

**Email Exchanges on the Topic of Sexuality**  
**Mako Nagasawa**  
**Letter 3**

Dear \*\*\*\*\*,

No need at all to apologize for the length of your writing. I enjoy your emails. Besides, this is a sprawling subject and I'm glad to talk about it in depth. To caution you, I'm about to do that very thing! I'm heartily encouraged by your affirmation of Scripture in your early paragraphs. I look forward to hearing more about you at some point in the future. I too am glad we don't live in the 1950's. I do, however, have several questions about your telling of the story of how Christians have approached Scripture, science, and sexuality.

To begin with, I want to touch on perhaps the least personal topic. According to David Bentley Hart in his book *Atheist Delusions*, the church's relationship with science – especially astronomy – is not the way you portrayed it. This affects whether we can use that issue as an analogy to sexuality (e.g. Christians changed their opinion about the solar system, so why not gay marriage?), and if so, how. Christians inherited a geocentric view of the solar system from the ancient Greeks, not because the Bible is committed to such a view. Yet decades before Galileo, Copernicus had already argued that the earth revolves around the sun. And the Catholic Church liked Copernicus and many other scientists; they had already funded lots of scientific research, and on high levels even extending to Pope Paul III, met Copernicus with approval. The Jesuits, in fact, championed Johannes Kepler. So Galileo was not condemned for putting forward a heliocentric model of the solar system; that had already been offered. Instead, he argued that the planets orbited around the sun in perfect circles. Pope Urban VIII and others demanded proof because Galileo had not supported this circular orbit theory with detailed and precise arguments. There were mathematical irregularities in Galileo's findings because the planets orbit in ellipses, not perfect circles. Galileo was a physicist and not an astronomer, and did not have the patience for doing that kind of research. He was incensed for being challenged. The ensuing conflict between him and Pope Urban, both proud and stubborn men of power, led to Galileo being forced to recant his position. So the Galileo incident was actually not how people tend to remember it, on the popular level that is. We can take heart that the church did not shut down scientific research and keep humankind trapped in the ignorance of the so-called "Dark Ages." That is an Enlightenment myth designed to paint the Enlightenment with brilliant colors against the church's supposedly dull and drab tones of gray. The reality, it seems, was much different. Sociologist Rodney Stark also maintains this position in his book *The Victory of Reason*.

This impacts our ability to make a parallel between Christians changing their views on science to Christians changing their views on sexuality. You favor making such an analogy; I think that would be unwise because a closer look at history does not support it. If we were to draw any lesson from the history of the church and science into the realm of the church and sexuality, it would be this: The hasty alliance of Greek astronomy and Christian theology had detrimental effects on both church and science. The church, while it can be committed to scientific research and can respect it as such, needs to be exceedingly careful in baptizing prevailing scientific views at any time. This includes scientific research into the origin of same-sex attraction. Science has not concluded how and why same-sex attraction, or opposite-sex attraction for that matter, happens exactly. Nor would we necessarily know what to do with ourselves if we did know such a thing. Nowadays, we seem to not emphasize the nature-nurture distinction because we now know that our biochemistry, neurology, and genetics are affected by our nutrition, our parents' nutrition, our stress levels, our parents' stress levels, love and the lack of love, even while we are in the womb and our first twenty years of life outside the womb. So while I am quite comfortable saying that there are biochemical, neurological, and genetic factors involved in our sexual orientations, I'm not certain we can go much further than that on that point. Moreover, if we are to include science more broadly in the discussion, there are issues connected to anatomy and physiology that are also important, like what physically happens to the sphincter and rectal tissues during anal sex. When we include that information, I don't think we can say that science is simply on the side of same-sex intercourse.

You also make an analogy between how Christians today look at the passages on women in ministry (1 Cor.11:13 – 16 and 14:33 – 35) and slavery (Eph. 6:5 – 9, Col. 3:22 – 4:1) with how Christians look at passages on sexuality. And again, on the popular level, I can appreciate why you and others might make this comparison. It seems like a progressive reading in one place justifies a progressive reading in another. But here again, the actual data does not support this parallel. The exegetical and historical issues involved here are quite different.

