

good critical essay example

Christopher Seitz, "Sexuality and Scripture's Plain Sense:
The Christian Community and the Law of God"

Historical-Critical Method versus the Plain Sense of Scripture
Christopher Seitz begins his essay with skepticism regarding the application of historical-critical method to the study of the Bible and homosexual practice. According to Seitz, the church must give top priority to hearing the "plain sense" of individual texts: "metaphorically, according to the rule of faith," rather than to "reconstructions of an 'original,' historical sense argued to be at odd with [his plain sense]." The historical-critical method tends to eschew plain-sense readings, emphasizing as it does the novel, progress, original authorial intent, and socio-cultural circumstances. But deconstructionist hermeneutics have exposed the historical-critical method's claims to objectivity.

The bottom line for Seitz is that the plain sense of Scripture on homosexual behavior is, well, plain: "If it were not for massive changes in sexual behavior over the past decades, I doubt that we would be considering this issue on the grounds that it is one contested within Scripture itself." Seitz rejects the hope that the contemporary church can resolve its differences by staying "in dialogue" long enough and doing "more historical-critical work."

While I am sympathetic to Seitz's views, I do not agree that the historical-critical problems raised by proponents can be ignored. I will have more to say about this later, at the end of my assessment of Seitz.

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