

Class 2b

Test Case:
Making Meaning of the Sodom Story

**GOD said it.
I Believe it
That settles it!**

Outline

- Our contemporary context
 - A cultural debate over rights for the LGBTI community
 - Two Christian positions
- Invoking the Bible
 - Does the Bible "speak"?
 - What do the texts say about same-sex relations?
 - What we mean by "homosexual"
 - The same-sex texts in the Bible
 - A feminist reads the story of Sodom



NBC Nightly News on the night of the Supreme Court Decision
Friday, June 26, 2015

An Evangelical Christian Response



Pastor John Hagee reacting to the decision
 Founder and Senior Pastor of the non-denominational, evangelical Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas
 Excerpted by the progressive online news outlet RawStory from an interview on the Hagee Hotline on GETV,
 published on YouTube on 1 July 2015
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky36SplgGk>

Invoking the Bible

Does the Bible Speak?

- Some Christians think it does – why might they?
- What would Loughlin, a postmodern Christian, say?
 - How is the Bible "inspired"?
 - How is it revelation?
- A Catholic perspective

The fundamentalism approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life. It can deceive these people, offering them interpretations that are pious but illusory, instead of telling them that the Bible does not necessarily contain an immediate answer to each and every problem. Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. *It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations.*

Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1995)

Invoking the Bible

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"The Bible teaches firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation."

Dei Verbum Art. 11

"...the interpreter of sacred Scripture in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writer really intended and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words."

Dei Verbum Art. 12

So - What Did the People Writing the Bible Mean?

Same-Sex Texts in the Bible

There are (only) 6

- Genesis 19
- Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10
- Romans 1:18-32

Leviticus 18:22
in the Jewish Bible

Hebrew

לא תשקב משקב אשה
תועבה הוא

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination.

Greek

καὶ μετὰ ἀρσενος οὐ κοιμηθήσῃ
κοίτην γυναικός· βδελύγμα γὰρ
ἐστίν.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10
in the Christian New Testament

Surely you know that the wicked will not possess God's Kingdom. Do not fool yourselves; people who are immoral or who worship idols or are adulterers or homosexual perverts or who steal or are greedy or are drunkards or who slander others or are thieves—none of these will possess God's Kingdom.

* Ἡ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἄδικοι θεοῦ βασιλείαν οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν· μή ἐξαπατήσῃτε οὖτε ἑαυτοὺς οὖτε εἰδωλωμένους οὖτε μοχοὺς οὖτε μαλακοὺς οὖτε ἀρσενοκοίτας *9 οὖτε κλέπται οὖτε πλεονέκται, οὐ μέθυσοι, οὐ φιλολάτρεις, οὐζ ἀφάρτοις βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσουσιν.

1 Corinthians 6:9
We Can't Quite Decide What It Says

Bible Version	<i>μαλακοὶ</i>	<i>ἀρσενοκοῦται</i>
Rheims	effeminate	liers with mankind
RSV		homosexuals
Jerusalem Bible	catamites	sodomites
Good News		homosexual perverts
NAB	boy prostitutes	sodomites
NRSV	male prostitutes	sodomites
New Jerusalem	self-indulgent	sodomites
Christian Community	perverts	sodomites
NIV	male prostitutes	homosexual offenders
NAS	effeminate	homosexuals
NLT	male prostitutes	practice homosexuality
KJV	effeminate	abusers of themselves with mankind

What Do WE Mean by "Homosexual"?

The image shows a screenshot of the Wikipedia article for 'Homosexuality'. The article text is partially visible, defining the term and discussing its etymology. A sidebar on the right contains a 'Sexual orientation' section with a gender symbol icon and a list of categories: 'Asexual', 'Bisexual', 'Homosexual', and 'Non-binary categories'. Below the text is an image of a classical painting depicting a scene with figures, likely related to the story of Sodom mentioned in the adjacent slide.

The Main Text: The Story of Sodom
Genesis 19

Were the men of Sodom gay?

Is that why they were destroyed?

Lot and his daughters flee the destruction of Sodom (his wife turns back and is turned into a pillar of salt)

The Story of Sodom

From the illustrations of R. Crumb in
The Book of Genesis Illustrated
(New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009)

The Story of Sodom

The Book of Genesis
ILLUSTRATED
BY R. CRUMB
ALL 50 CHAPTERS
—INCLUDING—
THE CREATION

IS NOT THE WHOLE LAND BEFORE YOU? PRAY, KINDLY PART FROM ME! IF YOU TAKE THE LEFT HAND, THEN I SHALL GO RIGHT, AND IF YOU TAKE THE RIGHT HAND, I SHALL GO LEFT.

