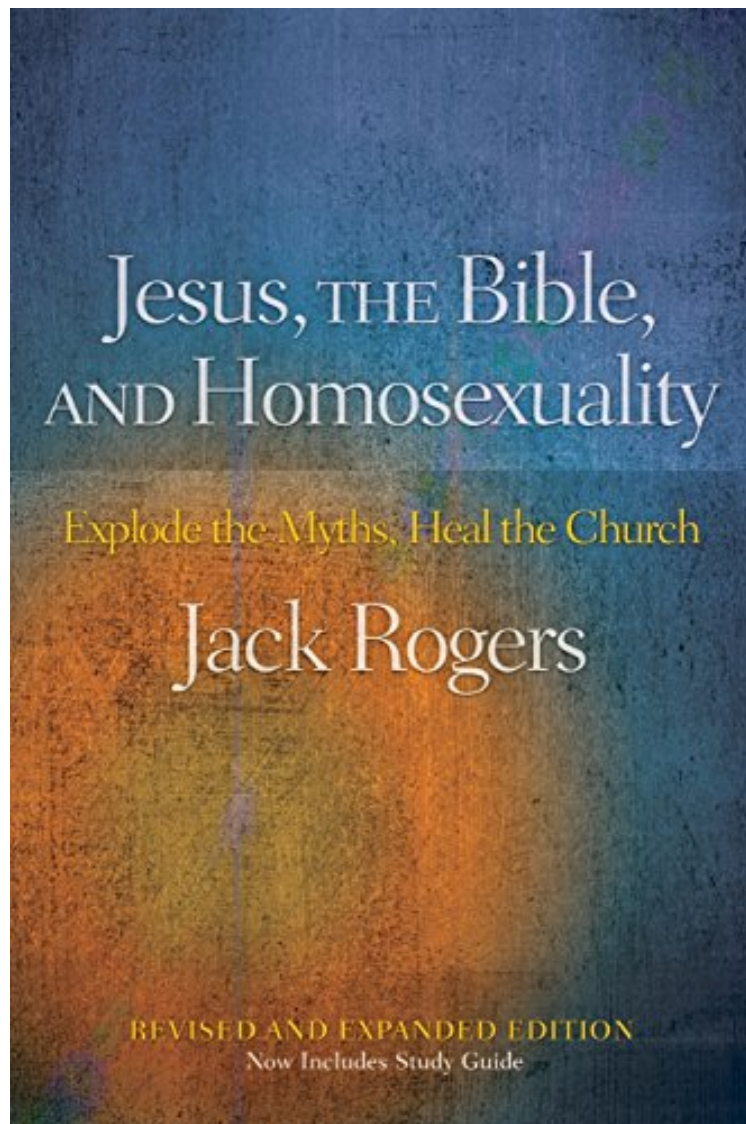


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## **Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality, Revised and Expanded Edition: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church**

*Jack Rogers*

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#95503 in Books Jack Rogers 2009-04-28 2009-04-14Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.21 x .58 x 6.14l, .85 #File Name: 066423397X208 pagesJesus the Bible and Homosexuality Explode the Myths Heal the Church | File size: 21.Mb

