

CHAPTER 5

NEW TESTAMENT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

5.1 Historical Background - The Classical Setting

5.1.1 Classical Greece

We are not certain when homosexual practices first appeared in Greek history. Some authors trace homosexuality back to the Mycenaean Civilisation (fl. 1400B.C). "This thesis stems from an interpretation of various passages in Homer (ca 850 B.C) as clearly homosexual, although homosexuality as such is not mentioned in Homer."¹ Others find the Dorian invasion (ca 1100 B.C) "as the decisive event that introduced homosexuality into Greece civilisation."² The Spartan lifestyle and the social pattern of the descendants of the Dorian invaders came to manifest itself in the exclusive and dominant male warrior class. "Whatever its origin in Greece, there is no reason to doubt Dover's suggestion that it was widespread by the sixth century B.C."³

5.1.2 Lesbianism in Greece

Perhaps the best known name in Greek antiquity to be connected with homosexual activity is that of Sappho from the island of Lesbos. Sappho was a poetess from Mitylene. After a childhood exile in Sicily, she returned to Mytelene where, some scholars believe, she functioned in some manner in a

¹ D.N. Robinson, E.J. Fluck, A study of the Greek Love-names, including a Discussion of Paederasty Prosographia. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1937), PP. 18 – 19.

² R. Flaceliere, Love in Ancient Greece, tr. J. Cleugh (New York: Crown Publications: 1962), P. 64.

³ K.J. Dover, Greek Homosexuality (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), P. 1.

school for girls which honoured Aphrodite and the Muses. She was married and had a child named Cleis. In a powerful and direct manner she writes candid accounts of her feelings for the girls in her circle of companions and their feelings for each other. She was a woman ahead of her time. She wrote contemptuously to an uneducated woman in a day when most were uneducated (frag.55). She wrote a poem with great feeling and intimacy to an unnamed girl, a poem some think was inspired as Sappho witnessed the girl's wedding and saw her standing by the bridegroom (frag.. 31). The possibility is strengthened by the fact that Sappho wrote a number of poems to her girls in celebration of their weddings.

Sappho writes in the vernacular dialect to Lesbos: her language is bold and straightforward but never coarse or erotic. Over the years Sappho and her "school" have become a symbol and name for homosexual activity among women — "lesbianism", being taken from the name of the island Lesbos. Thus "lesbian" in modern parlance and popular literature, almost invariably is not the name given to an inhabitant of Lesbos but the name given to a homosexual woman. Scholarly opinion, however, is neither certain nor unanimous about the matter. Some writers hold that "Sappho's relationship with the girls of her group was similar to that of Socrates and his companions."⁴ In this case the word *hetaera* should be translated as "companion" rather than "harlot" or "prostitute."

⁴ B.Saklatvala, Sappho of Lesbos: Her works restored. (London: C.Skilton Ltd; 1968), PP. 11 – 13, 15.

Homosexuality here, it seems, was of the refined "spiritual" nature found in Plato, which later became sullied by Sappho's detractors. Other writers see "a gradual development of a certain degree of abloquy in connection with her name beginning about three centuries after her death."⁵ This gathered force until the genius of Sappho was subverted, her name coming to connote decadence and depravity.

For at least two hundred years after her death she was praised as the queen of beautiful song. The first burst of calumny against her came from the Athenian comic dramatists, which in turn stigmatised her in the minds of later Latin poets. "The rapturous lines in Sappho's poems are explained by one writer as innocent "crushes" existing in that young lady's seminary as they do in many girls' schools today."⁶ Sappho's love of beauty of person in man or woman was purely aesthetic. She loved her disciples as Socrates did his; fondling the curly locks of Phaedo as he leaned against his knee. Robinson maintains that the moral purity of Sappho shines in its own light.

A woman of bad character and certainly a woman of such a variety of bad character as scandal has attributed to Sappho might express herself passionately and might run on indefinitely with erotic imagery. But Sappho is never erotic. There is no language found in her song which a pure woman might not use.⁷

⁵ E.M. Cox, *The poems of Sappho: With Historical and critical notes, Translations, and a Bibliography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1924), P. 19.

⁶ M.M. Miller and D.M. Robinson, *The song of Sappho: Including the Recent Egyptian Discoveries.* (Lexington, KY: Maxwellton Co., 1925), PP. 78 – 79.

⁷ D.M. Robinson, *Sappho and Her Influence.* (New York: Cooper Square Publications; 1963), PP. 43 – 44.

According to Robinson the Renaissance revival of Sappho was unfavourable to her, as was her popularity among the Romans. "The fifteenth century witnessed discovery of what was dubbed "Ovid's perverse epistle" which from that time forward biased all Sapphic literature."⁸

The great German classical scholar, Ulrich Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, likewise argued that "love of maidens does not necessarily translate into Lesbianism, in the modern sense of the word."⁹ Page, on the other hand, finds precious little evidence for the interpretation of Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. "The latter theorised that Sappho was the leader of a formal cult-association and that her companions were pupils. To them she gave lessons on moral, social, and literary topics. She was, therefore, a highly respected member of a society, a lady of official capacity and unblemished character."¹⁰

But Page rightly argues that the evidence for a cult association is non-existent. He, like Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, rejects "the gossip of comedians, rakes, pedants and bigots" who smear the name of Sappho; yet he recognises at the same time that the problem of the nature of Sappho's relation with her girl-companions cannot be ignored. So little is known, and that little is, as he describes it "confused with mythology and turbid with the scandal of comic

⁸ Ibid; PP. 136 – 137.

⁹ U. Von Wilamowitz – Moellendorf, *Sappho Und Simonides Untersuchungen Uber Griechische Lyriker*. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1966), PP. 17 – 78 especially PP. 72 – 73.

¹⁰ D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus: A Introduction to the Study of Ancient Lesbian Poetry*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), P. 32. nn. 2, 11, 111.

poets."¹¹ The fact remains, however, that any evidence for Sappho's amorous converse with men is scant. Although many of her poems discovered later reveal a different mood and do not display the high flame of passion of the earlier works, the earlier works cannot be ignored. Of the longer pieces, number 31 is the only one that seems to come from the heart without reserve and speaks of an overwhelming passion for a girl-companion. But as Page notes, "It is a lover's passion, not sisterly affection or maternal benevolence which Sappho describes in 31, the overwhelming emotion of intensest love."¹² For Page this statement does not necessarily imply that Sappho and her companions were involved in homosexual practices, although for him poem 31 clearly suggests she had homosexual inclinations.

Such was the nature of Sappho, not to be altered. To the further question — so often propounded, so seldom considered without prejudice whether evidence for practice as well as inclination is to be found in the fragments of Sappho's poetry, a negative answer must be returned. It is at least probable that Lesbos in her lifetime was notorious for the perverse practices of its women: but in all that remains of Sappho's poetry there is not a word which connects itself or her companions with them, and at most a half word which reveals her awareness of their existence. The question then is not one which can be discussed at all on the basis of reliable evidence. I therefore take my leave of it.¹³

The newer Egyptian discoveries fail to dampen speculation on this matter. The biographer in P. Oxyrynchus states that Sappho was "accused by some of being

¹¹ Ibid; P. 142.

¹² Ibid; P. 143.

¹³ Ibid; PP. 144 – 145.

disorderly and a lover of women."¹⁴ Page comments, "I find it remarkable that this biographer should say 'she is accused by some', if the fact were manifestly proved in her works which were abundantly preserved into the biographer's era."¹⁵ On the other hand, Page suggests in another footnote that although there is no reliable evidence in the fragments of Sappho for any impropriety in the conduct of herself or her companions, new evidence suggests that "the story might be different if the bulk of the Alexandrian collection of Sappho's poems had survived intact. At least there would be much more to say on the topic."¹⁶ As it is, the claim of the practice or non-practice of homosexual relations by Sappho is clearly in the realm of speculation. "Whatever the intimacies of her private life, it is clear that in Lesbos in her own day, her repute was unblemished."¹⁷

Although today's lesbianism is connected with Sappho and her school and she is offered as an example of homosexual practice in ancient Greece, evidence is almost non-existent. Earlier scholars of modern times defended Sappho's morality. They suggest that the Greek comic poets read into her writings the upper class morality and practices of their own society and time. The only evidence subject to interpretation as same-sex desire are a half dozen or so lines in poem 31 of the other writings. The tendency among scholars is to interpret

¹⁴ XV, 1800, fr 1, cd. 1. 16f.

¹⁵ Ibid; P. 142, n. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid; P. 144, n. 1.

¹⁷ J.B. Burry, *Greek Literature for the Eight Century to the Persian War*, (Cambridge University Press, 1939), 498.

these lines as love of women, but in the sense of the so-called elevated pederasty of the academy. Here, ethical restraint and consideration of the welfare of the object of desire played a part in the relationship. Page, the most recent scholar to assess Sappho's writings, suggests that poem 31 shows an inclination on the part of Sappho to "love of women", but declines to comment on her practice of lesbianism due to lack of evidence.

5.1.3 The Development of Pederasty in Classical Greece

The most common form of homosexuality among Greek males was pederasty. This term refers to a plan of education for boys in which they were placed by their fathers under the care of another man to be trained. As a feature of the system the boy, could be expected at times to provide his mentor, with homosexual favours. The Greeks themselves were divided in their understanding of the origin of pederasty among them. Herodotus, a widely travelled Greek historian and lecturer born about 484 B.C, assumed that "the Persians had learned it from the Greeks, whereas Plutarch of Chaeronea, a philosopher and bibliographer writing in the Hellenistic period (ca. A.D 120), traces the practice to Persia."¹⁸ It is possible these two authors are referring to quite different things under the same name.

In Athens pederasty already was deeply imbedded in the social structure by Solon's time (fl. 600B.C). Generally it was felt to be an honourable institution.

¹⁸ Herodotus, 1, 135. Plutarch, on the Malice of Herodotus, 13.

"The regulations of the legislation produced by Solon show that by that time boy-love was something customary for an Athenian."¹⁹ Solon, an Athenian statesman and poet, was himself of noble descent. But in his reform of the Athenian constitution he substituted wealth for birth as the principal criterion for political privilege. By this means he was able to mute the discontent of the unprivileged classes which had risen to a dangerous level because of their exploitation by the nobility.

The more one learns of classical Greek pederasty, however, the clearer it becomes that early Greek homosexuality was considered a strictly controlled convention rather than a "natural" and uncontrollable condition. Legal regulations stipulated that slaves could not traffic with freeborn, nor could a young man sell himself for money. This was no great barrier to the practice of homosexuality since it was generally accepted that anything mutually agreeable was excusable. Also, as time passed, this law fell into a dormant state. Foreigners and slave were not affected by this law, but no freeborn Athenian or Athenian citizen was to sell himself. Those who made a living from homosexual prostitution would be predominantly non-Athenians since foreigners were considered to be of less worth than citizens.

The adult Greek male who indulged in a homosexual relationship was expected to have that relationship with a young boy up to the age of puberty. The boy was not expected to enjoy the erotic aspect of the relationship, but merely endure it

¹⁹ Robinson and Fluck, P. 24.

for the sake of, and out of respect for, the older male. "If the boy sought bodily pleasure from the experience, he incurred disapproval as a prostitute or as perverted."²⁰

What the older male hoped to engender in the boy was not love primarily in a physical sense (eros) but a kind of love inspired by admiration and gratitude toward the older male philia. Such gratitude coupled with compassion would induce the boy to grant "favours" and perform the "services" which the older male desired. In public the behaviour of the two was expected to be decorous and circumspect. "Consequently, except for the boy and older male any homosexual activity between them remained to others a matter of conjecture."²¹

Ideally such a relationship was conducted in a most responsible manner and discussed only with the reticence and decorum if at all.

The gymnasium, a centre for the training of youth in academic, physical, and military discipline became famous (or infamous, depending on the point of view) for pederasty. "Here young men came to exercise in the nude and older men came to look at them and sometimes to seduce them."²² But society frowned upon this ogling and peeping at boys merely with a view to seducing them. The true erastes had the boy's physical and mental welfare in mind as well as the emotional and erotic aspects of the relationship. Once the young lad had come of

²⁰ Ibid; P. 52.

²¹ Ibid; PP. 53 – 54.

²² This situation as well as homosexuality in general is frequently the subject of ribald comedy in Aristophanes; see Peace, P. 762; and Birds, PP. 139 – 142.

age, he was not to submit himself homosexually to any man as a passive partner. If a young Greek citizen did so, he made himself liable to charges of homosexual submission.

5.1.4 Charges of Homosexuality as Political Handicap

Laws against selling oneself for homosexual acts could be revived if necessary to embarrass a political enemy. Precisely such an occurrence appears in the controversy between Aischines and Timarchos (fl. 350 B.C). These two men were orators (lawyers) and statesmen in Athens. Timarchos was a political ally of the great orator Demosthenes in his persistent opposition to the attempts of the Philip of Macedon to control Greece. Hence Demosthenes and Timarchos were the political enemies of Aischines, who sought to reconcile Athens to the Macedonian proposals. It was Timarchos who began prosecution of Aischines for his part in the peace negotiations. Aischines replied by charging Timarchos with a breach of law that forbade those guilty of notorious conduct from addressing the assembly where Demosthenes and Aischines were members. These disagreements between Demosthenes and "Aischines led to sixteen years of enmity between two men. Aischines sought to advance his case against Timarchos by citing law against Timarchos, who, he claimed, had sold himself as a prostitute for the sake of homosexual intercourse."²³ Perhaps encouraged by his earlier success against Timarchos, Aischines tried to prevent Demosthenes

²³ Dover, PP. 20 – 21.

from receiving a crown from the city by levelling similar charges against him.

The story is this: Demosthenes is about to be honoured for his service to the city by being awarded a crown in the theatre during the festival known as Dionysia.

"Aischines charges Demosthenes with homosexual submission."²⁴ In the clash he attempts to show that Demosthenes is unworthy of the crown. Demosthenes replies in a speech, ("concerning the crown") with all the power and devastating effect which his great rhetorical gifts could command, and he then wins the case.

The extraordinary effort by Demosthenes indicates the seriousness of the charge in the minds of Athenians. The idea that the younger partner would seek to initiate a homosexual act for his own sake was not a possibility allowed by any Greek enthusiast or apologist for homosexual *eros*.

5.1.5 Plato and Pederasty

Plato (429-347 B.C), a disciple and student of the great Socrates, gives the rules for the relationship.

When *erastes* and *eromenos* meet, each observing a rule, the *erastes* (sc. Rule) that it would be right for him to subordinate himself in any way to an *eromenos* who has granted him favors, and the *eromenos* (sc. The rule) that it would be right for him to perform any service for one who improves him in mind and character (lit; "who makes him *sophos* and *agathos*") ... then...in these circumstances alone, and in no others, it is creditable for an *eromenos* to grant favors to an *erastes*.²⁵

²⁴ Dover, P. 75.

²⁵ Plato, Symposium, 184 (I have followed Dover's translation).

Consequently, according to Plato, "It is creditable to grant any favor in any circumstances for the sake of becoming a better person (lit. for the sake of goodness)."²⁶ It is clear that in Athens at the time of Aischines, "whoever had sold his body while a boy or prostituted it, either unwillingly, by force or wantonly, lost his citizenship rights; he could not be one of the nine archons, neither could he be a priest. He could not be a herald, an ambassador, an orator, nor could he wear a crown."²⁷

The Greeks were not entirely consistent in their attitude to pederasty. A law of Solon forbade adult men entrance to the arena for exercise connected with gymnasium. "But before the end of the fifth century this law had fallen out of use or was no longer enforced. Plato could speak approvingly of pederasty in the symposium"²⁸ yet suggests in *The Republic* that there could be laws against it. Indeed, in *Republic III*, 403, he suggests that there should be "a law to the effect that a friend should use no other familiarity to his love than a father would use to his son." This ambiguity may stem from the difference between a rigidly controlled and sublimated boy-love emphasizing physical and intellectual development and, in contrast, what was considered a degenerate sort of relation formed simply for erotic satisfaction. Karlen sees the chief justification of

²⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, 185 (Dover's tr).

²⁷ Robinson and Fluck, P. 42.

