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Samuel Terrien, *Till the heart sings: a biblical theology of manhood and womanhood* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). A leading Old Testament scholar's charming account of gender and sexuality.

Dr. Harold Turner formerly professor of Primal Religions at Universities in Africa and Europe, is now director of the Gospel and Cultures Trust, Auckland, New Zealand. **p. 54**

The Source and Meaning of the translation 'Homosexuals' in Biblical Studies

James B. De Young

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This detailed and scholarly linguistic article is rewarding for those who persevere with it! The author seeks to show how the pro-homosexual lobby in our mainline church councils have been influenced by the arguments of John Boswell, R. Scroggs, William Petersen and others that Paul's use of malakai and arsenokoitai refers to male prostitutes, sodomites and men who make use of call boys; therefore scriptural injunctions have no relevance to homosexuality as now practised by Christians, lay and ordained. This study argues that Paul coined the term arsenokoitai, deriving it from the LXX of [Leviticus 20:13](#), and used it to refer to both homosexual orientation and practice.

Editor

INTRODUCTION

Coincident with the rise of the gay rights movement in recent years has been an increasing focus on the biblical statements regarding homosexuality or sodomy.¹ As part of this focus, the meaning of the term ἀρσενικοῖται (*arsenokoitai*, 'homosexuals'), used twice by the apostle Paul ([1 Cor. 6:9](#), [1 Tim. 1:10](#)), has received vigorous scrutiny.² This **p. 55** issue is particularly crucial to contemporary society since so much of modern ethics is shaped by

¹ For convenience sake, the term 'homosexual' is used to encompass both same-sex orientation and same-sex behaviour. The meaning of this term is one of the main considerations of this study.

² These times are different from just over a century ago. Then P. Fairbairn (*Pastoral Epistles* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874] 891) could write of ἀρσενικοῖται that it is a 'term for which fortunately our language has no proper equivalent'. Unknowingly he thereby touched upon the basis for the contemporary debate and study. The present writer endorses the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles on the basis of internal and external evidence (see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, [4th ed.; Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 1990] 621–649, for an extensive discussion and citation of supporters of the Pauline authorship).

biblical statements. More particularly, the concern over gay rights and the place of gays or homosexuals in the church and in society requires the resolution of biblical interpretation.

This study of historical, linguistic, and literary matters will survey and evaluate recent proposals for the meaning of *arsenokoitai* and present evidence to point to a resolution. Several writers and their positions represent the modern debate on this word. Three authors, Bailey, Boswell, and Scroggs, have provoked considerable discussion and significantly encouraged the wider acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle in society, in the church, and in the ministry.³

I. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF 'HOMOSEXUALS' J. BOSWELL

The most influential study of *arsenokoitai* among contemporary authors is that of John Boswell.⁴ Whereas the usual translation⁵ of this term gives it either explicitly or implicitly an active sense, Boswell gives it a passive sense.

In an extended discussion of the term (341–53), he cites 'linguistic evidence and common sense' to support his conclusion that the word means 'male sexual agents, i.e. active male prostitutes'. His argument is that the *arseno-* part of the word is adjectival, not the object of the *koitai* which refers to base sexual activity. Hence the term, according to Boswell, designates a male sexual person or male prostitute. He acknowledges, however, that most interpret the composite term as active, meaning 'those who sleep with, make their bed with, men'. Boswell argues that in some compounds, such as παιδομαθής (*paidomathēs*, 'child learner'), the *paido-* is the subject of *manthanō*, and in others, such as παιδοπόρος (*paidoporos*, 'through which a child passes'), the *paido-* is neither subject nor object but simply a modifier without verbal significance. His point is that each compound must p. 56 be individually analysed for its meaning. More directly, he maintains that compounds with the attic form *arreno-* employ it objectively while those with the Hellenistic *arseno-* use it as an adjective (343). Yet he admits exceptions to this distinction regarding *arreno-*.

