January 16, 2010

Dear Students in Christian Sexuality,

We welcome you to this time of reading, reflection, and preparation for STMM 547 (Christian Sexuality), which will be held this coming Spring Quarter on the weekends of April 10-11, and May 21-23, 2010.

Since our shared learning takes place in the context of two intensive weekends, we want to assist you in being prepared to participate fully in our first session together. To help you with that task, you will find 14 pages attached that include:

- A description and outline of the course.
- Guidelines for the reflection paper that is due two weeks after the course is finished.
- A series of reflection questions that will be used in triad discussions.
- Criteria for grading.
- The reading list for the course.
- A description of the final synthesis presentation.
- The Bible and Sexuality.
- Creation Stories.
- Homosexuality and the Bible.

The following are the reading assignments for the first weekend:

- All students read *Your Sexual Self: Pathway to Authentic Intimacy*.
- All students read *Tender Fires: The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality*.
- All students read pages 1 through 235 of *Sexuality and the Sacred*.
- Students of the Catholic tradition: read at least chapters 1-5 of *In Pursuit of Love; Human Sexuality* (USCC document); relevant sections of *The Catholic Catechism;* and other suggested readings of your choice.
- Students of other Christian Traditions read at least: chapters 1-5 of *Embodiment;* and any other suggested readings of your choice.

In addition to the reading assignments outlined above, we ask that all students read and prepare reflection questions #1 through #5 for the triad discussions sessions during the first weekend. There is no written assignment for the first weekend.

We look forward to the opportunity of meeting you and joining you in this experience of shared learning, professional development, and personal growth.

Sincerely,

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CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY
STMM 547 (2010) Fran Ferder & John Heagle

Course Description

An exploration of the biblical, psychological, and ethical dimensions of human embodiment, sexuality and relationships. With psychosexual development and the teachings of one's respective Christian tradition as a context, this course examines the shared call to become life-giving and loving persons. Through reading, writing, and shared reflection, students are invited to clarify and claim their own values and vision as a basis for addressing contemporary issues of sexual ethics.

Course Outline

1. Introduction & overview; contemporary issues and historical setting; pastoral theology and human sexuality; scripture as a resource for human sexuality.

2. Religion and sexuality: historical development; biblical images and themes; the relationship between sexuality and spirituality.

3. Psychosexual development: prenatal beginnings; childhood tasks and cycles; adolescence: awakening to adult relating.

4. Adult psychosexual growth; mutuality; ongoing integration; the "3rd birth"; intrinsic ethic: the trajectory toward wholeness and holiness.

5. Perspectives on human intimacy; reclaiming a more affirming understanding of eros; ethical dimensions of sexual intercourse and faithfulness; various meanings of sexual intercourse in our culture.

6. Generativity and human sexuality; what does it mean to be a 'life-giver'? Patterns of relationships; reproductive rights and responsibilities. The vital link between sexuality and power, relationships and justice.

7. Sexual orientation and its implications in contemporary church and society; historical background; contemporary issues; pastoral implications.

8. Sexual abuse; psychological profile of victims and survivors; effects of sexual abuse; recovery: emotional and pastoral implications; sexuality and justice—the neglected perspective.

9. Human sexuality and professional ethics; pastoral responsibility and healthy relational boundaries; biblical roots and pastoral implications.

10. Presentation of synthesis by triads; open forum and discussion; summary reflections and evaluation.

STMM 547 **CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY** (2010)
Course Requirements & Reflection Questions

Reflection Paper: "*Toward A Renewed Theology of Human Sexuality*"

Using the primary sources of theology (scripture, tradition, the human sciences, and reflective personal experience), we invite you to engage in the on-going task of developing a renewed pastoral theology of human sexuality.

After reading, research, and reflection on your personal and pastoral experience, write a reflection paper in which you articulate what you consider to be one (or more) of the major concerns of theological envisioning and pastoral practice that you think ought to be the basis for a renewed theology of human sexuality.

Basic requirements:

- 5-7 pages, typed, double spaced.
- Share the central theme or outline of your paper and reflections in your triad.
- If possible, use ideas, images, and themes from the initial outline of your paper in preparing the synthesis presentation with your triad.

