

The New Testament's References to Same-Sex Sex in their Greco-Roman Cultural and
Historical Context

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I

Introduction:

My project is a collection, assessment, and examination of ancient descriptions of, and attitudes toward same-sex behavior. By establishing a broad Greco-Roman cultural setting, I will examine Paul's references to same-sex behavior.¹ This will bring forward commonalities and differences. The goal is to paint an accurate picture of the ancient perceptions of same-sex behaviors and those in the New Testament.

I will demonstrate that the ancient perceptions of same-sex behaviors and those in the New Testament solely rely on the unjust use of another body for sexual satisfaction. The display in the contrasting power dynamic and the reported sexual relations were governed by hierarchical contrast pertaining to social status (class standing) and sexual hierarchy. Following that, I will demonstrate how *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos* have been mistranslated in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 to mean “homosexual” by analyzing its uses in other ancient literature. *Arsenokoitēs* means some sort of sexual exploitation (such as prostitution) and *malakos* means something that is soft/feminine. Obviously, the implications of such an examination might be used in modern-day debates over what Scripture has to say about sexuality today. Those debates are often undertaken in ignorance about the biblical texts and how they might have been read by their earliest audiences.

Defining terms:

¹ I'll refer to “Paul” as the author of these passages, as is traditional. However, disputing authorship, which is common for 1 Timothy especially, is not within the scope of this paper. Even if he was not the author, it was common for a student to attribute their work to their teacher which is a common held theory in the case of 1 Timothy.

Throughout this paper, I will be referring to any modern terms for referring to one's sexual orientation² (any sort of LGB+³ label, homosexual/heterosexual) only for concepts in today's modern Western context.⁴ Predominantly, I will not be using those terms often since I am focusing on the Greco-Roman context and not a modern context. In the early first century historical time period, there were no Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic (etc.) words for homosexuality (a word that was first coined in the early 19th century). Thus, I avoid anachronistic language by referring to sexual intercourse/sexual behavior among people of the same sex as "same-sex sex" or "same-sex behavior." In doing so, I will take the focus off of the orientation in sexuality (as it is seen in most Western cultures today) and put the focus on the sexual act itself (how same-sex sex was seen in the Greco-Roman period).

I define one's biological sex as the anatomical reproductive organs that make someone male or female. I will be referring to gender as how that sex is expressed within a given culture. As a cautionary note, one's gender does not necessarily have to align with their sex and vice-versa. Often, it was the case in Greco-Roman contexts that a male's fear was to not be "manly" enough and therefore he would be labeled as a feminine (even though his genitalia was that expected of males); his sex was male, but his society labeled his gender as feminine. On the contrary, females (with the corresponding genitalia) could be labeled "manly" if they acted in

² "Had they [Greco-Romans] known the modern distinction between different sexual orientations, they might have considered a bisexual identity as normal (an assumption that does not justify categorizing the ancient Greeks as 'bisexuals')." Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, ed. Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998), 129.

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual. The "+" is to ensure that I am being inclusive of all identities, including, but not limited to: transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual.

⁴ One's sexual orientation in relation to the gender that they are attracted to either in the place of an egalitarian same-sex relationship as reflecting one's orientation, or if they are not in a relationship.

bold or decisive ways, ways thought to be proper for men, which was the case for Thecla by later interpreters.⁵

To sum up my point: regardless of biological sex (reproductive organs), sex between two males was socially acceptable as long as the prestigious male took the masculine role by penetrating the feminine-typed male (an explanation of the culturally-understood feminine role and masculine role in sex will be explained in the third section).

Rationale for Males (Rather than Females) Experience of Same-Sex Sex:

Even though, as a feminist, I would love to devote the majority of this paper to talking about women or sex between two women, it is unreflective of the patriarchal Greco-Roman culture to do so. Correspondingly, ancient women's experiences are under-reported, broadly. Further, sex between two women garnered far less attention than sex between two men. There are, proportionally, significantly fewer stories or documentation about females engaging in same-sex sexual behavior, either because either it happened less frequently or because males were not interested in it enough to write about it.⁶ There are few stories about sex between two women and, in those stories, the women who would take the active role in sex are hyper-masculinized.⁷ It was believed that they had really long clitoris in order to take the penetrative role in sex.⁸

All surviving stories about females sexual activity (mostly coming from Classical Athens) were written by males.⁹ However, if the women were not hyper-masculinized, then they

⁵ Thecla (female) is a follower of Paul who displays "manly" characteristics such as speaking in public. Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd C. Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (London: T&T Clark International, 2009), 6.

⁶ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 43.

⁷ e.g. Iphis, *Babyloniaca* of Iamblichus

⁸ Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 98.

⁹ K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 171.

were seen as joining of two equals outside of sexual roles, which raised moral concern.¹⁰ Sex between two females, according to Martti Nissinen, “was worse than the passive role of a man, which brought shame only upon the individual, while the active role of a woman was an attack on manliness itself, threatening to lower its status and undermine the male privilege of penetration.”¹¹

Rationale for New Testament Cultural Focus

For the sake of space and time, this project could not include a full in-depth study of both Testaments. I decided to direct my attention on the New Testament references because of the more available and plentiful documentation from the Greco-Roman culture, as opposed to the Ancient Near East culture. Of course, the New Testament passages do not exist in isolation from the Old Testament passages. Therefore, my study will give some attention to how Old Testament texts are foundational to shaping the early views in Hebrew Scriptures (and, therefore, impacting Christian) views of same-sex behavior. That behavior was not permitted in Jewish society (Lev 18:22; 20:13). Paul, for the most part, accepted Jewish practices and re-applied and explained them in a Gentile context. His arguments must make sense for his Greco-Roman audience, but there is much evidence that his letters reflect his Jewish ethics.

Just because same-sex sex was common in broader Greco-Roman culture does not mean that it was seen as acceptable. Especially, if Paul sees this particular type of behavior (given the power domination) as accepted, despite its being abusive in his view, he would have more reason to speak out about it. As my main point of interest, when he mentions same-sex activity, it is from the perspective of a powerless minority socio-religious group criticizing the more powerful

¹⁰ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 79.

¹¹ Ibid.

majority group's practices and Paul warns them to obtain from it in order to keep their Jewish identity¹² and not to assimilate to those who have destroyed so much of their culture.

In comparison to other topics,¹³ Paul hardly mentions same-sex sex, even though it was widely practiced. That means that either: 1) it was not among his most serious concerns; or 2) that his audience agreed with him and were not participating in same-sex sex that much (or some combination of the two).

Brief OT overview of same-sex behavior:

Genesis 19:1-29 recounts the story of two angels visiting the wicked city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham brought the angels to Lot's house by following the social customs. This hospitality, compelled people to welcome visitors into their home. When the men showed up at Lot's house, they said either, "Bring them out to us, so that we may **know** them" (Gen 19:5, NRSV; bold added) or as the NIV says, "... so that we can have **sex** with them." The reason for the different translations is because the homographic word (יָדָע) can mean "to know" or "know a person carnally, of sexual intercourse."¹⁴ Either way, their instructions are never stated. Michael Carden stated that, "I have yet to find evidence that, until the early 1990s, any biblical scholar had ever publicly questioned the homophobic interpretation, which is still promoted by religious conservatives."¹⁵ Yes, rape happens in this story, but this story teaches a lesson of cruelty and inhospitality, as evident by the ending when the angels blind the men and destroy the city. There are twenty other instances in the Bible where the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is used to reference God's destruction, and none of those passages claim that the destruction was

¹² Same-sex sex meant sex without the implications of child bearing. The ancient Jewish correlation between sexuality and the command from God to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28) rather than pleasure alone demonstrates the biblical understanding of sexual "norms".

¹³ e.g. salvation, righteousness, marriage, etc.

¹⁴ Parallel Plus by TheBible.org. Accessed March 17, 2019. <https://thebible.org/gt/index>.

¹⁵ Michael Carden, *Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth* (London: Routledge, 2004), 7.

because of the erotic same-sex rape;¹⁶ for example, Ezekiel 16:49-50 states that “This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it” (NRSV).

It is clear that in this case of Sodom and Gomorrah, the “abomination” was the rape and inhospitality. I want to highlight that these men were not only motivated by their desires to penetrate other males. Had it been so, Lot would not have offered his daughters instead.¹⁷ As a point of interest: we do not follow the stringent ancient social norms of hospitality to the same extent which in this case expected a person to protect his guest at all cost, apparently even to the point of offering your own daughters up to be raped instead. Today, such a man will be prosecuted for sex trafficking.

