

Tinsley Institute

Background Paper 18

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Homosexuality and Christianity

A basic reading guide

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The Tinsley Institute was established in 2008 with the merger of the Centre for Christian Ethics and the Centre for Evangelism and Global Mission at Morling College. The ethics and public theology arm of the Tinsley Institute seeks to contribute to academic and public policy debates on social and ethical issues from an evangelical perspective, and to provide relevant resources for churches, church agencies and others. The Institute does this by conducting research on a wide range of social and ethical issues; publishing a suite of resources for the church, the media and the academy; lobbying state and federal governments; and engaging in various teaching and learning activities including preaching and public speaking. The Institute's principal financial partners are Morling College, the Baptist Union of NSW and Baptist Investments and Finance Ltd.

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Introduction

Homosexuality is one of the most pressing and divisive issues facing the church today. There is increasing social pressure for the acceptance and encouragement of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) lifestyles in our communities. As this trend progresses, churches and church leaders come under increasing pressure to change the traditional conviction that homosexual behaviour is sin, that same-sex marriage is wrong, and that persons of LGBT orientation should be excluded from church leadership. The literature on these related issues is voluminous, and can be daunting and confusing.

This paper (no. 18 in the series) offers an annotated reading list of selected recent publications on homosexuality and Christianity. Its aim is to identify resources that will assist thoughtful Christians, especially evangelical Christians, in thinking through the issues and drawing wise and mature conclusions. Not all resources listed below share the perspective of the Baptist Churches of NSW & the ACT. If you are aware of other resources (print or electronic) that should be included below, please contact the author by email.

Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE), *Faith, Hope and Homosexuality* (London: Evangelical Alliance, 1998). 51pp. ACUTE report “on homosexuality and the gospel,” affirming the traditional view but showing sensitivity to pastoral issues. Includes chapters on definitions, summary of present church debate, treatment of biblical texts, the witness of science, and the witness of history. Also 12 concluding affirmations and recommendations.

Atkinson, David, *Homosexuals in the Christian Fellowship* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1979). 127pp. A classic evangelical defence of the traditional Christian teaching on homosexual behaviour, including analysis of the key biblical texts and the main liberal critiques of these.

Balch, David L. (ed.), *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2000). 304pp. Detailed and provocative academic discussion on how the church views (or should view) homosexuality, with emphasis on biblical texts and church practice. Includes essays representing both “sides” of the debate. The concluding essay by the editor raises important hermeneutical and ethical considerations.

Balswick, Judith K. & Balswick, Jack O., *Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999). 282pp. Examines the origin and formation of sexuality, parameters of “authentic” and “inauthentic” sexuality, and instances of sexual violence and addiction. Note especially chapters 4 and 5 on homosexuality and Christian response (pp. 68-103).

Baptist Union of NSW, “Human sexuality, marriage and church leadership,” Appendix K in *Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Annual Reports 1998-1999*, pp. 55-63. A paper clarifying biblical teaching and suggesting practical guidelines on homosexuality. Includes a section on various approaches to the question of homosexuality, reflecting a “non-affirming” stance.

Bradshaw, Timothy (ed.), *The Way Forward? Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church* (second edition; London: SCM Press, 2003). 229pp.

“Sets out the full range of Christian responses to [homosexuality in the church], and offers mature and informed contributions from key figures on all sides of the debate.” Note especially the long essay on hermeneutics by Anthony C. Thistelton.

Brawley, Robert L. (ed.), *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). 155pp. Essays by a broad range of biblical scholars on issues surrounding the ethics of homosexual behaviour and gay/lesbian ordination.

Brown, Paul E. (ed.), *Homosexuality: Christian Truth and Love* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2007). 160pp. Reflection on biblical teaching on sexuality and homosexual behaviour, as well as historical and medical perspectives, the impact of recent UK legislation, and “guidance on a Christian response.” A fine conservative approach.

Coleman, Gerald D., *Homosexuality: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995). 202pp. Examines the nature and origins of homosexuality, the biblical teaching, and the teaching of the Catholic Church on homosexuality. Also discusses spiritual and pastoral concerns, discrimination, and HIV/AIDS.