Boswell next appeals to the Latin of the time, namely *drauci* or *exoleti*. These were male prostitutes having men or women as their objects. The Greek *arsenokoitai* is the equivalent of the Latin *drauci*; the corresponding passive would be παρακοῖται (*parakoitai*, 'one who lies beside'), Boswell affirms. He claims that *arsenokoitai* was the 'most explicit word available to Paul for a male prostitute', since by Paul's time the Attic words πόρνος (*pornos*, 'fornicator') and πορνεύων (*porneuōn*, 'one committing

³ For example, see Scroggs' (see n. 14 below) influence on M. Olson, 'Untangling the Web', *The Other Side* (April 1984): 24–29. For a study suggesting a further prohibition of homosexuality in the OT, see A. Phillips, 'Uncovering the Father's Skirt', *VT* 30/1 (January 1980) 38–43. For a bibliography of other sources dealing with ἀρσενικοῖται see the *Wilson's Disc Religion Indexes* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1987).

⁴ J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University Press, 1980).

⁵ Several translations of [1 Tim 1:10](#) are: KJV, 'them that defile themselves with mankind'; ASV, 'abusers of themselves with men'; NASB, 'homosexuals'; RSV, NKJV, NRSV, 'sodomites'; NEB, NIV, 'perverts'; GNB, 'sexual perverts'. In [1 Cor. 6:9](#) these occur: KJV, 'abusers of themselves with mankind'; ASV, 'abusers of themselves with men'; NASB, RSV, 'homosexuals'; NKJV, 'sodomites'; NEB, 'homosexual perversion'. The RSV and NEB derive their translation from two Greek words, μαλακοί and ἀρσενικοῖται which GNB has as 'homosexual perverts'. NRSV has the two words as 'male prostitutes' in the text, and 'sodomites' in the footnote. The active idea predominates among the commentators as well; it is the primary assumption.

fornication'), found also in the LXX, had been adopted 'to refer to men who resorted to female prostitutes or simply committed fornication'.⁶

In the absence of the term from pagan writers such as Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch, and from the Jewish writers Philo and Josephus, Boswell finds even more convincing evidence for his affirmation that *arsenokoitai* 'did not connote "homosexual" or even "sodomite" in the time of Paul' (346).⁷ He also demonstrates its absence in Pseudo-Lucian, Sextus Empiricus, and Libanius. He subsequently finds it lacking in 'all discussions of homosexual relations' (346)⁸ among Christian sources in Greek, including the *Didache*, Tatian, Justin Martyr, Eusebius,⁹ Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom. Chrysostom is singled out for his omission as 'final proof' that the word could not mean homosexuality.¹⁰

Boswell next appeals to the omission of the texts of 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy from discussions of homosexuality among Latin p. 57 church fathers (348).¹¹ Cited are Tertullian, Arnobius, Lactantius, and Augustine. The last named uses 'circumlocutions'. Other Latin writers include Ausonius, Cyprian, and Minucius Felix. The term is also lacking in state and in church legislation. By the sixth century the term became confused and was applied to a variety of sexual activities from child molesting to anal intercourse between a husband and wife (353).

Having surveyed the sources, Boswell concludes,

There is no reason to believe that either ἀρσενικοῖται (*arsenokoitai*) or μαλακοί connoted homosexuality in the time of Paul or for centuries thereafter, and every reason to suppose that, whatever they came to mean, they were not determinative of Christian opinion on the morality of homosexual acts (353, transliteration added).

It is clear throughout that Boswell defines *arsenokoitai* to refer to male prostitutes. He even goes so far as to conclude that Paul would probably not disapprove of 'gay

⁶ Boswell, *Christianity* 344. Yet this was not a word 'available to Paul for a male prostitute', for it does not occur at all in any literature prior to Paul (as a search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* using IBYCUS confirms). If Paul coined the term, it would have no prior history, and all such discussion about its lack of usage in contemporary non-Christian and Christian literature is meaningless.

⁷ Again this would be expected if Paul coined the word.

⁸ The key phrase here apparently is 'discussions', for Boswell admits later (350 n. 42) that it occurs in quotes of Paul but there is no discussion in the context. Hence the implication is that we cannot tell what these writers (Polycarp *To the Philippians* 5:3; Theophilus *Ad Autolycum* 1.2, 2.14; Nilus *Epistularum libri quattuor* 2.282; Cyril of Alexandria *Homiliae diversae* 14; *Sybilline Oracle* 2.13) meant. Yet Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the Apostle and died about A.D. 155, argues in the context that young men should be pure. He uses only the three terms πόρνοι, μαλακοί, and ἀρσενικοῖται from Paul's list. This at least makes Boswell's use of 'all' subjective. Apparently Clement of Alexandria *Paedagogus* 3.11; *Stromata* 3.18 also belong here.

