

**BIBLE STUDY AND CONCERNS
REGARDING SAME-SEX 'MARRIAGE' TAKING PLACE
ON METHODIST PREMISES**

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ABBREVIATIONS

Hebrew Heb.

Septuagint Sept. (Greek version of Hebrew Scriptures)

Deuteronomy Deut.

Please Note : My English characterisation of the Hebrew and Greek words are to aid readers in pronunciation and that in Greek ει (ei) is pronounced 'a' as in sale and αι (ai) 'i' as in icon.

SCRIPTURE AND THE HOMOSEXUAL ACT

The Methodist Conference appointed a Task Group to bring a report to the 2019 Conference regarding the taking place of same-sex ‘marriage’ on Methodist premises, which the Task Group did, under the heading of ‘God in Love Unites Us’. The purpose of this Bible study is to be faithful to the words of Scripture regarding the homosexual act since the Task Group’s interpretation of those texts gives cause for concern.

The Scriptures should not be interpreted to fit individual ideologies but understood within the context for which they were written. Jesus Himself quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures and where appropriate used them to explain the meaning of true faith, thus paving the way for His Death and Resurrection’s Gospel Call.

The Old Testament Scriptures therefore, contain the basis for the New Testament and both should be interpreted truthfully from the words of the text. However, in their Report to Conference, the Task Group, in their interpretations of the texts relating to the homosexual act, appear to align themselves with Bible commentators who also write on homosexual issues or who are professed homosexuals. These interpretations are at variance with the Hebrew and Greek texts as written in Scripture and as such must be challenged.

Therefore, those OT texts which refer to the homosexual act, I have translated from both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew and was undertaken approx. 150-300BC. This Greek translation was the version in predominant use at the time of Jesus and often quoted from in the NT.

The New testament texts I have translated from the Greek New Testament.

THE TRANSLATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT :

GENESIS Ch. 2 v 21-25 : Task Group Report - 2.1.4

The Task Group state that these verses about Adam and Eve, do not refer to what we have

come to call marriage but rather refer to the couple's mutual help. However it is clear from Scripture that these verses are about a heterosexual matrimonial commitment since we read that "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins - in Heb. **קבַּךְ** (dabak), in Gk. **προσκολληθήσεται** (proskollathasetai) - himself to his heterosexual wife." I have inserted the word heterosexual because the word for 'his wife' in Heb. is **אִשְׁתּוֹ** (ashathwe) and means either his woman or his wife and in the Gk. **γυναίκα** (gunika) means a woman or married woman. So, Scripture makes clear that Adam joined himself to the woman as his wife and they became, in Heb. one **עַחַד** (echaid) – flesh **בָּשָׂר** (baisair). The Gk. reads - "the two **δύο** (duo) - shall unite into one **μία** (mian) - flesh **σάρκα** (sarka)." Thus Scripture makes clear their union was not only for mutual companionship but one of a joined commitment, as in matrimony, between a heterosexual couple.

GENESIS Ch. 19 v 5-8 : Task Group Report 4.3.11 and 4.3.12

The Task Group states that the wrong doing in this passage from the book of Genesis, refers to the rules of hospitality and then more so, to angel rape and thus not applicable to the homosexual act in general.

However the view of Angel rape as the focus, cannot be sustained from Scripture. In these verses the townsmen of Sodom called to Lot saying "Where are the men (visitors) who arrived this night, bring them out that we may know them." The Heb. word for 'know' is **יָדָע** (diah) from **יָדָעַ** (yeda) and can mean know 'carnally' or 'converse' with. If the latter, why did Lot offer his daughters instead? Importantly in the Sept. the usual Greek word for 'know' is not the word in use here. The word here in the Sept. is **συγγενώμεθα** (sungenow-metha) and means to have 'relations' with. Of course, one reason Lot refused to hand over his visitors was that they were guests in his house and as such entitled to his protection. However in both Heb. and Gk. the word for Angels in Heb. **מַלְאָכִים** (melakim) and in Gk. **ἄγγελοι** (angeloi) can also mean messengers and to Lot, his male visitors, either Angels or messengers, represented God. To the townsmen these male visitors were men, since they asked for the 'men' to be brought out and the Sept. clarifies that the townsmen desired to have 'relations' with the men.