Take 1 Corinthians 14:33 – 35 as a case in point. Paul has already authorized women to pray and prophesy openly in the congregation in 11:2 – 16. So how do we read ‘women should be silent in church, as the Law says’? Do we simply ignore what Paul said in 11:2 – 16 about women speaking in the congregation out of their spiritual gifts?

It is much more likely that Paul was sarcastically quoting the Corinthians back to themselves, as he does frequently in 1 Corinthians to hold what they are saying up to scrutiny and critique. Here are places where Paul quotes from the Corinthians but reverses or qualifies the quote:

- ‘You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings’ without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. (1 Cor.4:8)
- ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are profitable. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be mastered by anything. ‘Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,’ but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. (1 Cor.6:12 – 13)
- Now concerning the things about which you wrote, ‘It is good for a man not to touch a woman.’ (1 Cor.7:1)
- We know that ‘we all have knowledge.’ Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. (1 Cor.8:1)

This also connects with Paul’s vision of Christ reversing Greek ‘wisdom’ throughout the letter (1 Cor.1:18 – 25; 3:18 – 20). Greek culture did put women into the category of property, without many rights, especially if she were childless. I believe Paul was critiquing this Corinthian view.

This also agrees with the fact that there is no reference in the Law (or the entire Old Testament) to women being silent in the assembly of Israel. In fact, it contradicts the fact that women did speak in Israel and to Israel (Miriam in Ex.15; Hannah in 1 Sam.2; Deborah in Judg.4 – 5; Esther); a woman was the human source of some Scripture (Miriam in Ex.15; Deborah in Judg.4 – 5; arguably Ruth and Naomi; Hannah in 1 Sam.2; King Lemuel’s mother in Proverbs 31); and the prophets envisioned women speaking by the Holy Spirit in the new covenant (Joel 2, quoted very significantly in Acts 2). It concurs with women leaders in the early NT church: Priscilla (Acts 18:18 – 26, Rom.16:3), Lydia, Chloe and Nympha (Acts 16:13 – 15, 40; 1 Cor.1:11, Col.4:15), Phoebe (Rom.16:1), Junia (Rom.16:7), Philip’s daughters and other prophetesses (Acts 21:9), Tryphena, Tryphosa, Euodia, Syntyche (Rom.16:12; Phil.4:2).

This also coincides with Paul’s other references to the Old Testament. Whenever Paul in 1 Corinthians appeals to the Old Testament, he does so by citing a specific text. He never omits the text from which he quotes, nor does he refer to the Old Testament simply as ‘the Law’ as he does in 14:34 – 35. For example:

- For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’ (1:19)
- As it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’ (1:31)
- As it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.’ (2:9)
- For it is written, ‘He is the One who catches the wise in their craftiness’; and again, ‘The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.’ (3:19 – 20)
- For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.’ (9:9)
- As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.’ (10:7)
- In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord. (14:21)
- It is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ (15:45)
- Then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?’ (15:54 – 55)

When citing ‘the Law’ in 14:34 – 35, Paul does not use his standard formula. Why not? He is more likely rebuking a misogynistic rabbinic saying that we know was applied in many Jewish synagogues, or a Corinthian presumption. Furthermore, Paul normally quotes from the Old Testament in a stylistic manner to make his points, but, as Gordon Fee notes, he never quotes from the Law to draw a direct lesson about Christian ethics and behavior. He insists that we are free from the Jewish Sinaitic Law, though still under the ‘law of Christ’ (1 Cor.9:19 – 22). Moreover, Paul wants his readers in Corinth to ‘learn to not go beyond what is written’ with regards to the Old Testament (4:6). His

manner of argumentation using the Old Testament throughout 1 Corinthians strongly suggests that he is intercepting a Corinthian tendency to allegorize the Old Testament to achieve anti-Christian principles.

To strengthen this view, the generic masculine pronouns in 14:36 – 39 could legitimately be read as intentionally masculine, rebuking the *men*: ‘Was it from you [*brothers*] that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks *he* is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.’ This concurs with Jesus welcoming women into his circle of disciples (e.g. Lk.8:1 – 4; 10:38 – 42) and women being the first witnesses to his conception and resurrection. Also, there is a virtual identity between Paul’s earlier concluding statement, ‘we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God’ (1 Cor.11:16), and this one, ‘let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment’ (1 Cor.14:37). Apparently, Jesus encouraged his women disciples to pray and prophecy publicly, and this was handed down to ‘the churches of God’ as ‘the Lord’s commandment.’ Jesus was inaugurating the new covenant prophecy of Joel in which the Spirit would fall on all God’s people, and women would prophesy along with men. The Corinthians were not right in trying to silence women.

