

A Critique of Prohomosexual Interpretations of the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

James B. De Young

Professor of New Testament Language and Literature
Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon

The contemporary debate surrounding homosexuality has many facets, including sexual behavior, public morality, law, civil rights, public health, and the interpretation of Scripture. The last facet is particularly important, for the way people perceive the relevance of the Bible on the issue will determine in large measure how the issue will be addressed from the other perspectives.

In recent years interpretations of the Scriptures have arisen that challenge traditional teaching regarding homosexuality. The "prohomosexual" interpretations are "revisionist" in that they either (1) fail to find homosexuality where it has been found before (Gen. 19; Judg. 19; Ezek. 16; 1 Cor. 6; 1 Tim. 1; etc.), or (2) claim that passages referring to homosexuality are irrelevant to the Christian church either because they concern Israel's special relationship to God (e.g., Lev. 18; 20), or because they concern a form of homosexuality (rape or pederasty) unlike the modern phenomenon of mutual adult relationships and hence have nothing to contribute.

Somewhat surprisingly, this "prohomosexual" position is founded on the witness of the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The claim is that the Scriptures, excluding 2 Peter and Jude, do not link homosexuality to Sodom, nor does the Old Testament Apocrypha. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha makes this connection for the first time in reactions to the homosexuality rampant in Greco-Roman society. The Pseudepigrapha subsequently in-

fluenced 2 Peter and Jude to connect Sodom with homosexual practices. Therefore, according to Bailey, "the traditional conception of Sodom receives little support from Scripture."¹ Boswell² and Scroggs³ have followed Bailey in this approach. Scroggs indeed believes that condemnations of Scripture concern pederasty, not mutual, adult homosexuality, on the basis of interpretations found in the Pseudepigrapha. The New Testament, like the Pseudepigrapha, is only reacting to the pederasty of the surrounding pagans.

The Old Testament Apocrypha consists of about 14 books or portions found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. These are books of history (1 Esdras; 2 Esdras; 1, 2 Maccabees); poetry and wisdom (Ecclesiasticus; Wisdom of Solomon); and fiction having an edifying purpose (Judith; Tobit; Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah; Prayer of Manasseh; three additions to Daniel; and additions to Esther). In 1546 the Roman Catholic Church canonized 11 of these books or portions, while Jews and Protestants have refused to view them as authoritative.

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha encompasses additional books, most of which were written, like the Apocrypha, between the Testaments of canonical Scripture. Most are named after Old Testament persons who purportedly authored the books, though no one was deceived by these false claims and no one considered these writings canonical. Nevertheless they provide encouragement and insight into the times, and many claim to set forth the course of future events in an apocalyptic genre.

It is clear that the proper interpretation of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is crucial to the interpretation of Scripture on the issue of homosexuality and to the modern debate over homosexuality, at least in its use of Jewish and Christian Scriptures. This study seeks to interpret all the references to Sodom and sodomy (homosexuality) found in this intertestamental literature and to critique "pro-homosexual" use of it.

The Apocrypha

ECCLESIASTICUS

This book was written in Hebrew about 180 B.C. and is also known as Sirach or the Wisdom of Joshua, son of Sirach. According to the

¹ D. Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), p. 10 (see also pp. 6-8, 27-28);

² John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 94, n. 7, and pp. 108-11.

³ Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), chaps. 5, 6, esp. pp. 67, 83-84, 97-98.

prologue it was translated into Greek by the grandson of the author in 132 B.C. Prohomosexual interpreters cite Ecclesiasticus 16:8 as making pride the sin of Sodom, not homosexuality. This is supposedly "a more ancient tradition."⁴ The pertinent lines are the following: "He did not spare the people among whom Lot was living, whom he detested for their pride."⁵

In the context the author successively discussed the judgment of Israel, the giants at the Flood, Sodom, Canaan, and the 600,000 Israelites who died in the sojourn. It is obvious that he was not trying to be exhaustive in giving the reason for judgment in each case. For example only the rebellion of the giants (16:7) is given as the reason for the judgment of the Flood (saying nothing about violence, intermarriage, etc., as Genesis 6 relates).

Since Genesis 19 says nothing of pride, it is clear that the author of Ecclesiasticus was interpreting when he assigned pride as the cause of the overthrow. Yet he was not incorrect to do so, as will be shown.

Moreover, the author of Ecclesiasticus had a special reason for giving pride as the cause of Sodom's downfall. He viewed pride as especially abhorrent throughout, whereas wisdom is extolled. Wisdom characterizes those who fear the Lord and those who master the Law (15:1). To fear the Lord is "the source of wisdom" (1:14) and "all wisdom comes from the Lord" (1:1; cf. 1:16; 14:20; 15:18; 16:4). Also wisdom is "far from pride" (15:8). According to Ecclesiasticus pride violates both wisdom and fear of the Lord. Thus in the context which includes Sodom, past causes of judgment are interpreted as "pride" (16:8), "obstinacy" (16:10), and being "stiff-necked" (16:11).

The author believed that God "will judge a man by his doings" (16:12; cf. 16:14). It must be assumed, therefore, that the author had some deeds in mind for which Sodom was judged, which were the expressions of its pride.

