

Liberation Theologies on Romans 1:16-2:29: A Queer Apostle's Peculiar Epistle for an Inclusive Church?

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Translation 1:16-2:16. 1:16-17 Jesus' Good News for the oppressed 16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News [to the oppressed], for it is God's power for integral liberation to everyone believing, both to the Jew first and to the Greek. For in it God's liberating justice is revealed from faith to faith, as it has been written: "Now the just *man* by faith will live" [Hab 2:4]

1:18-32 Elaboration of the Rhetorical Trap: Bad news for idolatrous oppressors

18-23 Idolatry 18 For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all idolatry and **oppression** of *men*, who by their **oppression** imprison even the truth itself, 19 because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For ever since the creation of the world, his eternal power and divinity, though invisible, have been understood and clearly perceived in the things that have been made, so they are without excuse, 21 because although they knew God, they did not glorify nor thank him, but became futile in their reasonings, and their undiscerning heart was darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools 23 and **changed** the glory of the immortal God into a likeness of an image of corruptible man and birds and quadrupeds and reptiles;

1:24-27 Desires/lusts and unclean sexual acts 24 wherefore, **God gave them up** in the covetings/desires of their hearts to **uncleanness**, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 who **exchanged** the truth about God for the lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed unto the ages! Amen. 26 For this reason, **God gave them up** to dishonorable passions, for even *their* females **exchanged** the natural/procreative use (*chresis*) for the unnatural/nonprocreative (*para phusin*); 27 and similarly also the males, **leaving** the natural/procreative use (*chresis*) of females, burned with their lust/desire for one another, males in/with [other] males working up the shameless-dishonorable-deed / their-shameful - member and receiving back in their own persons the recompense due their error [of idolatry (18-23)].

1:28-32 Catalogue of 21 evils (vices and persons): Injustice, oppression, violence [nothing sexual; KJV + "fornication" is a textual error]

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, **God gave them up** to a debased mind to do what is not proper, 29 having [already/previously!] been *filled* with all

1-4 **oppression**, [+ *porneia*, fornication, immorality, Textus Receptus, KJV, RV], wickedness, **covetousness**, malice,

5-9 *full of* envy, of murder, of strife, of guile, of malignity,

10 gossipers, [30]

11 slanderers,

12 haters of God,

13 bullies/insolents,

14 arrogant,

15 boasters/braggarts,

16 inventors of evil projects,

17 disobeyers of parents,

18 [31] *undiscerning*,

19 *unfaithful*,

20 *unaffectionate*,

21 *unmerciful*;

32 Who, knowing God's just ordinance that those who practice such things deserve to die, not only do them, but even approve/applaud others who practice them

2:1-16 *The Rhetorical Trap Sprung: God's just judgment of hypocritical judges*

1 Wherefore, O man, you are inexcusable, everyone of you who judges; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, since you who judge practice the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment is according to truth against those who do such things. 3 So do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and longsuffering? 5 But by your stubbornness and your impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's just judgment will be revealed.

6 He will repay according to each one's deeds [Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12]: 7 on the one hand, to those who by manly perseverance in doing good work seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give life in the age to come; 8 on the other hand, to those who are self-seeking and disobeying the truth, but practicing **oppression**, there will be **wrath and fury**. 9 **Oppression and poverty** on every soul of man working evil, the Jew first and also the Greek; 10 but glory, honor and peace to everyone working good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality [favoritism].

12 For as many as have sinned without Torah also will perish without Torah; and as many as have sinned in Torah will be judged by Torah; 13 for it is not the hearers of Torah who are just with God, but rather the doers of Torah will be justified [at the future final judgment]. 14 For whenever Gentiles who do not possess Torah by **nature** the things of the Torah do, these, though not having the Torah, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the Torah to be written in their hearts, to which their own conscience bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16 on the day when, according to my good news, God, through Messiah Jesus, will judge men's secret thoughts.

1. Liberation Theologies: *Identity Perspectives in Paul's Letter to the Romans*

1.1 To tenement house assemblies/churches with members mainly socially weak and *oppressed* (Rom 16; Hanks 2006:583; 2007/12:2-3, 8, 10).

Marcella Althaus-Reid writes: "A simple search into the broader semantic field of the word 'oppression' in the Hebrew Scriptures should be the first step for a Queer hermeneutician to reflect upon in order to clarify the starting point of her re-reading" (2003:79, citing in her note 1 on p. 174 my first book, *God So Loved the Third World: The Biblical Vocabulary of Oppression*, 1982/1983). There I had struggled to figure out how oppression could be such a fundamental Hebrew Bible concern (20 roots occurring 555 times) and so central to Jesus' mission (Luke 4:18-19), yet apparently almost disappear from the New Testament elsewhere (cf. the two RSV exceptions: James 2:6; Acts 10:38). While preparing the English edition (1983) I discovered my clue when I read in **Jacques Pons'** *L'oppression dans l'Ancien Testament* (1979/81) that the LXX most often translated *ashaq* (the basic Hebrew term for oppression) as *'adikia* ("injustice, oppression, unrighteousness")—a term which any reader of Paul in the Greek would recognize as fundamental to the Apostle's theology, especially in Romans: "Pons studies the Greek translations (esp. the LXX) of the Hebrew vocabulary for 'oppression,' which...fills an obvious gap. This section could prove the most important for future studies because it lays the foundation for an entirely new interpretation of the New Testament teaching on oppression and liberation" (Hanks 1983/2000 128, note 29). Actually, Pons' conclusion had been largely anticipated in **José P. Miranda's** study of *resha'im* (oppressors) in the Psalter (1972/74:100-103). Although long ignored or caricatured by first-world scholars, Miranda demonstrated that throughout the Bible and particularly in the Psalter and Romans 1-3, *sin* is to be understood primarily in terms of **oppression/injustice**. Any contemporary contextual interpretation of Rom 1:24-27 must thus take into account what we can learn from postcolonial theology to appreciate the way Paul in 1:16-32 combines referents to imperial **idolatry, oppression**, divine **wrath** and God's **liberating justice/salvation** (see Enrique Nardoni, 1997/2004:263-89; David Lamb 2012).

Rom 1:16 For I am **no longer ashamed** of [Jesus'] **Good News** [to the poor and oppressed], which is God's power for **integral liberation/salvation** to everyone believing, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it **God's liberating justice** is revealed from [Christ's] faith/fulness to [human] faith/fulness; as it is written, "the Just One by faith(fulness) shall live" [Hab 2:4]. ¹⁸For **God's wrath** is revealed from heaven

against all **idolatry** and **injustice/oppression** of men, who with their **injustice/ oppression** suppress even the truth....²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, *God gave them up* to a debased mind to do what is not proper,²⁹ having been filled with all **injustice/oppression** [?:] wickedness, covetousness, malice, full of envy, of murder, of strife, of guile, of malignity, whisperers,³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹ undiscerning, unfaithful, unaffectionate, unmerciful,³² who, knowing God's just ordinance that those who practice such things deserve to die, not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them....

2:6 [God] will repay according to each one's deeds:⁷ on the one hand, to those who by manly perseverance in doing good work seek glory and honor and immortality, he will give life in the age to come;⁸ on the other hand, to those who are self-seeking and disobeying the truth but obeying **oppression**, there will be **wrath and fury**.⁹ **Oppression/affliction** and impoverishment of every soul of man working evil, the Jew first and also the Greek;¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace to everyone working good, the Jew first and also the Greek.¹¹ For God shows no partiality....

3:5 But if our [Jewish] **acts of oppression** commend God's liberating justice [for any oppressed among us], what shall we say? That God is an **oppressor** when he inflicts his **wrath** (on us)? (speaking humanly).⁶ No way! Otherwise, how could God judge the (Gentile) world?

In his own translation of Rom 1:29, Miranda placed a colon (:) after the term injustice/ oppression to clarify and emphasize its centrality in the context, as heading the lengthy vice list that follows (1972/74:161-62), explaining: "According to the Bible the sin against which God intervenes...is specific: it is injustice and the oppression of the weak by the powerful...In the entire passage ([Rom]1:18-3:20) *adikia* is the predominant concept (1:18a, 18b, 29; 2:8; 3:5)" (1971/74:83, 162; see 160-192; Hanks 1982/83:128, note 29; 1992:514-24). Paul does not even refer to "sin" until 2:12 and Miranda points out that when Paul begins to employ the term "sin" he makes clear that he understands it to refer basically to injustice/oppression (Rom 3:5-18; Miranda 1972/74:181,169-70). The rhetorical trap Paul prepares in 1:18-32 thus refers not only to Gentiles but to the "all" (1:18) who had become guilty of oppression (Jews are not specified until 2:17, but perhaps also implicitly in 2:1-17; Jewett 2007:152). Recently the interpretation of Romans in the light of imperial oppression takes Paul's understanding of sin as "oppression" much more seriously (Tamez 1982, 1991; 1998/99; Horsley 1997; 2000; Wright 2002).