**Jack Rogers : Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality, Revised and Expanded Edition: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality, Revised and Expanded Edition: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book. By Hawaii Ellen This is a useful book and brings a nice perspective of how Christianity has learned to move from slavery to integration, from sexual oppression to sexual equality (well, sort of), and now needs to do the same thing with homophobia to move to embracing our LGBT community. It uses traditional historical/critical analysis for Biblical interpretation, which is the mainstream manner of interpretation for over 100 years, to show how a literal translation of the "gay-bashing" scriptures is so cruel and inappropriate. The perspective is heavy on Presbyterian history and governance, but can be readily applied to any denomination. I just wish the Presbyterian church and other denominations were as open-minded and loving as this book is. A great book on the same topic is *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality*, available via too.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Biblical Scholar Tackles a Difficult Subject By Lorna Collins Jack Rogers set out to defend the anti-gay position he believed contained in the Bible. But as he pursued his studies, he discovered many of his preconceived ideas simply didn't hold up. A thoughtful consideration of this divisive subject by a biblical scholar. I read the book as part of a class offered by my church. The book and the class were eye-opening. Highly recommended--but only if approached with an open mind.5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Decent But Still Not Convincing By Nick Peters When reading Rogers, it's looking again like so much of this is "Let's avoid one extreme by going to the other one." I can side with what he says on page 18 about the problems of a literalistic approach to Scripture and taking some Scripture out of context with tragic consequences. We should all want to avoid that. While I do harp on literalism, there are some passages that are straight-forward and some that the surrounding context further indicates that what is going on is what the straight-forward reading indicates. This is the kind that says let us not look at what the verses say, but let us look to the attitude of Christ. Now naturally, we should look to the attitude of Christ, but if all the verses say the same thing and there is no movement of progression or change or any counter-examples of what a verse says, then perhaps we should consider that that is what Christ would have us say on the matter. If the Scripture is silent, then we can be silent, but if it is not, we should listen to it. Rogers wants to give us seven guidelines for interpreting Scripture. I will be presenting my response to each. I found some of them problematic simply for being so subjective. The first is to recognize that Jesus is the center of Scripture. Always realize that with the Old Testament themes of Messiah and covenant. Keeping Christ as center aids in interpretation. (p. 53) Now there can be no question for the Christian that Christ is the focal point of Scripture, but that also doesn't provide us with much information for interpretation. I also encourage Christians when reading the Old Testament to at first NOT be a Christian. What I mean is don't read it with the Christian lens on. Read it as you would a person at the time who knows nothing about a coming Jesus and decide how you would interpret it then based on where you are. Would you immediately conclude Isaiah 53 is Messianic? Maybe. Maybe not. What purpose would you see in the Levitical Laws? How would you see a prophecy like that of Daniel 9? So with the first, I do think it's good to keep Christ as central, but the problem can be in our society, we can all say we do that and all say we're right as a result. It's the classic problem of the church coming together for a vote and vote as "The Spirit leads you to vote." Unfortunately, the Spirit can't seem to decide what He wants in those cases. On p. 56 we find the second that says to let the focus be on the plain text of Scripture with the grammatical and historical context instead of allegory and subjective fantasy. For the most part, I don't have much problem with this. However, I do wonder about the "plain text." What is plain to us is not necessarily plain to the original readers and vice versa. I doubt that that would be seriously objected to however. Yet here, Rogers will come up with a point of contention in the debate. Is it wise to take statements that condemn idolatrous and immoral sexual activity and apply them to contemporary Christians who are gay or lesbian and neither idolatrous or immoral? (p. 57) I have no wish to quibble by saying we're all idolatrous to some extent, but I think we can on immorality. The very question at the heart is "Is this immoral?" and you don't answer that by arguing "They're not doing anything immoral." Of course, if we take the Levitical Laws, we could go across the board with them. What about the incestual relationships? Are those okay provided they're loving and committed and not done in idol worship? Would bestiality be okay? Was Paul wrong in 1 Cor. 5? When we get to guideline 3, I start getting concerned. Rogers's rule is "Depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting and applying God's message." (p. 57) The problem is many of us can do what I call, punting to the Spirit, where we don't have any basis for our claims and just say that this is what the Holy Spirit is saying. Of course, we're back to the church problem again. How many people disagree on what the text says and say the Holy Spirit is telling them what it says? P. 59 says to be guided by the doctrinal consensus of the church, which is the rule of faith. Now to an extent, I don't disagree with this. If you are coming up with a new interpretation, you need to have some basis for it especially if it goes against what the church has taught for a long time. Of course, there can be new information found such as when we found the Dead Sea Scrolls that can shed new light and of course, the new claim can be right, but it had better have good evidence for it. On p. 61, we get to the fifth that says that all interpretations be in accordance with the love of God and the love of neighbor. Again, most anyone would not disagree, but what is love? So many people today say that if you oppose homosexuality, then you are not being loving. Aren't God's people supposed to love? It's this bizarre idea that love means that you don't ever say that anyone or anything is wrong. In reality, if you love anything, you will have to hate. You will hate because you love what you love and want the good of what you love and will be opposed to anything that goes against that. Love is not a rule that says anything goes and you don't condemn. If you have children, you will not let them play with

