

### Review, Thomas D. Hanks

Probably the most welcome feature of this prestigious new study Bible by the Society of Biblical Literature is Leander E. Keck's note on Romans 1:26-27:

Some think that Paul here condemns homosexual acts by heterosexual people (i.e. *unnatural* means "unnatural for them") [John Boswell 1980]; others that he condemns pederasty (sexual activity between adult men and boys) [Robin Scroggs 1983]. It is questionable whether Paul thought of homosexuality as a condition or a disposition [orientation; Robert Jewett 2006] (see 1 Cor 6:9). The repetition of the word *exchanged* (see v. 25) is deliberate: moral confusion follows idolatry, as Jewish thought had long maintained (see Wis 14:12) [Robert Gagnon 2001; Jewett 2006].

For details on the authorities I have inserted in Brackets, see my "Romans" in *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London: SCM, 2006; USA distributor Westminster John Knox) and my review of Robert Jewett's *Romans* in the Hermeneia series, Fortress Press, 2006; [www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar](http://www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar)). So far as I know, Keck's friendly note in the new HCSB has no precedents in previous study Bibles; cf James Edwards' longer and more hostile note in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, 2011-2012 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003). So if you maintain dialogue with fundamentalist friends who refuse to believe in evolution, you might encourage them to contemplate the evidence from the translations and study Bible notes on the clobber texts, perhaps starting with the totally negative RSV ("homosexuals" in 1946) and the NIV note on Romans 1:26-27.

Keck encourages us to look further for More Light and encouragement in 1 Cor 6:9. There the rather queer NRSV translation refers to "male prostitutes" and "sodomites" but the note explains:

*Male prostitutes*, adolescent boys who sold sexual favors to older males or, more generally, the more passive male in a homosexual act. *Sodomites*, Greek *arsenokoitai*, lit. "those who bed males," may be Paul's own coinage, for no earlier occurrence of the term is known. It seems to refer to the more active partner in a male homosexual act; see also Rom 1:27; 1 Tim 1:10.

The note briefly interprets the original Greek well enough (where nothing is said about Sodom), but hardly atones for the outrageous NRSV translation "sodomites," which perpetuates the millennium-long myth that the males of Sodom were divinely punished for homosexuality, when Gen 19 makes clear that it was a case of attempted gang rape of the two visiting angels. Love may cover a multitude of sins, but Study Bible notes often leave exposed a prejudiced translation. Since for even more light, the 1 Cor 6:9 note refers us to 1 Tim 1:10, we hasten thence, only to find that the NRSV translation error is repeated ("sodomites" for *arsenokoitai*) but without even a loincloth of a note to cover it (the juxtaposition with "slave traders" is illuminating).

Recalling that the New Jerusalem Bible in French and Spanish (the Vatican notwithstanding), held out an Olive Tree branch to LGBT/ Queer Christians by correctly translating Jude 7 as referring to Sodom and Gomorrah as going after "different flesh" ("una carne diferente" Spanish), we consult the new HCSB, where the NRSV says the cities pursued "unnatural lust" (apparently imported from Rom 1:26-27; certainly not representing anything in the Greek of Jude 7, *sarkós heteras*). The HCSB translation note corrects the NRSV reading: "Gk went after other flesh" and another note explains: "The Sodomites attempted sexual relations with angels," citing Genesis 19, which makes clear that the relations were not very consensual and loving but attempted gang rape.

Seeing that the prestigious Rabbi, Jacob Milgrom, authored the notes on Leviticus (he who wrote the 3-volume Anchor Bible Commentary on Leviticus, including an extensive queer explanation why Lev 18:22 and 20:13 do not prohibit homosexual relations for modern Gentiles, nor for Jews living outside Palestine), I end my pilgrimage by hastening to those texts. However, surprisingly, both texts stand naked in the translation with no covering note (just "See 18:22" with 20:13). Were we prone to conspiracy theories, we might think that a Gagnon fan at Abingdon stole it "while we slept"; or a homophobic computer disappeared it, or maybe poor Jacob simply despaired of reducing the 20+ pages on homosexuality in his 3000 page opus to 3 lines and thinks we had best just buy his commentary and read Leviticus more often.