

## Some Resources for a Study of Homosexuality and the Christian Church

### Moravian Sources (In chronological order)

Issues of *The Hinge* after 1995 are available on line at:

<http://moravianseminary.edu/moravian-studies/the-hinge.html>

*The Hinge*, vol. 1, no. 4 (April 1991). “Toward Healing and Wholeness: Personal Reflections on Sexuality and Spirituality.”

*Moravian pastor Douglas Bauder tells the story of his sometimes painful and troubled journey toward realizing that he is gay, and presents his perspectives on his sexual nature and a brief survey of the scripture passages commonly cited regarding homosexuality. The 7 respondents – both pastors and lay persons – clearly present both sides of the debate, and Doug responds to each with courage and grace. (P)*

*The Hinge*, vol. 2, no. 2 (October 1991). “The Place and Authority of Scripture in the Moravian Church.”

*Moravian pastor Stephen O. Nicholas and lay author Mary Borhek each use the topic of homosexuality as a test case in discussing the role of the Bible in today’s Moravian Church. Each presents his/her “side” in a well-reasoned argument, worth reading thoughtfully; perhaps the most helpful paragraph in the issue is that written in response by the late Bishop Warren Sautebin: “... in my years as a pastor and a church administrator, I have found that such matters as homosexuality – and heterosexuality – are best dealt with from the perspective of pastoral care rather than authoritarian scriptural interpretation. ... The subject of how Christians should deal with the subject of sexuality is more closely related to the compassionate nature of Jesus Christ than it is to any particular interpretation of a specific biblical passage. (p. 23) ... The Bible can speak to me with authority that is lodged in the God who speaks and not in the specific words in my leather-bound black book.” (p. 24) (B)*

*The Hinge*, vol. 11, no. 2 (summer 2004): “Regarding the Interpretation of Resolution 6.”

*Glenn Herzog writes concerning the resolution, passed at the Northern Province Synod of 2002, welcoming homosexual persons and allowing them “to celebrate their lives as individuals and as couples completely within the bounds of the church and under the grace which our Creator imparts to all persons.” His article concludes: “I think God may judge us less on its content [what the resolution says] than on the way we treated each other while we discussed it.” The respondents are mostly in favor of the resolution; the editor says that several who were invited to respond chose not to, fearing that to speak out against a synod resolution might be harmful to their future within the church. (P)*

*The Church and Homosexuality: Two Views*. Originally submitted by a task force convened by the Eastern District executive Board as the result of action of the 2002 Synod of the Eastern District of the Moravian Church, Northern Province. Updated in 2011 as a result of action of the 2010 Synod of the Moravian Church, Northern Province.

*Clearly written, intended for group study, contains material for four different sessions (introduction; Issues for the Moravian Church; A Biblical View; A Scientific View). Each*

session has a brief essay on the “traditional” view, written by the Rev. Stephen Nicholas, and the “progressive” view, written by the Rev. Dorothy Burcaw. Each session also has devotions for opening and closing the group meeting. (P / B / T)

#### *Guiding Principles of Biblical Interpretation.*

*Formulated by Interprovincial Faith and Order Commission (2011), approved by Provincial Elders Conferences (2012). Available at [http://www.moravian.org/images/moravian/PDFs/Guiding\\_Principles\\_of\\_Biblical\\_Interpretation.pdf](http://www.moravian.org/images/moravian/PDFs/Guiding_Principles_of_Biblical_Interpretation.pdf) (B)*

*The Hinge*, vol. 18 no. 1 (fall 2011): “A Model for Church Discernment When New Experiences Clash with Scripture and Tradition: The Narrative of Acts 10-15”

*A discussion of whether a scriptural model can provide us with a way forward in difficult conversations about controversial issues in the Moravian Church, specifically the question of whether the Moravian Church is fully welcoming to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) persons.*

*The Hinge*, special issue (June 2014): “Special Issue for the Northern Province Synod: Interpreting Scripture in the Moravian Church”. View online at

[http://issuu.com/moravianseminary/docs/hinge\\_special\\_june2014?e=2975957/8151090](http://issuu.com/moravianseminary/docs/hinge_special_june2014?e=2975957/8151090)

*This special issue contains the Guiding Principles of Biblical Interpretation, along with two essays. First is Frank Crouch’s “Applying the ‘Guiding Principles of Biblical Interpretation’ To Moravian Decisions Relating to Full Inclusion of Gay and Lesbian Persons in the Life of the Church”. This is followed by Craig Atwood, “How Moravians Read the Bible in the Past”. (B)*

