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Who Are the ἀρσενοκοῖται, and Why Does Paul Condemn Them (1 Cor 6:9)?

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INTRODUCTION

The Christian Bible, however one views it, contains but a few verses regarding same-sex sexual acts.¹ Yet, they have had a large impact on views regarding same-sex sexuality throughout history. One of these verses is First Corinthians 6:9, with its apparent Pauline neologism ἀρσενοκοῖται. This word is rendered differently in different translations,

¹ Usually mentioned are Gen 19:1–13; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 23:17–18; Rom 1:25–27; 1 Cor 6:9; and 1 Tim 1:10 (with a few others less frequent). This article will not actively use the term “homosexual” and its derivatives, in order to avoid obvious anachronism (discussed in, e.g., Anthony Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David: Manly Love in the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Sex* [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011], 3; Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 4–5, 97; Dale B. Martin, “Arsenokoitês and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences” in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*, ed. Robert L. Brawley [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996] 117–36, 118; and Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992], vii–viii). By avoiding “homosexual,” I also avoid hiding the difference in status between the penetrator and the penetrated in the ancient world, see Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978), 67, 104; Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 177; Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 197–98. I will instead use “same-sex sexual acts,” a choice discussed in Hedlund, Simon, “You Shall Not Lie with a Male as with a Woman; It Is an Abomination” (Lev 18:22; 20:13): Come again?” (Master Thesis, University of Uppsala, 2016), 5.

and sometimes in combination with the proceeding *μαλακοί*.² A few common suggestions for its translation are “homosexuals,” “pedophiles,” “sodomites,” and “men who lay with men.” The sheer difference between these suggestions raises questions, and I will argue that such translations have lost touch with the historical and literary context, which has a negative impact on their attempts at dynamic equivalence. This article will question the practice of a joint translation of *μαλακοί* and *ἀρσενοκοῖται*, suggest considerations for a more dynamically equivalent translation, and a new translation.

MEANING AND TRANSLATION

Dynamic equivalence is by no means a universal ideal of translation. However, in the case of a controversial and historically potent word like *ἀρσενοκοῖται*, I find it valuable, since I would argue that a translation of such a word should understand, and attempt to reproduce, as much as possible of what it meant in its original context.³ As we discuss the literal meaning of *ἀρσενοκοῖται*, it will also become clear that no modern

² Rendered on its own, *μαλακοί* is often translated “effeminate,” which is also problematic, given what was considered effeminate in the ancient world. It is a notion that could include “chasing” women in a way considered unrestrained, performing oral sex on a woman, wanting sexual relations with married women, being lazy, having a weak eye, pale skin, or having too much love of excess and luxury (see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 136, 143, 152, 199; Martin, “Arsenokoitês and Malakos,” 125; and Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 33, 125). In Josephus’ *J.W.* 7.334–338, it is even said that those who hesitate to kill their families and commit suicide instead of ending up in the hands of the enemy are “most effeminate.” *Μαλακός*, then, referred to all aspects of being less than a man, and those notions were not necessarily the same as today. When “effeminacy” is used in this article, it will refer to the ancient notion.

³ I am here influenced by Eugene A. Nida’s opinion that if dynamic equivalence is to be achieved, both the modern and the ancient culture, as well as the literary context, must govern the translation (Eugene A. Nida, *Contexts in Translating* [Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2001], 13, 68). For a more thorough discussion on ideals of translation, I refer the reader to Dan Nässelqvist, “Könsinkluderande språk i nästa svenska bibelöversättning,” *SEÅ* 81 (2016): 169–216.

translation of it adheres to strict formal equivalence, but are based on specific interpretations of contemporary and literary contexts. One enlightening example is the New American Standard Bible (NASB), usually focused on formal equivalence.⁴ The NASB translates ἀρσενοκοῖται as “homosexuals” instead of the literal “male layers/bedders,” thereby interpreting ἀρσενοκοῖται in a specific way. In this article I will argue that such an interpretation entails, among other things, an anachronistic understanding of sexuality, that it wrongly includes women and inclination, and that it does not sufficiently transmit social background. Further, it is worth noting that the emotional impact of the translation of ἀρσενοκοῖται is often overlooked.⁵ Since, as I will argue, 1 Cor is a deliberative letter, and since ἀρσενοκοῖται is a powerful word, this aspect should be considered.

When finding a base of meaning for a dynamically equivalent translation, knowledge of the historical context of both author and first (intended) recipients⁶ will help us understand what interpretive principles they received and reproduced.⁷ Implicit here is the idea that Paul used a word he thought his recipients could, and would, interpret in a way similar to himself.⁸ We also need to look at the textual context within

⁴ Nässelqvist, “Könsinkluderande Språk,” 179–80.

⁵ For a discussion on emotional impact and translations, see Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 95.

⁶ Gadamer has correctly noted the difficulty of delineating who the first recipients of a text actually were (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall [London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013], 413). However, as Paul is sending his letter to a specific group of people, whom he seems to have been familiar with, the problem of who the first intended recipients were is not as acute here as in the case of many other texts. I presuppose that there is an overlap between the intended recipients and those who actually received the letter – albeit that overlap is not an exact one.

⁷ So Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 14, 16. See also Martin, *Corinthian Body*, xiv.

⁸ Cf. Alexander Miller, *Philosophy of Language* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 153, 162, 165.

the letter, since the surrounding themes affects understanding, and analyze what point Paul is trying to argue. By attaining such an educated prejudice before focusing on smaller textual units, we will be better posed to understand them as part of a whole.

Since part of our understanding of the Corinthian community will come from a historical reconstruction based on Paul's deliberative letter, a note of caution on the relation between facts and rhetorical means is due.⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues, for example, that the community was not as fractioned as Paul suggests in 1 Cor 1. Rather, they were seeking the advice of different authoritative figures on how to live, while Paul wanted to extend his influence by posing the alternatives as either-or.¹⁰ To avoid painting the congregation only through Paul's eyes, I will use a wider historical reconstruction from which the letter will be read. However, first we will turn to the issue of the origins of ἀρσενικοῖται.

Ἀρσενικοῖται

Paul is the first known user of ἀρσενικοῖτης, using it once.¹¹ It is composed of ἄρσην ("male") and κοίτη ("bed," "sleeping mat"). The latter word in the construction has a verbal force, rendering the literal transla-

⁹ Dated to the mid-fifties CE (John Barclay, "1 Corinthians," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 1108–33, 1109; and Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 73). A more precise dating is not needed here. Further, there seems to have lived Jews in the congregation (1 Cor 7:18; 9:8–10, 20–22; 10:1–13), but while the culture was predominantly Roman, it is not clear how many (Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [London: Black, 1968], 2; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 6–7, 24).

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion on historical reconstructions from a deliberative address, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians," *NTS* 33/3 (1987): 386–403, esp. 396–98.

¹¹ Assuming here that 1 Tim (1:10) was not written by Paul himself.

tion “male layers/bedders.”¹² A plausible background is found in Lev 18:22 and 20:13 (LXX), which uses ἀρσην and κοίτη in relation to male same-sex sexual matters. It seems likely that Paul had them in mind when creating ἀρσενοκοῖται.¹³ Translated, they read:

And you shall not sleep with a male as in a bed of a woman, for it is an abomination. (Lev 18:22)

And he who lies with a male in a bed for a woman, both have committed an abomination; by death let them be put to death; they are liable. (Lev 20:13)¹⁴

Even though the place, a bed for a woman, rightly has been placed in focus, the verses seem to have been understood as a circumlocution for male-male sex.¹⁵ However, since context affects understanding, and most (or all) modern translations of 1 Cor 6:9 make assumptions based on some understanding of the context of Paul, we have to look at that context to see what connotations, cognitive and emotional, that might have been raised by such a circumlocution. Before that, however, a brief overview of the history of research.

¹² John Boswell, *Christianity, social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 342 (he translates it “male fuckers”); David F. Wright, “Homosexuals or Prostitutes: The Meaning of Arsenokoitai (1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10),” *Vigiliae Christianae* 38/2 (1984): 125–53, 130–32; Barrett, *Commentary*, 140; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 447–48.

¹³ So Wright, *Homosexuals*, 129; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 447; and Victor Paul Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues* (3rd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 80. Of course, it would be unnecessary to claim that no other influence is possible. For example, the latin *coitus* and the Greek κοιτάζω might also have influenced Paul, but that would not render the connection to Lev 18:22 and 20:13 less significant.

¹⁴ The translation is made by Dirk L. Büchner and is available online here: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/03-leu-nets.pdf>.

¹⁵ As an example of this, see Philo's *Spec. Laws* 3.39, where he discusses male same-sex sexual relations and calls for a death penalty, in agreement with Lev 20:13 (cf. *Abraham* 133–36; Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality & Civilization* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003], 44).

