

that "all subsequent writers on this topic have had to take careful account" of it.

The traditional Christian view of this incident has been that the people of Sodom (and Gomorrah) were involved in homosexual practices, which they attempted to carry out on the two angels that Lot was entertaining in his home. Because of the place name, this sin has become known (even in American law) as sodomy.

Stott points out that Sherwin Bailey (and practically all who treat the biblical teaching on this subject) differs from this view and challenges it on two main grounds:

First, it is a gratuitous assumption [Bailey argued] that the demand of the men of Sodom "Bring them out to us, so that we may know them" meant "so that we can have sex with them" (19:5 NIV). The Hebrew word for "know" (yada') occurs 943 times in the Old Testament, of which only ten occurrences refer to physical intercourse, and even then only to heterosexual intercourse [Bailey claims]. It would therefore be better to translate the phrase "so that we may get acquainted with them." We can then understand the men's violence as due to their anger that Lot had exceeded his rights as a resident alien, for he had welcomed two strangers into his home "whose intentions might be hostile and whose credentials . . . had not been examined." In this case the sin of Sodom was to invade the privacy of Lot's home and flout the ancient rules of hospitality. Lot begged them to desist because, he said, the two men "have come under the protection of my roof" (v. 8).

Bailey's second argument was that the rest of the Old Testament nowhere suggests that the nature of Sodom's offense was homosexual. Instead, Isaiah implies that it was hypocrisy and social injustice (1:10-17); Jeremiah makes it adultery, deceit and general wickedness (23:14); and Ezekiel, arrogance, greed and indifference to the poor (16:49-50). Then Jesus himself (though Bailey does not mention this) on three separate occasions alluded to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, declaring that it would be "more bearable" for them on the day of judgment than for those who reject his gospel (Mt. 10:15; 11:24; Lk. 10:12). Yet in all these references there is not even a whiff or rumor of homosexual malpractice! It is only when we reach the Palestinian pseudepigraphical writings of the second century B.C. that Sodom's sin is identified as unnatural sexual behavior. This finds a clear echo in the letter of Jude, in which it is said that "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion" (v. 7), and in the works of Philo and Josephus, Jewish writers who were shocked by the homosexual practices of Greek society.

Stott responds to Bailey's claims as follows:

But Bailey's case is not convincing for a number of reasons: (1) The adjectives "wicked," "vile," and "disgraceful" (Gen 19:7; Judg 19:23) do not seem appropriate to describe a breach of hospitality; (2) the offer of women instead "does look as if there is some sexual connotation to the episode"; (3) although the verb yada' is used only ten times of sexual intercourse, six of these occurrences are in Genesis and one in the Sodom story itself (about Lot's daughters who had not "known" a man, v. 8); (4) for those of us who take the