

As it can be expected, the wide-ranging nature of this work leads the reader to several different directions under the umbrella of theodicy. In an attempt to summarize the main concepts presented, I would say that on the part of the “critics” there is a recurrence of an old and well-known question: “If God is perfectly good and omnipotent, why do the Old Testament narratives describe him differently (as evil)?” From their point of view, this question leads to illogical and irreconcilable answers. On the other hand, some recurrent concepts contained in the “defenders” arguments are: moral progress (God’s ethical adaptation to a people that needed step-by-step restoration), divine-command theory (strong divine command), skeptical theism (human cognitive limitations in discerning God’s reasoning), and the vulnerability of God (anthropomorphism), among other references to interpretative methodologies.

Many of the arguments given in the book—implicitly or explicitly—seem to be dealing with the dilemma of whether to read the text at face value or under other types of interpretative options. That is, critical importance seems to be given to the interpretation mode or methodology. Along these lines, several of the essays touch upon the status of the Old Testament as divinely inspired Scripture as well as the meaning and application of inspiration.

This book’s nature is highly academic and would most likely present a serious challenge for everyday readers of the Old Testament. In fact, the book demands that the reader be familiar with issues concerning theodicy, inspiration, hermeneutics, biblical studies, and philosophy at a scholarly level. This dynamic is reflected in Louise Antony’s question: “Why would a benevolent God ‘reveal’ himself in so obscure a way that one needs a PhD to understand him?” (56) Although her point is well taken, it is also often evident to the everyday Bible-believing reader that the questions under discussion might have no easy answers. Thus, even the nonacademic reader will typically be required to partake in an extra effort in order to navigate the realm of theodicy.

Despite the implicit limitations in regards to the complexity of the matters under discussion, such a diverse compilation of philosophical critiques, analysis of biblical passages, and suggested theodicies is an excellent medium to familiarize oneself with the variables and complexities involved in matters of theodicy within the Old Testament.

The unique and varied perspectives exposed by the different authors in regards to the moral character of God surely provide a space for dialogue and inquiry, and for exploratory answers to the concerns of a thoughtful reader.

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Cameli, Louis J., *Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality: New Paths to Understanding*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2012 171 pp. Paper, \$12.63

How can the Roman Catholic Church minister effectively to members with same-sex attractions and yet maintain its traditional teaching concerning homosexual behavior? This seems to be the heart of the issue that Louis

Cameli addresses in this book. The questions he uses to frame this issue are: “Is the sexuality of homosexually inclined persons a blessing or a curse? Does it lead a person to God or away from God? Can a homosexual person be a good Catholic?” (back cover). His answers may surprise some. The author seeks to answer these questions by starting, not with homosexuality, but with the human sexuality that is common to all persons. Out of that context, his goal is to describe how a person with same-sex attractions can be a member of the Catholic Church on equal footing with other members, without feeling ostracized or being treated as an outcast.

Louis Carmeli was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in 1969, and has served that tradition as a parish priest and as a professor of theology and other roles at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary.

I must mention up front that I am not a Roman Catholic. So I am looking at Cameli’s work from the outside. He clearly is writing for a Roman Catholic audience. Yet, it seems that other Christians may find help in understanding this issue from his writing, as other denominations are wrestling with similar issues. In my review of his work, I do not attempt to defend or deny Roman Catholic teaching. But I believe that as Christians we can learn from each other as we “look over the shoulder” to see how others are approaching difficult issues.

Cameli structures the book very logically, and it is easy to follow his line of thinking. The basis for his argument is Catholic tradition and the Bible, informed by studies in anthropology (he uses the term *theological anthropology*). In chapter 1 he addresses the basic issue of a person’s source of truth. If the postmodern approach of self as the definer of truth is adopted, then a person who is homosexual might define him or herself with that self-understanding, and no one has the right to assail that self-definition. But if truth is revealed from outside oneself (from God), then our self-definition must conform to the objective revealed truth. The latter epistemological approach is the basis for Cameli’s argument. From this foundation, he posits that sexuality is a gift from God that we are to care for as stewards, not as owners. This approach refutes the idea that it is my body, therefore I can do what I want with it. Rather, as stewards, we are responsible to a higher moral authority to express our sexuality in ways that are appropriate and healthy for ourselves and for other people. The chapter deals with other moral and ethical issues, including treatment of gays and lesbians as “the enemy.” The Catholic Church does not take this stance, says the author, but seeks to love and accept persons with same-sex attraction without condoning improper behavior. The rest of the book expands on this idea in great detail.