⁹ Yet Eusebius uses it in *Demonstratiois evangelicae* 1.

¹⁰ Either Boswell is misrepresenting the facts about Chrysostom's use of ἀρσενικοῖται and its forms (about twenty) in the vice lists of [1 Corinthians 6](#) or [1 Timothy 1](#), or he is begging the question by denying that the word can mean homosexual when Chrysostom uses it. Yet the meaning of ἀρσενικοῖται is the goal of his and our study, whether in the lists or other discussions. Boswell later admits (351) that Chrysostom uses the almost identical form ἀρσενικοῖτος in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. Although Boswell suggests that the passage is strange, it may be that Paul is seeking to make a refinement in ἀρσενικοῖται.

¹¹ Apparently Jerome is a significant omission here, since he renders ἀρσενικοῖται as *masculorum concubitores*, corresponding 'almost exactly to the Greek' (348, n. 36).

inclination', 'gay relationships', 'enduring love between persons of the same gender', or 'same-sex eroticism' (112, 116–17).

II. REACTIONS TO THE NEW INTERPRETATIONS D. WRIGHT

In more recent years the positions of Bailey, Boswell, and Scroggs have come under closer scrutiny.¹² Perhaps the most critical evaluation of Boswell's view is that by David Wright. In his thorough article, Wright points out several shortcomings of Boswell's treatment of *arsenokoitai*.¹³ He faults Boswell for failing to cite, or citing inaccurately, all the references to [Lev. 18:22](#) and [20:13](#) in the church fathers, such as Eusebius, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen (127–28). Boswell has not considered seriously enough the possibility that the term derives either its form or its meaning from the Leviticus passages (129). This is significant, for if the term is so derived, it clearly refutes Boswell's claim that the first half of the word (*arseno-*) denotes not the object but the gender of the second half (*-koitai*). The LXX must mean 'a male who sleeps with a male', making *arseno-* the object.

Wright also faults Boswell's claims regarding linguistic features of the term, including suggested parallels (129). Though Boswell claims that compounds with *arseno-* employ it objectively and those with *arreno-* employ it as an adjective, Wright believes that the difference between the two is merely one of dialectical diversity: 'No semantic import attaches to the difference between the two forms' (131). Wright believes [p.58](#) that in most compounds in which the second half is a verb or has a verbal force, the first half denotes its object and where 'the second part is substantival, the first half denotes its gender' (132).¹⁴

It is with Boswell's treatment of the early church fathers that Wright takes special issue, because the former has failed to cite all the sources. For example, Aristides' Apology (c. A.D. 138) probably uses ἀρρενομανεῖς (*arrenomaneis*), ἀνδροβάτην (*androbātē*, and ἀρσενοκοιτίας (*arsenokoitias*) all with the same basic meaning of male homosexuality (133, contrary to Boswell's discussion. Boswell fails to cite Hippolytus (*Refut. Oran. Haer.* 5:26:22–23) and improperly cites Eusebius and the Syriac writer Bardesanes. The latter uses Syriac terms that are identical to the Syriac of [1 Cor. 6:9](#) and [1 Tim. 1:10](#) (133–34).¹⁵

Next Wright shows how the early church fathers use *arsenokoitai* in parallel with παιδοφθορία (*paidophthoria*) referring to male homosexuality with teenagers, the dominant form of male homosexuality among the Greeks (134). Sometimes this parallelism occurs in the threefold listings of μοιχεία (*moicheia*, 'adultery'), πορνεία (*porneia*, 'fornication'), and *paidophthoria*, with *arsenokoitai* replacing *paidophthoria* (136). Clement of Alexandria in *Protr.* 10:108:5 cites the second table of the Ten Commandments as 'You shall not kill', οὐ μοιχεύεις (*ou moicheuseis*, 'you shall not commit adultery'), οὐ παιδοφθορήσεις (*ou paidophthorēseis*, 'you shall not practise homosexuality with boys'), 'you shall not steal ... (150 n. 43, transliteration and translation added).

¹² On Boswell's treatment of [Rom. 1:26–27](#), the article by R. B. Hays, 'Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1', *JRE* 14/1 (Spring 1986): 184–215, is an excellent critique.