However, Lot's main reason for refusing to hand over his visitors was his abhorrence at the homosexual act taking place, preferring instead to let his daughters be victims of sexual violation. Lot would not have done this lightly for in Gen ch. 34 we read how Dinah's brothers took revenge on Shechem for raping their sister even though Shechem subsequently

wished to marry Dinah and accepted circumcision in order to do so. Scripture tells us that Dinah's brothers were filled with anger and shame because Shechem had defiled their sister and done a disgraceful thing in lying with Jacob's daughter. Likewise, Lot would have been filled with anger and shame had the disgraceful violation of his daughters taken place.

So, in response to the Task Group's interpretation of Angel rape, the question must be asked, did the townsmen know that Lot's visitors were Angels? Did these visitors display huge wings on their backs as depicted in Nativity plays? If so, the townsmen would have called on Lot to bring out the Angels who had arrived that night, whereas they called for the men to be brought out. Male sexual intercourse was deemed to have been rife in Sodom, so presumably these townsmen already practised it. Lust and force in any sexual relationship are abhorrent yet Angel rape would not even have been a consideration, had it not been for the townsmen's desire for male sexual intercourse.

It has to be said that not all biblical scholars and commentators agree with the theory of Angel rape being the focus of these texts.

The Scriptures we know as Genesis, are from different sources which were at some stage or stages amalgamated, which means that different generations affirmed them.

JUDGES Ch. 19 v 22-25 :

There is too much wrong doing in this chapter to dissect here but it describes men desiring to have knowledge of another man as a disgrace in Heb. נְבִלָה (n'belah) and in the Gk. as folly and wickedness ἀφροσύνην (aphrosuvan).

DEUTERONOMY Ch 23 v 17/v18 in Heb.

Deuteronomy is thought to be the book of the law discovered around 622BC when the temple was being repaired in King Josiah's reign.

Here in Ch. 23 v 17 we have lists of condemnations, including "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel." The word used here for sodomite in Heb is שִׁדְדִּי (qadish) and can mean someone who engages in the homosexual act or a sexual idolater. Here, the Gk. Sept. has fornicator πορνεύων (porneuown) from which the word pornography. This Gk. word fornicator, includes whoredom, lewdness and impiety, "a fornicator shall not come forth from the sons of Israel." NOTE: that a fornicator here must mean a man with a man because the females here are termed harlots. It is possible that fornicator could mean a male prostitute although in the Gk. Sept., male sexual idolaters are

mentioned separately from male fornicators, making a clear distinction between the two.

The Heb. consonants **שדק** (qadish) can also mean Holiness or that which is separate or set apart from God. So **שדק** could be interpreted as set apart.

This passage from Deut. Ch. 23 is about unjust dealings, and an offering to God out of proceeds of prostitution in itself would be grossly unjust and a condemnation.

LEVITICUS Ch. 18 v 22 : Task Group Report 4.3.11, 4.3.12 and 4.3.13

Regarding chapters 18 and 20, the Task Group refer to the Holiness Code Lev. Chs 17-26 and state “that it is hard to pick out what is still binding and dispose of others without importing criteria from outside the texts themselves.” Regardless of what the Task Group claim, texts on the homosexual act are quite clear! The Task Group then refer to St. Mt. Ch. 15 vs 10-11 and 17-20 as “showing that Holiness is not a matter of the external act as of inner disposition so that what is being done is done to love God and love ones neighbour.” Does loving God and our neighbour mean we are to love our neighbour’s same-sex ‘marriage’? They then refer to St. Mt Ch. 22 verses vs 34-40, St. Mk. Ch. 12 vs 28-34 and St. Lk. Ch. 10 vs 25-28 where they state that these texts “show Jesus bringing in the laws and prophetic teaching of the OT under the over-riding principles of love for God and love for neighbour.” Does this mean that loving God over-rides OT teachings, leaving our neighbour free to disregard Scripture? Whilst shifting the focus of Lev. Ch. 18 onto love, the Task Group appear here to have neglected to comment on v 22 and the condemnation of the homosexual act!

