

River Church

Marlow

The Question

Whether our expectations of homosexual people in the expression of their sexuality should be the same as our expectations of heterosexual people

Another Way of Framing It

How does God think and feel about
homosexual people?

And in the light of that—how should
his Church respond to homosexual
people on his behalf?

Last Week: Setting The Scene

- Why our answer is so important
 - It's not an academic question
 - It's about people, and mission, and being sure that our thinking aligns with God's
- The basic principles of evangelical biblical interpretation

This Week: The Bible

- The Church's traditional position
 - Why should there be any reason to revisit that?
- What does the Bible say?
 - The relevant verses in the light of those basic principles of evangelical biblical interpretation

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

Three examples

- Slavery—until the 19th Century
- Women—until the 20th Century
- Divorce and Remarriage—until the 20th Century

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

Three examples

- Slavery—until the 19th Century
- Women—until the 20th Century
- Divorce and Remarriage—until the 20th Century

In each case, a ‘plain reading’ of ‘what the Bible says’ could come to no other conclusion than that the ‘traditional’ beliefs were 100% correct and ‘biblical’

To reach any other conclusion, one would need to
go beyond ‘proof-texts’

‘Traditional’ Beliefs—Slavery

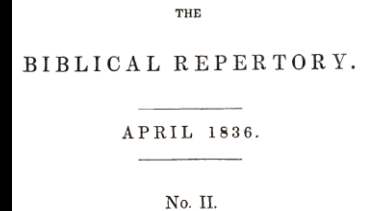


CHARLES HODGE, *PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY* (DIED 1878)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs—Slavery

The assumption that slaveholding is itself a crime, is not only an error, but it is an error fraught with evil consequences. It brings its advocates into conflict with the Scriptures, it embitters and divides the members of the community and distracts the Christian church.

[The biblical position] must be maintained, whatever are the consequences. We are no advocates of expediency in morals . . . Men cannot alter the laws of God.



‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Women

‘I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man’

1 CORINTHIANS 11:3 (KJV)

‘Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord . . . as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands’

EPHESIANS 5:22-24 (ESV)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Women

‘Wives, accept the authority of your husbands . . .
Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord’

1 PETER 3:1-6 (NRSV)

‘I do not permit a woman to teach or to have
authority over a man; she is to keep silent’

1 TIMOTHY 2:12 (NRSV)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Women

‘Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings’

1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35 (NLT)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Women

‘For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner’

1 TIMOTHY 2:13-14 (NIV)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Women

‘A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head’

1 CORINTHIANS 11:7-10 (ESV)

‘A Creation Order Issue’

“Paul does not ‘permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man’ for a creational reason: ‘for Adam was formed first, then Eve’. The creation narrative reflects the creation order, which embeds a divine intention that is to be upheld in God’s churches. Because this is a creation order issue, it cannot be said that Paul’s prohibition on women teaching or exercising authority is rooted in any cultural consideration. It is rooted in God’s divine order.”

COLIN SMOTHERS (PHD, SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY)
COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD WEBSITE

‘Natural Law’

‘Natural Law’ says that there is a God-given, self-evident universal moral order for human life that we can grasp through reason (common sense, or what’s ‘obvious’) and from which we can determine behaviour as ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’

- When Paul says, ‘Does not *the very nature of things* teach you* that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?’ this is ‘natural law’ speaking—1 CORINTHIANS 11:14–15 (NIV)

* ‘*Isn’t it obvious?*’ (NLT)

River Church and Women



Our Distinctives

We have three key distinctives:

The role of women in leadership.

We welcome and promote the role of women at every level of leadership.

So why—in the light of what
‘the Bible clearly teaches’—
is this a River Church
‘distinctive’?

Isn't that blatantly ignoring
‘the supreme authority’
of the Bible as
‘the written Word of God’
+ ‘traditional’ beliefs?

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Divorce and Remarriage

‘Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery’

LUKE 16:18 (NIV)

‘Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery’

MARK 10:11–12 (NIV)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Divorce and Remarriage

‘To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord: a wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.’