²⁸ In *symposium* 181, Plato, perhaps with tongue in cheek, had state that there should be a law against pederasty because of the waste of Zeal and effort on an object so uncertain as youth. He attributes the uncertainty to the impossibility of predicting whether a youth would end in vice or virtue of mind and body. Even in his praise of pederasty the erotic element is not paramount in Plato's thinking.

pederasty as being of the higher sort, as Cretan and Dorian homosexuality. Here the relationship between a man and a boy was supposed to be pedagogic, the interesting to produce brave men and good citizens. He concludes,

Now, if the relationship continued, it was the man's job to mold the boy into a good citizen and brave warrior. Here as in Sparta, says Plutarch, it was considered shameful for a wellborn boy of twelve or thirteen not to have a lover. The phrase "wellborn", like the assumption of having city and country homes and time for a long honeymoon, indicates an upper class phenomenon.²⁹

Karlen's negative judgement results partly from his conviction that intellectual Athenian homosexuals attempted to justify homosexuality by rewriting myth and history to produce homosexual gods and heroes in abundance. He finds the culmination of this tendency in Plato's symposium where the author attributes everything virtuous and desirable to homosexuality.

Although there may be some truth in Karlen's thesis, he overstates the case. "There can be no doubt that intelligent Greeks attempted to sublimate and elevate the conventional boy – older male relationship to a high ethical plane which few men reached in actual practice."³⁰ In the story of Socrates and his young student, Alcibiades, we have the student attempting repeatedly to seduce the teacher but without success. Clearly, the nature of the boy – older male relationship and the amount of erotic invested in it would depend heavily on the nature and character of the individuals involved. Some argue that "the love of

²⁹ A. Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality: A new view*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971), P. 26.

³⁰ J. Ferguson, *Moral Values in the Ancient World*. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), P. 89.

men for boys was never quite sanctioned by society, consequently both laws and parents united in their efforts to check and control it."³¹ From this perspective the very institution of the *paedagogos* (a guardian or custodian who protected the boy) is proof enough of the attitude of the parents toward *paederastia*.

Bryant also takes a different view of the symposium of Plato. True, Plato's work is a beautiful defense of love between men, but Plato also distinguishes two orders of love. First, the love manifested in the senses and second, the love of the soul. He places *paederastia* in the latter. Here the ideal as the perfect philosopher friend, "we cannot deny that, as he refines it, the relation approaches that perfect friendship which has been the dream of so many philosophers."³² According to Plato "about all the care and attention some boys' education received was derived from the interest of their older male in getting the best for them."³³ Many a lad grew to manhood watched over and guided by mature wisdom and looked upon with admiration and respect by his older males. This at least was the ideal, though not all relationships kept to this high a plane. As Bryant concludes, not all reached the high ideal, but not all abused the convention either.

Even the temperate and high-minded Socrates requires all his iron will at times to banish unholy desires, as he confesses himself, with humility. To too many *erastae* the paramount interest was the body and not the soul of the boys for whose favour they sued. For such a relation even Plato has nothing to say, though he admits its prevalence, at least outside of Athens. It is easy, of course, to overdraw the part which abuse of the relation played in the community life; just as it is idle

³¹ A.A. Bryant, "Boyhood in Athens," *Harvard studies in classical Philology* 18 (1907): 101 – 102.

³² *Ibid*; P. 105.

³³ Plato, *Alcibiades* 1, 103, 135: *Symposium*, 213, 215 – 216.

to deny that its influence was on the whole bad. And yet those who threw away all restraint must have been in the minority.³⁴

Again, it probably is true that "the Greeks never 'canonised' the physical act of sodomy. They always kept up the fiction of 'educational paederasty."³⁵ But to be fair to the sons of Hellas, however, "we need to add that homosexual practice was largely the result of an approving social convention and the weakness of human nature on the part of most Greeks rather than deliberate plan or personal decision."³⁶ It is possible to see many of the Greeks as being, from Paul's point of view, ignorantly well intentioned. Their times of ignorance god winked at. Devereux adds the insight that "pre-Platonic homosexuality, while behaviourally real, was psychologically spurious."³⁷ What he is saying is that the Greeks were not "perverts" (a word which actually appears to mean in his article what we have described as "invert"). He explains,

A contemporary adolescent, courted by adult men, taught to glory in such attentions, and subjected to homosexual practices, would, in most cases, become a genuine and permanent pervert (i.e. invert?); in the rest of the cases he would become a neurotic. The Greek adolescent, however, ended up as a non-neurotic, completely (or predominantly) heterosexual adult.³⁸

Devereux concludes that the Greeks saw the boys experience as a stage in the

³⁴ Bryant, PP. 106 – 107.

³⁵ Karlen, P. 33.

³⁶ J.J. Chapman, Lucian, Plato and Greek morals. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), P. 132.

³⁷ G. Devereux, "Greek Pseudo-Homosexuality and the Greek Miracle," *Symbolae Osloensis* 42 (1967): 69.

³⁸ *Ibid*; P. 70.

child's development toward masculinity and, although it may not have been the best way, it was encouraged by inadequate fathering. "The Greeks, consequently, were not inverts in the sense we have described, involved in homosexuality from deep personal need or even underlying perverted fanatics. Neither was there an anti-hedonistic aggressivity involved. For Devereux the average Greek was not an invert."³⁹ Rather in the typical youth culture in classical Greece, homosexuality was but one way to prolong youth and keeping touch with the privileged, admired, and irresponsible world of adolescence. This produced a strange convention where another man brought up and educated one's sons. We read:

The Greek father usually failed to counsel his son; instead he counselled another man's son, in whom he was erotically interested. As for the boy, who needed an effective father to model himself upon, he had to rely on his erastes, who also served as a father surrogate.⁴⁰

In Sparta the older male was responsible even for the misconduct of the boys; the father having no responsibility. "The expectation for the Greek youth after the boys stage, however, was that he would marry and rear a family."⁴¹ Although he might have a boy himself, he would by no means subject himself passively to another man without receiving scorn. Whatever the origin of this convention in which a stranger raised and educated the sons of another's family, receiving as

³⁹ Ibid; PP. 71 – 73.

⁴⁰ Ibid; P. 78; Plato, Laches, 179 – 180.

⁴¹ W. Churchill, Homosexual behaviour among Males: A Cross Cultural and Cross Species Investigation. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), PP. 140 – 141.

his fee certain sexual favours from the youth and association with him, certain classes of Greeks countenanced the practice for some time. However, the presence of a privileged and powerful oligarchy in Greece unwittingly fostered a double standard in pederasty; one for the nobles and citizens where youths were protected by ethical, social and political considerations; another for enfranchised Greeks and foreigners where lust was the only limit. In time the latter tended to overshadow the former.

As we have seen, Greek society appears to have had an ambivalent attitude to pederasty. Citizens were protected from homosexual exploitation. Any man who had submitted himself to another merely for gain was scorned and his reputation sullied. Any youth tutored by an older man was expected to allow him sexual favors, but the boy was not indulge in it for enjoyment or gain, but out of respect for the older man. In intellectual circles there was a tendency to elevate and ethicize the relationship so that it became a "platonic" friendship. This was not always successful. Even Plato recognized that outside the academy the practice of boy-love degenerated to licentiousness.

5.1.6 Plato's Defense of Pederasty versus Sensualism and Licentiousness

Whatever high spiritual ideals may have been attached originally to the practice of pederasty, its tacit licensing of erotic expression as a reward for services offered damaged the social fabric. No matter how charming, innocent and quietly intimate it may have been at first; it did not take long for less sensitive

souls to legitimate their lustful and sometimes violent activities as pederasty. Those who did not believe, like Plato, that the unseen soul and ideas were the only reality quickly gravitated to an intense and exclusive preoccupation with outward physical beauty. This development of pederasty in two directions is summarized nicely by Robinson and Fluck:

To sum up, then, the path of development which pederasty had taken, I quote John Addington Symonds: "We find two separate forms of masculine passion clearly marked in early Hellas - a noble and a base, a spiritual and a sensual." As Maximum Tyrius says: "The one is Greek, the other barbarous; the one is virile, the other effeminate." The mixed form (*poikilos*) on which the Greeks prided themselves and on which Plato was decisive, was a passionate and enthusiastic attachment between man and youth, recognized by society and protected by opinion. Though it was not free from sensuality, it did not degenerate into mere licentiousness.⁴²

This dual tradition of boy-love coupled with the Greek appreciation of attractive physical form was easily misunderstood and perverted by those who followed the practice. Even in the Academy the overemphasis on outward form and beauty meant that the gangling Athenian youths with acne had less chance of receiving a good education than his comely counterpart, at least with an older male.

Plato attempted to uphold an idealistic pederasty governed by ethical self-control. "Socrates' advice to Hippothales is reported in Plato's *Lysis* 222. Plato recognizes that there are many more non-lovers than lovers."⁴³ It is not only the

⁴² Robinson and Fluck, P. 42.

⁴³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 231 – 232.

lover who can be a firm friend. Indeed, true love does not seek the effeminate and submissive youth. Plato even describes the older male as wolf who forces his attention upon the younger man, not with real kindness but because he has an appetite and wants to feed on the youth."⁴⁴

How then can Plato defend this relationship at all? "He defends it philosophically (theologically) on the basis of divine madness (*manike*), the immorality and transmigration of the soul, recollection, and idealism."⁴⁵

Plato's dualism always leaves an element of doubt or ambiguity about bodily pleasure. "At times he seems to spiritualize the entire relationship while on other occasions it becomes physical."⁴⁶ In the Symposium, Plato considers pederasty the greatest of blessings: "For I know not any greater blessing to a young man who is beginning life than a virtuous lover, or to the lover than a beloved youth."⁴⁷ Plato then makes clear the far-reaching ethical and social ramifications of this ideal relationship:

And I say that a lover who is detected in doing any dishonorable act or submitting through cowardice when any dishonor is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father or by his companions, or by anyone else. The beloved, too, when he is found in any disgraceful situation has the same feeling about his lover. And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army should be made up of lovers and their loves, they would be the very best governors of their

⁴⁴ Ibid; 240 – 241.

⁴⁵ Ibid; 244 – 256.

⁴⁶ Ibid; 255 – 256.

⁴⁷ Plato, Symposium, 178. Quotations from the symposium are from Jowett's translation, B. Jowett, the Dialogues of Plato: Translated into English with Analyses and Introduction (London: oxford university press, 1924).

own city, abstaining from all dishonor, and emulating one another in honor; and when fighting at each other's side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world. For what lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger? The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest at such a time; love would inspire him. That courage which, as Homer says, the god breathes in the souls of some heroes, love of his own nature infuses into the hero.⁴⁸

At this point Plato begins to enumerate Homeric heroes who were inspired with this love, a process that Karlen calls a rewriting of history to glorify homosexuality. Plato distinguishes between the heavenly Aphrodite and the common or earthly Aphrodite. The love of youth comes from the heavenly Aphrodite. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, inspired love in human beings. Normally it was male for female and vice-versa. Plato, however, in his typical dualistic pattern divides Aphrodite into a heavenly Aphrodite and an earthly Aphrodite. For Plato only the heavenly ideas were reality. Matter was transient, deceptive, evil. He subsumes heterosexual relations under the earthly Aphrodite.

But the offspring of the heavenly Aphrodite is derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part; she is from the male only; this is the love which is of youths, and the goddess being older, there is nothing of wantonness in her. Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature; anyone may recognize the pure enthusiasts in the very character of their attachments. For they love not boys, but intelligent beings whose reason is beginning to be developed, much about the time at which their beards begin to grow. And in choosing

⁴⁸ Ibid; 178 – 179.

young men to be their companions, they mean to be faithful to them, and pass their whole life in company with them, not to take them in their inexperience, and deceive them, and play the fool with them, or run away from one to another of them.⁴⁹

In contrast, followers of the earthly Aphrodite, whether in love of woman or youths, are the foolish and ignoble who do good and evil indiscriminately. Plato's statement, already quoted, suggests that boy-love should be outlawed since it is uncertain how their souls will turn out and much noble enthusiasm may be wasted on them. The statement itself testifies to a male dominant culture and in general displays almost a misogynist attitude.

Plato was well aware that pederasty was practised by two very different groups of people for whom he tries to present a rationale. He recognizes that not all parents approve of the relationship and place their children under a tutor's care. Plato insists, however, that such practices are honorable if followed honorably. "Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul, inasmuch as he is not even stable, because he loves a thing which is in itself unstable."⁵⁰ For Plato "the attachment must be voluntary and impart virtue."⁵¹

5.1.7 The Androgynous Myth

Plato's dualism and divine madness did not account for the attraction of men to youths, not even to Plato himself, "so he goes into great detail on the

⁴⁹ Ibid; 181.

⁵⁰ Ibid; 183.

⁵¹ Ibid; 184.

androgynous Man-Woman Myth to explain it."⁵²

In this myth Plato explains that primal man was dual. He had four hands, four feet, two faces and two privy parts, that is, like two people back to back - the faces opposite directions. Some of these dual, primal creatures were male in both parts; others were female in both parts and yet other (a third sex) part male and part female. These primal creatures were so strong that they became insolent, attacking the gods. Because of their continued insolence, Zeus divided these dual four-legged creatures into two-legged creatures. A dual male became two males; a dual female two females and the male-female (androgynous) became a male and a female. On this basis he accounts for the differing sexual desires apparent in society, for each creature searches out its own or opposite kind, according to its original orientation. When dual parts encounter each other they fall in love. "By the creation of this myth Plato attempts to explain the attraction some men and women have for persons of the same sex."⁵³

However, dualism has the last word. Those pregnant in the body only betake themselves to women and beget children, whereas pregnant souls wonder about seeking beauty in souls. Those having an affinity of soul have a closer union and friendship than those who beget mortal children. Hence beauty of soul is more important than beauty of form. Taken at face value there is a defensible element here; but for Plato the immortally invisible soul (idea) is the only reality. In the

⁵² Symposium, 189 – 192.

⁵³ Ibid; 189 – 192. Plato tries to clinch his argument with the example of Socrates and Alcibiades, 217 – 219.

Republic Plato "would have no more familiarity between older boys and young boys than between father and son, and in the laws he recommends the death penalty for violence done to a free woman or a youth."⁵⁴

Plato himself was aware that the controlled aesthetic pederasty he advocated was not followed by the majority. Therefore he goes to great lengths to show that this type of love and this alone is the one which is philosophically (theologically) defensible. For Plato this kind of pederasty is "natural" since he defends it with a myth of origins and from a philosophical — theological perspective. Aristotle, a student of Plato, also "recognized that pederasty may be practical for various reasons — either from custom, habit or nature."⁵⁵

5.1.8 Homosexuality in Greek Drama

A brief word is appropriate about the use of Attic Comedy as historical evidence in a serious and accurate account of homosexuality. The idea that drama always represent reality is a misleading notion. Poets in ancient Greece pictured the gods as enjoying sodomy, masturbation and fellatio. A first glance at old attic comedy might lead one to believe that "the Greeks lived in a rosy haze of uninhibited sexuality."⁵⁶ There is reason to believe that the Greeks themselves, at least Athenian audiences did not suppose that the figures in tragedy represented normal human beings in normal family circumstances. "On the other hand

⁵⁴ Plato, Republic, III 403; Laws IX 874. Symonds, P. 52.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics VII 5.

⁵⁶ K.J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the time of Plato and Aristotle. (Oxford: Basil, Blackwell, 1974), P. 205.

comedy generally dealt with normal people in comic situations.⁵⁷ Ehrenburg demonstrates that "old Attic comedy is truthful about all real facts, especially those relating to the general conditions of life."⁵⁸ He takes the comedies to be a good source of reality; "reality in essence here meaning the everyday life occurrences which are not displaced in comedy (as in tragedy), by myth."⁵⁹ Men of all classes are attacked and ridiculed in Old Attic comedy. "Comedy pictures the reality of everyday life as background, for the average spectator of comedy must have familiar ground to stand on if the dramatist is to make his point."⁶⁰ David shows that political satire, likewise, was not simply the dramatist's personal response to a political treatise or philosophical arguments. Authors dealt with subjects familiar to the populace and popular subjects of discussion.⁶¹ Sexual matters were unduly prominent in comedy and the outstanding quality that characterized noblemen was the practice of pederasty.