*Position Paper of the Theological Commission of the European-Continental Province of the Moravian Church Regarding the Blessing of Same-Gender Relationships.* Translated by Paul Peucker. <http://goo.gl/J3nEFw> . (P)

### **Resources About Studying Scripture**

David J. Lose, *Making Sense of Scripture*

*This is a seven-session study, designed for a class or group, the purpose of which is to give the class participants some “tools” and understanding for how to read the Bible effectively. The study includes a book for participants (with an introduction, seven primary chapters, and a short conclusion); the expectation is that class members will read the chapter before coming to class. The study also includes a leader’s guide with suggestions for how to structure the class sessions and some specific activities; and also a DVD with a video introduction intended for the leader, and an 8-to 10-minute introduction to each session which may be used in the class. This study could help members of a class or congregation gain common ground for future Bible studies, both as individuals and as classes. The leader’s guide, participants’ book, and DVD are all available in the BCM Resource Center.*

Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You should Read the Bible* (Zondervan Press, 2008).

*This book is a very good, deliberately nonthreatening presentation of what the author calls a “third way” of reading and interpreting the Bible between literal fundamentalists and anything goes liberals. He uses the issue of women in ministry to demonstrate his approach, but lightly touches upon premarital sex and homosexuality. It would be a good first book for a group of folks to read and discuss before talking about homosexuality because his points will resonate with their unspoken, perhaps unrealized, experience of reading and interpreting scripture.*

### **Booklets and Books About Homosexuality and the Church**

(In alphabetical order by author’s last name)

Leroy Aarons, *Prayers for Bobby* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

*A moving story of the struggle of a family of deep faith, when their young son Bobby “comes out” to them as gay. Told from the mother’s perspective, with quotations from Bobby’s journal, found in his possessions after his suicide. (See Lifetime movie by the same name.)*

J. Neil Alexander, *This Far by Grace: A Bishop’s Journey Through Questions About Homosexuality* (Cowley Publications, 2003).

*This is a short and very readable account of Neil Alexander’s personal reflections on homosexuality and the church, through his personal journey from exclusion to acceptance. He reviews briefly each of the standard scripture passages used to argue that homosexuality is sinful. Many will remember that Neil was involved in the youth group at Home Moravian in the 1960’s. (B / P)*

Mark Achtemeier, *The Bible’s Yes to Same-Sex Marriage* (Westminster John Knox, 2014).

*In the 1990’s Achtemeier was, in his own words, “a conservative church activist working hard to defend the ‘traditional’ teaching of [the PCUSA] that was condemning homosexual practice.... The passage of fourteen years found me working to repeal the ban on gay ordination I had once helped put in place.” (p. xi) He has come to recognize that “God’s blessing is available to same-gender relationships just as much as to heterosexual ones” (p. xii). He himself has been married for 32 years.*

*His journey began with friendships with gay persons seeking to follow Jesus, and seeing the harsh toll it took on their emotional and spiritual health. He identifies his writing as “a spiritual travelogue” – not a scholarly survey, but rather beginning with what he saw in people’s lives that made him question the traditional teaching. He recognized the pitfalls of the “fragment method” of Biblical interpretation – taking selected verses and generalizing from them for all circumstances and for all times; then he put these verses up against the broader message of scripture, and his question, then, became how to correct the understanding of scripture, not just to throw it out.*

*This book has a book study available for free download, divided into four sessions (could be more or less); and he suggests gathering a diverse group so the study doesn’t*

*“degenerate into an exercise in gathering ammunition for one’s position” (book study, p. 2) (Available in BCM Resource Center.) (P / B)*

David L. Balch, *Homosexuality, Science, and the ‘Plain Sense’ of Scripture* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000).

*This is a series of essays by theologians, pastoral and New Testament professors on the topic, with a variety of views presented. More “scholarly” in style than many of the other resources, this is a resource for those wanting to explore the differences of viewpoint among theologians. (T)*

John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1980)

*This is a very large work (424 pages including indexes) is a study of the history of attitudes toward homosexuality in the Christian west from the beginning of the Christian era to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. More a social history than a study of homosexuality per se, the author is opening a new field of scholarship in looking at the history of tolerance using homosexuality as a “test case”. Full of good information and analysis; has lots of footnotes; still very readable for those who want to “go deeper” into history. (T)*

Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012).