It is clear that "pride" cannot be limited to a state of being or disposition, but here must include "proud behavior," and perhaps even "sexual desire"⁶ The Greek term is **u ρ erhf ania**, which occurs as a noun here (often including actions: 10:7, 12-13, 18; 15:8; 16:8; 22:22; 48:18; 51:10) and in the Letter of Aristeas (262, 269) and in Mark 7:22. As the noun so the verb **u ρ erhf anew** can mean both "be proud,

⁴ Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, p. 94, n. 7.

⁵ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), p.252.

⁶ Even the English word "pride" denotes this. See Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1971), p. 1799. An obsolete meaning is "sexual desire." Also see The Compact Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Oxford University, 1971), 2:2297.

haughty," and "treat arrogantly and disdainfully, despise" (4 Macc. 5:21: "the law is despised").⁷ So both aspects characterize these cognates.

The word "detested" ("whom he detested for their pride") is **ep-delucato**. In 15:13 it is said, "The Lord hates anything abominable" (**bdelugma**). Since these cognates are used in the Septuagint to refer to sodomy (Lev. 18:22; 20:13), it may well be that sodomy is referred to in Ecclesiasticus 15:13; 17:26; and 41:5 by this term (contrast 1:25; 11:2; 13:20, twice; 19:23; 20:8; 27:30).

It seems certain that sodomy is the meaning of the term in 49:2. In this verse the author praised King Josiah as a godly king. He wrote, "He succeeded in converting the people, and abolished the wicked abominations."⁸

The last two terms translate **bdelugnata aponiaj**. These same terms are juxtaposed in Jeremiah 16:1.8 and are translated, "detestable idols and abominations" (NASB). Snaith renders the terms in Ecclesiasticus as "loathsome and lawless deeds."⁹

It is important to note the event referred to by the author in 49:2. The setting is 2 Kings 23:1-13, where the terms for "abolished" (vv. 5, 11) and "abomination" (v. 13) occur. In these verses Josiah, with whom Jeremiah was a contemporary, is credited with defiling the abominable high places of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom (v. 13), and ending the idolatrous priests and other idols (vv. 5, 11). Yet the significant statement is Josiah's being credited with breaking down "the houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the Lord, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah" (v. 7). This is a reference to religious prostitution between males and constitutes sodomy (cf. 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12). Moses forewarned of such practices in Deuteronomy 23:17-18. It is not unreasonable to assume that the writer of Ecclesiasticus had in mind this

⁷ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 848-49. Paul placed the adjective **uþerhf anoj** between **uþristhj** and **alazwn** in a list of vices (Rom. 1:30), where the arrogant despisers of others stand conceptually between the violently insolent and the empty boasters. The noun occurs in the New Testament only in the list of vices in Mark 7:22. See the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, S.v. "**uþerhf anoj, uþerhf ania**", by Georg Bertram, 8:525-29.

⁸ Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha*, p. 321. :

⁹ John G. Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 244. For Old Testament usage of these and other terms see James B. DeYoung, "The Old Testament Witness to Homosexuality: A Critical Assessment of the Prohomosexual Interpretation of the Old Testament," paper presented to the Northwest Section, Evangelical Theological Society, May 4, 1985, Portland, OR.

idolatrous, sexual vice when he used the term **bdeḷ ugma** in 49:2. Yet probably the most significant passage for this study is 10:13-18. The author wrote of the judgment on pride:

For pride begins with sin, and the man who clings to it will rain down abominations. For this reason, the Lord brings unheard-of calamities upon them, and overturns them utterly. The Lord tears down the thrones of rulers, and seats the humble-minded in their places. The Lord plucks up nations by the roots, and plants the lowly in their places. The Lord overturns heathen countries, and destroys them down to the foundations of the earth. He takes some of them away, and destroys them, and makes the memory of them cease from the earth. Pride was not created for men, nor fierce anger for those who are born of women.¹⁰

The concepts here are similar to those in 16:8 ("whom he detested for their pride"). He wrote with sarcasm that on those who hold to pride, God will bring abominations (**bdeḷ ugma**). The first line of verse 13 enforces the interpretation of 16:8 that other sins are implicit in the passage.

The second line of verse 13 is rendered by Box and Oesterley as, "And its source overfloweth with depravity."¹¹ The idea is that sin pours forth every form of depravity.¹² Another Greek manuscript reads, "And fornication is the source of both." Evidently the Hebrew term for "depravity" is פְּחִי, used also in Ezekiel 16:27, 43, 58 ("lewdness"), and Judges 20:6, where the Levite accused the men of Gibeah of committing "a lewd act in Israel." They had desired a homosexual relationship.

Other verbal connections with Old Testament contexts dealing with Sodom occur. In Ecclesiasticus 10:13 ("For pride begins with sin") the noun **uḫerhʿania** occurs. In verse 17 the verb **eḫhranen** occurs ("He takes some of them away"). Both of these words and the passage as a whole support the idea that the author alluded to Ezekiel 16:49-50 with its judgment of Sodom: "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance. . . . thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it." The words "arrogance" and "removed" in the Septuagint are from the same Greek terms as employed in Ecclesiasticus 10:13 and 17.