Reflection Questions

1. Every quest begins with questions. What do you consider to be the three or four most import questions to be raised, or issues to be faced in approaching the topic of human sexuality today? What are your personal learning goals for this course? What assumptions, expectations, or basic stance do you bring to this learning experience?

2. What were the 'core-life messages' (verbal or non-verbal) about human sexuality that you were taught (or that you 'caught') from your family, peers, school, church, and society in the process of growing up? What impact have these messages had on your life and relationships? How have they evolved or changed in your adult years? What persons, events, or circumstances contributed to this change? How?

3. Spend some time reflecting on the significant turning points, or 'stepping stones' in your relational and psychosexual growth. Allow images, events, places, and people to surface in your awareness. Next, jot them down in chronological order. In a series of 6 or 8 images, or 'chapter titles' summarize your experience. What have you learned about loving from your journey?

4. Summarize your current, reflective approach to 'sex education' (or what we prefer to call 'sexual formation). Reflecting on your own experience of growing up, what do you wish you would have been told or had a chance to talk about with a trusted other? What role should parents play in this area, as compared to peers, school, or religious education? What

central values or components do you think it should include? And at what age level should they be discussed or communicated?

5. From your reading and study, summarize what your religious tradition says about the meaning and significance of eros, human intimacy, and sexual intercourse. What central values does the tradition uphold? Has its teaching developed, grown, or changed on this topic? How? With which aspects of your tradition do you most resonate? With which dimensions do you struggle? What are the reasons for your struggle or critique?

6. From your reading and study, summarize what your religious tradition says regarding the *generative*—or life-giving dimensions of sexuality. What connection does your tradition make between sexuality and justice? What central values does your tradition strive to protect or uphold? Has its teaching developed, grown, or changed on this topic? How? With which aspects of your tradition do you most resonate? With which dimensions do you struggle or disagree? Why?

7. From your reading and study, summarize what your religious tradition says about sexual orientation, and specifically regarding homosexuality. How does your tradition approach scripture on this topic? What central values does your tradition attempt to protect or uphold? Has its teaching developed, grown, or changed on homosexuality? How? With which aspects of your tradition do you most resonate? Why? With which dimensions do you struggle or disagree? Why?

8. Sharing of reflection papers in triads and working toward an 'integration summary' to be presented to the rest of the class.

9. Integration summary presentations; open forum; summary reflections.

Criteria for Grading

The School of Theology & Ministry is a learning community that emphasizes self-initiative, personal responsibility, creativity, and shared reflection as a vital part of a graduate studies program in ministry. Students are therefore responsible for self-assessment in the grading process, along with the faculty. Criteria for grading include the following:

- Level of personal investment in required and other background readings.
- Time spent in personal reflection in preparation for triad sharing.
- Commitment to dialogue in triads, class participation, and final synthesis.
- Quality, insight, and organization of the reflection paper.
- Perceived level of personal learning, growth, and reflective awareness.

READING LIST – STMM 547 Christian Sexuality (2010)
Fran Ferder & John Heagle

REQUIRED READING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Fran Ferder & John Heagle, *Your Sexual Self: Pathway to Authentic Intimacy* (Ave Maria Press, 7.95).

Fran Ferder & John Heagle, *Tender Fires: The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality* (New York: Crossroad Publications, 2002).

James Nelson & Sandra Longfellow (eds.), *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection* (Westminster John Knox, 1994).

Required Reading For Students from Roman Catholic Tradition:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997). Cf. sections on human sexual identity; equal dignity of both genders; vocation to love and communion; chastity; purpose and meaning of marriage.

Benedict XVI, *God Is Love [Deus Caritas Est,* An Encyclical Letter (USCC, 2006).

Vincent Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality* (Michael Glasier, 17.95), Second Edition, 1996.

Required Reading For Students of Other Christian Traditions:

Background Sources and Current Documents from your respective Christian tradition on Human Sexuality.

James B. Nelson. *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology.* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 11.95).