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF SCHOLARSHIP

An appropriate starting point for this summary of scholarship is the study of John Boswell from 1980, since it is still being quoted by commentaries writing on our verse.¹⁶ Boswell has two main points. First, he argues that the Pauline corpus says hardly anything about homosexuality, and that the juxtaposition of ἀρσενοκοῖται and πόρνος in 1 Tim 1:10 suggests that ἀρσενοκοῖται refers to male (possibly homosexual) prostitutes. His second point is that it is improbable that ἀρσενοκοῖται denotes "homosexuals" since no one during the following three centuries used it in such a way.¹⁷

Although important, not many of Boswell's conclusions are left standing, and the study has become more of a starting point for critique. One powerful critic has been David F. Wright, who, in an article from 1984, argues that the study of Boswell was important, but flawed. One of the first points of critique is that Boswell fails to take Lev 18:22 and 20:13 into account.¹⁸ He goes on to show that the structure of the word does not support the conclusions drawn from it by Boswell. According to Wright, when κοίτης is used in a compound the first part usually denotes the object. Further, the difference made by Boswell between ἀρρεν- and ἀρσεν- has not found support, and Wright considers it quite unlikely to have any support at all. He also argues that "in most if not all of the compounds in which the second half is a verb or has verbal force, the first half denotes its object, irrespective of whether it is ἀρρενο- or ἀρσενο-".¹⁹ Last, but not least, he shows that Boswell underestimated the use of ἀρσενοκοίτης in the early Church fathers. Ultimately, Wright concludes that ἀρσενοκοίτης encompassed all forms of homosexual acts between males.²⁰

¹⁶ Boswell, *Christianity*.

¹⁷ Boswell, *Christianity*, 341, 343–44, 346–49.

¹⁸ Wright, *Homosexuals*, 126–27.

¹⁹ Ibid., 130–32. Among his examples are the more common words δουλοκοίτης and μητροκοίτης, where the first part of the word is referred to as the object of the second.

²⁰ Ibid., 135, 141, 143, 144, 146.

While the critique is harsh, and often justified, Wright also makes a few unfounded assumptions. The most important one is that he does not allow the context of 1 Cor to properly inform his interpretation of the word. This is a problem he shares with Victor P. Furnish, who states that the list is a random collection of gentile vices.²¹ Arguing for the opposite are Charles K. Barrett and Anthony C. Thiselton, who claim that the list of vices are contextual and based on what Paul knows about the congregation in Corinth.²² I find this view more convincing, given the list's thematic connection to the rest of the letter (see 3:3; 4:6, 18–19; 5:1–5; 6:12; 11:17–34),²³ and if, as seems likely, it was Paul himself who created the word ἀρσενοκοῖται, that would suggest that the list is composed to fit the specific context. As Barrett claims, Paul probably used the common rhetorical device of making a list of vices, and filled it with content he found suitable given his understanding of the Corinthian context.²⁴ I find it plausible that the list is not a general note on sins, but an address to specific issues Paul either had seen in the congregation or found them at risk of doing, as they lacked clear boundaries towards the outside world.²⁵

A common understanding of the meaning of ἀρσενοκοῖται is “pederasts” or “the active male partner in a pederastic relationship” (with *μαλακοί* being the passive partner). This interpretation is supported by, among others, Ben Witherington III and Herman C. Waetjen.²⁶ Some

²¹ Furnish, *Moral Teaching*, 82–83.

²² Barrett, *Commentary*, 140; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 447–48.

²³ Connections like these are also pointed out by Gordon Fee, who seems to presuppose that the vices are not there at random but closely connected to the letter (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 242).

²⁴ Barrett, *Commentary*, 140.

²⁵ See 1 Cor 3:3; 4:17; 5:6 (and 5:10–11, where Paul shows the important difference between the ones in the congregation and the ones outside of it, a boundary that cannot be too strict with regard to association, but the more so with regard to behavior – cf. also 5:1–5).

²⁶ Herman C. Waetjen, “Same-Sex Sexual Relations in Antiquity and Sexuality and

problems should be noted. Larry W. Hurtado points out that there were other words available to Paul to describe pederasty instead of creating a new one.²⁷ Hurtado also notes that it is unlikely that ancient people viewed the pederastic relationship as a victimization in the way that we do, so to attribute a protest against such victimization to Paul could be dangerous. Further, girls were given in marriage at the same age as boys were taken as lovers, possibly even younger.²⁸ If Paul wanted to protest against pederastic relationships in general, it would have been misguided to use a word denoting only men.²⁹

The concept of pederasty was not used in the same way in ancient Rome as it is in modern Sweden. The Romans understood παιδεραστία as a form of stuprum, that is, an “offense consisting in the violation of the sexual integrity of freeborn Romans of either sex,” and could also be seen as a Greek custom.³⁰ The latter stems from the fact that in Greek culture it was not only allowed but even encouraged for a grown man to have sex with a *freeborn* boy. Such a qualification is important, since it reveals a big difference between the attitudes of the two cultures. In Roman culture, freeborn boys were off limits, while slave boys were not.³¹ The difference originates from different ways of viewing the sexual act itself. In Greek culture, the man helped teach the boy and passed on virtues by knowledge and by intercourse.³² In Roman culture on the

Sexual Identity in Contemporary American Society” in *Biblical Ethics & Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture*, ed. Robert L. Brawley (1st ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 103–16, 107; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 166.

²⁷ Larry W. Hurtado, “The Bible and Same-Sex Erotic Relations,” *Crux* 32/2 (1996): 13–19, 16–17.

²⁸ Cornelia B. Horn and John W. Martens, “*Let the Little Children Come to Me*”: *Childhood and Children in Early Christianity* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 15.

²⁹ Hurtado, “Same-Sex Erotic Relations,” 16–17. His critique focuses primarily on interpretations of Rom 1:26–27, but he also raises the issue of 1 Cor 6:9, where the critique is also valid.

³⁰ Quote from Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 96.

³¹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 30–31; Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 99.

³² Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 6, 8.

other hand, all sexual acts were a display of power, rule, and imposition of the will of the penetrator upon someone else. To penetrate a Roman boy would be to make him submissive, the complete opposite of what was aimed for.³³ A man having sex with a freeborn Roman boy would thereby be seen as violating both the “sacrosanct” body of a citizen and the “propriety claims of the *paterfamilias*,” and the act blurred the distinction between free and slave.³⁴

Both Waetjen and Halperin argue that there was no such thing as reciprocal homoerotic desire known to the ancient world.³⁵ This argument finds support in Kenneth J. Dover, who states that “the reciprocal desire of partners belonging to the same age-category is virtually unknown in Greek homosexuality.”³⁶ The evidence from Roman culture, however, speaks, contrary to Waetjen and Halperin, about men who wanted to be penetrated, seemingly as a part of the everyday life. There even existed a few words to describe them – *cinaedi*, *impudicus*, *pathicus*.³⁷ They were ridiculed and disadvantaged in the eyes of the law, but simultaneously considered “handy, even pleasurable, outlets for men’s sexual pleasures.”³⁸ It seems, then, that 1) it was conceivable for a man to desire to be penetrated, and 2) the objections against a sexual relationship between men was that someone had to “be the woman,” not that they were in what we would call a male homosexual relationship. Also, when Aristotle asks why it is “that some men enjoy being acted

³³ Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 100.

³⁴ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 97, 99; John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 48.

³⁵ Waetjen, “Same-sex,” 107; David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 21.

³⁶ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 16.

³⁷ It should be noted that although all men who wanted to be penetrated were designated as such, the designation also included men who did not want to be penetrated.

³⁸ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 172, 175, 182.

upon sexually, whether or not they also enjoy being active,”³⁹ he shows an awareness that it could occur, which perhaps necessitates a nuancing of the conclusion drawn by Dover above. The desire was probably not unknown, but since there was no “egalitarian model for sexual relations,” implying that someone had to lose if two men had sex, the fact that a man was willing to lose appeared strange.⁴⁰

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON SEXUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT

Today, sex might be ideally described as someone doing something *with* someone. In the ancient Greco-Roman context it was more suitably described as someone doing something *to* someone. There was the active, penetrating, masculine partner, and the feminine, passive, penetrated partner.⁴¹ To be penetrated was considered inferior, not physically enjoyable to men, and “homosexual anal penetration [was] treated ... as an aggressive act demonstrating the superiority of the active to the passive partner.”⁴² This inferiority was also ascribed to women, but in that case, subordination was expected. Such a subordination was also, in varying degrees, expected from slaves, prostitutes, non-citizens and freed slaves. The only ones supposed to be off limits for a freeborn Roman man were other freeborn Roman men and women (his wife excepted).⁴³

³⁹ Aristotle, *Problems*, book 4, problem 26.

⁴⁰ Cf. Williams, *Roman*, 7–8, 183, 186, 250–51.

⁴¹ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 177. The use “passive” and “active” to describe the participants in a same-sex sexual act is problematic. Yet, I choose to do so here, since it seems to be quite an accurate depiction of how they were perceived in ancient Greco-Roman culture – the “active” being the penetrator and the “passive” the penetrated.

⁴² Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 67, 104. The perspective of “aggressive act” was probably true also in the case of oral sex (see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 4–5). Thiselton also holds that there was a close connection between the “homosexuality” prevalent in the time of Paul and slavery, social dominance and idolatry (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 451).

⁴³ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 4–5, 19, 100, 226.