¹³ D. F. Wright, 'Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ ([1 Cor. 6:9](#), [1 Tim. 1:10](#))', *VC* 38 (1984): 125–53.

¹⁴ In an unpublished paper, Henry Mendell, 'ΑΙΙΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ: Boswell on Paul', effectively refutes Boswell's claims regarding the philology of ἀρσενοκοῖται. He finds the meaning to be general, 'a male who has sex with a male' (4–11). The paper is available from the writer of this essay.

¹⁵ Wright's end notes (148–49) list additional sources in the church fathers.

Another occurrence of ἀρσενικοιτεῖν (*arsenokoitein*, 'commit homosexuality') exists in the *Sibylline Oracles* (2:71–73). It may be, Wright observes, that the word was coined by a Jewish pre-Christian writer in a Hellenistic setting represented by *Or. Sib.*, book 2 (137–38).

Wright also discusses uses of *arsenokoitai* in Rhetorius (6th century) who drew upon the first century A.D. writer Teueer, in Macarius (4th–5th cent.), and in John the Faster (d. 595) (139–40). The last in particular bears the idea of homosexual intercourse, contrary to Boswell.

Wright next replies to Boswell's contention that the term would not be absent 'from so much literature about homosexuality if that is what it denoted' (140–41). Wright points out that it should not be expected in writers prior to the first century A.D. since it did not exist before then, that the Greeks used dozens of words and phrases to refer to homosexuality, that some sources (e.g., *Didache*) show no acquaintance with Paul's letters or deliberately avoid citing Scripture, and that Boswell neglects citing several church fathers (140–41).¹⁶ p. 59

Boswell's treatment of Chrysostom in particular draws Wright's attention (140–44). Boswell conspicuously misrepresents the witness of Chrysostom, omitting references and asserting what is patently untrue. Chrysostom gives a long uncompromising and clear indictment of homosexuality in his homily on [Rom. 1:26](#). Boswell has exaggerated Chrysostom's infrequent use of the term. Wright observes that Boswell has 'signally failed to demonstrate any use of ἀρσενικοῖτης (*arsenokoités*) etc. in which it patently does not denote male homosexual activity' (144, transliteration added). It is infrequent because of its relatively technical nature and the availability of such a term as *paidophthoria* that more clearly specified the prevailing form of male homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁷

Wright also surveys the Latin, Syriac, and Coptic translations of [1 Tim. 1:10](#) and [1 Cor. 6:9](#). All three render *arsenokoitai* with words that reflect the meaning 'homosexual', i.e., they understand *arseno-* as the object of the second half of the word (144–45). None of these primary versions supports Boswell's limited conclusion based on them.

Wright concludes his discussion with a few observations about the catalogues of vices as a literary form. He believes that such lists developed in late Judaism as Hellenistic Jews wrote in clear condemnation of homosexuality in the Greek world. This paralleled the increased concern on the part of moral philosophers over homosexual indulgence. The term came into being under the influence of the LXX (145) so that writers spoke 'generally of male activity with males rather than specifically categorized male sexual engagement with παῖδες (*paides*)' (146, transliteration added). If *arsenokoitia* and *paidophthoria* were interchangeable, it is because the former encompassed the latter (146).

In summary, Wright seeks to show that *arsenokoitai* is a broad term meaning homosexuality and arises within Judaism. The views of Boswell, Scroggs and others who limit the term to 'active male prostitutes' or pederasty are without significant support from linguistic and historical studies.

¹⁶ We also have noticed the same tendency by Boswell to fail to cite all the references to Sodom and sodomy in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. See J. B. De Young, 'A Critique of Prohomosexual Interpretations of the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha', *BSac* 147/588 (1990): 437–53.

¹⁷ In light of the claim made by Boswell that the infrequency of ἀρσενικοῖται points to a meaning lacking homosexual significance, Wright asks pertinently 'why neither Plato nor Josephus use παιδοφθορία nor Josephus παιδεραστία, and why ... Clement did not use the latter and Chrysostom the former' (152 n. 71). In a more recent article, 'Homosexuality: The Relevance of the Bible', *EvQ* 61 (1989): 291–300, Wright reiterates these same points. He believes the term is general and was 'adopted or fashioned' from Leviticus (298). Paul shows a 'remarkable originality' in extending the OT ethic to the church (300).