*The author, a successful tenured English professor, describes her journey through what she describes as a “train wreck” in her life -- conversion to Christianity. This process of conversion included the transformation of her whole life, including her sexuality, and she moved from same-sex partnerships through celibacy into marriage with a man with whom she has raised several adopted and foster children. She is very honest about the difficulties she faced and the compassionate care she received from Christians throughout the years, and she explores diverse aspects of her life -- both her life in activism in the academic and gay community, and later on, the blessings and challenges of home-schooling her children and life as a pastor's wife. A thought-provoking account of a spiritual odyssey, very well written and compelling. (Available in BCM Resource Center)*

Ann Thompson Cook, *And God Loves Each One* ([www.manyvoices.org](http://www.manyvoices.org), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2004).

*This is a 24-page booklet subtitled “A Resource for Dialogue About Sexual Orientation”, and thus a good introduction to the topic. Sections include a view of sexuality as one of God’s good gifts; some “frequently-asked questions” about sexual orientation; a brief overview of scripture as speaking of love, not condemnation; and some short vignettes of actual experiences of gay and lesbian people in the church and in the world. (P)*

Beth Ann Gaede, ed., *Congregations Talking About Homosexuality* (Alban Institute, 1998).

*This is a very helpful book, presenting a variety of guidelines for discussion and actual congregational case studies. Each chapter brings up considerations valuable in structuring a discussion or study so that it might result in building up the body of Christ rather than being an attempt to “win” from one “side” or the other. (P)*

Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (Zondervan, 2010).

*This is a deeply moving, intensely personal account of Hill's struggle with his homosexual orientation in light of his Christian faith. He never wavers from the conviction that homosexual practice is a sin, and he is deeply committed to his faith; yet he struggles with loneliness and the sense that something is "wrong" with him. A compelling read, this short book gives insight into the spiritual journey of those of homosexual orientation who embrace celibacy. (P/T) (Available in BCM Resource Center)*

Bruce Hilton, *Can Homophobia Be Cured? Wrestling with Questions that Challenge the Church* (Abingdon Press, 1992).

*A compassionate, very readable, brief survey of the question of homosexuality and the church; a good introduction to the questions. The author treats homophobia – the fear/revulsion many heterosexuals experience towards homosexual persons – as a reaction as significant, and harmful, as sexism and racism. Chapter titles are: Asking the Right Questions; A Question About Feelings; What Do We Know About Gay People? What Does the Bible Say? What Does the Church Say? What Is Our Ministry to Gay People? Can Homophobia Be Cured? (P)*

Diane Lipsett, "Sexuality and the Church: A Conversation about the Bible, Ethics, and Communities of Interpretation".

Available online at *Alliance of Baptists* website at <http://baptistnews.com/ministry/organizations/item/7804-alliance-of-baptists-sunday-explores-sexuality> (follow the link *study* in the second paragraph).

*A study of biblical passages that seem to treat same-sex sexuality, exploring them for their relevance to contemporary questions about the church and sexuality, within the context of principles or guidelines or approach to biblical interpretation. (B/T)*

William Loader, *Sexuality in the New Testament: Understanding the Key Texts* (Westminster John Knox, 2010).

*This is a more scholarly, "neutral" book that draws from what we know of the Ancient Near East as well as the opinions of other scholars, about what the New Testament actually has to say about human sexuality. The author strives for balance, and deals with passages not only concerned with same sex relations, but also divorce, marriage and the submission of women. A significant merit of this book is that he takes the scripture with utmost seriousness, looking not for support for any particular "position" but rather for what it would have meant to the original writers/hearers: "The focus ... is not how we might apply these texts today, but what they meant in their own day." (p. 7) (B)*

Andrew Marin, *Love Is an Orientation* (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

*The author refers to himself as a "one-time Bible-banging homophobe" (p. 137), who now asks the church "to leave the judging to God, to leave the convicting to the Holy Spirit, and to embrace the orientation of love" (p. 149). He seems to imply that the ultimate goal for a GLBT person is to change – that "straight" is the ideal, the goal, and that being a GLBT person is sin. Too often he refers to "GLBT persons" and*

*“Christians” as if the two are mutually exclusive categories. All of his references to Bible commentaries are the more conservative ones – InterVarsity Press, Zondervan, John Stott. He makes a lot of references to the Marin Foundation, which urges conversation between “Christians” and “GLBT persons”. The Marin Foundation website, however, is useful in that it gives a bibliography of resources on sexuality – identified as “conservative” or “progressive”. (B / P)*

David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage* (HarperOne, 2005).

