

BIBLE PASSAGES AND SAME-SEX PRACTICES

**Gen. 1-2; Deut. 23.17-18 (Hebrew Bible: 23.18-19); 1 Kings 14.24; 15.12; 22.46;
2 Kings 23.7; Gen. 19; 2 Pet. 2.10; Jude 7; Judges 19; 1 Cor. 6.9; 1 Tim. 1.9-10 ;
Lev. 18.22//20.13; Rom. 1.26-27. Gal. 2; Acts 10-11; Acts 15.**

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1. Gen. 1:26-30 — This passage has been the subject of much debate, scholarly and otherwise. What kind of being does God “make” (1.26, *asah*) or “create” (1.27, *barah*)? He wishes to “make” (*nasaseh*) *adam*, variously translated as “man” (Goodspeed; Tanakh; NIV) or “humankind” (NRSV; Shocken Bible); that is, a creature distinct from the ones that precede *adam*, who is distinguished by being created in the divine image (*tselem*), that is, as God’s visible embodiment of the divine reign over the creation, to rule over that creation, just as a human monarch’s rule was signified by an image of the monarch set up in public or pictured on coins.

The two are special in that they are created in God’s “image,” according to God’s own “likeness” (1.26-27). The meaning of both of these words has been discussed, debated, expounded, endlessly worried over. Here their simplest meaning is that humans reflect God’s dominion over creation: As God exercises that dominion, so humans, too, are to exercise dominion, and just as the monarch’s rule was signified by an image of the monarch set up in public (or on coins, a practice persisting to the present day), so humans are the visible image of God (von Rad 1961: 57-58).

2. Deut. 23.17-18 (Hebrew Bible: 23.18-19); 1 Kings 14.24; 15.12; 22.46; 2 Kings 23.7 – These passages are commonly taken as referring to male (and female) prostitutes connected with the Jerusalem temple or with religious obligations--men and women perhaps resorting to prostitution to get money to pay religious vows (van der Toorn 1992). The Hebrew *qadesh*, commonly taken to mean male prostitute, may in fact refer to some other Temple functionary (Adler Goodfriend 1992).

3. Genesis 19: The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

19.5: Hebrew: נדעה / *nēd`ah* -- **Luther Bibel:** “dass wir sie erkennen”(1907 ed.); “dass wir uns über sie her machen” (1973 ed.). **Zürcher Bibel** (1954): “dass wir ihnen beiwohnen.” **Gerhard von Rad**, *Das erste Buch Mose* (1953): “dass wir sie erkennen.” **KJV, RSV, NRSV:** “that we may know them.” **NIV:** “so that we can have sex with them.” **The Complete Bible: An American Translation** (1923, 1927, 1939, 1948) and **New World Translation** (rev. ed. 1970): “that we may have intercourse with them.” **Today’s English Version** (1976): “wanted to have sex with them.” **Contemporary English Version** (1995): “so we can have sex with them.” **Tanakh** (1985): “that we may be intimate with them.” **Everett Fox**, *The Five Books of Moses* (1995): “we want to know them” (footnote: “The meaning is unmistakably sexual”). **E. A. Speiser**, *Genesis (Anchor Bible, 1964):* “that we may get familiar with them.” (Speiser, Gen. 4.1, translating the same Hebrew verb: “The man had experience of his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain.”)

→ **1. Hospitality** as an obligation/virtue (Abraham, Gen. 18.1-7; Lot, Gen. 19.3, 8); interpreted thus

by Jesus in Matt. 10.15//Luke 10.12. 2. Inhospitality of the town males, all (19.4)—not just some gays--wanting to gang rape Lot's guests, "womanizing" them. 3. Their xenophobia (19.9)—hatred of outsiders. 4. Same-sex relations between equal consenting partners is not the issue in this passage nor in biblical references to this passage with possible exception of 2 Pet. 2.10 and Jude 7 (see below). 5. Gang rape of women seen as an acceptable price of hospitality to avoid (unhospitable and shaming) gang rape of men.

4. Judges 19: A Levite and the gang rape and death of his concubine

19.22: Hebrew: ונדענו / *wenēdaenu* -- Same verbal root as in Gen. 19.5. Meaning: to have sex (translations are like those in Gen. 19.5).

19.25: Hebrew: וידעה / *wayēdeu* -- Same verb root as in Gen. 19.5 and Judges 19.22. **Luther Bibel:** "Die erkannten sie" (1907 ed.); "Die machten sich über sie her" (1973 ed.). **Zürcher Bibel** (1954): "sie wohnten ihr bei." **KJV, RSV:** "they knew her." Robert Boling, *Judges* (**Anchor Bible**, 1975), *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (1923, 1927, 1939, 1948): "they had intercourse with her." *New World Translation* (rev. ed. 1970): "they began to have intercourse with her." **NIV, Today's English Version** (1976), *Contemporary English Version* (1995), *Tanakh* (1985): "raped her." **NRSV:** "They wantonly raped her."