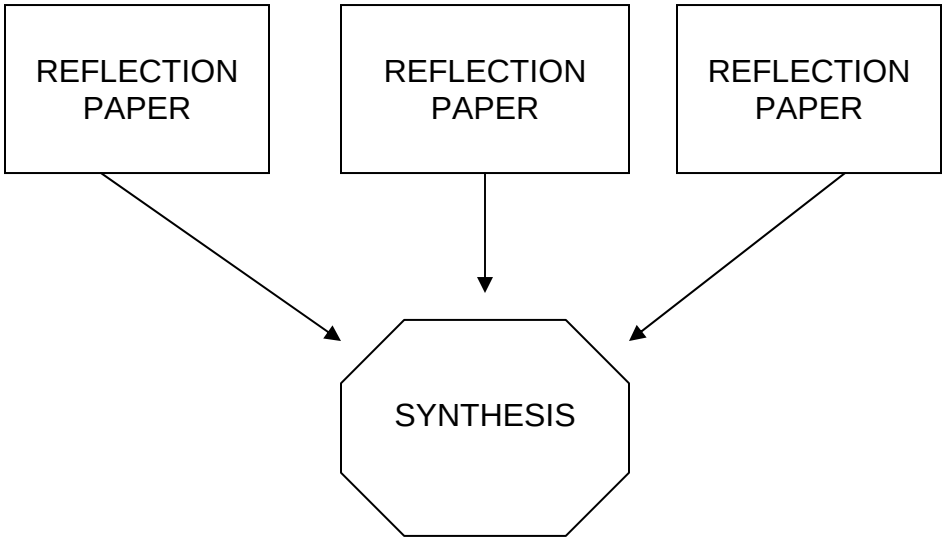
OTHER SUGGESTED READINGS

Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

Spencer Rathus, Jeffrey Nevid, Lous Fichner-Rathus, *Human Sexuality in a World of Diversity,* 4rth edition (Allyn and Bacon, 2000).

Walter Wink (ed.), *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999).

STMM 547 <u>CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY</u> (2010)
SYNTHESIS OF TRIAD REFLECTIONS
Integration Summary Presented to Entire Class



<u>WHAT IT IS:</u>

→ a joint presentation of shared conviction/story/vision/awareness on an aspect of a renewed vision of human sexuality.

<u>Process</u>

1. Share the basic themes of your individual reflection papers.
2. Look for common themes.
3. Integrate them into one shared report:
   - Panel discussion
   - Drama
   - Ritual
   - Art

<u>WHAT IT IS NOT:</u>

→ three separate reports
→ a sermon or homily
→ a lecture
→ three separate readings from segments of three different reflection papers.

WHAT DO ALL THREE OF YOU …

→ have some shared conviction around?
→ believe ought to be in a renewed theology of human sexuality?

The Bible and Sexuality

Background: Hebrew Scriptures and Sexuality

The promise made to Abram – "*Your descendants will outnumber the stars*" *(Gn 15:5)* was interpreted literally and was a belief which significantly influenced and defined sexual ethics in the Hebrew Scriptures, i.e.,

- Abram & Sarah & Hagar -- when Sarah did not provide Abram with a son (descendants), Abram slept with Hagar, his wife's maid, to help bring about the fulfillment of the promise of descendants which would "outnumber the stars".

- Onan & Tamar (wife of Lot) – When Lot died without male offspring to continue his name, it was his older brother's obligation (Onan) to sleep with Tamar in order to provide descendants for his deceased brother.

Looking for Sexual Ethics in the Bible

1. Neither the Hebrew nor Christian scriptures provide a *Code of Sexual Ethics (i.e., inclusive list of acceptable sexual behaviors)* applicable to all times in history.

2. There is no single word either in Hebrew or Greek that translates the concept of human sexuality as we understand it today.

3. Many sexual prohibitions mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures are related to cultic purity and socio-economic conditions (i.e., remaining distinct from the pagans who worshipped many gods.)

4. There are a variety of contradictory statements about sexual behaviors in sacred scripture.

5. Contemporary sexual issues such as marital fidelity, intimacy, psychosexual development, integration, same-gendered loving, etc. were not a concern to those who wrote the bible.