So how do these texts from Leviticus read? The writings we know as Leviticus could, using earlier sources, have been compiled formally as late as the time of the exile 586BC to safeguard the Hebraic Laws and their Codes of Practice. If so, such a formal compilation at this crucial time proves the importance of preserving these Scriptures.

Regarding sexuality, Lev. Ch 18 vs 6-17 are about a man not ‘uncovering’ or revealing, in Heb. **גלו** (gala), in Gk. **ἀποκαλύφεις** (apokalypseis), the nakedness in Heb. **ערוה** (erwah), in Gk. **ἀσχημοσύνην** (asxaimosunain), of near relatives. Thus it is inbreeding which is condemned.

Interestingly in Lev. Ch. 18 v 9 one of the condemnations is against a man having a relationship with his half sister, even though this practice was not unusual, especially in harem living. Abraham and Sarah were half brother and sister. Perhaps, in their case, the reason their union was childless for so long was owing to inbreeding. Possibly, inbreeding abnormalities contributed to the Levitical condemnations.

However, of the condemnations in Ch. 18 only two carry their own individual condemnation. The first is in v 17 “You shall not uncover both the nakedness of a mother and her daughter or grand-daughter. The individual condemnation here in Heb. is, it is lewdness, זמא (zemar) and in Gk. ‘impiety’ ἀσέβημα (asebama). However this condemnation is NOT described as an abomination!

In v 22 we have the second individual condemnation and this refers to the homosexual act with the words “You shall not lie with mankind as with a woman” and these words do carry the individual condemnation of an abomination.

The Hebrew word here translated ‘lie with’ is שָׁכַב (shakhab/v) and can mean lie with carnally, as opposed to נָחַ (nocha) which means lie/sleep with as in slumbering. So “you shall not lie carnally שָׁכַב (shakhab/v) - with a male זָכָר (zakhar) - as with a woman, it constitutes an abomination,” in Heb. תועבה (toevah) from טעב (toev). The Gk. Sept. reads “with a male you shall not sleep/repose κοιμηθήση (koimathasa).” The word does not mean repose/recline at table with a woman which would be κατάκειμαι (katakamai) and not make sense here. The text then reads “with a male ἄρσενος (arsenos), you shall not lie sexually κοίτην (koitan)” - κοίτην/coitus means sexual intercourse. The text continues “as with a woman, it is an abomination βδέλυγμα (bdelugma).”

Whilst the homosexual act could not lead to inbreeding, it is still included with the sexually condemned practices even though without any reference to family connections.

The previous condemnations in v 6-17 are only referred to collectively as abominations at the close of the sexual category.

As regards the condemnation of ‘abomination’ it is interesting that in more recent times with the outbreak of AIDS, the male homosexual act was seen as a world wide abomination and would still be regarded as such even in this country, if it were not for the formulation of treatment to control the disease. Likewise, if diseases from homosexual intercourse were rife in Bible times, it would also explain why the homosexual act is listed along with other dangerous sexual acts.

However in Scripture, it is important to note that it is not homosexual people as such who are referred to as an abomination but the homosexual act in which some engage.

Also not all homosexual couples choose to consummate their union.

Strangely though whilst promoting same-sex ‘marriage’ the Task Group affirm the co-

habitation of heterosexual couples.

LEVITICUS Ch. 20 v 13 : Task Group Report 4.3.1

Here in vs. 11.13.15 instead of the words “Not uncover the nakedness of” each condemnation has “not lie with” in Heb. שכב (shakha/bv), in Gk. κοιμηθή (koimatha) and until v. 17 each condemnation has the additional “shall die the death.” Then in v 13 in Heb. we read “If a man lies carnally שכב (shakhab/v) - with a male זכר (zakhar) - as with a woman both have committed an abomination תועבה (toevah) - and shall die the death.”