Two other verses of importance are Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. The former reads, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:13 states that “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.”

Leviticus has two sets of ancient laws: the Priestly Code (1-16) and the Holiness Code (17-26).¹⁸ The Priestly Code refers to laws that are only applicable to priests while the Holiness Code refers to laws that all of Israel must follow.¹⁹ In addition to the Holiness Codes clearly the canonical totality of Leviticus speaks of an ideal utopian society very different than our modern

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 29, 32:32-38; Judges 19; Isaiah 1:21, 23, 17; 3:8-9; 13:19; Jeremiah 23, 49, 50; Lamentations 4:6; Amos 2, 4; Zephaniah 2; Matthew 10:14-15, 11:12-24 ; Luke 10:10-12, 17:26-30

¹⁷ See also, Judges 19.

¹⁸ Thomas J. King, *Leviticus: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), 36-38.

¹⁹ Stackert, Jeffrey. "Priestly/Holiness Codes." *Priestly/Holiness Codes - Biblical Studies - Oxford Bibliographies*. August 26, 2013. Accessed March 17, 2019. <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0182.xml>.

Western context and to blindly equate the two without understanding their role in its Ancient Near Eastern context is anachronistic and problematic. Some of these laws include restrictions like the following: not wearing clothing made of two kinds of fabric (19:19), women are not allowed to be touched on their period and for the seven days following until she rendered as “clean”(15:19), not eating shellfish (11:10), shrimp (11:10), nor pork (11:6). Hence, “sleeping with a man as one would with a woman,” was viewed as a “violation against nature and is, likely, associated with the abominations of the Canaanites.”²⁰ The purpose of what seems like unexpected laws and tight regulations laws in our modern Western understanding was to keep the Hebrew people pure and segregated from the Canaanites (those who worshiped idols and fertility cults) so that the they would be seen as holy people accomplishing God’s mission.²¹

²⁰ King, *Leviticus*, 189

²¹ Genesis 12:1-3

II New Testament Verses Referencing Same-Sex Sexual Activity

Brief Exegetical Treatment of passage (in Biblical context)

Romans 1:26-27:

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. (NRSV)

The previous mentioned Levitical passages contain the last mention of same-sex behavior in the Old Testament. From the 42 books²² separating Leviticus from Romans same-sex sex is not brought up again until Paul speaks of it. It is significant to note that in the Gospels, Jesus neither mentioned anything resembling same-sex sex; it seemed that that issue was not relevant in his teachings. Paul's original audience of Romans 1:26-27 was to the Christian churches of Rome and, although it is never explicitly stated, the way he described those who settled for the unnatural, implies that he is referring to gentiles since his language reflects that of traditional Jewish understanding of non-Jews.

This is the only time Paul talks about women engaging in same-sex sex. This passage is significant because it is the longest discussion of same-sex behavior in the Bible. No other passage spends more than a verse talking about it and this passage spends two verses talking about this subject. However, "Out of the many things Paul could have highlighted in the pagan world, he has chosen same-sex erotic practices, not simply because Jews regarded [those]

²² In the Protestant canon

practice as a classic example of pagan vice, but more particularly because it corresponds in his view, to what humans in general have done in swapping God's truth for a lie."²³

Paul's main message in Romans 1:18-3:20 is about the universality of sin, including but not limited to worshipping false idols, and he describes the universal need for salvation. This section can be broken up as the following: 1:18-32: God's judgment on the Gentiles because of idolatry; 2:1-3:8: God's judgment on the Jews because of self-righteousness. 3:9-20: "On the basis of works, all people stand under sin and are justly condemned by God."²⁴

Paul claims that those who worshiped false idols, "God gave them up to degrading passions" (Rom 1:26). The basic idea of this passage argues if you exchange God for an idol, then God will exchange your "genuine humanness for a distorted version, which will do you no good."²⁵ In other words, "Changing the Creator to a creature leads to the altering of conventional orders, which is manifested in disordered sexual behaviors... The natural order is the divine order and to change the Creator to a creation means converting order to disorder, for example, exchanging 'natural intercourse' (*physikē khrēsis*) for 'unnatural' (*para physikē*)."²⁶ Paul could have chosen a number of behaviors in the pagan world to discuss, but it is likely that he chose this one because it aligns with his view that humans have swapped God's truth for a lie.²⁷ The Greek translation of this passage has led scholars to disagree on what he specifically meant. Some interpreted the relationship as temple prostitution and others have interpreted it to mean any same-sex sexual practice in general. However, "Scholars tend to agree... that Paul is writing

²³ Leander E. Keck. *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Volume #10* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 350

²⁴ Harrelson, Walter J. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.

²⁵ Keck, *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 351

²⁶ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 106

²⁷ Keck, *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 350

about... people he saw as heterosexuals going against their natural instincts and engaged in same-sex acts.”²⁸ All of Romans 1 leads up to a “therefore.” The next passage, Romans 2:1-5 is the punch line that immediately follows:

Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. You say, “We know that God’s judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth.” Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed (NRSV).

The term for natural and unnatural referred to their role in sex. Paul’s use of φυσικός (*phusikos*) is reflective of the philosophical language used by Stoics.²⁹ The proper use of something is its nature. Hence, it was not natural for a woman have brief sexual encounters with another women because it was not her “proper” use. However, it was “natural” for a male to take the active role in sex and for a female to take the passive role. If a male took a passive role in sex, it was considered “unnatural,” just like if a female took an active role in sex. Same-sex behavior challenged the active and passive role because it allowed for the inverse of those prescribed roles and, as Vines says, “This inversion of accepted gender rules combined with the non-procreative character of same-sex unions is why ancient writers called same-sex intercourse ‘unnatural.’”³⁰ “Natural” and “unnatural” were not synonyms for such modern western terms such as “straight” and “gay”, they were “boundary markers between what did and did not

²⁸ Hilton, Bruce. *Can Homophobia Be Cured?: Wrestling with Questions That Challenge the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1992. Print. 72

²⁹ This word is only used 3 times: Romans 1:26; 1:27; 2 Peter 2:12

³⁰ Vines, Matthew. *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-sex Relationships*. New York: Convergent Books, 2014. Print. 108

conform to customary gender roles in a patriarchal context.”³¹ It is also crucial to note that “dishonorable passions” here solely refers to impurity and not sinfulness,³² had it been the case, Paul would have used other wording.³³

Arguably, Paul is only referring to brief and short sexual relations. Paul does not even mention the words such as love, fidelity, monogamy or commitment; he only describes this love as being “lustful”. Obviously, Paul does not address customary same-sex relationships within a long-term, egalitarian, and committed relationship, let alone in a marriage as it did not reflect his Greco-Roman context.

Dale B. Martin argues that a natural desire (to have sex with those of the opposite sex than oneself) is taken to an unnatural extreme by using making an analogy to eating, because they were condemned in the same way. Gluttony was seen as contrary to nature “because they have indulged their desires to excess, thus losing control of them.”³⁴ Just as gluttony was too much eating (nature intends for them to be satisfied with a reasonably sized meal, but people who are gluttonous, over eat, often to the point where they are doing harm to themselves and therefore losing control), same-sex sex was too much sex: they both arose from a natural desire that was taken too far. Hence, “It was not a question of ‘disorientated desires’ but of legitimate desires that were allowed illegitimate freedoms.”³⁵ It is for that reason that Martin believes that *para physin* (which is often translated to unnatural/contrary to nature) more closely represents

³¹ Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 109

³² Impurity marks creation as unclean while sinfulness distorts holiness.

³³ This is also true of 1 Thessalonians 4:5.

³⁴ Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 57.

³⁵ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 58

“beyond nature”³⁶ or “in excess of what is natural.”³⁷ For ancient authors, Martin says, “[T]he actions could be ‘unnatural’ but still sprang from basically natural desires. This is why the ancients had no notion of ‘homosexual orientation’ or ‘homosexuals’; it was not a question of ‘disordered desires’ but of legitimate desires that were allowed illegitimate freedoms.”³⁸ In addition to the natural desire referring to too much sex, it also referred to taking the feminine role in sex (being penetrated often times in anal sex). Paul believed that sex was already for “those aflame with lust”³⁹ and that sex between two people of the same-sex was a further extreme of the corruption in sex itself.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers **malakoi**, **arsenokoitai**, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Many questions have been brought up around the words *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi* in this passage. Paul’s exact meanings for *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* are unclear (more so for the latter word). The NRSV translates those words to be “male prostitutes” and “sodomites.” The RSV combines the two Greek words into one word: “homosexuals.”⁴⁰ The NIV translates it as “men who have sex with other men.” Other translations include other variations of those two words. While *arsenokoitai* is harder to define, because of how infrequently it is used, the best definition scholars can come up with is that it refers to exploiting others by means of sex. *Malakoi* is not as

³⁶ Ibid., 57

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 58

³⁹ 1 Cor 7:9

⁴⁰ This should surprise us, because there is no ancient Greek word for “homosexual.” The term regarding sexual orientation was not even coined until the late 19th century, hundreds of years after Paul wrote this letter.

hard to define since it is used four times in the New Testament.⁴¹ In every verse except this one, the word in questions refers to soft clothing. In addition, there are ample uses of this word in other ancient literature.

