

Destructive Heresies

The latest edition of the New Oxford Annotated Bible has been endorsed by the homosexual Metropolitan Community Churches.

By Al Dobras

For centuries, Christians aiming to “love the sinner and hate the sin” have used Scripture as the basis for opposing homosexuality. But now that Biblical standard faces a new attack. The recent edition of the popular commentary for the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) offers revised interpretations of key sections of the Bible. These revisions challenge established Christian beliefs about homosexuality, Jesus Christ’s sovereignty and the sanctity of life.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NOAB) Third Edition commentary—edited in part by pro-homosexual and feminist scholars—was swiftly hailed by the Rev. Troy D. Perry, founder of the homosexual Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC).

“The world-renowned Biblical scholars who prepared *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* have adopted a great deal of MCC’s own scholarship and theology,” he said on the MCC Web site. “There is no Biblical condemnation of homosexuality—only prohibitions against its misuse, just as there is no

Biblical blanket condemnation of heterosexuality, only prohibitions against misuse of that gift.”

Twisted Halo

Evangelical leaders, such as Dr. Norman Geisler, prolific author, apologist, professor and president of Southeastern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, have also responded to the Third Edition.

“Use of this commentary will reinforce already-present tendencies to go soft on the Biblical stand regarding homosexuality,” Geisler told *Family Voice*. “This Biblical commentary puts a halo over these views.”

The Third Edition replaces the Second Edition, which was published in 1991. It’s easy to see why the MCC and other homosexual activists endorse the latest edition: It reinterprets key texts on homosexuality.

For 3,500 years, the sin of Sodom (Genesis 19:5-8) was said to be the widespread practice of homosexuality. However, the new NOAB says, “Though disapproval of male

homosexual rape is assumed here, the primary point of this text is how this threat by the townspeople violates the value of hospitality.”

The new commentary ignores the fact that God destroyed the cities because of the outcry over their grievous sins (see Genesis 18:20 and 19:13). Other key passages on homosexuality, such as Romans 1:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, are similarly reinterpreted. [See sidebar on page x for a comparison of sections from the NOAB's Second and Third Editions.]

Who is Jesus?

Most perniciously, the Third Edition questions the sovereignty and divinity of Christ. In its commentary on John 14:6-7, 11, the Second Edition states, “Access to God is solely through Jesus.” However, according to the Third Edition, “Jesus is the gateway to God.” This statement removes the explicit declaration that Jesus is the sole way to access or know God. Similarly, in Philippians 2:5-7, the Third Edition removes the declarative statement of Jesus’ divinity and introduces several other interpretations that leave His deity an open question.

Further, the Third Edition casts aside Psalm 139:13-16, a key sanctity-of-life passage, and even uses the terms B.C.E (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) as replacements for the commonly used terms B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (anno domini, “in the year of our Lord”). Western culture has used the latter terms as the means of dating years since A.D. 532. Non-Christians who found it insulting to reference Christ in their documents initiated the more recent convention,

and its use has spread to some academics and liberal theologians.

“This would be understandable in an Islamic commentary, but not in the Christian context . . .,” Dr. Geisler points out. “This is another attempt to take Christ out of society.”

Out With the Old

New editors likely influenced the drastic changes in the Third Edition. The Second Edition editors were the late Rev. Roland Murphy, a Catholic theologian, and Dr. Bruce Metzger, a renowned New Testament theologian affiliated with Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Metzger is the author of *What Does the Bible Have to Say About Homosexuality*. He is an opponent of homosexual ordination and a major contributor to the best-selling book *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel.

According to Metzger, in February 1997, Donald Kraus, executive editor in the Bible Department of the Oxford University Press (U.S.A.), informed him of his decision to undertake a thorough revision of the NOAB with an entirely new editorial team.

“From earlier publications that Kraus had sponsored, I could surmise what kind of changes he had in mind,” Metzger told *Family Voice*. “When he asked me to serve as ‘senior consulting editor,’ I could see that many of my suggestions would be overridden or ignored. Consequently, I declined to take part.”

The backgrounds of at least some of the new editors raise questions regarding their commitment to Christian orthodoxy. Editor of the Third Edition is Michael D. Coogan, a professor at Stonehill College. He has

Continued on page 31

Truth Revised

This comparison of selected sections from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Second and Third Editions, shows why the changes please homosexuals and theological liberals.

The sin of Sodom is now “inhospitality.”

Genesis 19:5-8: “[A]nd they called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.’ Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, ‘I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.’”

Second Edition: “The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah impressed itself deeply upon later generations as an example of God’s total judgment upon appalling wickedness. ... [T]he episode is told to illustrate the sexual excesses of Canaanites. 5. Know refers to sexual relations (v. 8), here homosexual (‘sodomy’). 8: Once guests had eaten in his house, Lot felt he had to obey the law of oriental hospitality, which guaranteed protection. Thus his proposal to hand over his daughters showed his determination to put first his obligation as a host.”