In Ezekiel 16:56-57 Judah's sin is identified as this same pride

¹⁰ Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha*, pp. 241-42.

¹¹ G. H. Box and W. O. E. Oesterley, "The Book of Sirach," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, ed. R. H. Charles, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 1:350.

¹² Snaith renders the second line of 10:13 as, "so persistence in it brings on a deluge of depravity" (*Ecclesiasticus or The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*, p. 54).

(**uḫerhf ania**) in a verse linking Judah with Sodom: "As the name of your sister Sodom was not heard from your lips in your day of pride, before your wickedness was uncovered." Here in a context of harlotry, lewdness, and abominations (v. 58) Judah's sin is also identified as "pride" just as Sodom's is identified in verse 49! The Greek **uḫerhf ania** (used in Ezekiel only in 7:20; 16:49, 56) translates the Hebrew **יִרְאָה**. In similar contexts it means "arrogance, cynical insensitivity to the needs of others, and presumption. It is both a disposition and a type of conduct (both of which are inextricably connected)."¹³ The contexts of Ezekiel and Ecclesiasticus confirm this statement.

In Ecclesiasticus 10:12 the meaning of pride is given: "The origin of pride is to forsake the Lord, man's heart revolting against his Maker." Here "origin" has the sense of "essence" (cf. 1:14).¹⁴ Hence the essence of pride is revolt against God. Persistence in pride then increases the depravity (v. 13). Can there be any doubt that or this author "pride" includes conduct and disposition? Is this not an apt description of sodomy?

The graphic portrayal of God's judgment in 10:12-18, coupled with the Greek terms employed, and their Hebrew counterparts, makes an allusion to the overthrow of Sodom because of sodomy extremely probable. Even the translators suggest this as a possibility.¹⁵ The writer of Ecclesiasticus appears to be faithful to the account of Genesis 19 via Ezekiel 16. For his own theological purpose he interprets the sin of Sodom as pride in 16:8, a pride that includes arrogant conduct and a violation of wisdom. For Bailey and Boswell to limit their discussion to Ecclesiasticus 16:8 is unfortunate. And for them to limit the sin of Sodom to pride because of this passage is even more unfortunate.

WISDOM OF SOLOMON

The Wisdom of Solomon is by an unknown author and is probably a composite work dated 50 B.C. to A.D. 10, or as late as A.D. 40. The passage most frequently discussed regarding sodomy occurs in a list of vices in 14:23-26. The context deals with the origin and results of idolatry. For the author there is a deliberate connection between

¹³ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. "יִרְאָה," by Victor P. Hamilton, 1:143.

¹⁴ Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, p. 56. So also Edward Lee Beavin, "Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach," *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Charles M. Layman (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 557.

¹⁵ "In 16b ('extirpateth them,' etc.) there may be an allusion to Sodom. xvi. 49" (Box and Oesterley, "The Book of Sirach," 1:350, n. 16).

idolatry and sexual vice: "For the devising of idols was the beginning of fornication" (14:12; cf. v. 27). Then follows the catalog of vices (14:23-27):

For neither while they murder children in their rites nor celebrate secret mysteries, nor hold frenzied revels with alien laws do they keep their lives or marriages pure, but one man waylays another and kills him, or grieves him by adultery. And it is all a confusion of blood and murder, theft and fraud, depravity, faithlessness, discord, perjury, clamor at the good, forgetfulness of favors, defilement of souls, confusion of sex, irregularity in marriage, adultery, and indecency. For the worship of the unspeakable idols is the beginning and cause and end of every evil.¹⁶

It is often claimed by "prohomosexual" interpreters that the meaning of the phrase "confusion of sex" (**genesewj ephal lagh**) is uncertain and should not be used to refer to homosexuality. The meaning is difficult to ascertain, primarily because the phrase apparently occurs nowhere else in Greek literature. Research shows that **genesewj** is somewhat common in classical and biblical Greek and means "birth, origin, kind, family, existence, generation, genealogy." "However, **ephal lagh**, while frequent in classical Greek ("interchange, change, variation"), occurs nowhere else in biblical canonical or noncanonical literature (although Aquila used it at Psalm 9:12 and Isaiah 66:4). Several cognates exist, one with a sexual connotation, but only one cognate (**ephal lac**) occurs in Scripture, and then only once (Gen. 48:14, "crossing").¹⁷

There may be some connection with **epdihl lagmenou** ("changed" of sex), used by Aquila and Origen at 1 Kings 22:47 (Eng., 22:46). The reference is to a male cult prostitute. There is no Septuagintal text to translate the Hebrew of 1 Kings 22:47-50.

The phrase seems similar to one found in Philo utilizing **ephal lagh**: "change of the works of nature," according to Winston.¹⁸

¹⁶ Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha*, pp. 206-7. Samuel Holmes also renders the key phrase as "confusion of sex" ("The Wisdom of Solomon," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 1:559). The RSV reads "confusion over what is good." "Abuse of sex" is the rendering of Edwin Cone Bissell (*The Apocrypha of the Old Testament* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880], p. 262). He cites the KJV's "changing of kind" (marg. "sex").