Paul is considered to be the first to use *arsenokoitai* in ancient writings and except for this passage and its other usage in 1 Timothy 1:10, all other occurrences are found in subsequent lists of vices (likely dependent on Paul and, thus, not helpful for determining its meaning).⁴² It is likely that Paul used these words together because he assumed that his audiences was familiar with its meaning, certainly in a way that our modern context is not.⁴³ Regardless of what Paul meant, most scholars agree that it has something to do with sex and it may or may not be about two males engaging in sex as a means of power domination. It certainly could not refer to what our post modern Western culture today understand to be as two males (or two females) in a committed romantic, loving, and egalitarian same-gendered relationship based on their inherent sexual orientation. The issue with making such a strong statement that, “none of these will inherit the kingdom” (1 Cor 6:9), is that there is no follow up on such statement that denies a large group of people access to heaven, especially considering the fact the Jesus did not mention nor suggest anything about people using these two words.⁴⁴

Paul’s use of *malakoi* is interesting, because while a male who allowed himself to be penetrated by a female or male could be labeled as *malakoi* (since he was taking the feminine role). Had Paul wanted to solely refer to males that were penetrated by other “manly” men—not

⁴¹ Matthew 11:8 “dressed in **soft** robes”; Matthew 11:8 “wear **soft** robes”; Luke 7:25, “dressed in **soft** robes”; 1 Corinthians 6:9.

⁴² Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 123

⁴³ Loader, William R. G. *Making Sense of Sex: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013. 328

⁴⁴ Further explanation of these words will follow in section III.

“feminine” men generally—then it would seem fitting that he would have used *kinaedos*:

“indicates a man who willingly and habitually chooses the passive role in [same-sex]

sex.”⁴⁵There is no way to tell why Paul did not use that word, but it is inappropriate to equate

malakoi with *kinaedos*, seemingly as a means to further one’s agenda of condemning our western understanding of homosexuality because of what the text says (or does not say).

1 Timothy 1:9-11:

This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, **arsenokoitai**, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me (NRSV).

Most scholars believe that 1 Timothy was written pseudonymously under Paul’s name because the vocabulary and style of writing are different from his other letters. In contrast, to Romans and 1 Corinthians which are undisputedly written by him. Again *arsenokoitēs* is used in this passage just as in 1 Corinthians 6:10, where Paul is preaching to those who are already in agreement with him, he is using the same rhetoric here starting in verse 6. He aims to solidify that his audience is on his side so that he can establish the “us” so that he can point out the flaws in “them.” Paul is very blunt when calling out his own audience and that type of rhetoric is not used in these passages (1Cor 5:1).

It is clear that in these two passages with vice lists that include *arsenokoitēs* (1 Cor 6:9-11 and 1 Tim 1:9-11) the original and intended meaning is not as clear as some have made it out

⁴⁵ Robson, James, *Sex and Sexuality in Classical Athens (Debates and Documents in Ancient History)* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 58.

to be. Galileo Galilei⁴⁶ wrote in his *Letter to Benedetto Castelli* that, “Scripture cannot err, nevertheless some of its interpreters and expositors can sometimes err in various ways.”⁴⁷

Clearly, because of the uncertainty for how to interpret the meaning of *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*, we cannot make claims about these passages with equal certainty as clearer passages.⁴⁸

Section Conclusion

It seems clear to me that Paul only speaks of brief, lustful casual sexual encounters between people of the same sex. We would never interpret Scripture regarding people of the opposite sex falling victim to lust and promiscuity and then using that to condemn any relationship between a female and a male.⁴⁹ Yet, it is common to do so in order to condemn for LGB+ Christians. Obviously, there is a difference between lust and love; casual and committed relationships should not be equated; and promiscuity less desirable than monogamy, regardless of the sex of the people in the relationship.

As 2 Timothy 3:16 states, “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (NRSV). When we look to the Bible it is as a guide to salvation, not to understand science. Or as Galileo puts it in his *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*:

They [the church] go about invoking the Bible, which they would have minister to their deceitful purposes. Contrary to the sense of the Bible and the intention of the holy Fathers, if I am not mistaken, they would extend such authorities until even in purely physical matters--where faith is not involved--they would have us

⁴⁶ With the invention of his telescope, the Italian astronomer, physicist and engineer argued that the Earth revolved around the Sun, which contradicted the Bible’s and the church’s understanding that everything revolved around the Earth. More explanation will be given in section IV.

⁴⁷ “Letter to Benedetto Castelli.” Letter to Benedetto Castelli | Inters.org. Accessed March 18, 2019. <http://inters.org/Galilei-Benedetto-Castelli>.

⁴⁸ i.e. The Greatest Commandment

⁴⁹ Such examples include: David and Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 11; King Solomon’s 700 wives and 300 concubines: 1 Kings 11:3; Abraham falsely claimed that his wife was his sister, and allowing other males to have sex with her because otherwise, he would have been killed: Genesis 12:10-20;20:1-7.

altogether abandon reason and the evidence of our senses in favor of some biblical passage, though under the surface meaning of its words this passage may contain a different sense.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Galilei, Galileo. *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany* Internet Modern History Sourcebook. Aug 1997 ed. Paul Halsall. Accessed March 18, 2019 <https://web.stanford.edu/~jsabol/certainty/readings/Galileo-LetterDuchessChristina.pdf>

III Greco-Roman Culture and Same-Sex Sex

Introduction:

Sex between two people of the same sex was very common in the Greco-Roman historical time period.⁵¹ However, there is little mention of it in the New Testament, even though it was common. The fact that there are three admonitions against it in the New Testament, arguably, tells us that it was an issue that early believers were aware of. If same-sex sex did not occur then, Paul would have no reason to address it and would have no reason to tell others not to participate in that sort of behavior. But, because of how common it was in the broader culture and the degree to which it violated the Torah, Paul spoke against it.⁵²

In comparison to other topics, Paul rarely mentions same-sex sex, even though it was widely practiced. That means that either: 1) it was not among his most serious concerns; or 2) that his audience agreed with him and were not participating in same-sex sex that much (or some combination of the two).

In the following section, I will demonstrate that the ancient practices of same-sex behaviors and perceptions in the New Testament rely solely on the unjust use of another body for sexual satisfaction. This argument relies on evidence of a contrasting power dynamic and that the reported sexual relations were governed by hierarchical contrast pertaining to social status (class standing) and sexual hierarchy. Following, I will demonstrate how the terms *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos* have been mistranslated in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10 to mean “homosexual,” by analyzing their uses in other ancient literature. *Arsenokoitēs* relates to some

⁵¹ Ancient documentation focuses primarily on sex between two males; what females did or did not practice is not widely known.

⁵² For varying perceptions of what is “natural” between Greek thought and Judaism, as well as the association of same-sex sex with idolatry, see Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 105-106.

sort of economic and/or sexual exploitation (such as prostitution) and *malakos* is used to describe something that is soft or feminine.

However, just because sex among people of the same sex was commonly practiced does not mean it was universally acceptable. Since Paul does not see this type of exploitation as accepted (given the presence of power domination),⁵³ he would have more reason to speak against it. Also, Paul's sexual ethics are in line with his context: Hellenistic Judaism, at once deeply committed to the Torah and influenced by the wider Greco-Roman society that he was speaking against. Therefore, when he mentions these sexual practices, it is from the perspective of a lower class, powerless, and smaller religious group speaking against the more powerful majority group's practices.⁵⁴

More attention will be paid to ancient Roman societies as opposed to Classical Greek society. Both historically and culturally, Roman sources align stronger with the New Testament and the early church time period and political realities. Greek sources from the classical age (5th-4th C. B.C.E.) discuss same sex in provocative (and, at times, shocking) ways, but culture in the Greco-Roman world had shifted dramatically by the 1st and 2nd C.E.⁵⁵

Romans:

Who Romans Had Sex With:

For ancient Romans,⁵⁶ the values surrounding acceptable practices of sex were concerned with maintaining power differentials.⁵⁷ Thus, same-sex sex was encompassed by the

⁵³ Although, it may be argued that Paul's harsh argumentation is, in itself, abusive.