Miranda also focused on oppression in texts treating sexuality in Rom 1:18-32, indicating that it would be a "fundamental exegetical error to take the sexual 'exchanges' of Rom 1:24-27 out of context and absolutize every word in these verses as if they were articles of a juridical code" (1972/74:170). Since the text echoes Wisd. 13-15, he points out that "The sexual effects of idolatry...are important only insofar as they are the means for men to afflict one another and make one another suffer" (171). Similarly Jewett, citing the phrase "inflamed with their lust" (1:27) comments that "This wording implies irrational bondage to an egoistic, empty, and unsatisfying expression of animalistic sexuality" (2007:178-79)—a far cry from any loving consensual homoerotic relationship or marriage. Recent commentators conclude that in Rom 1:26-27 Paul does not generalize about loving consensual homoerotic acts but portrays behavior that is "idolatrous and abusive.... reference is being made to destructive and/or abusive behavior" (Hultgren 2011:99, 617). Sadly, however, even in Latin American liberation theologies, Miranda's subversive conclusions regarding sexual minorities in Rom 1:24-27 were ignored. He emphasized that *'adikia* (injustice/ oppression) was fundamental to Paul's exposition of his Gospel in Rom 1:16-32 and that it subsumed the references to sexual misbehavior in 1:24-27 as examples of oppression (not loving consensual sexual behavior). Had Miranda included treatment of **1 Cor 6:9-10** he could have made the same point: the "soft males" and "male-bedders" were engaged in *oppressive* behavior that harmed the neighbor (indicated, as in Rom 1:28-32, by *'adikia* heading the Corinthian vice list):

⁷The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means that already you have been completely defeated. Why not rather suffer **oppression** (*'adikeisthe*)? Why not rather be impoverished? ⁸But you **oppress** (*'adikeite*) and **impoverish** even your brothers. ⁹Don't you know that **oppressors** (*'adikoi*) will not inherit God's kingdom? Don't be led astray. Neither prostitutes, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **soft males** (*malakoi*) nor **male-bedders** (*'arsenokoitai*), ¹⁰nor thieves nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor rapacious persons will inherit God's kingdom. ^{11a}And such were some of you (1 Cor 6:7-11a).

Even to readers dependent on English translations, the other New Testament reference to “male-bedders” in 1 Tim 1:10 (deutero-Pauline) also clearly refers to sexual behavior that is oppressive/violent, since it occurs between terms for prostitutes and slave traders (“prostitutes, male-bedders, slave traders”; J. Albert Harrill, JBL 1999:97-122; Hanks 2000/08:172). Thus the prominent place of oppression in Romans (1:18, 29; 2:8; 3:5), paralleled in 1 Corinthians (6:8-10) and the references to prostitutes and slave traders in 1 Tim 1:10, confirms that Rom 1:26-27 suggests homoerotic acts condemned for exploitation, injustice and violence (rape), all commonly experienced by the slaves to whom the letter was primarily addressed (Hanks 2000/08:105-108; Jennifer Glancy 1998; 2002; see below on slaves and cf. Countryman on “uncleanness” in Rom 1:24).

1.2 To slaves and liberated slaves, mainly poor, in 5-10 tenement and house assemblies (Hanks 2006:83; 2007a/12:20-21).

In Rom 16:3-16 Paul sends greetings to **24 named believers**, many living in 5-10 tenement/house churches (16:1-5a, 10-11, 14-15). Of these 24, at least **nine** and perhaps as many as **22** have names common for slaves or liberated slaves (still mainly poor). In addition Paul greets slaves (plural) attached to other households (10b, 11b), Nereus’ unnamed sister and other “saints” (15b). Both Leon Morris (1988:535-36) and Craig Keener (1993:448) identify Urbanus and Rufus as common slave names, *pace* Lampe 2003:153-184). Of the 24 believers greeted by name, only PRISCA and AQUILA clearly are *not* slave names. Craig Keener observes that the house churches avoided construction of special edifices for the first three centuries and thus were able to use their income to buy slaves’ freedom and feed the poor (1993:447; Hanks 2007a/12, Appendix 2, Slaves).

However, Robert Jewett points out that in Romans we have long ignored **the correlation between slavery and homosexuality**. The right of masters to demand sexual services from slaves and men “freed” (with conditions) is an important factor in grasping the impact of Paul’s rhetoric, as illustrated in Seneca the Elder’s oft-cited comment: “Sexual servicing is a crime for the freeborn, a necessity for a slave, and a duty for the freeman” (Jewett 2007:180; see Hanks 2000/08:93, note 20; J. Albert Harrill 2006:119-144; Bernadette J. Brooten, ed. 2010, *passim*). Paul purports to bring the “wonderful news” of God’s liberating justice to some 5-10 tenement/house churches in Rome (1:16-17), but if this news consists of theocratic yearnings to reinstate the Leviticus death penalty for all males who had suffered anal penetration/rape (Rom 1:32; Lev 20:13), it would not be welcomed with enthusiasm on the part of the vast majority (slaves, freedmen and women) in Rome’s churches, nor was the situation different in Corinth, where Paul dictated Romans (J. Glancy 2006:49-50).

Regarding women ex?/slaves in Rome’s tenement churches, Sheila Briggs says about Paul on prostitution and slavery in 1 Cor 6:13-18:

The use of prostitutes was widespread even among Jews and Christians. The early Christian community at Corinth evidently saw nothing wrong in Christian men visiting brothels, at least until the apostle Paul rebuked them. But when we look more closely at Paul’s condemnation of prostitution in 1 Corinthians 6:13-18, we find that the moral problem for him was *not* the sexual exploitation of the prostitute, who in no sense chose to enter into prostitution. His sole concern was the male body, which he saw as dishonored through sex with a prostitute. Worse, if it were a Christian male body, such dishonor would pollute the body of Christ. We find similar objections in non-Christian writers of antiquity: it is the male body that is dishonored, not the female body that is exploited (159-60 in Brooten, ed. 2010).

Jewett’s reminder about slavery raises the question whether commentators do well when they try to squeeze an ethical absolute out of a perplexing mythical-historical “decline of civilization” narrative intentionally loaded with ambiguous terms. However, if we allow Rom 1:19-32 to be interpreted within the framework of the proclamation of the Gospel of liberating justice (1:16-17) and the description of God’s wrath as targeting *all* oppression (1:18, 29; Ex 22:21-24), we can agree with Jewett when he suggests that “Paul’s rhetoric may provide entrée into the similarly unhappy experience of Christian slaves and former slaves who had suffered and resented sexual exploitation both for themselves and for their children, in a culture marked by aggressive bisexuality” (2007:181, citing Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 156-64). Jewett himself, however, then leaps to the conclusion that Paul intends a “moral condemnation of same-sex and extra-marital relations *of all kinds*” (181), implying a “damnation” that would provoke terror rather than comfort for slaves! Rather we should recognize

that Paul especially targets same-sex acts characterized by oppression/violence (1:18, 29). Moreover, if we hesitate to take a flying leap from Jesus' parable about the shrewd but dishonest steward to an ethical absolute that stewards should be dishonest (Luke 16:18; Harrill 2006:66-83), Paul's use of a "decline of civilization narrative" in Rom 1:19-32 might give us similar pause, especially given his deconstruction in the course of the letter of four of his five descriptions of the sexual practices referred to (Hanks 2000/08:91-94) and the more limited but coherent behavior norms provided later (Rom 13:8-13), where the hyperbolic rhetoric of sermon aiming to entrap gives way to sober instruction.

Paul thus allows these two transcendent horizontal norms to remain standing when he concludes the letter (Rom 13:8-13): (1) love the neighbor; (2) avoid coveting, which harms the neighbor;—both appropriate for the slaves in the Roman house churches. Although slaves could not refuse to provide the sexual services commonly demanded of them, they could fulfill the norm of love for neighbor that avoids harm, injustice, oppression and violence. This unmasking is oblivious to the socio-economic-historical context and hopelessly anachronistic any notion that Paul sought to construct an "ethical absolute" against "homosexuality" (including lesbians). Paul's norms for sexual conduct condemn the covetous, oppressive sexual demands of slave owners, but insist on love for neighbor as the *unique* norm that fulfills the divine intent in Moses' 613 laws. This teaching is coherent with the Apostle's proclamation of a Gospel that is good news to poor slaves, who could not obey the Leviticus cleanliness code. In recent centuries we have seen fundamentalist churches *abandon* incessant citations of Paul to enslave women and *defend* racial slavery, but they now *forget* that Paul often addressed churches consisting mainly of slaves—and indulge in incessant and lucrative citations of Paul to promote homophobia and attack "homosexuals." Modern paraphrases that substitute "servants" for the more literal "slaves" and then add the neologism "homosexuals" to Paul's theological vocabulary (RSV 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10) greatly facilitate the disappearance of slaves from our hermeneutical grid and promote violence against sexual minorities.

1.3 To the *poor* in tenement/house assemblies (Hanks 1992, ABD 5:514-24; 2000/08:82-85; 2006:583-85)

Paul had agreed with the Jerusalem apostles on only one priority: to "remember the poor" (Gal 2:10; see 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9). Especially for the poor slaves in the Roman tenement and house assemblies, Paul's project of the offering (Rom 15:25-27) would confirm that his Gospel too was "good news" to these poor, echoing Jesus' preferential option (Luke 4:18-19; 7:22; 10:25-37; 16:19-35; Bruce Longenecker 2010: 298-316, 335). Some slaves may have been liberated when Paul wrote, but most of them would still represent the poorer and marginalized classes (Lampe 2003:153-184). Jewett agrees: "This letter is addressed to believers who for the most part belonged to the social class of 'uneducated' and 'barbarian'....such a gospel seemed designed to appeal to the despised and the powerless.... (1 Cor 1:27-29)" (2007:136). Given Paul's privileged background (*born* with Roman citizenship, Acts 22:25-29; with elite rabbinic education, Acts 22:3), his emphatic self-designation as a "slave" of Messiah Jesus (Rom 1:1) signaled his solidarity with his readership (Jewett 2007:100; see also Rom 12:13, 16; Longenecker 2010:144-46). With the responsibility of delivering safely to the poor saints in Jerusalem the generous offering supplied by Gentile churches, Paul also is keenly aware of his situation as a *debtor*, not only with money but also with the Gospel message (1:14) and with love (13:7-8; 5:5; 1 Cor 13).