Cameli then presents a long discussion on spirituality and sexuality (chapter 4). He posits the need to “recover an integral and non-dualist understanding of the body” as found in the Apostle Paul’s writings (34). A person’s body is not “detached from the encounter with God as the mystery of our lives” (35). Human sexuality, spirituality, and the work of the Spirit of God are all interconnected as the believer experiences the presence of God

in the Christian life. Three examples of this are presented for consideration: the experience of transverberation as reported by Teresa of Avila, Ezekiel and his description of covenantal fidelity, and the liturgy of the Easter Vigil. Cameli sees all three as indicating a deep connection between human sexuality, spirituality, and the Spirit's work. His conclusion from this is that there are "three movements of great significance": "a movement to connect, to claim and be claimed, and to give life" (45). These three (connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life) are the basis for the author's parameters for proper sexual intimacy in a believer's life. He also defines these three as the common ground for experiencing sexuality, "whether one is male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, genitally active or abstinent. . . . All of us experience a movement to connect with others, to claim and be claimed, and to give or generate life" (50, 51).

Therefore, all Catholics must be guided by these movements when deciding whether to be "genitally active" as they live out their sexuality. All persons are to live out their sexuality, but only some are permitted to engage in sexual intercourse. Those who must abstain include unmarried men and women, two persons of the same sex, and married couples using artificial contraception. Later, he also proscribes masturbation, pornography, prostitution, and "various paraphilias" (61). So, homosexuals are not being singled out when the church prohibits their practice of sexual intimacy; rather, they are one of a number of groups that fall into the same category. This then allows the church to accept and ministry to those with same-sex attractions and yet maintain behavior standards. There are ways (which are described in chapter 7) for homosexuals and others who are called to celibacy to still express their sexuality through connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life, but these ways do not involve sexual intercourse.

Chapter 8 compares gay identity with Christian identity, and Cameli argues here that the gay identity must not be the central organizing principle of the same-sex attracted believer. Rather, the identity as a child of God in Christ must inform and shape all aspects of the life, included the sexual aspects. The believer is a Roman Catholic who has these attractions, rather than a gay person who is attempting to fit into the Church.

The next chapter (chapter 9) focuses on how Roman Catholics should relate to a pluralistic society, particularly in relation to sexual issues. The author proposes four steps: protect the rights of members to practice their faith, engage in an honest dialog with the culture about what is right and wrong, witness for the revealed truth about these issues, and focus on the "internal formation of believers" (114), helping them to have a "cultural-critical mindset" (115), learning to evaluate the assumptions and values of the culture, rather than accepting them uncritically.

Chapter 10 addresses how the church should minister to young people in the area of sexuality. It should help them understand that same-sex attraction may be a fleeting phase, and they should not lock in their identity too quickly. It is wise to wait and see if it dissipates. Cameli also deals with the social and psychological issues involved with a young person "coming out" as gay. The

church should be a safe and helpful place for youth to process the evolution of their sexual identity.

The last chapter focuses on homosexuals in the priesthood. The author wrestles with some very sensitive issues for the Roman Catholic Church, including the percentage of priests who are attracted to other men, and the molestation of male adolescents by priests. After citing Cozzens's 2000 study and other research, which indicate that there is a higher proportion of men in the Catholic priesthood with same-sex attraction than in the general population, Cameli suggests that this may be more an issue of "incomplete formation of sexual identity" than settled gay identity (130). These priests "have not successfully passed through adolescence" (130). The question then becomes, should men with same-sex attractions be ordained to the priesthood? Cameli cites several church documents to conclude that a man should not be ordained to the priesthood if he is practicing homosexuality, if he has "deep-seated homosexual tendencies," or if he supports the "gay culture" (135). Cameli then describes four ways to identify "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" in a more objective manner.