It was one of the most favored (and most exaggerated) themes of comedy... There were, of course, very different types of pederasty, from fashionable liaisons down to venal love; but from comedy one gets the impression that the differences had almost disappeared. The comic writers again and again sneer at the members of the aristocratic circle as paederasts.⁶²

Though this bias of comedy concerning aristocracy and pederasty should not be

⁵⁷ W.K. Lacey, *The family in classical Greece* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), P. 10.

⁵⁸ V. Ehrenburg, *The people of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1943), P. 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*; P. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*!; PP. 19, 26 – 27.

⁶¹ E. David, *Aristophanes and Athenian Society of the Early fourth century B.C.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), PP. 21,27.

⁶² Ehrenburg, P. 77.

construed as a moral judgment per se, it is hard to escape the idea that even here the attitude of comedy echoes a feeling held by many. In comedy a slave is never the object of homosexual love. All those ridiculed for practicing it come from the upper classes. "Both pederasty and misogyny are attacked in comedy; treated as upper class practices which went hand in hand but did not represent urban and rural middle-class views."⁶³ In poor and middle-class families there was much more opportunity for boys and girls to get acquainted with each other and carry on love affairs. "The upper classes, on the other hand, made it extremely difficult for a young man to establish contact with the daughter of another citizen. Even if he managed to do so, he might place himself in considerable danger."⁶⁴ Furthermore, pederasty was expensive, which also tended to limit its practice to the upper classes and wealthy. At least in comedy, it was the practice of aristocrats and those who cared to imitate them. Consequently, it was held suspect by the common people and at times became a means of arousing prejudice in legal cases, as we have seen. In comedy, then, we find a tendency to exaggerate sexual (particularly homosexual) matters. In addition it gives evidence for a degree of class bias including, to a certain extent, bias against homosexuality itself. This needs to be kept in mind as we approach the texts. Aeschylus, the prolific Greek playwright of about 500 B.C, in *Seven Against Thebes*, speaks of "man, woman — or some despicable thing halfway twixt them

⁶³ Ibid; PP. 133, 143. There is no mention of Spartan homosexuality involving all of society.

⁶⁴ Dover, PP. 209 – 211.

both.”⁶⁵ A reference to the effeminate male Aristophanes, the great poet of old attic comedy (born ca 457 B.C), speaks derisively of the effeminate, "O thou young shaver of the hot-souled rump, with such a beard, thou monkey, dost thou come tricked out amongst us in a eunuch's disguise?" Here of course, is a reference to the youth who remains passive after puberty and shaves his buttocks to retain the appearance of pre-pubertal youth. Another reference in the same work describes such a character as,

The little fop we all despise, the young Cratinus neatly shorn
with single razor wanton — wise, that Artemon — engineer
of ill, whose father sprang from an old he-goat, and father and
son, as ye all may note, are rank with its fragrance still.⁶⁶

In *The Knights* Aristophanes pronounces what may have been only too true of homosexual relations outside the Academy, that is, purely erotic and indiscriminate, "you yourself, excuse me sir, are like boys with lovers. The honest gentleman you won't accept, yet give yourself to lantern-selling chaps, to sinew-stitchers, cobblers, aye and tanners."⁶⁷ He also speaks of boy-love as associated with "vile degrading crimes."⁶⁸ He portrays the obviously low-class sausage-seller in *The Knights* as having "sold sausages... and myself."⁶⁹ Toward the end of *The Knights* is a play on words and possible jibe at what we have described as situational homosexuality, "First, when the sailors from my ships of

⁶⁵ Ibid. P. 226.

⁶⁶ Aristophanes, *The Archarnians*, 123 – 125; 153 – 159.

⁶⁷ Aristophanes, *The Knights*, 696 – 699.

⁶⁸ Ibid; 883 – 886.

⁶⁹ Ibid; 1250 – 1252.

war come home, I'll pay them all arrears in full," To which the sausage-seller answers, For that, full many a well-worn rump will bless you."⁷⁰ Of course, this could mean that their sailor's posterior was tired from rowing, but the double-entendre is clear.

"Aristophanes contains references to the beardless boys in the agora whom he identifies with the striplings in the perfume mart,"⁷¹ and in the clouds he "bemoans the loss of the good old days of the mainly aesthetic pederasty of the gymnasium, which has degenerated into effete customs and practices."⁷² The former seems to have been held in a certain amount of respect by some Greeks, whereas the latter was generally despised. Of these two classes it was unfortunately also the latter, featuring effeminacy and prostitution, that was predominantly received by the Hellenistic world as the legacy of classical Greece.

Briefly, pederasty developed along two lines. First, a more refined version practised among intellectuals in which affection for boys led older men to care for and train them. Sometimes this involved a sensual element but it was supposed to be a controlled and elevated relationship that took the boys' interests into consideration. Some ancient critics claimed that this was not always the case, which probably is correct.

⁷⁰ Ibid; 1364 – 1368.

⁷¹ Ibid; 1373 – 1376.

⁷² Aristophanes, *The clouds*, 965 – 1018.

The second direction in which pederasty went was toward sensualism, licentiousness, exploitation, and prostitution. Since all men had sexual drive but not all had the education, philosophy and bent of those who attended the academies, such an outcome was inevitable. Aside from the androgynous myth, Plato's defense of "ethical" pederasty is based on an anthropology that is fundamentally a metaphysical dualism. This entire philosophical premise now is widely recognized as alien to the Biblical understanding of the nature of man. For the Christian, therefore, the practice of pederasty as explained by Plato is founded on an erroneous concept of the nature of homosexuality or an accurate statement of its origins because of his immortal soul doctrine does not give an accurate picture of the nature of man and on that premise alone it is unacceptable. Plato does not present an accurate picture of the nature of man. Although they exaggerate and are biased, the dramatists provide some clues to social life in Athens with respect to homosexuality. We cannot conclude that homosexuality existed only among the noble and intellectual classes, but it was common enough among them that jibes were well understood. Any indiscretion in this direction also was eagerly picked up and used as a political tool against them by their peers. At any rate the dramatists show us that pederasty was not limited to the refined type described, defined, and defended by Plato.

5.2 New Testament Historical Background - The Hellenistic World

5.2.1 Pederasty and Prostitution in Later Greek Practice

No major change in attitude or activity concerning homosexuality stands between the earlier Greek and Hellenistic periods. Pausanius, a character in Plato's dialogue, *Symposium* 182, observes that in Greece as well as abroad there were cities that frowned on homosexuality and others whose laws favoured it. This was increasingly true following the fourth century B.C when Alexander carried Greek influence to many new regions, beginning what is called the Hellenistic era. Cities with large Jewish populations frequently were anti-homosexual. Although during the Hellenistic era even Jewish mores eroded considerably in some areas, there is no evidence of general Jewish acceptance of this practice. The manly ideal of pederasty continued in the gymnasias of the Hellenistic world with their all-male emphasis, military training, sports and nudity for exercises. In some of the countries and cities where gymnasias were established, however, there already existed a tradition of effeminate homosexuality. Further, the status of women in many countries occupied by the Greeks was higher than that of Greek women. "Consequently, the invading Greeks and their descendants who remained on foreign soil were required to deal with women whose status was equal or almost equal to their own."⁷³

⁷³ R.E. White, "Women in Ptolemaic Egypt," *JHS* 18 (1898): 238-266, C.C. Edgar, "A women's club in Alexandria," *JEA* 4 (1917): 253-254.

"The effeminate actor-dancer also was well-known outside of Greece."⁷⁴ In short, both the high status of women and practice of effeminate homosexuality outside Greece were serious factors to contend with when Greeks ventured abroad. The result was development of both the female and effeminate erotic elements in the Hellenistic life.

As Licht observes,

The more the foreign element penetrates the Greek spirit the more pederasty retires into the background; the female element begins to occupy more space when, especially in the large cities, the intercourse of young men with hetaerae increased.⁷⁵

As a result the meaning of homosexuality in the Hellenistic world broadened to include everything from the sublimated educational process between older male and young boys to extremes of rape and prostitution of adult effeminate. The manly and academic ideal still was held in the theory, but probably was practised in the breach rather than as the rule. In Hellenistic times a debate developed that compared the virtues and vices of pederasty vis-à-vis sexual relations with women. Scroggs has described the homosexual scene in the Hellenistic era as "composed of sublimated pederasty, slave prostitution and the effeminate call-boy. All of this met stern opposition from Judaism, particularly Diaspora Judaism."⁷⁶ Sublimated pederasty in the Hellenistic milieu was similar to the

⁷⁴ C.C. Edgar, "Records of a village club," *pulicazioni di Aegyptus-Serie Scientifica 3, Raccolta di Scritti in Onore di Ciriaco Lumbroso 1844-1825* (Milan, 1925): 369-76.

⁷⁵ H.Licht, *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1952), P. 438.

⁷⁶ R. Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress press, 1983), PP. 29-98.

Greek phenomenon. Hellenistic epigrams in the Greek anthology show that the same concerns, emotions, and social conventions continued into later times. "Perhaps one new twist is that of a *hetaira* dressing up as a boy to attract the young *ephibes* in the gymnasium."⁷⁷ In a unique way it demonstrates that in that bastion of Greek culture, the gymnasium, pederasty was in vogue. Here also "we find the typical Greek defence of homosexual love,"⁷⁸ as well as a poem to "a boy whose charms are beginning to fade."⁷⁹ Callimachus produces a series of epigrams on *eromenoi*⁸⁰ and Rhianus on the diverse charms of different boys.⁸¹ Even the large number of anonymous epigrams dwell on homosexuality and the relation between older male and young boys.⁸² In them we find scarcely anything but the transference of the Greek pederastic tradition to foreign soil. Slave prostitution was practised in Greece, and it acquired an effeminate nature in the expanded Greek Empire. Young slave boys often were castrated before or after puberty in order to prolong their youthful appearance and subsequently their usefulness for homosexual activities. "This clearly was not a part of the old Greek ideal although increasingly it became characteristic of the Hellenistic age."⁸³ "These pathics or effeminates were sometimes used commercially in

⁷⁷ Asclepiades, XX. The epigrams are found in A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology, Hellenistic Epigrams*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

⁷⁸ Asclepiades, XXXVII.

⁷⁹ Asclepiades, XLVI.

⁸⁰ Callimachus, V-XI.

⁸¹ Rhianus, III.

⁸² Anonymous, VIII-XXIII.

⁸³ T. Hopfner, *Das Sexualleben der Griechen Und Romer Von den Anfängen bis Ins 6. Jahrhundert nach Christus* (New York: Ams Press, 1975), PP. 418-420.

brothels or as household servants for wealthy men to whom they provided sexual favours.”⁸⁴ The servants of wealthy men frequently acted as procurers of beautiful boys and girls for the sexual indulgence of their masters. The beauty of Aristobulus, the young son of Herod the Great was reported to Mark Antony by his servant who hoped to procure the lad and his sister for the sexual satisfaction of his master. The Jewish historian, Josephus, writing about A.D 93, reports that Herod,

Decided that it would not be safe for him to send Aristobulus, who was the most handsome — being just sixteen — of a distinguished family, to Antony, who was more powerful than any Roman of his time, and was ready to use him for erotic purposes and was able to indulge in undisguised pleasure because of his power.⁸⁵

Unbridled lust may not have been more prevalent in Hellenistic times than in the early Greek experiences, but it was written about more, and in extremely frank, vulgar, and sometimes obscene language. The treatment of sex and homosexuality in Roman authors such as Lucilius, Horace, Persius, Petronius, Juvenal, Catallus, and Ovid leaves little to the imagination. Seemingly unobtainable objects of lust could be obtained by stealth and trickery by means of a procurer or procureress for the right sum of money. "Sometimes it was done with the connivance and co-operation of personnel in a temple under the guise of religious ritual."⁸⁶ Although worship in many pagan temples was not necessarily

⁸⁴ Petronius, *Satyricon*, II, 79f; Lucian, *Timon*, 22; Seneca, *Epistle*, XLVII 7, Suetonius, *Nero*, XXVIII.

⁸⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* XV. 26-30.

⁸⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII. 65-80.

a sex act, "it was customary to use temples in search of love-adventures with men or women."⁸⁷ Roman homosexuality usually was connected with the baths. In addition, actors and mimes were expected to have a homosexual disposition. A prolific literature grew up "describing various sexual experiences, saturated with salacious puns. The result is an extensive Roman sexual vocabulary."⁸⁸ However, although adultery and homosexuality are mentioned in the literature without censure, Veyene observes that "the interested parties would be discreet enough to admit nothing, and pretend to know nothing."⁸⁹ Satire and literary invective frequently employed sexual imagery and obscenity became an art form, asserting the claims of nature against convention. "In such works men and women were reduced not merely to sex objects but to sex organs."⁹⁰

In Roman literature sexual and homosexual activity appears at times as sheer voluptuousness, degenerating on occasion to sadomasochism. It involved the exploitation of slaves and other defenceless persons. Emperors such as Nero and Caligula led the way. Nero castrated a youth named Sporus and married him, declaring the boy to be his "empress." Churchill contrasts this effeminacy with the Greek masculine ideal:

While the Greeks were charmed by the masculinity of their favourites and looked upon their passion as an opportunity to better the condition of the beloved, it was necessary for Nero to remove the clearest evidence of masculinity in Sporus, to

⁸⁷ O. Kiefer, *Sexual life in Ancient Rome*. (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1934), P. 129.

⁸⁸ J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). P. 13.

⁸⁹ P. Veyne, *Homosexuality in Ancient Rome*, "Western Sexuality Practice and Precept in past and present times; (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), P. 32.

⁹⁰ L.C. Curran, "Nature, Convention and Obscenity in Horace's Satires," *Arion* 9 (1970): 221, 235.

feminize him and to degrade rather than elevate him. Such cruel and eccentric acts were not at all uncommon among the Romans, but had virtually no precedent in the history of the Greeks.⁹¹

Karlen suggests that "this came about by the Roman mind's equating eunuchism and homosexuality with eastern religious cults, particularly that of Cybele and the eunuch priests, the Galli."⁹² In his *Metamorphoses* Apulleius describes the eunuch-priests of Cybele as passive homosexuals with insatiable appetites for sexual gratification, who rape a dinner guest. This is significant in itself, for Roman invective assumed that there was only one main kind of male homosexual, that is, pathic (those who were anally penetrated). These are frequently identified as *effeminatus*. If the Romans wished to hint at underlying sexual profligacy or perversion, they had a full vocabulary at their command to do so. "Besides speaking of a man as pathicus or effimatus, he might be called *mollis* ("soft"), or any of a dozen or more adjectives connoting weakness or delicacy."⁹³

One of the most common accusations in graffiti, political slanging matches, political lampoons, and courtroom attacks is "pathic". Usually it designated three kinds of behaviour: (1) having been the boy of some older man previously; (2) as an adult, continuing to enjoy being penetrated anally by other men; and (3)

⁹¹ W. Churchill, *Homosexual Behaviour Among Males: A cross-cultural and cross-species investigation*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), P. 61.

⁹² A. Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality. A New View* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971), P> 61.

⁹³ A. Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), PP. IX, 92.

enjoying fellatio. In Rome as in Greece, a man seeking to discredit another could do so by claiming that he had been or still was sexually passive. Sexual intercourse with young slave boys was regarded not only socially acceptable but also normal, whereas sexual intercourse with free-born boys was shameful and illegal, no doubt out of consideration for the boy's pride and future reputation.

The aggressive position carried no stigma; what bothered the Romans most in male homosexual behaviour was assumption of the female role. It was disgraceful for a Roman citizen to act as the passive instrument for another's pleasure.

Artemidorus (Second Century AD) travelled widely in the ancient Near East in a study of dreams. Eventually he wrote a treatise on the interpretation of dreams. This man, a good representative of the majority opinion, described intercourse with his wife, mistress, male or female slave as normal behaviour. But he stopped short of accepting the passive role; "to let oneself be buggered by one's own slave is not right. It is an assault on one's person and leads to one being despised by one's slave."⁹⁴ "It was the Sodomite (*cinaedus*) held up to ridicule in Petronius, a Roman novelist of the First Century AD."⁹⁵ Often these were pathics who danced and cut lewd capers at banquets. Often they were freeborn youths or men who sold their services to individuals for sexual gratification.

⁹⁴ Ibid; PP. 220-221, 225.