Selective Use of Biblical Sayings About Sexual Behavior

It is an inappropriate use of scripture to:

- Isolate statements about sexual behavior from their context and apply them to our time without question. (i.e., "What does the bible say about ...")

- Assume that every sexual behavior condemned in the scriptures is also condemned in our time ... or, conversely, to assume that every sexual behavior allowed in the scriptures is also ethically appropriate for our own time.

How Can Sacred Scripture Be Applied to Sexuality Issues Today?

- Note the GRADUAL EMERGENCE of a progressive SEXUAL ETHIC in the biblical stories.

- Distinguish between A SEXUAL ETHIC (underlying values guiding sexual decision making) and a CODE OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR (specific lists of what is allowed and not allowed sexually). Note: Jesus did not provide us with a comprehensive list of what we can and cannot do genitally –

- Allow the LAW OF LOVE to guide all sexual behaviors and choices.

- Take seriously the biblical mandates to: "Be compassionate" and "Become whole ("perfected").

CREATION STORIES

Introduction

There is an old Hasidic proverb that 'God created human beings, because God loves stories.' Perhaps that is also why we humans love stories, whether they are the daily accounts of our life together or the 'Great Stories' that embody the vision of an entire people. Every culture has its creation myths that try to answer the perennial questions of the human heart: Where did we come from? How did we get here? What is the purpose of life? What is the meaning of love, death, and sexuality? Why is there suffering and evil?

The following are parts of the creation stories (most of them almost 6000 years old) of the First Nations from the northern plains of the United States and Canada. We invite you to notice the striking similarities of images and themes with our own heritage in the Hebrew Scriptures:

The loon, the grebe, the kingfisher
Tried to find the earth beneath the water
-DENE

Napi told the mud forms of woman and child
to rise and walk, for you must be people
-SIKSIKA

Inktome took a piece of mud from the muskrat's claws,
and rolled it into a ball that became the earth
-NAKOTA

Wesakecahk blew on the ball of earth
so that forests and lakes began to appear
-NEHIYAWAK

A sun was created to light up the great darkness
-ANISHINABEG

The eagle saved one girl from the great flood
and set her back on earth to found a great nation
-DAKOTA

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters.
-Genesis 1: 1-2

Yahweh God formed ha adam of dust from ha 'dama
and breathed into its nostrils
and ha adam became a living nephesh
-Genesis 2:7

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE

Basic Facts

1. In the original languages of the bible, the term "homosexuality", as we understand it today, (primarily response of erotic love directed toward persons of the same gender) is never used.

2. Both the Israelites and the early Christians were unfamiliar with a situation in which a person's natural response of erotic love was toward members of the same gender.

3. In the bible, whenever acts presumed to be homosexual are mentioned (about five times), the context is not one of erotic response or same gender love, but of violence, abuse, or idolatrous worship. **Never does the bible describe a homosexual relationship between two people who love and care for each other and express this love sexually.**

4. Historically, the phenomenon that is today known as homosexuality did not become named as such, acknowledged, or even understood until 1869...though it has certainly been experienced in all times.
   ***** It is therefore, imperative that we not read back into the bible a condemnation of something that biblical authors would not have understood in their day in the same way that we do today.**

Related Biblical References

OLD TESTAMENT

1. Genesis 19:5-9 ... Word used in Hebrew – **YADHA (to know)**
   (Sodom and Gomorrah Story)

   "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may **yada** (know them." Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, **for they have come under the shelter of my roof (tsel – term implying protection)**." (RSV)

   "...Send them out to us so that we may abuse them." (Jerusalem)

"...Bring them out to us that we have intimacies with them." (New American Bible)

"...Bring them out to us!" The men of Sodom wanted to have sex with them. Lot went outside and closed the door behind him. "Friends, I beg you, don't do such a wicked thing! Look, I have two daughters who are still virgins. Let me bring them out to you and you can do whatever you want with them. But don't do anything to these men; they are guests in my house and I must protect them." (Good News Bible)

Opinion of scripture scholars on Genesis 19:5-9

This is a story about the Israelite demands of hospitality for guests. Lot had a responsibility to protect his guests from the idolatrous practices engaged in by the men of Sodom and/or from any violence (gang rape?) that might befall them. (It is interesting to note that a parallel story is told in Judges 19:22-30, only this time a concubine is thrown out to the men of the town and they gang rape her all night and leave her to die. These men of Gibeah "committed an abomination" (Jg 20:6). The crime in both instances is not one of homosexuality or heterosexuality, but of violence, abuse, and rape. (Note that heterosexual activity is not condemned because of the second story.)