Gen 13:9

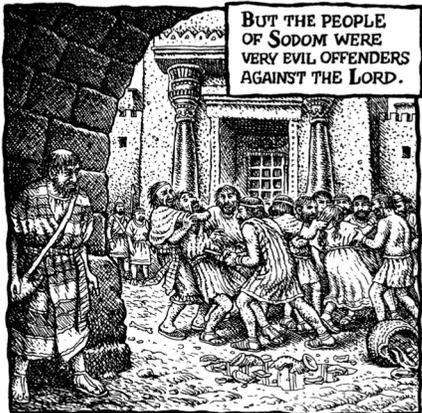
AND LOT LIFTED HIS EYES AND BEHELD ALL THE PLAIN OF JORDAN, SAW THAT ALL OF IT WAS WELL-WATERED— BEFORE THE LORD'S DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH— LIKE THE GARDEN OF THE LORD, LIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT, TILL YOU COME TO ZOAR.

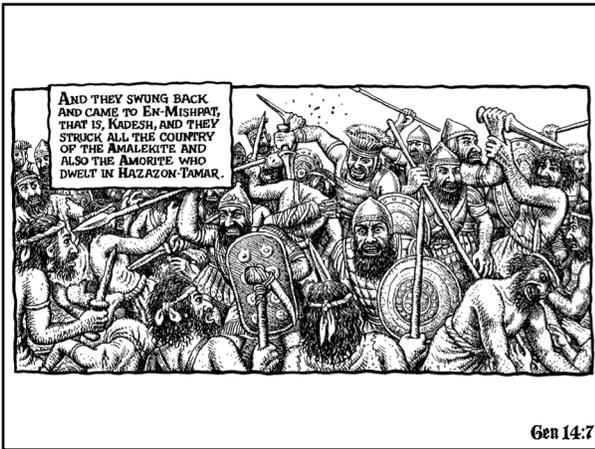


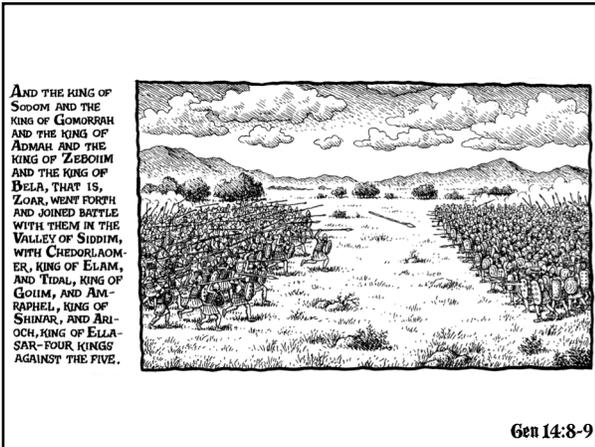
AND LOT CHOSE FOR HIMSELF THE WHOLE PLAIN OF JORDAN, AND LOT JOURNEYED EASTWARD, AND THUS THEY PARTED FROM ONE ANOTHER. ABRAM REMAINED IN THE LAND OF CANAAN, WHILE LOT DWELT AMONG THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN, AND HE PITCHED HIS TENT NEAR SODOM.

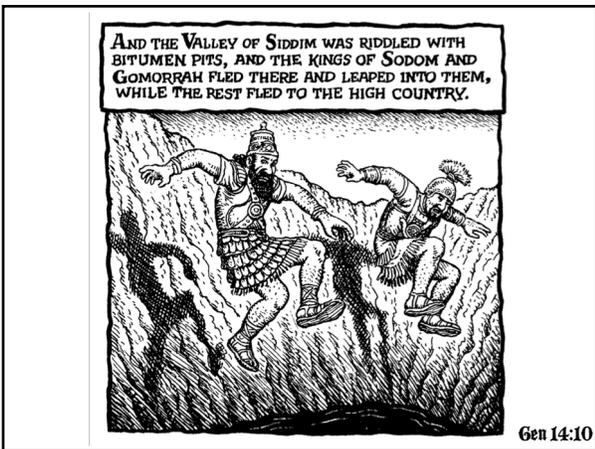


BUT THE PEOPLE OF SODOM WERE VERY EVIL OFFENDERS AGAINST THE LORD.