If you’re interested in reading more, the scholars who supply more analysis in favor of this view include: Katharine C. Bushnell, (1889), who quotes 18th century lexicographer Johann Friedrich Schleusner and early 20th century Pauline scholar Sir William Ramsay in support also; Jessie Penn-Lewis, (1919); Helen Barrett Montgomery (1924); J. A. Anderson, (1933); Joyce Harper, (1974); Walter C. Kaiser, (1976); Guy B. Dunning, (1977); N. M. Flanagan and E. Hunter Snyder, (1981); Laurence R. Iannacone (1982); David W. Odell-Scott, (1983, 1987, 1989); Chris U. Manus, (1984); Charles H. Talbert, (1984, 1987); Gilbert Bilezikian, (1985); Gordon D. Fee, (1987); Robert W. Allison, (1988); Linda McKinnish Bridges, (1989, 1990). See also the sociological reasoning put forward in support of this position by Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1986), p.108.

But is this just clever exegesis without any foundation in actual early Christian practice? Do we have any historical information outside of the New Testament writings which indicates that the early Christians encourage women to speak in the congregation? We do, and they did. This is helpful in further confirming our exegesis of 1 Corinthians with actual known liturgical practice among the early Christians. T.F. Torrance wrote an article in 1992 called *The Ministry of Women* in which he highlights an amazing mural drawn in one of the earliest Roman catacombs in the *Capella Greca*, within a century after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the mural, seven elders are seated around a table breaking bread and celebrating communion. This is called ‘The Catacomb of Priscilla’ because Priscilla is one of the seven elders seated next to the presiding elder, presumably her husband Aquila. The institution of the seven Christian elders is copied from the institution of seven Jewish elders that led smaller Jewish synagogue communities throughout the Jewish Diaspora, including in the city of Rome. This is impressive for various reasons, but it indicates that Priscilla was an elder in the Christian community at Rome, who presided at the Lord’s Supper and taught the congregation as an elder. Another popular document called *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* – Thecla being a Christian woman who was gifted in teaching and purportedly accompanied Paul in some of his travels – was widely circulated and read in an approved manner in the first few centuries, with the exception of Tertullian. While we are fairly certain that the content of *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* is embellished, that’s not the relevant issue here. What matters is that the early Christians cherished a document that featured a woman teaching. That is some of the historical attestation which confirms our exegesis of 1 Corinthians.

Perhaps you were already familiar with the above arguments, in which case, thanks for indulging me in reading something you already knew. However, I say the above to show that to the best of my understanding, the conversation about changing the historic Christian position on sexuality is a conversation without analogy. The church did not suddenly do an ‘about face’ on science to become more progressive or modern. Nor are we doing an ‘about face’ on women in leadership, or slavery for that matter; we may be getting back to the original meaning and intention of those passages, but we are not setting them aside or overruling them. It is demonstrably false that Christians today are taking a misogynist text which was culturally bound to the human author’s cultural horizon, overturned its intended meaning, and constructed another, more progressive, interpretation in its place. Rather, we have recovered the original meaning of this particular text, which now makes it square neatly with several other key data points, both in Scripture and in history. The combination of solid exegesis and historical precedent is vital to establishing norms for Christian life and lived devotion to God. One without the other may not be enough to establish anything. Slavery, as well, can and must be treated the same way – both exegetically and historically – and the results are very impressive (if you’re interested, I can provide an analysis I did last summer on slavery). So too

biblical sexuality. And here, since we do not have any historical evidence that the early Christians endorsed same-sex relationships, which in itself is significant, we must rely purely on exegesis.

In order to read nuance into some of these biblical statements, you seem to be doing at least three main things, if I understand you correctly. First, you are asking for Scripture to offer an explicit condemnation of a healthy, loving, committed same-sex relationship; in the absence of such a condemnation, you believe that Scripture permits it. Second, you take a person's emotional and romantic satisfaction within a committed same-sex marriage relationship and make it material evidence for your case that same-sex marriages must be part of God's vision. Third, you hang a great deal of your argument on the idea that 'natural' and 'unnatural' are relative to each person's sexual orientation.