⁵⁴ However, transgressions of these boundaries were also forbidden in Mesopotamian and Syrian societies. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 129.

⁵⁵ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 69.

⁵⁶ Because my interests are with the New Testament canon, I will concentrate on the Greco-Roman era from roughly the 1st century B.C.E. – 2nd century C.E.

⁵⁷ Of course, it is possible that love, intimacy, commitment, etc. were part of the individuals' experience, but neither were those the cultural-norms that governed same-sex sexual activity, nor were they documented.

power dynamic that took place between a male of power and a “lesser of a man” not in power. For example, since slaves made up roughly 40 percent of the population, often times those slaves were the penetrated subject of their dominant owner.⁵⁸ Craig A Williams stated that, “Slaves’ bodies were entirely at their masters’ disposal, and from the earliest of times it seems to have been understood that among the services that Roman men might expect their slaves to perform was the satisfaction of their sexual desires.”⁵⁹

Because being penetrated was seen as feminine, it was not acceptable for Roman males to have sex with freeborn Roman boys (as their being penetrated would feminize them). In fact, as Williams says, “The question ‘who penetrated whom?’ lies behind nearly every ancient allusion to a sexual encounter, even between women.”⁶⁰ Slave boys were at the peak of desirability; in fact, “adultery generally aroused more concern than pederasty.”⁶¹ It was so frequently practiced among the Romans that out of the first fifteen emperors, Claudius was reportedly the only one to have sex solely with females. Thus, for almost two hundred consecutive years, Rome was ruled by males who took pleasure in having sex with other males.⁶²

Role in sex:

The higher ranking and more prestigious Roman male was supposed to take the dominant/penetrative role in sex⁶³ (regardless of his partner’s sex). That active role was

⁵⁸ Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 80

⁵⁹ Williams, Craig A., *Roman Homosexuality*: 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 31.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 177

⁶¹ Ibid., 3

⁶² John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 61; Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 70.

⁶³ The terminology exists in ancient Latin sources as evidence: *Irrumatus* : “face-f**king” (Masterson 450); *pedicatus*: “to a**-f**k”(Idem, 451); *fututus*: “to f**k” (Idem, 451). While, this is quite graphic and explicit, it emphasizes that in the different sex positions, some males were seen to be passive and the person doing the active part was seen to be the penetrator, so this was seen as a feminizing act, which was shameful for “strong” males.

associated with masculinity, higher social status, and adulthood. While, on the contrary, the passive role was associated with femininity, lower social status, and youth: all characteristics that were seen as not virtuous. Regardless of one's sex, these are the crucial binary clusters for understanding ancient perceptions of sexuality: the active / dominant / masculine figure would penetrate the passive / submissive /feminine figure. Brittany E. Wilson explains, "In other words, 'man' is the type whereas 'woman' is the antitype; 'man' is the standard by which 'woman' — or the 'other' — is measured."⁶⁴

Both literally and hierarchically, men were on top and women were on the bottom. Within this matrix for valuing sex, it did not matter if a male was having sex with a male or a female, as long as he demonstrated his higher rank by taking the penetrative role, which necessitated that his partner took the penetrated and submissive (feminine) role. As a point of interest, Williams summarizes: "[Same-sex] behavior was not condemned *per se*, and a citizen male could admit to sexual experience with males in certain contexts and configurations without fear of ridicule or reprisal, without the threat even of a raised eyebrow."⁶⁵

To summarize, in the Greco-Roman culture, the main area of interest was who penetrated whom in oral, anal or vaginal sex and one's manliness was related to how much of an active role the male took in sex. In fact, according to Nissinen and epigraphic evidence, anal penetration was seen as the most moral because it subjugated the passive person's role in sex as well as the mode that they were penetrated.⁶⁶

Language/gender identity:

⁶⁴ Wilson, Brittany E., *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 40.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 17.

⁶⁶ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 68.

The grammar of the Latin language also reflects the division between men and non-men. In decreasing hierarchy order, there are the Latin terms used for the different types of men: *Vir* (the root of our Latin-derived word for *virtue*) applies to freeborn, adult, male Roman citizens. They should not be penetrated. On the other hand, *homines* is the more common and general term that often refers to slaves and lower status males.⁶⁷

However, these were not fixed categories. One's manliness was fought for and reaffirmed; hence, Wilson explains, "Even elite males... were not securely fixed atop the gender hierarchy but were in constant danger of 'slipping down' towards the female pole."⁶⁸ Just as it was stigmatized for a male to move from a *vir* to a *homins*, it was just as problematic for a female to move up if they displayed manly traits such as speaking in public or holding political power.⁶⁹

It is crucial to note that this rigid gender identification was not just practiced among the Romans, whether citizens or residents of the Italian province. It was also widespread geographically in areas dominated by Roman power and culture: evidence of these values is found among the Greeks, Jews (4 Mac 14:11-17:6),⁷⁰ and Christian apocryphal and Gnostic texts (Gospel of Thomas,⁷¹ Acts of Paul and Thecla). However, as Wilson acknowledges, "Jewish and Christian authors during the principate also differ from their Greek and Roman contemporaries

⁶⁷ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 41

⁶⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 47. This passage, "Provides an extensive encomium on the self-control and 'manly courage'... of a Jewish mother who is martyred along with her seven sons."

⁷¹ From *Gospel of Thomas* 114: "Simon Peter said to him, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

in their construct of masculinity, especially when the ‘rules’ of masculinity conflict with their scriptural text.”⁷²

Conclusion: Sex in a Greco-Roman Context:

In the Greco-Roman society, what made a male masculine and a female feminine was not their physical biological/anatomical features,⁷³ but rather the determining factor between them was reflected in their social characteristics. Elite males could not penetrate another male’s wife nor a freeborn citizen’s, but they could penetrate slaves and prostitutes, regardless of their gender.

Just as in modern, Western culture there is increasing understanding that gender identity is not an easy equation with biological sex, there was the same complexity (although manifested in a different paradigm) in the Greco-Roman period. As the main point of interest, Colleen M. Conway argues, “What has become increasingly clear is that ancient masculinity was constituted more by the shape of one’s life than by the shape of one’s body ...It is actually incorporeality that was viewed as the ultimate in masculine achievement.”⁷⁴ At birth, upon looking at the genitalia, one would classify the sex, but just because (for example) a male (his sex) was born, did not necessarily mean that he would grow into a man (his gender).

Although male anatomy was seen as more complete/perfected than that of the female anatomy, it did not itself entail achievement of masculine ideals.⁷⁵ Roman understanding was that male genitalia was turned outward (perfected) and female genitalia was turned inward

⁷² Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 48.

⁷³ “Rather, both men and women had the same body parts; only that the woman’s were inverted. The degree to which one was seen as male or female could vary significantly” (Loader *Making Sense of Sex* 86).

⁷⁴ Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

⁷⁵ Conway, *Behold the Man*, 17.

(reflecting incompleteness/imperfection).⁷⁶ In addition, a man's body was characterized as hot, dry, and hard, whereas a woman's body was seen as cool, wet, and soft.⁷⁷ They were of the same bodily continuum, but one was perfect and the other was not perfected.⁷⁸ To illustrate, 1st C. C.E. Jewish philosopher Philo sums up this point by stating that, "...Because male is more perfect than female...it is said by the naturalists that the female is nothing else than an imperfect male."⁷⁹

It was also believed that one could turn from a man into a woman (and hence not be perfect) and in order to avoid slipping towards full femininity, manly men also abstained from being a feminine man. Most notably, "an adult male, castrated or not, who played the part of the 'passive' female *did* risk losing the rights and privileges that accompanied proper masculinity...What such laws indicate is that the core of masculinity identity resided not in the body per se but rather in what one did with, and allowed to be done to, one's body."⁸⁰ It was not enough to be born a male, a virtuous man also had to act like one by penetrating other (males or females) and could never be the object of penetration. However, penetration was not the only or preferred way of asserting one's manliness. Other demonstrations of proper masculinity included self-control,⁸¹ wisdom, justice, courage, and military skills.