AND THE FOUR KINGS TOOK ALL THE GOODS OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH AND ALL THEIR FOOD, AND WENT OFF. AND THEY TOOK LOT, ABRAM'S NEPHEW, AND ALL HIS GOODS, AND WENT OFF, FOR HE WAS THEN DWELLING IN SODOM.



Gen 14:11-12

AND THERE CAME ONE THAT HAD ESCAPED, AND TOLD ABRAM THE HEBREW, FOR HE WAS THEN ENCAMPED AT THE TEREBINTHS OF MAMRE THE AMORITE, KINSMAN OF ESHKOL AND ANER, WHO WERE ABRAM'S CONFEDERATES.

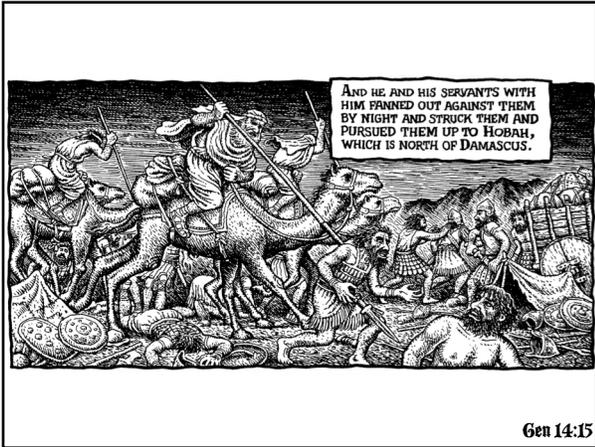


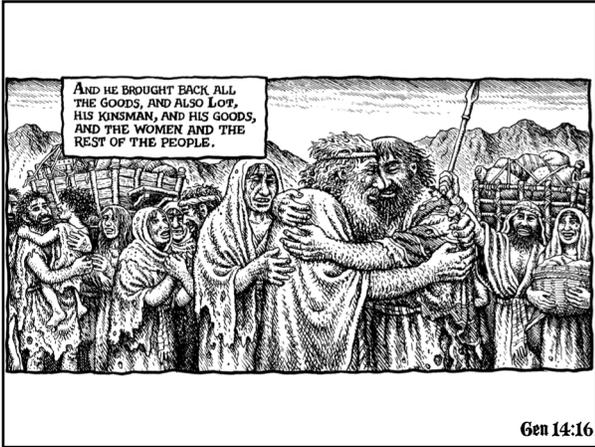
Gen 14:13

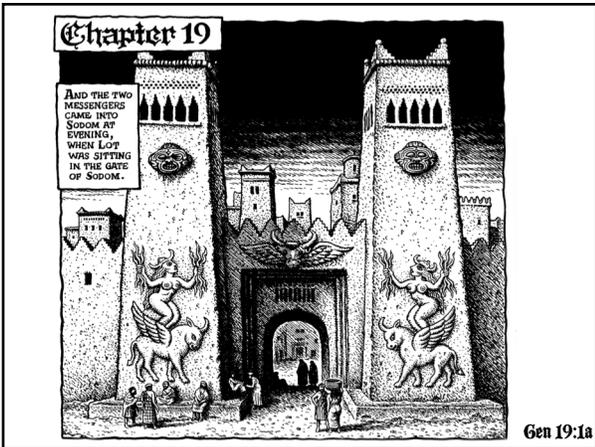
AND WHEN ABRAM HEARD THAT HIS KINSMAN WAS TAKEN CAPTIVE, HE MUSTERED HIS RETAINERS, BORN INTO HIS HOUSEHOLD, 318 OF THEM, AND WENT IN PURSUIT UP TO DAN.



