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# THE BIBLE AND QUEERNESS

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## *A few Biblical passages from Christian and Jewish scripture that shape my thinking on living faith and queerness*

*by Carol Rose*

**Romans 12:2** - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

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**Genesis 1-2** - The creation story focuses on where we came from and who we humans are in relation to God. Humankind was formed in God's image, both male and female. So God, who is One, encompasses *diversity* in gender identity rather than rigidity or hierarchy. The story also models equality and mutuality in relationship which continues to be quite relevant in questions of sexual ethics.

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**Various Biblical passages** about **Eunuchs** are a place I look to learn about how the community of faith has thought about and interacted with people who are part of sexual minorities (while acknowledging that the practice of making enslaved people eunuchs was extremely oppressive in terms of bodily mutilation, and bore within it heterosexist/sexist assumptions related to male ownership of females and power being entwined with sexual intercourse).

- **Acts 8:31**- Baptism of Ethiopian Eunuch.
  - **Isaiah 56:3** - Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.' To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.
  - **Matthew 19:12** - For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.
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**Galatians 3:28** - "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

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**Ephesians 2:3** - Another strong image of the heart of the gospel being about bringing together human diversity in ways that are mutual and just rather than ways that act out oppression.

- **Ephesians 2:14** - The heart of the message: Jesus is our peace in whose flesh both groups have been made into one and who has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ... the ones who were on the outside are in.
  - **Ephesians 3:10** - So that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Variety is an essential part of the "manifold wisdom of God.")
  - **Ephesians 3:14-15** - For this reason I bend my knee to God the Loving Parent of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is named.
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**Acts 10** - Peter was called to Cornelius' house and in that context came to see that the way he had understood ethics had been wrongly excluding some from the Church. Vs. 46 - "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

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***Some commentary on Christian and Jewish sacred texts often stretched to their limit / distorted by Christians trying to support heterosexism in the Church (clobber texts)***

**Genesis 1-2** - The story of the creation was both set and written in a time of human history when the world was sparsely populated. In that context, fertility and reproduction were highly important. The Hebrew scriptures do not take this story as normative in terms of monogamy. Yet some use it to justify exclusive heterosexual orientation.

**Genesis 19:1-29** – Sodom – a story of attempted gang rape by “all the men of the city.” What relevance could a story about gang rape have to the status of some people’s loving mutual committed relationship? None. Also, Ezekiel 16:49 says that “Sodom’s sins were pride, gluttony and laziness while the poor and needy suffered outside her door.” So the story of Sodom may in fact be relevant in examining how the church destructively exploits, excludes and uses this vulnerable group as scapegoats rather than offering hospitality and welcome to LGBT2QQ folks.

**Deuteronomy 23:17-18** - Context of prostitution involved in Canaanite fertility rites.

**Leviticus 18:22, 20:13** - Unclear meaning that may be related to prostitution, to wasting “seed” (semen), to context of patriarchy in which most sexual norms in the code have to do with property rights of men to the women in their household; comes in the context of the Holiness Code which includes over 600 laws, many of which we do not follow like the prohibition against men trimming beards (17:27) and not planting more than one kind of crop in a field (19:19).

**Romans 1:26** - Context is a convoluted argument in which Paul makes the point that all of us have sinned and should not take judgmental stances. By the use of the term “unnatural” one could assume that Paul is raising a concern about when straight folk act out sexually outside of their own nature or in a lustful attitude. It may also reveal an assumption Paul lived with that heterosexuality is the “natural” thing for all people.

**1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10** - Questionable translation of *arsenokoita* which refers to “male beds” or “softness;” most likely refers to men who engage in sex with boy prostitutes in which case it would be most relevant to consider these texts in relation to sexual abuse of children, rather than in relation to mutual loving committed relationships between adults.

**Some sources of reflections on the bible and heterosexism**

- [www.truthsetsfree.net/bible.htm](http://www.truthsetsfree.net/bible.htm)
- [www.soulforce.org/article/homosexuality-bible-walter-wink](http://www.soulforce.org/article/homosexuality-bible-walter-wink)