1 CORINTHIANS 7:10–11(NIV)

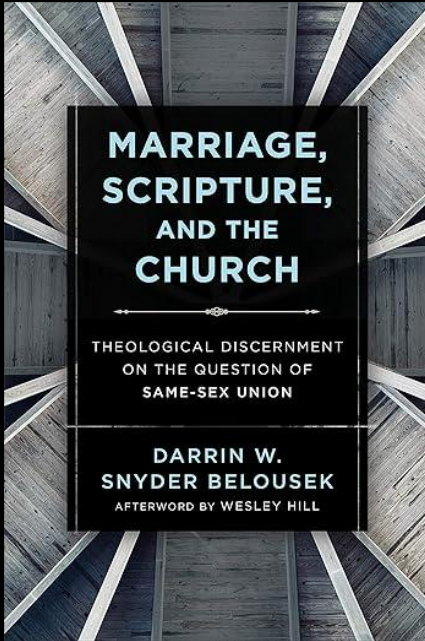
‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Divorce and Remarriage

‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another woman commits adultery’

MATTHEW 19:8–9 (NIV)

‘Traditional’ Beliefs



“Congregations reluctant to extend accommodation to same-sex couples must ask themselves why they should accommodate some situations that deviate from the creational ideal, such as divorced-remarried couples ... but not accommodate other situations that also deviate from the creational ideal, such as same-sex couples ... Expecting sexual discipline of gay believers while accommodating the sexual sins of straight and married believers is simply hypocrisy.”

‘Traditional’ Beliefs

About Divorce and Remarriage

Why is there *any* tolerance for divorce and remarriage in otherwise conservative evangelical churches?

- What happened to the ‘supreme authority’ of the Bible as ‘the written Word of God’ on that one?

Note: ‘except for sexual immorality’ is only in Matthew and does not extend to remarriage (otherwise it would be contradicting all the other scriptures)

Divorce and Remarriage Today

- Pragmatism: in view of its prevalence
- Compassion: things go wrong in life
 - Seeking the best in less-than-ideal circumstances
 - Not perpetuating failed or abusive marriages for form's sake
- The consequences for a divorced woman today are not what they were in the first-century world
 - Jesus was being women-centered, not doctrine-centered
- 'It is not good that *'āḏām* should be alone' GENESIS 2:18
- 'It is better to marry than to burn with sexual desire'
1 CORINTHIANS 7:9 (NCV)

The Basic Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation

Biblical Interpretation #1

The meaning of a text is *always* what it would have meant to its original author and audience

- It's *what they* would have understood it to be saying, *about what*, and *why*

“A text cannot mean what it never meant”

GORDON FEE & DOUGLAS STUART

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

Biblical Interpretation #2

Context, Context, Context is to biblical
interpretation what Location,
Location, Location is to property

Some Features of Context

- Old Testament or New Testament
- The genre (type of writing)
- The surrounding verses
- Where it sits in the biblical story
- The words in the original language(s)
- The political background
- The economic background
- The cultural background and its societal 'norms'

Some Features of Context

- *Who* was writing . . . *to whom* they were writing . . . *why* they were writing
- What else we know about the characters
- What the biblical writer knew and didn't
- Everything that people in the Ancient World thought was 'obvious'
 - About God, the gods, spiritual things, science, **nature**, the human body (such as, reproduction), medicine, the cosmos . . .

Biblical Interpretation #3

Once we know *its original meaning* for them then we can move to the entirely separate question of *its meaning for us*

- a. Exactly the same
- b. Something analogous—the same value or principle, outworked differently, or
- c. Nothing at all—speaking to ‘there and then’

Biblical Interpretation #4

Is the text **prescribing** something to be *normative* or just **observing** something that's *normally* the case?

Normative is 'setting a standard or pattern to which all should conform'

Normally, or the norm, is 'reflecting what was—and maybe still is—typically the case'

Why All This Matters

‘Bringing out’ things that ARE in the text is called *exegesis*—which is the goal

‘Reading-in’ things that ARE NOT in the text is called *eisegesis*—which is bad practice

We need to be certain that any answer we think we’re finding in the text is to the same question that they were asking

The Old Testament Commandments

Which ones apply to Christians?