No uniform tradition exists in the bible as to Sodom's exact offense. For Isaiah it was a lack of justice (Is 1:10; 3:9); for Jeremiah adultery, lying and the unwillingness to repent (Jer 23:14); for Ezekiel, "pride, surfeit of food, and prosperous ease" and the refusal to "aid the poor and needy" (Ezek 16:49). Wisdom speaks of Sodom in terms of inhospitality (Ws 10:8; 19:14; Sir 16:8). The New Testament presents Jesus referring to Sodom's sin as one of inhospitality (Mt 10:14015; 11:23-34).

The very fact that Lot offers his virgin daughters to the men of Sodom is clear evidence that the story is not dealing with sexual ethics that we must emulate for all time. Rather, it is dealing with cultic issues.

2. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13... Words used in Hebrew –
   SHAKAB (to lie down) and
   TOEBAH (abomination)

   "You shall not **shakab** (lie with) a male as with a woman; it is **toebah** (an abomination)." (Lv 18:22) (RSV)

   "If a man **shakab** (lies with) a male as with a woman, both of them have committed **toebah** (an abomination); they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them." (Lv 20:13) (RSV)

Opinion of scripture scholars on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Leviticus was written not as an ethical code for all time, but as a book of rules for a group of monotheistic people surrounded by polytheists (practicing idolatry). The purpose of all of the rules is expressed in the opening sections: "You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt...You shall not walk in their statutes." (Lv 18:3)

The book of Levi condemns many things. Virtually the only things quoted today are the above references to men lying with men. (The probably assumption is that heterosexual men were doing something not heterosexual, therefore, unnatural as well as pagan.)

For the person who believes in a contextual approach to scripture (as taught by Catholicism), the book of Levi must be understood in the light of its meaning and purpose for the people of the day – a people trying to keep themselves separate from pagans and Canaanites. Such a position understands that the Old Testament is not condemning (or even knowing of) persons who are constitutionally oriented to being attracted to members of their same gender.

"The condemnation of homosexual activity in Leviticus is not an ethical judgment. Homosexuality is here condemned on account of its association with idolatry." (Human Sexuality by the Catholic Theological Society of America, p. 190)

For the fundamentalist, on the other hand, homosexuality must be forever condemned as something hated for all time by God. So must eating pork and shellfish, sleeping with the other wives of one's father, wearing clothing made from two kinds of fabric (cotton blends), eating rare meat, trimming beards, getting tattoos, and seeing your wife naked if she is menstruating...all things which are condemned in the book of Levi. (We cannot have it both ways...we cannot "pick and choose" which proscriptions of the Holiness Code we will keep and which ones we will ignore.)

NEW TESTAMENT

3. Romans 1: 26-27 (No errors in translation)

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error." (RSV)

Opinion of scripture scholars on Romans 1: 26-27

The Greek word **OREXIS (passion or desire)** indicates that the motive for the sexual behavior in question was desire. It is unlikely then that Paul was describing dispassionate acts performed in the context of pagan ritual or ceremony as some have suggested (idolatry).

Still, the focus of Paul's words is infidelity. He is angry toward the pagans who have abandoned God even though they knew better and he lists a whole series of vices in which they were involved: **They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.** (Rm 1: 29-31) (RSV)

Paul is not describing (or condemning) people who are loving, caring homosexuals engaged in faithful sexual activity. Rather, he is dealing with people whose entire lives are consumed by wickedness. Everything they do, whether they are having sex or merely talking is tinged with evil because they have turned from God.

Another point of reference for Romans 1:26-27 deals with the issue of "naturalness". The women and men Paul is discussing wee apparently heterosexual because he says they "exchanged" or "gave up" natural relations – suggesting they had been functioning in a different way (thus, heterosexually) at an earlier point.