However again, the Gk. Sept. is explicit with the words “whoever lies κοιμηθή (koimatha) - with a male ἄρσενος (arsenos) - sexually κοίτην (koitan/coitus)” which means sexual intercourse, “as with a woman both of them have committed an abomination βδέλυγμα (bdelugma) - and shall be ἔνοχοι (enoxoi) subject to or liable to death.” Perhaps the word ἔνοχοι (subject to) means that the death threat was not always carried out.

These condemnations cannot be dismissed on the grounds that Christians do not follow other of Leviticus’s condemnations for example those relating to food, especially pork. In in OT times, pigs seem to have lived in the wild and since pigs eat more or less anything it is sensible that all things appertaining to pigs would be categorized or coded with other such health warnings. It is rather like today, being told not to eat chlorinated chicken or genetically modified foods or not mixing fabrics, which makes sense since some fabrics even now are more prone to shrinkage or colour runs than others. Not to sow different crops in the same field, could have resulted from bad harvests.

Only as time went by, would these safety issues been turned into the ceremonial. So it is not appropriate to use something from one Code of Practice as a dismissal for something from another Code.

ISAIAH Ch. 56 v 4 :

Isaiah Ch 56 v 3 is about foreigners and eunuchs who attach themselves to God, being welcomed into God’s house. However the Task Group in their Report to Conference seem to interpret the word foreigners as meaning ‘others’ and thus homosexuals. However in Heb. the word נכר (nekhar) and in Gk. ἀλλογενής (allogenis) mean foreigner or stranger and is not referring specifically to homosexual people.

Also in both the Heb. the word סריסים (sarisim) and Gk. in the Εόνούχοις (eunouchois) mean eunuchs of the type castrated for the harem etc. and not homosexual people.

NEW TESTAMENT :

NOTE: THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS WRITTEN IN GREEK.

ROMANS Ch. 1 vs 26 & 27 : Task Group Report 4.3.11

The preceding verses are about idolatry and how people have turned from worshipping God to the worship of idols.

Then in v 26 St. Paul writes regarding females “Their women have exchanged μετήλλαξαν (metallaxan) - the natural φυσικὴν (phusikane) - manner χρήσιν (krasin) - for the unnatural παρά φύσιν (para phusin).”

As regards males v 27, St. Paul writes “Likewise the males ἀρσενες (arsenes) - have abandoned ἀφέντες (aphentes) - the natural φυσικὴν (phusikane) - manner χρήσιν (krasin), with females, and burn ἐξεκάυθησαν (exekauthasan) - with their lust/desire ὀρέξει (orexai) - for one another ἀλλήλους (allailous) - males ἄρσενες (arsenes) - with males ἄρσεσιν (arsesin) - producing κατεργαζόμενοι (katergadsomenoi) - lewdness/shame ἀσχημοσύνην (asxamosunain) and receiving due retribution ἀντιμισθίαν (antimisthian) within themselves for their perversion πλάνης (planais).” Does retribution within themselves refer to sexual disease?

Whether or not these same-sex acts in which women engaged with women and men with men, were part of or separate from idolatry, or lustful or loving relationships, it is clear that St. Paul denounced the acts as unnatural.

1 CORINTHIANS Ch. 6 v 9 : Task Group Report 4.3.11

Here, St. Paul denounces deceivers πλανᾶσθε (planasthe) - and fornicators πόρνοι (pornoi) which we have seen includes whoredom and lewdness - and idolaters εἰδωλολάτραι (idololatri) - and adulterers μοιχοὶ (moixoi) - and effeminates μαλακοὶ (malakoi) although the word effeminates is debatable as it means soft, which could mean a troupe of trained boys prostitutes or submissive males.

St. Paul continues with his next denouncement which is male sexual intercourse the word being ἀρσενοκοῖται (arsenokoitai) arsen meaning men and koitai sexual intercourse (coitus).

St. Paul as a trained Pharisee, would have been able to translate for himself both the Heb. and Sept., OT texts and here St Paul clearly distinguishes between idolatry and male sexual intercourse.

So, regardless of what, in their Report, the Task Group claim about any uncertainty of v 9, with reference to the homosexual act, it is in fact explicitly clear that St. Paul is referring to and denouncing homosexual intercourse.