- a. All of them—they're all 'The Word of God'
- b. None of them
- c. The 'moral' ones, but not the 'civil' or 'ceremonial' ones
- d. The ones that still seem to make sense in our world today
- e. The ones repeated in the New Testament

The Key Texts For The Traditional View

Key Texts For The Traditional View

GENESIS OFFERS A 'CREATION ORDER MANDATE' AGAINST
SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS—*WHICH JESUS THEN AFFIRMED*

LEVITICUS 18:22

LEVITICUS 20:13

ROMANS 1:26-27

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9

1 TIMOTHY 1:10

The 'creation order' texts in Genesis

God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number . . ."

GENESIS 1:27–28

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. GENESIS 2:23–24

The 'creation order' texts in Genesis

Is the writer of Genesis *prescribing* something to be *normative* for human life, or just *observing* something that is self-evidently '*the norm*' in human life: it's where babies come from?

The 'creation order' texts in Genesis

Is the writer of Genesis *prescribing* something to be *normative* for human life, or just *observing* something that is self-evidently '*the norm*' in human life: it's where babies come from?

- Might we not equally find other such 'divine mandates' in the creation account?
 - All men should be farmers? GENESIS 2:15
 - We should all be vegan? GENESIS 2:16
 - Everyone must be married? GENESIS 2:18

The ‘creation order’ texts in Genesis

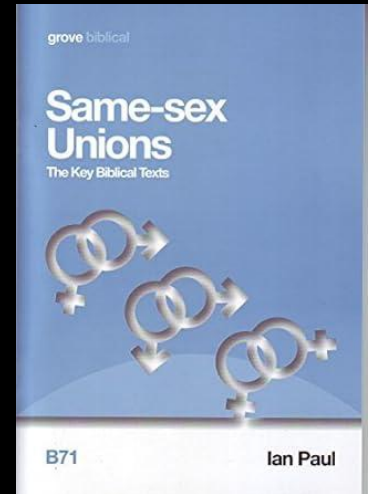
Would *the original audience* have thought those verses were saying *anything at all* about same-sex relationships?

Would that be reading *out* of the text what *is* there—exegesis—or reading *into* the text what *isn’t* there—eisegesis?

Jesus and a 'creation order' mandate?

“In the Gospels, there is no explicit mention of same-sex sexual activity. Arguments from this part of the New Testament therefore need to be made *by inference* to a large degree ... we need to read *realistically*, taking *historical context seriously*, and being aware of the dangers of *arguments from silence*.”

IAN PAUL, *SAME-SEX UNIONS: THE KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS*



Jesus and a ‘creation order’ mandate?

“Haven’t you read,” Jesus replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” MATTHEW 19:4–6

By quoting these two Genesis texts, is Jesus affirming a ‘creation order mandate’ against same-sex relationships?

Jesus and a ‘creation order’ mandate?

If we ‘take historical context seriously’ Jesus is actually answering *a question about divorce*

Some Pharisees asked him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

MATTHEW 19:3 (NIV)

What about Ian Paul’s other ‘tests’?

- *Inference*—is such a ‘mandate’ a *good* inference?
- Is it reading those texts *realistically*?
- Is it an *argument from silence*?

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The Two Verses in Leviticus

“The Old Testament represents an old covenant, which is one we are no longer obliged to keep. Therefore, we can hardly begin by assuming that the Old Covenant should automatically be binding upon us. We have to assume, in fact, that *none* of its stipulations are binding upon us *unless* they are renewed in the New Covenant. That is, unless an Old Testament law is *somehow restated or reinforced* in the New Testament it is no longer directly binding on God’s people.”

FEE & STUART, HOW TO READ THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH

The Two Verses in Leviticus

Are they '*somehow restated or reinforced*'?

The Old Testament is referenced 936 times in the New Testament

- Including verses from Leviticus 32 times
but *Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are not among them*

Paul himself references the Old Testament 123 times just in Romans, 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, so he certainly could have
The numbers include 'allusions' and 'possible allusions'

SOURCE: BLUE LETTER BIBLE WEBSITE

The Two Verses in Leviticus

Are they '*somehow restated or reinforced*'?