19.22: Hebrew: בני בליעל / *benē belīya'al* -- **Luther Bibel:** "böse Buben" (1907 ed.); "ruchlose Männer" (1973 ed.). **Zürcher Bibel** (1954): "ruchlose Menschen." **KJV:** "certain sons of Belial." **RSV:** "base fellows." **NIV:** "some of the wicked men of the city." *New World Translation* (rev. ed. 1970): "mere good-for-nothing men." *Contemporary English Version* (1995): "some worthless men of that town." *Tanakh* (1985): "a depraved lot." *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (1923, 1927, 1939, 1948): "perverted fellows." **NRSV:** "a perverse lot." *Today's English Version* (1976): "some sexual perverts from the town."

→ 1. Gang rape of a woman seen as an acceptable price of hospitality. 2. Context in Judges: social chaos when there is no king. 3. The translations of *benē belīya'al* (19.22) fall into three categories:
1. Very literal translation: "sons of Belial" (KJV), i.e. of "worthlessness"; 2. the rapists as bad, "worthless"; 3. or as sexually "perverted."

5. 2 Pet 2.10 Just what does the Greek refer to? [

[*Context:* 2.5: if God didn't spare the angels who sinned, and the ungodly in Noah's day (though saving Noah)], and [2.6] if God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah "and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly" but [2.7] rescued righteous Lot who was "greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless," [2.8] for he was daily "tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard," [2.9] "then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment [2.10]—especially those who *indulge their flesh in depraved lust* [*opisō sarkos en epithumia miasmou*], and who despise authority."

Luther Bibel (1907 ed., 1968 ed.): "wandeln nach dem Fleisch in der unreinen Lust." **Zürcher Bibel** (1954): "in Begierde nach Befleckung [fremden] Fleisch nachlaufen." **KJV:** "walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." *Nouveau Testament* (3d, rev. ed., n.d. [1974?]): "courrent après la chair dans leur appétit d'ordures." *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (1923, 1927, 1939, 1948): "indulge in passions that defile them." **RSV:** "indulge in the lust of defiling passion." *New World Translation* (rev. ed. 1970): "go on after other flesh with the desire to defile [it]." *The New Testament in Modern English* (J. B. Phillips, 1957): "indulged all the foulness of their lower natures." **NEB:** "follow their abominable lusts." **NIV:** "follow the corrupt desire of their sinful natures." *Today's English Version* (1976): "follow their filthy bodily lusts." *Contemporary English Version* (1995): "don't think of anything except their own filthy desires."

- 1. Sodom and Gomorrah as a byword for destruction caused by “licentiousness” and “lawless deeds.” 2. “depraved lust” in NRSV 2.10 might suggest same-sex relations, but note the other translations and the translation in the standard Greek-English lexikon (Danker-Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, 3d ed. [2000] of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament*), s.v. miasmos: “*follow after the flesh in corrupting desire.*”]

6. Jude 7 Just what does the Greek refer to?

[*Context:* vs. 5-7 are somewhat parallel to 2 Pet above. After mentioning rescue from Egypt and angels who sinned:] v. 7: “Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”

[The NRSV footnote to “pursued unnatural lust” offers a literal translation of the Greek: “*went after other flesh.*” So also **Luther Bibel** (1907 ed.): “gehuret haben und nach einem anderen Fleisch gegangen sind”; **Luther Bibel** (1968 ed.): “Unzucht getrieben haben und fremdem Fleisch nachgegangen sind.” Likewise **KJV**: “giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh” [marginal note on “strange”: “Gr. *other*”]. **Zürcher Bibel** (1954): “Unzucht trieben und wesen einer andern Gattung fleischlich nachstellten.” **Nouveau Testament** (3d, rev. ed., n.d. [1974?]): “s’étaient livrées de semblable manière à la prostitution et avaient couru après des êtres d’une autre nature” (footnote: refers to vices “contre nature des habitants de Sodome et Gomorrhe,” Gen. 19). **The Complete Bible: An American Translation** (1923, 1927, 1939, 1948): “immorality and unnatural vice.” **RSV**: “acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust.” **The New Testament in Modern English** (J. B. Phillips, 1957): “Gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.” **NEB**: “committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts.” **NIV**: “gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.” **New World Translation** (rev. ed. 1970): “had committed fornication excessively and gone out after other flesh for unnatural use.” **Today’s English Version** (1976): “indulged in sexual immorality and perversion.” **Contemporary English Version** (1995): “became immoral and did all sorts of sexual sins.” Danker-Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, 3d ed. [2000] of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament**, s.v. *sarx* 3b: “Of flesh other than human”; in Jude 7: “*after another kind of flesh*” (cf. Judges 2.12 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament: “after other deities”); “i.e. of divine messengers who take on [flesh] when they appear to humans”; others interpret the passage as referring to “same-sex activity.”]