The emphasis on the social status of participants and roles played in the intercourse highlights a significant aspect concerning gender in the ancient world. Instead of mere biology, what you *did* with the partner, and that person's social status, was of great importance. A man who wanted to be penetrated was seen as effeminate (μαλακός), and not living according to "the central imperative of masculinity: control and dominion."⁴⁴ It seems to have been known that some men had a preference for penetrating men or women, but that preference did not exclude penetrating someone of the less preferred sex.⁴⁵ Further, reputation was of great import in the ancient world (very much so in Corinth), and men would (generally) do what they could to avoid damaging it.⁴⁶ To be seen as masculine was good for one's reputation, and accusations of being the penetrated partner could be devastating.⁴⁷

Sex, then, was a manifestation of a zero-sum game⁴⁸ where the feminine lost to the masculine. By penetrating a man, one reached an ideal of Roman masculine virility in putting another man down.⁴⁹ This perspective is in some ways also applicable to Greek culture. A Greek man was encouraged to have a sexual relation with a young boy, but to have sex with another grown man was a different matter, and being penetrated was to be feminized.⁵⁰ Such a feminization, prevalent in both cultures, was not for everyone to choose to either experience or avoid. Slaves and freed men, for example, did not have control over their sexuality – the *paterfamilia* had the opportunity to use them as he wished, as

⁴⁴ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 126–27.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 172. For a with no ascription of value to such alternatives, see Plato's *Symp.* 191c. For an example of a text with clear value judgments, see Ovid, *Am.* 2.683–686.

⁴⁶ Corinth seems to have been a place where it was very important to rise through the social hierarchies – see Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 13; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 8, 22. Paul seems to be addressing the issue in, e.g., 4:6–16.

⁴⁷ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 110, 165. See also Quintillian's *Inst.* 11.1.84; and Suetonius' *Jul.* 2, 49.

⁴⁸ So Winkler, *Constraints*, 54.

⁴⁹ Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 98.

⁵⁰ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 103–104.

long as he was the one penetrating.⁵¹ Given that up to 40% of the population of the Roman empire in the century before Jesus was born were slaves, and then adding freed men, prostitutes and non-citizens of different sorts who were “available,” free men had a lot of sexual opportunities.⁵² There were some restrictions,⁵³ but on the whole, the freeborn man could enforce his sexual will on a lot of people that were socially weaker than himself.⁵⁴

Furnish argues that the two most common expressions of male same sex sexual acts in Paul’s time was “sexual exploitation of youthful male slaves by their masters, and ... the sale of sexual favours by teenage boys to older male clients.”⁵⁵ Corinth was definitely no exception.⁵⁶ Categories similar to these are also in focus when authors during the late Augustan era denounce male same-sex sexual acts; free men who abandon their roles as dominant men, effeminization, and male prostitution.⁵⁷ The elements of domination and humiliation, greed and sexual exploitation, as well as the will for excess and lack of moderation, are prominent ingredients behind the opinions of philosophers like Dio Chrysostom, Seneca the Younger, Plutarch, and Musonius Rufus, who were all against these sexual acts.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 99; Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 31.

⁵² Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 80.

⁵³ For instance, a man was supposed to keep his pleasures at a moderate level (see Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 38). If a man had too much sex, for example, he would become weaker due to the loss of semen, as it was seen as distilled manliness (Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 200). Furthermore, it was frowned upon to have sex with another man’s slave since the slave was that man’s property (Cantarella, *Bisexuality*, 103; Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 30).

⁵⁴ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 451.

⁵⁵ Furnish, *Moral Teaching*, 70.

⁵⁶ Fee, *First Epistle*, 244. Witherington further holds that “many in Corinth were already suffering from a self-made-person-escapes-humble-origins-syndrome” (Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 8). In a milieu like that, it is more likely that people would go to any length to become self-made escapers of their humble origins.

⁵⁷ Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 15.

⁵⁸ Furnish, *Moral Teaching*, 72–74. Cf., e.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 7, 151–52;

I argue that the pertaining perspective of a zero-sum game, rigged for abuse against the socially weak, informed Paul in condemning ἀρσενοκοῖται in 1 Cor. If my inference is correct, it should be clear that ἀρσενοκοῖται cannot simply refer to modern “homosexuality,” unless we affirm the same values about honour and sexual dominance as those pervading in the time of Paul. Of course, there were men who did not care about being seen as effeminate,⁵⁹ but to conclude that the sex was always consensual would be naive. Further, where there are people with influence and a will to penetrate, there is also a chance of finding people who agree to being penetrated in exchange for benefactions of that influence.⁶⁰

We should remember that views on male same-sex sexual relations were changing in the shift between the Augustan and the Imperial era.⁶¹ There is an increasing polarization between approval and disapproval. As Thomas K. Hubbard argues, the texts that comment negatively on male same-sex sexual acts right before, and during, the Augustan era, does it with focus on the “morally debilitating effects of wealth, power, and

77/78:36; Musonius Rufus, *On Sexual Indulgence* 12:1–10; Plutarch, *Amat.* §4–§5; Seneca, *Ep.* 47.7. As noted by Hubbard, *Homosexuality*, 185, Seneca and Musonius Rufus were minority voices in questioning the sexual relations a man could have with his slaves. Further, in the Augustan era there seems to have been an increased worry about dropping birth-rates in higher social strata-families (since men could have sex outside of marriage, but the children resulting from that were not seen as legit or necessarily kept alive), so Augustus created laws to promote marriage, halt adultery and encourage the rearing of children within marriage (*lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* and *lex Julia de adulteriis*).

⁵⁹ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 157.

⁶⁰ Hence I agree with Furnish, *Moral Teaching*, 70, regarding the most common expressions of male same-sex sexual activities.

⁶¹ With the changing views, it could be dangerous to invoke texts of a significantly older date of composition for views on male same-sex sexuality pertaining in the time of Paul. There might also be a danger in seeing the texts as normative, since they were more or less written by an elite. They might, however, still give us a hint as to some pertaining views in society.

appetitive excess.”⁶² On one end, there were writers like Seneca the Younger who, on the basis of the mistreatment of slaves, held that male same-sex sexual acts were wrong.⁶³ On the other end, we have texts like Tibullus’ *Elegiae* 1.4 and Propertius’ *Elegiae* 2.4.17–22, who show a romanticizing of pederasty that had earlier been more uncommon.⁶⁴

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON MALE SAME-SEX SEXUAL RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM

As we have seen, the Torah (Lev 20:13) calls for punishment by death for male-male sexual acts, and there seems to have been prevalent negativity in Jewish thought towards such acts. A Jewish person was likely to be considered by the Jewish community as at risk of “suffering” such acts, not ever wanting to partake.⁶⁵ Paul himself, in Romans 1:18–32, considers such acts a punishment from God.⁶⁶ But what grounds for

⁶² Hubbard, *Homosexuality*, 16, 383.

⁶³ Seneca, *Ep.* 47.7. For examples of the treatment of slaves, see Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 9.39.77; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6; and Martial, *Epigram* 2.49.

⁶⁴ Hubbard, *Homosexuality*, 345, 383.

⁶⁵ Crompton, *Homosexuality*, 47, referring to, for example, b. Kiddushin 82a.

⁶⁶ Note that here Paul is assuming quite a harsh stance in discussing female and male same-sex sexual acts together (cf. b. Yebam. 76a, where female same-sex sexual acts are hardly enough to disqualify a woman from marrying a priest). I want to emphasize the danger in using Rom 1:18–32 when interpreting 1 Cor 6:9, since it is written to a different setting, from a different place. Further, the acts discussed are put in diametrically different perspectives – as a result of God’s wrath (Rom) or as an act making God angry enough to not grant the perpetrator a place in the Kingdom of God (1 Cor). There are also more obvious reasons; ἀρσενοχοῖται is not used in the letter to the Romans, and that letter also includes sexual acts of women. Ultimately, to use Rom 1:18–32 would be a matter of subjective speculation; one could argue that it might enlighten our understanding of Paul’s view on same-sex sexual acts, or argue that if Paul is discussing the nature of same-sex sexual acts in Romans, he must be making some other point in 1 Cor 6:9, given the stark differences between the perspectives of the letters.

opposing male same-sex sex are assumed?⁶⁷ Was such opposition accepted at face value? There are different interpretations worth noting in discussing this question, and here, we will have to focus on two important ones. We have already seen that Philo wanted to inflict death penalty because of worries concerning population growth (see above, 120 n. 15). Further, he drew a connection between male same-sex sexual acts, excess, and the sin of Sodom (*Abraham* 133–36).⁶⁸ In Josephus we also find what might be a similar trail of thought.⁶⁹ In *Jewish Antiquities* 1.11.1, he writes that the people of Sodom, among other sins, τὰς πρὸς ἄλλους ὁμιλίας ἐκτρέπεσθαι (“distort to each other [m.] the companionships/intercourses,” my translation). It is not certain what the last sentence means, the word ὁμιλία can mean both “intercourse” and “companionship” (it denotes the latter in 1 Cor 15:33), and in Josephus, it is used in both ways.⁷⁰ There are, however, a few reasons to interpret it sexually in this case. Earlier in the sentence, the word ὕβρις is used, as well as ἀσεβεῖς (“to be impious”) towards God, and ἄλλους ὁμιλίας ἐκτρέπεσθαι is one of the examples of that. To do ὕβρις is often, in both Philo and Josephus, connected to sexual or conjugal matters, and added by them to the text of the LXX when those subjects are either implicit or explicit.⁷¹ There are, then, two words in the sentence that carry possi-

⁶⁷ I believe that we can only speak of assumptions here, given the abundance of suggestions to the origins of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 (for some examples, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 1566).