The Old Testament is referenced 936 times in the New Testament

- Including verses from Leviticus 32 times
but *Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are not among them*

Nonetheless, Ian Paul still says Paul 'echoes quite strongly' and 'references back to' Leviticus, so there is 'a consistent canonical connection' . . .

The Two Verses in Leviticus

But let's assume for a moment that the standard (Fee and Stuart) view is wrong

The Two Verses in Leviticus

But let's assume for a moment that the standard (Fee and Stuart) view is wrong

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman;
it is an abomination

LEVITICUS 18:22 (NKJV)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman,
both of them have committed an
abomination; they shall be put to death

LEVITICUS 20:13 (NKJV)

‘Context, Context, Context’

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them:

‘I am the LORD your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you.

Do not follow their practices.’”

LEVITICUS 18:1-3

‘Context, Context, Context’

How confident are we that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are talking about our question?

- Formally committed, faithful, monogamous, lifelong, consensual relationships today

And—if they are—why would the death penalty not be timelessly appropriate?

‘Abomination’ — *tôw‘êbah*

This Hebrew word is used 117 times

111 of those times it’s talking about other things—such as taking advantage of the poor, not respecting the Sabbath, being arrogant, telling lies, rabbits, and shellfish

The death penalty was also prescribed for *inter alia* blaspheming, sacrificing to other gods, disobeying parents, and being a false prophet

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Romans 1:26–27

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;

27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

‘Context, Context, Context’

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth ...

21 For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

ROMANS 1:18–32 (ESV)

22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator ... 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

ROMANS 1:18–32 (ESV)

29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's decree that those who practise such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practise them.

ROMANS 1:18–32 (ESV)



The Roman emperor Nero



They 'exchanged the glory of
the immortal God for images
resembling mortal man ...'

v.23

They 'exchanged the truth
about God for a lie* and
worshipped and served the
creature ...'

v.25

*That the emperor was a god

Romans 1:26–27

26 For this reason God gave them up to **dishonourable passions**. For their women exchanged **natural relations** for those that are **contrary to nature**;

27 and the men likewise gave up **natural relations** with women and were **consumed with passion** for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Ancient World 'Natural' and 'Unnatural'

- A man who has 'sex for pleasure' — even with his wife — makes her metaphorically a prostitute (JOSEPHUS)
- 'Any man who has sex with his wife for the purpose of pleasure adulterates his marriage' (CLEMENT)
- You should engage in marriage and sex 'only for the procreation of children' (JOSEPHUS)
- Deuteronomy 14:7 forbids having intercourse 'in too frequent succession' (CLEMENT)

Ancient World 'Natural' and 'Unnatural'

- Even sex 'according to nature' and within marriage is wrong if it is driven by 'too much desire' (PHILO)
- 'Wives must never take the initiative in the sexual act. They belong on the bottom since they are subordinate to their husband' (CLEMENT)
- Men should not 'outrage' their wives 'by shameful ways of intercourse' (PSEUDO-PHOCYLIDES)
- A man must never ejaculate in any part of his wife's body other than her vagina, and then only for procreation (CLEMENT)

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The Basis of The Alternative View

What the Bible was talking about ‘then’ was

- Almost invariably abusive—in power imbalance contexts of pederasty, prostitution, and sexual abuse of slaves—and excessive lustfulness
- Same-sex sexual *behaviour*—in *those* contexts—not faithful, consensual, monogamous *relationships* as we know them today

The Basis of The Alternative View

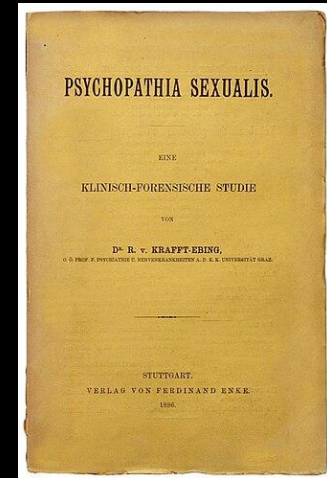
- The Ancient World presumed humanity to be *opposite-sex* oriented *by nature*
- Scientific awareness of *same-sex* orientation by nature began only in the late 19th century—when ‘homosexuality’ was coined to define it
- Conclusion: the Bible was not answering the question we are asking—hence it’s silent
- In the light of what we now know, but the Bible did not, what should be our approach?

