

“The Sin of Sodom Revisited: Reading Genesis 19 in Light of Torah” by Brian Neal Peterson, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, March 2016; “Christian Rock Singer Announces He Is Gay” by Jim Denison, *Denison Forum on Truth and Culture*, June 2, 2016; “Salty Christianity” by Richard Doster, *byFaith*, Q2.16.

In 1979, the Evangelical Theological Society president was Marten H. Woudstra, Calvin Seminary’s most conservative professor. He was also the OT translation chair for the NIV Bible. As advisor on homosexuality for the Christian Reformed Church, he stated: “There is nothing in the Old Testament that corresponds to homosexuality as we understand it today.” Now, four decades later, ETS publishes Peterson’s anachronistic search for gays in ancient Sodom.

Sodom’s story is irrelevant to today’s gay issues according to Evangelical biblical scholars Stephen Hayner, Gerald Sheppard, Miguel De La Torre and James Brownson – all supporters of Evangelicals Concerned – and Christopher Wright, Richard Hayes, Joshua Jipp and even antigay scholars, e.g., Gene Haas and Robert Gagnon.

Ezekiel said Sodom’s sin was “prideful abundance without helping the poor and needy” (Ezek 16:49). *Midrash* tells of Sodom’s killing those who *did indeed help* the poor and needy. Raging mobs at Lot’s door (Gen 19) were bent on rapes, not gay dates. They meant to demean and subjugate male sojourners as mere women and their property. There’s nothing in the Bible of “a caring homosexual relationship between consenting partners” says InterVarsity’s *New Bible Dictionary*. It notes: “The Bible says nothing specifically about the homosexual condition” and the Evangelical author laments that, “too often [so-called antigay verses] have been used as tools of a homophobic polemic which has claimed too much.” Peterson is yet another of these homophobic polemicists.

When he says he’s against the “rise of same-sex ‘affirming’ interpretations of the Bible within the evangelical church”, he shows no awareness of Evangelical affirmation during his – and many of his readers’ – childhoods. He resents that, “Today, one is hard pressed to find a good contemporary biblical commentator willing to point out the clear sexual nature” of Sodom’s story. Of course the intended rapes were to be “sexual”, but *violent abuse* was motive and context of that “sexuality”. He can find no gay love at Lot’s door.

Peterson is upset over “the inhospitality” argument. But didn’t Ezekiel use it? Didn’t Josephus? Peterson insists that the men of Sodom wanted simply “to satisfy their sexual urges”. Does he find his gay fantasy more “exceedingly wicked” (Gen 13:13) than Sodom’s pride and neglect of the needy?

His biggest mistake is failing to learn from his OT and Ancient Near East mentors that the sin of Sodom, for *historical* reasons, cannot be about *our* experience or knowledge of same-sex orientation or relationships today. He ignores a basic hermeneutical principle: One should not read into ancient texts what could not have been in the minds of original writers or readers in their own time and place.

That Peterson is stuck in a controversy of *his own era* is again betrayed when he pins the anachronistic label, “Sodomites”, onto ancient men of Sodom. He also mistakenly states that they were condemned for “the one sexual sin singled out as an abomination – homosexual acts.” Conveniently, he forgets that biblical “*abominations*” include, e.g., *pride* (Prov 16:5) – as at Sodom, *false weights* (Prov 20:10), *condemning the just* (Prov 17:15) and *lying lips* (Prov 12:22) – all of which are examples of *inhospitable* acts.

Trey Pearson, lead singer of a Christian rock group, says: “I never wanted to be gay”. He is one of many thousands of today’s devout

Christians who’ve tried and failed to get rid of same-sex attraction. Ill prepared by family and church, Pearson tried to pray away and change his homosexuality. Giving in to his subculture’s pressure, he married a woman. But what Peterson fails to learn in an ivory tower, Pearson finally has learned through hard struggles, in his words: The Bible does not prohibit the “loving, committed gay relationships known to the modern world.”

Southern Baptist leader Jim Denison says Pearson “deserves a response from those of us who believe all homosexual relations to be outside God’s word and will” – as if, for over two decades, Pearson, himself, hasn’t believed exactly what Denison intends to tell him. But, unlike Denison and Peterson, Pearson *wrestled* with it in sleepless anguish.

Plugging his book on “biblical marriage” (on polygamy?), Denison asserts: “Here’s my view: The Bible is either right on this issue or it is wrong.” Does Denison not hear how much he sounds on *this* issue, like his Southern Baptist forebears on slavery and racial segregation? Ignoring historians and biblical scholars, he slips into a maze of logical fallacies, insisting that, either God gave us “revelation on an issue that was just as pervasive in ancient culture as it is today [or] his revelation has misled millions of Christians over twenty centuries”. Echoing his SBC forebears, he warns against reading “the Bible through the changing prism of cultural opinion”. But didn’t *changed cultural opinion* lead the SBC to change its “biblical” take on race? Denison urges Pearson to go to a leftover group that promises he’ll “overcome homosexual feelings”. Yet, Exodus’ international network of “ex-gay ministries” closed down with anguished apologies for all the harm it did and all the failures it hid for some four decades.

In June, the conservative Presbyterian Church in America finally repented of its roots in segregation and resistance to Civil Rights. The vote came after years of postponements and after many hours of debate this summer. The vote was 74-22-1 for repentance until, with further compromise, it was passed unanimously.

In “Salty Christianity”, Nashville PCA pastor Scott Sauls is asked: “What will it take to ensure that every unmarried person has access to friendships as deep and lasting as marriage and as meaningful as sex?” Happily married, Sauls replies: “What if we got rid of the term ‘single’ in the church and embraced a renewed biblical vision for the church as a surrogate family where every person, married and divorced and single, hetero-attracted and same sex-attracted, has access to spiritual friendship as deep as that of David and Jonathan, whose mutual accessibility, transparency, and loyalty rivaled the love between a man and a woman?” This proposal so sadly misses the mark.

Trey Pearson has said: “I found so much comfort as a teen in the intimacy of Jonathan and David. I thought and hoped that such male intimacy could fulfill that void I felt.” But it didn’t for it couldn’t. Could such friendship replace Sauls’ wife? Christians are “salt of the earth” to serve others, e.g., the lonely, not to smear salt into their wounds.

