

James R. White and Jeffrey D. Niell. *The Same Sex Controversy*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002. 254 pp. \$12.00 (paper). Reviewed by Don Green.

The recent legal and political maneuvering about same-sex marriage in American society and the expanding acceptance of homosexuality in modern culture over the past several years have generated a corresponding expansion of literature providing biblical analysis of homosexuality from different viewpoints. *The Same Sex Controversy* contributes to the literature by answering the claims of those who attempt to interpret the Bible to support the homosexual agenda (21).

James White, the prolific author and apologist, combines with Jeffrey Niell, a Presbyterian pastor, to produce this helpful volume. They organize the book primarily around the key biblical passages on homosexuality. After an introductory chapter, they evaluate Genesis 18-19 on Sodom and Gomorrah, spend three chapters analyzing key passages from Leviticus, interpret Paul's argument from Romans 1, and provide a helpful discussion of key terms from 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.

The merits of this book are many. The authors document the arguments that pro-homosexual interpreters use against the traditional view that the Bible condemns homosexuality, and then proceed to dismantle those arguments with the application of sound hermeneutical principles, including word studies (e.g., 32-33; 146-150), close attention to context (68-69), and background information (128-129), just to name a few.

The authors also buttress their position with several quotations from early church fathers to refute the pro-homosexual assertion that "using the Bible to oppose homosexuality is a rather recent occurrence" (168-172), including a devastating homily from John Chrysostom against homosexuality that is reprinted in its entirety (221-233). The bibliography and suggested reading list at the end of the book will also prove beneficial.

The book is most courageous in its pastoral appeal to those who are struggling with homosexual practices or desires (199-210). It offers hope and forgiveness with an uncompromising call to repentance (e.g., 206), and through that example reminds Christian leaders to preach the gospel to the homosexual community with humility and clarity. Homosexuality is not the unpardonable sin—but it *is* sinful and should be declared as such.

White and Niell did not include any insights on responding to the political issues that have arisen over homosexuality, but one can hardly fault them for the omission. They obviously intended to restrict their discussion to the biblical data, and delving into political implications would have strayed beyond the scope of the book and perhaps even undermined the thesis that proper biblical interpretation is the most important aspect of the debate.

*The Same Sex Controversy* will prove most beneficial to the busy pastor who wants a clear and concise defense of the biblical testimony against homosexuality. It could provide a framework for an edifying series to a congregation that faces the issue in the news and in the neighborhood on a daily basis.

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