Third Edition: “The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a prominent example in Israelite tradition of God’s total judgment. As in the case of 18:1-8, the main issue here is hospitality to secretly divine visitors. Here, however, the sanctity of hospitality is threatened by the men of the city who wish to rape (know) the guests. Though disapproval of male homosexual rape is assumed here, the primary point of this text is how this threat by the townspeople violates the value of hospitality. ... As a result of his protection of his guests, he (Lot), like

Noah, ‘finds favor’ with God, and he and his household are rescued out of destruction.”

Other key texts on homosexuality:

Romans 1:26-28: “For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done.”

Second Edition: “God gave them up, because in turning from God they violated their true nature, becoming involved in terrible and destructive perversions; God has let the process of death work itself out.”

Third Edition: “Degrading passions, while Torah forbids a male ‘lying with a male as with a woman,’ Paul’s Jewish contemporaries criticized a range of sexual behaviors common in the pagan world. Although widely read today as a reference to homosexuality, the language of unnatural intercourse was more often used in Paul’s day to denote not the orientation of sexual desire, but its immoderate indulgence, which was believed to weaken the body (the due penalty).”

The Third Edition commentary states that a due penalty—weakening of the body—is decreed for “immoderate indulgence of sexual desire.” However, the Second Edition, as well as most other commentaries, recognizes the sin of *Romans 1:26-28* as homosexual

Continued from page 29

stated that the apostle Paul did not write several of the New Testament epistles attributed to him; nor, he said, did Matthew, James, Jude, Peter and John write the books that bear their names.

Associate Editor Carol A.

Newsom, in particular, is a feminist theologian who partnered with Dr. Sharon H. Ringe to produce the *Women's Bible Commentary*, a feminist perspective of Scripture. Dr. Ringe is a professor of New Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary and serves as a Biblical consultant to the Reconciling Congregation Program of the United Methodist Church—an outreach to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Methodists that affirms their sexual behaviors.

Into the Mainstream

Although it has been endorsed by the pro-gay MCC, the NOAB has a much wider influence. It is the commentary of choice for the United Methodist Church's Disciple Bible Study program for adults, which has proven to be hugely popular. The United Methodist News Service recently reported that 1.2 million people in the United States have participated in the course, representing 12,490 churches and 34 denominations.

Bible study is essential and positive for all Christians, but studying from a corrupted commentary can undo all the good intentions that a Bible study can offer, especially to neophytes in the faith. These very issues—homosexual affirmation, the sovereignty and divinity of Christ, and

perversion, and the due penalty is spiritual death.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God."

Second Edition: "Male prostitutes, young men or boys in a pederastic relationship; sodomites, the older homosexual."

Third Edition: "The Greek terms translated male prostitutes and sodomites do not refer to 'homosexuals,' as in inappropriate older translations; 'masturbators' and male prostitutes might be a better translation."

The Third Edition is ambiguous on Christ's sovereignty and divinity.

John 14:6-7, 11: "Jesus said to him, 'I

am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him. ... [If you do not believe], then believe me because of the works themselves."

Second Edition: "Access to God is solely through Jesus; knowledge of God is solely through the person, words, and works of Jesus."

Third Edition: "Jesus is the gateway to God; God is revealed through the words and works of Jesus."

Philippians 2:5-7: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness."

Second Edition: "In the form of God,

that is, pre-existent and divine. Something to be exploited and never relinquished. But emptied himself, the extreme limit of self-denial.”

Third Edition: “In the form of God, equality with God, may refer to divine status, or simply pre-existence as a heavenly being, or Adam’s original immortality, which Christ renounced by becoming subject to death. But emptied himself, the extreme limit of self-denial.”


Sanctity-of-life passage cast aside.

Psalms 139:13-16: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in

the sanctity of life—have plunged several mainline denominations into controversy. The new commentary adds fuel to a wildly burning fire.

Nor does the impact stop there.

“Translators look to commentaries to interpret difficult texts,” Geisler said. “The interpretations influence who buys the commentary, which influences who translates them. Commentaries ultimately influence the translation of the Scriptures themselves.”

Theological liberalism, the acceptance of homosexuality and abortion, and the denial of Christ’s divinity currently reign in church agencies and seminaries of many mainline denominations. Now, with the laity’s broad exposure to a corrupted commentary, the need for reform is all the more urgent. 

secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.”

Second Edition: “God formed the embryo in the womb (poetically called the depths of the earth) and knew the psalmist’s character from the moment of conception.”

Third Edition: “The mysterious process of creation.”

Dr. Bruce M. Metzger, the NOAB’s former editor, told *Family Voice*: “I have read your perceptive comments about the two editions of *The Oxford Annotated Bible* and am in full agreement with your evaluations.”

—*Al Dobras*

Al Dobras is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to Culture & Family Report

(www.cultureandfamily.org/cfi), a publication of the Culture and Family Institute, an affiliate of CWA.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- PRAY** that MCC founder Troy D. Perry will respond to the Truth of God’s Word.
- PRAISE** God for the eternal, inerrant Bible He has provided as a light unto our feet.
- ACT** Contact Executive Editor Donald Kraus to let him know your reactions to the new NOAB: Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016; Krausd@oup-usa.org.