The modern Western concept of the human body is a two-sex body⁸² (males and females are understood as opposite sides of the dichotomy). In contrast, the ancient body was viewed as a

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 50.

⁷⁸ Note from Conway, *Behold the Man*, 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid., QE 1.7 also *Spec. Laws* 1.200-201

⁸⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁸¹ "In fact, by the first century and beyond, self-control appears to trump the active/passive binary when it came to defining ideal masculinity." Conway, *Behold the Man*, 25.

⁸² Here I am speaking in terms of general perception. It is not within the parameters of this paper to also look at the transgender/intersex community, although their rejection of gender-binary would have much to offer this discussion.

single-sex body (in which there was a patriarchal hierarchy spectrum involved).⁸³ The Gospel of Thomas emphasizes this idea when it says:

Simon Peter said to him, “Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.” Jesus said, “I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁸⁴

Contextually within the gnostic values represented in *Thomas*, salvation was understood in terms of where one was located on the spectral hierarchy: the closer to the “manly” side, the more likely they were to “enter the kingdom of heaven.” The connection to Roman “Virtue,” that is, performed masculinity, should not be missed. Dale B. Martin Summarizes, “Thus, women may experience salvation as a movement upward into masculinity, but men who experience a movement downward into femininity (and both kinds of movement are noted in ancient texts) are not understood by that to experience an improvement in state or status.”⁸⁵

In conclusion of my Roman cultural focus, Nissinen proposes four categories of sex between two people of the same sex, which are not mutually exclusive: 1) transgenerational same-sex sex (involving an older and younger participant; e.g. pederasty); 2) same-sex sex when both members belong to the same biological sex, but the passive person has a feminine role; 3) class distinguished same-sex sex (e.g. slaves and their owners); and 4) an egalitarian same-sex relationship as reflecting one’s orientation. The last category lacks documentation in the Greco-Roman time period; only the first three are well represented (especially the second and third category). Because of how those categories have been incorrectly melded into one category (anachronistically called homosexuality), too many biblical scholars have assimilated any

⁸³ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 84.

⁸⁴ *Gospel of Thomas* 114.

⁸⁵ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 84.

reference of same-sex sex as being equivalent to modern homosexuality and, therefore, wrong or at least unbiblical/Christian.⁸⁶ Nissinen states simply, “Ancient same-sex interactions and modern notions of homosexual orientations are thus two different things; although they can be compared with each other, they must be kept separate.”⁸⁷ The next section will demonstrate how *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos* have been translated to mean “homosexuality,” which incorrectly assimilates those above categories.

Semantic Range of *Arsenokoitēs* and *Malakos* in Ancient Writings:

Introduction:

These two words (*arsenokoitēs* and *malakos*) have commonly interpreted without reference to their original context,⁸⁸ which has resulted in readings of those verses (1 Cor 6:10; 1 Tim 1:9-10) that ancient readers would not have understood nor could Paul⁸⁹ have meant. In the few times it appears, *arsenokoitēs* refers to some sort of economic and sexual exploitation (such as prostitution). The adjective *malakos* describes something that is soft (like clothing)⁹⁰ and/or perceived to be feminine. There is more certainty around the meaning of *malakos* because it appears more frequently in ancient literature, as well as in the Gospels.⁹¹

⁸⁶ The converse is never practiced, in which a sinful ancient opposite-sex encounter (Amnon and Tamar in 2 Sam; 1 Cor 6) rules out all modern heterosexual relationships.

⁸⁷ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 131

⁸⁸ “It is not readily apparent to modern English speakers with little knowledge of classical languages that the passage of thousands of years obscures, sometimes beyond recovery, the exact meaning of words in the language of cultures with experiences and life-styles very different from their own.” Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 335.

⁸⁹ I’ll refer to “Paul” as the author of these passages, as is traditional. However, the authorship of 1 Timothy is disputed. Arguing for or against Pauline authorship, is not within the scope of this paper. Even if he were not the author, it was common for a leader’s student or follower to write a letter pseudepigraphically; that is, the student would attribute their work to their teacher (which is a common held theory in the case of 1 Tim).

⁹⁰ Matthew 11:8 “dressed in **soft** robes”; Matthew 11:8 “wear **soft** robes”; Luke 7:25, “dressed in **soft** robes”. 1 Cor 6:10 is the only instance in the Bible where *Malakos* is not used to refer to soft clothing

⁹¹ See Matthew 11:8, where *malakos* appears twice, and Luke 7:25.

Arsenokoitēs:

History of Translating *Arsenokoitēs*

The attempts to translate *arsenokoitēs* that is so infrequently used in ancient literature has received inconsistent and puzzling treatment in how it has been translated. Dale B. Martin (1964-present) has done profound work through historical criticism in discerning both *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos* meaning. As a member of the queer community, Martin's ground breaking research on these two words has shed light on the uncertainty of these vague words that has often been mistranslated in such a harmful way. Through the unfavorable ways of mistranslating *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos*, it is clear that those translations are accompanied by ideological scholarship, rather than profound and insightful scholarship.

A survey of how *arsenokoitēs* has been translated (or mistranslated by later scholars) emphasizes not only how uncertain scholars are with this word, but mostly how through its different translations, as there was an increasing disapproval of homosexuality, *arsenokoitēs* has been translated to reflect that, rather than how it was perceived by its earliest audience.

Early English (1380) translations of the Bible translated that word to mean, "thei that son lecherie with men". Until the early 20th century, similar translations were found. When "homosexuality" was coined as word in the late 19th century, as a reflection of scholars disapproval of that term, Bible translations correspondingly shifted and instead of referring to an action (regardless of the modern conception of orientation), it then referred to a perversion. Previous translations correctly referred to *arsenokoitēs* as something that went on only between males and later translations expanded that concept to be inclusive of both males and females even though "thorough historical or philological evidence was never adduced to support this shift

in translation.”⁹² In the mid 20th century, *arsenokoitēs* was translated to refer to as an archaic term associated with sodomy. Today, it is translated in numerous different ways⁹³ that overall reflect our post-modern western unaccepting stance on “homosexuality”: an unrecognizable concept in the Greco-Roman culture.

A common error made with this word is to assign *arsēn* to male and *koitē* to bed/sex⁹⁴ and, by combining those words, some claim that, clearly, Paul is referring to males who exclusively have sex with other males.⁹⁵ However, that approach does not encompass the whole argument of that statement. *Koitē* directly refers to bed/sex and has a derogatory sexual connotation. However, it is unclear in which of the following ways the prefix *arsēn* is used: (a) as the adjective (describing a male who lies either with males or females); or (b) an object (one who exclusively lies with males).⁹⁶ By looking at other analogous words, John Boswell argues in favor of the former explanation.⁹⁷ Either way, we cannot hold firm to a word’s meaning, since we do not have a comprehensive understanding. Those two words paired together are not found in the LXX,⁹⁸ nor in any of Philo’s or Josephus’s writings,⁹⁹ implying that Paul invented this

⁹² Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 39.

⁹³ “Sodomites” (NRSV); “For those practicing homosexuality” (NIV); “Homosexuals” (NASB); “People who have intercourse with the same sex” (CEB).

⁹⁴ This prefix, “corresponds to the vulgar English word, ‘f**ker’ i.e. a person who, by insertion, takes the ‘active’ role in intercourse.” Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 342.

⁹⁵ “In bald English the compounds means, ‘male f**kers.’” Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 342. Nissinen describes this “adjectival” use as males being the *subject*, but the meaning is the same (*Homoeroticism*, 115).

⁹⁶ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 114-115

⁹⁷ Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 343-344; Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 115.