matches or guns because you love them and you will not tolerate the schoolyard bully punching them because "You need to show love to him." The next is on p. 62. It is that the Bible requires earnest study to establish the best text and interpret the influence of the historical and cultural context. Of course, this is absolutely true. One must seriously study the Bible, a lesson it would be good to see internet atheists learn. Rogers already has an example citing Furnish on Romans 1 with the idea that same-sex intercourse compromises what would be seen in a patriarchal society as the dominant role of males over females. I find this claim problematic. There were writings that referred to nature, such as in Cicero, that point to the idea that the male and female body fit together. (It's hard to think that no one back then ever noticed that.) The second century physician Soranus wrote about parts of the body not being used as they were meant to be in homosexuality. Furthermore, Paul is writing this from a Jewish perspective and in Judaism, the opposition to homosexual behavior was the most intense. Why if they were just copying the culture around them? It's furthermore difficult to think that the wrath of God was pouring down on the world because they were questioning patriarchy. On p. 64, we read that we are to seek to interpret a passage in light of all of the Bible. Again, I can agree to a point. I think we should interpret the passage on its own merit first and then in the end go to the whole, but I doubt Rogers would disagree with that. Rogers does say later that "When we recognize that all of us, of whatever sexual orientation, are created by God, that we are all fallen sinners, and that we can all be redeemed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, homosexuality will no longer be a divisive issue." I don't know anyone in the debate who is contesting that. I hold that homosexual practice is wrong, but that the people are made by God and are fallen sinners and can be redeemed. Of course, if he's wanting to say they were created that way, that could be contested and that would need to be established and to my knowledge, it hasn't, but I know of no one who is denying the power of Christ with redemption. When Rogers gets to the text, it's not much better. Rogers argues that the Levitical statements are all about male superiority and if you undermine that, then that leads to the death penalty. It's hard to think of how all the other incestual laws and the laws against child sacrifice and bestiality go against male superiority, but somehow Rogers thinks they do. It's also hard to think that the other nations, as the ending of Lev. 18 and 20 indicate, are being judged for going against male superiority. Does Rogers want to argue that God is sexist? On p. 73, Rogers says that the Gospel Paul is proclaiming does not center on sexuality but the universality of sin and grace in Christ. Sure, but so what? The issue of what we can and cannot eat should not be read the way it is because of the Gospel? Paul after all did not write this whole letter just to say you can eat X kinds of food. There's a lot more to it. Paul did not write the letter just to condemn homosexual behavior, but what if that is a part of what he did? Rogers also argues that for Paul, unnatural was a synonym for unconventional. Rogers points to the illustration of the olive tree in Romans 11 as his example. This doesn't really work since the olive tree is not an entity with its own will and desires. When we speak of what is natural for it, we speak of what will happen following the course of nature. By the course of nature, shoots from another tree would not walk on over and attach themselves to the olive tree. When we apply this to humans, we are not talking about convention, as if olive trees grow by convention. We are talking about design and this time the participants can choose to act according to their design. Rogers also argues that this was about passion and having too much of an excess. I find this an odd argument. While Paul can say in 1 Cor. 7 that he wishes all were as he was and willing to be celibate, he doesn't ever talk about an excess of sex. He never says to the married couples "Hey! You two! Let's not have too much of that hanky panky going on! Please try to desire your spouse a little bit less!" Instead, if he has any danger he wants to warn against, it's married couples having too little sex. Paul is saying "If you want to avoid sex, do it by mutual consent and then only for a short time." Of course, Paul would condemn sex outside of the covenant and he does, but it is not the case that we have Paul saying people are desiring sex too much. It's what they do with it. Thus, I find Rogers's argument strange and lacking. Rogers says that if Paul walked into the Playboy Mansion today or observed college students "hooking up" he would condemn such an action not because heterosexual sex is wrong, but because of the context. I can't help but wonder at this point if Rogers would say the same if he was told that these were "loving relationships." That does seem to be the qualifier for him. To his credit, Rogers does interact with Gagnon and points out that Jesus said some are born eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, this is an odd response. Rogers and others will say that the ancient world knew nothing of homosexual orientation (see p. 58 of his book) and yet here, Jesus is talking about people with a homosexual orientation supposedly. Which is it? Furthermore, these people are people who in fact do not just avoid sex with women, but rather sex with ANYONE whatsoever. If Rogers was consistent, then he would be saying that those who are born eunuchs then should avoid all sex. Jesus never says anything about these eunuchs having sex with others. Rogers also says that Gagnon thinks all homosexuals have willfully chosen their orientation. No source is given for this and from my interactions with Gagnon, this is not the case. In fact, about Rogers's statement, Gagnon points to what he has said in his book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. "The latest scientific research on homosexuality simply reinforces what Scripture and common sense already told us: human behavior results from a complex mixture of biologically related desires (genetic, intrauterine, post-natal brain development), familial and environmental influences, human psychology, and repeated choices. Whatever predisposition to homosexuality may exist is a far cry from predestination or determinism and easy to harmonize with Paul's understanding of homosexuality. It is often stated by scholars supportive of the homosexual lifestyle that Paul believed that homosexual behavior was something freely chosen, based on the threefold