At first, I am always drawn to sympathize as much as possible. Yes, a life of sacrifice is very hard and uniquely difficult for each person. Yes, I thoroughly eschew the social pressures and stigmas that you ascribe to the U.S. in the 1950's, some of which lingers on in many places. But I am also having trouble understanding why this is a compelling line of argument for the totality of the issue. On the one hand, there are ample places in Scripture where Jesus and the apostles caution us that living life with Christ is emotionally challenging in deep, deep ways. It involves taking drastic action when we are tempted, akin to Jesus' arresting analogy of gouging out one's own eyes and cutting off one's own hands. It frequently involves rejection from parents, community, and perhaps even one's own spouse and children. At times, we must endure fearsome persecution, and uncomfortable levels of sacrifice. Most of all, it involves a groaning with this present creation, including our own limitations and weaknesses and corrupted human nature, as Jesus continually shapes our desires and priorities, and bears witness to this world through us, limited and weak as we may be, until he comes again to heal and transfigure all. Struggling with various internal and external issues is the Christian norm.

On the other hand, we can go the other direction, that is, even further down the path of your argument, to see what happens. I brought up the situation of a bisexual person and what you might advise them about marriage. Your response was that you don't know bisexual people who want to be in a relationship with more than one person at a time. Now, I also have a few bisexual friends who also feel that, so I can appreciate your response in that sense. For these people that we have in our minds, no doubt your explanation would be mostly satisfying.

But I also know bisexual people who think that the whole idea of marriage to one person is bogus to begin with. My friend TG, for instance, says that his sexual orientation makes it impossible to be satisfied in the constraining bind of a two person commitment. And of course, there has been a spate of recent articles from GLBT and straight people alike saying that monogamy is outdated, impractical, and impossible at least for some. For example, sociobiologists suggest with all seriousness that since men have an evolutionary interest in spreading their genes as far as possible, male infidelity is 'natural.' Given the discussions about Romans 1 about what is 'natural' and 'unnatural,' that's a significant use of a very significant word. More and more people today favor an open marriage, not just easy divorce, etc. for the same reasons you've put forward for your case. The challenge involved with your approach is that you are trying to retain elements of a very conservative view of marriage, while taking a fairly central aspect of that view and making it negotiable or symbolic. Yet if gender is negotiable, metaphorical, or symbolic, then can't the number of persons be negotiable, too? Why can't two really represent three? Or four? And what about permanence in marriage? Why can't permanence just represent 'meaningful for the time being'? Or, what makes 'sexual orientation' such a firm category for everyone, after all? What if a person does not experience their sexual orientation the way you do, but much more fluidly? I know many such people. At least from their perspective, you would be asking them to restrict their choices and their emotional well-being. What basis do you have for saying that God's vision for them is different from their felt desires?

You appeal to God's creation order as normative for two people, for the quality of relationship between those two people, and for prohibiting all other kinds of sexual activity outside those two people, but not normative for the gender of those two people. On the exegetical level, you leave me unsure of how you do that. I'll start with Matthew 19:1 – 12, a passage that you do not seem to consider to be very important in the discussion; I think we will find it to be very important.

(1) Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:1 – 12 places marriage and sexuality into an unfolding story involving God's creation order and Jesus' renewal of that creation order along a trajectory God intended for human beings. In Matthew 19:2, the Pharisees ask about the legitimate grounds for divorce, but Jesus treats the subject of

marriage more fully than that. Jesus quotes from both Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 (in Mt.19:4) and Genesis 2:4 – 25 (in Mt.19:5) to affirm marriage as monogamous ('two become one'), opposite gendered as 'male and female', and binding ('God has joined together, let no man separate'). This was God's original intent. Significantly, Jesus did not have to refer to 'male and female' (Genesis 1:27) to answer the Pharisees, but he did anyway. By defining God's original intent for marriage more comprehensively than how the Pharisees asked for it, Jesus makes clear that 'male and female' is not an optional inclusion. He affirms that, while each individual person is in the image of God, a 'marriage of male and female' is in the image of God because opposite-sex marriage alone can properly bear the 'fruit' of multiplying human life that mirrors God's own creative activity and enjoyment in making each individual human life. Same-sex unions would fail the creation mandate to multiply; it would not reflect this rather vital aspect of the image of God; and it would thus be an alienation from God's original commission to humanity. Hence, gender is irreducible and non-negotiable. God's intent for marriage involves a union of male and female. The connection between Eve and Adam's rib even suggests that God's intent for marriage involves a *reunion* of male and female.