However, as Peter Esler indicates, the fact that in Antioch Peter had broken the agreement with Paul (Gal 2:11-14) puts Paul's offering in a different light: "every coin that dropped into Paul's collection bags was a physical reminder that the Jerusalem leaders had breached the Jerusalem agreement" (2003:130), a challenge that shamed them and pushed them to honor the agreement. For Paul the offering was an eschatological sign of solidarity between rich and poor, Gentiles and Jews (Longenecker 2010:312). Concerning the contrast Paul makes between the "spiritual things" (*pneumatikois*) that Gentile believers have received from Jewish evangelists and the "fleshly things" (*sarkikois*) consisting of the Gentile churches' offering for the poor of the saints in Jerusalem (15:27), Tom Wright points out that "this is one of the few places where the 'spiritual/fleshly' contrast in Paul means more or less what it means in our contemporary parlance" (2002:756).

In her doctoral thesis, Elsa Tamez demonstrated that "justification" in Romans refers particularly to God's gracious welcome and vindication of the oppressed, the poor and marginalized (1991a:38-39, 46). Her later work focuses on the prominence of women leaders amongst these congregations of the poor, slaves and sexual minorities (1998/99:558-59). Recognizing Paul's teaching on *sin* as (imperial) oppression, and *justification* as

the welcome and vindication of the marginalized poor, slaves, women and sexual minorities, enables us to see that the Good News of the revelation of God's *justice* (Rom 1:16-17) refers especially to the kind of *liberating* justice experienced by Israelite slaves in the Exodus. For Paul in Romans, then, divine justice is to be understood as liberating justice, responding to experiences of oppression, and not primarily as a maintaining of "law and order" (common euphemisms for imperial oppression and violence; Hanks 2000/08:9-11).

1.4 To women church leaders: Rom 16:1-16; 1:26 (Hanks 1997:140-41; 2000/08:82-88; 2006:604-5; 2007a/12, Appendix 1 Rom 1:26). As indicated in detail in my previous studies, in the latter decades of the twentieth century, a wave of feminist studies brought to light the amazing role of women leaders attested in Rom 16 (Deacon Phoebe, 16:12; church-planter Priscilla, 16:3-4; Apostle Junia, 16:7). Scholars increasingly discerned a remarkable contrast between such authentic Pauline material and the more patriarchal perspectives of the later Deutero-Pauline letters (the household tables of Colossians and Ephesians and the pastoral letters, especially 1 Tim 2:8-15; see 1 Cor 14:34-35, best rejected as a textual gloss; **Hanks 2012:168-70**). Patriarchal households like those represented in the household tables rarely converted before the end of the first century AD/CE (when many would date the deutero-Pauline letters).

Moreover, gender studies have unmasked a patriarchal ideology that is both presupposed and subverted in Romans. As Stephen Moore says: "*Righteousness* [liberating justice] *in Romans is essentially a masculine trait...the very mark of masculinity*" (2001:163, italics his). Sinfulness (injustice, oppression) then, signifies a loss of masculinity, the lack of self-mastery, "essentially a feminine trait in Romans" (163). Thus in Romans 1:24-27 the Apostle describes "unclean" persons who allow masculine reason to be dominated by the lusts thought to be characteristic of women; similarly in 1:28-32 masculine reason does not rule, but feminine passions dominate, as covetousness (*pleonexía*) leads to acts of oppression (*adikía*) and violence.

On the other hand, males are active sexual penetrators, while females were to be passive and receptive (B. Brooten 1994:11; Ron Long 2004:26-27, 142-144). Thus, God is imaged as passively feminine when hospitably welcoming unclean Gentiles into the divine household (God's justified people), and Paul seeks to mold the Roman house churches in this image of the divine feminine, insisting that they should hospitably "receive" and welcome one another despite ethnic-cultural differences (Rom 14:1; 15:7). The Apostle's male-like penetration of Cesar's empire by the establishment of subversive communities acknowledging Christ as Lord (1:1-15; 15:14-33) constitutes the dialectical counterpart to the hospitable house churches and their welcoming God (reflecting the masculine image of God "inserting" the Gentiles into the Israelite olive tree in 11:14, 20).

1.5 To sexual minorities (Hanks 1997:142-149; 2000/2008:88-90; 2006:583-94).

As we have seen, Paul sends greetings to 24+ believers in the 5-10 Roman tenement/house churches of whom at least 12 and perhaps as many as 22 bore common slave names—and under Roman law slaves could not legally marry (Peter Lampe 1987/2003:183). Surprisingly, what has been overlooked in the voluminous studies on Romans 16 is the fact that of the 24+ greeted believers and 38 persons whom Paul names in Romans 16:1-16, 21-23, *only three are married couples* (six persons; Hanks 1997:137-149; 2000/08:88-94; Douglas Moo 2009:844 notes the scarcity of families but fails to indicate the significance for interpreting 1:26-27).

Of these married couples, the first two break with the patriarchal pattern and like the unmarried persons might be described as gender-benders. The remaining **22+** whom Paul greets apparently are sexual minorities like Jesus and Paul himself (single, widowed, divorced?). In addition to the **six** single women and **16+** single males in Rome to whom Paul sends greetings, Paul also names **eight** single male companions living with him in Gaius' bachelor pad in Corinth. In Romans 16 we thus have a total of **Paul + 30** other single persons; see also "Deacon" Phoebe, bearer of the letter; 16:1-2. Such remarkable deposits of exegetical dynamite buried for millennia in Romans 16 beneath dull lists of names long ago led me to suggest that readers with traditional prejudices need to study Romans backwards: begin with Chapter 16 and proceed in reverse order to Chapter 1 (Hanks 2000:80-81, 94). Similarly, Stephen Moore recently concluded that for his purposes "I shall have to outflank the letter's defenses and steal up on it from behind" (2001:135). Marcella Althaus-Reid cites three examples of what she considers authentic conflictive ministries: "Any militant theological practice (for instance, Robert Goss's 'act up' Queer manifesto; Mary Hunt's 'Water Alliance' or Tom Hanks' 'The Other Sheep' ministry...) implies an 'ourselves' taking sides in a particular moment of the struggle" (2003:98).

1.6 From *Paul, sexual minority (repressed homosexual?)* (Hanks1997:144; 2000/08:92-93; 2006:598).

In Rom 1:26-27, “Was Paul talking about heterosexuals and homosexuals?” (Loader 2010:20-22). In 1980 John Boswell proposed that those whom Paul purportedly condemned in Romans 1:27 were not homosexuals, but heterosexual men engaging in homosexual acts (109; cited by Loader 20b). However, in 1996 Brooten provided ample evidence that “many people were aware of men and women whose sexual preferences were directed to people of their own sex, including lifelong orientation [orientation?]. She finds evidence in magical practices and in discourses of medicine, astrology and philosophy” [Loader 20-21, citing Brooten 1996:8-9; Schoedel 2000:55; Smith JAAR 1996:223-56]. “Such discussions are not to be equated with the complex theories of orientation of modern times and are at best rudimentary [Loader endnote #39 citing du Toit 2003:103-4], but were sufficiently widely attested to have been within Paul’s knowledge. It is difficult to measure whether Paul was aware of such distinctions and then how he might have responded to them with assent or dissent” [Loader 21; endnote #40, citing Gagnon 2003:81, 102]

Gagnon cites Brooten’s evidence to argue that Paul would have been aware of stable differences in sexual preference/orientation, but that when Paul refers to the sexual exchanges (Rom 1:26-27) “he is referring not to orientation...but to actions, as in 1:26 where what was exchanged was natural intercourse.... Having such dishonorable passions is no excuse for acting them out.... Gagnon ultimately appeals to the fall of Adam. He writes of ‘innate passions perverted by the fall and exacerbated by idol worship’ (Loader 20; citing Gagnon #41-43, Notes n. 136, 142). Loader, however, more convincingly concludes (21c):

“In all likelihood he [Paul] would have believed ultimately that all people are heterosexual on the basis of the creation stories according to which God made them male and female and/or because this was what he saw as natural. Most who continue...to espouse this view see the assumptions of both Boswell and Gagnon, that Paul operated with categories equivalent to homosexual and heterosexual as used in contemporary discussion, as anachronistic” [#44 Collins 2000:142; du Toit 2003:104; Via 2003:16].

But wasn’t the Apostle Paul *Heterosexual*? This question has been studiously/ neurotically avoided. Presumably, due to authors’ concern for job security, the dominant heterosexist ideology (often involving heterosexism and homophobia) and the assumption that since the dominant forms of Judaism and Christianity traditionally have condemned “sodomy” and “sodomists” to imprisonment, torture and death, it was literally unthinkable to question the Apostle’s sexual orientation. Rare exceptions to this scholarly neglect have come especially from Germany, where post-war awareness of the violence targeting homosexuals in the Holocaust may have prompted an earlier boldness on the part of a few. Thus, Gerd Theissen (1983/87), in what for almost three decades has been the most cited study on the *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, has written regarding Paul’s “devaluation of the flesh”:

[Hermann] Fischer’s new idea [1974] is that Paul was forced throughout his life to repress latent homosexual tendencies. Devaluation of the flesh is said to generalize defense against a particular “fleshly” inclination to everything pertaining to the body. Paul’s strong judgment on homosexual behavior in Rom. 1:25-27 is also held to be a reaction to this inclination. Even before Fischer, S. Tarachow [1955] had postulated in more general form a passive homosexuality in Paul.