⁹⁵ Petronius, Satyricon, II, 21; or passive boys, II, 81.

Cicero informs us that "Mark Antony of Antony and Cleopatra fame, played this role as a youth."⁹⁶ He asserts that Antony played the passive role and was basically the harlot "mistress" of another man to whom he functioned as a wife. Such practices often could be quite remunerative. If youths remained indefinitely in such a role, they emphasised their effeminate position by imitating the toilette of women. "They mimicked feminine hair styles, make up, depletion of masculine body hair and sometimes feminine attire."⁹⁷ Scroggs notes that "among several words used to refer to such persons was *malakos*, a Greek word meaning "soft" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10), that Paul uses to refer to this specific category of person."⁹⁸ He continues by surveying the Hellenistic arguments for and against pederasty."⁹⁹ The debate in Hellenistic times survives today in two authors — Plutarch of Chaeronea (ca. AD 50-120), and Lucian of Samosata, from the late Second Century AD. Arguments for pederasty included the platonic ideal of a non-sexual relationship, illustrated in ancient times by the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, and a second view that allowed sexual gratification in the pursuit of wisdom. Pederasty, it was thought, contributed in some way to the growing wisdom of the youth involved in it. Thus "Protogenes in Plutarch's *Erotikos* speaks of the love of women as an effeminate and bastard love, but true love brings young and talented souls to virtue, that is,

⁹⁶ Cicero, Philippics II, 44-45.

⁹⁷ Ibid. P. 45.

⁹⁸ Scroggs, P. 42.

⁹⁹ Ibid; PP. 44-65.

boy-love."¹⁰⁰ Pederasty clearly is touted as more masculine than heterosexuality and worthier, since men are worthier than women. Protegenes appears not merely as a pederast but as a misogynist.

Daphnaeus advances arguments against pederasty. He argues for what to us seems obvious, "that intercourse between men and women is natural and conducive to friendship,"¹⁰¹ that the love of men and the love of women is of the same sort. If anything, male effeminacy is an affront to Aphrodite. Daphnaeus rejects Plato's heavenly Aphrodite versus earthly Aphrodite dichotomy. So did Philo of Alexandria, who thought of the idea as humorous."¹⁰² Boy-love can be thought of as the late born son of an old man who tries to disinherit true love. He comes slinking into the gymnasium to corrupt the boys there. Plutarch exposes academic pederasty as a sham:

It plays the highbrow and publicly proclaims that it is a philosopher and disciplined on the outside — because of the law. But when the night comes and all is quiet, "sweet is the harvest when the guard's away."¹⁰³

Protegenes counters these arguments by arguing that "the young man must be ruled by someone during his youth, who better than his older male? Were not the heroes of old susceptible to this kind of love and does not the true lover use the beautiful body simply as an instrument to memory?"¹⁰⁴ Of course these are

¹⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Erotikos*, 750c – 751a.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*; 751c.

¹⁰² *Ibid*; 751d; cf. Philo, *The Contemplative life*, 59-62.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*; 751;752a.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*; 758b; 761d, 766a.

Platonic arguments posited to counter the picture of pederasty as a lascivious assault

"that is why we class those who enjoy the passive part as belonging to the lowest depth of vice and allow them not the least degree of confidence or respect or friendship."¹⁰⁵

The arguments alternate between the two antagonists, but Plutarch ends the debate with an endorsement of heterosexuality.

There are very few examples of a durable relationship among boy lovers, but countless numbers of successful unions with women may be enumerated, distinguished from beginning to end by every sort of fidelity and zealous loyalty.¹⁰⁶

Lucian, a later writer, favours pederasty. Lucian admits that "some men give the appearance of devotion to physical training in the wrestling schools while their real interest is boy-love."¹⁰⁷ He grants that Aphrodite made men for women and vice versa. He despises "eunuchism for homosexuality and espouses the ideal concept of pederasty."¹⁰⁸ His misogynist leanings surface in the following statement: "And how much better that a woman should invade the provinces of male wantonness than that the nobility of the male sex should become effeminate and play the part of a woman."¹⁰⁹

Lucian concedes that marriage is necessary for the perpetuity of the race that is why boy-love did not appear in earlier times. But with leisure came the pursuit

¹⁰⁵ Ibid; 768e.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid; 770c.

¹⁰⁷ Lucian, *Erotos*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid; 19-20.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; 28.

of wisdom and knowledge and men have found boy-love to be the stablest of loves.¹¹⁰ "Lucian considers idealistic pederasty to be bred into people from childhood and enacted by divine laws."¹¹¹ This is of interest since most Hellenistic writers considered it contrary to nature. Lucian's view of pederasty is summed up in one of his concluding statements

Marriage is a boon and blessing to men when it meets with good fortune, while the love of boys, that pays court to the hallowed due of friendship, I consider to be the privilege only of philosophy. Therefore, all men should marry, but let only the wise be permitted to love boys, for perfect virtue grows least of all among women. And you must not be angry charicles, if Corinth yields to Athens.¹¹²

Of course, Corinth was notorious for its female prostitutes whereas Athens was the centre of academic pederasty. In brief, the basic arguments against pederasty were that law and public opinion opposed it, that philosophy was a sham cover-up for erotic escapades, that it encouraged boys to become effeminate, that the relationships were brief, that it fostered jealousy in the youth and that it was contrary to nature.

Throughout the Hellenistic period the idea of sublimated pederasty continued, especially in the gymnasia, the centres of Greek culture and influence. Outside these areas homosexuality combined with eunuchism and effeminacy frequently degenerated into unbridled lust with elements of sadomasochism. Homosexuals prostituted themselves publicly and privately. The activity became so

¹¹⁰ Ibid; 33-36.

¹¹¹ Ibid; 48.

¹¹² Ibid; 51.

widespread that even the most eminent men in society prostituted themselves and sought to use others. Eventually pagan authors debated the wisdom of the entire practice of pederasty. Some defended it while admitting abuses, others found no value in it at all.

5.2.2 The Reaction of Hellenistic Judaism

1. Palestine

Palestinian Judaism consistently rejected homosexuality. From legal injunctions of the Torah to the Targums, translations of the Torah, we meet general opposition. The Neofiti text and Targum Jonathan, for example, "interpret Genesis 19 as a homosexual rape and Deuteronomy 23:18 as prohibiting male homosexual prostitution outside any cultic setting."¹¹³ In Rabbinic literature, the Mishnah summarises and explains pentateuchal law. "In this document homosexuality is one of the crimes punishable by death."¹¹⁴ To the rabbis homosexuality was a Gentile sin and Jews were not under suspicion of it, although certain precautions were made to avoid temptation or the appearance of evil. "Only one clear mention of Jewish homosexuality occurs in the rabbinic literature."¹¹⁵

Palestinian literature discusses homosexuality in terms of homosexual acts, not other facets such as intention or motive.

¹¹³ Scroggs, PP. 75-77.

¹¹⁴ Mishnah, Sanhedrin 7,4.

¹¹⁵ Sanhedrin 23c, 4.

2. The Diaspora

The best known document from Judaism outside Palestine during the Hellenistic period is the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, from the period 300 - 100 BC. Scroggs believes that the language of Septuagint in Leviticus influenced Paul's terminology. It reads, "with a male (*arsen*) you shall not lie the intercourse (*koite*: lit 'bed') of a woman" (Leviticus 18:22). Also, "And whoever lies with a male (*arsen*) the intercourse (*koite*) of a woman, both have done an abomination; they shall be put to death, they are guilty" (Leviticus 20:13). Scroggs believes "this juxtaposition of the two words, *arsen* and *koite*, reached a semi-technical status among the rabbis in the expression *mishkav zakur* ("lying with a male") and *arsenokoites* (1 Corinthians 6:9), an almost exact Greek parallel to the Hebrew."¹¹⁶ Deuteronomy 23:17-18 is translated in the Septuagint in such a way to oppose male homosexuality more clearly than the Masoretic text does.

Philo, a Jewish writer and philosopher of Alexandria (fl. AD40), "rejects homosexuality. He especially abhors the effeminate male."¹¹⁷ Philo accuses both active and passive partners of acting against nature, pursuing unnatural pleasure. For Philo "the greatest sin is the channelling of semen away from the natural, divinely intended purpose of procreation. Such a man is an enemy of nature."¹¹⁸ Philo applies Deuteronomy 23:1 to the effeminate castrated male, attacking this

¹¹⁶ Scroggs, P. 86.

¹¹⁷ Philo, Special Laws, III,37.

¹¹⁸ Ibid; 36.

form of homosexuality at every opportunity.¹¹⁹ He also "attacks the ancient Sodomites and accuses them of homosexual practices."¹²⁰ Josephus, another Jewish Hellenistic author originally from Palestine but later a pensioner in Rome (fl. AD 70), cites the pride, arrogance, and wealth of Sodom as the reason for God's destruction of the city. "He turns the account of the two angels into one of intended pederastic rape, speaking of the angels as two "young" men."¹²¹

Apocryphal and pseudo-epigraphal literature is mixed in its interpretation of homosexual episodes in the Old Testament. The book of Jubilees assumed to be written by a Pharisee between 135 and 105 BC, "mentions the destruction of Sodom but attributes it to general wickedness, fornication and uncleanness."¹²²

The letter of Aristeas, which purports to give a firsthand account of the translation of the Septuagint about 270 BC, "depicts homosexuality as a Gentile vice from which the Jews have been kept by their adherence to the law of Moses."¹²³ The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, another Pharisaic work dated 109 - 106 BC, mentions Sodom in a context of idolatry but also in a context of creation.

The Gentiles went astray, and forsook the Lord, and changed their order, and obeyed stocks and stones, and spirits of deceit. But ye shall not be so, my children, recognising in the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created

¹¹⁹ Philo, *Special Laws*, I, 325.

¹²⁰ Philo, on Abraham, 133-141; *Questions on Genesis*, IV, 37.

¹²¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 1. 194-204.

¹²² Jubilees, 16, 5. Edition cited or Consulted in this section, R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

¹²³ Letter of Aristeas, 152.

things, the Lord who made all things, that ye became not a Sodom, which changed the order of nature.¹²⁴

The last statement here is likely a reference to the homosexual episode of Genesis 19. The Sibylline Oracles, a collection of prophecies begun by Jews and later added to by Christian writers, "speak of an empire that follows the Greeks (Rome), characterised as allowing male to draw near to male and they shall set their children in ill-famed houses."¹²⁵ In another passage the oracle prophesies that a holy race of men will appear who are not given to idolatry,

nor do they hold unholy intercourse with boys as do the Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Latins and spacious Hellas and many nations of other men, Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing the holy law of the immortal God which he ordained.¹²⁶

To the oracle the transgression of God's law by idolatry and pederasty precipitates woes and calamities. Men should shun "adultery and confused intercourse with males, "for this brings the wrath of God."¹²⁷ Rome in particular is condemned. "Adulteries are with thee and unlawful intercourse with boys, effeminate and unjust, thou wicked city, most ill-starred of all."¹²⁸ "Rome is castigated repeatedly for abuse of boys, harlotry, irregular unions within the degrees of consanguinity, fellatio and bestiality."¹²⁹ Sometimes these evils are

¹²⁴ Testament of Naphtali, 3:1-5.

¹²⁵ Sibylline Oracles, III, 185.

¹²⁶ Ibid; 584-606; 596-600 cited.

¹²⁷ Ibid; 722-766.

¹²⁸ Sibylline Oracles, V, 166-167.

¹²⁹ Ibid; 386-393, 428-430.

connected with idolatry, sometimes not. The oracles describe Rome as full of the basest evils of which idolatry and various sexual crimes seem to be the worst.

The Apocryphal book of Wisdom, produced in Egypt about 116 - 50 BC by a conservative Jewish author, "makes idolatry the beginning and cause of every evil, including what the RSV translates as "sex perversion."¹³⁰ This is a "translation of the obscure expression *geneseos enallage*, which translates literally as "changing of order" or "changing of kind." It is similar to the expression "changed the order of nature" in the Testament of Naphtali,¹³¹ and it is difficult to see what else it could refer to except the change of sex role in homosexuality.

In brief, the judgement against homosexual acts in Judaism is so universal and deeply rooted that arguments against it seem to have been considered superfluous. Judaism excluded homosexuality by definition; therefore, it was non-Jewish authors who brought detailed arguments against it in the Hellenistic period.

5.3 The New Testament and Homosexuality

5.3.1 The Social Background of Early Christianity: Form and Context of Anti-Homosexual References

Outside Palestine Christianity took root first in provincial towns and cities of the Roman Empire. For the most part the Apostle Paul walked Roman roads and sailed Roman trade routes. The aim of Roman policy was to unify and

¹³⁰ Wisdom, PP. 14, 26.

¹³¹ The verbal form of *enallage* is used in T. Naphtali, 3, 4.

acculturate the provinces to Roman ideas. In pursuit of these goals Rome worked in alliance with Greek civilisations, especially in the heavily populated eastern provinces. As Ramsey observes, "the Greek influence was, on the whole, European and Western in character; and opposed to the oriental stagnation which resisted Roman educative efforts."¹³² Christianity was doubtless envisaged by many in the east as a force in a social life arrayed on the side of imperial policy. The new religion worked against ignorance, stagnation, social anarchy, and enslavement of the people to priests. At the same time, "it stood for universal citizenship, universal equality of rights, universal religion and a universal church. Almost all of these concepts already were developing slowly in one way or another within the empire."¹³³

Paul took advantage of elements in Greek education. The best in Greek ethics, learning, and forms of polished courteous address he did not disdain. In his speeches at Lystra and Athens there was nothing overtly Jewish or Christian. Paul could speak as a Jew and a Christian; also he could express the truths of Scripture in the language and ideas of educated Romans.

The first churches were in cities and towns, and the first Christians urban dwellers. "Cities were small by modern standards, however population density in

¹³² W.M. Ramsey, *St. Paul the traveller and Roman citizen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), P.

131.

¹³³ *Ibid*; P. 138.

many cities rivalled that of modern city slums."¹³⁴ Under such circumstances privacy was rare; no social group could remain anonymous.

So it is not surprising that Christians in the larger cities were extremely sensitive to public opinions. Their safety as Christian groups depended to a certain degree on their religious activities largely escaping public attention. Abnormal behaviour in the community of believers would encourage circulation of rumours to the discredit of the entire community. As Judge indicates, "The basic problem for Christians was thus not their relations with the government, but with the communities within which they lived."¹³⁵ Early Christian writers responded more to social criticism than questions about the legality of the Christian's status or actions in relation to the state.

"It is a mistaken judgment to consider the triumph of Christianity as tantamount to the triumph of the lower classes, or "proletariat", as some Marxist exegetes prefer to say, over the upper classes."¹³⁶ Early Christian churches represented a cross section of society. If anything, "the small intense clusters of Christian communities were largely middle class in origin."¹³⁷ "The triumph of Christianity in a hierarchically organised society necessarily took place from the top down."¹³⁸

¹³⁴ W.A. Meeks, *The first urban Christians, the social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), P. 28.

¹³⁵ E.A. Judge, *The social pattern of the Christian Groups in the first century* (London: Tyndale Press, 1960), PP. 71, 73.

¹³⁶ K. Kautsky, *The foundation of Christianity*, tr H.F. Mins (New York: S.A. Russell, 1953).

¹³⁷ R.M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publications: 1977), P. 11.

¹³⁸ *Ibid* p. 11

5.3.2 Christians and Social Structure

The form which the early Christian communities assumed was present already in the environment. The early Church did not build structures especially for its own religious activities. The meeting places of a great number of Paul's converts in the diaspora were the private houses. Several times Paul mentions Christian assemblies in connection with a specific household. The conversion of a person with "all his/her household is mentioned several times in Acts also. In New Testament times the term "household" meant more than in modern western societies. "It included not just immediate relatives but slaves, freedmen, hired hands, even partners in crafts or trades, and could be extended to include virtually anyone who depended on the group for livelihood and sustenance."¹³⁹

The household was a basic political unit whose loyalties could rival those toward the Roman republic. The head of the household had a certain amount of legal responsibility for his/her charges. But as Malherbe points out, the solidarity of such groups, "was based more on economic, and especially psychological, social and religious factors."¹⁴⁰ New Christian groups were thus superimposed upon an already existing network of relationships.