Jesus even identifies *God's authorial intent in Scripture* with respect to the issue of marriage and sexual expression. '*He who created them male and female...said...*' In other words, the Creator God of Genesis 1 *said* the words of Genesis 2:24. You write in your treatment of Genesis 2, 'The primary reason God gives for their union here is not to procreate or to rear biological children, but to have a partner or a helper.' However, Jesus links Genesis 2 inextricably to Genesis 1:27 in a way that you try to separate. In contrast to your statement, Jesus includes opposite gender as part of what it means to have a marriage partner or helper. This is another reason why Matthew 19:1 – 12 is so significant to the discussion. Jesus binds together Genesis 1 and 2. By talking about marriage in this way, Jesus identifies God's authorial intent in Genesis 1 and 2: It was written to remind us of what had once been, and to anchor a beginning point for the story of God and us. This anchors our understanding of God's vision for human relationships and what it means for us to live within that vision in a restored way. Because of Matthew 19:1 – 12, any Christian reflection on marriage and sexual expression must start with Genesis, treating it as normative, not incidental. There is a straight line of continuity between Genesis 1 and 2 to Matthew 19:1 – 12.

(2) This brings us to Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. In Matthew 19, in the course of this conversation with the Pharisees, Jesus helpfully explains how we are to view the Jewish Sinaitic Law today. He says that the Sinaitic Law code given in Exodus 19 and onwards was a temporary concession to human hardness of heart, and a deviation from the creation order given from Genesis 1 and 2. Marriage 'from the beginning' (in v.4 and v.8) did not include divorce. The intermediate 'divorce certificate' of Deuteronomy 24:1 – 4 was 'permitted' and not 'commanded.' Notice the critical shift in language from the Pharisees' question ('Why then did Moses *command*') to Jesus' response ('Moses *permitted*'). Jesus indicates that some aspects of the original creation ideal of marriage were retained and commanded (e.g. monogamy, male and female), while others were reluctantly relaxed (e.g. binding permanence into divorce). All the references in the Sinaitic Law to marriage and sexuality, not simply the ones referring to same-sex intercourse in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, are best understood as part of this larger story. Adultery, rape, promiscuity, incest, and bestiality all violate the original creation order as well. Those aspects of God's original creation ideal of marriage were not relaxed to accommodate for Israel's hardness of heart.

You make a statement heavy with significance when you say, '[Leviticus] 18:22 and 20:13 by themselves would have application to male same-sex relationships were we still living under the Mosaic Law—but we are not.' I can affirm that we are not living under the Sinaitic Law, and that largely explains why we do not carry out the *civic* punishments specified there because we do not have a specific *civic* vision of life and devotion to God. Christians are not bound to a land as Mosaic Israel was; we are not a separate civil society; etc. In fact, once again Matthew 19:1 – 12 is very helpful because Jesus shows that only his followers are capable of living in such a way because they are the only human beings who have allowed him to remove their 'hardness of heart.' This immediately means that the teachings of Jesus cannot be politically legislated on non-Christians, at least fully. But the Sinaitic Law does indeed serve to illustrate for Christians what it means to *live within the story* between original creation and Jesus' new creation. It expresses prophetic hopes that inform the *moral* vision of life and devotion to God that Jesus opens up before us and calls us into. Yes there were some things in the Sinaitic Law that are not part of the original creation order, but there are some things that unequivocally are. Those things are retained and elevated in the New Testament.

If Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 were entirely passed over by the New Testament writers, then we would still have to think through their significance and their relation to other texts and themes in Scripture. A note on the use of the

Sinaitic Law might be helpful. There are issues – sexual and otherwise – which are mentioned in the casuistic law framework of the Sinaitic Law but not explicitly covered in the New Testament. Take for example bestiality, the goring ox hurting or killing a neighbor, how much thieves should recompense their victims for theft, etc. Even though we don't have explicit teaching on these problems in the New Testament documents, we can make reasonable conclusions about them because we live in a story unfolding from creation to new creation, and because the Sinaitic Law gives us some indication about the magnitude of these issues in a place along the timeline of that story, even if we don't live in that place and time in the story any more. Hence, Paul appears to take the Levitical prohibition on incest as a true exposition of God's creational ideal in human marriage, and carries it over as valid in the church; he applies it in 1 Corinthians 5, not because we are under the Sinaitic Law as a whole, but because the Sinaitic Law spoke truly about the issue of incest as it was informed by God's original creation order and Jesus' new creation renewal of that order. This is why, even if Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 did not reappear in the New Testament, we would still have to think it through and come to a similar conclusion. However, in our case, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 do in fact reappear in the New Testament.

(3) When you read the word '*arsenokoitai*' in 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 and 1 Timothy 1:10, you rightly state that this word was rare in Greek literature, and Paul was in fact the first to use it in 1 Corinthians. You give examples of other compound words whose meaning is not necessarily derived from the two words used to construct them. You suggest that the nature of the 'vice lists' indicate that cultic sex, sexual coercion, or economic-sexploitation are in view, not loving and committed same-sex relationships. All of which are accurate points to bring up. However, you do not mention that the Greek Septuagint translation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 is translated as follows: 'Whoever lies with a man as with a woman [*meta arsenos koiten gynaikos*], they have both done an abomination.' Duke Professor of New Testament Richard B. Hays, following Robin Scroggs, says, 'This is almost certainly the idiom from which the noun *arsenokoitai* was coined.' (Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, p.382) Paul appears to have taken the verb form *arsenos koiten* into its noun form *arsenokoitai*. Now the paucity of the word *arsenokoitai* in every other place in the extant Greek literature makes a very different case and paints a very different picture: Paul was deeply familiar with the Greek Septuagint translation of Leviticus; he was deeply committed to being a Jewish creational theologian in his own right as a Pharisee; he was now living under the teaching of Jesus, the consummate Jewish creational theologian, including of course Jesus' own teaching on marriage; and he had no other reason to put these two words *arsenos* and *koiten* together as a single noun except that the Greek Septuagint already did in verb form. In your exegesis, you do not treat this question or consider its significance.

Instead, you write, 'But the male homosexuality verses are never cited in the NT, by Jesus or anyone else. Although some argue that Paul's negative comments about the lustful same-sex behavior of idol worshippers in Romans 1 constitute a reiteration of the Levitical prohibitions, Paul does not make reference to Leviticus in Romans as a basis for his statements.' I cannot agree with you here. Given that Paul makes a compound word *arsenokoitai* from the Greek Septuagint wording of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which were unambiguous blanket prohibitions on same-sex intercourse, we can in fact say that the male homosexuality verses *are* cited in the New Testament. Not directly in Romans, but in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. Given that Paul was also very much a Jewish creational theologian in the same mold as Jesus and deeply devoted to what Jesus taught as far as new creation ethics, we can further understand why he would say this.

This oversight leads you to also not consider the intertextual relationship between Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 on the one hand, and 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 and 1 Timothy 1:10 on the other. What is the relationship between these texts? Or, perhaps a better and broader way to put that question is: What is the relationship between the Jewish Sinaitic Law on the one hand, and the teaching of Jesus and the apostles on the other? I think the relationship between creation, Israel, and Jesus' new creation has incredible bearing on the topic of marriage and sexuality, which I explained above. There are many other points of correspondence between the Pentateuch and Paul's thought that confirms how he operates within the developing story of God. Yet you ranked 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 11 and 1 Timothy 1:10 as having low significance in the conversation, with Leviticus being mid-level in significance. That's puzzling to me. Given the intertextual relationship here specifically, and the broader theological relationship more generally, your assessment may need to be revised. 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy should have at least the same level of significance as Leviticus, if not higher. In fact, in the light of the story unfolding from creation, through Israel, and into Jesus' new creation, as Jesus explained in Matthew 19:1 – 12, for instance, I would tend to say that all these passages are still very high in importance.