GALATIANS Ch 5 v 19 :

Here St. Paul more or less writes of the same denouncements as in Corinthians.

1 TIMOTHY Ch. 1 v 10 : Task Group Report 4.3.11

There are some doubts as to whether this letter is by St. Paul but even so, it is thought that some of the letter is Pauline in origin. In vs 9 and 10 we have a list of separate ungodly actions which includes fornication πόρνοις (pornois) and male homosexual intercourse ἀρσενοκοΐταις (arsenokoitais).

JUDE v 7 :

The letter of Jude refers to Sodom and Gomorrah and surrounding cities, giving themselves up to fornication ἐκπορνεύσασαι (ekporneusasi) and seeking after other ἑτέρας (heteros), flesh σαρκὸς (sarkos).

Some Bible commentators, especially writers on homosexual issues, say that the word heteros ‘other’ flesh in Jude v 7, refers to something entirely different from human flesh thus harking back to Genesis Ch. 19 and the idea that the sin of Sodom was the rape of angels – angels being other than human flesh. However the Gk. word heteros means ‘other’ and not superhuman. As we have already seen in Gen. 19, the argument for the rape of angels doesn’t stand up to scrutiny. Neither therefore can it appertain to angel rape in Jude v 7. So then, in Jude v 7, heteros sarkos must mean human flesh which is ‘other’ than the man/woman union.

ST. MATTHEW Ch. 15 v 19 :

Jesus said “out of the heart comes evil thoughts” which He itemizes. He then separates adultery μοιχεΐαι (moixaii), from fornication πορνείαι (porneiai). In (Deut. Ch. 23 v 17) we have seen that fornicator refers to a male engaging in the sexual act with another male and also that the Gk . Sept. lists the male with male sexual fornicator, separately from the male sexual idolater (male prostitute).

So was Jesus including the homosexual act under the general heading of fornication? It is

possible, since He would know Deut Ch. 23 v17, from both the Heb. and the Gk. Sept., the latter being the version of His day and it is nowhere recorded that Jesus contradicted the Scriptural references to the homosexual act.

Jesus's daily tongue would have been Aramaic, the local vernacular of his day. St. Matthew's Gospel however was written in Greek but care would have been taken to translate Jesus's words carefully from Aramaic into Greek.

St. MATTHEW Ch. 19 v 4 & 5 :

Here it is recorded that Jesus reiterating Gen. Ch. 2 v 24 said "have you not read, in the beginning the Creator made them male ἄρσεν (arsen) and female θήλυ (thalu) - for this reason ἐνεκα (eneka) - a man will leave his father and mother and unite κολληθήσεται (kollathaseti) - himself to his woman/wife γυναίκε (guniki), and the two δύο will become one μίαν (mian) - flesh σάρκα (sarka)."

Verse 12 refers to those born as eunuchs and probably means people born with physical genital disabilities rather than born homosexual.

The Hebrew and Septuagint texts as we have them are the preserved Jewish and Christian writings, copied and handed down from earlier documents. In the OT texts regarding the homosexual act, both the Hebrew and the Greek Sept. texts are in agreement, with the addition that the Sept. elucidates the Hebrew. The NT texts on the homosexual act concur with those in the OT. Therefore the Task Group's interpretations of texts regarding the homosexual act need to be challenged prior to people voting. Otherwise Methodist people may be led to believe that a vote in favour of same-sex 'marriage' is based on Scripture, when the case is that the interpretations with which they are being presented are from a view point which is not as written in Scripture.

However the question is, should same-sex 'marriage' take place on Methodist premises and in answering that question we are, in our discussions asked to consider Methodism and same-sex 'marriage' under the Headings of :-

1. The Methodist Quadrilateral.
2. Taking the Bible Seriously.
3. Living with Contradictory Convictions.
4. Mission.

So let us examine them :-

The Methodist Quadrilateral :

Which refers to Scripture, Reason, Experience and Tradition, all of which are important but how will they be presented to Methodist people by same-sex ‘marriage’ supporters .