The household, probably 30 -50 persons at the most, afforded privacy, intimacy, and stability of place for early Christian communities. However, when several

¹³⁹ Meeks, p. 75-76.

¹⁴⁰ A.J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), P. 69

households existed in one community, a potential for factions existed. Households were hierarchical. The head of the household, who was legally responsible, no doubt also exercised certain political and moral influence over the group. Paul seems to take this for granted in his epistle to Philemon. Household factions also may be the source of the trouble in 1 Corinthians 1 - 4. It was not unusual for households to be the centre of a cult or society under the patronage of the head of the household. Under these circumstances the solidarity of Christian groups as a whole is indeed remarkable and points to other inner cohesive factors at work beyond the exclusivity of the household.

Social intercourse with those outside the Christian group was not discouraged, but a clear line of demarcation was drawn between the ethical-moral behaviour expected of those outside and that expected of those inside the group (1 Corinthians 5:9 - 13). Paul also discouraged any activity that might involve participation in another cult (1 Corinthians 8 and 10).

It is clear from the advice that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians Chapters 5 and 6, that he considered the Christian community a pure and holy place over against the impure and profane world outside. Christians were to avoid the abhorrent sexual practices and other vices practised in the pagan world.

The house rules in Ephesians 4:17 and onward state (in the positive) what is expected of Christian communities (cf. Col 3:12ff). These regulations were essential to the solidarity and cohesiveness of Christianity as a whole (1

Corinthians 1:2). They also highlight Paul's conviction that the purity of the community "is contaminated only from within, not by contact with outsiders, even though the latter are considered typically immoral."¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the house rules were composed with an eye toward how outsiders perceived the community (Col. 4:5).

5.3.3 New Testament Vice Lists: Christian and non-Christian

Regulations for Christian ethical behaviour also are stated negatively in the New Testament. "This was achieved by listing vices that Christians were exhorted to avoid."¹⁴² "It is possible that such lists were used in catechetical instruction beginning at a very early period."¹⁴³ These lists existed in the popular moral teaching of the period, and parallels among stoics are unmistakable.

"The cataloguing of virtues and vices in such lists is familiar enough in classical, Hellenistic, and early Christian Literature."¹⁴⁴ Of course this is not to say that Paul took his ideas directly from the teachings of the great classical schools of philosophy studied by privileged elite with the requisite time and inclination. A careful analysis shows that Paul has "much in common with philosophical thought in general but not with any regular system of thought."¹⁴⁵ Judge proposes

¹⁴¹ Meeks, P. 105.

¹⁴² New Testament vice lists include: Matt 15:19, Mark 7:21-22, Romans 1:18-32, 13:13; I Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:19,21; Eph 4:31; 5:3,7; Col 3:5,9; I Tim 1:9-10; 6:4-5; 2 Tim 3:2,5; Titus 3:3; I Peter 2:11; 4:3-4; Jude 8:16; Rev 9:20-21; 22:15.

¹⁴³ C.H. Dodd, "The Ethics of the New Testament," *Moral Principles of Action – Man's Ethical Imperative*. (New York: Harper Bros. 1952), PP. 544-545.

¹⁴⁴ E.N. O'Neal, *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978); 309.

¹⁴⁵ Judge, *St. Paul and Classical Society* (New York: G.H. Doran Co., 192), P. 32.

another approach to illuminate how the niche Paul filled related to popular ethics. This is not a system of ethics as such, he says, "but the way in which a loose body of general principles for life develops among thoughtful people in a community."¹⁴⁶ This "body of general principles" is not directly subject to the discipline of the schools, although it may draw from them and feed into their systems. Christians also found precedent for ethical lists in the Hellenistic Jewish Literature. They are abundant in Philo, and an excellent example of a vice list is found in Wisdom 14:25 - 26: "Blood and murder, theft and fraud, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, troubling of good, unthankfulness for benefits, defilement of souls, confusion of sex, disorder in marriage, adultery and wantonnes's. Easton observes that "in accord with Jewish custom action rather than thoughts are enumerated here."¹⁴⁷ In contrast, "a stoic list would centre on sins of disposition. Likewise, Wisdom's characteristically Jewish emphasis on idolatry as the cardinal defect differs from Greek and Roman moralists who would choose ignorance."¹⁴⁸

Paul's line of thought in Romans 1:26 - 31 parallels much of Wisdom's thesis and language. Yet this longest of the New Testament catalogues of vices does not simply repeat the list in Wisdom. "Of the 15 terms in Wisdom and 21 in Romans

¹⁴⁶ Ibid; P. 33.

¹⁴⁷ B.S. Easton, New Testament Ethical lists, JBL 51 (1932):2.

¹⁴⁸ Marcus Aurelius, Meditations II, I. Say to thyself at daybreak: I shall come across the busy-body, the thankless, the overbearing, the treacherous, the envious, the envious, the unneighborly, all this has befallen them because they no not good from Evil.

only 2 (two) — murder and deceit — are common to both lists."¹⁴⁹ Indeed most of the lists are conventional and the particular sins listed have little to do with the immediate context. Non-Jewish precedent, particularly Stoic, as well as Jewish precedent inform most lists. Easton "postulates non-Jewish precedent for Romans 1:29 - 31 and somewhat less so for 2 Timothy 3:2 - 4."¹⁵⁰ Other lists probably have Jewish-Greek influence in the immediate background. McEleney finds no pattern of terms followed in the vice lists of the pastoral epistles. He concludes,

Thus the vice lists of the pastorals have been influenced by more or less of these elements:

- (1) Reference to the Decalogue or other commands of the law;
- (2) Polemic against immoral pagan idolaters;
- (3) Hellenistic conceptions of virtue and vice as qualifications of a man;
- (4) Moral dualism due to various inclinations of spirits in a man causing him to walk in one of two ways
- (5) The theme of eschatological punishment.¹⁵¹

Here again the Stoic and Jewish background stand out. The similarities with stoicism, however, should not be over emphasized. The pagan concept of love for mankind, while present in Wisdom is notably absent in the New Testament. The Christian concept of patience, on the other hand, is absent in stoicism, and qualities such as mercy and humility are Christian virtues but stoic vices.

¹⁴⁹ Easton, P.3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid; P. 8.

¹⁵¹ N.J. McEleney, "The vice lists of the Pastoral Epistles," CBQ 36 (1974): 218.

The differences are determined by different views of man, his nature, and purpose in life. The Christian concept of human relationship with God is determinative in Christian lists. Therefore it is vital to understand the conceptual framework in which the terms are used in the New Testament also to recognise that these terms are not used in that framework outside of it. As Easton has noted, "Avoidance of the sins catalogued in these lists is never identified with Christian morality. Life as a Christian hardly begins until such temptations have been put to death."¹⁵² It is most significant, therefore, that all major references to homosexuality in the New Testament occur in vice lists. In creating vice lists the Stoics tried to demonstrate that one is not controlled by the logos — the universal world soul — and which are therefore improper or unethical for the man of reason of philosophy. Avoiding them produces an ethical man of logos. For Christians, however, mere avoidance of vice is not the essence of an ethical or moral person. Morality and ethics cannot begin until these acts are removed from the lifestyle. Christian ethics and morality involve the doing of positive things, not merely removal of negatives. Homosexual activity never appears in any positive list in the New Testament, although numerous other activities are listed. When homosexuality is mentioned it is always included in the negative vice lists. This fact cannot be ignored by those who claim that loving homosexual relations are condoned in Scripture. Nowhere does Paul issue instructions for the homosexual couple or tell how they are to be integrated into

¹⁵² Easton, P. 8.

the church. He does this for slaves, for families where only one spouse is a believer, for those coming from pagan cults and worldly associations, for those who are virgins and those who are not, and for Jews and/or Pharisees with all their religious and cultural baggage. But homosexual acts are listed as one of the lifestyles left behind, discontinued upon acceptance of Christ.

5.4 Primary New Testament Texts Cited with Reference to Homosexuality

Romans 1:26 - 28. For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and improper conduct.¹⁵³

These verses are followed immediately by the longest vice list in the New Testament (Romans 1:29 - 32). It includes no sexual sins. Apparently Paul was satisfied with his treatment of them in verses 24 - 28, the whole of which (verses 24 - 32) may be seen as an extended vice list. Numerous interpreters of these verses see homosexual acts totally condemned in them, others find only a certain kind of exploitative homosexual practice condemned here. Among the latter by far the most prevalent view is that which sees Paul opposed to homosexual lust but not homosexual acts per se. The text, "they claim, could not have been written against the "natural" or permanent homosexual because Paul was

¹⁵³ Bible, New International Version Romans 1:26-26.

ignorant of the distinction between the primary or constitutional homosexual and other perverted forms of homosexual activity."¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, Paul is concerned with exploitation, prostitution, and unbridled homosexual lust. In fact he must refer to those who are not permanent homosexuals, because the text states that those involved do so against their nature. It would not violate the nature of a constitutional homosexual to indulge in homosexual activity, but it would be against the nature of a heterosexual to do so. Therefore, Bailey interprets this text to speak about perverted heterosexuals who indulge in homosexual acts for kicks out of lust. Consequently, "it cannot refer to the loving homosexual relationship of the constitutional homosexual where affection and responsibility are the marked criteria and not unbridled lust."¹⁵⁵ Another common interpretation, sometimes held in conjunction with Bailey's view, is that Paul here is condemning those who were idolaters, not homosexual activity as such. "Paul is speaking out against those who were idolaters — and — homosexuals, not against those who were homosexuals but not idolaters."¹⁵⁶ Various assumptions are involved here. Among them, that homosexuality was practised in conjunction with idolatry in Paul's day and was, therefore, "a conscious voluntary choice, or that homosexuality is in some way the result of idolatry or

¹⁵⁴ D.S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press 1975), pp. 38, 157.

¹⁵⁵ H.K. Jones, *Toward a Christian understanding of the Homosexual* (New York: Association Press, 1966), p. 70.

¹⁵⁶ R.W. Wood, "Homosexual behaviour in the Bible, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1976), p. 82.

that it is God's punishment for idolatry."¹⁵⁷ Other interpreters zero in on the word "nature". "They reject the idea that Paul's use of the word is held in some way to Greek philosophical usage."¹⁵⁸ Others read it to mean simply "convention", the generally accepted practice in a particular time and place. These frequently quote 1 Corinthians 11:14 where Paul says, "Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him?" Here Paul uses the word "nature" in what is considered a conventional sense.

In the Graeco-Roman Culture, it was generally accepted practice for men to have short hair and be close to shaven. However, among the Jews the practice was quite different. Longer hair and beards, cropped or uncropped, were not considered degrading. "Nature" here seems to mean the nature of the situation in a particular time and place. Neither long hair nor short hair was wrong per se, its appropriateness depended on a particular time and place. "The implication is, of course, that the homosexual acts that Paul says are "against nature" are practices simply not accepted in some societies but accepted in others, and this is what he means here."¹⁵⁹ He is not saying that God condemns homosexual acts but simply that homosexuality is a behaviour contrary to Jewish culture and practice. Finally, some adduce an argument more theological than historical, lexical, or

¹⁵⁷ Jones, D.L. Bartlett, *A Biblical Perspective on Homosexuality*. "Homosexuality and the Christian Faith." (Valley Forge, P.A. Judson Press 1978), PP. 30-31.

¹⁵⁸ L. Scanzioni and V.R. Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual my Neighbour: Another Christian View* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publications: 1980), P. 65.

¹⁵⁹ J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality. Gay People in Western Europe from the beginning of the Christian Era to the fourth century*: (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) PP. 110-111.

philological. For them some forms of homosexual behaviour are legitimate. Romans 1 is seen as incidental to the book and even incidental to Paul's attack on false righteousness in Romans 2, especially among Jews who believed they kept the law.

According to this interpretation Paul adopts a Jewish list of vices from apocryphal literature, but he does not seriously endorse all of it. He can point out the same sins among contemporary Jews. Homosexuals are not the only ones under criticism since Paul speaks of covetousness, malice, envy, deceit, gossip, and so forth. All men are sinners, and Paul is not isolating one group for special condemnation. All sinners can be saved by Christ, and there is no Biblical basis for singling out homosexuals more than gossips and fornicators. Since fornicators, adulterers, and thieves are accepted into the church fellowship, why not homosexuals? One cannot always be certain whether Paul addresses the condition or the acts. Some would include both others would not. This interpretation is summed up in Bartlett's paraphrase of Galatians 5:6: "In Christ Jesus, neither heterosexuality, nor homosexuality — in themselves — are of any avail, but faith working through love."¹⁶⁰

If the above interpretations are accepted those who believe Paul is condemning all forms of homosexual activity will find their position difficult to defend. Perhaps it is wise to look at the entire context in which Paul is speaking, better to

¹⁶⁰ Barlett, P. 39.

determine just what he is or is not saying. Those with even a scanty knowledge of Romans know that here Paul deals in considerable detail with the doctrine of justification by faith. The theme of the book, as announced in Romans 1:16 -17, is that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel about His Son Jesus Christ. Then Paul illustrates the need for this righteousness by showing that sin carries a retribution in life and eventually culminates in death. The arena where sin operates is universal. Those who drank the dregs of pagan vice and crime as well as those pagan moralists who consider themselves superior to the outcasts of society needed righteousness. Even the Jews, the chosen people of God who considered themselves supremely enlightened in contrast to the rest of mankind, fell under the stern judgment of God. In short, all mankind stands wanting and guilty before God. None has reason for complacency and congratulatory self-righteousness.

Paul's aim is to show that the whole of humanity is morally bankrupt, ... He begins with an area of human life whose moral bankruptcy was a matter of general agreement among moralists of the day — the great mass of contemporary paganism.¹⁶¹

But in placing both pagan and moralists and Jews in the same category with the pagan masses Paul is not claiming that moralists and Jews practised the same forms of immorality. What he is saying is that even the most degraded pagan can know enough from creation itself to avoid confusing the creator with the

¹⁶¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1969), pp. 81-82.

creatures (including man as creature). If, however, they deliberately confused the two, inevitably they fell into errors of thought and action. Paul is not suggesting that the pagan masses or any other group were not intelligent enough to understand, but that by resolute moral obduracy they failed to do that which they knew to be right.

As a group the Jews demonstrated that the essential problem was not ignorance but something quite different. The Jews are under the judgment of God, because, exactly as they boasted, they are supremely enlightened. Consequently, they should have done that much better than those not so advantaged. But they failed to do so. Privilege brings responsibility and they failed in the latter when God provided the former. Righteousness, or a right relationship and standing before the Holy God, was not to be found in the actions of the pagan masses, among the moralists, or even among the Jews; for all showed the same fundamental failure, a stubborn disobedience to what they already knew to be right. It is here that Paul introduces the new principle of the gospel (Romans 3:21 - 5:21). God does not expect man to become righteous before He declares him such. Such a requirement would pose a hopeless situation. Rather God gives right status, or declares a person righteous, initiates a right relationship, then helps him to grow up to its full potential. For Paul freedom from a system of law or religious activity to set oneself right with God and freedom from death (Romans 7:1 - 8:39) come before freedom from sin (Romans 6:1 - 23). He vigorously opposes the idea that the outpouring of God's grace means a life contained in sin. In

baptism we die to sin, and changing the analogy to the slave market he sees the Christian as a redeemed slave working for a new master — God, not the old master sin.

Paul's remarks encompass all humanity. It is not against merely a Jewish or Greek background that he writes, but against a cosmic background. He deals with the broad canvas of creation, sin, fall, and redemption. For Paul, Adam was a historical person involved in the process (Romans Chapter 5). Since all have sinned and come short of God's original glorious intention for man, God offers to all the opportunity to come into right relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. The relationship is to be maintained thereafter to the best of one's ability in co-operation with God, in good faith. The ultimate aim is that man will be restored to God's image as He intended in creation. In the section under consideration (Romans 1:24 - 32) Paul is showing how far mankind has fallen from this ideal or original state. In verse 24 he first uses the words, "God gave them up." We doubt that these words, repeated in verses 26 and 28, imply that the abandonment of the heathen to the dominion of sin represents a punitive act inflicted by God."¹⁶² If God withdraws the restraints of His providence and grace from the wicked He may be described in Biblical terminology as giving them over to sin. But "the permission to sin is not necessarily a judicial or punitive act."¹⁶³ The sin of Adam was permitted, but scarcely as a judgment or penalty for

¹⁶² C. Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), P. 40.

