

Veroordelende tekste (please scroll down for english translation)

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Op grond van `n paar tekste in die Bybel is baie mense daarvan oortuig dat gay mense vir God onaanvaarbaar is en dat hulle eers van hulle sondige lewenswyse moet afstand doen voordat hulle gered kan word. Maar, wat sê die betrokke Bybeltekste regtig?

Die Reformerende Kerk het in Maart 2001 die SA Bybelgenootskap amptelik per brief versoek om die term "homoseksueel" of enige sinspeling daarop, uit die volgende Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling weg te laat. Hier volg die begroning vir dié versoek:

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Genesis 19:5 (parallel met Rigt 19:22)

Die wanvoorstelling:

Baie mense gryp onmiddellik na die Sodom en Gomorra-verhaal om daarmee te illustreer wat God van homoseksuele mense sou dink: Hy vernietig hulle met vuur en swael! Die Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling (NAV) versterk hierdie wanopvatting by Afrikaanse Bybellesers dat die Sodomverhaal oor homoseksualiteit handel, as gevolg van Gen 19:5 se bewoording: "Ons wil geslagsgemeenskap met hulle hê." Enige leser sal die woord "geslagsgemeenskap" hier verstaan asof dit gaan oor die Sodomiete se homoseksuele wellus - wat dit hoegenaamd nie is nie!

Die werklike omstandighede:

Hier is geen sprake van "gemeenskap" nie, maar in werklikheid `n verskriklike dreigement van mas-saverkracting!

Die bedoeling van die Sodomiete was om die twee "spioene" wat ongenooid hulle stad binne-gedring het, te intimideer en te verkleineer met die voorneme om hulle gewelddadige fisiese leed aan te doen. Die oortreding van die twee besoekers, in die oë van die Sodomiete, sou gewees het dat hulle ná sonsondergang, op `n baie klandestiene wyse by Lot (self nog maar `n vreemdeling in Sodom) tuisgegaan het. In daardie tyd het stamoorloë en plundery algemeen voorgekom en nagtelike besoeke deur vreemdelinge kon nie geduld word nie. Wat die mans van Sodom dan dreig om te doen, is onteenseglik wel `n homoseksuele daad, maar dit het niks te doen met `n homoseksuele oriëntasie nie. (Selfs vandag nog gebeur dit in byvoorbeeld gevangnisse, dat heteroseksuele persone betrokke raak by homoseksuele dade, maar dit beteken nie dat hulle noodwendig `n homoseksuele oriëntasie het nie. Die oomblik wanneer hulle uit die geslote omgewing vrygelaat word, is hulle weer - volgens hulle natuur - gerig op lede van die teenoorgestelde geslag.) Dit is van wesenlik belang om te onderskei of die Bybel verwys na homoseksuele persone met `n homoseksuele oriëntasie, of na heteroseksuele persone wat betrokke raak by `n homoseksuele daad. Dit is duidelik dat Gen 19 handel oor laasgenoemde. Die feit dat Lot sy dogters vir die mans van Sodom aanbied, is `n bewys dat Lot hulle nie beleef het as homoseksuele mans nie...!

Volgens Esegïel 16:49w was die sonde van Sodom selftevredenheid, hoogmoed en ignorering van behoeftige mense (- geen vermelding van homoseksualiteit nie).

Ons versoek

Die sin "Ons wil geslagsgemeenskap met hulle hê" is misleidend en weerspieël niks van die ang-swekkende dreigement (`n naderende massaverkracting) waarvan die konteks getuig nie. Vir die moderne leser klink dit na `n perverse voorstel, waar die Sodomiete hulle vleeslike plesier wil najaag. Maar in werklikheid handel dit nie hier oor (homo)seksuele toenadering nie, maar oor `n brutale vorm van magsvertoon. Hulle wil die twee besoekers van Lot straf, seermaak en verkleineer . Ons versoek dus dat hierdie sin hervertaal word om iets van die dreigende ondertoon weer te gee. `n Voorstel is byvoorbeeld: "Ons wil hulle `n les leer."