Gen 14:14

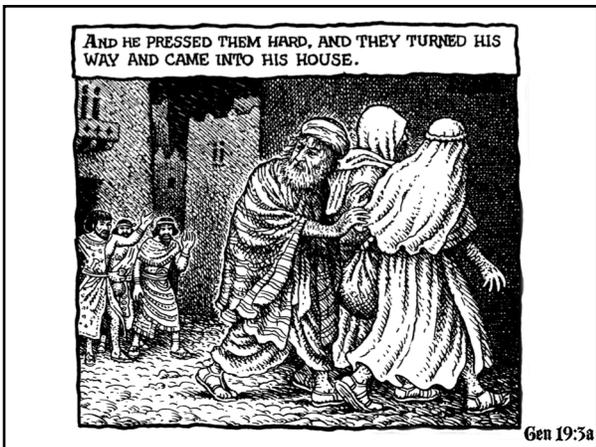












AND HE PREPARED THEM A FEAST, AND BAKED UNLEAVENED BREAD, AND THEY DID EAT.



Gen 19:36

THEY HAD NOT YET LAIN DOWN WHEN THE TOWNSMEN, THE MEN OF SODOM, FROM LADS TO ELDERS, EVERY LAST MAN OF THEM, GATHERED ABOUT THE HOUSE.



Gen 19:4

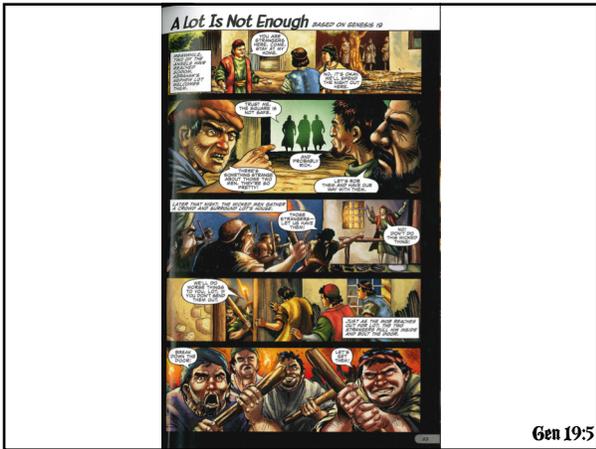
AND THEY SHOUTED TO LOT AND SAID TO HIM...

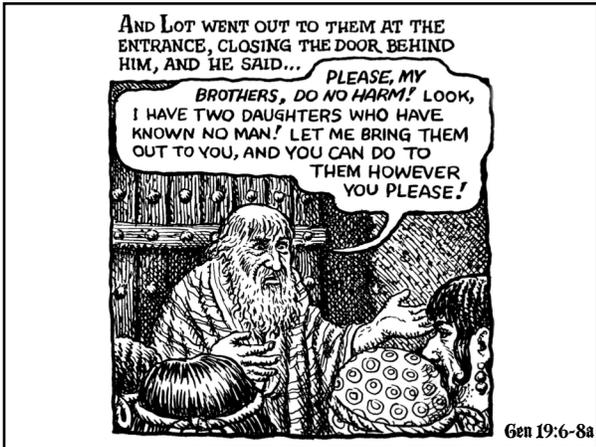
WHERE ARE THE MEN WHO CAME TO YOU TONIGHT ???

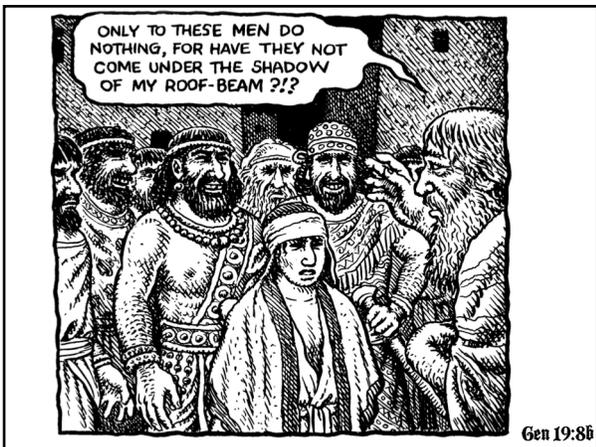
BRING THEM OUT TO US SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THEM!!



Gen 19:5







AND THEY SAID...
STEP ASIDE!!
AND THEY SAID...
THIS FELLOW CAME AS A SOJOURNER AND NOW HE SETS HIMSELF UP TO JUDGE!!
NOW WE'LL DEAL WORSE WITH YOU THAN WITH THEM!!



Gen 19:9a

AND THEY PRESSED HARD AGAINST THE PERSON OF LOT, AND PUSHED FORWARD TO BREAK DOWN THE DOOR.