¹⁶³ W.G.T. Shedd, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), P. 25.

sin. The issue here is one of free relationship between God and humans. God allows the wicked to "enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and (they) are therefore, self-enslaved."¹⁶⁴ To some extent sin is exposed and punished by its own results, but this is because God has so constituted natural process that wrong inevitably gravitates to wretchedness. "God leaves men where they place themselves — in the fatal region of self-will and self-indulgence."¹⁶⁵ "There is a moral law in life that men are left to the consequences of their own freely chosen course of action; and unless this tendency is reversed by divine grace, their situation will go from bad to worse."¹⁶⁶ It is not helpful then to consider homosexuality a punishment for sin. Such an opinion may lead to judgmental questions as asked by the disciples, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). As with blindness, so with the homosexual condition the answer may be "neither, but that the glory of God might be revealed in him."

There is no doubt that in verse 25 Paul sees the vices of paganism as the product of idolatry. This was commonplace in Jewish apologetic of the time (See Wisdom of Solomon 12 -14: the epistle of Aristeas). For him the vices of paganism with their inevitable results are in themselves retribution for the fundamental error of taking up an irreligious attitude to life — that is, of placing the reason and will of the creature at the forefront in spite of the knowledge of

¹⁶⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The problem of plain* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1961), PP. 115ff.

¹⁶⁵ H.C.G. Moule, *The Epistle to Romans* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1925), P. 49.

¹⁶⁶ Bruce, P. 81.

God native to the human mind. Idolatry cannot be reduced in this context simply to pagan practices and cultic life. In essence it is an attitude toward God that places human will above His will, human authority above His sovereignty (Romans 1:28,32).

To say that homosexuality is a result of idolatry is to say, therefore, in the wider sense of the word that it is the result of the sinful human condition in which we all live, to which any specific individual may or may not contribute by his/her actions. In verse 26 Paul specifies some of the things that result from and contribute to the fallen existence common to man. God gives man up to the dishonourable passions that spring from his attitude towards God. Specifically, Paul mentions homosexuality as a dishonourable passion. It needs not be the only one. The fact that men may believe they serve God by indulging in these passions is part of the ultimate irony in idolatry — the ultimate foolishness of those who claim to be wise (verse 19). Paul begins with women, or "females" as he designates them, who exchange natural relations for unnatural. The meaning of this brief verse is clarified by the next (verse 27). Men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another: men (actually "males") committing shameless acts with men.

5.4.1 Natural versus Unnatural

The two terms in these verses are the expressions "natural" and "unnatural" and much depends upon what Paul meant here. The crux of the issue turns on why Paul concludes that homosexuality is unnatural. Paul uses the term *para phusin*

("against", "beside", or "contrary to") nature and *kata phusin* ("according to") nature. (cf. Expressions in Romans 11:24).

There is no doubt that these terms are common Greek usage and that they are used at times to express an ethical judgement on homosexuality. This is true in Plato (Laws I,636; VIII,836 - 841), who repeatedly uses the term "natural" to describe heterosexual intercourse, and "unnatural" homosexual intercourse. Plato attempts a reason why it is unnatural, that is, because men cannot fall below the level of the animal world where homosexuality does not take place (Laws VIII,841). These expressions are common in the Hellenistic period, as we see in Diodorus Siculus (ca. 49 BC). In his History 32, 10, 8 - 11, he uses the term *kata phusin* of natural intercourse with a woman. However, in a case where the woman was in reality a man, he speaks of the intercourse as having taken place "as with a man" and the marriage as "against nature" (*para phusin gamou*). In any event the woman (in reality a man) had to submit to "unnatural embraces" (*para phusin homilian*).

Mosonius Rufus, a Roman stoic philosopher sometimes referred to as the Roman Socrates, was Paul's contemporary (ca. AD 30 - 102). "His works show the typical characteristics of the popularised philosophical treatise."¹⁶⁷ He is one of the few real supporters in antiquity of equal standing for women. For Mosonius, life in accordance with nature is life in accordance with virtue. Mosonius

¹⁶⁷ A.C. Geytenbeck; Musonius Rufus and Greek Diatribes. (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co., 1963), P. 13.

identifies *kata phusin zen* ("to live according to nature") with *en arete zen* ("to live according to virtue"). Because men and women may have equal virtue they should have equal training. It is not surprising then that Musonius sees marriage as the most venerable relationship. One of Musonius' arguments is that marriage is *kata phusin*. "In the later stoic marriage is always said to be *kata phusin*"¹⁶⁸ He allows for sexual intercourse only within marriage and then only for procreation. "All other instances are "indecent relationships", adultery because it is unlawful and other unmarried relations as being unlawfully dissolute. Also when he speaks on sexual relationships, he refers to pederasty as *para phusin tolmema* ("an outrage against nature")."¹⁶⁹

Another contemporary of Paul, the Jewish historian Josephus (ca. AD 37 - 97), "speaks of sodomy as "unnatural vice" (*para phusin*) and "unnatural pleasure" (*para phusin*)"¹⁷⁰ Examples of such vices spoken of as *para phusin* occur also in Plutarch and other Hellenistic writers but none of them attempts to define what they mean by these expressions. After reading them all, we still do not really understand what they meant. Under these circumstances, it might be easier to determine what Paul did not mean by these expressions and to clarify the ideas that separate him from the late stoics who also used the same terms.

Paul's God was transcendent, wholly above and beyond the world, as was

¹⁶⁸ Ibid; P. 68.

¹⁶⁹ C.E. Lutz. The Greek Text with Translation and Introduction (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1947).

¹⁷⁰ Josephus, Against Apion, II 273, 275.

Aristotle's. Like Plato's God, however, Paul's was also the creator of nature, nevertheless separate from the natural world. On the other hand the stoics believed that God was immanent in ways that Paul could not at all agree with. For them, not only was the world controlled by God, but in the last resort, it was God. For the stoics, existence goes on forever in endlessly recurring cycles following a fixed "law" or "formula" (logos). This law is fate or providence ordained by God.

The stoics thought that the logos is God or the mind of God, the universal world soul. The stoic system, therefore, was basically determinist. Cicero, the Roman orator, statesman, and stoic philosopher (106 - 43 BC), claimed that according to Zeno "the law of nature is divine," that Clenthes held that "the world itself is god", and that Chrysippus said that "the divine power resides in reason and in the soul and mind of the universe."¹⁷¹ "There is little doubt that the late stoics deified "nature."¹⁷² Marcus Aurelius spoke of nature as "the eldest of the deities."¹⁷³ It is clear that Paul uses stoic philosophical terms in Romans 1 and 2. But "it is equally clear that Paul does not simply repeat the terms and concepts of the stoa with the same meanings they had in stoicism or even in Hellenism."¹⁷⁴ It is probable that for Paul the word "nature" "meant the providential ordering of the

¹⁷¹ Cicero, of the nature of the Gods, 1, 14, 15. On Stoic determination see, E. Bevan, *Stoic and Skeptics* (New York: Avno Press, 1979), P. 53.

¹⁷² C.S. Lewis, *Studies in words* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University press, 1975), P. 41.

¹⁷³ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations IX*, 1.

¹⁷⁴ A.J. Malherbe, "Te Apolegetic Theology of the Preaching of Peter," *Restoration Quarterly* 13 (1970): 211.

natural world, as with the stoics.”¹⁷⁵ Apart from this agreement, however, the term has a completely different function for Paul. The meaning of the term in Romans comes from a stoic-Jewish storehouse. The direct influence of non-Jewish Hellenistic thought upon Paul has been exaggerated. His main background is Jewish, or better, that of Hellenistic Judaism. Paul, writing as a moralist and having occasion to deal with vices, ordinarily follows the classification used by popular moralists of the time. Customarily "they were classified as sensual and anti- social. Many of the vice lists in Paul's epistles demonstrate that he was familiar with this mode of classification.”¹⁷⁶

Paul's God, however, was not nature, but the supremely transcendent one, the creator who formed the earth and made man in perfection, whose work was blighted subsequently by the entrance of sin. Consequently, for Paul nature at present does not represent humanity's true nature. In a fallen world an appeal to nature to determine what humans should do or be is at best relative and at worst useless. In the context of fallen nature only relative distinctions can be made between the natural and the unnatural. For the Christian contemporary natural life is prelude to life with Christ, and it is validated as natural only because Christ Himself entered into the fallen natural life through incarnation.

Through the fall the "creature" becomes "nature". The direct dependence of the creature on God is replaced by the relative freedom of natural life. Within this freedom there are

¹⁷⁵ A.J. Herschbell, *Plutarch's Ethical Writing's and Early Christian Literature*. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), P. 167.

¹⁷⁶ C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Harper and Row Publications: 1932), PP. XXXII, 26-27.

differences between the true and the mistaken use of freedom, and there is therefore the difference between natural and the unnatural. In other words there is relative openness and relative closeness for Christ.¹⁷⁷

The natural, from this point of view, is recognised as the form of life preserved by God in the fallen world. It is that life directed toward justification, redemption, and renewal through Christ. "Reason itself is embedded in the natural; reason then is nothing more than the conscious perception of the content of the natural in the world. Thus reason, after the fall, has not ceased to be reason, but is now fallen."¹⁷⁸

From this there follows a conclusion that is of crucial importance, namely, that the natural can never be something that is determined by any single part of any single authority within the fallen world. And indeed whatever is set up in this arbitrary manner by an individual, a society or an institution will necessarily collapse and destroy itself in the encounter with the natural which is already established. Whoever does injury to the natural will suffer for it.¹⁷⁹

Here we see that the natural, even in the form preserved by God after the fall, is a given. In the fallen world nature reflects the splendour of the glory of God's creation and points forward to the restitution of all things. But Paul's perspective in the passage under consideration is not limited to the relative distinctions between natural and unnatural in the fallen world. Only God's original intention for humans can be considered determinative for human essence, and this is revealed as His will in Scripture.

¹⁷⁷ D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*. New York: (Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968), P. 145.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*; P. 146.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*; P. 147.

It is difficult to see what else Paul could mean by "nature" in our text if not the world and man as intended and as created by God. The "unnatural" comes as consequence of the fall and, therefore, not God's original intention and will for man.

The cosmic context of Romans 1:18 - 32 is generally recognised. Scroggs even suggests "that in these verses the universal fall is under discussion, which includes Jews as well as Gentile."¹⁸⁰ For these reasons "homosexuality is not treated here merely as an expression of cultic idolatry, rather both practices are traced to the bad exchange that man made in departing from the creator's original design."¹⁸¹

As Field observes,

In writing about "natural relations", Paul is not referring to individual men and women as they are. His canvas is much broader. He is taking the argument back, far more radically, to man and woman as God created them. By "unnatural" he means "unnatural to mankind in God's creation pattern." And that pattern he clearly understands to be heterosexual. So the distinction between pervert and invert (which Paul could have hardly made anyway) is undercut.¹⁸²

Paul has in mind not only the casual and capricious sex swapping of the pervert, driven by lust and desire for flesh stimulation, but the basic divergence from God's original creation scheme which all homosexual behaviour represents. "The invert or constitutional homosexual may be seen as an aberration of God's

¹⁸⁰ Scroggs; P. 110.

¹⁸¹ D.H. Field, "Homosexuality," *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 2, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publications: 1980): 657.

¹⁸² D. Field. *The Homosexual Way-A Christian option?* (Grove Books; Brom cote Notts 1980), P. 16.

original creation. He may be considered depraved (as all are to some extent) in the theological sense but not in a moral sense."¹⁸³ The constitutional homosexual who has physical and emotional attraction to other males may be less culpable morally than the lustful heterosexual who constantly fantasises adulterous relationships. Neither may act out their inner drives. The excessive sexual drive of the heterosexual may be due to some physical predisposition, but it is a perversion of God's intention and design. Both are culpable if the drives are acted out. The nymphomaniac whose impulses cannot be sexually satisfied by one man falls into the same category. Paul uses the homosexual practices of his day to illustrate the depravity that follows departure from God's will. "If homosexual acts could gain divine approval in any sense, surely Paul would have indicated how and drawn the distinction."¹⁸⁴

Paul must have known the distinction between the homosexual relationships in Plato, Sparta, prostitution, pederasty, and so forth, as well as adult relationships of a more permanent kind. For example the Roman emperor Galba (AD 68 -69), considered a conservative and supported by many of the stoic leaders, is described by the Roman historian, Suetonius:

A homosexual invert, he showed a preference for mature and sturdy men. It is said that when Icelus, one of his old-time bed fellows, brought the news of Nero's death, Galba openly showered him with kisses and begged him to get ready and have intercourse with him without delay.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ H. Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*. (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1978), P. 282.

¹⁸⁴ G.L. Bahsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical view* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), P. 50.

¹⁸⁵ Suetonius, *Galba*, 21., tr. Robert Graves. *The Twelve Caesars*, rev. with and introduction by M. Grant (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1979) P. 258.

In a day when homosexual acts were commonly practised and widely known, Paul could hardly have been ignorant of the variety of relationships existing in the first century Hellenistic world. An interpretation of his words that allows homosexual activity would have to allow also any sin in the list of vices which follows.

We need to emphasise, however, that Paul is speaking of homosexual acts, not temptations to homosexuality or disposition to homosexuality of whatever intensity. Paul concludes verse 27 by observing that those who practise such acts, "receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error." The apostle may refer to spiritual moral erosions in the life of the physical deterioration that results from a dissolute life or both. At the end of the vice list (verse 32) he notes finally that "they do not only do them but approve those who practise them." We must keep in mind that in Paul's day male-with-male sexual relationships not only went largely uncondemned but were sometimes glorified as a stage of love higher than that between man and woman."¹⁸⁶ Paul came from a Semitic culture that held marriage and family in high esteem for centuries and homosexual acts were condemned. For him and many early Jewish Christians, homosexual acts produced revulsion. It is understandable to find him reacting as he does, Lovelace observes: "Paul's target in Romans 1:26 and 27 is, therefore, not a few dissolute heterosexual experimenters, but the Gentile culture whose male

¹⁸⁶ E. Best, *The letter of Paul to the Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1967), P. 23.

aristocrats could use women as chattel and child rearers but reserve their most refined erotic passion for other males."¹⁸⁷ One might argue that as a conservative Jew Paul was merely reacting to the Gentile culture around him in typical Jewish fashion. But Paul was the most liberated of the apostles. He was most open and accepting of the Gentile and willing to reject Jewish tradition where he saw it in conflict with the will of God. Other reasons have to be found for Paul's rejection of homosexuality. He was no conservative reactionary. Based on evidence, there is no "Pauline privilege" for homosexual activity in Romans 1:26 - 28.

1 Corinthians 6:9,10. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, no adulterers, nor (homosexuals), nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God.¹⁸⁸

The old city of Corinth was destroyed in 146 BC by the Roman Consul L. Mummius. "A hundred years later Julius Caesar rebuilt it and established a Roman colony there. Both old and new cities had one thing in common; they were notorious for their depravity and immorality."¹⁸⁹ From this city Paul wrote his vivid description of the moral corruption of the pagan world, (Romans 1:18 - 23). "Nearly every religious cult and rite of the Mediterranean region was practised and excavations have uncovered the sacred objects of Greeks, Romans, Orientals, Anatolians, and Egyptians."¹⁹⁰ Corinthians depravity was paralleled, if

¹⁸⁷ Lovelace, P. 92.

¹⁸⁸ Bible, King James Version; I Corinthians 6:9, 10.

¹⁸⁹ Strabo, VIII, 6, 20; Hovace, epistle, 1, 17, 36.

¹⁹⁰ D.E. Smith, "The Egyptian Cults at Corinth," HTR 70 (1977): 201-231.

not surpassed by the social polarisation in the city. The most abject poverty stood adjacent to immense wealth and extravagant luxury (1 Corinthians 11:17 - 34).