⁶⁸ According to Crompton, *Homosexuality*, 39, Philo might have been the first, or at least among the first, to make a connection between the sin of Sodom and male same-sex sexual activities. Philo argues that excess was the foundational sin of Sodom, which then gave rise to male same-sex sexual acts.

⁶⁹ The inclusion of Josephus here is not to argue that he had a direct influence on Paul, but rather that he and Paul were part of the same sphere of ideas.

⁷⁰ See, for example, *Ant.* 1.1.4, where it is used to denote the company of God, which Adam tries to avoid since he has eaten from the fruit of the forbidden tree, and 2.4.2, where it is used to denote what the wife of Potiphar wants Joseph and her to do.

⁷¹ For a discussion on this, see Daniel B. Levine, “Hubris in Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* 1–4,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 64 (1993): 51–87, esp. 52, 58–59.

ble connotations to sexual matters. Further, Philo was, to Josephus, a “model for rewriting the Bible,”⁷² and as noted, Philo connected the excess of Sodom to male same-sex sexual acts. Also, both of them have clear connections to contemporary stoicism,⁷³ in which male same-sex sex, excess, and greed were connected (cf. Seneca the Younger, Dio Chrysostom, and Musonius Rufus, above). I argue, then, that it is likely that Josephus, given his context, his connections to Philo, and the use of the word ὕβρις connected to δμιλία, sees a sexual connection here.⁷⁴

By reading δμιλίας as “intercourse,” we find in this passage that the sin of Sodom was a moral collapse that had its origin in misplaced pride, excess, and greed, something that was expressed through impiety towards God, unjustness towards men, hate against strangers, and distortion of the sexual intercourse – an interpretation close to the one given by Philo.⁷⁵

⁷² Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 14.

⁷³ Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 193; Stefan Nordgaard “Paul’s Appropriation of Philo’s Theory of ‘Two Men’ in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49,” *NTS* 57/3 (2011): 348–65, 363.

⁷⁴ Levine, “Hubris,” 58, places his discussion on Josephus’s treatment of the story of Sodom in the section with the title “Sex, Marriage, and *Hubris*,” and shows that he, too, finds the passage to be connected to sex.

⁷⁵ There were, of course, others who did not connect the Sodom-story to male same-sex sexual practices. In the gospels of the New Testament, focus is on greed, with no trace of male same-sex sexual acts (Matt 10:14–15; Luke 10:10–12; 17:28–29), and this overlaps with the view found in the Hebrew Bible, where Ezekiel specifies Sodom’s sin as different sins against charity (Ezek 16:49). The interpretive tradition that focused on greed continued in the time after Paul. Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer, originating in the first or second century CE (with later redactions), says that the sin of Sodom was that the riches of the city were not shared with “the wayfarer or the stranger” (PRE XXV:4). Furthermore, in b. Sanh. 109a-b (compiled between c. 370 and 500 C. E), for example, it is said that Sodom did its best to avoid helping the poor. However, Genesis Rabbah 50:7 (7th century CE) says that the sodomites used male same-sex rape against strangers to keep them from visiting the city. In this later text, then, the clear connection to male same-sex sexual thoughts and acts and Sodom that were observed in Philo and Josephus is back.

An important question to raise, however, is whether Paul was enough influenced by the line of thinking behind the view of Philo (and probably Josephus) to reach a similar conclusion. In light of that question, it is essential to remember that that view on the sin of Sodom was not a majority view in their time. So to argue that Paul held a view similar to theirs, and that he made a similar connection based on the Sodom story, one should be able to show a plausible trail of influence. Below, I will argue that such a trail is evident.

First of all, one should note that Philo, Josephus, and Paul all seem to have been quite heavily influenced by contemporary stoicism. The ideas of excess and greed leading to unwanted behaviour was, then, probably quite familiar. Second, scholars have found an indirect connection between Paul and Philo in a common intellectual tradition.⁷⁶ Stefan Nordgaard, however, goes further, and by investigating 1 Cor 15:45–49 in light of Philo, he argues that it is quite possible that there was a direct link between the two, and that people in Corinth used Philo in a way that Paul did not agree with.⁷⁷ Similarly, Gregory E. Sterling sees a clear link in exegetical tradition between Paul, Philo, and the congregation in Corinth, but then goes on to propose that there is a good possibility of a direct link between Paul and Philo, through Apollos.⁷⁸ Even if a direct link is not a view held by all scholars, Nordgaard and Sterling make a convincing case that there is a shared foundation between the two.⁷⁹ A connection between Paul and Philo, as well as the line of thinking of

⁷⁶ To mention just one example, Arkady. B. Kovelman, “Jeremiah 9:22–23 in Philo and Paul,” *Review Of Rabbinic Judaism* 10/2 (2007): 162–75, 172–75, points primarily to 1 Cor 1:26–31 and 2 Cor 1:12–14. He also sees a connection between Philo’s theory of the “two men” and 1 Cor 15:45–49, the very point Nordgaard argues throughout his article (Nordgaard, *Paul’s Appropriation*).

⁷⁷ Nordgaard, *Paul’s Appropriation*, 349, 352, 364.

⁷⁸ Gregory E. Sterling, “‘Wisdom among the Perfect’: Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity,” *NovT* 37/4 (1995): 355–84, 382–83.

⁷⁹ See also Kovelman, “Jeremiah 9:22–23,” who finds, at least, an intellectual connection in the use and similar interpretations of Jeremiah 9:22–23.

Josephus, therefore seems plausible.⁸⁰ The ideas underlying the interpretations made by Philo might then be relevant as part of the context informing Paul in his reading of Lev 18:22 and 20:13. Such an interpretation does not negate the common Jewish hostility towards male same-sex sexual acts in the time of Paul, but it places the *motives* for that hostility partly in a hellenistic, stoic understanding by contextualizing it as in some sense Philonic.

Considering the now discussed perspectives on male same-sex sexual acts in the time of Paul, I argue that it is untenable to translate ἀρσενοχοῦται in a way that does not convey 1) the emotional impact of the polarizing between those who approved and those who disapproved of male same-sex sexual acts, and 2) the close connection between power, abuse, and sex. With that in mind, we now turn to investigate the more immediate social context of Paul and the Corinthians.

PAUL AND THE FIRST LETTER TO CORINTH

Among the members of the congregation in Corinth, there seems to have been a clear social stratification, with the few from the higher social stratas being very influential,⁸¹ and Paul intentionally grouping himself with people from lower social stratas.⁸² He also, by working, made

⁸⁰ There is, furthermore, an interesting connection between Rom 1:26 and *Ag. Ap.* II.273. In the latter, Josephus calls the will of males to mix sexually with males as *παρὰ φύσιν* ("against nature"), and so does Paul. That they use the same two words does not prove a direct connection, but might suggest that they had part in the same intellectual tradition with regard to male same-sex sexual acts.

⁸¹ Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 69, 101; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 22; Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 68; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 69; Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 242.

⁸² This is done by, among other things, performing physical labor (see Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 13; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 51; and Cicero, *Off.* 1.42, where different

himself independent of the rich in Corinth, which could affect their status as followers.⁸³ To not accept gifts might have been seen as a rejection of friendship,⁸⁴ but Paul seems to have called for a different way of measuring social stratification, where his role as independent apostle (9:1, 11–12) should be seen as a socially potent one,⁸⁵ something to be imitated (4:16). Paul lowered himself to “everyone’s slave” (9:19), and in advocating a different way of measuring social stratification (see 1:30–31, where a shift in focus is made clear, and also 2:14–15), he chal-

occupations that are and are not highly esteemed are enumerated. Among those that require physical labour, only agriculture is worthy of esteem). Paul’s rhetorical abilities suggest that he was educated, and the fact that he, as a Jew, had full citizenship in the Roman empire tells us that he probably came from a well-off family (Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 3, 21; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 51–52; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 104–105). Regarding “social stratification,” as well as “higher” and “lower” stratas, I will use categories mentioned by Paul himself in 1 Cor 1:26 – education, power, and family – in evaluating stratification. Further, it is relevant to add wealth. Paul is refusing monetary compensation from the congregation in Corinth (1 Cor 9; see also 2 Cor 11) – to give money of gifts was a way to assert social influence and power for those who had the money (see Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 22). Furthermore, wealth seems to have been an important ingredient in the struggles within the congregation (see, e.g., 11:17–34), which Wayne Meeks holds to be the clearest example that there was a conflict between the “relatively rich” and the “relatively poor” (Meeks, *First Urban*, 67–68). It is obviously impossible to draw an absolute line between “higher” and “lower” stratas, as it is impossible to draw an absolute line between rich and poor, well-educated and poorly educated, today. Still, these concepts mean something to us, and similarly, the concepts of powerful, educated, rich, and of noble birth meant something to Paul (categories like family and possessions were important already to the writers of Exod 22:21–26 and Amos 2:6b. In the latter, the word אֲבִיִּין means “needy” or “poor.” In the LXX, the word used is πένητα, which also occurs in 2 Cor 9:9 [πένησιν]). Therefore, we must use these categories as categories that were important to, and affecting, Paul, while at the same time allowing ourselves not to know who exactly were included in them. We must also be aware that the categorization “high” and “low” stratas are tools enabling us to grasp and discuss a reality separated from our own.