- Meaning of the Greek is unclear: Sodom and Gomorrah as examples of “sexual immorality” and “unnatural lust” OR going “after other flesh.”

7. 1 Cor. 6.9: A list of vices, including *malakoi*

Greek μαλακοί / malakoi -- **Luther Bibel**: “Weichlinge” (1907 ed.; 1973 ed.). **Zürcher Bibel** (1954): “Lustknaben.” **Tyndale** (1534), **Coverdale** (1535), **Cranmer** (1539): “weaklinges.” **Douai-Rheims** (1582), **KJV**, **American Standard Bible** (1901): “effeminate.” **The Complete Bible: An American Translation** (1923, 1927, 1939, 1948): “sensual.” **The New Testament in Modern English** (J. B. Phillips, 1957): “the effeminate.” **Jerusalem Bible** (1966): “catamite.” **New American Bible** (1966), combining *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*: “Sodomites.” **New World Translation** (rev. ed. 1970): “men kept for unnatural purposes.” **NIV**, **NRSV**: “male prostitutes.” **Today’s English Version** (1976), combining *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*: “homosexual perverts.” **Contemporary English Version** (1995): “a pervert.” // Danker-Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, 3d ed. [2000] of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament**, s.v., μαλακός: 1. “**pert. to being yielding to touch, soft, of things**”; 2. “**pert. to being passive in a same-sex relationship, effeminate** esp. of catamites.” *Regarding:* 1 Cor. 6.9: NRSV’s “male prostitutes” is “too narrow a rendering.” Revised

English Bible's "sexual pervert" [combining *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*] is "too broad."

- The translations of *malakoi* fall into three categories: 1. Those that focus on "softness" of males (i.e., they are weaklings) or speak of "effeminacy." 2. Those that specify the softness of males as the passivity (i.e., softness) of a male in a same-sex relation, whether with or without pay: "catamite," "Sodomites," "male prostitutes." 3. Those that focus on a condition: "homosexual perverts," "pervert."
- Another view of *malakoi* (Martin): Ancient usage shows that the basic meaning of *malakos* is "effeminacy"; extending the meaning beyond this is unwarranted.

8. 1 Cor. 6.9: A list of vices, including *arsenokoitai*

Greek ἀρσενοκοῖται / *arsenokoitai* -- Luther Bibel, "Knabenschänder"(1907 ed.;1973 ed.). Zürcher Bibel (1954): "Knabenschänder." Wyclif (1380): "thei that don lecherie with men." Tyndale (1534): "abusars of them selves with mankynde." KJV: "abusers of themselves with mankind." *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (1923, 1927, 1939,1948): "given to unnatural vice." *The New Testament in Modern English* (J. B. Phillips, 1957): "the pervert." Jerusalem Bible (1966), New American Bible (1970), NRSV: "Sodomite. *New World Translation* (rev. ed. 1970): "men who lie with men." RSV: "homosexuals." NIV: "homosexual offenders." *Today's English Version* (1976), combining *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*: "homosexual perverts." *Contemporary English Version* (1995): "behaves like a homosexual." // Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich, 3d ed. [2000] of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament*, s.v., ἀρσενοκοίτης: "a male who engages in sexual activity w. a pers. of his own sex, pederast."

- 1. The translations agree: *arsenokoitai* refers to males who have sex with other males. Another view of *arsenokoitai*: (Martin): Deriving the meaning from the word's two parts (ἄρσεν / *arsēn*, male, and κοίτη / *koitē*, bed)—a male who lies in bed with another male—is linguistically unsound (example: "understand" does not mean "stand under"); meaning comes from context; in some ancient texts *arsenoitai* occurs in economic contexts, referring to some form of economic exploitation (by means of –homosexual?–sex?); in other contexts it may refer to same-sex relations; conclusion: "no one knows what it meant."

9. 1 Tim. 1.10: A list of vices including *arsenokoitai*

Greek ἀρσενοκοῖται / *arsenokoitai* – Luther Bibel: "Knabenschänder"(1907 ed.;1973 ed.). Zürcher Bibel (1954): "Knabenschänder." KJV: "them that defile themselves with mankind." *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (1923, 1927, 1939,1948): "men sexually perverted." *The New Testament in Modern English* (J. B. Phillips, 1957): "sexually perverted." RSV, NRSV: "Sodomites." *New World Translation* (rev. ed. 1970): "men who lie with males." NIV: "perverts." *Today's English Version* (1976), combining *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*: "sexual perverts." *Contemporary English Version* (1995): "sexual perverts* or live as homosexuals." // Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich, 3d ed. [2000] of Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament*, s.v., ἀρσενοκοίτης: "a male who engages in sexual activity w. a pers. of his own sex, pederast"

*This translates the Greek word πόρνοι / *pornoi*, which other translations (more correctly) render as "immoral people" (*The Complete Bible*), RSV, "immoral persons," "sexually uncontrolled" (Phillips), "the immoral" (*Today's English Version*), "fornicators" (NRSV). NIV's "adulterers" restricts the meaning of *pornoi* too much.