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, written from Ephesus about AD 57, Paul attempts to correct a number of abuses in the church. He must deal with factions in the church (1 Corinthians 1:10 -4:21), with moral abuses (5:1 - 6:20), and in the last part of the epistle, with various questions and problems raised by members there. Our passage falls within the section 6:1-11 where Paul is remonstrating with the Corinthians for their litigation before pagan law courts. Both the Greeks and the Romans prided themselves in litigation. Many reputations were made at court and fortunes won or lost at the bar. Paul censures the church members for entering this arena. Matters between the brethren should be settled amicably within the confines of the church. In addition, the attitude manifest in litigation for trivial causes did not exhibit the mind of Christ in the believers. Christ would rather allow Himself to be deprived or wronged.

The Corinthian believers, on the other hand, were still manifesting the character of their previous way of life in this matter. Rather than patiently enduring a wrong as Christ would, they were doing wrong. The apostle censures them sternly because they know better than this: "Do you not know" (verse 2) and "Do you not know" (verse 3) and again "Do you not know" (verse 9). "This expression is used often by Paul when he wants to bring to mind some important

truth his readers knew but disregarded."¹⁹¹ Looking at the passage in greater detail, we see that Paul picks up the word "unrighteous" (*adikoi*, verse 9) from the previous verse, "But you yourselves wrong (*adiko*) and defraud." The Corinthians treated standing up for one's rights, even in trivial matters, as an assertion of Christian freedom. It was likely the wealthy who went to court with high confidence of winning because they could afford the costs. The poor would have neither the bribes, lawyers' fees, nor court fees necessary for a successful suit in those days. What Paul labours to point out here is that unrighteousness in all its forms is a survival from the wretched past all Corinthians ought to have left behind them. So he says plainly, evil-doers such as you were cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Pagan religions tended to divorce religion from morality. One could be a devotee of many gods and goddesses and scrupulously perform many religious rites without changing lifestyle. Some converts may have been prone to look upon Christianity as just another religion. "The closest to what we call religious conversion among ancient pagans was joining a philosophical sect where ethical and moral demands were made on the person."¹⁹² Using the vice list format, Paul begins to enumerate the evils that should belong to the past of any Christian. It is possible that some in the Corinthian Church were advocating the idea that the

¹⁹¹ C. Hodge, *Commentary on the first Epistle to the Corinthians*. (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), P. 94.

¹⁹² A.D. Nock, *Conversion, the Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

deeds of the body were irrelevant to salvation. Paul warns them, "Do not be deceived," there was danger that some were being deceived or led astray by a form of gnostic teaching that considered the body intrinsically evil and not subject, therefore, to redemption. Again, this view may have appealed to the few aristocratic families in Corinth since it allowed them to justify their customary lifestyle, one they enjoyed and could well afford. Such people would have taught that faith in the heavenly Christ and knowledge of the true nature of the things were sufficient for salvation.

Paul enumerates ten kinds of offenders. They represent sins no doubt prevalent at Corinth, but the list is largely conventional. Of the first five, three (or four) are sins against purity. Fornicators or immoral persons, adulterers, and homosexuals are the first three in some versions. Idolaters usually are mentioned separately and second in the list. "Homosexuals" is in some ways a misleading translation. As the RSV footnote points out, the word is a translation of two Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. "The translation and meaning of these two words is vigorously debated. The primary meaning of *malakos* is "soft"¹⁹³ The word is used to describe fabrics (Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25), skin and many other items. It can be used of persons in the sense of "soft of nature", "delicate", or "tender". "In a more derogatory sense the word means "effeminate" or

¹⁹³ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek Lexicon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), PP. 1076-1077.

"voluptuous". Moffat translates the term separately as catamite and sodomite."¹⁹⁴

Catamite is usually defined as a boy used for pederasty.

Other translators see no connection at all with homosexual acts and suggest that "the word means loose, morally weak, or lacking in self-control."¹⁹⁵ These non-

homosexual translations are usually picked up by the prohomophile literature.

The idea at work here is that if the word *malakos* (soft) is not a reference to homosexual activity, then such acts are not a form of iniquity that prevents entrance to the Kingdom of God.

Many of commentators and lexicographers of the New Testament, however, "see this as a reference to passive homosexuals, that is those who yield themselves to be used for homosexual purposes."¹⁹⁶ Some quote Papyrus Hibeh 54, "And send

us also Zenobius the effeminate with tabret, and cymbals, and rattles."

"Effeminate" here equates to *malakos*. On this papyrus Dessmann comments,

"The word is no doubt used in its secondary (obscene) sense as by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians VI, 9. It is an allusion to the foul practices by which the musician eked out his earnings."¹⁹⁷ The fact that *malakoi* are mentioned between two other

sexual sins in our text lends weight to the argument that "softness" here is not

¹⁹⁴ J. Moffat, *A new Translation of the Bible* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935).

¹⁹⁵ J.J. McNeill, *The Church and the homosexual* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1976), P. 52.

¹⁹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), P. 61.

¹⁹⁷ Deissmann, P. 164, n. 4.

merely self-indulgence in general but, as the lexicographers, Arndt and Gingrich suggest, "males who allowed themselves to be used homosexually."¹⁹⁸

Finally, the point is sometimes argued that "if we were to take this catalogue of vices seriously, non of us would enter the Kingdom of God because we are all guilty, for example, covetous."¹⁹⁹ This conclusion completely overlooks the Biblical distinction between repentant believers prone to sin but striving against the inner and outer expression of it (see 1 John 1:6 - 10) "and unrepentant sinners, on the other hand, who follow a steady largely unresisted programme of deliberate disobedience (see 1 John 2:4; 3:6 - 9)"²⁰⁰ The constitutional homosexual is not barred from the kingdom of God any more than the inveterate adulter or the kleptomaniac. All, however, must resist the temptation to act out their impulses. As Paul says, "And such were some of you. 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" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Such reasoning would undermine any attempt at repentance or reformation in the church by arguing that "we are all sinners."

5.4.2 Meeting the Gnostic Approach

1 Timothy 1:8 -10. Now we know that the law is good, if anyone uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man

¹⁹⁸ Atkinson, P. 61. Also P.M. Ukleja, "Homosexuality in the New Testament," Bsc 140 (1983): 350-351.

¹⁹⁹ Mollenkott and Sconzoni, P. 70.

²⁰⁰ Lovelace, P. 96.

slayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.²⁰¹

Readers who accept the authenticity of the first epistle to Timothy usually date it about AD 63 -65. They believe that Paul dispatched it while staying in Macedonia shortly after a visit to Ephesus — in other words that Paul wrote the epistle between his first and second Roman imprisonments. A quick reading of the epistle shows that it is primarily concerned with the issues of the heresy and church order. The heresy seems to have been a form of Judaizing Agnosticism based on metaphysical dualism. Matter was held to be essentially evil, and God is the supreme good. Therefore God could have no direct contact with matter. A series of emanations was posited between man and God.

The danger of Gnosticism was not simply theological: it also had serious moral and ethical consequences. If matter is essentially flawed and evil and spirit/soul is good, then physical bodies are essentially evil. In ethical belief and conduct, this produced two results. First, if the body is evil it must be subjugated, thwarted, held down. This type of Gnosticism ended in rigid asceticism. But the same basic assumption, the evil nature of the body, could result in exactly the opposite ethical belief. If the body is evil then it does not really matter what one does with it. The body is unimportant; all that really matters is spirit. Therefore, a person may indulge his body in the most gluttonous, licentious, and uninhibited manner possible, and it makes no difference to salvation. If the body

²⁰¹ Bible. The New International Version, I Timothy 1:8-10.

will not be resurrected (2 Timothy 2:18), the deeds done in the body become irrelevant to the hereafter.

It is not hard to imagine the impact on the law of two such approaches. One group desired to be teachers of the law but understood neither what they were saying nor what they affirmed (1 Timothy 1:7).

Some of the false teachers evidently assumed that the law was designed for the righteous man and "urged their interpretations of it as necessary appendices to the gospel."²⁰² These false teachers forbade marriage and ordered abstinence from certain foods (1 Timothy 4:1,5). On the other hand, Paul finds it necessary to warn Timothy about those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, that is, "those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:4 -7). These men also opposed the truth, they are "men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith" (2 Timothy 3:8).

Against such a background, Paul affirms that the primary purpose of the law is to condemn sin. The law is good (Romans 7:16) if it is used properly, and its purpose for Paul in this context is to reveal and restrain evil. In this sense the law is good (*kalos*). In an ideal world there would be no need for law other than the

²⁰² A.E. Humphreys, ed. *The Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1925), P. 85.

love of God in the heart. But the present state of affairs calls for something quite different.

Paul then presents "a catalogue of sins which the law must identify and condemn."²⁰³ In keeping with the context, the list of sins enumerated here follows the pattern of the Decalogue in that they move from general to specific. First he addresses the "lawless and disobedient, or those who refuse to obey any law. Next are the ungodly and sinners or those who refuse to obey the law of God, followed by the unholy and profane who transgress specific requirements of the law."²⁰⁴ These relate to the first four commandments of the Decalogue. "Murderers of fathers and mother correlate to the fifth commandment, representing an extreme violation of it."²⁰⁵ "Man slayers represent the sixth commandment whereas immoral persons and sodomites apparently are cited as extreme examples of the commandment not to commit adultery."²⁰⁶ So the list continues; men stealers (kidnappers, RSV), the grossest kind of theft representing the eighth precept, liars and perjurers the ninth, and so forth. The key word in the passage is "sodomites" which is a translation of *arsenokoitai*. Most exegetes agree that this word refers to homosexual behaviour. It is not a question of disposition or temptation. We can make a

²⁰³ W. Barclay, *The letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon: With Introductions and Interpretations.* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), P. 42.

²⁰⁴ W. Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistle* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons 1924). P. 12.

²⁰⁵ D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), P. 61.

²⁰⁶ F.D. Gealy and M.P. Noyes, *I Timothy*: IB II (1955): 387.

number of significant observations about the vice list in 1 Timothy. First, the list deals with deeds: "only those sins have been enumerated of which the human law can take cognizance."²⁰⁷ The tenth commandment warning against covetousness is covered by the final words in the list "and whatever else" and probably reflects Paul's disinterest at this point in sins of the mind and heart.

Pornos, translated "immoral persons." Is a generic term in the New Testament for one acting against the virtue of chastity. Paul, however, specifies sodomite to be in the same category. Field remarks, "as an interpretation of the seventh commandment the parallel is striking. The implication is that homosexual conduct infringes the demands of the Decalogue as certainly as heterosexual adultery."²⁰⁸ We also observe that Paul never connects homosexual acts with cultic or ceremonial law, or prohibitions against idolatry as such. In this context we see Paul attaching to his prohibition the kind of normative authority assigned to the Decalogue. If this is so, there can be no doubt that Paul regarded homosexual acts as sin and a perversion of the order of human existence as willed by God." Even though within this catalogue of vices it is not accented as being especially horrible, as many moral theologies would make it appear."²⁰⁹

Scroggs suggest that 1 Timothy is not a condemnation of homosexuality generally or even pederasty as such but of that specific form of pederasty that involved enslaving boys or youths for sexual purposes and the use of these boys

²⁰⁷ J.H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1906), P. 28.

²⁰⁸ Field; P. 17.

²⁰⁹ Thielicke, P. 278.

by adult males. In this way this text is read to condemn only certain kinds of homosexual practices.

Although a scenario such as that describes was common enough in Paul's day, it does not follow that Paul is discussing it here. The context of 1 Timothy 1:8 - 11 is the use and abuse of the law. The general consensus of opinion among commentators is that this list is modelled on the Decalogue. For Paul there was a time and a place for the preaching of the law, and its precepts were to be set forth as "a means of awakening in human hearts the conscious need for salvation."²¹⁰

The law is basically for criminals and rebellious offenders. Christians, however, who enjoy the liberty of love and grace in Christ Jesus must never forget that liberty is not license. Paul makes this point in his remarks at the end of verse 10, "and whatever else is against sound doctrine." These words come as a surprise after a list of criminal offenders against the law. "Sound doctrine" (*hugiainouse didaskalia*), are words found more frequently in the pastoral epistles than anywhere else in the New Testament. This could be expected since the pastorals are filled with instruction. In this context, however, they show that for Paul the law was not merely for criminals but contained teaching intended for the normal rule of life. Thus the description "sound doctrine" denotes "wholesomeness or healthiness of true Christian doctrine."²¹¹

²¹⁰ C.R. Eerdman, *The Pastoral Epistle* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1923), P. 24.

²¹¹ Guthrie, P. 62.

The implication is that sound Christian teaching will not run contrary to the law of God. If it does, the law serves as a corrective showing that the moral nature is in violation of and in opposition to God's will. A person who thinks he is healthy may be shown by X-ray to be in mortal danger from disease. Likewise the law can point out sin and by so doing show man his need of righteousness, but law has no power to make him so. That is accomplished by the gospel.

As Quinn notes,

The upright believer is, on the other hand, not antinomian, anymore than he is a liar or a murderer (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9b). He does not reject all laws, divine and human. The point of the contrast here is that the law is "superfluous" for the believer who in virtue of the spirit and faith in Christ (cf. Galatians 5:22 - 23) already does and more than does what the law can only command.²¹²

The law and the gospel cannot be played off one against the other. Furthermore, scholars have shown that "the Decalogue has its theological and ethical foundation established firmly on the bedrock of the creation teaching of Genesis."²¹³ In other words, the appeal of the Decalogue is for men and women to live the lifestyle the creator intended for his creation. "And in that creation scheme, for Paul at least, homosexuality has no place."²¹⁴

We see that the three major references of homosexuality in the New Testament clearly condemn homosexual acts. Romans 1, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy,

²¹² J.D. Quinn, "The Pastoral Epistle on Righteousness," (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1982), P. 237.

²¹³ C.F. Henry, Christian Personal Ethics (Grand Rapids: WM.B Eerdmans Publishing C., 1957), PP. 27ff.

²¹⁴ Field, The Homosexual way, P. 17.

male with male sexual acts are considered immoral. In Romans Paul illustrates the depravity of the pagan world by reference to such acts. At the same time the context in which it is discussed and the words used to describe this activity demonstrate that for Paul it was an aberration in human sexual conduct, the result of the entrance of sin. Homosexuality was not a part of God's plan for the sexes. To say that "natural" refers to what appears to be natural to fallen humanity today is to miss the cosmic perspective of creation against which Paul writes. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to activities, which although part of the individual's past, now are to be given up as the Christ-like lifestyle takes command. Among them is the practice of homosexuality. Attempts to free the Greek words *malakos* and *arsenokoites* from the homosexual connotations are not convincing. The evidence is too strong that homosexuality is indicated by these words. We can only conclude from this text that the homosexual lifestyle lies outside Christian sanctification. This understanding is reinforced by the second mention of *arsenokoites* in 1 Timothy. Here the basic principles of the Decalogue are expanded and illustrated by listing various activities that the law forbids. The arrangement implies that the mentioned activities are forbidden, with the authority of the Decalogue standing behind the ban. This means that homosexual acts are forbidden by the same authority that prohibits adultery. Once more, attempts to limit the word *arsenokoites* to certain limited kinds of exploitative prostitution by linking the words *pornos* and *andrapodistes* with

arsenokoites are possible only if we dislodge the words from the context and consider them independently or in a compromising historical context.

Although there are only three major references in the New Testament relating to homosexuality, their meaning is clear. Homosexual acts are not a part of God's plan for the sexes. Neither are they a part of Christian sanctification which culminates with entrance into the kingdom of God. They are forbidden by the same authority that prohibits murder and adultery.

5.5 Secondary New Testament Texts and Homosexuality

Of the many texts in the New Testament interpreted as pro or anti homosexual statements, on closer inspection, most are not really relevant at all. As examples we will examine two or three of these borderline reference. Two texts in 2 Peter and Jude are virtually parallels, although one throws some light on the other.

2 Peter 2:6 -10. If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes He condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; and if he rescued the righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked (for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day, with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.²¹⁵

The second chapter of 2 Peter is essentially a warning against false teachers.

Verses 1 to 3 describe these false teachers and their heresies. The succeeding

²¹⁵ Bible, The King James Version, 2 Peter 2:6-10.

verses through verse 10 assure readers that ultimate damnation and punishment of the false teachers is certain. Three examples of previous punishment of the wicked and deliverance of the righteous are cited to confirm such assurance. First, the angels who sinned were consigned to pits of darkness to be kept until the judgment day. Second, Noah was rescued from the flood that destroyed the ungodly. Finally, according to our text, verses 6 - 10, Lot was rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah before the wicked cities were reduced to ashes. Lot does not appear in the Old Testament as a particularly righteous man. However, based on Abraham's pleading in Genesis 18:23 -33, we must conclude that Lot was one of the righteous whom God would not destroy with the wicked.