The Word 'Homosexual'

First used in 1868 in a letter by journalist Károly Mária Kertbeny, and in a scientific paper by Professor Richard von Krafft-Ebing, in 1886—and so, too, the word 'heterosexual'

There were no equivalent words in any ancient language, because the concepts were only scientifically recognised from then

Continuation in Kertbeny's letter - Ich dagegen verbrachte dies Leben
Zienitz unfeindlich, da es nicht mein Will gewesen hätte, vertrieben
und durch persönliche Bedrückung gezwungen zu werden, mich auch noch
mit jüdischen Grundstücken beschäftigen zu müssen - mit der
Studien der legislativen wie juristischen Grundpraxis, sowie
aller bestehenden Gesetzgeber, besprach ich mich die Frage, wieviel
mit gewissen Seiten der Staats- wie Rechtslehre, und habe ich mich
die naturwissenschaftliche, anthropologische wie historische Seite der
Frage gründlich erschöpft, und in einem eigenen kleinen Buch
- das Sie noch nicht kennen, und das in der künftigen
zerfällt: Monosexual, Homosexual, Heterosexual, Distinguent
neben mir der allgemeine Vortheil ward, hier einen der Wissenschaft
nicht geschulten, der Wiener Diagnostikschule entstammenden, aber
hier gebornen, und hier ständliche Praxis ausübenden Arzt von Seite
gehabt zu haben, der lebhaftes Interesse an solchen Forschungen
nimmt, mit dem ich alles besprechen kann, oder mir schon die
merkmaligen Fälle theils sehen ließ, theils theoretisch analysirte.



The Response of the Traditional View

- The knowledge of the biblical writers is irrelevant—the Bible is timelessly condemning all same-sex sexual behaviour *irrespective of 'orientation'* and *irrespective of context*
- 'Orientation' is 'unproven'—not all scientists agree—and in any event, God knew
- If the biblical writers had known about 'orientation' they would have still said exactly the same

The Response of the Traditional View

- OK, the word didn't exist—but the concept did
- There were examples of same-sex relationships in the Ancient World (that Paul would have known about)
- Even though the Bible speaks only about the behaviour of men, we should reject female same-sex relationships as well—ROMANS 1:26?

1 Corinthians 6:9 + 1 Timothy 1:10

- Both verses are undoubtedly condemning same-sex sexual behaviour(s) of some sort(s)
- The question is *what* behaviour(s) *in what context(s)* were the writers condemning?
 - And how, then, does *that* relate to today?

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **homosexuals**

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9 (NASB **2020**)

... the sexually immoral, **homosexuals**, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching

1 TIMOTHY 1:10 (NASB **2020**)

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **homosexuals***

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9 (NASB **2020**)

*There are two Greek words here

The first word is *malakos*

Jesus, talking about John the Baptist in the wilderness:

‘What did you go out to see? A man dressed in **soft*** *clothing*? Those who wear **soft*** *clothing* are in kings’ palaces!’

MATTHEW 11:8 (NASB 2020)

**malakos*

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **effeminate*** nor **homosexuals**

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9 (NASB **1995**)

*NASB footnote: 'Effeminate by perversion'

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **homosexuals***

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9 (NASB **2020**)