¹⁷ See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, comps., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. H. S. Jones, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 343, 554, 1288; Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, pp. 154, 261; William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 352.

¹⁸ David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1979), p. 26. Ernest G. Clarke renders the phrase of 14:26 as "sexual perversion" (*The Wisdom of Solomon* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973],

He renders the phrase in 14:26 as "interchange of sex roles." He compares the phrase to "changed the order of nature" (Test. Naph. 3:4 discussed later) and to "women exchanged natural relations for unnatural" (Rom. 1:26, NIV). He notes that the preceding phrase in Wisdom 14:26, "defilement of souls," has a moral sense, and the following phrase, "irregularity in marriage," points to sensual excess, perhaps meaning "inordinate."

It seems that the phrase means "interchange, change of kind or sex." Bailey argues that it could mean anything from "changing of race" (a reference to Jewish apostasy) to self-castration, effeminacy, mixed marriages, homosexuality, or cultic transvestism. He argues that "there seems no reason to suppose that it has any special reference to homosexual acts."¹⁹

Yet Bailey seems to deal inadequately with the context. The Wisdom of Solomon clearly refers to Sodom on two other occasions (10:6-9; 19:13-17), making a reference to sodomy in 14:26 possible. Also the immediate context refers to immoral sexual practices. The list in 14:23-26 is a catalog of vices--a literary device occurring in both Testaments (e.g., Jer. 7:9; Rom. 1:29-31) and in other Jewish, Christian, and pagan literature.²⁰ Homosexuality is often found in such catalogs. Also the majority of translators and commentaries translate the phrase in a way that allows a homosexual meaning. In Wisdom 19:13-17 Sodom is not explicitly cited but is clearly referred to.²¹ The passage reads:

And upon the sinners came the punishments not without tokens given beforehand by the force of thunders; for justly did they suffer through their own exceeding wickedness, for grievous indeed was the hatred which they practiced toward guests. For whereas certain men received not strangers who came among them, these made slaves of guests who were their benefactors. And not only so, but God shall visit the former after another sort, since they received as enemies them that were aliens; whereas these first welcomed with feasting, and then afflicted with dreadful toils, them that had already shared with them in the same rights. And they too were stricken with loss of sight (even as those others at the righteous man's doors), when, being compassed about

p, 97). He cites a similar list of immoralities in Hosea 4:2. In Hosea 4:14 Aquila rendered "shrine prostitute" by the term **epdihl lagmenou**, "changed" (of sex).

¹⁹ Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, p. 48. Scroggs thinks the passage refers to homosexuality, but that the text "puts no particular weight on homosexuality, or any other specific sin" (*The New Testament and Homosexuality*, p. 92). This seems to be beside the point.

²⁰ Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. 280,

²¹ The author of the Wisdom of Solomon characteristically avoids the use of proper names, but no one doubts the reference to Sodom here. See Clarke, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. 37, 127, and the extended discussion of this phenomenon in Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. 139-40.

with yawning darkness, they sought every one the passage through his own door.²²

Here comparison is being made between the reception given by the Sodomites and the more bitter hatred of strangers exhibited by the Egyptians in their treatment of Israel. Strong terms ("sinners," "wickedness," etc.) describe the Egyptians and their behavior.

It is hardly legitimate to infer from this passage that the behavior of the Sodomites was merely inhospitable. The contrast being made in the passage is not between the kinds of sins involved or their severity. Rather the contrast is between the recipients of the harsh treatment: Egypt persecuted guests and benefactors. At least the Sodomites did not "add fickleness to their crimes."²³ Sodom persecuted aliens and strangers. The judgment of blindness recorded of both (19:17) heightens the perversity of both Egypt and Sodom (Gen. 19:11).

One other passage in Wisdom clearly refers to Sodom and its sins. In the context (10:1-14) the author illustrated the saving and punishing power of Wisdom by describing seven righteous heroes and their wicked counterparts, including Lot and the Sodomites.²⁴ None of them is named, in keeping with the author's style. The passage (10:6-9) describes Wisdom's deliverance of Lot from Sodom and the latter's destruction:

It was she who rescued a righteous man when the ungodly were perishing, and he escaped the fire that descended on the Five Cities, which were turned into a smoking waste as a testimony of their wickedness; with plants that bear fruit before they ripen, and a pillar of salt standing there as a memorial of an unbelieving soul. For having passed Wisdom by, they were not only distracted from a knowledge of the good, but also left behind for the world a monument of their folly, so that they were unable to go undetected in their failure. But Wisdom rescued her servants from troubles.²⁵

The Five Cities in 10:6 are those five cities of the plain named in Genesis (10:19; 14:2), including Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁶ The refer-

²² Holmes, "Wisdom of Solomon," 1:567. Due to textual variations in 19:15 it may be rendered otherwise. Goodspeed has, "And not only so, but those others shall have some consideration, for the men they received with such hostility were aliens" (*The Apocrypha*, p. 219). Yet Holmes believes that it is unjustified to weaken the word **episkoph** to "consideration, allowance." He points out that this is the "only certain reference in this part of the book to future retribution" (*The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. 567, n. 15).