For a good discussion of the "natural vs. unnatural" argument, the following is recommended:

Boswell, John. Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980.

The Greek phrase **"para physis"** is used 24 times in the Pauline letters. Translated in Rm 1:26-27 **"against nature"**, the phrase is more frequently translated **"beyond nature"** the other times it is used. In 1 Cor 11:14, Paul uses the Greek **"physis"** to claim that it is unnatural for a man to have long hair. In Rm 11:24, the word is applied to God acting "against nature": "For if you have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, **"para physis"** contrary to nature), into a cultivated olive tree (by God) how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree." (Rm 11:24) (RSV)

Since God is here portrayed as acting "against nature", it is inconceivable that the phrase necessarily connotes moral turpitude. Rather, it means something different, unexpected, but not necessarily immoral.

For Paul, the concept of "unnatural" usually refers to that which went against contemporary Jewish custom (i.e., long hair in men) or was unexpected. The notion of what is "natural" and "unnatural" continues to be subject to new understandings in each age.

4. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 ...

Words used in Greek – **MALAKOI – (soft)**
- ARSENOKOITAI – (translation disputed)

"Do not be deceived; neither the **"PORNOI"** (unfaithful; one who practices prostitution), not **"EIDOLOLATRAI"** (idolaters), nor **"MOICHOI"** (adulterers), nor **"MALAKOI"** (soft), nor **"ARSENOKOITAI"** (bold English, "male fucker"...from **"koitai"** meaning licentious sexual behavior and **"arseno"** meaning performed by a male), nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor 6:9-10) (Translated directly from the Greek)

The key Greek words above have been translated in a variety of ways in different bibles:

"...neither the immoral, nor idolater, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, ..." (RSV)

"...people of immoral lives, idolaters, adulterers, catamites, sodomites, thieves, ..." (Jerusalem Bible)

"...people who are immoral or who worship idols or are adulterers or homosexual perverts or who steal ..." (Good News Bible)

"...no fornicators, idolaters, or adulterers, no homosexual perverts, sodomites, thieves, ..." (The New American Bible)

** NOTE: A footnote in the NAB states: "...the fornication referred to is probably that of religious prostitution, an accepted part of pagan culture in Rome."
(p. 1264)

Opinion of scripture scholars on 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

The Greek words **"MALAKOI"** and **"ARSENOKOITAI"** are differently translated in virtually every edition of the New Testament (as can be seen above). Scholars do not believe that Paul was singling out homosexual persons for condemnation in this passage, but rather was quoting from a commonly accepted list of vices that contained condemnations of general sexual license and infidelity.

The word "MALAKOI" is used in Luke 7:25 in the following way:

> "What then did you go out to see? A man clothed in **"MALAKOS"** (soft) clothing? Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts." (RSV)

This suggests that a common usage in New Testament times referred to soft or luxurious living. The word is used in many ways in ancient writings, and sometimes means gentle, effeminate, or generally lacking self-control. <u>It did not begin to acquire an association with homosexuality until the twentieth century</u> – a fact scholars suggest was much more determined by popular definitions of morality than by any actual meaning inherent in the word itself.

In fact, it might be in the best interest of the religious leaders who today often live luxuriously (as in the "king's court") to shift attention away from the condemnation of "softness" or "luxurious" living and focus instead on someone else's behavior.

The word **"ARSENOKOITAI"** is quite rare, is used only by Paul, and meant "male prostitute" until well into the fourth century. After that time, it has undergone numerous shifts in meaning and is generally translated in accord with what is interpreted in any given age to mean culturally disapproved sexual activity. (Note the shift from "sexual perverts" (RSV) to "homosexual perverts" (NAB and GNB). The latter translations have no basis from the Greek word itself.

5. 1 Timothy 1:9-10 ... Word used in Greek – **ARSENOKOITAI** (see above)

   > "...the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, "**arsenokoitai"** ("sodomites"), kidnappers, liars, ..." (RSV)

   ** NOTE: See above on **"ARSENOKOITAI"** for commentary.