⁹⁸ Some have tried to argue that it clearly refers to sex between two males because it corresponds to Exod. 20:14 and Deut.5:18. The flaw in this argument is that μοιχεύσεις is used to describe adultery, not *arsenokotes*. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 46 (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2000), 30-31

⁹⁹ “Both discussed Sodom, both believed— following a Jewish Apocryphal tradition of their day— that Sodomites were punished for homosexuality, and both had vocabularies highly similar to Paul’s, yet neither mentioned the word *arsenokoitēs* or any resembling it.” Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 346.

word for this context since *arsenokoitēs* is not found in any other writings predating its first discovered use in 1 Corinthians.¹⁰⁰

However, as Martin says, “this approach is linguistically invalid. It is highly precarious to try to ascertain the meaning of a word by taking it apart, getting the meaning of its component parts, and then assuming, **with no supporting evidence**, that the meaning of the longer word is a simple combination of its component parts.”¹⁰¹ For example, to “understand” does not mean to *stand under*. Martin states that the authoritative way to define a word is by looking at its use in its original context;¹⁰² for *arsenokoitēs* this is of little help, unfortunately, as it is hardly ever used. Based on these two passages and receptions of theme, *arsenokoitēs* occurs in lists of sins. Even though *arsenokoitēs* is ambiguous, Martin claims that “it seems to have referred to some kind of economic exploitation by means of sex, perhaps but not necessarily homosexual sex” based off of its few contemporary uses.¹⁰³

Ancient uses of *Arsenokoitēs*

Arsenokoitēs is referred to an economic sin in *Sibylline Oracles*, *Acts of John*, and *To Autolychus*. In the *Sibylline Oracles* *arsenokoitēs* is in a list of economic sins and it is the only word that refers to sex.¹⁰⁴ In the context of economic sins, Martin argues that it most likely here refers to “some kind of economic exploration, probably by sexual means: rape or sex by economic coercion, prostitution, pimping, or something of that sort.”¹⁰⁵ If it were strictly related to a sexual sin, then it would be with the rest of the sexual sins, but it is not;¹⁰⁶ it is in lists that

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 39

¹⁰¹ Ibid., (emphasis added)

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 40

¹⁰⁴ “Do not *arsenokoitein*, do not betray information, do not murder...” 2.73

¹⁰⁵ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 41

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

are about cheating, theft, murder, and betrayal. In *Acts of John* 36 when “John” is condemning the rich men of Ephesus, *arsenokoitēs* is used as an economic injustice or sin and the section emphasizes that the sin is misuse of power, money and unjust exploitation, not sex.¹⁰⁷ In *To Autolychnus*, *arsenokoitēs* is used in a list of sins: 1) adultery and prostitution; 2) thief, plunderer and robber; 3) *arsenokoitēs*; 4) savagery, abusive behavior sins of passion (uncontrolled emotion); 5) pride: boastfulness. Clearly, *arsenokoitēs* refers to an economic injustice and reinforced by its mention soon after, “it is an economic exploitation by some sexual means.”¹⁰⁸

There are two examples where *arsenokoitēs* could arguably refer to sex between two males. First, in Hippolytus’s *Refutation of All Heresies*, Hippolytus claims to pass Gnostic myths about the subduction of Eve by Naas. Naas committed adultery with her, then came to Adam and “possessed him like a boy (slave)” (which implies rape), which is how *moicheia* (adultery) and *arsenokoiti* came into the world.¹⁰⁹ However, it is crucial to note that in addition to rape, deception and fraud also play pivotal roles in this writing and that contextually, *arsenokoitēs* could “imply the unjust and coercive sex of another person sexually.”¹¹⁰ The second example of *arsenokoitēs* possibly referring to sex between two males is in Eusebius’s *Preparation for the Gospel* (2nd/3rd century). Bardesanes claimed that people east of the Euphrates River held strong views about being guilty of *arsenokoitēs*: “[H]e who is reviled as a murderer, or a thief, is not at all indignant: but he who is reviled for *arsenokoitēs* avenges himself even to death: among the Greeks, however, even their wise men are not blamed for having favorites.”¹¹¹ Only the later translations of the text assimilate *arsenokoitēs* with having favorites. It is unclear the original and

¹⁰⁷ “So also the poisoner, sorcerer, robber, swindler, and *arsenokoitēs*, the thief and all of his band... So, men of Ephesus, change your ways...” (section 36).

¹⁰⁸ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 41-42.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

intended meaning of that term because this text is the most likely one to equate *arsenokoitēs* with sex between two men. And as a cautionary note, even if it does, one should be careful if claiming that *arsenokoitēs* always refers to sex between two males. Martin concludes his discussion on this ambiguous word by saying:

It is certainly possible, I think probable that *arsenokoitēs* referred to a particular role of exploiting others by means of sex, perhaps but not necessarily [homosexual] sex. The more important question, I think, is why some scholars are certain it refers to simple male-male sex in the face of evidence to the contrary. Perhaps ideology has been more important than philology.¹¹²

Malakos:

Unlike *arsenokoitēs* there are many uses of this word in other writings and “the changes in translation of *malakos* provide an ever clearer record of how interpretive decisions have changed due to historical shifts in the ideology of sexuality.”¹¹³ It is critical to note that the translations were not accompanied by new historical scholarship, rather they were the result of a historic paradigm shift in viewing sexuality especially homosexuality.

History of Translating *malakos*

In the early 16th century *malakos* was mostly translated as, “weakling”. From the mid 16th century to the mid 20th century, it was translated as effeminate. In an interesting turn of events, with no historical scholarship, in the late 20th century, scholars believed that it referred to an illicit sexual action or even an (homo) orientation.¹¹⁴

In other Greco-Roman writings, *malakos* can be found in the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomy*, Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Pseudo-Lucianic *Affairs of the Heart*. And

¹¹² Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 43

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Male prostitutes” (NRSV); “adulterers” (NIV, CEB); “effeminate” (NASB; it is ironic that *malakos* is translated correctly here because *arsenokoitēs* is translated as “homosexuals”)

in those writings “*malakos* more often referred to men who prettied themselves up to further their heterosexual exploits.”¹¹⁵ In *Physiognomy*, Pseudo-Aristotle uses *malakos* repeatedly in description of “effeminate” men. *Malakos* is never referencing sex in that context. It references negative female characteristics against which the male characteristics are juxtaposed. Boys who were trying to make themselves more attractive (to either boys or girls) were labeled as *malakos*. In Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe* a *malakos* (feminine) male wears perfume and makeup, had a clean haircut and wore rings.¹¹⁶ In Pseudo-Lucian’s *Affairs of the Heart*, the man who loves women is said to be *malakos* because he is skilled at applying makeup as a means to attract women.¹¹⁷ Take note of this: A male is attracting female attention and is described as *malakos* (This is not an equivalent to the modern term homosexual). Another example can be found in *From Epictetus* where the protagonist is praised as an athlete who died rather than getting the surgery that would have allowed him to live by removing his genitals. He (honorably) chose to die rather than to be less manly and therefore a feminine man; it was more honorable for him to die than to be perceived as a woman.¹¹⁸

The following quote from Martin summarizes the cultural values surrounding sex within the Greco-Roman context:

The real problem with being penetrated was that it implicated the man in the feminine and *malakos* referred not to the penetration per se but to the perceived aspects of femaleness associated with it. The word *malakos* refers to the entire ancient complex of the devaluation of the feminine. Thus people could use *malakos* as an insult directed against men who love women too much.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 45

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 46

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 47

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

In looking at these historical examples, it is clear that *malakos* refers to something demonstrating qualities deemed effeminate and there is no historical reason to refer to it as the subjective man being penetrated by another man.

In ancient times, using *malakos* was similar to a male today saying, “this sucks”¹²⁰ or “you surf like a girl” to another male because the subject is using a blanket statement to condemn the object as feminine: *malakos*. Overall, regardless of if a male had sex with another male or female, he could be labeled as effeminate because that word had no direct correlation to sex between two males. Also, any penetrated male could be labeled as *malakos*.¹²¹ In the first century, this term was often used to refer to males who had no facial hair and males who shaved daily since that look gave them a feminine look; for example, Plato wrote that “too much music made a man soft (*malakos*), and feeble; unfit for battle.”¹²² Too much of anything (including sex) would be sufficient enough for a male living in the Greco-Roman society to be labeled as *malakos* because they were being penetrated by their uncontrollable desires; being penetrated, either phallically or symbolically was seen as sufficient evidence to label one as *malakos*.

Unfortunately, many scholars have translated that word anachronistically to mean “homosexual.” It is doubtful that Paul intended *malakos*, which refers males who are clean-shaven or who like music, as homosexuals in any modern sense. The word refers to a male who behaves in feminine (or soft) matter.¹²³

Conclusion regarding *Arsenoikōitēs* and *Malakos*

¹²⁰ Ibid., 48

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Giles, Keith. "The Abomination of a Close Shave?" Patheos. April 24, 2018. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/keithgiles/2018/04/the-abomination-of-a-close-shave/>.