SUPPORT FOR THE PAULINE ORIGIN OF ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ

Some final questions remain to be answered regarding the source of Paul's term. As Mendell points out, anyone wishing to explain Paul's meaning must answer three questions.¹⁸ Where does he get the word? Why does he use such an arcane word in speaking to his P. 60 audience? If the word is ambiguous, as Boswell affirms, how can he expect to be understood?

It is a reasonable position that Paul coined the term based on the juxtaposition of the two words *arsenos* and *koitén* in the LXX of [Lev. 20:13](#) (cf. [18:22](#)), though absolute proof of this is impossible. It may be suggested that the criteria of style, practice, familiarity with the LXX, and context, make this a highly plausible conclusion, however.

Paul has the practice of coining terms, it appears. For example, in [1 Tim. 1:3](#) and [6:3](#), Paul used a term he had probably originated. The word *ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω* (*heterodidaskaleō*, 'to teach a different doctrine') does not occur before Paul and only afterward in Ignatius to Polycarp [3:1](#).¹⁹ Hence in the scope of eight verses Paul has possibly coined two terms, though one of them he had used earlier in [1 Cor. 6:9](#).

In general, statistics show that Paul probably coined many terms. There are 179 words found in Paul and nowhere else in pre-Christian Greek literature. Of these, 89 occur only one time. Other statistics support the theory that Paul had a creativity in choosing vocabulary.²⁰

In addition, Paul displayed considerable dependence upon the LXX. He usually quoted from the LXX rather than the Hebrew of the OT when he quoted the OT. Out of 93 quotations of the OT classified by Ellis, Paul used the LXX 14 times, but only 4 times did he quote the Hebrew.²¹ Obviously Paul was familiar with and used the LXX.

More particularly, the NT frequently uses the portion of [Leviticus 18–20](#). The structure and content of these chapters mark them as special. Often identified as the 'code of holiness', these chapters (unlike the remainder of Leviticus) are universal in their scope, much the same as the Ten Commandments of [Exodus 20](#) and [Deuteronomy 5](#). The Jews held [Leviticus 19](#) to be a kind of summary of the Torah, a central chapter in the Pentateuch. This respect carried over to the writers of the NT where chapters [18–20](#) are

¹⁸ Mendell, 'ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ' 20.

¹⁹ Paul also uses rare terms found elsewhere outside the NT only. One such term is *ἀνδραποδιστᾶς* which occurs in [1 Tim. 1:10](#) and is important to the meaning of *ἀρσενοκοῖται*. Scroggs defines the former term as 'those who steal boys for sexual purposes' and uses it to define the preceding *ἀρσενοκοῖται* as 'pederasts'. The word occurs in many pagan writers (e.g., Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Polybius, Dio Chrysostom). In Philo (*Special Laws* 4.13) it is used generally of a kidnapper who steals people to reduce them to slavery. It appears that Scroggs is again too narrow in his definition and fails to appreciate the structure and OT background of the list of vices of [1 Tim. 1:9–10](#).

²⁰ For example, there are 433 words used only in both secular Greek and Paul. Of these 203 occur but once in Paul. More interestingly, 175 words occur only in both the LXX and Paul. Of these 31 occur but once in Paul. Of this last group 5 of the 31 are combinations of two words similar in pattern to that of *ἀρσενοκοῖται*. See R. Morgenthaler, *Statistik Des Neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (1973 rpt.; Zurich: Gotthelf-Verlag, n.d.) 175–80. The numbers are our calculations.

²¹ E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the OT* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957) 150–52. Some of the remainder of Paul's quotations are in agreement with both the LXX and Hebrew (19 times), and in others he agrees with neither.

widely used. They are cited by Christ, Paul, Peter, p. 61 and James.²² ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ is from [Lev. 19:18](#). When Paul alludes to [19:19](#) in [2 Cor. 6:14](#) to illustrate the ban on unequal yoking, he coins a word ἑτεροζυγοῦντες (heterozygountes, ‘being unequally yoked’) that is found nowhere before him. Yet the adjective form ἑτεροζύγω (heterozygō, ‘unequally yoked’) occurs in [19:19](#). The LXX probably suggested the coinage to Paul.