Levitikus 18:22 en 20:13

Die wanvoorstelling

Hier is sekerlik een van die gruwelikste vertaalfoute in die NAV. "Jy mag nie `n homoseksuele verhouding hê nie..." Vir die gewone Bybelleser lyk dit asof God hier direk met gay mense praat en hulle veroordeel. Hierdie teks word gewoonlik aangehaal om gay mense wat in `n verhouding is, te laat twyfel oor die wenslikheid daarvan. Twee misleidende terme word in die Afrikaanse Bybel, gebruik, naamlik "homoseksuele" en "verhouding". Nie een van hierdie terme kom in die Hebreeuse teks voor nie - en word selfs eers geïmpliseer nie.

Die werklike omstandighede

Die "jy" wat hier aangespreek word, is nie `n gay persoon of paartjie nie, maar die gemiddelde Israelitiese "man op straat". Die vertalers het hier `n anachronisme gebruik toe hulle die woord "homoseksueel" ingevoeg het. Dit is totaal onvanpas en staan nie in die Hebreeuse teks nie. Die term "homoseksueel" is eers in die laat 18de eeu vir die eerste keer vanuit die menswetenskappe gevorm. Die oorspronklike lesers of hoorders van Levitikus sou geen benul gehad het wat "homoseksueel"(- of selfs heteroseksueel!) beteken nie. Natuurlik moes hulle vertrouwd gewees het met die verskynsel van homoseksuele daede, al het hulle nie die term "homoseksueel" geken nie, want dié is so oud soos die mensdom self. Maar hulle was net eenvoudig nie gesofistikeerd genoeg in daardie primitiewe tye om te kon onderskei dat sommige mense psigies en fisies aangetrokke kon wees tot lede van hulle eie geslag nie. In hulle verwysingsraamwerk sou alle mense "heteroseksueel" gewees het, onder wie sommige die "gier" gehad het om seksueel met die eie geslag te verkeer. Maar hierdie "neiging" wat daar onder sommige lede van die bevolking aanwesig moes gewees het, word nêrens in die Bybel vermeld of selfs gesuggerer nie.

Die homoseksuele daad waarna hier verwys word, is `n baie spesifieke verskynsel en vorm van homoseksuele optrede, wat NOOIT gelykgestel mag word met die sosiologiese verskynsel van menslike gedrag, wat ons vandag as "gay" of "homoseksueel" beskryf nie. Dit is twee wyd uiteenlopende sake wat min met mekaar in gemeen het, behalwe `n homoseksuele daad.

Hierdie Levitikus-tekste het dit spesifiek teen afgodsdienste, soos dit onder die buurvolkere van Israel beoefen is. Ons semantiese merker in hierdie vers is die Hebreeuse woord to'eba, `n uitsluitlik kultiesse term, wat hierdie verbod onlosmaaklik in `n kultiesse verband plaas. Dit is `n woord wat God se afkeer, weersin en verwerping uitdruk, ten opsigte van kultiesse handeling. Reg aan die begin van Levitikus 18 word daar uitgespel waarom hierdie hoofstuk gaan, nl. die maniere waarop Israel se bure hulle afgode aanbid het - en uitdruklik dat dit onaanvaarbaar vir God was as metodes waarop mense tot hom sou nader.

Die heidense volkere het hulle afgode aanbid deur middel van bloedskanie, kinderooffers, bestialiteit en homoseksuele daede. In daardie konteks het die homoseksuele daede niks te doen gehad

met dit wat ons vandag ken as `n "homoseksuele oriëntasie" nie, maar daar was dit ingespan as kultiese handeling, as deel van hulle (af)godsdienstige rituele - binne die konteks van hulle vrugbaarheidskultusse.

Die verrassende is dat dit `n heteroseksuele vrugbaarheidsmotief gehad het - en niks van persone met `n homoseksuele oriëntasie wat wedersyds tot mekaar aangetrokke was nie! Die verbod wat God plaas, is nie teen homoseksualiteit nie, maar teen `n homoseksuele daad as `n kultiese handeling om met God in aanraking te kom. Met ander woorde, God wou nie hê dat Israel hom moes aanbid op die manier waarop die Kanaäniete hulle afgode aanbid het nie! Wat God dus hier verbied, is afgodsdienst - die hele konteks getuig daarvan - en nie gaywees, of `n gay verhouding nie!

Verder: In die Hebreeuse teks word hier net met (heteroseksuele) mans gepraat, maar soos dit nou lees in die Afrikaanse Bybel, word die fokus verskuif - nie alleen na gay mans nie, maar ook gay vrouens word nou aangespreek! Dit is `n nuwe element wat die oorspronklike bedoeling van die teks ingrypend verander en assulks dus ongeoorloof is.