Theissen cites as factors basic to proper psychological interpretation of Paul’s theology “Consciousness of sin”, “Conflict with Law,” “The doctrine of justification,” “Christ mysticism” and “Paul’s social relationships” (1983/87:25-27). Remarkably, in the three decades since the publication of Theissen’s prestigious pioneering work I have noted literally hundreds of references to its contents, but never a mention of this revolutionary paragraph, much less any article attempting to confirm or refute the hypothesis he presents (Thomas D. Hanks 1997a:145; see Robert Goss 2006:577-78 for another exception). However, where angels fear to tread, **Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong** rushed in, developing a similar hypothesis—but with no reference to the works of Theissen, Fischer or Tarachow! (Hanks 2007a/12, Appendix 3 Spong 1991:116-26).

However, the perception of **Paul as a repressed homosexual** thus enables us to better account for the following:

- Paul’s “family” living situation in Corinth with eight other single males (Romans 16:21-23);
- His friends (especially “beloved” males) greeted in the five to ten tenement house churches; almost all unmarried slave-class (Rom 16:3-16);
- His determination to proclaim a law-free Gospel and Christ as the “end of the Law” (Rom 10:4);
- His incorporation of uncircumcised, sexually “unclean” Gentiles into God’s people (Rom 11:17-24);
- The separation of his treatment of Sodom’s judgment (Rom 9:29) from male-male anal sex (1:27);
- His determination that churches practice *Abrahamic* hospitality (Gen 18; Rom 15:1-13; cf. Gen 19);
- His prohibition of the sin of excessive desire/coveting as the norm for his churches (Rom 13:8-10);
- In Romans 1:18-32 he reflects awareness of the prohibitions of male-male anal sex in Lev 18:22 and 20:13, yet he deconstructs each of the four negative elements in the rhetoric of 1:24-27 later in his letter;
- His emphasis on God’s universal love and Christ’s death for the “ungodly” (Rom 5:6; cf. 1:18);
- His special relationship with Timothy (1-2 Timothy) and rush to personally circumcise him (Acts 16:3), despite his general aversion to the practice (Galatians 5:1-12; 6:11-17; Romans 2:25-29).

1.7 From Paul, a Jewish missionary, involving Roman churches in his mission to Spain (Hanks 2007/12:19-21, 37-42).

Jewett says: “I view the argument of this letter as *an attempt to persuade Roman house and tenement churches to support the Spanish mission*” (2007:3; my italics). Marcella Althaus-Reid comments, “Perhaps Queer people [including Paul!] receive a special sense of divine vocation or a wanderlust that makes of them uninstitutionalized, restless nomads” (2003:49). Loader (12) also recognizes Paul’s missionary purpose in Romans: “Broadly speaking Paul is writing Romans because he plans to visit them and enlist their support for his future plan of a mission to Spain (15:22-29).” However, elsewhere Loader seems to forget about Paul’s rhetorical trap and gives priority to traditional Justification Theory (Campbell), holding that the purpose of Romans 1–4 is to prove that “all have sinned” (3:9, 23; Loader 12-13, citing John Nolland 2000). This in turn implies that Paul’s purpose in 1:18-32 involves making clear the sinfulness of all same-sex relations and that ideological purpose imposes itself over resistant exegetical data (“unclean unnatural...dishonorable...changes”). If, however, Paul’s basic purpose in Romans is missional, then texts like 3:9 and 23 mainly address the ethnocentric, arrogant, inhospitable members of Roman house/tenement churches whom he later invites to penitent solidarity (14:1–15:13).

In 1:8-15 Paul says only that he would visit the (divided) Roman tenement/house churches to preach his inclusive Gospel (of reconciliation/justification, 5:6-8; and welcome, 15:1-13); but despite his debt to “remaining nations” (1:13) and “barbarians” (1:14), the Apostle does not reveal his intention to use the Roman churches to launch his proposed mission to Spain until the end (15:14-33): “The stunning feature of Paul’s thesis [1:16-17]...is its contention that preaching the gospel to establish faith communities, rather than force of arms or apocalyptic military miracles, is the means by which such righteousness [liberating justice] is restored The global offensive in behalf of divine righteousness [liberating justice] envisioned by Romans is missional and persuasive rather than martial and coercive” (Jewett 2007:146, 143).

Obviously, ethnocentric prejudice against those “barbarians” and “foolish” (1:14) in Spain would be a major obstacle to any effort to get support in Rome for Paul’s mission project, and it is this imperial prejudice that the laying (1:18-32) and the first springing (2:1-29) of his rhetorical trap devastatingly addresses. The ancient foolish pagan option for idolatry (1:18-23, 25) and God’s resulting abandonment of them to social injustices (1:28-32) and to their sexual uncleanness (1:24-27) also perfectly describe the barbarians in Spain as seen from Rome. The sting operation in 2:1-29 drives home the point: anyone presuming to condemn those barbarians in Spain had best look first in the mirror. Thus to understand Paul’s purpose in 1:16–2:29 we must recall (1) the nature of the house churches as consisting largely of the poor (slaves and freed persons), sexual minorities, led mainly by women (Rom 16), (2) their divisions between the strong, mainly gentiles, and the weak, mainly Jews (14:1–15:13) and (3) the Apostle’s effort to involve these feuding churches in launching his mission to Spain (15:14-33) and so usher in Jesus’ return and earthly rule (13:11-12). This complex situation Paul addressed resulted in rhetoric in 1:16–2:29 that confuses modern readers, unaware of the diversity of his listeners, Paul’s multiple aims and his baiting of his rhetorical trap (1:18-32) with *intentionally ambiguous language*.

2. Queer Perspectives: Paul's Rhetorical Trap and Four Deconstructions of Rom 1:18-32

For more than a century, most commentaries recognize that in Rom 1:18-32 Paul lays a rhetorical trap. George Edwards (1984:94) can even cite William Sanday and H.C. Headlam in the famous I.C.C. series, which already compared Paul's trap with that of Nathan: "The transition from Gentile to Jew is conducted with much rhetorical skill, somewhat after the manner of Nathan's parable to David" (1902:54; see 2 Samuel 12:1-7). Edwards then cites Amos 1-2 and the unjust steward in Mat 18:23-35 as other biblical examples of rhetorical traps. Moreover, Edwards cites various commentaries that conclude that, due to its rhetorical genre, Rom 1:26-27 does not necessarily represent Paul's personal perspective (95)—and hence may not be used "for the condemnation of homosexuality itself" (1984:98). Regarding Rom 1:18-32 as Paul's rhetorical trap, see also V. P. Furnish (1985:78-80); Byrne (1996:70); Schreiner (1998:102); Nissinen (1998:111-12); Gagnon (2001:277-284); Swancutt 2003:193-233; 2004:42-73; Hanks 2006:596-598; 2007/12:8-10; Jewett 2007:148; Loader 2010:13; 2012:295; Hultgren 2013:117; for exegesis that strangely ignores the trap cf. Kruse 2012.

Although he recognizes its serious limitations, Robert Jewett commends Paul for providing in Romans 1:26-27 "a theological approach to the issue of homoeroticism . . . unique in the ancient world" (2007:180). However, he also emphasizes that Romans 1:18-32 constitutes "a **rhetorical** tour de force" (148) employing the traditional features of Greco-Roman and Jewish rhetoric in which Paul was well versed. So *whom* does the Apostle address and *what* does he want them to believe and/or do? Douglas Moo takes 1:18-19 as an introduction indicting **all humanity** (see 3:23); 1:20-32 as referring mainly to Gentiles; 2:1-16 especially to Jews; and 2:17-3:8 specifically to Jews (1996:96-98; 2009:850). Efforts to use 1:24-27 to provide norms for church praxis today require that we give full weight to the following four factors:

- the *literary genre* of a Decline of Civilization narrative (1:20-23/27) describing all humanity in antiquity;
- the *rhetorical trap* constituted by the relation of 1:18-32 (trap set) to 2:1-29 (trap first sprung);
- as the scroll of the letter unrolls Paul *deconstructs five* key elements of the ambiguous, but usually pejorative rhetoric of 1:24-27 (David W. Odell-Scott 2000:55-61).
- from the rhetoric used to lay the trap in 1:24-27 the *only prohibition that remains normative* throughout the letter is the fifth: against *excessive desire* (coveting/lust that harms the neighbor; 1:24, 26-27), since coveting is to be replaced by sacrificial love (5:5-8) and linked to the norm of *love for neighbor* (13:8-14).

However, even in current widely-informed studies (which are rare) five basic questions remain unresolved.

(1) Much incoherence is evident in treatments of Paul's laying (1:18-32) and repeated springing of his rhetorical trap (2:1-16, 17-29; 14:1-15:13; Hanks 2006:585-87). But if Paul has loaded his rhetorical trap with *intentionally ambiguous* terms, we need not create a false dichotomy that forces us to choose between William Countryman's bracketing of 1:24-27 as "uncleanness," and the more common sinful implications of the key terms.