²³ Clarke, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. 128.

²⁴ Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. 211.

²⁵ The translation is that of Winston.

²⁶ These same five cities from Genesis 14 are found listed in the same order in an Ebla tablet, dated about 2500 B.C. See Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, p. 215.

ence to unripened fruit as a witness to Sodom's "wickedness" finds its counterpart in Scripture (Deut. 32:32), Josephus, Tacitus, and throughout history.²⁷

The passage describes the Sodomites by various terms, including "ungodly" (**ašebwn**) and "wickedness" (**ponhria**). In Wisdom 10:8-9, which forms a unit marked off from the preceding and the following, the penalty for ignoring God and wisdom is given, followed by the benefit to righteous men. The "folly" is **af rosunhj**, and "in their failure" is **esf alhsen** ("to slip, stumble, fall"; rendered "enormities" by one writer).²⁸

It is clear that Wisdom of Solomon did not limit Sodom's sin to inhospitality. In fact its writer never used the term "inhospitable" to describe Sodom. It may characterize such a passage as 19:13-17, but the indictment of Sodom should not be limited to it. The phrase "confusion of sex" (or "interchange of sex roles") in 14:26 shows the author's acquaintance with sexual perversion, probably in the form of homosexuality in light of 10:6-9. For "pro homosexual" interpreters such as Bailey and Boswell to limit the sin of Sodom to inhospitality is unwarranted in light of the total witness of Wisdom. Their failure to discuss all the passages, or to quote them completely, is unfortunate and significantly distorts the witness.

The Pseudepigrapha

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha has even clearer references to sodomy and Sodom than those found in the Apocrypha. All such references are here brought together, but because of the limitations of this article, discussion will be kept to a minimum. The passages speak for themselves.²⁹

2 ENOCH

Also known as Slavonic Enoch, this book (dated as early as 100 B.C. but probably best assigned to the turn of the era³⁰) describes at 10:4-5a the place of torture between the third and fourth heavens.

The longer recensions (P, J) read:

This place, Enoch, has been prepared for those who do not glorify God, who practice on the earth the sin which is against nature, which is child

²⁷ See references in Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, pp. 215-16.

²⁸ Clark, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, on 10:8.

²⁹ The author of this article is unaware of any other one source where all these passages pertinent to homosexuality are quoted or discussed.

³⁰ Francis I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1983), 1:97.

corruption in the anus in the manner of Sodom, of witchcraft, enchantments, divinations, insulting, coveting, resentment, fornication, murder-and who steal the souls taking away their possessions.

The shorter recension (A) has:

This place, youth, has been prepared for those who practice godless uncleanness on the earth, who perform witchcraft and enchantments, and who boast about their deeds. They steal souls secretly; who untie the yoke that has been secured; who enrich themselves by fraud from the possessions of others.³¹

It is clear that the words of the longer recensions, which so explicitly refer to Sodom and sodomy, find their counterpart in the words of the shorter recension, "who practice godless uncleanness on the earth." These words are clearly parallel to Jubilees 16:5-9, in which the men of Sodom are described as those who "work uncleanness on the earth" (discussed later). When these words are compared to the longer recensions the nature of the sin is made clear.

In 2 Enoch 34:1-3 (J) there are additional references to sodomy. God convicts the persons who are idol worshipers and sodomite fornicators, and for this reason He brings down the flood upon them.

For I know the wickedness of mankind, how they have rejected my commandments and they will not carry the yoke which I have placed on them. But they will cast off my yoke, and they will accept a different yoke. And they will sow worthless seed, not fearing god and not worshipping me, but they began to worship vain gods, and they renounced my uniqueness. And all the world will be reduced to confusion by iniquities and wickednesses and abominable fornications, that is, friend with friend in the anus, and every other kind of wicked uncleanness which it is disgusting to report, and the worship of (the) evil (one). And that is why I shall bring down the flood onto the earth, and I shall destroy everything, and the earth itself will collapse in great darkness.

The shorter recension (A) again omits the references to sodomy:

I know the wickedness of mankind, how they will not carry the yoke which I have placed on them. Nor do they sow the seed which I have given them; but they have renounced my yoke, and they will take on another yoke; and they will sow worthless seed, and do obeisance to vain gods. And they will reject my sole rule. And all the world will sin by injustices and crimes and adulteries and idolatries. Then I shall bring down the flood onto the earth, and the earth itself will be overwhelmed by a great quantity of mud.³²

Several summary observations about these passages in 2 Enoch can be made. First, in 10:4-5 the reference seems primarily focused on pederasty, whereas adult sodomy is the concern of 34:1-3. In 10:4 (P,

³¹ Ibid., pp. 118-19. The translation of both recensions is Andersen's. He seems to favor the longer recensions as genuine.

³² The translations are those of Andersen (ibid., pp. 158-59).