- The translations agree: *arsenokoitai* refers to males who have sex with other males, sometimes with very negative overtones: "perverts" or "sexual perverts" or "sexually perverted." More neutral (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich): "a male who engages in sexual activity w. a pers. of his own sex" but limiting this to "pederast." Another view of *arsenokoitai* (Martin): See no.

7 above.

→ **On *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*:** 1. Both words occur in lists of vices. None of these vices is singled out as more important than the other. Which of them is a cause for exclusion from the church? 2. Because the world of the translators has changed, their translations reflect those changes: same-sex behaviour came to be understood as rooted in a state of being (as an “orientation”)–homosexuality–whether genetically or socially determined and/or chosen and as a perversion. Hence translations such as “perverse” and “pervert” and “homosexual perverts.” 3. Theories and causes of same-sex attraction: Rosario, ed., *Science and Homosexualities*; Duberman, *Cures*.

10. Lev. 18.22//20.13 – Males shouldn’t have sexual relations with other males; penalty: death (20.13). Context: Lev. 17-26, “Holiness Code,” setting Israel apart from other peoples; preservation of God’s chosen people in a time of high infant mortality a prime concern; hence “onanism” (Gen. 38.8-10) condemned as is a male lying with a male. Noticeably absent: women in same-sex relations. Today: A populous planet with shrinking, overused resources. And do we keep the Code’s many other regulations?

11. Rom. 1.26-27 – Same-sex intercourse (1.26-27) is not “natural” and along with other forms of evil (1.28-31) is seen as divine retribution for idolatry (1.18-25).

→ 1. Scroggs’ foundational survey of attitudes to homosexuality in the ancient Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian worlds contends that Paul condemns only pederasty. 2. Smith admires but also corrects Scroggs work (not all same-sex relations were between unequal partners, and some were between women), and goes beyond him: ancient views of sexuality, ranging from homo- to heterosexual, parallel modern studies (Kinsey); Paul’s condemnation of same-sex relations was only one of many condemnations of cultural practices; “Paul never faced . . . people who claimed to be committed, self-affirming homosexuals and also committed Christians.”

→ 2. Same-sex intercourse is not “natural.” Neither are some behaviours of moderns which are both “unnatural” and also go against the plain sense of scripture: (a) Blends of fabrics or synthetic fibers are not “natural,” they go against “nature” and against scripture (Lev. 19.19). (b) Clothing itself is not “natural”; animals by “nature” wear their birthday suits, humans don’t. (c) Jewelry, makeup, and coiffed hair are not “natural” and go against scripture (1 Tim. 2.9; 1 Pet 3.3-6). (d) Shaving men’s beards off is not “natural” and goes against Scripture (Lev 21.5). (e) In scripture, flying is the prerogative of God, who can ride on a cherub or fly on “the wings of the wind” (Ps. 18.10; Ps. 104.3), something that humans can only long for because by “nature” they lack wings (Ps. 55.6). (f) Same-sex behaviour in animals and insects, which are anatomically equipped for heterosexual coupling, is “natural” for some individuals, domestic and wild, according to various books and articles reporting on scientific research that verifies what farmers and others observe.

12. Gal. 2 – Will “Gentile sinners” (2.15) be accepted into full membership in the fledgling Jewish Jesus community *as Gentiles*, i.e., without keeping Jewish observances? Early Christian leaders–James (brother of Jesus), Paul, Peter–represent different views on this key issue in early Christianity. How did the first-century church address this issue? According to Paul, Titus and other Gentiles are accepted **as** Gentiles, i.e., **without** ethnic or dietary or physical restrictions.

13. Acts 10-11; 15 – Acts 10-11: Gentiles accepted through baptism, with no restrictions, after the Holy Spirit falls on them. Acts 15: a council is convened; Gentiles accepted but with some

restrictions.

Then: Gentiles as followers of Jesus presented Jewish followers of Jesus with a new reality, which they searched the scriptures to understand. **Now:** Gays and lesbians as public followers of Jesus in Christian churches present Christians with a new reality, which they search the scriptures to understand. Is gayness the problem, or how Christians react to it (Egertson 28)?

Reformation Interpretive Principles

Sola Scripture, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide // Scripture Alone, by Grace Alone, by Faith Alone

“In Christian ethics there must always be a return to the heart of the tradition precisely at the point where one is engaging with the most contextual of modern problems. It is thus that one begins to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Ian McDonald, quoted in Jersild: 134).

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