Most importantly, both of the contexts where *arsenokoitai* appears suggest that Paul was thinking of the Levitical ‘code of holiness’.²³ [First Corinthians 5](#) has many allusions to [Leviticus 18–20](#). The theme is moral separation, as it is in Leviticus. Topics include distinction from the Gentiles ([5:1](#); cf. [6:1–6](#); [Lev. 18:3](#), [24–30](#); [20:23](#)) and future inheritance (κληρονομέω [klēronomeō, ‘I inherit’], [6:9](#), [10](#); [Lev. 20:23–24](#)). The law of loving your neighbour ([Lev. 19:18](#)) is reflected in [6:8](#). Of the ten vices in [1 Cor. 6:9–10](#), only one (drunkards) is not found in [Leviticus 18–20](#). It is feasible, then, that both *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* come from [Leviticus 20:13](#) and point to the passive and the active same-sex roles. [Leviticus 20:13](#) said that both persons were to be put to death (the penalty is not found in [18:22](#)). The Corinthian list of vices may be a summation of [Lev. 20:23–24](#) (cf. [18:29–30](#)).

The same observations apply to [1 Tim. 1:10](#). In the context Paul begins with perversions of teaching regarding the Mosaic Law (vv. [3–8](#)), moves to legislation in general (vv. [9–10](#)), and ends with the gospel (v. [11](#)). With the Law of Moses so dominant, it is not surprising that the list of specific vices corresponds in order to the fifth through the ninth of the Ten Commandments. Since the list uses both single terms and doublets to refer to the Ten Commandments, it is more probable that ἀνδραποδισταῖς (*andrapodistais*, ‘slave-dealers’) goes with the following ‘thieves’ rather than with the preceding *arsenokoitai*. This militates against Scrogg’s narrow sexual definition (‘slavedealers who procure boys as prostitutes’, 120) of the term. Hence *pornois* and *arsenokoitai* represent the sixth commandment.

The preceding discussion justifies the claim that Paul coined the word in question. No one else in Hellenistic Judaism used the term before Paul.

Two questions still remain. Why did Paul coin such a term? It may be suggested that he sought to demonstrate the relation of believers to the Law of Moses, in particular to show that the universal standards of the Law (derived from [Exodus 20](#) and [Leviticus 18–20](#)) were still valid. Paul assumed his readers’ acquaintance with Judaism: note references to ‘Satan’ ([1 Cor. 5:5](#)), the ‘day of the Lord’ ([1 Cor. 5:5](#)), ‘leaven’ and ‘unleaven’ ([5:6–8](#)), ‘Passover’ ([5:7](#)), and judging angels ([6:3](#)). He quoted [Deut. 17:7](#) in [5:13](#). Since [Leviticus 18–20](#) became central to the Day of Atonement, it was natural for Paul to refer to this section of Leviticus (cf. p. 62 chaps. [16](#) and [23](#)). The topic of the believer’s relationship to the Law or law is the main point in [1 Timothy 1](#).

Finally, how could Paul expect his Greek readers to understand the term? Compounds involving *arseno-* and *arreno-* and *koitē* abounded. The Greeks were adept at forming compounded Greek words.²⁴ Therefore Paul coined a word that brought quick recognition.

²² Specific citations are available in J. B. De Young, ‘The Old Testament Witness to Homosexuality: A Critical Assessment of the Prohomosexual Interpretation of the OT’ (an unpublished paper read at the NW section, Evangelical Theological Society, Portland, Oregon, May 4, 1985) 22–23.

²³ Mendell, ‘ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ’ 21–24.

²⁴ Ibid., 21, 25–28.

The word is general, reflecting the passage in [Lev. 20:13](#). Paul did not use ἀνδροκοίτης (*androkoitēs*, ‘male having sex with a male’), which would not have suggested a reference to pederasty. His term expressed gender but not gender and maturity; he condemned ‘males who lie with males of any age’.²⁵ It agrees with the threefold use of ἄρσεν (arsen, ‘male’) in [Rom. 25:1](#):27 where Paul condemns same-sex activity.

This theory also explains why the word did not catch on with the secular world after Paul. The Gentiles did not appreciate the biblical context of OT moral legislation. Paul was ahead of and contrary to his time. Perhaps for the same reason ‘sodomists’ and ‘sodomy’ are fading from general secular usage today.