You also make the case that Paul was writing in the midst of temple same-sex prostitution and other unequal same-sex relationships. You believe that Paul was simply not exposed to loving, committed same-sex relationships, so it was the *type* of same-sex relationships he was rejecting, not the whole category. Had he been exposed to an appropriate level of commitment and love between same-sex partners, so the argument goes, he would have qualified what he was saying. Can you provide me with sources for making this historical judgment? According to an anthropologist named Jenell Williams Paris, in her book *The End of Sexual Identity* (2011), which is the most recent summary of the historical data that I've seen, Paul would have known about committed, long term same-sex relationships: "There is literary evidence of loving, long-term same-sex relationships between men, and of relations between high-status Roman men and freeborn boys and girls. Some argue that Roman sexual ideals around the time of Christ are best viewed as numerous, including a high value on procreative, marital sex with room for same-sex relations among youth, between dominant men and social subordinates, and between men as equals" (p.65). "Ancient Greek and Roman artifacts and literature show long-term, loving, same-sex sexual relationships between social equals" (p.68). If this is the case, then Paul did in fact have the opportunity to nuance what he was teaching. He could have affirmed loving, freely undertaken, egalitarian, committed same-sex relationships. But he did not appear to do that, here or elsewhere.

(4) In 1 Corinthians 5 – 7, for example, we find Paul working out of an understanding of God's unfolding story from creation, Israel, and Jesus' new creation in much the same way Jesus did, exemplified in Matthew 19:1 – 12. We know that he has Genesis 2:24 in mind because he quotes from it in 1 Corinthians 6:16: 'For He says 'The two shall become one flesh.' Like Jesus, Paul ascribes authorship of that statement to God Himself, not simply to Moses. All throughout this section, he corrects the places where the Corinthians had gone wrong against the creation order and God's original vision for marriage from Genesis 1 and 2. In 1 Corinthians 5, he condemns the sexual relationship between a man and his stepmother (incent not of blood-relations; an example of how to be informed in part by the Sinaitic Law, as I suggested above). Next, he says that the Corinthians had already stopped practicing same-sex relations, using the terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor.6:9, since that would have been understood as against God's creation order. Then, he gives balanced advice about whether his Christian readers should get married or not. Significantly, he corrects the Corinthians' denigration of marriage by referring to husband and wife specifically: 'But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.' (1 Cor.7:2 – 3). Paul takes it for granted that Christian marriage is opposite-gendered. If he did not actually believe that, here was an opportunity for him to affirm loving and committed same-sex marriage as a possibility, and encourage Christians to pursue that as a viable option. But he did not do so, and the fact that he did not is quite significant on its own right. He was clearly a Jewish Christian theologian working, like Jesus did, out of a creational paradigm uniting Genesis 1 and 2, where the 'two' – i.e. 'male and female' persons – 'shall become one flesh.'

(5) In Romans 1:26 – 27, you argue that the phrase '*para physin*' should mean 'unnatural relative to their own personal sexual orientation.' But you did not acknowledge the fact that this way of reading *para physin* completely neglects Paul's cultural context and how other people used that phrase during his very own time period. They did not use it referring to an individual's personal desires, but to the biological order. While Gentile culture was certainly permissive and often enthusiastically so, same-sex relations had their own detractors back then as well, outside of Christians. Those detractors used the phrase '*para physin*' in the same way Paul does. Plato (fourth century BC) writes, 'When male unites with female for procreation the pleasure experienced is held to be due to nature [*kata physin*], but contrary to nature [*para physin*] when male mates with male or female with female' (*Laws* I, 636C). He speaks categorically of same-sex unions. He goes on later to say that he is referring to reproductive capacity, and hence the biological order, not just active-passive sex roles and who plays what role (*Laws* I, 839A). The Stoic-Cynic philosopher Dio Chrysostom says that the goddess Aphrodite 'stands for the natural [*kata physin*] intercourse and union of the male and female,' whereas a society that permits brothel-keeping and other vices will soon find that human lusts will carry people still further: 'Is there any possibility that this lecherous class would refrain from dishonoring and corrupting the males, making their clear and sufficient limit that set by nature [*physin*]?' The male whose appetite is insatiate in all things...will turn his assault against the male quarters...' Diodorus Siculus (~50 BC) discusses a case of mistaken same-sex relations as *para physin*; the woman received 'unnatural [*para physin*] embraces' (*History* 32.10.8 – 11). Plutarch (~100 AD) contrasts 'natural' [*te physei*] love between men and women to 'union contrary to nature [*para physin*] with males.' He repeats shortly afterwards that those men who consort with males do so *para physin* (*Dialogue on Love* 751 C, E). Hence, *kata physin* (natural) and *para physin* (unnatural) was standard and consistent language among the Greek moral philosophers for the biological

order, and they used it to refer to opposite-sex and same-sex relations, respectively, without any further qualification given for the emotional or relational quality of such relationships.

