

NOTE: This material was first published in a series of 5 articles and published in the August, September, October, December, and January, 1983 and 1984 issues of **The Apostolic Messenger** when I was living in Jackson, MS. — Walton Weaver

Homosexuality And The Bible

Response To Gay Advocates

Part Three

by Walton Weaver

Argument No. 3, 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. I: 10; Rom. 1:26-27

Finally, there are three New Testament passages which must be considered. I Corinthians 6:9 and I Timothy 1: 10 include two very specific Greek words which, if they refer to same-sex relationships at all (and many of the finest Greek scholars are convinced they do not), condemn only ritual temple prostitution. Even a casual contextual reading of Rom. 1:26-27 shows manifestly that Paul was speaking of homosexual acts being committed by people he believed to be heterosexual. These, too, were almost certainly in the context of ritualized prostitution.

The Bible appears to condemn certain kinds of homosexual acts. These include rape, ritual prostitution, and homosexual activity on the part of heterosexual people. While similar heterosexual acts are also condemned, no one to my knowledge has suggested that these passages constitute a condemnation of homosexuality.

1. The meaning of the words in 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1: 10. The words under consideration in these two passages are translated “effeminate” (*malakoi*): “abusers of themselves with mankind” (*arsenokoitai*) and “them that defile themselves with mankind” (*arsenokoitai*) in the King James Version. The two words involved appear in I Cor. 6:9 and the second of these words is found in I Tim. 1: 10. Since Paul says that those who do such things shall not enter into the kingdom of God, it is vitally important that we have a correct understanding of these terms. For an avowed homosexual preacher like Ken Martin to quickly brush these passages aside by simply saying they only prohibit a certain kind of homosexual behavior, namely, temple prostitution, is totally unjustified, and it is altogether unbecoming of one who presents himself as one who respects the Scriptures and applies the best principles of interpretation.

This is especially so in view of the fact that Martin charges those on the opposite side of this issue with both a lack of respect for the Scriptures and a disregard for the best principles of interpretation.

The real issue involved here is not whether these two terms (*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*) speak of homosexual behavior. McNeill, however, argues that *malakoi* refers to those who are “self-indulgent” and *arsenokoitai* is limited to homosexual prostitutes. Thus he admits that the second term speaks of homosexual behavior although he defines the first term differently. But

even though *arsenokoitai* refers to homosexual behavior, according to McNeill, it does not necessarily refer to homosexuals in committed love relationships. This is essentially the argument advanced in the statement from Ken Martin quoted above. He does not deny that the last of the two terms in these passages refers to homosexuality; he simply takes the homosexual practice which is condemned to be of a certain kind. The passages do not condemn all homosexual acts.

C. K. Barrett is right when he tells us that most commentators understand the two words in I Cor. 6: 9 to refer to “the passive and active partners respectively in male homosexual relations” (**A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians**, p. 140). Derrick Bailey, a gay advocate, agrees with this interpretation when he says “the technical words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* denote respectively those males who engage passively or actively in homosexual acts, (p. 38). Thus it seems that McNeill has missed the real meaning of the word translated “effeminate” (KJV) in I Cor. 6:9 when he follows John Boswell (**Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homo- sexuality**, pp. 339-340) in making the word mean self-indulgence, or those “morally weak, or lacking in self-control” (p. 52). Arndt and Gingrich say that the word suggests “men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually” (**A Greek-English Lexicon**, 4th rev. ed., p. 489), thus indicating that it refers to passive homosexuality.

Two factors in the context of I Cor. 6:9 argue strongly against the contention that the first word (*malakoi*) simply means “immoral.” Paul had already used a word in the list which has this meaning, the word *pornoi* which is translated fornicators (KJV), although it has a broad meaning in that it refers to sexual “immorality” in some translations. It would seem to be redundant for Paul to use two words in the list to mean “immoral.” In addition to this, the word *malakoi* is preceded and followed by words which have a sexual meaning, and in both cases specific sexual acts are referred to by these words. The word could not refer to adulterers because this is named immediately prior to *malakoi* and it is not exactly the same as the *arsenokoitai* which is named immediately following *malakoi*. So the context favors the view that *malakoi* refers to the passive partners in homosexual acts while *arsenokoitai* refers to the active partners in homosexual acts.

2. Homosexual acts committed in love. But does *arsenokoitai* speak only of homosexual prostitutes and say nothing about homosexual behavior in committed love? Stated in a slightly different way, is Paul only condemning promiscuous gay prostitution, and is saying nothing about physical expressions of two persons of the same sex who affirm that they are “in love”? Homosexual advocates say yes to his question. For them Paul is only condemning homosexual acts not committed in love. McNeill argues for this position based on the fact that *arsenokoitai* is used in the plural form; but it is plural because all the other classes of unrighteous persons are referred to in the plural also. So there is no merit to his argument. Bailey had earlier drawn the same conclusion but for a different reason. He distinguishes between perverts (heterosexuals who engage in homosexual acts) and inverts (the person of a fixed or settled homosexual disposition) and then affirms that Paul condemns only the former in this passage because he knew nothing about the condition of inversion. Larry Bishop and Eric Pement (“Gay Debate in the Church,” **Cornerstone**, X11, Issue 5, p. 15) have concisely and ably responded to this argument in the following statement:

Such an assumption contains certain fallacies. Homosexual behavior has existed in societies throughout history. Thus, it would seem highly unlikely that earlier cultures would be unaware that some people appeared to express an exclusively homosexual disposition. Aristophanes (Greek dramatist, 445-385 B.C.) recognized the homosexual disposition as 'natural' to some, just as heterosexuality was for the majority, as did the illustrious Aristotle (384-322) and others. The homosexual condition was obviously not unknown in the ancient Greek culture which bore a direct influence on Paul's writings. It may be safely assumed that the well educated Paul, in condemning homosexuality, took fully into account the Greek acceptance of gayness as a natural and permanent state for certain persons.

Thus we find that from the standpoint of Christian morality, the distinctions of 'invert' and 'pervert' are completely inadequate to determine the rightness or wrongness of sexual acts for specific individuals. Rather, the Bible reveals a God to whom certain acts are wrong regardless of the personal and social context in which they occur. By returning to the pattern of creation as the norm for human sexuality, Paul places all homosexual behavior, as well as all heterosexual distortion, in the category of perversion. Thus we must totally reject the situationism of Bailey's invert/pervert ethic, since from the standpoint of Scripture, the distinction between 'invert' and 'pervert' are non-existent.

Since there was a recognition among the Greeks that a homosexual disposition was "natural" for some, the argument that the idea of inversion as over against perversion could not have been in Paul's mind when he spoke of homosexual practices as contrary to nature is an invalid argument. "Nature" in Romans 1:26-27 is something established by creation itself, a natural order of creation. The natural order is that God created man as male and female. This natural distinction, Paul argues at this place, must be maintained. The natural sexual proclivity of man is not for other men, but for women (Gen. 2:18-25).

Sometimes, in response to this point, gay advocates tell us that what Paul says could not apply to the invert (that person of a fixed or settled homosexual disposition) because Paul is speaking of those who leave the natural use of the body, and inverts never do that, only perverts do. The invert, we are told, has not turned from the natural heterosexual condition because he has never been heterosexual. So Paul's statement could not apply to him. This introduces the final argument we wish to consider in this response, a single positive argument which deserves some comment.