(2) Many oppose the conclusion of Robert Gagnon and Robert Jewett that Paul condemns *all types* of same-sex acts. However, those who accept Countryman's bracketing of Rom 1:24-27 as treating "uncleanness" rather than "sin" conclude logically that they cannot accept that the text specifies *only* sinful sexual behaviors (oppressive/abusive acts by idolaters—with minors, slaves, cultic(?) prostitutes, etc.).

(3) Commonly overlooked is Paul's highlighting of five transcendent norms (two prohibitions and two positive norms: IDOLATRY is replaced by LOVE for Israel's God and egotistic LUST/coveting that dishonors God and harms neighbor is replaced by LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR (Rom 5:5; 8:35, 37, 39; 12:9-10; 13:8-14; 15:1-13) + women leaders, thus deconstructing the priority of female initiative in sexual diversity in 1:26-27.

(4) Most accept uncritically Bernadette Brooten's conclusion that Rom 1:26 refers to women in same-sex acts, anticipating the reference to male *same-sex* acts in 1:27, thus ignoring, usually without investigation, the patristic interpretation (until ca. 400 C.E.) of women in *heterosexual* anal sex ("against nature" = not procreative; see Hanks 2007a/12, Appendix 1, Rom 1:26).

(5) Few have begun to grapple with Douglas Campbell's evidence that 1:18-32 may not express Paul's own theology but that of a "Teacher" in Rome, whom Paul refutes in Romans 5-15 (Hanks 2007a/12, Appendix 5).

2.1 How Paul lays his Rhetorical Trap, 1:18-32. Brooten concludes her interpretation of Romans 1:18-32 by referring to Paul as trying “to *persuade* his readers” with his purported “condemnation of homoeroticism” (1996:302; my italics). Jewett insists that *no persuasion* would have been *necessary* since Paul could have counted on the (mainly slave) audience in Roman house and tenement churches in 57 AD to applaud the negative rhetoric (2007:173). Most perceptive, however, is the conclusion of **Diana Swancutt** that *Paul’s aim* in 1:18-32 is *not to persuade*, but to **entrap**, and that to interpret 1:18-32 correctly we must recognize that the rhetoric reaches its climax only when the trap is first sprung in 2:1-16 and judgmental members of the audience are caught (Swancutt 2003:193-233; 2004:42-73; Hanks 2006:596-598). Until 2:17 (“you who call yourself a Jew”), Paul is coy about the identity of the “men/ persons” he describes (1:18; “them...to them,” v. 19, etc.). His rhetorical skill is such that, as 1:18-32 was read in the Roman tenement/house churches, both Jews and non-Jews would continually ask themselves: “Does that mean me?” And if they began to feel superior, assuring themselves that it did not and condemning the idolatrous oppressors of Rom 1:18-23, 28-32, they tumbled neatly into Paul’s rhetorical trap (2:1-16).

However, as Jewett points out (2007:197-98), the Roman readers would not even realize that they themselves also had been rhetorically entrapped in 2:1-16 until Paul directly denounces *their* pride in 14:1–15:13: “That this verb *krinein* recurs in the context of Paul’s critique of the judgmental spirit within the Roman churches (14:3-5, 10, 13, 22) renders it likely that he is building a rhetorical argument here whose full relevance will emerge later.... The peculiarities of this passage can be explained by Paul’s rhetorical goal of creating an argument for an ethic of mutual acceptance and welcome between the competitive house/ tenement churches in Rome, which would then enable them to participate with integrity in the Spanish mission” (2007:197).

Paul’s rhetorical entrapment of hypocrites (both Gentiles and Jews, 2:1-29) who are judgmental of others regarding diverse lifestyles thus fits perfectly with Jewett’s understanding of the letter’s ultimate purpose in uniting the strong and the weak in the 5-10 tenement/house churches in support of the Apostle’s prospective mission to the Spanish barbarians: “The audience says to themselves ‘those hypocrites think they are exempt from wrath, but we know better!’ It is a brilliant rhetorical trap [for both the strong and weak parties hearing the letter in Rome]” (2007:200). “They will not realize until chap. 14 that their own bigotry toward one another is another form of treating God’s kindness with contempt, and that another stage of repentance is now required” (202; see also note 91). Thus, as Douglas Campbell makes clear, in Romans 1:18–4:25 Paul is not explaining to sinful *unbelievers* how they may become Christians (as the text, addressed to believers, is commonly misused), but laying the groundwork for his concluding pastoral admonitions to the divided tenement/house churches in 12:1–16:26 (supporting Campbell, see Gorman 2011:103-04).

Swancutt (2004:45), developing the conclusions of Stanley Stowers (1994), emphasizes the importance of not breaking our reading of Rom 1:18-32 at the end of Chapter 1 but continuing through 2:1-16, since this section **springs the rhetorical trap** with “a sweeping sting operation” (so even Gagnon 2001:278) and constitutes the immediate goal of the rhetoric in 1:18-32. Paul’s main purpose in 1:18-32 is thus not to persuade his audience that homoeroticism is a terrible sin, nor even to convince them that “all have sinned” (3:23; both Jews and Greeks, 3:9). Rather Paul’s references to the “uncleanness” (1:24) of females who avoided procreation by resorting to anal sex (1:26) and males similarly practicing anal sex but with one another (1:27) is held out as a kind of bait to listener/reader prejudices in order to then convict them of the sin of hypocrisy like that of the pretentious censorious bigot addressed in the diatribe of 2:1-16.

Jewett clarifies: “Although many commentators... assume that Paul is only targeting Gentiles in this passage [1:18-23], the inclusive reference in Rom 1:18 to ‘all impiety and unrighteousness [= injustice/oppression] of humans’ eliminates this loophole.... The cross reveals a fundamental distortion of honor-shame systems in which a universal desire for superior status ends up in a hostile assault on God” (2007:158; 196). As for the expression “whoever you are who pass judgment” (2:1), Jewett adds: “In various locations... Paul maintains the same principle: ‘Because judging is God’s right alone human judging is forbidden.’ Paul’s formulation depicts a censorious bigot who condemns everybody beyond himself” (197) Although Jewett captures better than anyone else the complexity of Paul’s trap with its *multiple* springings (especially in Rom 14), he cites only Stowers’ earlier work on *Diatribes* (1981), but not the later one (1994, emphasizing the relationship of 2:1-16 with 1:18-32), nor does he refer to Diana Swancutt’s development of this point (2004). Thus, although commentators may now recognize that in Rom 1:18-32 Paul lays a rhetorical trap, first sprung in 2:1-29 and

then more pointedly in Rom 14, the question often is not faced as to what, if any, “ethical weight” should be given to those elements in the laying of the trap that coincide with common Jewish values and prejudices. Obviously, Paul would want the Roman house churches to avoid impiety and idolatry and the 21 examples of injustice/oppression in his vice list (1:18-23, 25, 28-32), but why does Paul bracket 1:24-27 with the ambiguous term “uncleanness” (1:24; see 6:19; cf. 14:14, 20)?

Moreover, if clear sexual ethics (condemning all same-sex acts?) is main goal in 1:24-27, why is Paul so vague about the “unnatural use” by “their females” in 1:26, especially if he really intends to invent a new prohibition against lesbianism (notably absent in the Hebrew Bible and from 1 Cor 6:9 in his reference to “male-bedders”)? And if Paul intended to create a new law against lesbianism to add to Moses’ 613, why was the language so ambiguous that no one interpreted it this way for 350 years (centuries when most Church Fathers like Clement of Alexandria were fluent in Greek)—until John Chrysostom finally made things “clear” around 400 AD? (but not to Augustine!). And for the males of 1:27, would Paul only insist that covetous sexual lust and exploitation be avoided with love for neighbor the norm (13:8-13)? Or does he really intend listeners to deduce a clear code of sexual ethics from his rhetorical “Decline of Civilization” narrative in 1:18-32? Today we still face an ever-growing multiplication of possibly intended “codes” arguing that 1:27 targets (1) only “perversion”—homosexual acts by heterosexual males, or (2) pedophilia, or (3) sexual abuse and exploitation of slaves, or (4) participation in idolatrous cult prostitution. This suggests that Paul’s purpose in 1:24-27 was not to provide clear sexual behavioral norms, since when this is his aim the ambiguity is reduced (13:8-13), not maximized. And although 1:26-27 might suggest that Paul approved only “natural” (procreational) sex, elsewhere Paul is singularly uninterested in procreation (1 Cor 7; 1 Thes 4:3-8; see similarly Jesus’ praxis and his teaching regarding eunuchs, Mat 19:12). Rather, Paul’s two references to “natural” (procreational) sex (Rom 1:26-27) remind us that in 1:18-32 he is luring into his trap patriarchal readers obsessed with procreating heirs.

William Loader calls Rom 1:18-32 Paul’s rhetorical *ploy* (2010:13), using the phrase “caught out” for the hunter metaphor “trap” (see David, who fell into Nathan’s trap; also Judah and Israel in Amos 1–2):

What follows in 2:1-16 dramatically turns attention back on the accusers who had been so appreciating Paul’s statements thus far. The way Paul’s rhetoric works at this point suggests that he expects some among his hearers to be caught out.... If the primary aim is to catch out those who had somehow set themselves above and beyond the Gentiles and depict all, Jews and Gentiles, as sinners (3:9), then one might wonder whether what Paul says of Gentiles is to be taken seriously at all or is just a ploy or a kind of role-play. In 1:18-32 Paul would then be role-playing the hypocrite of 2:1 and accordingly such hypocrisy, together with its claims, should be summarily dismissed, including alleged statements about same-sex relations....*How do we determine what is rhetorical ploy from what Paul really means?*” (Loader 2010:12-13; my emphasis).

