

Benevolence* Rewritten as *Religiousness

Did Apostle Paul Really Condemn Homosexuals?

Excerpted from Golden Rule Bible™: An Introduction

The New Testament’s most fundamental teaching was simple: salvation by obedience to Jesus’ Faith/Law—the utterance, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” In other words, the New Testament taught: salvation by *obedience* to *benevolence*. But the evangelical camp rewrote *obedience* as *belief*; and the traditionalist camp rewrote *benevolence* as *religiousness*. Together, the two camps have completely rewritten the New Testament’s most fundamental teaching, pointing the modern reader *away from* the original salvation message.

We’ve briefly touched upon the evangelical camp’s contribution to the translation debacle. So how, exactly, has the traditionalist camp rewritten *benevolence* as *religiousness*?

The traditionalist camp is currently chastising Golden-Rule-based denominations for their acceptance of homosexual members.¹¹⁰ And they are making a public spectacle of the issue. Given the traditionalist camp’s focus on homosexuality, it would be most enlightening to use their chosen issue to demonstrate their contribution to the Bible translation debacle.

Traditionalists often appeal to 1 Corinthians 6.9 and 1 Timothy 1.9 in their condemnation of homosexuality. In the Greek, both of these verses condemn the *arsenokoitai*. So who were the *arsenokoitai* that these verses condemn? Were these *arsenokoitai* guilty of violating *benevolence* or a *religious sexual taboo*?

When the 16th-century German monk Martin Luther translated the New Testament, he translated *arsenokoitai* as referring to the rapists of young boys.¹¹¹ Even into the late 1800’s, eminent scholars such as Dods, Roberts, and Donaldson all translated *arsenokoitai* as referring to the rapists of young boys.¹¹² The recognition of *arsenokoitai* as the rapists of young boys persisted at least until 1914, as seen in Pape’s highly respected Greek-German dictionary.¹¹³ Thus, the *arsenokoitai* were guilty of the grotesque *injustice* of raping young boys.

¹¹⁰ For example, the traditionalist camp has recently been making a public issue over its assertion that the Torah’s prohibition on homosexuality remains in force. They often cite Leviticus 18.22: “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” [Leviticus 18.22 NASB] The traditionalist camp cites this Torah precept *as if* this proscription remains in force. However, Golden-Rule-based denominations say that this precept *isn’t* in force, because it’s not one of the precepts summed up in “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The Leviticus 18.22 precept illustrates the very real-world differences between requiring adherence to the entire Old Testament moral code vs. solely requiring adherence to “the Golden Rule.”

¹¹¹ *Das Problem kirchlicher Amtshandlungen an gleichgeschlechtlichen Paaren: Sozialwissenschaftliche, theologische, ethische, poimenische und liturgiewissenschaftliche Perspektiven* by Wiebke Krohn, p. 124, V&R unipress GmbH, Aug 15, 2011

¹¹² In *Theophilus to Autolycus* 1.1.2, Dods, Roberts, and Donaldson all translate *arsenokoitai* as corruptors of young boys—not homosexuals.

¹¹³ “ἄρρενο-κοιτέω , mit Knaben Unzucht treiben, Orac. Sibyll.” (Wörterbucheintrag Griechisch-Deutsch zu »ἄρρενο-κοιτέω«. Wilhelm Pape: *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*. Braunschweig 1914, Band 1, S. 359.)

Also, “ἄρρενο-κοίτης , ὁ , Knabenschänder” (Wörterbucheintrag Griechisch-Deutsch zu »ἄρρενο-κοίτης«. Wilhelm Pape: *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*. Braunschweig 1914, Band 1, S. 359.)

But conventional Bibles have now assigned a completely new meaning to this word. They translate *arsenokoitai* as a reference to “homosexuals”—not “rapists of young boys.” They’ve turned a grotesque violation of *benevolence* into a violation of a *religious sexual taboo* instead. This is a perfect example of *benevolence* being rewritten as *religiousness*.

