 22:23; 24, 14).

When we turn to the NT, we find that this root is perhaps no longer the only term used to describe the return of God, especially with any frequency by Paul, Peter, Matthew and Luke. Speaking more positively, the first point to note is that in the NT the term is used to describe the return of God on every level. It is used from the immediate context of the revelation of God's wrath and judgment, as in these verses:

Till the day of judgment comes from heaven against all the ungodly and wicked men, the Lord Jesus with his heavenly hosts (Rev 11:15).

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the mystery hidden for ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the Spirit of God... (Rom 16:26).

The comfort and vindication which Jesus' followers are in need of in the midst of this fallen world are not yet revealed, but when they appear, Jesus Christ will put their trust in him, and Christians will realize that the path of all who trust in Jesus is a path that is hard to believe by those who will one day testify to their truth.

The following examples will suffice:

God will bring to light the plans of the heart of those who trouble you and give relief to those who are troubled, and to us as well. (Rom 13:11).

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that shall be revealed in us (Rom 8:28; also see 2 Pet 1:15-17).

Of course, Jesus will also be fully vindicated when he returns to earth, and the wonderful glory which is his due will at last be manifested for all to see.
The Parousia: Getting Terms Right

Walter Riggans

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If we are going to assume that one of the signs that a biblical teaching is important lies in the amount of space given to it in the Bible, then it is clear that Jesus’ return to earth is one of the most important teachings to be found in the NT. It is frequently given more space than the teaching of Jesus himself right through to the last writing of the NT. The whole of the first three of Paul’s letters (Col, Rom, Eph) are concerned as well as on our attitude to God. So much is this the case, that in several NT chapters, Paul goes beyond the shadow of that day. Having quoted Romans 13:12 above, we remind ourselves not only of Jesus’ return, but also of the sacrifice of the Lamb, and of the promise of eternal life for those who trust in Him.

2. Parousia

The Aoristic verb form is often only found in the NT at the first part of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. The expression itself is capable of two interpretations, each of which is supported by different passages in the NT. The first is that the parousia is a reference to the second coming of Jesus, which is more commonly understood as 'apotheosis', namely the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God. In this interpretation, the parousia is seen as a miraculous event, which is not only significant in terms of its theological implications, but also as a means of glorifying God.

On the other hand, the second interpretation is that the parousia is a reference to the return of Jesus to earth, seen as a fulfillment of the prophecy of the messiah. This view is supported by passages such as Acts 1:11, where Jesus is seen returning to earth in glory. This interpretation is more in line with the historical context of the NT, where the return of Jesus was seen as a fulfillment of the prophecy of the messiah.

3. Epiphanius

This is the first of the three specific terms used in the NT with regard to the second coming of Jesus. It is derived from the Greek root 'epiphaneia', which means 'appearance' or 'manifestation'. In the context of the NT, it is used to describe the manifestation of Jesus to his apostles on the mountain of Transfiguration in Mark 9:2-8. However, the term is also used to refer to the entire history of Jesus, from his birth to his resurrection.

In short, this expression will be met by Christians with unparalleled relief and joy. The struggle will be over. As Paul says, it is a "blessing of the grace that is given to the apostles" (Rom 1:7).
The second coming of Jesus will come as a dramatic shock to people who believe in Him. God will return with great power and in glory, and He and He in turn will open up to the light of His glory all the dark secrets of our lives. Just as suddenly as the fall came, God has also prepared us to last the wisdom of the Lord's ways in our lives and in our world's history.

"Parousia" itself

This is our third term and the one most frequently used for the second coming of Jesus in the NT. The verbal root means 'to be present with' and is used in a number of its derivatives. The noun 'parousia' means therefore either 'presence' or 'arrival.' It is a regular NT term for the Lord's return and appears frequently in the NT literature, especially in the letters of the apostle Paul.

Although this word is not really known by modern English speakers, its Latin equivalent certainly is. The Latin term is 'parousia.' For example, even though we sometimes read of the first coming of Christ, we know that not a great deal from the NT at all. It is from the Greek that the parousia is known from, even though it was a term that the Lord Jesus used of His own arrival in the NT.

Although this word is not really known by modern English speakers, its Latin equivalent certainly is. The Latin term is 'parousia.' In yet another way, we refer to the NT literature as the parousia because this word was used by the Lord Jesus of His own arrival in the NT.

The term 'parousia' is the Greek term for the NT in connection with the apostle Paul. However, he does not come out of it all in comparison with the parousia of Jesus itself. It was evidently said by some of Paul that he was a better writer than a person conversant, since, in their opinion at least, he had no real personal charisma, or what we might call "charm".

For some say, 'His letters are weighty and forcible, but in person he is unimpressive and his speech amounts to nothing' (2 Cor. 10:10). The qualification for Paul is that the parousia of Jesus was, if anything, even more impressive than Paul's writings:

"In the parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ, He calls, and we have to meet with Him already. It will be a sudden and public appearance, and will vindicate the faith and hope of Christians everywhere.

The purpose of the parousia

Although, as I indicated at the beginning, we cannot go into the purposes of the parousia in this study, I do not think we can leave the subject without examining the purposes of the parousia. For example, there is the principle of the parousia: the fullness of the parousia and the climax of the parousia. The parousia brings a number of other major purposes for the parousia, which we have been examining. First, the parousia brings about the final conquest of the devil and his forces (1 Cor. 15:24-28). It will bring about the full manifestation of the kingdom of God (Acts 7:5). Secondly, it completes the redemption of the redeemed (1 Jn. 3:2). Thirdly, it is the parousia that brings the whole story of the Bible to its climax and fulfillment (Rom. 8:19; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:5). And fifthly, it marks the end for all, the public vindication and glorification of Jesus (Mt. 15:62; Rev. 17:1). Examples of texts could, of course, be multiplied.

The purposes of the parousia

We could subdivide and further elaborate the five points above. We could also add to this list. For example, I believe that the parousia will also end the age of the world, the age that Paul states in Romans 11:26 that 'all Israel will be saved at the parousia.' I believe that the parousia will also put an end to the age of the world, the age of the Messiah, the age of the parousia. And fifthly, that particular parousia, is strictly a NT term in the sense in which we are using it here.

However, the noun parousia is also used in a more general sense in the NT. Apart from the verses quoted above which refer to Paul's parousia, we also find joy over the arrival of the parousia of Jesus (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:23; 2 Thess. 2:16; Titus 2:13). Verbal forms of the root are used in the NT to indicate the parousia. For example, Galatians 4:18, 20. The verbal root of the parousia term is even used of the Boast in Revelation 17:8, where we read:

"For you are rich now, and have no place for me in your company... and will come out of the Abyss and go to his destruction... he was now, was taken, and carried up out of the Abyss to Heaven..."