In die Hebreeuse teks is daar geen sprake van `n "verhouding" nie, maar dié woord is ingevoeg in die NAV, wat die indruk wek dat God teen `n gay verhouding gekant is. (Dit wil voorkom asof die algemeen gangbare mening van die Afrikaanse kerklui ten tyde van die Bybelvertaling hierdie vers in sy huidige vorm beïnvloed het, naamlik dat `n "kern-homoseksueel" nie kan verander nie, maar hy mag dit net nie beoefen of - nog erger - ultiel in `n verhouding nie. So iemand moet die ander mense konsidereer en selibaat leef!)

Die Reformerende Kerk probeer om `n kultuur aan te kweek onder gay mense dat `n vaste verhouding `n ideaal is wat nagestreef moet word, maar hierdie teks wek die indruk dat `n verhouding dié groot sonde is waarteen daar gewaak moet word!

Ons versoek

Vertaal hierdie vers asseblief letterlik soos die 1933 vertaling, maar dan met `n verduidelikende voetnota of omskrywing agter-in die Woordelys, dat dit hier gaan oor `n kultiese handeling as deel van afgodsaanbidding, en nie oor homoseksualiteit as oriëntasie nie.

OF

`n Ander moontlikheid is die dinamies-ekwivalente vertaalmetode deur die betekenis in moderne idioom oor te plaas, maar sonder om enige element van die oorspronklike betekenis skade aan te doen. `n Voorstel sou byvoorbeeld wees: "Moenie dink dat jy deur middel van eksotiese / buitengewone seksuele daade, met God gemeenskap kan hê nie. Kultusse wat so iets voorstaan, moet jy vermy, want dit is vir God onaanvaarbaar."

[Rom 1:26 en 27](#)

Die wanvoorstelling

Hierdie teks word dikwels aangehaal om te probeer bewys dat homoseksualiteit "teen-natuurlik", abnormaal, afwykend en nie volgens die Skepper se bedoeling is nie.

Die werklike omstandighede

Paulus is nie hier besig om `n uitspraak oor homoseksualiteit te maak as `n sosiologiese verskynsel van menslike gedrag nie, maar hy lewer kommentaar op die heidense afgodsdienste wat in die Romeinse kultuur iets alledaags was. Net soos in die geval van Lev 18:22, handel dit hier ook oor homoseksuele daade wat ingespan was as kultiese handeling en godsdienstige rituele binne die

konteks van vrugbaarheidskultusse. Dit gaan nie hier oor persone met `n homoseksuele oriëntasie wat aangetrokke is tot soortgelykes nie, maar oor "heteroseksuele" mense wat betrokke is by homoseksuele daade tydens afgodsaanbidding by vrugbaarheidskultusse.

Daar is duidelike semantiese merkers wat `n aanduiding hiervan is, soos die vermelding van die (afgods)beelde (vers 23) en kultiese begrippe soos "dien" en "vereer" in die sin "hulle dien en vereer die skepsel in plaas van die Skepper" (vers 25).

Ook wanneer hierdie teks binne die groter geheel van Paulus se algemene gedagtegang geplaas word, word dit duidelik dat Paulus nie hier besig is om uitsprake teen homoseksualiteit te maak nie, maar teen afgodsdienste!

Let op Paulus se gedagtegang: Eers beskryf hy die heidense kultusse van die Romeine en kritiseer hulle dan vir die wrang vrugte wat hulle voortbring (vers 28-30). Daarna rig hy hom teen die Joodse kultus (2:1-29) en kritiseer hulle dan eweneens vir die wrang vrugte wat hulle - op hulle beurt- voortbring (2:17-24) - hulle slaafse wetsonder-houding ten spyt! In Rom 3:21-22 kom ons by die draaipunt van Paulus se betoog, naamlik dat God nie kant kies teen Romeine of Jode voortrek nie, maar dat God vrypraak gee - sonder onderskeid, aan almal wat glo. Wat Paulus wil tuisbring is dat die sensuele afgodsdienste van die Romeine hulle niks nader aan die ware God gebring het nie, maar dat die wettiese godsdienste van die Jode hulle óók niks nader aan God gebring het nie! Die enigste manier hoe `n mens by die ware God kan uitkom, is deur geloof in Jesus Christus (vers 22)!