The traditionalist camp defends the rewrite in three ways:

- They accuse “liberals” of wanting to write a “new” meaning of the word.
- They appeal to the etymology of the word.
- They appeal to the position of the word in the sin list of 1 Corinthians 6.9.

All three arguments are dubious at best. We shall briefly touch on each.¹¹⁴

James B. De Young has written an oft-cited work entitled, “The Source and NT Meaning of *Arsenokoitai*, with Implications for Christian Ethics and Ministry.” Immediately after the introduction, Young dives into a section entitled: “Survey of New Interpretations of *Arsenokoitai*.” Young tells the reader that each of the meanings in his list are the “new” ones—the newest meaning being rapists of young boys.

The only problem with Young’s claim is that it’s literally the opposite of reality. As documented above, the translation “rapists of young boys” *preceded* the translation “homosexuals” *by many centuries*. It is the translation “homosexuals” that is the new kid on the block. Nonetheless, Young audaciously portrays the situation as the literal opposite of reality, *and then proceeds to build his argument from there*.

The common appeal to etymology is equally dubious. How so? Having a stable of slave boys for sexual use was a status symbol during Paul’s day. Therefore, all the words referring to the rape of young boys were either neutral or praiseworthy. From an etymological standpoint, Paul was in desperate need to coin *a derogatory term for the oft-praised practice of raping boys*.

The frequency in which young slave boys were raped was on par with the frequency in which men had sex with adult women. That’s how common it was, yet there weren’t any derogatory terms for it. Therefore Paul coined a derogatory term: *arsenokoitai*.

So how do leading etymology advocates address the then-pressing need for a derogatory word? They literally write the opposite of historical reality. They audaciously assert that Paul already had a slew of derogatory words to choose from, and therefore conclude that *arsenokoitai* couldn’t have been developed as a derogatory word for raping boys:

If Paul had wanted to condemn (a kind) of pederasty, **why did he not use one of the several Greek words or phrases for it current in Hellenistic Jewish writings** [e.g., *paidophthoreseis*]?¹¹⁵—Wright

Just like Young, Wright is an oft-cited scholar. It is Wright who is often cited as the etymology expert. Yet, just like Young, Wright literally wrote the *opposite* of reality. For there were *no* derogatory words for the rapists of young boys at the time Paul wrote his letters. Yet Wright audaciously asserted there were *several*.

¹¹⁴ A full exposé on all three arguments is presented in *Pauline Paradoxes Decoded*, “Section IX—Law and Pederasty,” pp. 273-340, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.

¹¹⁵ D.E. Wright as cited in “HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES IN THE USE OF THE BIBLE TO JUSTIFY THE ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE” by Guenther (Gene) Haas (Redeemer College), as cited in http://www.phc.edu/gj_haas_hermen.php, January 3, 2013.

The derogatory term *paidophthoros* (corrupter of boys) was created by the Christian community *after* Paul's death.¹¹⁶ And here's a remarkable historical fact that traditionalist etymologists brush aside: *paidophthoros* (corrupter of boys) was the word created by the Christian community to explain *arsenokoitai* to the general Greek public!¹¹⁷ Thus, we have empirical documentation on who the *arsenokoitai* were. According to the earliest Christians, the *arsenokoitai* were the "corrupters of young boys." (Notice that this was correctly understood by Martin Luther, Dods, Roberts, Donaldson, and Papes' German/Greek dictionary.)

Regardless how Wright may appeal to the potential Levitical origins of the word, it's the *actual real-world use* of a word that matters, not theoretical conjecture (or worse still: theoretical conjecture that claims a meaning opposite of the actual historical use).¹¹⁸

The traditionalist camp lastly appeals to the position of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6.9. (They use a word right next to *arsenokoitai* to bolster their rewrite of "rapists of young boys" as "homosexuals.") Yet, once again, their approach is literally the *opposite* of reality. How so? 1 Corinthians 6.9 is an *unordered* list. One cannot legitimately appeal to the word order of an unordered list. Consider the following example:

Don't you know that the selfish cannot inherit God's Kingdom? Don't be deceived. Neither... **thieves**, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor abusive people, nor **robbers**...¹¹⁹

In an ordered list, "thieves" and "robbers" would appear side by side. Yet notice that "the covetous" and "drunkards" and "abusive people" are all between "thieves" and "robbers." Why is this? 1 Corinthians 6.9 simply isn't an ordered list. It's an *unordered* list.¹²⁰ Therefore, the traditionalist camp is appealing to word order in an unordered list! This is patently ridiculous.

There's only one thing that matters when assessing the meaning of a word: How was that word used during the time period in which it was written? We already know that the early Christians *defined* the term *arsenokoitai* as "corrupters of young boys." Thus, we *know* the historical real-world use of the word.

The real-world use is not only documented in the early Christian's own *definition* of the word, but is also seen in the way that early Christians used *arsenokoitai* in their own writings. Four extant Christian manuscripts from the same language period as Paul contain the word *arsenokoitai*.

¹¹⁶ The earliest known appearances of the Greek term *paidophthoria* are found in the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache, and the writings of Justin Martyr. (Source: Dr. William Berg) All of the texts in which this word is found were written after Paul's death.

¹¹⁷ The Greek terms *arsenokoitai* and *paidophthoroi* (corrupters of young boys) were used interchangeably in the formulaic Triple Prohibition found throughout early Christian writings: *moichoi, pornoi, arsenokoitai/paidophthoroi*. Some texts used *arsenokoitai*. Others used *paidophthoroi*. Given the interchangeability of these terms in the Triple Prohibition, it is abundantly clear that *arsenokoitai* and *paidophthoroi* were synonyms—both terms quite specifically condemned *pederasts*. *Paidophthoroi* was coined after *arsenokoitai*. (See footnote above.) Thus, the Christian community turned Paul's highly Judeocentric word (*arsenokoitai*) into a word which the general Gentile public could relate to (*paidophthoroi*).

¹¹⁸ For an explanation of the dubious nature of the all-too-common etymological appeal to Leviticus see *Pauline Paradoxes Decoded* by Michael Wood, pp. 310-320, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.

¹¹⁹ The Greek word *adikia* referred to any lack of kindness, whether active malice or passive selfishness. Given the presence of "drunkards" and others in Paul's list, it is this passive sense that's being appealed to.

¹²⁰ An in-depth analysis of the unordered nature of 1 Corinthians 6.9 is provided in *Pauline Paradoxes Decoded* by Michael Wood, pp. 321-327, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.

And **all four Christian works solely used *arsenokoitai* in reference to the rape of young boys.**¹²¹

The historical use of the word is *unequivocal*. Therefore, it is the historical use of the word that traditionalist advocates seek to distract attention away from. Is this an overly harsh assessment? Consider the following realities:

- **The translation “rapists of young boys” preceded the translation “homosexuals” by hundreds of years.**—Yet Young builds his argument on the notion that “rapists of young boys” is the new translation and “homosexuals” is not.
- **All other derogatory terms for the rape of young boys were developed *after* Paul’s death.**—Yet Wright builds his argument on the notion that Paul had “several” derogatory terms to choose from.
- **1 Corinthians 6.9 is an unordered list.**—Yet many theologians still build their argument on the word order of this unordered list.

One cannot help but believe that the experts in this matter are fully aware of the above realities. Therefore, one cannot help but believe that they are counting on the fact that their readers aren’t aware of these realities. If this is indeed the case, then their publications are truly works of deception—nothing more, nothing less.

And we have only scratched the surface regarding the *immense* documentation that *arsenokoitai* originally referred to the rapists of young boys. There is much, much more.¹²²

The traditionalist camp correctly considers the issue of homosexuality as biblically important. But the issue is important for different reasons than they think. The issue strikes at the heart of whether Paul was consistent or not.

The Apostle Paul didn’t write that brotherly love fulfills *part* of the Law. On the contrary! Paul repeatedly taught that brotherly love fulfills the *entire* Law. Therefore, if he wrote that no homosexual shall enter God’s Kingdom, then he repudiated his own teaching. There’s truly no two ways about it. Either brotherly love fulfills the entire Law or it doesn’t.

The traditionalist camp has produced translations which teach two opposing notions:

- **X**—Brotherly love is the totality of the Law.
- **Z**—No homosexual shall enter God’s Kingdom.

The traditionalist camp *cannot* assert biblical superiority when their own translations contain both X and Z statements. The fact that their own translations teach two *opposite* perspectives strongly testifies that they haven’t reconciled Paul’s teachings into a coherent whole. For there is nothing coherent in:

¹²¹ Four *context-defined* instances of *arsenokoites* exist in extant Koine manuscripts: Aristides’ *Apology*, Hippolytus’ *Refutatio*, *Acts of John*, and *Sibylline Oracles*. All four solely used the word in reference to the rapists of young boys. It should be noted that *arsenokoitai* is found in other Koine works, works where there is no contextual indication of word meaning. (*Pauline Paradoxes Decoded* by Michael Wood, pp. 305-307, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.)

¹²² For in-depth documentation on *arsenokoitai* as referring to the rapists of young boys, see *Pauline Paradoxes Decoded*, “Section IX—Law and Pederasty,” pp. 273-340, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.

The entire Law is fulfilled in one statement, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

No homosexual shall enter God’s Kingdom.

He who loves others has fulfilled the law.

Law wasn’t created for a righteous person, but for people such as homosexuals.¹²³

Does brotherly love fulfill the entire law, or are homosexuals excluded from God’s Kingdom? Does he who love others fulfill the Law, or was law created to condemn unrighteous homosexuals? One cannot have it both ways. Yet conventional translations promote both opposing notions (twice over) *anyway*.

Today’s most recognized scholars are finally acknowledging the incoherence of their own translations:

There is nothing self-evident, on the basis of the principle “love your neighbor,” about saying that homosexuals would not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6.9-11).¹²⁴—EP Sanders

Sanders is perfectly correct. If Paul wrote both statements, then Paul was inconsistent. However, Sanders assumes that Paul did exclude homosexuals, and therefore he concludes that Paul was indeed inconsistent.

Rather than check to see if the problem is with his own ideology, Sanders opts to assume the problem is with Paul instead. And, whether traditionalist advocates realize it or not, they too are advocating Paul’s *inconsistency*. If they are right about Paul’s view of homosexuality, then Paul truly repudiated his teaching on brotherly love as the fulfillment of the entire Law.

Meanwhile, the Golden Rule Bible™ simply uses the historical meaning of the word, preserving Paul’s consistency as well:

The entire Law is fulfilled in one utterance, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

No rapists of young boys shall enter God’s Kingdom.

He who loves others fulfills the Law.

Law wasn’t created for the compassionate, but for people like the rapists of young boys.¹²⁵

Notice how the Golden Rule Bible™ reads seamlessly, fluidly, without the slightest hint of contradiction. And the reason for this is straightforward: When the New Testament is translated using the actual historical meanings, it reads seamlessly, fluidly, without the slightest hint of contradiction.

The inconvenient truth is that *no prior English translation was made using the actual historical meanings*. Rather, translators have been arguing that the “context” demands something different than the historical meanings. Then they write *paradoxical statements in the name of preserving the consistency of context*. Meanwhile, the context has always read seamlessly with the historical meanings, and *it only becomes a paradoxical mess with the self-invented meanings*. Therefore, the appeal to “context” is dubious at best.