Martin emphasizes that it is significant that neither the *Didache* (2nd-century Christian writing from the Apostolic Fathers), nor Clement of Alexandria, nor John Chrysostom mentions *arsenokoitēs*, nor *malakos*, since they discuss same-sex sex significantly more than any other church father. If either one of those two words had a strict correlation to same-sex sex, then it would have pivotal for them to use at least one of those words. Since the different examples “[do] not give a clear indication, the meaning of *arsenokoitēs* remains indefinite.”¹²⁴ While *arsenokoitēs* may be more ambiguous than many conservative scholars make it out to be, using *malakos* as a reference to sex between two males is entirely unfounded, as it is a reference to males deemed by the Greco-Roman worldview to be feminine (or soft). These unwarranted and sweeping translations of these words turn Paul’s words much more specific and much too modern for his Greco-Roman setting. As Boswell explains,

However modern translations may choose to refer the words in question, the historian should not be led to imagine that they played a role in the development of European attitudes towards homosexuality. There is no reason to believe that either *arsenokoitēs* or *malakos* 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.¹²⁵

It is noteworthy that Paul used the words that he did. One who was penetrated (either sexually or “penetrated” by their desires to act in excess) could be labeled as *malakos* since penetration was seen as shameful. However, had Paul wanted to solely refer to males that were penetrated by other “manly” men and not feminine men, then it would seem fitting that he would have used *kinaedos*: “indicates a man who willingly and habitually chooses the passive role in [same-sex]

¹²⁴ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 116.

¹²⁵ Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 353.

sex.”¹²⁶ There is no way to tell why Paul did not use that word, but it is inappropriate to equate *malakos* with *kinaedos*.

¹²⁶ Robson, *Sex and Sexuality*, 58

IV

Conclusion: The New Testament and Same-Sex Sex Read in Context

This project seeks to show how crucial understanding and foundational New Testament historical context is to see how the message that was given to particular people then would be understood in their cultural, historical, and sociological setting. Clearly, the New Testament does not exist in a cultural/historical vacuum and it is essential to understand its message. Christians have emphasized following the spirit of the law above the letter of the law. It is crucial to understand ancient cultures so that it would be easier to imagine the message that the earliest audience would have taken away. As Augustine puts it, “Whoever takes another meaning out of Scripture than the writer intended, goes astray, but not through any falsehood in Scripture.”¹²⁷

The Greco-Roman paradigm of gender roles in sex affected how Paul wrote about sex between two people of the same sex. Paradigms differ and change over the centuries; the paradigms for understanding gender and sex in which Paul and his audiences were imbedded are no exception to that rule. Over time, those ancient paradigms have evolved and changed, coming into conflict with other worldviews, out of which have come our understandings and value-systems surrounding sexuality in the Western world today. Neither Paul nor his contemporaries were aware of the possibility of a sexual *orientation*, let alone a same-sex orientation. Hence, he and other ancient authors do not imagine the possibility of a committed, romantic, loving, and egalitarian same-sex relationship (let alone in a marriage). In his historical setting, same-sex sex among males was very common among the Greco-Roman upper-class citizens but it was not seen as acceptable under any circumstance for the Jewish leaders during the time. Regarding

¹²⁷ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.36.41 “On Christian Doctrine, in Four Books.” Christian Classics Ethereal Library. June 1, 2005. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/doctrine.xxxvi.html>.

Greek and Roman cultures, William B. Loader explains that, “It was generally considered acceptable that men engage in sexual relations with their slaves, male and female, and with prostitutes, male and female and they frequently did all of these. It is arguable that similar assumptions may have prevailed in Jewish society, but restricted to heterosexual relations.”¹²⁸

Louis Crompton explains further:

Ancient Greek culture celebrates same-sex love in history, literature, and art, making high claims for its moral influence. By contrast, Jewish religious leaders in the sixth century BCE branded male homosexuality as a capital offense and, later, blamed it for the destruction of the biblical city of Sodom. When these two traditions collided in Christian Rome during the late empire, the tragic repercussions were felt throughout Europe and the New World.¹²⁹

It is vital to understand these different contexts because claiming that Paul (or any other ancient author) intended to condemn a healthy, safe, trusting relationship between two people of the same sex based because of these three often mistranslated verses in Paul’s letters is anachronistic and, potentially, deceptive. The many cultures encompassed by the term Greco-Roman had a different understanding of sex (both sex between people of the same sex and sex between people of the different sex) than what is held in many Western cultures today. Therefore, to equate modern perceptions to what Paul is talking about in his Greco-Roman context is inappropriate, wrong and has caused far too many homosexual Christians to be mistreated and even bullied by the church since the direct correlation without considering its cultural differences has had dire consequences. Some of the statistics are staggering, such as the following: LGB+¹³⁰ youth (42.8%) seriously contemplate suicide at three times more than their heterosexual peers

¹²⁸ Loader *Making Sense of Sex* 90-91

¹²⁹ Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 1.

¹³⁰ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual. The "+" it so ensure that I am being inclusive of all identities, including, but not limited to: transgendered, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual.

(14.8%)¹³¹ and LGB+ youth are almost five times more likely to attempt it than their straight peers;¹³² 39% of LGB+ Americans reported that they were rejected by their family because of their orientation;¹³³ and 30% of LGB+ Americans have been physically attacked/threatened¹³⁴ and 29% reported that they do not feel welcomed in a place of worship.¹³⁵

Fortunately, more Christians are becoming more welcoming of the LGB+ population. For example, in a survey conducted in 2015, it found that 54% of U.S Christians accept homosexuality, as opposed to the 44% that were supportive of it in 2007.¹³⁶ That study also found that 83% of non-Christians accept it, which is a 10% increase from 2007.¹³⁷

People will often disregard the cultural difference of the authors and audiences for whom the Bible was written. Particularly, in terms of letters, it is common to take a particular message that was directed to specific people and make it applicable to all without any modification. I argue that this is the issue that Galileo faced with the church, simply manifested in a different paradigm. Prior to Galileo's discoveries, a geocentric view (viewing the Earth as the center of the universe with the sun, moon, stars and planets revolving around it) of the universe was universally accepted. However, with the use of his invention: the telescope, Galileo argued for a heliocentric universe (viewing the sun at the center of the universe with the sun, moon, stars and planets revolves around it). To put it lightly, the church was infuriated with Galileo's discovery.

¹³¹ Kann, Laura, Emily O'Malley Olsen, Tim McManus, et al., "Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9–12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015." *MMWR: Surveillance Summaries* 65, no. 9 (August 12, 2016): 1-208. 19.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Paul Taylor et al., "A Survey of LGBT Americans," Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, June 2013, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Caryle Murphy, "Most U.S. Christian Groups Grow More Accepting of Homosexuality," Pew Research Center, December 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/18/most-u-s-christian-groups-grow-more-accepting-of-homosexuality/>.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Even though they accepted his evidence from the telescope, the church's issue with Galileo was that his discoveries directly contradicted what the Bible said about the unmovable Earth being the center of the universe.¹³⁸ This caused him to state that, “...the holy Bible can never speak untruth--whenever its true meaning is understood...”.¹³⁹ Galileo believed that every word of the Bible is correct; however, he also believed that because it was written in a different context than his, its original true meaning is often hard to figure out.

However, laws change over time to address the needs of an evolving culture. While some laws persist (murder, stealing), other laws become unnecessary: for instance, Deuteronomy 22:28-29 commands that a woman must marry her rapist. That law made sense in a patriarchal world in which a woman was considered property. Thus, a woman who lost her virginity was considered damaged goods and the person who caused the damage should take the lost. Today, in most western cultures women and men are considered equal (at least in theory) and rape is seen as a crime against the personhood of the woman herself; hence, we prosecute and imprison rapists (at least ideally). Most significantly, the one law that Christians believe is eternal is the Love Commandment (Mt 22:34-40). Jesus commands us to “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). Our Gospels demonstrate that Jesus did not follow his contemporaries' cultural norms to determine who was worthy of love.¹⁴⁰

However, whenever some people's love becomes conditional, they tend to judge, condemn, and exclude people different from themselves. This has been (and is) the experience of many in the LGB+ community at the hands of many Christians. Unfortunately, when we make culturally bounded laws absolute we become adherents to the letter of the law and miss the spirit

¹³⁸ Joshua 10:12-13; 1 Chronicles 16:30; Psalms 93:1, 96:10, 104:5; Ecclesiastes 1:5

¹³⁹ Galileo, *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina*. 3

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 4:18; John 4:4-42.

of the law. This is the kind of self-righteous and stubborn behavior which has lead Augustine to say, “Whoever, then, thinks that [she or] he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as [she or] he ought”.¹⁴¹ Regardless of where people are socially/biblically, one must love their neighbor, even if their neighbor has a different sexual orientation and then to use the Bible as a weapon against that community as a means of furthering their agenda is, in my mind, a misrepresentation of what it means to follow Christ.