*The two authors each started with the same assumptions – that “sexual orientation is a moral choice, and that the Bible resoundingly condemns homosexuality” (p. 182); each began their journey to their current position in favor of marriage equality through personal relationships with people in whom the Spirit of Christ was clear and who held other views. This isn’t a “gay marriage” book – it’s a pro-marriage book. The authors do examine Scripture, but not only that – they look at the case for marriage in terms of the well-being of individuals, children, and society. They review the current scientific thinking on sexual orientation (remember, the book is 10 years old) and sociological studies on changing attitudes over the past now 35 years. The book includes discussion questions for each chapter. (P)*

\*Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1978, revised and updated 1994).

*The two authors explore the question of homosexuality in the church with such topics as stigma and stereotyping; a review of scriptural passages often quoted in discussions of homosexuality; scientific research; and the continuing challenge for the Christian church in America. This book is the outcome of more than twenty years of research and study. Very readable, and a good introduction to all the issues. (P)*

\*Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow? Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (InterVarsity Press, 1995).

*This is a compassionate and readable presentation of the main traditional argument that the Bible clearly states homosexuality is sinful behavior. Because the book is dated, what it says about the health effects of homosexuality is not universally held by scientists today. (B)*

Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Augsburg Fortress, 1984).

*While this book is 30 years old, it remains a most helpful resource, with the apt subtitle “Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate”. Scroggs writes that his purpose is “to make it as clear as possible what are the issues in the use of the bible in Christian debates about the acceptance of homosexuals” The book includes a lot of information about the culture surrounding early Christianity – looking at the model(s) of same-sex relationships that would have been known by the New Testament writers. Scroggs recognizes that the texts speak forthrightly against same-sex behavior, but argues that the model known to these writers was that of pederasty – an unequal relationship between an older man and a youth – not at all the kind of relationship of mutual caring, respect, and equality envisioned today. Scroggs concludes, therefore, that these specific texts do not*

*give guidance to Christians today facing the question of homosexuality in the church, because they are speaking to a completely different model, and thus the cultural context is totally dissimilar. (B)*

Marion L. Soards, *Scripture & Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Westminster John Knox, 1995).

*This is a brief and very readable summary of the traditional biblical arguments against the church softening its position on the sinfulness of homosexuality. This book will be particularly helpful for those who do not understand the interpretive lens of more conservative biblical scholars. (Available in BCM Resource Center) (B)*

Eve Tushnet, *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith* (Ave Maria Press, 2014)

*Written by a lesbian who acknowledges and practices celibacy as the teaching of the Catholic Church for homosexual persons, this book is a good resource to all who are learning how to live their vocation – their “unique call from God to love and serve others and to receive their love.” An honest portrayal of the author’s own experiences, this is an inspiring book for anyone to read, regardless of their sexual orientation or their perspective on homosexuality and the church. (B/P/T) (Available in BCM Resource Center)*

Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (Convergent Books © Matthew Vine, 2014).

*The subtitle goes farther than many of our members may be ready to trust – is there a Biblical case in support of same-sex relationships? Don’t let this title put you off, however; this is a deeply personal, yet very well researched and documented, study of scripture and homosexuality. Vines reviews the literature of both “affirming” and “non-affirming” writers. He writes that he holds “what is often called a ‘high view’ of the Bible”, believing that “all of scripture is inspired by God and authoritative for [his] life” (p. 2). He deals compassionately with his own cognitive dissonance, and that of his father, in facing his own identity as a gay man while holding this high view of the Bible, and his upbringing with the “traditional” interpretation of Scripture regarding homosexuality.*

*Read this well-written book to follow one man’s journey through faithful study of scripture, Christian history, ancient Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern culture, and science, to try to discover if he could reconcile his identity as a gay man with his identity as a “theologically conservative Christian”. (BCM Resource Center) (B)*

Ken Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation* (Read the Spirit Books, 2014)

*Ken Wilson is founding pastor of the Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor, MI. He sees the question of homosexuality in the church primarily as a pastoral issue: “is the Bible addressing modern-day monogamous gay unions at all? If the answer to that question is unclear, how are we to apply the prohibitions to gay people who are willing to practice lifelong fidelity with a same-sex partner?” (p. 79)*

*He suggests a “third way” between what he calls the “code phrase” options of “open-affirming” and “love the sinner, hate the sin”, both of which treat the question as*

*settled. He calls for “unity by virtue of a shared experience of a common core”, citing Romans 14-15, saying this is a “disputable matter” (pp. 94-104). His view seems to mesh with Unity Synod’s statement that this question “does not rise to the level of ‘Jesus is Lord’,” and seems to go well with our sense of essentials, ministerials, and incidentals. He asks both sides to leave the judging to God, and to welcome one another, embrace one another, as God has embraced us. (P / T)*

Walter Wink, ed., *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Fortress Press, 1999).