⁸³ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 54–55; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 9, 20–21.

⁸⁴ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 83–84.

⁸⁵ In 9:1, he puts it directly after “free” – ἐλεύθερος.

lenged the “old” way of doing it – thereby in some sense challenging those who were perceived as having a high social stratification by that measurement.

In 1:26, Paul indicates that the recipients are a social mix (using the designations σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, δυνατοί, and εὐγενεῖς).⁸⁶ It seems that to him, the bulk of the issues in the congregation were caused, or could be solved, by members of a small but influential (or aspiring-to-be influential) group of people,⁸⁷ and throughout the letter, there are examples of Paul challenging them. One of the more obvious examples, 11:17–34, shows the apostle being upset with the wealthy in the congregation, who eats and drinks what they have brought along, while people of lesser means (and probably of lower social stratification) are hungry.⁸⁸

Paul is, however, not fighting for egalitarianism (7:20–21), but wants people from higher social stratas to treat people from lower stratas with respect.⁸⁹ In 1 Cor 7, this shows to be the opposite of considering the foot (often a slave) of the social body as worth less than the head (often the father of the house).⁹⁰ He wanted to minimize the effects of differences stemming from where one belonged on the social scale.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Barrett, *Commentary*, 23; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 55, 70; Origen, *Cels.* III 48.

⁸⁷ Cf. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 20; Fiorenza, “Rhetorical Situation,” 399.

⁸⁸ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 96, 163. Also interesting is 10:15, where he says that he is talking ὡς φρονίμοις (“as to reasonable/wise people”). This might resonate with the few σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα (“wise according to the flesh”) in 1:26.

⁸⁹ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 109.

⁹⁰ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 31, 75, 94, observes that the analogy was not unusual in the ancient world to describe society, but Paul used it not to motivate, but to disprove a suppressive status hierarchy. He also states that Paul often undermined the ideological basis of the hierarchy, although the “people” of low social stratas referred to were men, not women (199).

⁹¹ Theissen describes Paul’s solution as one that “acknowledges class-specific differences within the community while minimizing their manifestations” (Theissen, *Social Setting*, 164). He emphasizes the economical aspect of stratification, and uses “class” to discuss it. However, I find that he might be taking his perspective too far, as is also pointed out by Meeks, *First Urban*, 70. I would therefore replace “class-specific

Such a focus on social stratification and on minimizing its effects can also be helpful when reading 1 Cor 6, a passage where Paul, among other things, addresses the issue of congregants going to court to settle disputes. Courts were controlled by the higher stratas,⁹² and trials that dealt with disputes were not subjected to a jury, but handled by a judge from those stratas.⁹³ These and other circumstances caused a structural bias,⁹⁴ and Paul knew that socially weak people in most cases did not have a chance to use the court, while the powerful could use it against the socially weak as they pleased. Changing the venue for disputes from court to congregation might therefore decrease the effects of social differences.⁹⁵ This conclusion means that the “you” (ὁμεῖς) in 1 Cor 6 would primarily refer to people from higher social stratas in the congregation. However, that they were the ones primarily addressed does not mean that only they were meant to hear it, or that they were the only ones affected by the critique. It was probably meant for the entire congregation to hear,⁹⁶ although it was primarily debunking the behaviour of a smaller group.

The difference in perspective between Paul and some members of the higher social stratas in the congregation seems also to be visible in the ways in which they understood the pollution of the body. Paul’s focus was on intrusion, that is, that pollution might enter and pollute the body.⁹⁷ For the higher social stratas however, this was mostly not the

differences” with “differences stemming from where you belonged on a scale of social stratification,” since “class” carries a lot of baggage, and wealth was not the only, or necessarily an always important, mark of social status.

⁹² Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Source Book in Roman Social History* (2 ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 10.

⁹³ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 162.

⁹⁴ For a fuller discussion, see Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 162–63; and Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 76.

⁹⁵ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 78.

⁹⁶ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 56; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 36.

⁹⁷ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 163. See also 1 Cor 5:6–8, 11; 6:12, 18.

issue. Instead, the focus was on the balance of the body.⁹⁸ Paul, then, promotes a different perspective on the body, one more commonly held by people of lower social stratas, and one that might resonate with the Lev 18:24 through the shared motif of keeping the community from becoming impure.⁹⁹

Paul obviously came from a background coloured by both Judaism and Hellenism. Siding with the socially weak is promoted more than once in the Hebrew Bible and this might well have been a source for Paul's ethical perspective.¹⁰⁰ The rhetoric of the letter is, however, more Hellenistic, and First Corinthians can be classified as a deliberative letter with the main goal of keeping the congregation free of pollution and disorder.¹⁰¹ One way of achieving that was by creating a respectful relationship between the members of different social stratas. A deliberative letter would also be presenting arguments with the aim to convince, which points to an important consideration in translating ἀρσενικοῖται: it should be an argumentative translation.

TEXTUAL CONTEXT OF 1 COR 6:9–10 AND THE PAIRING OF μαλακός AND ἀρσενικοῖτης

The passage about not going to court ends in 6:11,¹⁰² and the following passage, vv. 12–20, discusses the problem of πόρνηα, “fornication,” which is also the first word in the list in 6:9–10. Consequently, the list of vices occurs in a transition from the subject of using one's social posi-

⁹⁸ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 163.

⁹⁹ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, xvi. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 451, argues that Paul did not “surrender an emphasis on the holiness and corporate identity of the covenant people of God in favor of Stoic views of ‘nature’ as a basis for ethics.”

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., Exod 22:25; Lev 19:10; Deut 24:17; Isa 58:7; and the interesting Amos 2:7, where the sin of not helping the poor is followed by the sin of a son sharing a woman with his father (cf. 1 Cor 5).

¹⁰¹ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 38–39.

¹⁰² Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 164; Barclay, “1 Corinthians,” 1110.

tion against someone weaker to fornication. My understanding, which I aim to motivate in the following, is that the list harbours both of these, while staying within an argument for a minimization of the effects of differences in social stratification in the Corinthian congregation.

Before moving on, I want to note that the first five vices of the list might all be considered as sexual in some way,¹⁰³ and aimed at controlling with whom a man had sex. Such an argument could find support, for example, in Paul's argument in 1 Cor 7, where he holds that sex should only take place within a marriage between man and woman. However, Paul seems to supply another reason for marriage as perhaps even more important when he opens his whole argument by saying that marriage is needed because of all the *πορνεία* (7:2). That fornication is used to motivate marriage suggests that Paul found it to be a serious problem. If we understand *πορνεία* as a behaviour expressing social abuse, as our contextualization will suggest, we find that Paul, in 1 Cor, places his sexual ethics in the context of social order. That inference does not negate that he could have considered legitimate sex to occur only within a marriage between man and woman. However, it does tell us that in Corinth, the problem of social abuse was, from Paul's point of view, large enough to convince him to place his argument about sexual partners within the context of social abuse. Consequently, a sole focus on the issue of "with whom" cannot give us a sufficient perspective on why the list was incorporated, and why the partner in a sexual relation was important to discuss in this specific letter, using a neologism, and it prevents us from uncovering aspects that might be lost in over-simplistic readings which take the "with whom" issue at face value. These considerations, then, motivates further investigation.

I take the first term on the list, *πόρνος*, with its thematic connection to the following *εἰδωλόλατρης*, to mean "fornicator."¹⁰⁴ Given the un-

¹⁰³ Idolatry could be considered an act of fornication with other gods than the God of Israel in Jewish tradition; cf. n. 104, below.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. LS, "*πόρνος*." See also James A. Kelhoffer, *Persecution, Persuasion and Power: Readiness to Withstand Hardship as a Corroboration of Legitimacy in the New Testament*

derlying issue of social status in 6:1–8, it is interesting to note some substantial connections to that theme; in order to attract a partner, one would have to care for one's appearance, as well as have both the time and means to meet and attract women. There was a bigger chance of having these means if one was part of higher social stratas. This aspect of *πόρνος* entails a close link to both *μοιχός* and *μαλακός*, as we will see below. Further, Paul declares in 4:18 that some in the congregation have *ἐφυσιώθησαν* ("boasted themselves"). In 4:19, he goes on to say that when he comes to visit the congregation, he will find out about *οὐ τὸν λόγον τῶν πεφυσιομένων ἀλλὰ τὴν δύναμιν* ("not the speech of the boasters but the power"). The term used in both instances for the people boasting is *φυσιώω*, which is used again in 5:2, when Paul says that those who did not cast out a man guilty of *πόρνος* (5:1) are boasters. Interesting here is the connection between these boasters and *τὴν δύναμιν* ("the power") that Paul ascribes them (4:19). This resonates with the *δυνατοί* in 1:26, and there seems to be a connection between those who boast even in light of *πορνεία*, and the ability to cast someone out of the congregation. The powerful, who had a lot of influence by being able to lend the congregation resources, also seemed to be the ones who could, and, according to Paul, should, have cast the fornicator out, but did not.