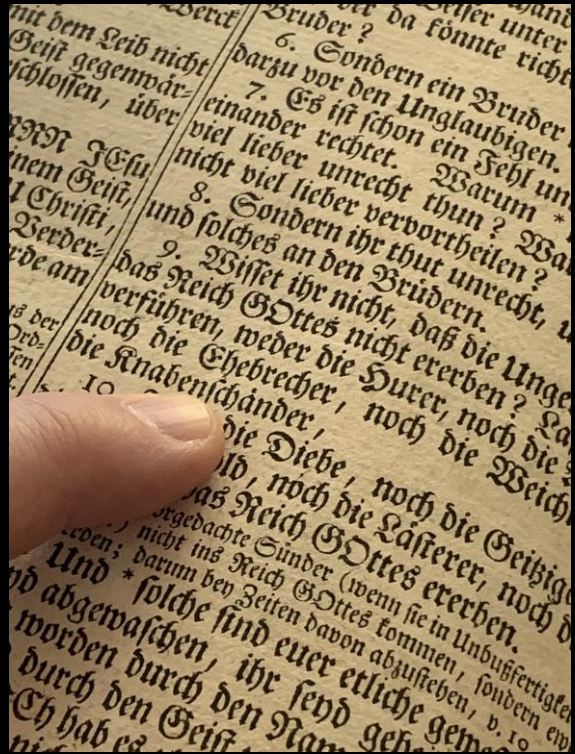
*NASB footnote: 'Two Greek words in the text, probably submissive and dominant male homosexuals'

1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10

The second Greek word in 1 Corinthians 6:9—
and the sole word in 1 Timothy 1:10—is

arsenokoitēs

- Nothing to do with slang for ‘bum’ or the Latin word *coitus*
- It’s a ‘compound’ word deriving from *arsen* = ‘man’ and *koitē* = ‘bed’
- *1 Corinthians 6:9 is the first known instance of this word in any ancient literature*

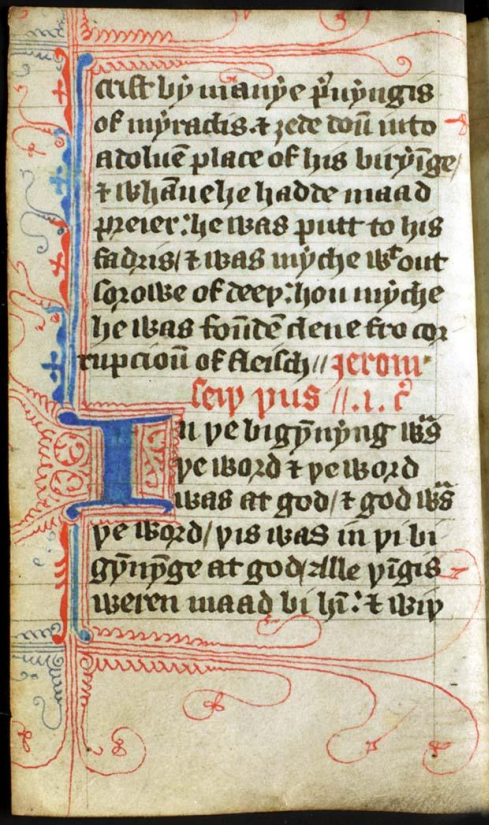


Greek word: *arsenokoitēs*

In Martin Luther's
German Bible (1534) he
translated it as
Knabenschänder

Knaben = 'boy'

Schänder = 'molester'



Greek word: *arsenokoitēs*

The Wycliffe Bible (1382)
translated it as:

‘They that do lechery
with men’

Lechery is ‘unrestrained,
excessive indulgence of
sexual desire’

Translation—or Ideology?

Greek word translations in 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10

‘sexual perverts’

‘practicing homosexuals’

‘males who have sex with males’

‘people who do sex sins with
their own sex’

‘men who engage in illicit sex’

‘effeminate call boys’

‘boy prostitutes’

‘sexual deviancy’

‘homosexual perverts’

‘effeminate [by perversion]’

‘those who make women
of themselves’

‘homo-erotic-partners’

‘those who use and abuse each
other; use and abuse sex’

‘The Bible Says’: The Questions For Us

Is what the Bible was condemning ‘the same thing’ as same-sex relationships today?

Is same-sex orientation a naturally-occurring feature of human sexuality?

- If so, how might that impact our conclusion?

To what conclusion does the balance of evidence lead you, personally?

- Has the traditional view been proven ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ *sufficient to justify evangelicalism’s demands of gay people?*