There are many uncertainties about Paul. As an author and person fixed in history, we will never know how he would react to circumstances outside of his own. For instance, if he understood sexuality in terms of orientation, would he find people in mutually-consenting same gender relationships as acceptable? Clearly all theorizing about that remains uncertain. However, one thing is certain about interpretations of Paul: there are some rules that Paul held tightly that most modern Christians do not adhere to. For example, many Christians do not believe that marriage is solely for those who are “afame with passion” (1 Cor 7:9) and unable to exercise “self-control” (1 Cor 7:9). Paul’s philosophy for marriage does not align with American churches’ emphasis on wives, husbands, and nuclear families.¹⁴² Hence Christians commonly disagree with things that Paul speaks of— as inapplicable to modern life— but accept without context Paul’s few comments on sex between two people of the same-sex. They will equate inaccurately same-sex sex in an unequal power dynamic (which would have been the referent in Paul’s Greco-Roman context) with what it referred to today as homosexuality, even if that homosexuality that takes place in a healthy, loving and committed relationship.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 1.36.40

¹⁴² Paul states his distaste in marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:7: “I wish that all were [unmarried] as I myself am” and in 1 Corinthians 7:28 his unfavorable view of marriage and the married life is stated: “Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that”.

In conclusion, I have been arguing that the New Testament does not address long term-committed same-gender orientation nor relationships because it was not part of its Greco-Roman historical context. Traditional and conventional interpretations of and hermeneutical approaches to them are misunderstood in its original Greco-Roman context. The conventional interpretation of those three passages that arguably mention sex between people of the same sex is not in sync with the interpretive priorities from Scripture, to love God and to love others. Because of their (often misunderstood and ill-informed) reading of those passages, people are shifting their love for one another to discrimination and sometimes even to the point of hatred.¹⁴³ Neither the New Testament (nor the Old Testament) address same-gender relationships (based on mutuality) nor same-gender orientation; it only addresses same-sex sex because that is what fit within ancient paradigms of sexuality.

The concept of homosexual orientation and the presence of mutually equal same-sex relationships was not documented in the Ancient Greco-Roman world. Same-sex intercourse was widely known in the Greco-Roman culture, but was practiced primarily in situations with an unequal power dynamic (masters and slaves). A significant example is that pederasty was widely accepted in Classical Greek culture. In contrast, same-sex sex appears to have been uncommon among the Hebrew people. This is evidenced in Scripture, as same-sex sex is only addressed six times out of the over 31,000 passages in the Bible.¹⁴⁴ To put that into perspective, the Bible speaks more about alcohol in a negative way than it does about sex between two people of the same sex. Of the 247 mentions of alcohol in the Bible, only 40 of those mentions are negative.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ I would make the same argument for slavery, immigration, violent warfare etc.

¹⁴⁴ "How Many Chapters, Verses, and Words Are in the Bible?" NeverThirsty. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/how-many-chapters-verses-and-words-are-in-the-bible/>.

¹⁴⁵ Based on those numbers, maybe conservative Christians who protest gay marriages should instead protest liquor stores.

The lack of attention given to same-sex behavior in the Bible indicates to me how insignificant of a concept it was by the biblical authors. Just as the writers of the Bible did not know that the earth was round nor about nor about heliocentrism, they also did not know anything about same-sex sexual orientation nor same sex relationships.

Language of orientation is in itself anachronistic; if they were to speak in today's terms of orientation they would acknowledge that In their minds there existed only one sexual orientation: hetero. Thus, it would have been impossible for them to imagine loving same-sex relationships because there could not be that relationship where one person is taking the passive role while still holding equal status to the person taking the active role in sex.¹⁴⁶ Over all, it is essential to understand that, "Our ways of reading [the Bible] are shaped by our own cultural and historical contexts, and that any interpretation of ancient texts must always bear in mind the contextual nature of all interpretations."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ On a related note, sex in any relationship (either homo or hetero) is not the defining part of a relationship. We need to know that who they love is more important than who they are having sex with. Generally speaking, people are in a relationship because they love each other and ideally the relationship is not primarily about sex; it is about the love between two people and sex is one powerful way to express that love.

¹⁴⁷ Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender*, 138.

Appendix A: Classical Greeks Perception of Same-Sex Sex:

Both historically and culturally, Roman sources align stronger with the New Testament and the early church time period and political realities. Greek sources from the Classical Age (5th-4th C. B.C.E.) discuss same sex in provocative (and, at times, shocking) ways, but culture in the Greco-Roman world had shifted dramatically by the 1st and 2nd C.C.E.¹⁴⁸ Thus it is anachronistic to equate the two in a direct comparison, and it is impossible to know the degree to which pederastic practices directly influenced such a later time period: the Greco-Roman period.

In the Greek culture, the sex role paradigm mainly manifested itself in pederasty,¹⁴⁹ which comes from the Greek word *paiderastia*: love (*paid*) for boys (*erōs*). Most of the information about this comes from Athens and Sparta. It was justified by the Greeks because they believed that their gods practiced it.¹⁵⁰ Pederasty gave males spiritual satisfaction while sex with a female gave them physical satisfaction. It was seen more as a way to represent social identity than sexual identity and it is crucial to note that, “Ancient Greek societies did not operate under the heteronormativity of Western modernity, but [they]... were *homonormative* in that they privileged males and prioritized relationships between men through the institution of pederasty.”¹⁵¹ Pederastic relationships were seen as a crucial part of raising a boy¹⁵² to become a

¹⁴⁸ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 69

¹⁴⁹ It also did in the Roman culture (as long as it was not with a freeborn child), but it is more common in the Greek culture.

¹⁵⁰ Examples include: Zeus turning into an eagle to so that he can take Ganymedes to Olympus and have a pederastic relationship with him; Iolaos left his father to have a pederastic relationship with Heracles. In fact, Plutarch (Plutarch, *dialogue on Love*. 71D) claims that Heraclies was in too many pederastic relationship to count. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 58.

¹⁵¹ Masterson, Mark et al., *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 137.

¹⁵² There were two kinds of boys: *agathoi/ erōmenos*: boys that older males could develop honorable pederastic relationships with; *Pornoï/ kinaidos*: “one night stands” with effeminate boys that desired to be penetrated. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 68.

man.¹⁵³ In fact, even “Plato appreciated the pederastic relationship as the noblest of all human relations and as the embodiment of the purest love.”¹⁵⁴ The Greeks believed that, “The older one was to serve as an example, to win the admiration of the younger, and to give his protecting affection to the younger. In return, he would gain admiration and sexual satisfaction from the younger man.”¹⁵⁵

To socially promote this, there were *gymnasions* (which can be traced back to Classical Athens) and “these were exclusively male preserves, where boys and youths would have trained and competed in the nude and developed their bodies physically.”¹⁵⁶ They were also places where older men could find young boys to penetrate. James Robson stated that “Above all, it is important to bear in mind that the ancient sources and their modern interpreters over-emphasize certain aspects of homoerotic behavior and tend to ignore others” mainly the institution of pederasty and gymnasiums.¹⁵⁷

Difference Between the Greco and Roman Values of Sex:

The fundamental difference between the ideal values of same-sex sex between the Greco and the Roman culture was that even though they both associated power roles with sex, “the Greeks were able to conceive of love between an older and a younger male as protective and affectionate mentorship, while the Romans generally speaking, did not accord this privileged status to male relationships.”¹⁵⁸ Simply stated, “In Greece, to be the beloved protégé of a

¹⁵³ In addition, when a boy hit puberty, it represented him going from taking the passive role in sex to taking the active role and no longer being the passive person in pederasty. The increased body/pubescent hair, height and stature that came with puberty physically symbolized and represented a boy transitioning into a man.

¹⁵⁴ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism*, 59

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Robson, *Sex and Sexuality*, 47

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 65

¹⁵⁸ Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization*, 79

respected ruler was an honor. In Rome, it was an embarrassment and an occasion for ribald humor.”¹⁵⁹

Priapus: (originated among the Greeks, but was more popular among the Romans)

Priapus was an ugly Greek god who had an enormous penis.¹⁶⁰ He would guard his garden and anyone who attempted to steal from it, he would sexually penetrate. Priapus gained more popularity among the Romans because of his large penis, which for them represented manliness. While the Greeks valued small penis’ and “images of smooth, discreet boys as objects of desire.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 80

¹⁶⁰ Robert E. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology: Symbols, Attributes & Associations* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1982), 101

¹⁶¹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 94

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