These inferences connects 6:1–11 to 6:12–20, in that they both discuss social problems arising in the body of Christ (the congregation) caused primarily by the higher social strats. In that context, it should also be noted that when Paul argues that a person who commits fornication defiles the body of Christ by defiling his own body (6:12–20), he is pursuing an argument that wants to emphasize the dangers of intrusion, over against balance.

Further, and perhaps more obvious, *πόρνος* relates to the idea of creating a functioning body of Christ in that it is problematic if men of

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 155–56. *πόρνος* is frequently used in the LXX in discussing the unfaithfulness of Israel with gods other than YHWH (e.g., Lev 17:7; 20:5; Judg 2:17; 8:33).

high social stratification force their sexual will on others through means of social power – which as we have seen was quite common. It would also be problematic if a member of the congregation tried to sell themselves to people of influence (not least since Paul is advocating either sex within marriage or abstinence, 1 Cor 7), since that would be a way of manipulating one's social position (cf. 7:20–21).

Idolatry (εἰδωλόλατρης), which is next on the list, was, of course, a possibility of unfaithfulness against YHWH for both high and low stratas, and caused a problem on more than one level for a monotheist like Paul. However, in 1 Cor 8 and 10, he specifically raises the issue in light of what food one can eat. Meat was quite exclusive in the Roman Empire, and people from low social stratas almost never had it. The meat they did get was often cultic and therefore probably, to them, more attached to idolatry than it was to members of higher social stratas.¹⁰⁵ When high-strata people ate meat, then, it might have been seen as idolatry by the lower social stratas. The meat made an “intrusion” into their bodies, and thereby into the body of Christ. The risk of committing idolatry, or acts that might be perceived as such by other members of the congregation, was greater if one was part of the high-status community, or wanted to be, since there would be a need to have good relations to pagans.¹⁰⁶ As becomes obvious in 8:12–13, the per-

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of food and social stratification, see Theissen, *Social Setting*, 126. Cf. Ovid *Metam.* 8.664–668; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 2.6.1–2. For an interesting description of the food one might attain (lousy wine and mouldy bread), see Juvenal *Sat.* 5.12–22, 24, 25, 67–71.

¹⁰⁶ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 126–28, 131. Meeks adds another argument to why the discussion of meat is an indicator of conflicting views of higher and lower social ends of society. In 1:26, Paul mentions, as we have seen, the few σοφοί (“wise”). Then, in 8:1, Paul mentions γνῶσις, “knowledge,” and shows that those having this knowledge (the wise) are insisting on being free to eat what they want, including cultic meat. These stand opposed to ὁ ἀσθενῶν, “the weak” (8:11), whose conscience is weak and thereby cannot eat cultic meat. Moreover, they might be led astray by seeing the ones with knowledge eat it (Meeks, *First Urban*, 69; see also 1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7, 9; 9:4, 5, 6, 12, 18; 10:23, 24, 29). Note also the care that Paul is promoting in chapter eight, where he claims that by eating cultic meat in a way that might lead one's brother astray, one is

ceived idolatry of a person was a risk to the congregation, and in this case, members of the higher social stratas were to think of their fellow Christ-believers so as to not lead them astray as a result of their social status.

Μοιχός, the third word of the list, translates into “adulterer” or “paramour.”¹⁰⁷ As with εἰδωλόλατρης, it can be taken as applying to everyone. There are, however, two reasons to suppose that there is, once again, a primary focus on the higher social stratas. First, both of the textual pericopes surrounding the list are primarily aimed at members of higher social stratas. Thereby, a thematic “shadow” is cast. Second, it seems wise to highlight both the “adulterer” and the “paramour” that the word might entail, since even if the partner differs, they have a shared trait in that they seduce women.¹⁰⁸ As already mentioned, in order to successfully seduce women you had to have both the time to find them, and the opportunity to care for your appearance, which was a luxury primarily afforded by the more well-off in society. By understanding μοιχός in this way, we also discover a close link between μοιχός, πόρνος and μαλακός. Before further discussing that link, a short comment on μαλακός and the common pairing with ἀρσενοκοίτης is needed.

The reasons that other scholars have for interpreting μαλακός and ἀρσενοκοίτης together seem to be twofold: 1) there has to be a reason for them standing next to one another; and 2) both of them have been seen as sexual vices. Since μαλακός *can* denote a man who wanted to be penetrated, it is natural to see ἀρσενοκοίτης as the penetrator. There are, however, points to be made against these inferences. The restriction of μαλακός to a male same-sex sexual aspects of the word can only be supported if it is paired with the word following it, rather than with the one

sinning against Christ (8:12). The problem is that the brother in Christ is led astray. Consequently, it is more important to Paul to create respect in the congregation than to allow some members to enjoy their freedom.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. LS, s.v. “Μοιχός.”

¹⁰⁸ Boswell, *Christianity*, 337.

preceeding it. Dale B. Martin argues that an ancient person would not have seen any more of “homosexual” than “heterosexual” acts in the word *μαλακός* itself,¹⁰⁹ and while finding the pairing of *μαλακός* and *ἀρσενοκοίτης* to be intentional in 1 Cor 6:9, Witherington nevertheless notes that the latter, if not paired with the former, denotes both partners in a male same-sex sexual relation.¹¹⁰ Wright further claims that *ἀρσενοκοίτης* simply denotes both the active and the passive partner in all sorts of male same-sex sexual acts, regardless of age and *μαλακός*.¹¹¹ Given the fact that *ἀρσενοκοῖται* is used without *μαλακός* in 1 Tim 1:10, we might also infer that in its early reception, the word was probably found to encompass both of the participants.¹¹²

Further questions arise when we look at the verses from Leviticus that might have informed Paul’s use of *ἀρσενοκοίτης*, since Lev 20:13 condemns both the active and passive partner to death. The need for another word to condemn the passive does not seem to exist. Of course, we do not know if all of the readers were able to see the connection to Leviticus, or if Paul thought that they all could do so. However, there seems to be no substantial reasons as to why the recipients would *not* have interpreted *ἀρσενοκοῖται* as encapsulating *both* of the men participating in homoerotic sexual acts. The notion of separating them seems to be an interpretation based on the pairing with *μαλακοί*. That inter-

¹⁰⁹ Martin, “Arsenokoitês and Malakos,” 127.

¹¹⁰ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 166, esp. n. 18.

¹¹¹ Wright, *Homosexuals*, 146. My conclusion is also partly supported by Martin “Arsenokoitês and Malakos,” 123, who states that it is impossible to know what *ἀρσενοκοῖται* meant, but that the strongest suggestion is one that sees the word as referring to “a particular role of exploiting others by means of sex, perhaps but not necessarily homosexual sex.” However, I do not agree with his conclusion that other forms of sex than male same-sex sex were included.

¹¹² A note of caution is raised by Wright, however, who holds that 1 Tim 1:10 does not help in clarifying the meaning of *ἀρσενοκοῖται* (Wright, *Homosexuals*, 132). The fact that 1 Tim is a reception of, rather than a source for, 1 Cor, and the fact that the list is closely connected to the situation in Corinth speaks in favor of such a conclusion. The presented assumption also rests on the presupposition that the author of 1 Tim wanted to condemn both men involved in the intercourse.

pretation *forces* ἀρσενικοῖται to denote only the active partner, since μαλακοί would never be used in such a way. But if the words are not read together, there is no clear basis for removing the passive partner from ἀρσενικοῖται, and thereby nothing that says that people not familiar with the LXX would have understood the word to not include both of the partners in a male same-sex sexual intercourse.