According to 2 Peter, Lot was wearied by the licentious behaviour of the wicked, therefore he was rescued by God from Sodom. The expression "licentious behaviour of the wicked" is a translation of three Greek words: "*aseligia* meaning "outrageous licentiousness" and "lasciviousness"; *anastrophe* which means "mode of life" or "conduct"; and *athesmos*, translated "wicked". *Athesmos* literally means "lawless" but differs from *anomos* which also means "lawless". *Thesmos* (here, from *athemos*) implies a divine ordinance or a fundamental law."²¹⁶

The point is that the wicked in their unbridled licence insolently disregard the most basic divine precepts. In verse 8 Peter repeats the theme that Lot suffered in

²¹⁶ J.B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. Jude and Second Epistle of St. Peter: Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Comments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), P. 125.

Sodom and heightens it with stronger language. What Lot saw and heard as he lived among them on a day-to-day basis tortured his righteous soul. The lawless deeds here are the deeds elsewhere described in Scripture as deeds of persons not subject to law, that is, of Gentiles (Acts 2:23; 1 Corinthians 9:21) or of law breakers and malefactors (Luke 22:37). Only verse 10 points up the same kind of licentiousness Jude emphasised in describing the sin of the "sons of God" and of Sodom as typical of the sin of the Libertines. In verse 10 we read that God is able to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, especially those who indulge in the "lust of defiling passion." Lust of defiling passion is variously translated as "lust of defilement", "lust of pollution or polluting desire". All are translations of *epithumia miasmou*. Alford comments, "Here, all following after unlawful carnal lusts is meant ... hankering after unlawful and polluting use of the flesh."²¹⁷ It seems that those troubling those who worshipped God did so not only with false doctrines but also gross immorality.

The mention of Sodom and the strong language used in a number of these verses has led some commentators to think the apostle has in view here "the darker forms of impurity which were common throughout the Roman Empire (Romans 1:24 - 28),"²¹⁸ that is, homosexual lust. Peter's descriptions, however, are general and quite diffuse. It is possible that since he mentions Sodom and puts emphasis

²¹⁷ H. Alford, *The Greek Testament 4*, ed. Chicago: (Moody Press, 1968): 406.

²¹⁸ E.H. Plumtre, *The General Epistle of St. Peter and St. Jude: with notes and Introduction*. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1926), P. 181.

several times on sexual sins, he intends to include homosexual acts also, but we are not justified in singling out homosexual acts as alone intended by these verses. All sexual sins are included as well as the other lawless deeds of the people among whom Lot chose to live.

Jude 7, 8. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these men in their dreams defile the flesh, reject authority, and revile the glorious ones.²¹⁹

It is generally accepted that the Jude who wrote this epistle is probably Jude the brother of Jesus, but it is not clear to whom the epistle is addressed. It is concerned with disruptive elements in the church, mostly a form of gnosticism, as in 2 Peter. Hints of gnostic heresies appear in Colossians, the pastoral epistle, and Revelation. This kind of heresy was spreading through the churches of Asia Minor, and this epistle may have been sent to one or more of the churches there.

The writer begins what looks like a regular epistle intended to confirm the faith of the believers. Then he urges them to defend the faith against certain intruders and begins to expose the nature of these culprits by showing how they parallel earlier rebels against divine authority in Old Testament times. He assures the faithful that a similar fate awaits these contemporary rebels.

Concerning the parallel passages in 2 Peter and Jude. It is not possible to determine whether 2 Peter used Jude or vice versa. Our text is one of the parallel

²¹⁹ Bible, New International Version. Jude Chapter 7 and 8.

passages where Jude, like Peter, is explaining how sinners and rebels against God in antiquity were duly punished. The two lists are clearly related - both mention the fallen angels reserved unto judgement. Jude does not mention Noah and the antediluvian world but moves to Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, five in all: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zoboim and finally Zoar, which was spared due to Lot's pleading (Deuteronomy 29:23; Genesis 19:19 - 30). Lot himself is mentioned in Jude. These cities "acted immorally" (*ekporneusasai*) a term encompassing all kinds of immorality. The intensive use of the preposition *ek* suggests that immorality was practised "to its fulfilment, thoroughly, without reserve."²²⁰ Then, we are told, they "indulged in unnatural lust." This seems related to Paul's use of "unnatural", giving appearance of being a statement about homosexual acts. The original text, however, does not lend itself to this interpretation. It reads literally, "They went after other flesh", "other flesh" meaning flesh of a different kind (*heteros*). The two interpretations of this phrase are possible, both appearing in different translations of Jude 7:

Remember Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring towns; like the angels, they committed fornication and followed unnatural lusts [NEB].

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion [NIV].

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust [RSV].²²¹

²²⁰ Alford, P. 532.

²²¹ Bible, New International Version, Jude Chapter 7.

The NEB and RSV translations tell us that the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah paralleled the behaviour of the angels mentioned in the previous verse. But that previous verse does not say specifically what the angels did; it says, "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him ... in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day" (verse 6).

Many commentators, however, relate verse 7 to Genesis 6:1 - 14 especially verse 4, which reads, "The Nephelim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown" (RSV). Here the "sons of God" who "came in to the daughters of men" are interpreted as angelic beings who have intercourse with human beings. This assumption is carried to Jude's statement as well. Interpreters often assume that Jude is dependent on the non-canonical 1 Enoch for its ideas here. Clearly, Jude is familiar with pseudepigraphical works. He refers to the Jewish literary work, Assumption of Moses in verse 9 and actually quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in verse 14. First Enoch 6 is a tale of the fall of the angels based on Genesis 6: 1 - 4, passages in 1 Enoch read as follows:

1 Enoch 6:1,2. In those days, when the children of man had multiplied it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said

to one another, "come let us choose wives for ourselves from among the daughters of men and beget us children."²²²

1 Enoch 7:1,2. And they took wives unto themselves, and everyone (respectively) chose one woman for himself, and they began to go unto them. And they taught them magical medicine, incantations, the cutting of roots, and taught them about plants. And the women became pregnant and gave birth to great giants whose heights were three hundred cubits.²²³

If Jude simply follow these stories and claims that the sodomites followed in the same manner as the angels, then, it is argued, he is not talking about homosexuality. "Thus the "other flesh" the sodomites went after was that of the angels, just as the angels in 1 Enoch went after the "other flesh", that is, woman."²²⁴ According to this account impurity as well as pride was involved in the fall of the angels, and Sodom represents an identical reverse repetition of their fall.

Another interpretation proposes that Jude refers to the apocalypse of Enoch without intending an exact comparison with it in every detail. Following this interpretation, the experience at Sodom was similar in certain ways to that in 1 Enoch. The angels went after that which was not divinely intended for them, and the men of Sodom did likewise. Unquestionably Jude uses the legend of fallen angels in 1 Enoch as some sort of analogy to Sodom and Gomorrah. His allusion

²²² E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubledau

²²³ *Ibid*; P. 16.

²²⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistle of Peter and Jude* (New York: Harper and Row Publications: 1969), PP. 258-259.

to the story illustrates parenthetically the similarity between the judgment of the angels and that of Sodom.

This interpretation gains certain credence by the fact that there are basic differences in the two accounts. In Genesis 19 the men of Sodom apparently were unaware that Lot's visitors were angels and could not be accused of knowingly desiring celestial beings. But they did perceive of them as men and could be accused of desiring them as such. On the other hand, the angels in the 1 Enoch account of Genesis 6 knew that they were desiring and cohabiting with human beings. This aspect is neither accidental nor incidental in the 1 Enoch story. The NIV translation, "In a similar way," points to the affinity between the events of Genesis 19 and the 1 Enoch story without requiring an exact correspondence.

In the case of the angels the forbidden flesh (lit. "other than that appointed by God) refers to the intercourse with women; in the case of Sodom to the departure from the natural use (Romans 1:27).²²⁵

This interpretation of Jude assumes that he is using the 1 Enoch legend as an illustration or analogy to the Sodom experience. It need not be considered Jude's own interpretation of Genesis 6, in which it has at least two considerations in its favour.

First, it avoids interpreting Genesis 6:1 - 4 in a way that many readers of the Bible would find incomprehensible. The straightforward interpretation of

²²⁵ Mayor, P. 32.

Genesis suggests "cohabitation between human beings."²²⁶ Second, it forestalls a flat contradiction between Genesis 6:4 and the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:30, "for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." So it is not necessary to translate "Sons of God" in Genesis 6:4 as angels, but simply as men. For Jude the 1 Enoch legend was an apt illustration of the Sodom event.

Finally, with another "likewise" or "in like manner" statement Jude addresses his own day and those troubling the Church. Just as the men of Sodom could be compared with the angel legend in Enoch, so the heretics of Jude's day have parallels with the men of Sodom. "These men are dreamers of visionaries (*enupniazomenoi*). Not that they experience visions or dreams while asleep,"²²⁷ "rather here is a metaphorical depiction of liberties as having a "nocturnal blindness" to the true faith."²²⁸ Perhaps this is an illusion to the blind Sodomites groping for the door. They are the children of the night, mere dreamers. These men live as if they were in a dream. The word "dream", therefore, is connected with all three words that follow and not simply with "defile the flesh". The Greek construction does not support the KJV reading, "filthy dreamers." These men live in an unreal world. The result is an impurity not unlike that of Sodom,

²²⁶ See Nichol, P. 251, on the Misunderstanding of the word Nephilim, Mistakenly translated "giants" in the Septuagint(LXX).

²²⁷ See Moulton and Milligan, PP. 219, 229.

²²⁸ H. Balz, "Hupnos, etc" in TDNT 8 (1977): 553-554.

in a rejection of authority and in the reviling (lit. "blaspheming") of glorious ones (cf. 2 Peter 2:10).

The expression "defile the flesh" is too general to allow application to homosexual acts alone. In the New Testament *miaino* usually defilement, sexual immorality in general."²²⁹ Once more it is clear that writer is not singling out homosexual acts in these verses.

On the other hand, they cannot be entirely excluded. The reference to Sodom and to sexual irregularities calls to the minds of the readers the type of misbehaviour for which the city had become proverbial. "We must conclude, therefore, that in 2 Peter and Jude the full range of forbidden sexual relations is addressed and there is no scriptural basis for reading these texts as references to homosexual acts alone."²³⁰

Revelation 22:14,15. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.²³¹

In this final chapter of the New Testament, John the Revelator is describing the new earth and its inhabitants. He reminds them of the types of people who will be received into the new earth and the holy city and of those rejected, who remain outside.

²²⁹ R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1963), P. 110.

²³⁰ Coleman, P. 111.

²³¹ Bible, The King James Version . Revelation 22:14,15.

"Outside" does not mean that evil doers will be forever clamouring at the gates of the city, vainly seeking admission, but is akin to the "outer darkness" in Matthew 24, implying eternal destruction. "This thesis is strengthened in Revelation 21:8 where five of the six character traits mentioned are consigned to the lake of fire ("dog" is the only additional epithet in 22:15). "Outside" involves eternal destruction in the lake of fire."²³²

Among those outside is a group described as "dogs" (lit. "the dogs"), *hoi kunas*. The word is sometimes regarded as an exclusive reference to homosexuals, or sodomites. This has been discussed from an Old Testament perspective, where we suggested that the word refers to a male cult functionary who may have been involved in heterosexual and/or homosexual acts.

"But it is unlikely that this is a cult functioning neither is it a special reference to the Sodomites."²³³ The word is more general here than in Deuteronomy 23:17,18 where it appears as a quasi-technical term for male cult prostitutes. In the Revelation text the general characteristics of the undomesticated pack-hound come more to mind. Such animals were pariahs and scavengers of almost anything. Such wild dogs ate the body of Jezebel (2 Kings 10:33 - 37) and befouled the streets and walls of the city. They licked the sores of beggars (Luke 16:21) and even worse (1 Kings 21:19; 22:38; Proverbs 26:11).

²³² R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), P. 394.

²³³ Diesterdieck, *A Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1887), P. 491.

In the Jewish culture of the First Century A.D Palestine, the term "dog" became an epithet for anyone morally and ethically disgusting. "The word appears in Scripture for various kinds of impure and malicious persons. It was used by the Jews in reference to the heathen (Matthew 15:22ff), to the godless in general,"²³⁴ and expressed utmost contempt. Barclay quotes a rabbinic saying: "whoever eats with an idolater is the same as he would eat with a dog."²³⁵ Among the Jews "dog" was a symbol of all that was disgusting and unclean. A comparison with Deuteronomy cannot be entirely ignored in connection with this text, however.²³⁶ From Jewish point of view, it refers to a thoroughly immoral, unethical person; and those who persisted in the practice of homosexual activity would fall within the prophet's purview. But John's vision is wider than that of Judaism.

As Beasley-Murray comments:

It is evident that for John the term relates not to the heathen over against the Jews, but to the godless of any nations in contrast to the men of all nations who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb (7:14 and 22:14).²³⁷

It is not correct, therefore, to apply this text exclusively to homosexuals. Just as the word *porne* once meant a cult prostitute but was widened in the Hellenistic world to include all kinds of fornication, so the term "dog" assumed a much

²³⁴ Sotah, 9:15.

²³⁵ W. Barclay, *The Revelation of John 2* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960): 290.

²³⁶ J. Moffatt, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," *In the expositor's Greek Testament 5*, ed. (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967): 491.

²³⁷ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, New Century Bible Series (Greenwood, SC: Attic press, 1974), P. 341.

wider meaning than a (possibly homosexual) cult prostitute and refers to a generally immoral person. Anyone tempted to feel smug at the thought that those who practise homosexual acts or are immoral and outside the city should read on, because sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, idolaters, and everyone loving and practising falsehood are also found outside. Impudent persistence in such activities confirms a rebellious attitude toward God.

We will not discuss numerous other texts quoted as evidence of gay lifestyle, sometimes to claim New Testament approval. Neither will we dignify with an answer the assertion that Jesus himself was a homosexual who:

Went around kissing, embracing and living only with men, who loved a younger man in a very special way, even allowing him to lay on his lap in public, who advocated pacifism, never legally married, wore a dress and longer hair, used expensive perfume, stayed up all night, was very close to his mother, advocated decriminalisation of non-violent sex crimes, often had clashes with the Law and the Church, and even spoke up for all kinds of eunuchs, "Canaanite dogs" and gay rulers.²³⁸

Hebrews 13:4 is sometimes cited as further evidence for the approval of a gay lifestyle: "Let marriage be held in honour among all." The emphasis is placed on "all" and interpreted to include homosexuals.

Mathew 5:23 is interpreted to mean, anyone who calls his brother a "queer" is in danger of hell. The man who assisted Jesus in the preparation of the last supper was a homosexual (Mark 14:13) for by custom only women carried water jars. Jesus approved of the homosexual centurion's relationship by healing his young

²³⁸ P.R. Johnson and T.F. Eaves, *Gays and the New Light*, (Los Angeles: P.R. Johnson, 1982), P. 93.

male companion (Matthew 8:5 - 13). The Greek word *pais* used in the text is used to describe a same sex relationship. It is claimed that any Greek male in that culture would use the word to refer to his young lover. Some theologians suggest that Jesus had a sinful human nature just like ours (Heb. 2:14, RSV), that he was tempted in every respect as we are (Heb. 4:15,RSV). If Jesus is to understand us in our sinful condition and if we can overcome as he did, then Jesus must have been tempted homosexually. That is to say, he must have had a genuine homosexual inclination.

Conclusion

We conclude that the secondary references to homosexuality in the New Testament do not refer specifically to homosexuality at all. The three references examined are general, vague, and diffuse and none of them is a genuine reference solely to homosexual activity. Therefore any attempt to isolate homosexuality as the sin condemned in these verses is an inaccurate and misleading use of Scripture. Though homosexuality may be included within the context suggested by these writers, so are many other sins, both sexual and non-sexual.

The following chapter of this research will focus on the analysis and conclusion of this topic of homosexuality in East African culture and the Bible.