Loader thus perceptively raises a key question stemming from Paul’s laying of his rhetorical trap in 1:18-32 (overlooked by most commentators). Loader’s conclusion is that “Paul is...engaging in a rhetorical ploy. He sets up those Christian Jews who would join his condemnation of Gentiles with glee, only to confront them in 2:1-16 with their own sin, *but not in a way that he takes back anything he has said thus far about Gentiles*” (13-14; my emphasis). I have argued, rather, that in setting his rhetorical trap in 1:18-32, Paul *intentionally* employs a series of *ambiguous terms*, which hypocritical judgmental readers will seize upon in their rush into his trap, while he, as the letter unfolds (2:1-16:27), proceeds to redefine and deconstruct the terminology and concepts of 1:18-32, revealing in the process a profounder dialectical theology (see Campbell 2010). Loader and earlier commentators overlook this deconstruction process, but Loader does suggest the difficulty of any leap from rhetorical ploy to ethical absolutes (“what Paul really means”).

Rom 1:24-27 thus contains six ambiguous but usually pejorative elements (five later deconstructed; one remaining normative throughout Romans):

- (1) “**changed**” (first, idolatry, 1:23, 25; then, sexual practices, 26b, 27);
- (2) “**impurity/uncleanness**”: 1 time, Rom 1:24;
- (3) **dishonourable/shameful**, 3 times, Rom 1:24, 26a, 27);
- (4) females acting sexually “**against nature**,” Rom 1:26
- (5) males acting **against nature**, 2 times, Rom 1:27.

Cf. (6) continuity *condemning excess desires/lusts/covetousness*: Rom 1:24, 26a, 27 + 1:29; 7:7-8; 13:8-10, 14; replaced by divine love in believers: 5:5-8; 12:9-13 (Hanks 2006:585-87, 590; 2007/12:3-7, 11-12, 22-24, 27).

2.2 The four pejorative “changes” and God’s triple abandonment: 1:23a → 24a; 25a → 26a; 26b + 27a → 28 (Hanks 2006:582-87; 2007/12:8-10). Fundamental to the structure of Rom 1:18-32 are four references to the acts of “ex/change” in 1:23, 25 and 26 (+ “leaving” in 27), followed by three affirmations that “God gave them over” (1:24, 26, 28), which Gagnon interprets as a parental image, but Jewett, more correctly, as a judicial image of a judge handing over the guilty to be punished (Dunn, 1988:53, 75; Brooten 1996:231; Jewett, 2007:178; Loader 2010:15; Hultgren, 2011:93):

- (1) **1:23** they **CHANGED** the glory of...God for a likeness of an image of corruptible creatures;
→ **1:24 God gave them up** in **DESIRES/LUSTS**...to **UNCLEANNES**...bodies **DISHONORED**...
- (2) **1:25** who **EX/CHANGED** the truth of the Creator God into the lie of worshipping and serving the creature;
→ **1:26a God gave them up** to **PASSIONS**...**DISHONORABLE**...
- (3) **1:26b** “their females” **EX/CHANGED** **NATURAL** sexual acts for **UNNATURAL** (heterosexual anal?)
1:27 similarly/likewise (*homóios*)
- (4) **1:27** the males “**LEAVING**” the **NATURAL** use of the female
BURNED IN DESIRE to practice the **DISHONORABLE** (male-male anal intercourse);
→ **1:28 God gave them up** to a reprobate mind and **SHAMEFUL** conduct.

2.3 Five later deconstructions (commonly ignored or left unrelated to Rom 1:24-27!): (1) **uncleanness**, (2) **unnatural**, (3) **shameful**, (4) **changes**; (5) **women**; cf. / (6) **cf. covetousness, not deconstructed** (Hanks 2000/08:90-94; 2006: 588-90; 2007/12:11-13; 2010:147-150; David W. Odell-Scott 2000:55-61; Michael R. Stead 2012:355-64):

(1) Behavior traditionally categorized as “**UNCLEANNES**” (1 time, Rom 1:24) → **cleansed**, 14:14, 20. Paul declares all *things CLEAN* (14:14, 20; see Titus 1:15; Mark 7:19). Despite their expertise in intertextuality, even Hultgren (2011:517) and Jewett (2007:859, 866-67) fail to relate Paul’s declaring all things *clean* (14:14, 20) to the “*uncleanness*” in 1:24 (similarly regarding 1:26 “against nature”; cf. Stead 2012).

(2) Behavior “**AGAINST NATURE**” (2 times, 1:26-27) → **God also, 11:24!**
(Hanks 2006:587-88 + 595-96; cf. law in 2007a/12:15-17). “Unnatural” behavior sounds condemned (1:26-27), but later at times *even God acts contrary to nature* (11:24; hardly something Philo would have said!). Yet such “unnatural” behavior is precisely what God engaged in when engrafting believing Gentiles into the Olive tree of God’s people (Israel, Rom 11:21, 24). This relationship is ignored by Jewett (2007:172-76, 692-93) and Hultgren (2011:411; cf. James Brownson 2013:223-55). Moreover, by referring to Gentiles as *uncircumcised* “by nature” (2:27), Paul recognized circumcision to be a cultural imposition and thus an act “against nature”; see also the Gentiles not having the Law from/by birth (2:14; Hanks 2000/08:92),

(3) “**Shameful**” passions (3 times, 1:24, 26-27) → **Shame becomes redemptive**
(3:21-26; 8:18-25; Hanks 2006:590-91; 2007a/12:15). Some sexual behavior is shameful (1:24, 26-27), but Paul says he is “not ashamed” of his message of a crucified savior (1:16), since that shameful crucifixion is God’s means of cosmic redemption (3:21-26). Jesus’ naked **SHAMEFUL CRUCIFIXION** was God’s decisive instrument for liberating justice and cosmic redemption (1:16; 3:21-26; cf. “**BOASTING**” in our hope, in suffering and in God (5:1-3, 11); “despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2; Hanks 1990:92). Jewett fails to relate Jesus’ crucifixion shame to that of 1:24-27 (2007:46-51, 173, 275, 293).

(4) “**Their females**” acted sexually **against nature** (1 time, 1:26) → **Women leaders, Rom 16**
As indicated above, female leadership in Rom 16 subverts the homophobia apparent in the surprising inclusion and priority of “their females” in Paul’s rhetorical trap in **Rom 1:26**, and thus contributes to the deconstruction apparent in the cases in other texts (see **Note** below).

(5) Pejorative “changes” appear highly suspect, whether they involve changing God for idols (1:19- 23, 25) or changing sexual practices (1:24, 26-27), but change may also constitute the very essence of sanctification (→ “Be *transformed*...” Rom 12:1-2). Moreover, since Paul is the great theologian of change, later he not only describes **CHANGE** as constituting the positive essence of **sanctification** but as involving even the transformation of the entire cosmos (8:18-25; 11:25-36; 2 Cor 3:18; Hanks 2007/12:5-7; 2010:148). Both Jewett (2007:733) and Hultgren (2011:442) fail to relate the four negative changes in 1:18-32 to the later positive texts (Rom 12:1-2, etc.).

Cf. (6) Continuity condemning excess desire / covetousness: Rom 1:24, 26-27 + 1:29; 7:7-8; 13:8-10,14. Paul later deconstructs the above #1-4; however, covetous lust/ strong desire, #5 (linguistically somewhat ambiguous), *continues as a prohibition throughout Romans* (the last of the 10 Commandments; 13:9, 14). In Christian experience such lust is rather replaced by the divine Spirit’s gift of sacrificial love (5:5; 12:9, 20-21; 13:8-14; Hanks 2006:585-87, 590; 2007/12:3-7, 11-12, 22-24, 27).

3. Romans 1:26 on female-male anal sex (James Miller 1995:1-11; Hanks 2000/08:90-91; 2006:591-93; 2007/12:13-15, 29-33; Brownson 2013:83, 207-09; 224-25, 240, 244; who summarizes the decisive patristic evidence). As careful scholars commonly recognize, in Romans 1:26 Paul does *not* refer to lesbians who “abandoned” their husbands or “exchanged” their sexual *partners* (Jewett 2007:176, note 127; William Loader (2010:18-19, cf. the males in 1:27); but rather of females who exchanged their sexual procreative *practices* for the “unnatural” – probably offering themselves to males for anal sex, thus avoiding pregnancy.

Until ca. 400 A.D. the church fathers – including the two greatest sexual theologians, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine – recognized that Romans 1:26 referred to women offering themselves for anal sex with their male partners. Thus, Clement (ca. 250 AD), the church’s first significant theologian of sexuality, followed his citation of Romans 1:26-27 with this comment: “Nature has not even permitted the most unclean animals to procreate by means of *the passage of evacuation!*” (*Paidagogus*, II, 87.1). Clement thus reveals that he viewed *both* verses to refer to anal sex (women with men, 1:26; men with men, 1:27). Therefore, what links *both* verses (1:27, *homoios*, “similarly”), is not our modern ideological *concept* of “homosexuality” but simply the ancient *practice* of anal sex. The ancient tendency was to compare similar sexual *practices* (anal sex, avoiding pregnancy: females with males in 1:26, males with males in 1:27).