If we now return to the list, the case can be made for relating μαλακός closer to μοιχός, with the term “womanizer” as a fair translation. Men who notoriously chased women, who “love women too much,” could be called effeminate.¹¹³ They would do things such as remove the hair from their legs and chest and be, in the eyes of their peers, too meticulous about their appearance. One was a μαλακός in order to be a successful μοιχός, and perhaps also a successful πόρνος. No matter if this focus on appearance was to attract women or men, the behaviour was considered effeminate. Furthermore it can be argued that “men who sought to be sexually penetrated by other men were ... thought quite capable of [also] being adulterers.”¹¹⁴ The μαλακός was seen as a threat by married men, since he was attractive to women as well. In light of an emphasis on the “paramour” aspect for μοιχός, and the idea that a person guilty of this vice had to have a certain amount of wealth and high social ranking, it is worth remembering that the term μαλακός could also denote a person living in luxury and excess while “chasing” women (cf. n. 2 above). These words, then, seem to overlap in some respects, and could probably be interpreted as aspects of πόρνος. In the case of this list, however, given that it contains πόρνος as well as μοιχός and μαλακός, it is possible that they might relate to each other with slightly different meanings – men who have sex with prostitutes, or prostitute themselves (πόρνος); men who have sex with women other than their wives (μοιχός); and men who have multiple sexual partners while themselves not being married (μαλακός). This division is, of

¹¹³ Martin, “Arsenokoitês and Malakos,” 127.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, 3, 129, 132.

course, not beyond doubt, especially since it is hard to know exactly why Paul would include a word with a wide range of meanings like πόρνος and then specify certain forms of “illicit” sex. However, no matter the division, it is clear that the possible social impact on a congregation where people (men) viewed others as threats to their own marriage or the ability of their daughters to marry, or posed such threats themselves would be a problematic one, causing problems within and between social stratifications. Further, it would be a problem to remain a slave (7:21) and live in accordance with Pauline sexual ethics while being at the mercy of the sexual wishes of the *paterfamilia*. These problems were highlighted by the opportunity for some to take better care of their appearance and/or to use the bodies of some people as they (sexually) pleased. Given the textual context, it seems probable that an awareness of social impacts and social abuse was one of the main reasons for Paul to mention these specific vices as unrighteous. Hence, they are contextual conditions that should have an impact on our translation.

What do we do with the neologism, then? We might assume that Paul, in using ἀρσενοκοῖται, is condemning something that he found necessary, or at least favourable, to create a new word for. It is a condemnation related to a situation in Corinth that called for a specific word, and it is introduced in close proximity to, among other things, theft, idolatry, and fornication. It is also (thematically) enclosed in an admonition to keep the body of Christ free from internal fighting and pollution, to treat each other with respect, and it is linguistically related to a call for death penalty. Furthermore, there is an overarching concern with things that cause, highlight, or reinforce stratificational differences within the community. Πόρνος, μοιχός and μαλακός all relate to the use of one’s advantageous situation for sexual pleasures, and εἰδωλόλατρης is later used in terms of leading one’s siblings in Christ astray on behalf of demands of one’s social position. Μαλακός can, as we also have seen, further denote a person who is too lazy to do hard work, someone who lives a life in luxury and excess, and thereby is able to seduce women (cf. n. 2 above). Such a display of luxury could certainly highlight social differences. After ἀρσενοκοῖται, the vices are connected to greed, excess,

taking what does not belong to oneself (κλέπτῃς, πλεονέκτῃς, ἄρπαγεύς),¹¹⁵ and socially disruptive behaviors like drinking too much (μέθυσος) and to abuse or rail (λοιδορός).¹¹⁶ All these are problems that would disturb the community, while also potentially stem from, highlight, and/or reinforce social differences. The importance of communal order and social status is obvious in understanding ἀρσενικοῦται; maintaining communal order seems to be an important focus in the whole of 1 Cor, an order Paul found to be disturbed by people primarily from higher social stratas. Since the communal problems of Corinth are, by nature, specific for Corinth, I also continue to emphasize the idea that Paul's neologism must be viewed as a situational response to them.

PHILOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

It seems quite clear by now that Paul aimed to condemn all forms of male same-sex sexual acts and all of its participants. However, it would be a gross simplification to not contextualize that statement. In doing so, it will be important to remind ourselves that the rationale given for Paul's opposition in Rom 1:18–32 does not seem to be applicable here (cf. n. 66 above). Further, while Lev 18:22 and 20:13 are probably a source of inspiration for Paul, we have to take into account what he might have understood and contributed to their meaning in reading them.

The idea that stratificational differences are behind the vices in 1 Cor 6:9–10 correlates with the inference that Paul viewed the homoerotic activities of the active partner in Corinth as an expression of people from higher stratas taking advantage of their socially powerful position. To Paul, this behaviour caused them to pollute the bodies of members

¹¹⁵ LS, s.v. “κλέπτῃς,” “πλεονέκτῃς,” and “ἄρπαξ.”

¹¹⁶ LS, s.v. “λοιδορός,” “μέθυσος.” Wine might have been available to people of lower financial status (see, e.g., Ovid, *Metam.* 8.664–668 where wine is used for preservation), but better wine, with nicer flavour, was more expensive (cf. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 1.15, where wine is mixed with honey for a sweeter taste).

from the lower stratas, like the slaves and freed men who did not have the right to say no, and probably also their own bodies. By this intrusive pollution, they also polluted the body of Christ and created disharmony in the congregation. When Paul then tells the congregants to remain what they were when they were called, even a slave (7:21), he is simultaneously trying to create a community where there is enough respect to keep bodies free from pollution, since it was common knowledge that a slave was not always in the position to control his body.¹¹⁷

It would have been quite pointless for Paul to condemn a slave for being the passive partner since he, if the *paterfamilia* so wished, could do nothing else. Yet, I believe that Paul wanted to do two things by using a word that through its scriptural and linguistical connotations included the passive partner:

- 1) Halt the use of sex to climb the social ladder and/or attaining an influential patron.¹¹⁸ As mentioned, to use sex in order to gain some form of social status was quite a common rationale for male same-sex sexual activity in the time of Paul. Such behaviour was certainly not necessary or wanted if the Lord was going to appear soon¹¹⁹ – hence the advises in 1 Cor 7 on the matter of staying what you are. It would also have had a disruptive effect on the social construct of the congregation. This form of sexual passivity was to Paul an expression of social greed, aimed at gaining social powers. He probably also viewed the passive partner as a polluter of the body of Christ, since he tempted others to make an “intrusion” into his body.

¹¹⁷ Another way to deal with that might be to invoke the notion that one was not supposed to have sex with another man's slave. Paul says that the slaves are now freed men *of Christ*, bought by Him (7:22–23).

¹¹⁸ It might be of interest to see that Aristophanes (5th century BCE) seems to have made a difference between boys who *had* to sell themselves and those who did not, going easier on boys who had to do it (Aristophanes, *Eq.* 1241–1242; *Ran.* 145–151). To him, there was, then, an awareness of a difference between these categories (see also n. 56 above).

¹¹⁹ John A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 113.

- 2) As Paul does in 1 Cor 8, he might here be trying to invoke a Christian's responsibility for the salvation of others. He is pointing attention towards the "weak" (who are made passive by the "strong") and thereby tries to, once again, minimize the effects of the power structures. By saying that also the passive partner will not inherit the kingdom of God, just like the brother who is lead astray by someone eating "idol meat," Paul shows that if a man uses his social status to impose himself sexually on someone (or for that matter seduces an influential man – Paul, in ch. 7, seems to be aware that the temptations of the flesh can be hard to resist) he will cause both himself *and* the other to lose their part in the heavenly inheritance. The responsibility for one's brother in Christ and for the welfare of the community is more important than one's freedom.

A clarifying comment might be needed here. That social concerns were behind Paul's condemnation in this particular letter does not mean that he was pro egalitarian same-sex sexual acts, performed in a loving context. Given the background painted earlier, it is my conviction that it, in Paul's mind, did not exist any form of egalitarian same-sex sexual acts between men. They were to him, as far as we can tell, the result of social abuse or the wrath of God (Rom 1:18–32). Any further inferences as to what Paul would say about same-sex sexual acts in another context with another understanding of such acts would be speculative, since he (as everyone) acted within a specific context and a specific, contextual and personal, understanding and conviction.

It is important to note that all men, even those from lower social stratas, who had sex with men are condemned by Paul. However, since the letter is primarily addressing problems stemming from the higher social stratas, the *primary* intention of Paul was probably not to tell, for example, a poor boy in need of food that he was going to lose his place in the kingdom of God by prostituting himself. Yet, that is the consequence. In light of imminent eschatology and the will to save as many as possible, it was probably not strange for Paul to use it anyway. In the same way, it was not strange to use a word condemning those who stole, even if it were to be used against the poor, since it was more important to keep one's place in the kingdom of God than the one on earth (see, e.g., 1 Cor 9:16 in relation to 15:30–31). Further, Paul is propagating a

sense of communal responsibility, which it seems reasonable to assume stretches to social care like alleviating starvation. This inference means that even though the list of vices are written in a context where those at fault are primarily from higher social stratas, it could have an effect on the whole congregation. Behaviours performed at the cost of the peace of the community was to be avoided by everyone.

One could ask why, if it is correct that Paul wanted to do away with sex as a disturbing factor in the community, he limits his direct address to men, excluding women. Why not forbid all kinds of sexual intercourse if sex was a zero-sum game?¹²⁰ To start with, it should be remembered that in the letter, Paul is first and foremost addressing men from a male point of view. To these men, it was obvious that free women should not have any sex partner but her husband.¹²¹ Second, in 6:9–10, Paul forbids men to have sex with prostitutes, women married to other men, and he condemns men who “chase” women, or have sex with many different women (including unmarried), so Paul is indirectly excluding some of the forms of sex that are not part of marriage also for women, and to have sex within marriage was expected. Further, there were not the same kind of power-aspects involved in sex between two females, and so it might not, to Paul, have had the same disorderly effect on the community.¹²²

As stated earlier, Paul seems to have found the need for a neologism. I argue that this is because to him no other word adequately encompassed all male same-sex sexual behaviours (with boys as well as grown

¹²⁰ Note, however, that he wished that everyone would live like him, i.e., in celibacy (1 Cor 7:7).