CONCLUSION

It seems quite likely that Paul himself coined a new term which he virtually derived from the LXX of [Lev. 20:13](#). No other current explanation is as practical as this. If this be true, there are significant consequences, assuming that Paul wrote prescriptively. Obviously he viewed the moral law (derived from [Leviticus 18–20](#); [Exodus 20](#)) as authoritative for his Christian audience. Since he and his readers in Corinth and Ephesus knew also about same-sex orientation or condition, sufficient reason exists to apply his term to those today who are inverts or homosexuals in orientation.²⁶ English translations are justified in their use of words such as ‘homosexuals’ or ‘sodomists’. Besides, these terms should not be limited to acts or behaviour. Just as an adulterous orientation or condition is wrong, so is a homosexual one.²⁷

In addition, it appears that lexicons and dictionaries (e.g., BAGD, *TWNT*, *NIDNTT*, *EDNT*) are too narrow in limiting, explicitly or implicitly, the term to male sexual activity with men or boys.

However, since he referred to behaviour in his lists in [1 Corinthians 6](#) and [1 Timothy 1](#), he excluded from the kingdom of God all those who engage in same-sex behaviour, including forms of pederasty, prostitution, or ‘permanent mutuality’. The term *malakoi* used with *arsenokoitai* probably refers to the passive agent in same-sex activity and comes under similar condemnation. p. 63

Other applications follow from the contexts involved. First, homosexual behaviour is cause for church discipline in light of the context of [1 Corinthians 5–6](#). Certain religious bodies that approve a homosexual lifestyle have rejected scriptural authority. In addition, homosexual orientation should be a concern for church counsel and exhortation with a view toward moulding a heterosexual orientation.

Second, homosexual behaviour is a proper focus and concern for legislation in society and of the sanction of law, according to the context of [1 Tim. 1:8–11](#). This suggests that ‘gay rights’ is a misnomer. The movement has no legitimate claim to protection by the law.

²⁵ Ibid., 6 n. 14. Ἀνδροκοίτης and its cognate verb are much less frequent (c. 13 occurrences in secular papyri ranging from 30 B.C. to A.D. 140 [most before Paul] and apparently a few others [3?] in the church fathers). There are c. 50 occurrences of ἀρσενικοῖται, apparently all post-Pauline.

²⁶ One may cite additional reasons for including ‘adult-adult mutuality’ as well as orientation or condition in Paul’s term, as the context and wording of [Rom. 1:26–27](#) make clear. See De Young, ‘Nature’, 439–40.

²⁷ It may be that one should distinguish between sexual feelings (amoral) and sexual lust or desire (immoral).

In the Case of John Boswell

Richard John Neuhaus

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This readable and lucid critique of John Boswell's book, Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality (1989) shows that despite wide scholarly refutation of Boswell's arguments, his thesis that the early church countenanced homosexual activity continues to have an extraordinary influence on the councils and statements of many churches today. Neuhaus's exposure will help church leaders confronted with the arguments that Paul's reference to homosexual practice has no relevance to present-day practice, to recognize the source of such false assumptions.

Editor

Until a few years ago there was little need to defend the assertion that Christianity has, in a clear and sustained manner, always taught that homosexual acts are morally wrong. That has now changed, and the change can be dated from 1980, the publication of John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press). The influence of that book is truly remarkable; it has become a kind of sacred text for those who want to morally legitimize the homosexual movement. In certain circles, any allusion to what the Bible or Christian tradition say about homosexuality is likely to be met with, 'Yes, but Boswell says ...'

IMPACT OF BOSWELL'S THESIS

Boswell, a professor of history at Yale, says that in the early Church there were few sanctions against homosexuality. 'Intolerance' of gays became characteristic of Christianity during the high middle ages when the Church tried to assert greater control over the personal lives of the faithful. In time, theologians such as [P. 65](#) Thomas Aquinas would provide a theological rationale for the prohibition of homosexual acts, and canon lawyers would give the prohibition force in ecclesiastical discipline. That, Boswell says, is the unhappy legacy that is still with us in the attitudes and laws prevalent in Western societies.

The Boswell book was at first met with widespread acclaim. The reviewer in the *New York Times* said Boswell 'restores one's faith in scholarship as the union of erudition, analysis, and moral vision. I would not hesitate to call his book revolutionary, for it tells of things heretofore unimagined and sets a standard of excellence that one would have thought impossible in the treatment of an issue so large, uncharted, and vexed.' The next year Boswell won the American Book Award for History. Since then the book has become a staple in homosexual literature.