Each of the other six biblical texts referring to same-sex practices (always abusive) refer *explicitly only to males*: Genesis 19 (Sodom); Lev. 18:22 and 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7. Would Paul, who triumphantly proclaimed Christ as the “end” of the Law (Rom 10:4), have invented a new one, an ethical absolute prohibiting lesbianism, to add to Moses’ 613 laws? Thus, neither the Hebrew Bible (“Old Testament”), nor the New Testament, nor the Koran condemn sexual relations between women (“lesbianism”). The historic, orthodox “conservative” view never *misinterpreted* Romans 1:26 to refer to lesbians. Rather, the “liberal revisionist” misinterpretation of Romans 1:26 as a condemnation of lesbians was first introduced only around 400 A.D., and then popularized by John of Chrysostom, becoming a popular heresy in the Middle Ages and thereafter (Hanks 2007).

William Loader (2010:18-19) accepts Brooten’s defense of the (medieval) lesbian interpretation and her faulty argument regarding the linguistic usage of “against nature,” **but ignores patristic evidence and** misinterprets attempted refutations: “The interpretation of 1:26 as reflecting concern with procreation...faces problems” since Paul elsewhere was singularly unconcerned about procreation (2010:18-19). However, the contention is not that Rom 1:26 reflects *Paul’s* concern with procreation, but that his reference to “their females” resorting to anal sex to avoid procreation simply reflects the common motivation of those females, which in turn forms part of his rhetorical trap to catch judgmental readers

Excursus: Rom 1:26 why “ladies first”? 1. Why refer to *homoerotic* practices when these receive so little attention elsewhere in Scripture? 1.1 Option to exchange one true God for idolatry // exchange in sexual practices (rhetorical effectiveness); 1.2 Paul enhances the effectiveness of his *rhetorical trap* by appealing to the homophobia of his readers/hearers. 2. Why *include women* when the other five biblical homoerotic texts are exclusively male? 2.1 Evidence that 1:26 is not homoerotic; 2.2 Although biblical homoerotic references are all exclusively male, they refer only to male-male anal sex // heterosexual anal sex. 2.3 Paul aims to entrap

women as well as males when he finishes his multiple springings of the trap. 3. Why refer *first* to women when the five biblical homoerotic texts fail to even mention them? 3.1 Further evidence that 1:26 is not homoerotic; 3.2 Preparation for deconstruction in Rom 16 with women not leading into sin but in spiritual authority and leadership. “As to why Paul chose to mention the women before the men, the suggestion...that it was in order to give more emphasis to the male perversion by referring to it in the latter part of the sentence and dealing with it more fully seems more probable that either the suggestion that he was influenced by the narrative in Gen 3, or the suggestion that it was because he felt the women’s guilt the more shocking because of their greater endowment with modesty” (Cranfield, ICC 1975:125).

4. Rom 1:27 on male-male anal sex (Hanks 2000/08:91-94; 2006:582-605; 2007/ 12:17; 2011:76-114).

As Loader points out regarding the first word in 1:27, which links the male-male anal sex to “their females” in 1:26, “*Homoios*...can simply mean ‘likewise’ or ‘similarly’, [and] ensures that the female and male activities are identified as similar” (2010:19). He thus corrects the common translation “Likewise” or “In the *same* way” (NIV), aimed at equating the same-sex male acts with the purported *same-sex* female acts of 1:26. However, even if we follow the NIV, the male-male *anal* sex of 1:27 may be viewed as analogous to heterosexual *anal* sex (unnatural, avoiding procreation) in 1:26. Loader also then concludes that the reference to males, burning in desire “for one another” (1:27), implies “mutuality rather than exploitation and so apparently envisages also adult-adult sexual relations of mutual consent” (2010:23, citing Brooten 1996:361 and Gagnon, who even obscures Paul’s Greek to suggest romantic “yearning”; 2003:80 and “Notes” 93). However, 1:27 refers not to consensual *love*, but to idolaters abandoned by God to their mutual burning egotistical lust, which often results in cruelly imposing rape. And Loader acknowledges that (as Jewett emphasized) Paul’s formulations also could “include abusive sex, such as exploitation of male slaves, which...Paul may have in mind in relation to Rome” (23), where most of the names of church members greeted in Rom 16 are slave names.

In addition to the mutual lust (“one another”) and common slave name factors, Loader summarizes the long-standing debate over Robin Scroggs’ argument (1983; Miller 1997:861-65; Hanks 2006:593-94) that sexual exploitation by pederasts is Paul’s real target in Romans 1:26-27, since they are the predominant concern in both Jewish and Greco-Roman writers (Loader 2010:22-23). As Loader indicates, “research since Scroggs has concluded that Paul would have more in mind than just pederasty in Romans 1” (23). He also points out (2012:23, citing Hanks 2006:593) that if we interpret Rom 1:26 as referring to unnatural, non-procreative *heterosexual* acts (anal sex), one of the main arguments against Scroggs is removed (the fact that women were seldom denounced for pederasty). However, if we accept Countryman’s bracketing of Rom 1:24-27 as referring to sexual acts that are only “unclean” but not necessarily sinful, this would be incompatible with Scroggs’ emphasis on pederasty. And if we recall that Paul here is incorporating a Decline of Civilization narrative as part of his rhetorical trap for judgmental readers, we may hesitate to emphasize ambiguous verbal details, which were rhetorically formulated to lure readers into his trap, not to provide us with a sociologically precise map of Paul’s view of homoerotic behavior in the empire—much less universal sexual ethics to provide precise guidance for his churches (cf. Rom 13:8-14; 1 Cor 5–7).

Although ignored in Hultgren’s recent commentary (2011), Loader (2010:19-20) approvingly summarizes Robert Jewett’s original interpretation of Rom 1:27: “Jewett draws attention to the account in Hippocrates of the painful aspect of anal intercourse, suggesting that Paul is making specific reference to this effect. Thus he sees ‘shame’ here, as often, referring to a man’s penis ‘working up’ to the working up an erection; the ‘reward/payback’ [referring] to the soreness both of the anus and of the penis; and behind the words ‘which was inevitable/necessary’ [*dei*] he sees a reference to tightness or constrictedness and its effects. Accordingly, he translates: ‘males who work up their shameful member in [other] males, and receive back for their deception [error] the recompense that is tightness in themselves’ (summarizing Jewett 2007:179-80). I fail to see any basis in Jewett for attributing the tightness to the *penis* of the penetrator as well as the anus of the penetrated; Jewett also exempts the women of 1:26 (purportedly the worst offenders!) from suffering the tightness, since in 1:27 the participles “working up” and “receiving back” are connected syntactically with “males” (Jewett 2007:180). After his approving summary of Jewett’s proposals, Loader lists the alternatives and concludes only that “There remain a number of other unresolved issues” (2011:20).

Note. “Error” (*planes*), wandering from the path of truth (1:27e; cf. “planet,” a wandering body; on the “error” see Hanks 2006:598; 2007/12:18). Most understand the “error” (*planes*) in 1:27e to refer to the idolatry of 1:19-25 and the “recompense” as the sexual uncleanness of 1:24-27. Thus, Countryman concluded that we should “take the ‘error’ as idolatry and the ‘recompense’ as the [sexual] uncleanness of Gentile culture” (1988:115). Similarly, Gagnon translates: “receiving in themselves the payback which was necessitated by their straying (from the truth about God),” explaining that “the ‘straying’ or ‘error’ (*plane*) is that of not acknowledging the true God (i.e., idolatry),” which he calls “the consensus view” (2001:260 and note 19; see Calvin, Hodge, Godet, Murray, Cranfield 126-27, Wilckens, Dunn 165, Countryman 115-16, Schmidt 83-84, Nissinen 109, Byrne 1996:77, Helminiak 2000:98-99; Schreiner 1998:97; TDNT). As Gagnon indicates, both Countryman and Schmidt say that “Paul consistently used *plane* ...of wrong belief rather than wrong conduct” (2001:260 note 19). BDAG supports this, defining *plane* in Rom 1:27 as “an erroneous view of God, as exhibited in polytheism, resulting in moral degradation” (Danker 2000:822). Regarding **1:25** Jewett emphasizes the use of the article “*the* lie” to refer to the human exchange of the truth of God for idolatry, “which involves the fundamental thrust of humans to replace God with themselves....to define evil and good for themselves” (2007:170, citing Gen 3:5 and referring to emperor veneration in Roman religion).

Jewett, however, opposes this common interpretation (“error” = idolatry) and prefers to interpret *plane* in 1:27e as the error of sexual misconduct (1:24, 26-27a). Others similarly designate the “error” to be excessive passion or homosexual activity (Schmithals, Fredrickson 215-217, Moo 116, Fitzmyer 288, Wright 434, Talbert 68, Swancutt 2003:212) while Brooten leaves the question open (1996:257-58). Even less likely, however, is Jewett’s interpretation that for their “error” (*plane*) of sexual perversion the passive receptive males receive in themselves the payback, recompense, or penalty of anal “tightness (*edei*, from the verb *dei*), the soreness suffered as a result of being anally penetrated” (1:27b; 2007:180). Jewett recognizes that the antecedents in 1:27 refer the punishment *only to the passive males* (2007:180), even though the purportedly “lesbian” behavior of 1:26 was purportedly the worst offense! Jewett thus implicitly limits the sexual misconduct to male-male *anal* sex but with the penalty suffered *only by the penetrated male*! Preferable to Jewett’s definition of the punishment as anal “tightness/ soreness” would be the conclusion of Diana Swancutt that in Rom 1:27 the requital Paul refers to is what Philo of Alexandria (Paul’s Jewish contemporary) called “the disease of effemination,” commonly thought to result in the case of males who submitted to anal penetration (2003:200-201; 2004:56; 2007:30; Hanks 2006:596-98). With Jewett’s interpretation a certain coherent development can perhaps be discerned in 1:27: leaving (“abandoned”) → lusting → anal penetration → punishment). However, as Countryman points out, if we depart from the meaning of *plane* as a reference to idolatry we are left with a mysterious “recompense/ payback/ requital” that is undesignated in the context, while the sexual uncleanness is clearly indicated in 1:24, 26-27 as God’s punishment for idolatry. Loader (2010:20) lists the alternative interpretations but (like Brooten) leaves the identification of the “error” and the “payback” an unresolved issue.