J) the words "the sin which is against nature" remind one of Paul's condemnation of sodomy (Rom. 1). In addition, sodomy and idolatry are connected, as in Romans 1 and Wisdom 14:12. "A binding yoke" in 10:5 (A) and in 34:1 (both recensions) probably has a sexual connotation³³ and perhaps refers to sodomy. The connection with idolatry (34:1) supports this. It seems that euphemism or other obscurity is employed so as not to offend sensibilities. The phrase "reduced to confusion" (34:2, J) supports the reference to sodomy in Wisdom of Solomon 14:12 ("the devising of idols was the beginning of fornication," cf. 14:27). The words "who boast about their evil deeds" (2 Enoch 10:4-5 in both recensions) seem to reflect the meaning of "pride" (**uþerhf ania**) discussed above as the sin of Sodom given in Ecclesiasticus 10:13; 16:8; and Ezekiel 16:49, 56. In 2 Enoch 34:1-3 (both recensions) the sins (including sodomy) are viewed as universal before the Flood and the cause for the Flood.

3 MACCABEES

This historical romance (100 B.C.) refers to Sodom and its crimes in 2:5 between references to the giants of the Flood and Pharaoh. It says, "When the inhabitants of Sodom acted insolently and became notorious for their crimes you burned them up with fire and brimstone and made them an example to later generations."³⁴

The terms used to describe Sodom's sins, "acted insolently," "became notorious," and "crimes," are wholly consistent with the sin of Sodom elsewhere designated as "pride," as discussed earlier. Indeed in 2:3 all three examples (giants, Sodomites, Pharaoh) are indicted as those who "act insolently and arrogantly." Most significantly, the words used of Sodom ("acted insolently") translate the Greek terms **uþerhf ania eþgazomenoj**. The former is the very word for "pride" in Ecclesiasticus and Ezekiel. God's dealing with Sodom is viewed as having universal significance.

JUBILEES

This midrashic rewriting of biblical history (about 105 B.C.; or as early as 160 B.C.) records the cause for Sodom's destruction in 16:5-6.

And in that month the Lord executed the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and Zeboim and all of the district of the Jordan. And he burned them with fire and sulphur and he annihilated them till this day just as (he said), "Behold, I have made known to you all of their deeds that (they were) cruel and great sinners and they were polluting themselves and they were fornicating in their flesh and they were causing

³³ So Andersen comments to this effect (ibid., pp.119, 158).

³⁴ H. Anderson, "3 Maccabees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:518-19. See also Cyril W. Emmet, trans., "The Third Book of Maccabees," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 1:164. Anderson puts the date in the early first century B.C.

pollution upon the earth." And thus the Lord will execute judgment like the judgment of Sodom on places where they act according to the pollution of Sodom.³⁵

In 16:7-9 the sins of Lot and his daughters are described. Lot's seed would undergo judgment "just like the judgment of Sodom" (16:9). This is the fourth mention of Sodom.

The five phrases used to describe Sodom's sin are appropriate to homosexuality. R. H. Charles renders Wintermute's "causing pollution upon the earth" as "work uncleanness on the earth." This parallels the phrase in 2 Enoch 10:4-5a (shorter recension), "practice godless uncleanness on the earth." The longer recension of Enoch elaborates the phrase as sodomy in explicit terms. The terminology argues for the dependency of 2 Enoch on Jubilees, or that both draw on a common tradition.

Jubilees 13:17 includes another reference to Sodom: "And in the fourth year of this week Lot parted from him, and Lot dwelt in Sodom, and the men of Sodom were sinners exceedingly."

In Jubilees 20:5 it is written of Abraham and his children: "And he told them the judgment of the giants and the judgments of the Sodomites just as they had been judged on account of their evil. And on account of their fornication and impurity and the corruption among themselves with fornication they died."³⁶ In 20:6 Abraham warns that they not be cursed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Here the five phrases describing Sodom's sins are similar to those in 16:5-6, with "corruption among themselves" perhaps even more suggestive of homosexuality. The giants and Sodomites are linked here as both culpable for such sins. When these phrases are compared with those in the following passage (7:20-21) describing the sins of the giants, the reference to inordinate sexual practice seems even more convincing. Indeed, a reference to bestiality ("they sinned against beasts") seems to occur in 7:24 and reminds one of the same connection with sodomy in Leviticus 18:23 and 20:15-16. These are the words in Jubilees 7:20-21:

And in the twenty-eighth jubilee Noah began to command his grandsons with ordinances and commandments and all of the judgments which he knew. And he bore witness to his sons so that they might do justice and cover the shame of their flesh and bless the one who created them and honor father and mother, and each one love his neigh-

³⁵ O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:88. He dates Jubilees between 161 and 140 B.C. (p. 44). R. H. Charles dates it 109-105 B.C. in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:6. His translation uses "wicked" for "cruel," "defile themselves" for "polluting themselves," and "work uncleanness" for "causing pollution" (ibid., 2:37).

³⁶ Wintermute, "Jubilees," 2:94.

bor and preserve themselves from fornication and pollution and from all injustice. For on account of these three the Flood came upon the earth. For (it was) because of the fornication which the Watchers, apart from the mandate of their authority, fornicated with the daughters of men and took for themselves wives from all whom they chose and made a beginning of impurity.³⁷

4 EZRA

Three brief references to Sodom occur in 4 Ezra, self-designated 2 Esdras (so the AV and RSV). The original, middle section was composed about A.D. 100, with chapters 1-2, 15-16 added later.