Collins, Raymond F., *Sexual Ethics and the New Testament: Behavior and Belief* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000). 194pp. Examines many aspects of sexual ethics in New Testament perspective; note especially chapter 5, “Conduct to be avoided,” and in particular pp. 86-94.

Coulton, Nicholas (ed.), *The Bible, the Church and Homosexuality* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005). 130pp. Six writers address the apparent stalemate between faithfulness to biblical teaching and conformity to liberal conscience, advocating a change in the church’s approach to homosexuality.

Davies, Bob & Rentzel, Lori, *Coming Out of Homosexuality: New Freedom for Men and Women* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993). 202pp. A practical guide for people struggling with same-sex desires written by conservative evangelical Christians. Includes an Appendix providing “Answers to common pro-gay arguments” against key biblical texts and theological principles.

Dicker, Gordon S. (ed.), *Homosexuality and the Church: A Report of the Assembly Committee on Homosexuality and the Church* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1985). 71pp. Discusses the nature of homosexuality and considers the biblical teaching, illustrating a moderate liberal approach ultimately advocating heterosexual marriage or celibacy as the only valid options for Christians.

Edgar, Brian & Preece, Gordon (eds), *Whose Homosexuality? Which Authority? Homosexual Practice, Marriage, Ordination and the Church* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2007). 216pp. Structured in the form of a dialogue between “liberal” and “conservative” views around the quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience; also reflections on the Trinity, anthropology, ethics, marriage and eschatology.

Gaede, Beth Ann (ed.), *Congregations Talking About Homosexuality* (Bethesda, MN: Alban Institute, 1998). 144pp. Practical guide for congregations wishing to discuss homosexuality, along with case studies of congregations that have adopted the model.

Gagnon, Robert A.J., *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001). 494pp. Detailed examination of the biblical witness, and its hermeneutical relevance, concluding that same-sex intercourse is to be unequivocally rejected.

Goddard, Andrew, *Homosexuality and the Church of England: The Position Following ‘Some Issues in Human Sexuality’* (Cambridge, UK: Grove Books, 2004). 32pp. Fine discussion of recent church debate, biblical material, homosexual desire and identity, homosexual relationships and unions, and appropriate responses.

Grenz, Stanley J., *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Approach* (second edition; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997). 282pp. A comprehensive evangelical treatment of sexual ethics in biblical and theological perspective. Note especially chapters 1 and 2 on “Human sexuality and Christian theology,” and chapter 11 titled “Homosexuality: Sin or alternative lifestyle?”

Grenz, Stanley J., *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). 186pp. A clear and fair exposition of the historic or “non-affirming” position on homosexual behaviour written by an eminent evangelical theologian.

Harvey, John F., *The Truth about Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996). 368pp. Addresses ethical and (especially) pastoral questions about homosexual orientation and practice from a Catholic perspective.

Hays, Richard B., *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996). 470pp. Covers far more than sexual ethics, but note especially chapter 16 on homosexuality (pp. 379-406), where Hays presents an exemplary treatment of the “no” case.

Jones, Stanton L. & Yarhouse, Mark A., *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church’s Moral Debate* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000). 183pp. Examines how scientific research has been used in church debates on homosexuality; surveys and interprets recent research; and makes a strong case for a traditional Christian approach to homosexuality.

Jung, Patricia Beattie & Jung, Shannon (eds), *Moral Issues and Christian Response* (seventh edition; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2003). 463pp. Note the three essays in section 11, “Heterosexism” (pp. 248-306).

Keane, Christopher (ed.), *What Some of You Were: Stories About Christians and Homosexuality* (Kingsford, NSW: Matthias Media, 2001). 172pp. Stories of people who, because of their commitment to Jesus and belief in the Bible, choose not to act upon their same-sex attraction. Note also four appendices exploring cultural, medical and biblical issues.