*A collection of brief, very readable essays from various writers, lay and clergy, in favor of in favor of full inclusion of homosexual persons. This may be a very good introduction to the questions for someone just beginning to explore the topic. (P / T)*

Christopher Yuan and Angela Yuan, *Out of a Far Country* (Waterbrook Press, 2011).

*A deeply moving story of a gay man’s journey from a life of promiscuous sex and drug dealing, through prison, to faith; and his mother’s concurrent journey from judgment to healing love. (P) (BCM Resource Center)*

### Web sites

[www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/june/alan-chambers-apologizes-to-gay-community-exodus.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/june/alan-chambers-apologizes-to-gay-community-exodus.html)

*The founder of Exodus International, the organization dedicated to “curing” those of homosexual orientation, apologizes for the suffering caused so many by these attempts.*

[www.glad.org/uploads/docs/cases/gill-v-office-of-personnel-management/2009-11-17-doma-aff-herek.pdf](http://www.glad.org/uploads/docs/cases/gill-v-office-of-personnel-management/2009-11-17-doma-aff-herek.pdf)

*“Expert Affidavit of Gregory M. Herek, Ph.D.” GLAD, Nov. 13, 2009. In this professional testimony by professor of psychology Dr. Gregory M. Herek, he summarize the current state of scientific and professional knowledge about several issues relevant to sexual orientation and marriage.*

[www.reformationproject.org](http://www.reformationproject.org):

*A quote from this site: “The Reformation Project exists to train Christians to support and affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Through building a deep grassroots movement, we strive to create an environment in which Christian leaders will have the freedom to take the next steps toward affirming and including LGBT people in all aspects of church life.”*

<http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2014/08/11/third-way-christians-gay-issues/>

*A conversation from Religion News Service with Jonathan Merritt, who recommends creating a gracious space for all in our congregations, a middle ground between what*

*have been generally seen as the two sides of the question – “open and affirming” vs. “traditional” views of homosexuality.*

<http://spaciousfaith.com/2011/03/12/ask-the-pastor-about-homosexuality/>

*A blog from a pastor of a church that welcomes gay and lesbian people, in response to the question of how she reconciles her views on homosexuality with what the Bible says.*

<http://rachelheldevans.com/blog/reformation-project-gay-christian-network-conferences>

*This website presents information about conferences helping us to learn from gay and lesbian Christians*

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=710661775707756>

*A five-minute video presenting brief self-introductions of persons in the church who have differing sexual orientations.*

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/changing-our-mind>

*A review of “Changing Our Mind” by David Gushee; this extended article presents a clear refutation of many of the positions taken, with regard to scripture, by those who advocate for affirmation of committed same-sex unions.*

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/june-web-only/why-matthew-vines-is-wrong-about-bible-same-sex-relationshi.html?paging=off>

*By Christopher Yuan (see “Out of a Far Country”, above, this review of Matthew Vines’ “God and the Gay Christian” argues that Vines does not adhere to the high view of scripture that he professes.*

<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/gay-is-not-the-new-black>

*Written in support of the traditional view of marriage as between a man and a woman, this article refutes the thinking that same-sex marriage is the next step in civil rights.*

<https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/faith-culture/16805-gay-celibate-christians-easily-misunderstood>

*A brief introduction to the evangelical and Catholic Christians who identify as homosexual but embrace chastity as God’s call.*

## Movies

*Coming Out, Coming In: Faith, Identity, and Belonging* (2005)

*This documentary gives voice to gay and lesbian Christians who have struggled to reconcile faith with sexual orientation.*

*Fish Can't Fly* (2005)

*Taking a secular point of view, Fish Can't Fly explores the lives of gay men and women of faith as they recall their journeys to put their sexuality and spirituality in harmony.*

*Fish out of Water* (2009)

*Fish out of Water tackles the seven Bible verses used to condemn homosexuality and justify marriage discrimination. This feature documentary uses humor and original animation to make a traditionally complex and controversial topic accessible to those who don't like talking about religion and sexuality.*

*For the Bible Tells Me So* (2007)

*This film reconciles homosexuality and Biblical scripture, supporting the position that religious anti-gay bias is based almost solely upon a misinterpretation of the Bible. Through the experiences of five very normal, Christian, American families – including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson – discover how people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child or family member. Directed by Daniel G. Karlslake (Atticus Group, 2007)*

*Prayers for Bobby* (2013)

*This deeply moving film, made for TV by Lifetime Network, tells the story of the struggle of a family of deep faith when their young son “comes out” to them, and later commits suicide. Based on the book by Leroy Aarons.*