Methodist people must not be persuaded by the emotional rhetoric of “it is all about love and loving relationships.” The Task Group in their support of same-sex ‘marriage’ appear to stress the freedom to love and loving relationships but love and loving relationships cover many kinds of love including incestuous love which the Group exclude, thus defeating their own arguments which they seem to base on the freedom to love.

2. Taking the Bible Seriously :

If we are to take the Bible seriously we must start by looking at Biblical texts as written and Jesus’s use of them, because in all He taught Jesus was paving the way for His Death and Resurrection and the establishment of God’s Salvation. In his teachings Jesus used Scripture to challenge those in His own day who were putting their own interpretation on Scripture. So when Jesus didn’t always conform to Jewish thinking, it wasn’t that He was misinterpreting the Scriptures but fulfilling them to further the work of His Kingdom. He did so by calling everyday people to be His disciples, rather than pandering to the Jewish hierarchy and by women having an active role in His ministry (women had already taken prominent roles in the OT), by teaching His fellow Jews to preach God’s Love to their Gentile neighbours and in other ways. He also affirmed marriage to be heterosexual.

3. Living with Contradictory Convictions :

A loaded statement which sounds manipulative! Perhaps promoters of same-sex ‘marriage’ should explain why they are not minded to accept views contrary to their own. Regardless of the Task Group’s apparent view to the contrary, marriage was instituted to sanction heterosexual consummation which is designed with the potential to produce progeny and to protect that progeny.

4. Mission :

Our Mission is to bring people into a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and this relationship is inclusive of homosexual people. However it does not mean the requirements of LGBT people and their supporters should take precedence over every other consideration.

CONCERNS :

Methodist people are to decide whether to allow same-sex ‘marriage’ on Methodist premises. To make sure that their voices from local are heard, there should be a Referendum of church members. Having been a Superintendent, I know that this is NOT impossible. It would negate the risk of grass root voices being swallowed up as the voting process goes up line to Conference.

If same-sex ‘marriage’ is voted through at Conference, local church councils and ministers will have to decide whether to be for or against. It could also mean that those assenting churches will be forced to include the teaching of LGBT relationships in their youth work.

Also will Conference add an ‘exemption clause’ to the annual calls to ‘Confirm our Doctrines’ to accommodate Ministers and Local Preachers who would not feel able to assent to Doctrine which would by default include same-sex ‘marriage’ on our premises?

This Bible study is designed to enable Methodist people to avoid basing their vote on information that is highly questionable and misleading.

Please work within your Church, Circuit Meeting or Synod (as appropriate) to bring a Memorials to Conference along the lines – ‘THAT on this important consideration of the Methodist Church to Redefine Marriage so as to include same-sex ‘marriage’ taking place on Methodist premises THAT we call upon Conference to hold a Referendum of Members existing as at 1st September 2019 and in good standing. Also THAT Conference appoint a new Task Group to re-examine the consideration of same-sex ‘marriage’ taking place on Methodist premises as the existing Task Group’s Report ‘God in Love Unites Us’ is seriously flawed in its interpretation of Scripture and its biased promotion of same-sex ‘marriage’. THAT the membership of the new Task Group must include equally people known to be strongly against same-sex ‘marriage’ taking place on Methodist premises as well as those who are promoting it. THAT the new Task Group’s reference points and findings MUST affirm the literal unadulterated translations of the Scriptures involved and also justly present the reasons and concerns against same-sex ‘marriage’ taking place on Methodist on premises and not as with the present Report be fixated in favour of same-sex views.’ It might be worth adding that the vote be not put at the Conference of 2020.

It has not been my intention in this Bible study to be disparaging towards homosexual people. However since the existing Task Group in their Report have promoted interpretations of Scripture which do not always represent what is written in Scripture, it has been necessary

to put matters right and let the Scriptures as written, speak for themselves.

Scripture is there to guide us in life – let us not be led away from it.

JESUS said “have you not read, in the beginning the Creator made them MALE and FEMALE, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united with his wife.” Perhaps we should all be listening to JESUS, after all, it is His CHURCH.