In the conclusion, Cameli states clearly how the church can include homosexuals in its fellowship. "It is both possible and desirable for persons with same-sex attractions to be at home in a Church which is both prophetic in its consistent proclamation of truth and loving in its universal outreach to all people no matter what their condition or life circumstance" (140).

By stressing the similarity we all have sexually (connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life), and by helping members to express that sexuality appropriately, Cameli sets forth an approach for ministering to homosexuals in a loving and accepting way, without stigmatizing them as perverts or outcasts.

As I evaluate Cameli's arguments, I want to reiterate that I am a non-Catholic looking in on an internal discussion within that communion. I want to applaud the author for addressing a very sensitive and difficult issue in a very gentle and professional manner. It is also commendable that he is seeking to include those with same-sex attractions in the church in a way that is positive and relational, without crossing the line of condoning behavior that is prohibited by the Bible and church teaching. There are, of course, some Christians outside the Roman faith who would not see homosexual intimate behavior as prohibited, and they will disagree with his approach, while other Christians will find his ideas interesting and may well be able to take pieces of his approach and adapt them to their own.

This attempt to ensconce homosexuality into a broader understanding of sexuality is commendable. Homosexuals are basically no different than other people, and as such they are limited in physical expression, as are priests, unmarried heterosexuals, etc. The same restrictions apply to everyone: no sex outside of the marriage between a man and a woman. And as with all people (who are all affected by the sinful world we live in, and who have struggles in various areas of life), the church needs to figure out how to accept and minister to persons with same-sex attractions in a healthy way. As

an evangelical Christian, these are ideas that I can embrace, though adapting them to my particular context.

Having said this, there is one aspect of Cameli's thinking that I would press him on. Returning to the three dynamics of human sexuality (connecting, claiming and being claimed, and giving life), I notice that Cameli, as I would expect from a Roman Catholic theologian, interprets the giving of life dynamic of human sexuality to exclude as legitimate sexual intimacy behavior that cannot produce life, such as the use of artificial contraception and homosexual sexual behavior. There are other behaviors, however, that he does not address. For example, he does not explicitly exclude sex between a postmenopausal woman and her husband, or a woman who through disease, injury, or surgery, can no longer produce children. Would he counsel married couples in this situation to abstain from sex? Can sterile men be intimate with their wives? And what about oral sex in the marriage bed? This is a weakness in his argument, and is the area where some Christian who agree with his conclusions might struggle to accept his reasoning.

*Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality* is well worth reading, for both Catholics and other Christians who are involved in this aspect of pastoral ministry. Cameli sees homosexuals, not as evil persons, but as people who are tempted to express their sexuality in inappropriate ways. The church's role is not to condemn, but to love, accept, teach, and help them live by Christian principles, which bring genuine happiness and real satisfaction.

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Kalimi, Isaac, and Seth Richardson, eds. *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, 71. Leiden: Brill, 2014. xii + 548 pp. Hardcover, \$234.00.

It is generally agreed that Sennacherib's third western campaign, which included his invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.E., is the best documented event in the history of Israel and Judah in the first temple period, and the historical details of the event have been well studied. Nevertheless, some gaps remain in our knowledge, since, as Cogan observed, "a consensus concerning the course of events in 701 B.C.E., the year of Sennacherib's campaign, has yet to be achieved" (51). However, readers who pick up this book in the hope of reading a definitive discussion of these historical events may be disappointed, since the book does not focus on the history itself, but contains a collection of essays that explore matters of historiography and reception history. Historiography focuses on the methodology of how to understand historical data, and reception history deals with how a historical event or figure was perceived and transmitted through the ages.

The book is divided into three sections. The first consists of four studies that focus on the early sources. Kalimi, a respected authority on the book of Chronicles, compares the Chronicler's account of the event with that of his sources. Cogan, an expert in biblical and Ancient Near Eastern history, analyzes the text of the Rassam Cylinder and attempts to define