
Reviewed by Catherine Caufield, University of Alberta.

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Homosexuality, Catholic doctrine, pastoral care

Paul Flaman’s commitment to walking a path of discernment to seek truth and discover who Jesus really is is evident as he applies this commitment to the issue of homosexuality. Consistent with personal Catholic faith and grounded in moral theology, Homosexuality and Following Jesus presents the reader with a well-researched book demonstrating an applied willingness to struggle with whether or not what Jesus says can contribute to understanding homosexuality. In a heavily footnoted passage, Flaman alludes to the fine line that he is walking in taking up this issue:

One needs to keep in mind, in humility, that each of us finite human beings has only a limited perspective on and understanding of truth, including that related to the complex reality of homosexuality. This does not mean that no views are true, for certainly we can formulate true statements that correspond to reality, including the reality of same-sex erotic attractions and relationships, even though these statements do not express the whole of reality. Among other things, while not being blind to mistaken views, we should try to appreciate what truth there is in other people’s views and be open to learning from one another. (16)

Yet, courageously manifesting the commandment of Jesus to “love others as I have loved you” towards those of homosexual orientation, Homosexuality and Following Jesus undertakes a careful study reflective of sincere and thoughtful struggle with the sometimes difficult and painful challenges homosexuality presents for individuals and for the Church. A poignant endorsement by an anonymous homosexual “who has always trusted in the love that Christ promises,” expresses gratitude for a Christian perspective which provides “a place for healing not judgment.”

Flaman succinctly states his thesis: “what are the requirements for following Jesus and the implications of following him, both for those who experience same-sex erotic attractions and others, including their family members, friends, pastors, counselors, teachers, other professionals, and fellow citizens?” (2). The exploration of this question clearly organized into five chapters with numerous sub-headings announcing relatively brief content to be elaborated under each heading, as in the style of medieval theological writing. The language used is straightforward and conceptually accessible. Intertextual relationships are made evident through referencing of themes.
and ideas between chapters. The book is thus a cohesive whole, rather than a series of related, but disconnected, essays. The work is well-grounded in biblical text, with citations selected for their relevance to aspects of the theme of homosexuality and following Jesus. Exegesis of Gospel passages include many practical suggestions for application in both interpersonal and pastoral settings. Flaman consistently maintains the importance of giving God first place in our lives (6) as a means of growing in love and truth (8).

Not only is the text thoroughly grounded in Scripture, there is also a heavy reliance on directives from the Vatican. Flaman makes very clear that in no way does following Jesus condone homosexuality; yet, at the same time, he strongly emphasizes the obligation of Christians to honour their neighbour human beings through loving them properly. For example, “listening well to understand, deeply, someone who acknowledges that he or she has same-sex erotic attractions or to parents struggling with their child’s revelation that he or she is ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ and showing genuine empathy (12). Consistent with his central concern with unity, Flaman points out that “getting to know one another better and achieving mutual esteem” (17) is not a one-directional movement from “conservative” Christians towards “gay” Christians, but also from gay rights activists towards those with religious commitment because true dialogue is this listening to the other, whoever the other is (14).

The accessibility of *Homosexuality and Following Jesus* for pastoral application might belie the theological capacity of its author – until one turns to the 31 pages of Endnotes. Revealed in very careful, detailed, scholarly elaboration, one finds the intellectual, theological and doctrinal depth and complexity behind the ideas glossed in the main body of the text. Thus this monograph has relevance beyond a specifically Catholic pastoral setting to not only other Christianities noted within the text, but also to a broad range of readership including clinical professionals and scholars interested in emotional conflicts or psychic traumas, how they manifest, and empathetic approaches to healing them.
"Even the most seasoned scholar, and the most devout Muslim, will learn from Droge’s annotated translation. It is a treasure trove of both familiar and novel elements of the Noble Book. In sum, Arthur Droge is to be commended for the extraordinary Herculean effort."

Bruce B. Lawrence, Duke University

This new, annotated translation of the Qur’ān is specifically designed to meet the needs of students of religion, and provides them with a one-volume resource comparable to what is available for the Jewish and Christian scriptures. The meticulously crafted translation affords readers not only a better sense of what the Qur’ān says, but how it says it, in a rendition that strives to remain faithful to the way it was originally expressed. Accompanying the translation is an extensive set of annotations, offering a wealth of linguistic and historical detail to enhance the understanding and appreciation of the text. They also contain abundant references to parallel passages within the Qur’ān, as well as comparatively among the ‘scriptures’ of Judaism and Christianity. With an introduction, a map, timeline, guide to further reading, and comprehensive index, this is the edition of the Qur’ān all students of religion – beginning as well as advanced – will want to possess for their exploration of Islam’s central text.

A. J. Droge is the author of Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture and, with James Tabor, of A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity.

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