Even more significant is the Hellenistic Jewish world and how they used the phrase *para physin*. Josephus, for instance, who was Paul's contemporary, refers to the same-sex relations of the people of Elis and Thebes as *para physin*, including it with incest as some of the 'monstrous and unnatural [*para physin*] pleasures' of the Gentiles (*Against Apion* 2.273 – 275). More examples of pagan and Jewish usage of *para physin* are found in Richard B. Hays, 'Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1' in *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (1986), p.191; J.B. DeYoung, 'The Meaning of 'Nature' in Romans 1 and Its Implications for Biblical Perspectives of Homosexual Behavior' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988), p.429 – 447; Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p.59 – 60; V. P. Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p.58 – 67.

Hence, what is 'natural' (*kata physin*) or 'unnatural' (*para physin*) is not measured against individualistic desires, but against biological and/or theological realities larger than us. Plato, Plutarch and the other Gentile critics of same-sex relations have the biological order in mind when they think of what is 'natural.' This coincides with Josephus and other Jewish sources, who as Jews, think of God's creation order as 'natural' with the fall as a disturbance in that order and a disruption of it.

Paul himself refers to the creation order in Romans. 'For since the creation of the world,' he begins, God's power has been evident in 'what was made' (Rom.1:20). Humanity's fall involved a temptation towards knowledge of a sort, which was in fact detrimental, so Paul describes the fall of the human mind in those terms: 'They became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools' (Rom.1:21 – 22). Rather than be the 'image of God' which we were created to be, we worshiped 'an image in the form of corruptible man' and creatures and debased ourselves (Rom.1:23ff.). Hence, the word 'image,' which occurred first in Genesis 1:27 appears but in a travesty. People began to primarily fear the created world above all things and tried to manipulate it through idolatry and manipulation of others, something narrated by the iconic city of Cain in Genesis 4:16 – 25. Paul calls God 'the Creator' (Rom.1:25). And most interestingly, he does not use the standard Greek terms for 'women and men' in Romans 1:26 – 27 but instead uses the terms 'female' and 'male,' probably referring to Genesis 1:27, 'male and female He created them.' Sexual relations between same-sex partners are *para physin*, unnatural, and they reflect an alienation from the created order and the Creator.

This is where the argument from Scripture's supposed silence breaks down. That argument goes: Since the Bible is completely silent about loving and committed same-sex relationships in particular, it must approve of them. But this argument fails to perceive the relationship between what is prohibited negatively and what is commanded positively. Arson, for instance, is never singled out as a problem in the Bible at all, ever. However, respect for other people and their property is mentioned repeatedly, so this certainly indicates that arson would be a sinful act. Making a false ID is never singled out as a problem, ever. But telling the truth and bearing true witness are repeatedly commanded, so this certainly means that making a false ID would be sinful. Bestiality is never singled out by the New Testament, ever. Yet there is a lot of material in the New Testament on human sexuality, and from this we are certain that bestiality is prohibited by the New Testament despite the fact that it is not mentioned there explicitly. We know this because there is a relationship between what is prohibited negatively and what is commanded positively, since the former flows out of the latter. The argument from silence is shortsighted and overly narrow in its request to see one issue taken out of the whole and singled out for explicit comment. The reason why same-sex intercourse is lumped in with adultery, promiscuity, rape, incest, and bestiality is because all those actions run contrary to God's original vision in creation that human marriage be monogamous, male and female, and binding.

Well, that was quite a lot, so thanks again for following along and engaging. I know it is emotionally and intellectually costly to revisit the exegesis you did in your original paper. Hopefully this is not just rehashing data you've already considered, but since you didn't include Matthew 19:1 – 12 and some other important points about the other passages, I thought I'd offer them.

Best,  
Mako