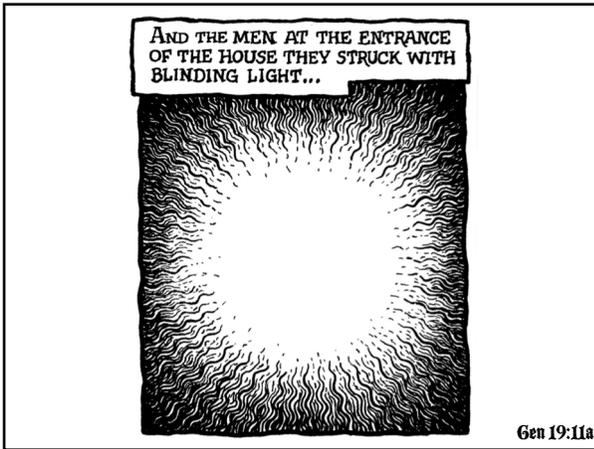


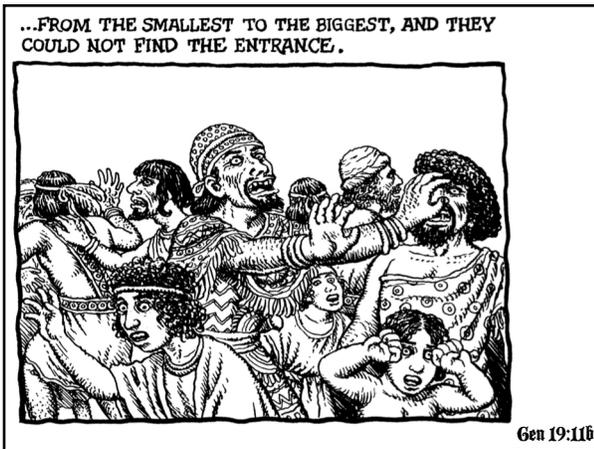
Gen 19:8b

AND THE TWO MEN REACHED OUT THEIR HANDS AND PULLED LOT INTO THE HOUSE WITH THEM AND CLOSED THE DOOR.



Gen 19:10





Were the Men of Sodom Gay?

Only if you ignore the women and children
(list here four spots in Gen 13-19 where women and children appear, according to Toensing)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Why are these women ignored when people talk about this story today?

Granting that the Men Weren't Gay...

Is their sin still "homosexuality"?

- If the sin of Sodom is homosexuality, why are the women and children killed too?
- Is it the same-sex nature of the act or the violence to vulnerable strangers that merits punishment?
 - Did the men have reason to fear foreigners?
 - How *should* they have treated them, and how do we know?

Why do we today make a story about rape a story about homosexuality?

Why do we today make a story about violence to foreigners a story about male victims?

Granting that the Men Weren't Gay...

Is their sin still "homosexuality"?

- If the sin of Sodom is homosexuality, why are the women and children killed too?
- Is it the same-sex nature of the act or the violence to vulnerable strangers that merits punishment?
 - Did the men have reason to fear foreigners?
 - How *should* they have treated them, and how do we know?
 - How do other biblical books read Sodom's sin?

The Sin of Sodom

In a Jewish prophet's view: economic injustice

[God speaking]

⁴⁹This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. ⁵⁰They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it. ⁵¹Samaria has not committed half your sins...; because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

- Ezekiel 16:43c-52

The Sin of Sodom

In Jesus' view: lack of hospitality

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

- Gospel of Matthew 10:5-15

The Sin of Sodom

Only one Christian text reads the sin as sexual

In this late 1st-century CE letter attributed to Jesus' brother Jude, the author imagines that the fate of Sodom will also be the fate of false Christian teachers

⁵Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great day. ⁷Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Jude 5-7;
See also 2 Peter 6, which largely copies Jude

Problems with Fundamentalism



The Pontifical Biblical Commission
(Roman Catholic biblical scholars serving the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on matters relating to the Bible)

The fundamentalism approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life. It can deceive these people, offering them interpretations that are pious but illusory, instead of telling them that the Bible does not necessarily contain an immediate answer to each and every problem. Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations.

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church
1995

Problems with Fundamentalism



But how are we to distinguish between the "divine substance" and its "human limitations"?

What is the difference between what is sacred, true, and worthy of reverence, and the profane, historically conditioned stuff in the Bible that we can leave behind?

And what "interpretive communities" do you embrace as you make those decisions?