In 2:8-9 the unrighteous people of Assyria are warned to remember what God "did to Sodom and Gomorrah, whose land lies in lumps of pitch and heaps of ashes." In 5:7 a sign of future judgment is that "the sea of Sodom shall cast up fish." In 7:106 Ezra, when told that prayers are ineffective on the day of judgment, asked, "How then do we find that first Abraham prayed for the people of Sodom?"

The motif of being reduced to ashes (4 Ezra 2:8-9) has a variant reading: "it has sunk right down to hell."³⁸ Both thoughts occur in the New Testament, and Sodom is in the context in each case (Matt. 11:23-24, "descend to Hades"; Luke 17:29; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7).

TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs purport to be the last words of each of the 12 sons of Jacob (Gen. 49). The work is variously dated, from as early as 150 B.C. to 40 B.C., with several additions from the Christian era.³⁹

The following are all the references to Sodom or sodomy found in the Testaments. In the Testament of Naphtali 3:4-5 and 4:1 the sin of Sodom is described as "changed the order of nature" and "wickedness," and is linked to the sin of the Watchers (angels) at the Flood--an association made in Jubilees 20:5.

But ye shall not be so, my children, recognizing in the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created things, the Lord who made all things, that ye become not as Sodom, which changed the

³⁷ Ibid., 2.69-70.

³⁸ Jacob M. Myers, *I and II Esdras*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1974), pp. 144, 150. The translations of 4 Ezra are from Bruce M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:526, 532, 541.

³⁹ R. H. Charles dates it 109-40 B.C. ("The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:282, 289-90). H. C. Kee dates it as early as 150 B.C. ("Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:777-78). A minor view puts it in the late second century and early third century A.D. (M. Dejonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* [Assen: Van Gorcum & Co., 1975], pp.127-28). The translations of the Testaments are from Charles.

order of nature. In like manner the Watchers also changed the order of their nature, whom the Lord cursed at the flood, on whose account He made the earth without inhabitants and fruitless.

These things I say unto you, my children, for I have read in the writing of Enoch that ye yourselves also shall depart from the Lord, walking according to all the lawlessness of the Gentiles, and ye shall do according to all the wickedness of Sodom.

Here for the first time the sin of Sodom is said to have "changed the order of nature" (ct. Rom. 1). In 4:1 this is summarized in the general term "wickedness."

Bailey and others believe this passage and those from Jubilees to be the sources of the "Christian interpretation of the Sodom story." Bailey believes that Jubilees departs from "the general tradition of Scripture" both in stressing the sexual nature of Sodom's sin and in linking it with the Watcher story and the Flood. Bailey faults the Testament of Naphtali 3:4-5 for making Sodom's sin homosexuality rather than heterosexuality.⁴⁰ These claims will be evaluated later.

In the Testament of Asher 7:1 the Sodomites for the first time are said to have sinned against angels. The verse reads, "Become not, my children, as Sodom, which sinned against the angels of the Lord, and perished for ever." Interestingly 6:2 (ct. 2:3; 3:2) speaks about those who "both do the evil thing and they have pleasure in them that do it." This reminds one of Paul's words in Romans 1:32, also in a context of homosexuality.

The Testament of Benjamin 9:1 reads as follows: "And I believe that there will be also evil-doings among you, from the words of Enoch the righteous: that ye shall commit fornication with the fornication of Sodom, and shall perish, all save a few, and shall renew wanton deeds with women."

The last clause may allude to the outrage at Gibeah where the Benjamites attempted the sodomy of a Levite but had to settle for the rape and murder of his concubine (Judg. 19-20).⁴¹

The Testament of Levi .14:6 prophesies that future, apostate Israel would take Gentile women as wives, "purifying them with an unlawful purification; and your union shall be like unto Sodom and Gomorrah." Kee renders the last clause as, "your sexual relations will become like Sodom and Gomorrah."

In 17:11 occurs the only use, apparently, of the term "pederast" (**paidof qoroj**) in the intertestamental literature. The passage prophesies the corruption of Jewish priests: "In the seventh week

⁴⁰ Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, pp. 12-18. See also pp. 27-28.

⁴¹ Bailey rejects a homosexual interpretation of the sin at Gibeah (ibid.)

there will come priests: idolators, adulterers, money lovers, arrogant, lawless, voluptuaries, pederasts, those who practice bestiality." Interestingly the terms "arrogant" and "bestiality" occur here also. In 17:8 the author wrote that there will be "pollution such as I am unable to declare in the presence of human beings, because only the ones who do these things understand such matters." This too perhaps refers to sodomy.

Many of the Testaments refer to the "abominations of the Gentiles" and the like (Testaments of Judah 23:1-4; Issachar 6:1-2; Zebulun 9:5-6; Dan 5:5, 8; Gad 8:2; Simeon 5:4; Levi 10:1-3; Reuben 5:6-7; 6:8). It seems that references to sodomy are implicit in many of the Testaments.