Lebacqz, Karen & Sinacore-Guinn, David (eds), *Sexuality: A Reader* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1999). 592pp. Explores various dimensions of human sexuality, and resources for the development of an appropriate sexual ethic (following the ‘Wesleyan quadrilateral’).

Nelson, James B. & Longfellow, Sandra P. (eds), *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). 401pp. Thirty-four wide-ranging essays on methodology, sexuality, spirituality, gender, and sexual ethics. Note especially the last four chapters on sexual orientation (pp. 357-401).

Nissinen, Martti, *Homosexualities in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). 181pp. Surveys attitudes in the ancient Mediterranean world toward same-sex erotic relationships, arguing that it is part of gender identity rather than sexual orientation.

Pronk, Pim, *Against Nature? Types of Moral Arguments Regarding Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1993). 325pp. Discusses homosexuality from biological, ethical and theological perspectives; argues that the appeal to Scripture is not necessary in formulating ethical guidelines since moral positions are antecedent to the appeal to revelation.

Schmidt, Thomas E., *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexual Debate* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995). 236pp. An evangelical wrestles with the major biblical, ethical, medical and pastoral issues relating to the status of homosexual behaviour. Clear and compassionate.

Seow, Choon-Leong (ed.), *Homosexuality and Christian Community* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). 159pp. Essays by Princeton Theological Seminary faculty on exegetical, hermeneutical and practical issues relating to homosexuality in the church. Note especially the essay by Max L. Stackhouse titled “The heterosexual norm.”

Siker, Jeffrey S. (ed.), *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). 208pp. Essays by a range of professional scholars on issues of scripture, tradition, moral reasoning, scientific reasoning, experience, and decision-making. Each issue is addressed by two scholars – one reflecting tradition, the other challenging tradition. Includes six U.S. denominational statements on homosexuality. Note the essays by Hays and Furnish on biblical issues.

Stanton, Glenn T. & Maier, Bill, *Marriage on Trial: The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage and Parenting* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004). 191pp. A defence of the traditional Christian understanding of marriage including four chapters on “Debunking the myths about homosexuality.”

Strauss, Gary H., “An evangelical looks at homosexuality: From the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to a Postmodern Tetralectic,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 26 (4), 1997, pp. 514-539. Examines the foundations of much contemporary Christian debate on homosexuality, and offers a personal response.

Swartley, Willard M., *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003). 212pp. A Mennonite New Testament scholar’s examination of the biblical teaching on homosexuality. Suggests a model of discernment for congregations seeking guidance on moral issues.

Swidler, Arlene (ed.), *Homosexuality and World Religions* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993). 232pp. Introductory essays drawing on sacred texts and historical-sociological analysis of the teachings of eight major religious traditions on homosexuality; includes Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam.

Thompson, Chad W., *Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would: A Fresh Christian Approach* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004). 183pp. A personal account of struggle with same-sex attraction and its eclipse through the use of non-sexual touch.

Vardy, Peter, *The Puzzle of Sex* (London: Harper Collins, 1997). 237pp. An excellent introduction to contemporary problems and issues relating to sex and sexuality, written from a religiously-neutral position. Note especially chapter 18 on "Homosexuality" (pp. 201-221), and chapter 19 on "The outsider" (pp. 222-226).

Webb, Barry G. (ed.), *Theological and Pastoral Responses to Homosexuality* (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1994). 190pp. A collection of papers presented to the annual School of Theology at Moore College, Sydney, in 1993. Includes historical, biblical, medical/psychological, and ethical perspectives.

White, Stephen R., *The Right True End of Love: Sexuality and the Contemporary Church* (Blackrock, Ireland: Columba Press, 2005). 143pp. Advocates the guiding qualities of creativity and love as the basis for a new framework of Christian sexual ethics. An important contribution to the debate, especially within the Anglican tradition.

Wink, Walter (ed.), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999). 133pp. Concise essays by a wide range of Christian leaders addressing "fundamental moral imperatives about homosexuality." Addresses the biblical witness and biblical authority, homosexual orientation and behaviour, issues for families and friends of gay and lesbian persons, and challenges faced by churches.