¹²¹ Shelton, *As the Romans*, 55.

¹²² It is worth mentioning that the vices in 6:9–10 might be taken, given a patriarchal understanding of male ownership of property and women, as acts against males. Therein might, according to Paul, lie one reason for their abilities to disturb social order. Also important is the fact that if the lack of a clear power-aspect contributes to Paul not including women here, despite including them in Rom 1:18–32, that would strengthen the inference that the aspect of power is crucial to understanding our neologism. However, as indicated in note 66, such inferences are uncertain.

men) while also highlighting the seriousness of the deeds. Ἀρσενο and κοιτη, however, carried connotations to both the active and the passive partner and a death penalty from Lev 18:22 and 20:13. It is possible that by situating the offence within the linguistic context of the Hebrew Bible, Paul wanted to point the congregation to the specific laws from Leviticus. Of course, some would not have picked this up when hearing or reading the text, but some would.¹²³ These people could have enlightened their fellow congregants on the connection, and thereby highlight the severe nature suggested. I admit that these inferences are in some sense only educated guesses, as is the case with all attempts to understand motivations. This is especially true when the act that is to be motivated is one that does not quite make sense; why use an unknown word when addressing people about something that is serious enough to cost a person their heavenly inheritance? Especially in a congregation as diverse as the Corinthian? However, I would argue that my educated guess rests on a plausible understanding of the culture(s) affecting Paul, as well as the linguistic and situational context. If the above inferences are correct, it would have made sense, not least rhetorically, to use the new word in a deliberative letter addressing the problems Paul thought to be relevant in the congregation in Corinth concerning how the higher social stratas treated the lower social stratas (or might treat them), and how people tried to use their bodies to gain social powers. Given the Jewish (Philonian) line of interpretation of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 that I argue Paul to be part of, excess and greed seem to have been reoccurring themes, and given the Greco-Roman context, the thought of exploitation was probably not far-fetched to him – they are all things that would upset the social peace of the congregation.¹²⁴ Even though the connection to the verses from Leviticus might initially have been

¹²³ See 1 Cor 7:18; 9:8–10, 20–22; 10:1–13; Barrett, *Commentary*, 2, Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 6–7, 24 (and n. 9 in this paper).

¹²⁴ It is not fruitful to view this as a case of the Jewish inheritance of Paul being applied to one partner (the active), and the Greco-Roman to the other (the passive). For Paul, these elements were probably inseparably intermingled.

lost on some of the first readers, the literary context of the word would have placed sexual acts between men on a par with, for example, theft, fornication, and blatant abuse of social power (as suggested by, for example, the close proximity to 6:1–8 and the connections between πορνοί and “the powerful”).

As stated, Paul probably intended to condemn all forms of male same-sex sexual acts. I find it probable that that was not lost on the first recipients, since they were formed by interpretive principles from a context that was heavily influenced by the idea that a man could not enjoy being penetrated, that sex was a zero-sum game, and that (free) men were born to put others down, for example by penetrating them. Further, they would have known that men could, and did, sell themselves sexually for social powers. When they then heard a ban on ἀρσενοκοῖται, a neologism placed within a context of socially abusive and disruptive behaviours through exploitation of financial and/or sexual kind, most people in the Corinthian congregation would probably have heard a ban on a behaviour emanating from the same problems that gave rise to theft, idolatry, abusing the legal system, and socially powerful men chasing women and abusing their slaves. That behaviour would have encompassed *all* forms of sexual relations between men, since they were, by many, understood as socially abusive.¹²⁵

TRANSLATION: SOME CONSIDERATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Throughout this article, I have noted a few considerations that should be remembered in a translation: the connection to a death penalty; the increased polarization in the time of Paul with regard to views held on male same-sex sexual acts; the deliberative nature of the letter (aimed at minimizing the results of social stratification); and the close cultural and

¹²⁵ Note the “by many.” Men who were attracted to other men, and who enjoyed sexual relations with men, would not necessarily have agreed. However, as can be seen also today, they are not always heard in the discussion, and at times, their existence is even denied.

literary connection between power, abuse, and sex. Further, it seems safe to assume that Paul did not have a positive view on the male same-sex sexual activities in his contemporary world, nor in the context of the Corinthian congregation, and that Paul wanted the term ἀρσενοκοῖται to be noted – it is a word with connections to the death penalty in a deliberative address.

Another case in point is the need to clarify the objects of ἀρσενοκοῖται. The ones addressed are men of all ages and all social classes who in any way are, or might be, participating in a same-sex sexual act. They are also people who are not doing these acts as a punishment from God. The word is placed in a context where the sharpest edge is aimed towards the higher social stratas, but it will be hard, if not impossible, to supply a translation which shows this focus without distorting the fact that others are included as well.

The main problem might, however, be to show that Paul held all same-sex sexual relations between men to be condemnable, and that the Corinthian congregation would have understood that (agreeing or not), while also showing that that perspective on such acts was created and maintained within a specific context and a specific mindset. If *all* sexual acts between men were construed as socially abusive today, it would perhaps be possible to simply supply “men who have sex with men” as a translation. However, as that is not the case, some other form of translation has to be created. One suggestion could be “men who have socially abusive sex with men.” This translation would clarify that the sex was understood as socially abusive, but it would also suggest that Paul would not have minded non socially abusive sex between men. As mentioned, any inference of that nature is purely speculative. However, it is equally speculative to translate it “men who have sex with men” (or something similar) since that suggests that Paul also disagreed with egalitarian forms of sexual acts between men. None of these options are possible to prove to be correct. The problem becomes worse when considering the fact that ἀρσενοκοῖται does not take substantially more space than any of the other vices, and the list is quite short. If a translation contains a lot of words, it risks breaking the flow of the passage and ascribe too

much spatial focus to this specific word. Further, to include any form of the word “homosexual” would demand some further modifier, showing that women are not addressed, and that actions, not inclination, are in focus.

Given these considerations, I would suggest adding a short explanatory note to the translation. I also suggest a translation that would draw attention to the problematic nature of translating the neologism, so as to discourage simplistic readings or simply failure to see that there is a note. Such a translation could be the aforementioned “men who have socially abusive sex with men,” supplied with a note reading something like “Paul is in 1 Cor addressing, among other things, issues of social abuse and communal disturbance, and in his context, sex between men was considered such an issue by many. We can assume that Paul strongly agreed with that. We also know that in Rom 1:18–32, he treats such acts as a punishment from God, but that seems not to be the case here. We can only speculate as to what Paul would have said about other forms of sexual relations between men, while holding that he connected the form he knew of to the death penalty in Lev 20:13.” Not everything can be said in a note, but this suggestion would mention literary and wordly context, differences in opinion in his time, the problem of interpreting the word in light of Rom 1:18–32, the connection to the death penalty in Lev 20:13, and the speculative nature of what Paul would say about egalitarian sexual relations between men. Yet, I admit that the translation is quite long and does not carry the emotional force that is likely to have been transmitted by ἀρσενοκοῖται.

What, then, if a note is not an option, as is the case for a lot of Bible translations? I find that we end up with two options – one that suggests that Paul was against all forms of same-sex sexual acts between men, and one that suggests that he was for sexual acts between men, as long as they were not socially abusive. As noted, both of these are problematic. I would, however, prefer the second option, since it contains an opening towards not knowing. One could infer, from “men who have socially abusive sex with men,” that Paul did not mind sex between men when not abusive. However, one *does not have to* infer that. On the other

hand, if a translation like “men who have sex with men” is used, there is no opening for any uncertainty – it is a blanket prohibition against all forms of sexual acts between men.

CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF PAUL’S NEOLOGISM ἀρσενικοῦται IN 1 COR 6:9

I have argued that ἀρσενικοῦται denotes males participating in a same-sex sexual act understood within a literary and cultural mindset which marks such acts as in all instances socially abusive. I have suggested the translation “men who have socially abusive sex with men,” preferably supplied with an explanatory note, as closer to dynamic equivalence than earlier attempts have been.

The participants in male same-sex intercourse are included in the list because they, according to Paul, are part of a social disturbance and pollute themselves, each other, and the body of Christ by this behaviour, and thereby lose their own heavenly inheritance and cause others to do the same. Paul wants to put an end to these behaviours in order to create a community that, while maintaining a hierarchy, minimizes the negative effects of it.

Finally, I want to emphasize that this article does not suggest that Paul was trying to get rid of social hierarchies. However, he advocated respect, in order to keep pollution away from the bodies partaking in the body of Christ. Neither is it suggesting that Paul was pro modern male, or female, homosexuality or homosexual acts. It says, rather, that Paul, in 1 Cor 6:9, did not express an opinion on all forms of homosexual acts as perceived today, nor on homosexuality as an inclination. I have instead argued that Paul commented on what he had perceived in his distinct context, and that the modern form of egalitarian homosexuality did not, in his mind, exist. What did exist, however, was the widespread and pertaining notion of using male same-sex sex as a tool for/of social powers.