THE LETTER OF ARISTEAS

This letter, purportedly explaining the origin of the Septuagint, is dated probably about 170 B.C., if not earlier (250 B.C.).⁴² The reference to sodomy occurs in verse 152. The passage reads (151 b-152):

This moreover explains why we are distinct from all other men. The majority of other men defile themselves in their relationships, thereby committing a serious offense, and lands and whole cities take pride in it: they not only procure the males, they also defile mothers and daughters. We are quite separated from these practices.⁴³

The clause, "they not only procure the males," is translated by Andrews as, "they not only have intercourse with men." The context makes clear that sodomy is meant by the Greek term (**proagw**). The passage probably alludes to Leviticus 18 and 20, in which sexual vices, including sodomy and incest, are condemned.

Scroggs believes that the passage is a reaction to pagan Greek pederasty and refers to this practice, not to adult sodomy.⁴⁴ Yet the letter makes no use of terminology for pederasty, and it identifies the vice as "men" with "males." The terminology is influenced by the Old Testament, not Greek practices.

⁴² See R. J. H. Shutt, "Letter of Aristeas," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:7-9; Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 47-50; and Herbert T. Andrews, "The Letter of Aristeas," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:87. Some of these support an earlier date (250-200 B.C.) or a date as late as the first century A.D.

⁴³ The translation is from Shutt, "Letter of Aristeas," 2:23.

⁴⁴ Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, pp. 92-97. Liddell and Scott cite a cognate (**proagwgeuw**) meaning "pander, pimp, procuress" (*A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1466). A variant (**prosagw**) of the term used in 152 can mean to act toward a woman "in an effeminate manner, procure," etc. (*ibid.*, pp. 1499-50).

Summary and Conclusions

"Prohomosexual" interpreters, such as Bailey, Boswell, and Scroggs, make several claims regarding the relationship of the intertestamental literature to the canonical Scriptures on the issue of homosexuality. These were briefly mentioned in the introduction. The claim that Sodom is associated only with pride or inhospitality in the Apocrypha has been shown to be false. The full meaning of "pride" or "arrogance" and the use of such terms as "abominations," "sins," "ungodly," "wickedness," "folly," "failure," and "confusion of sex" in Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon argue against the "prohomosexual" view. The failure of this view to consider all the pertinent passages where Sodom or sodomy is explicit or implicit contributes to the gravity of the misinterpretation.

The claim that the Pseudepigrapha, particularly Jubilees and the Testament of Naphtali, associate sexual sin, and particularly sodomy, with Sodom for the first time has been shown to be false. The association is implicit in the Apocrypha, as demonstrated in this article. The sexual, homosexual meaning originates in Genesis 19 itself. Also terminology in both the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is sufficiently similar to support a unified witness throughout the intertestamental period.

It is true that the Testament of Naphtali uses unique, explicit terms such as "changed the order of nature," but these words are a legitimate interpretation if the Old Testament narrative (Gen. 19) means sodomy. Jubilees is not any more explicit than Ecclesiasticus. Indeed 2 Enoch is the most explicit of all (in its longer recensions), with certain Testaments and the Letter of Aristeas being quite explicit as well. These observations seem valid whatever the dating and interdependency of these books may be.

The claim that Jewish reaction to Greek pederasty influenced the Pseudepigrapha to associate (wrongfully) sodomy with Sodom is false. Only in one place does the term meaning "pederasty" occur (Test. Levi 17:11), and there is no link with Sodom. By contrast, Philo used several terms for pederasty. Indeed, perversion of adults with adults is assumed virtually everywhere (even 2 Enoch 34:1-3 balances the reference to "child corruption" in 10:4-5). Old Testament terminology, including euphemism (beginning with "know" in Genesis 19 and Judges 19), influenced the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, as one would expect (e.g., in the use of "abominations," "pride," etc.).

The claim that the Pseudepigraphal books of Jubilees and Testament of Naphtali influenced 2 Peter and Jude to associate (wrongfully) sodomy with Sodom is false. These New Testament

books should be viewed as part of a stream of tradition regarding the sins of Sodom which began in the Old Testament itself. These writers used terminology consistent with the Old Testament: "lawless deeds," "ungodly," "sensual conduct," "fornication."

Even a study comparing the series of judgments found in 2 Peter and Jude with those in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha argues against any certain dependence. Peter and Jude have a different order of judgments; Peter omits entirely a reference to Pharaoh; Jude puts events of the wilderness first (out of chronological order, contrary, it seems, to the intertestamental books); and neither makes reference to giants before the Flood (angels take their place).

Those who wish to use the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha to eradicate sodomy from passages of the Old Testament or to eradicate condemnation of it where it cannot be denied (Lev. 18; 20) are proposing an extreme interpretation. It is so radical in its tenets, so serious in its consequences for ethics, so contrary to a reasonable interpretation, that it may be properly termed "revisionist" in a sense not unlike revisionist interpretations of recent history.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Dallas Theological Seminary
3909 Swiss Ave.
Dallas, TX 75204
www.dts.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu