

Talking Points

What you need to know and say when they say:
"But the Bible clearly condemns homosexuality!"

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*Throughout this paper, the writing presented here is largely, but not entirely, in the words of the authors cited in brackets with some alterations in some instances, and in some cases the statement attributed to the author is actually a paraphrase or summary statement of what the author, cited in brackets, wrote.

Introduction

This paper is a digest (in kind) of what some theologians, scholars and other notables have written on the Bible passages traditionally used to condemn homosexuals: Genesis 19; Lev. 18 and 20; Romans 1; I Cor. 9 and I Tim. 1; and Jude 7.

The intended use of this paper is to provide "talking points" that serve to support the proposition stated under each of the six topics presented. The outline is in four parts and is repeated per text(s) discussed: (1) *Topic* (heading), (2) *In Point of Fact* (stated proposition), (3) *Talking Points* (in support of the stated proposition) and (4) *Conclusion* (summary).

The object of this paper is to equip the reader (or, seminar participant as the case may be) with "talking points" so that he or she can succinctly speak in support of each *In Point of Fact*.

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Topic #1: The erroneous use of the word “sodomite(s)”
in the 1611 King James Version (KJV; also known as the AV – Authorized Version)

In point of fact: The occurrence of the English word “sodomite(s)” in the 1611 Old Testament King James Version is an obviously flagrant, inappropriate rendering of the Hebrew language by the 1611 Authorized Version (AV) translators.

Talking Points:

1. In Deut. 23:17, I Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; and II Kings 23:7 the Hebrew word “*kadesh*” שִׁדְדָן (and its derivatives) is incorrectly translated “sodomite(s)” in the 1611 King James Version of the Bible.
2. “*Kadesh*” and “*kedeshah*” (feminine form) are references to the ‘holy’ female and eunuch priest-prostitutes of the Canaanite fertility cults, of which Israel was to have no part [Blair, web site]
3. *Kadesh* שִׁדְדָן and *Sodom* סְדוֹם (from which Sodomite would be derived) are obviously two completely different Hebrew words
4. *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (2009) does not correct the unscholarly mistranslations of the 1611 version. Furthermore, at Job 36:14, *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (2009) footnotes the word “unclean” with “Or, sodomites. See Deut. 23.17” which occurs in the text: “They die in youth, And their life is among the unclean.” [The Holy Bible: King James Version]
5. The 1973 New International Version (NIV) correctly renders “*kadesh*” (and its derivatives) as “shrine prostitute” in each of the five verses (Deut. 23:17, I Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; and II Kings 23:7). [New International Version]

Conclusion: The inappropriate, unscholarly rendering of the word *kadesh* (and its derivatives) as “sodomite(s)” in the 1611 King James Old Testament Bible (and continued in *The Holy Bible: King James Version* of 2009), gives the inaccurate perception that certain godly Kings of Israel put the “sodomites” – or homosexuals – out of the land. The truth is they did no such thing. The correct reading shows they put the “temple prostitutes” out of the land, an altogether different matter. The Kings of Israel were, in these instances, concerned with idolatry in Israel, not with condemning homosexuals or homosexuality or same-sex sex acts *per se*.

Topic #2: “The notorious story of Sodom and Gomorrah [is] irrelevant to the topic” of homosexuality (Hayes, Gagnon who are both proponents of the biblical witness against homosexual practice)

In point of fact: The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 tells us no more about attitudes toward what we call homosexuality than the story of the rape of Dinah tells us about attitudes toward heterosexuality [Jennings, px].

Talking Points:

1. Leading conservative evangelical scholars, like Robert Gagnon and Robert Hays who are both proponents of the biblical witness *against* homosexual practice, agree that the

notorious story of Sodom and Gomorrah – often cited in connection with homosexuality – is actually irrelevant to the topic [Gagnon, p71]

2. Ex-gay leader and North American director of Exodus International Bob Davies, as early as 1993, he wrote that he agreed with pro-gay theologians who stated Genesis 19 does not provide a strong argument against prohibiting *all* homosexual acts [Davies, p184].
3. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were three [Goss, 192-197]
 - a. Violence – male rape
 - i. Ancient Near Eastern societies subjected those they had conquered (enemies, strangers, and trespassers), to phallic anal penetration to indicate their subordinate status [Goss, p193]. A more apt colloquial translation would be to *womanize, make into a woman* [Goss, p193].
 - ii. To the extent that homosexual activity was condemned, it was only homosexuality *rape* [Nelson, p79].
 - b. Inhospitality – “Hateful behavior toward strangers” (Wisdom of Solomon 19:13-14)
 - i. The Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah was centrally concerned not with sex but with the injustice of inhospitality to the stranger [Nelson, p79].
 - ii. The desert law of hospitality: “God put you in my way. I have no choice but to protect you” [Abou Fatma in the movie *The Four Feathers*].
 - iii. Gen 18 (the pastoral welcoming of strangers) is in contrast to Gen. 19 (the urban hostility toward strangers); hospitality is the “motif operative” [Goss, p193]
 - iv. Jesus’s reference to Sodom in Luke 10:10-12 is with regards to Sodom’s inhospitality (not Sodom’s sexual acts) – “and they receive you not”
 - v. Wisdom of Solomon 19:13-14 “And punishments came upon the sinners . . . Insomuch as they used a more hard and *hateful behavior toward strangers. For the Sodomites did not receive those, whom they knew not when they came . . .*”
 - c. Social Oppression – Patriarchal violence against (1) male strangers, the angels; and (2) women, Lot’s daughters
 - i. Lot is required to “protect male honor [his guests] over female honor [his daughters]” because the “gender code ... privileges males over females” and he therefore “offers the sexual capital of ... his virgin daughters” to the mob. [Goss, p195]
 - ii. Ez. 16:49 – “...This was the iniquity of...Sodom..., neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

Conclusion: Conservative Bible scholars agree the story of Sodom and Gomorrah “is actually irrelevant to the topic” of homosexuality [Gagnon, p71]. Instead, the customs and gender codes of ancient near Eastern societies would infer that the message of the story for us today is more about (1) hypocrisy – unjust patriarchal dominance; (2) violence – against the stranger and women; (3) oppression of the weak and vulnerable; and (4) injustice – to be unjust in one’s overall dealings with others. Ezekiel 16:49; Luke 10:10-12; and the Wisdom of Solomon 19:13-14 lend support to this interpretation. Furthermore, ironically – we can turn the story (as it has been traditionally used) on its head [Goss, p197]: the oppression of the (weak and vulnerable)

gay and queer “strangers” who are found in societies throughout the world, is, in fact, a commission of the sin of “sodomy” by virtue of oppressing, abusing, and marginalizing these sexual minorities.

Topic #3: Modern Bible versions that use the word “homosexual(s)” or “homosexuality” in its translation of I Cor. 6:9 and I Tim. 1:10 are “driven more by ideological interests in marginalizing gay and lesbian people” than by scholarship. [Martin, p38]

In point of fact: The translation of the two Greek words in dispute, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, – both found in I Cor. 6:9, and only one (*arsenokoitai*) in I Tim. 1:10 – as homosexual(s)* or homosexuality** is bogus.

*“[...]homosexual(s)[...]” (NASB, NLT, CEV, HCSB, NIRV, TNIV for *arsenokoitai*; and NKV for *malakoi*) **“[...]homosexuality” (ESV, AMP, TNIV for *arsenokoitai*; and AMP, ESV for *malakoi*)

Talking Points on *malakoi* (I Cor. 6:9 – “effeminate” KJV):

1. In ancient times, certain vices that were deemed “woman-like” were catalogued under the feminine [Martin, p44]. These vices (from a man enjoying sex with the opposite sex too much [Martin, p48] to a man who studies a lot [Martin, p45]) were deemed vices because they were viewed as being characterized by laziness, vanity, fear, or self-indulgence [Miner, p16-18]. These vices were catalogued as feminine, because women, like these moral failings which degraded men, were believed to be inferior to men [Martin, p48].
2. When *malakos*, in (patriarchal, sexist, misogynistic) ancient times, was used as a reference to a man who was penetrated (either by a woman or a man), it was not a reference to the penetration *per se*, but to the perceived aspects of the [inferior, degrading] femaleness associated with it [Martin, p47]. At issue here is the ancient horror of the feminine [Martin, p47.]
3. In ancient times, *malakos* was “a rather broad social category” [Martin, p45]. For more than three hundred years in the English-speaking world, *malakoi* was rendered “effeminate” (KJV). Only since around the mid-20th century has *malakoi* been translated in ways referring to homosexuality [Martin, p44].
4. In terms of moral condemnation, whatever the specific vice (from eating and drinking too much to looking metrosexual), *malakoi* meant *effeminate* [Martin, p47], *women-like* [Martin, p44].

Conclusion on *malakoi*: To say that *malakos* meant a man who was penetrated is simply wrong [Martin, p44]. All penetrated men were *malakoi*, but not all *malakoi* were penetrated men [Martin, p45]. There is no historical reason to take *malakos* as a *specific* reference to the penetrated man in *homosexual* intercourse. It is even less defensible to narrow that reference down further to mean “male prostitute.” [Martin, p47]

Talking Points on *arsenokoitai* (I Cor. 6:9 – “abusers of themselves with mankind” KJV, and I Tim. 1:10 – “them that defile themselves with mankind” KJV)

1. Because of its rarity, we can only guess at what the word means [Miner, p18]. There are no known usages before Paul, except one possible exception: an undated writing within a collection of writings, the Sibylline Oracles, which writings were collected over a period of many centuries [Miner, p18, 25].
2. In the six centuries following Paul, scholars have identified only 73 times were the term is used– and in virtually every instance the term appears in a list of sins (therefore, little to no context is provided whereby the meaning of the word might be determined) [Miner, p19, 26; Townsley, List].
3. In the *Sibylline Oracles* the term occurs in a list of ... actions related to economic injustice or exploitation [Martin, p40]. A list of sexual sins does occur elsewhere in the same oracle, which is where we might expect to find *arsenokoitai* if it were a reference to male-to-male sex [Martin, p41].
4. In the two Pauline lists where *arsenokoitai* appears (I Cor. 6:9 and I Tim. 1:10), the term comes after a sex-sin and before an economic-sin: in I Cor. 6:9 – “*malakoi* (if rendered “male prostitute”), *arsenokoitai*, thieves;” and in I Tim. 1:10 – “whormongers (fornicators), *arsenokoitai*, menstealers.” This grouping may suggest that *arsenokoitai* describes a male who aggressively takes sexual advantage of another male. [Miner, 20-21]
 - a. *Arsenokoitai* seems to have referred to some kind of economic exploitation by means of sex; perhaps, but not necessarily, homosexual sex [Martin, p40].
5. Two references to *arsenokoitai* in Greek literature may prove helpful:
 - a. In Arisites, *Apology 13*, Fragments 12.9-13.5.4, the term, found in a list cataloguing the sins of the Greek gods, may be in reference to Zeus who, in the form of an eagle, came down and seized the young beautiful boy Ganymede and carried him off by force to be make him his love [Miner, 20, 26].
 - b. According to Greek legend, Naas (the snake in the garden of Eden) commits “adultery” with Adam. According to Hippolytus (*Refutatio*, chapter 5), it is by this act of “adultery” between Naas and Adam that *arsenokoitai* enters into the world. [Martin, p42; Miner, p20, 26]. Hippolytus relates Naas and Adam back to Zeus and Ganymede [Townsley, Addendum 3].
 - c. In neither Zeua and Ganymede, and Naas and Adam, do we find a mutually consenting relationship of equals – we find the weak subjugated by a powerful aggressor.
6. *Arsenokoitai* cannot be defined by its two compound words (“male” and “bed”). The definition of a compound word is not known by the definition of its root word components [Miner, p18-19]. The literal translation of this compound word is (arsenos) male-bedders (koites), which could just as easily mean a man who sleeps around [Townsley, My Position].
7. If Paul derived the term *arsenokoitai* from the Septuagint Lev. 20:13 (where the two components of the compound word appear side by side in this Greek version of the Old Testament) (and that’s a big if), then it would follow that he was prohibiting cultic sexual practices (which is the context of Lev. 20:13) [Miner, p21]. The etymology of a word is its history, not its meaning [Martin, p39].

Conclusion on *arsenokoitai*: As an amplified, applied meaning for today, we might conclude: *Arsenokoites* [noun, masculine] occurs when a male, who by means of his vantage point, such

as economic or class superiority, or some other means of power (perceived or real), either subtly or openly uses aggression, oppression, or manipulation to force his will upon another male for the purpose of sexually manipulating that male in order to satisfy his own desires or purposes [Steve Parelli].

Topic #4: Romans 1, probably the passage most often used to condemn homosexuals, isn't about homosexuality.

In point of fact: In Romans 1, Paul uses the words “natural” and “unnatural” not to distinguish heterosexual people from homosexual people (which is not his purpose in this text), but Gentiles from Jews (which is his purpose in this text) [Stuart, p96]. To engage in same-sex activity was, characteristically, a Gentile trait, not a Jewish trait, a trait that the Jews catalogued as “unclean.”

Talking Points:

1. Paul is not condemning same-sex sex acts as sin; instead, he places these acts under the Jewish cultural category of “uncleanness” which describes material things as “out of their appropriate place.” Semen deposited “out of place” left the individual “unclean.” [Hanks, PDF]
2. In context (Romans 1 and 2), Paul is rhetorically addressing Jewish superiority over Gentile impurity as a “bait and switch” maneuver with the purpose in mind of asking his Jewish readers “who are you to judge these Gentiles when you do the same things” (Romans 2:1). He refers to these unclean homoerotic acts of the Gentiles (in Romans 1) only rhetorically so that he can later (in Romans 2) unpack Jewish sinfulness.
3. Paul is addressing a different set of facts. Paul’s model in Romans 1:1-31 does not address the gay relationship model of the 21st century. (Paul’s model is: to refuse to acknowledge God, v. 21; to worship idols, v. 23; to prefer earthly pursuits versus spiritual, v. 25; to give up their innate passions, v. 26-25; to engage in sex with temple prostitutes. The 21st century gay relationship model is: not part of idol worship; accepts their sexual orientation; sex with committed partners; and accepts God.)
4. Paul is talking about what is customary, not what is natural or unnatural. “Natural use” and “against nature” (Romans 1:26-27), or “natural” and “unnatural,” did not have for Paul the same meaning it has for us today. In ancient times, “unnatural” meant “unconventional” (cf. I Cor. 11:14-15 NRSV and Rom. 11:24 NRSV where long hair on a man is unnatural and where God himself does what is “contrary to nature”). Seneca, for example, refers to hot baths, banquets after sunset, potted plants and a man’s passive sexual role as all, equally “against nature”, i.e., contrary to custom.
5. Same-sex sex acts between women is nowhere condemned in the Bible, including the Romans 1:26 passage found here. In Romans 1:26, the reference (“against nature”) is to women who took the active role in sex with men [Goss, p, Nissinen p108] or women who engaged in anal sex with men to avoid procreation [Hanks and Miller as summarized in Goss, p200].

Conclusion: In Romans 1, Paul is not distinguishing between homosexuality and heterosexuality (or between homosexuals and heterosexuals) [Stuart, p96]. The set of facts

Paul establishes here (vs. 18 – 27) do not correlate, in the least bit, with the set of facts 21st century homosexuals actually experience in their personal lives [Miner, p14-16]. Paul is distinguishing between Gentiles and Jews with a view of entrapping the Jew (by what he says in vs. 18-27) so that he can, later on (in Romans 2), unpack the Jews' sinfulness [Countryman, p201; Goss, p200]. Paul is, therefore, speaking *rhetorically* to the Jews' superiority over the Gentiles [Halminiak, p201] in two areas: (1) The Jewish people are monotheistic (not idolaters as are the Gentiles, vs. 21-23) and (2) the Jewish people are "clean" with respect to material things, that is, keeping "things in their appropriate places;" semen deposited out of place (in anal intercourse, vs 26 and 27) left the Gentiles unclean [Hanks, PDF]. Paul is not condemning same-sex sex acts as sin, but as "unclean." Neither does Paul state that same-sex sex acts are "unnatural" in the modern sense of how we understand the word "unnatural." "Unnatural" and "against nature" for the ancients meant uncustomary, or out of the norm (cf. I Cor. 11:14-15; and Rom. 11:24). Finally, the Bible nowhere condemns same-sex sex acts between women. In verse 26, Paul is speaking of women who engaged in anal sex with men [Hanks and Miller as summarized in Goss, p200].

Topic #5: Once the context is understood, it is clear that Lev. 18:22 and 20:13
– that a man should not lie with a man –
is not a blanket condemnation of homosexuality

In point of fact: The forbiddance of male/male penetrative sex in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 is a Hebrew cultural prohibition prescribed for the purpose of keeping Jewish identity strong [Helminiak, p47]. The facts surrounding the Hebrew prohibition are so dissimilar to the facts surrounding questions about homosexuality today, that the Hebrew prohibition has no justifiable binding force or applicability for us today [Miner, p8].

Talking Points:

1. The phrase "the lyings of a woman" in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 is a prohibition specifically against male/male anal intercourse only, or male/male penetrative sex. The text does not prohibit male/male non-penetrative sex such as frottage, intercrural sex, masturbation and oral sex. The text does not prohibit female/female sex. [Goss, p189-190]
2. The prohibition of male/male penetrative sex, for the Israelite, was not a question concerning ethics or the morality of same-sex sexuality, but was a matter of *belonging* to a certain people who distinguished themselves from the other nations by their *uniform* observance of the Torah (of which Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 is a part). [Countryman, p21]
3. The Torah made obligatory the prohibition of mixing kinds [Countryman], the observance of gender roles (otherwise, a type of mixing kinds) [Goss], and separation from pagan cultic practices [Miner].
4. As a type of mixing kinds, male/male penetrative sex meant the penetrated male acted as a female. The Talmud, at a much later time than the social context of the Torah, comments that the penetrated male consigns himself "to the class of females . . . a *degradation* of status" which the Talmud says is a "sort of mixing of kinds, a general taboo" in Hebrew culture. [Goss, p191]

5. The immediate context of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, indicates that the rules set forth in chapters 18 and 20 are meant to prevent the Israelites from worshiping the Egyptian and Canaanite goddess of love and fertility, Astarte or Ishtar [Miner, p10]. Every kind of sexual practice imaginable was performed at these pagan rituals, including homosexual sex [Miner, p11]. No thought is given to whether the sex in itself is right or wrong [Helminiak, p47]. Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 condemns male/male penetrative sex as a religious crime of idolatry only [Helminiak, p45], not as a sexual offense of immorality or unethical behavior, not as a sin.

Conclusion: To be a Jew did not mean to primarily confess a certain faith, but rather to belong to a certain people. One was obliged to participate fully. The alternative was to become a nonperson. [Countryman, p.21] This mass uniform conformity was practiced with the purpose of keeping a strong Jewish identity [Helminiak, p47]. The Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 prohibition of male/male penetrative sex is a particular Hebrew prescription given in the larger context of prohibiting the mixing of kinds [Countryman, p26, 27] and the imperative to separate from pagan religious practices [Miner, p10]. The male/male penetrative sex prohibition was not a same-sex sex prohibition *per se*. The context in which the prohibition was prescribed conditions its applicability for us today [Miner, p8]. Since none of the Hebrew qualifiers of the prohibition exist for us today, it is unjustifiable to evoke Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 as a “Biblical” prohibition for us today. (The rule of no male/male penetrative sex established in the Hebrew case is limited to the facts of that case. The rule of no male/male penetrative sex cannot be applied to any future situation if the facts of that situation are not similar to the Hebrew case [Miner, p8]).

Topic #6: The reference in Jude 7 to Sodom and Gomorrah “going after strange flesh” is perhaps best understood in light of a first century legend

In point of fact: Many conservative Bible schools believe “going after strange flesh” (KJV) in Jude 7 is actually a reference to women who had sex with angels, and has nothing to do with homoeroticism.

Talking Points:

1. Of the 58 biblical references to Sodom, only Jude 7 focuses on what we would call the *sexual* dimension of Genesis 19 [Hanks, PDF].
2. Similar to the account of angels marrying women in Genesis 6 (which was thought to be the final sin that incurred God’s wrath in sending the flood), a first century legend held that women in Sodom and the area cities had sex with angels (“strange flesh”) which sin incurred God’s wrath in the destruction of Sodom [Miner, p 7].
 - a. Many theologians, including many conservatives, interpret Jude 7 this way: JND, Kelly (Harper and Row); Fred Craddock (Westminster John Knox Press); Richard Bauckham (Word Books, Waco); Michael Green (Inter-Varsity Press); CEB, Cranfield (SCM Press, London); and Richard Hays (Harper) [Miner, p7, 24].
3. The sin of Sodom in Jude 7 is viewed not as males violating other males but as mortals (women) violating immortals (angels). Homoeroticism is not the issue in Jude 7. [Nissinen, p93]

Conclusion: When we read this verse, Jude 7, having been raised in a culture that despises gays, it is easy to assume “going after strange flesh” must mean homosexuality [Miner, p7]. But, many Bible scholars believe Jude’s reference is to mortal women wanting sex with immortal angels [Nissinen, p93]. Even if the reference were to homoeroticism, it must be remembered that the sin of Sodom was violence (male rape), inhospitality and social oppression [Goss, p and has nothing to say in reference to consenting adults who engage in same-sex sex.

Books and Web Sites Cited

Note: All the books and web sites cited in this paper are pro-LGBT except for Gagnon and Davies

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<http://www.ecinc.org/Scriptures/deuteronomy23.htm>

Hanks, Rev. Dr. Thomas, www.othersheep.org, www.fundotrasovejas.org

- On Romans 1, see PDF “Twelve Myths in the Homophobic Interpretations of Romans 1:24-27”
<http://www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar/ingles/articulos/The%20Ten%20Myths%20.pdf>
- On Jude 7, see PDF “Violence to the Bible? Or Inspired by the Bible?”
<http://www.fundotrasovejas.org.ar/ingles/articulos/VIOLENCE%20TO%20THE%20BIBLE.pdf>

Martin, Dale. For Dale Martin’s chapter (from his book Sex and the Single Savior) on *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi* (complete and unabridged) go to
<http://www.clgs.org/arsenokoit%C3%A9s-and-malakos-meanings-and-consequences>

Townsley, Jeramy

- List. For a good list of all the instances of *arsenokoitai* and its derivatives in ancient Greek literature <http://www.jeramyt.org/gay/arsenok.htm>
- *Addendum 3* of “Search for God’s heart and truth”
http://www.bridges-across.org/ba/jt_add3.htm
- *My Position* from “Search for God’s heart and truth”
<http://www.bridges-across.org/ba/jtsearch.htm>

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