use of they exchanged (metellaxan) in Rom 1:23, 25, 26. The use of the word exchange may indeed suggest that Paul assumed an element of choice was involved, though for the phenomenon globally conceived and not necessarily for each individual. Certainly, the larger context in which these verses are found indicates a willing suppression of the truth about God and Gods design for the created order (1:18). And indeed who would debate the point that homosexual behavior is void of all choice? Even a predisposition does not compel behavior. Romans 1-8 indicates as well that Paul considered the sinful passions that buffet humanity to be innate and controlling. Corresponding to the threefold they exchanged is the threefold God gave them over (paredoken autous ho theos) in 1:24, 26, 28. Rather than exert a restraining influence, God steps aside and allows human beings to be controlled by preexisting desires. Paul paints a picture of humanity subjugated and ruled by its own passions; a humanity not in control but controlled. . . . Based on a reading of Rom 5:12-21 and 7:7-23, it is clear that Paul conceived of sin as innate . . . . Paul viewed sin as a power operating in the flesh and in human members, experienced since birth as a result of being descendants of Adam. . . . For Paul all sin was in a certain sense innate in that human beings dont ask to feel sexual desire, or anger, or fear, or selfishness they just do, despite whether they want to experience such impulses or not. If Paul could be transported into our time and told that homosexual impulses were at least partly present at birth, he would probably say, I could have told you that or at least I can work that into my system of thought. (pp. 430-31; boldface added) "For the sake of argument, Gagnon could be wrong in what he says. You could disagree with him entirely here. There is something he cannot be wrong on. He cannot be wrong in that this is what he believes. This does not indicate that he thinks this is willfully chosen. We might as well ask if Vietnam vets chose to have PTSD. Rogers also thinks Gagnon goes beyond Scripture in pointing to design, but this is interesting because much of the rest of the book is Rogers talking about interacting with homosexual couples. This can be touching I'm sure, but what does it have to do with interpretation? Would the argument work if I introduced you to several couples of mothers and sons living together in a loving incestual relationship? Obviously not. So what difference does seeing "loving homosexual couples" have to do with this? Just list any group down the line and see if you would apply the same standard. In the end, Rogers does not really have a convincing case. It looks more like he knew what he wanted to find and he went to find it. It's easy to go along with the culture many times in Christianity, but he who marries the spirit of the age will be destined to die a widow. In Christ, Nick Peters Deeper Waters Christian Ministries.

In this revised and expanded best seller, evangelical theologian and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Jack Rogers makes a biblical case for equal rights for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Throughout history, he observes, Christianity has moved towards ever greater openness and inclusiveness. Today's church is led by many of those who were once excluded: people of color, women, and divorced and remarried people. He argues that when we interpret the Bible through the lens of Jesus' redemptive life and ministry, we see that the church is called to grant equal rights to all people. Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality describes Rogers' own change of mind and heart on the issue, charts the church's history of using biblical passages to oppress marginalized groups, argues for a Christ-centered reading of Scripture, debunks stereotypes about people who are LGBT, refutes the conventional wisdom about the texts that are often used against people who are LGBT, and presents ideas for how the church can heal itself and move forward again. A fascinating combination of personal narrative, theology, and church history, this book is essential reading for all concerned with the future of the church and the health of the nation. The revised and expanded edition also includes: \* A new preface with 'stories from the road' as a result of Rogers's two year book tour in support of the first edition, \* Updates on recent developments within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), \* A new chapter that examines God's radical welcome for all who have faith as revealed in Scripture, \* A new appendix that maps the recent progress toward LGBT equality in major U.S. denominations, and \* A study guide for group or personal reflection.

.com "The book is masterful at describing how the church can learn from its past struggles in moving forward beyond the current divide. Rogers issues a prophetic and persuasive call for a more inclusive and more faithful church." Jeffrey S. Siker, Professor Chair, Department of Theological Studies, Loyola Marymount University "A valuable book has gotten even better in this new revised edition. Rogers's new prefatory relating of particular stories is compelling, the appendix draws important information together from other denominations, and the new chapter 8 will be useful to many. I strongly recommend this book." J. Philip Wogaman, Professor Emeritus of Christian ethics, Wesley Theological Seminary, and former senior minister at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. "Searching Scripture even more widely, sharing the progress toward equality across a broad range of denominations and describing his encounters with so many devout LGBT folk, Jack shows us how we can biblically and truthfully include all our children in the gospel promise, 'Jesus loves me, this I know.'" Rev. Janet Edwards, Parish Associate, Community of Reconciliation, Pittsburgh, PA "Rogers is more than a professor. He is one of the great evangelists of our time. He has heard the good news of God's love for all people, and he has given his life to sharing that news with others. This is a book that saves lives." Ted A. Smith, Assistant Professor of Ethics and Society, Vanderbilt Divinity School.com Praise for the Revised and Expanded Edition "Rogers offers both a rigorous yet accessible theological

study and a model of spiritual discernment that is essential reading for anyone struggling to reconcile their faith with the needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community." Harry Knox, Director, Religion and Faith Program, The Human Rights Campaign "The compelling biblical and theological case Jack Rogers makes for the full acceptance of gay couples is simply impossible to ignore." William Stacy Johnson, Princeton Theological Seminary, author of *A Time to Embrace: Same-gender Relationships in Religion, Law, and Politics*. "Rogers's biblical scholarship, humane love, and openness to evidence helps us discern what Jesus would do, and what we, his people, should do." David G. Myers, Hope College, co-author, *What God Has Joined Together: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage*. "I'm overflowing with gratitude for this work. Jack Rogers continues 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry,' directing his gifts as prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher to building new understandings and relationships in the church." Rev. Deborah A. Block, Pastor, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Milwaukee, WI

About the Author Jack Rogers is Professor Emeritus of Theology at San Francisco Theological Seminary in California. He was moderator of the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Roger's books include *Reading the Bible and the Confessions*, *Claiming the Center: Churches and Conflicting Worldviews*, and *Presbyterian Creeds*, all published by WJK.