¹²³ Cf. Galatians 5.14; 1 Corinthians 6.9; Romans 13.8-9; 1 Timothy 1.9

¹²⁴ *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* by EP Sanders, p. 95, Fortress Press, 1985

¹²⁵ Galatians 5.14; 1 Corinthians 6.9; Romans 13.8-9; 1 Timothy 1.9 GRB

Simply by using the actual historical meanings of words, Paul is perfectly consistent. So why, then, do translators go out of their way to advocate non-real-world meanings which only end up making Paul inconsistent as a result? Traditionalist theology requires it. Traditionalist advocates strongly believe that homosexuals cannot enter God's Kingdom, and yet this notion isn't found in the original Greek New Testament. Therefore, they've inserted the notion into their English translations. **“Rapists of young boys” rewritten as “homosexuals” is an example of a requirement of benevolence rewritten as a requirement of religiousness instead.**¹²⁶

Traditionalists strongly believe that God requires much more than brotherly love alone. And they are particularly concerned about *human sexuality*. Therefore, they've taken a particular interest in rewriting the New Testament's sexual terminology. The rewriting of “rapists of young boys” as “homosexuals” is a perfect example of this. 1 Thessalonians 4.1-6 is another case in point.

In 1 Thessalonians 4.1-6, Paul condemned the *malevolent* practice of having sex with other men's wives:

Here is the will of God, **here is what makes you holy: stay away from sex with another man's woman**, each one of you knowing how to keep your own body in a state of holiness and honor, and not in covetous passion like the Gentiles who don't know God—which means **not trying to get around and cheat your brother in the process**¹²⁷

The passage discusses a form of sex which “cheats a brother in the process.” Therefore, it is exceedingly clear that Paul originally wrote a passage demanding *benevolence* (instead of having sex with other men's women thereby cheating them in the process).

Yet, *against the context*, the traditionalist camp has rewritten the passage as prohibiting *fornication* instead. Not only does this rewrite violate Paul's teaching that brotherly love fulfills the entire Law, but the rewrite doesn't even fit within the local context either.

In the passage, Paul used the Greek word *porneia* which the traditionalist camp often rubberstamps as “fornication” or “sexual immorality.” Yet, in the first century, this word commonly referred to “sex involving another man's woman.” This was one of the most common uses—if not the most common use—of the word at the time Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians.¹²⁸

But let's call a spade, “a spade.” The translators didn't even need to know any of the historical documentation to realize that Paul *must* have used the word this way. Why not? Because only “sex with another man's woman” *cheats a brother in the process*. Had they solely applied their own stated criteria (“context”) then they would've ended up with the historical meaning (“sex with another man's woman”). The reality is that neither context nor historical meaning drives the translators' choice of words. Theological ideology is their sole consideration and they let both context and historical meaning be damned. **“Sex with another man's woman” rewritten as “fornication” is another example of a requirement of benevolence rewritten as a requirement of religiousness instead.**

¹²⁶ We use the word ‘ethics’ in the limited sense of that which involves caring for others, and we use ‘morality’ in the broad sense of any code of behavior that requires more than adherence to brotherly love alone.

¹²⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4.3-6.

¹²⁸ See *Pauline Paradoxes Decoded* by Michael Wood, pp. 211-272, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.

The traditionalist camp’s preoccupation with human sexuality has led to a number of ethical terms being *sexualized* during the translation process. For example, Paul’s condemnation of “contemptible behavior” is often sexualized as condemnation of “sensuality” instead—even in passages where the infraction is specifically related to a lack of brotherly love.¹²⁹ **This sexualizing of many ethical terms is another example of the requirement of *benevolence* rewritten as a requirement of *religiousness* instead.**

This sexualizing of New Testament terminology betrays each authors’ original commitment to brotherly love as the entirety of the Law, making it impossible for the modern reader to know that salvation by brotherly love alone runs throughout the Greek New Testament from beginning to end. The Golden Rule Bible™ has been produced to rectify this unfortunate situation.

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Excerpted from *Golden Rule Bible™: An Introduction*.

¹²⁹ See *Pauline Paradoxes Decoded* by Michael Wood, pp. 523-525, Tubi Publishing, LLC, 2013.