5. Conclusions: Three views: (1) Gagnon; (2) Jewett; (3) Hultgren

5.1 Undiluted heterosexism/homophobia (exegetical + pastoral, with any new exegetical insights trumped by “complementarity”). Robert Gagnon (2001, 2003; www.robagnon.net), Presbyterian New Testament professor, Pittsburgh Seminary) defends the traditional view that the Bible condemns *all same-sex acts*. Gagnon grants many exegetical points that pro-gay exegetes have made in recent years. His approach cannot fairly be labeled fundamentalist, except on homosexuality, since he denies inerrancy, works with the original languages, uses scholarly methodologies and accepts standard conclusions (JEDP sources in the Pentateuch, multiple authorship of Isaiah, deutero-Pauline letters in the New Testament, etc.; 2001:345). Thus anyone who studies Gagnon’s works might learn a great deal about modern scholarly interpretation of the Bible and could soon discover that biblical interpretation is not a matter of citing any old translation and interpreting it according to traditional prejudices. Gagnon’s common tactic, however, is to grant what recent scholars have pointed out about a text that would tend to undermine the validity of its use against sexual minorities today, but then to “trump the trick” by uncritically imposing his late nineteenth century concept of “complementarity,” thus seeking to reenlist the text to support traditional heterosexist and homophobic conclusions (Hanks 2007a/12:23; 2010:159; 2011:85; Diana Swancutt 2003:207, note 30; Kathy Rudy 1997:116-20).

Regarding **scientific studies** on homosexuality, Gagnon dismisses the overwhelming consensus of reputable scientists and organizations as ideologically motivated and rather cites as alone worthy of confidence a few Wheaton college professors, ideologues whose pseudo-scientific conclusions are dictated by fundamentalist views and interpretations of the Bible. Thus, pastorally, Gagnon even recommends the scientifically discredited “**ex-gay**” approaches which have resulted in many being overcome by depression, substance abuse and suicide (Wayne R. Besen 2003; Stephen Parelli, 2006). Moreover, with the exception of one irrelevant allusion to Louis Crompton (2003), Gagnon shows no awareness of the **history of homophobia** (Byrne Fone 2000) and the church’s complicity in persecution and violence against sexual minorities—as if someone were to exegete and set forth as normative the biblical teaching supporting monarchy, slavery, anti-Judaism, or female inferiority, while showing no awareness of the history of tyranny, racism, anti-Semitism and sexism!.

5.2 Paul’s heterosexism/homophobia trumped by science (Loader 2010:7; 2012). Robert Jewett (2007) clearly expects modern readers to *transcend Paul’s scientific limitations and prejudices*: “The depiction of a particularly unpopular example [homosexuality] for the sake of an effective argument leads Paul to highly prejudicial language, particularly to the modern ear” (2007:173). Earlier Jewett had warned that in Paul’s categorizing unclean sexual acts as “unnatural,” he is “raising a *cultural* norm to the level of a ‘natural’ and thus biological principle, which would probably have to be formulated differently today” (2000:234; citing Margaret Davies, 1995:323-30). Davies concluded that we can no longer accept Paul’s view on homosexuality because of the limitations in his understanding of it (cited but rejected by Schreiner 1998:97). Brooten (1996: 302) reaches a conclusion similar to that of Jewett and Davies; see her treatment of nature/unnatural (262-80). Dale Martin astutely critiques such heterosexist ideologies in the traditional interpretations of Rom 1:18-32:

Paul’s...logic assumes a mythological structure unknown to most modern persons, Christians included. Most of us do not believe that all of humanity was once upon a time neatly monotheistic, only later, at a particular historical point, to turn to polytheism and idolatry; nor are we likely to believe that homosexuality did not exist until a sudden invention of polytheism.... In sum, modern people, even Christians, do not believe the mythological structure that provides the logic for Paul’s statements about homosexuality in Romans 1. Heterosexist scholars alter Paul’s reference to a myth which most modern Christians do not even know, much less believe (that is, a myth about the beginnings of idolatry) and pretend that Paul refers to a myth that many modern Christians do believe, at least on some level (the myth about the Fall). Heterosexism can retain Paul’s condemnation of same-sex coupling only by eliding the supporting logic of that condemnation (1995:338-39).

5.3 Challenges to traditional exegesis as heterosexist/homophobic (Countryman, 1988/2007; Helminiak, 1995/2000; Campbell, 2009; Hultgren 2011). Romans 1:24-27 forms part of a Decline of Civilization narrative in which Paul lays a rhetorical trap (1:18-32) that he springs in 2:1-29, first on unspecified judgmental hypocrites (2:1-16) but then on specified Jews (2:17-29). Paul baits his trap by use of *intentionally ambiguous* language, which hence cannot communicate clear ethical teaching. However, after his trap has been sprung, Paul proceeds to clarify his teaching later in the letter, deconstructing both language and concepts: “The verses [1:26-27] are located within the section 1:22-31 in which Paul speaks of the mythological past of the Gentiles, using aorist (past tense) indicative verbs all the way through” (Hultgren 2011:96). Paul does not here specify “gentiles” since the option for idolatry referred to was made before Abraham and the Jew-Gentile distinction. The ambiguity of the key term is made clear by comparing Countryman (on “uncleanness” = cultic impurity; 2007:108-16) with Gagnon (= “sinful”; 2001:273-77). Jewett points out that the first springings of the trap in 2:1-16, 17-29 only reach their goal when both “strong” and “weak” recipients of the letter in Rome discover that they too have been entrapped (on this efficacy of the entrapment even for the “strong” and the “weak” in Romans 14:1-15:13, see Jewett 2007:197-204, 211, 217). Jewett emphasizes Paul’s rhetorical trap in his exegesis of its first springing in 2:1-16 but fails to note how the preceding *laying* of the trap affects the rhetorical language in 1:18-32. Hultgren totally ignores the trap in both contexts! By emphasizing the hermeneutical significance of the “trap-laying genre” in 1:18-32 and Paul’s use of deliberately ambiguous terminology to be deconstructed in the letter, we can avoid some of the extremes and difficulties of Douglas Campbell’s interpretation of Rom 1:18-32 as echoing a Teacher in Rome whom Paul proceeds to refute (though we should acknowledge Campbell’s many valid insights and contributions to the interpretation of Romans (see my review of Campbell, www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar/ingles/ingles.html; also Gorman’s 2011 review).

Either alternatives 5.2 or 5.3 may free biblically oriented churches from any need to perpetuate heterosexist/homophobic policies against sexual minorities. For battles in ecclesiastical politics, however, exegetical approaches normally prove more efficacious than the resort to hermeneutics (which requires the longer timeframe of academic courses). **Rom 1:24-27 clearly do not describe freely chosen same-sex relations of committed enduring love or marriage, but rather God’s judicial punishment of humanity’s earliest ancestors for their basic error of idolatry (1:18-23) and their resulting sexual acts carried out in contexts of imperial idolatry (pagan temples and homes; Rom 1:18-23, 25; 1 Cor 8:10)—acts which commonly:**

- manifest **oppression/injustice**, abuses of power (1:18ab, 29; 2:8; 3:5) that presuppose unequal, hierarchical sexual relations between penetrator and penetrated (anal sex);
- are motivated by selfish, egotistical “covetous desires” (1:24, *’epithumíais*; 13:9); dishonorable “passions” (1:26, *pathe*), “**burning lusts**” (*’exekauíthesan... ’oréksa*) that harm the neighbor and destroy communities (assemblies, churches); cf. 1 Cor 7:9, “better to marry than to *burn*”;
- result in loss of honor (1:24, “dishonored”; “**passions of dishonor**,” 1:26; “shameful acts,” 1:27); with payment in kind, the appropriate punishment (1:27d), the “uncleanness” of 1:24.

These sexual acts are here metaphorically referred to and bracketed as “**uncleanness/ impurity**” (1:24), which is especially appropriate for the references to anal sex in 1:26-27 (see Deut 23:9-14; cf. Rom 6:18-19 where “uncleanness” is first subversively redefined as injustice/ oppression, and then in 14:14, 20 **deconstructed** with all things declared clean; see Mark 7:19; Titus 1:15). Richard Beck’s important study (*Unclean*, 2011) impressively analyzes the concepts of disgust and uncleanness in numerous biblical texts, but overlooks the incredible support Paul’s teaching on uncleanness provides for Beck’s interpretation of uncleanness, hospitality and mission (see Romans 1:24; 6:19; 14:20; 12:13; 15:7, 22-29).

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