Maar wat van Paulus se beskrywing van hierdie optrede as "teen-natuurlik"? Baie mense wil graag hierin iets raaklees van "teen die natuur" (skeppingsorde). Die Grieks vir "natuur" is "fysis" en die betekenis daarvan kom duidelik uit in dieselfde Paulus se gebruik van dié woord in 1 Kor 11:14, waar hy sê dat dit volgens die "natuur" (fysis) oneerbaar vir `n man is om lang hare te dra! Paulus kan dus die term hier gebruik in die sin van "norm" of "gewoonte". Die aanvaarde norm was dat vrouens hulle hare lank, en mans hulle hare kort moes dra. (As dit van die natuur afgehang het, sou beide mans en vrouens hulle hare baie lank gedra het)! Vir Paulus beteken "teen-natuurlik" gedrag wat verras of skok, omdat `n mens dit nie van sekere tipe persone verwag of met hulle kan rym nie; dit is teen hulle natuur.

Indien ons onthou dat heteroseksuele mense binne die afgodsdienstekonteks aan homoseksuele daade deelgeneem het met die doel om meer vrugbaar te word, kan ons verstaan waarom Paulus hulle sou beskryf as mense wat teen hulle natuur optree. Wanneer `n heteroseksuele man seksueel betrokke is by `n heteroseksuele vrou, tree hy volgens sy natuur op. Wanneer twee homoseksuele persone seksueel betrokke is by mekaar, tree hulle insgelyks ook volgens hulle natuur op! Maar wanneer heteroseksuele persone betrokke raak by homoseksuele daade (al is dit selfs met `n heteroseksuele motief, naamlik om meer vrugbaar te word) is dit skokkend en baie beslis teen-natuurlik! Paulus moes uiteraard geskok gewees het oor wat hy in die vele afgodstempels raakgesien het in die groot Romeinse Ryk - dat "gewone" mans en vrouens - teen hulle natuur - seksueel by persone (tempelprostitute) van hulle eie geslag betrokke geraak het.

Ons versoek

Plaas asseblief `n verduidelikende voetnota of `n omskrywing in die Woordelys wat meld dat Paulus nie homoseksualiteit (of mense met `n homoseksuele oriëntasie) veroordeel nie, maar afgodsdienste, waar homoseksuele daade as vrugbaarheidsrituele ingespan is.

1 Kor 6:9

Die wanvoorstelling

"...mense wat homoseksualiteit beoefen... sal nie deel kry aan die koninkryk van God nie." Hierdie teks lyk asof dit gerig is teen alle gay mense wat hulle homoseksuele oriëntasie uitleef. Ek kan nie help om weer eens iets raak te sien van die heersende mening onder kerklui ten tyde van die Bybelvertaling nie, naamlik dat iemand homoseksueel mag wees, maar dit net nie mag beoefen nie - die verbod op die sg "praktiserende homoseksualis" (!) Vir die gewone Bybellezer lyk die saak baie duidelik en eenvoudig, nl dat daar nie plek vir gay mense in die hemel is nie.

Die werklike omstandighede

Baie Bybelkommentare is dit eens dat hierdie `n uiters problematiese teks is om te vertaal. Hier word twee Griekse woorde gebruik, nl malakoi ("sagte" mense) en arsenokoitai (letterlik: "man + beddens"). Malakoi kan beteken: sagte mans (wat alte gou geïnterpreteer word as vroulike mans!), maar dit kan ook doodgewoon in `n morele sin beteken, ruggraatlose mans sonder beginsels. Die woord arsenokoitai is egter `n woord waarvan die presiese betekenis totaal duister is. Dis `n woord wat slegs drie maal in die res van die Griekse literatuur aangetref word, wat meebring dat die presiese betekenis daarvan baie onduidelik is. Die gevolg is dan: soveel vertalers, soveel vertalings, waar die een maar deur `n ander een beïnvloed is! Vergelyk byvoorbeeld die Engelse vertalings: "those who are immoral with boys" - Jerusalem Bible; "sexual perverts" - Good News; "perverted" - Phillips; "perverts" - NEB; "sodomites" - RSV; "abusers of themselves with men" - Revised Version; "those who defile themselves with mankind" - Authorised Version; en "pederasts" - Interlinear Greek Testament. Hieruit moet dit net vir ons duidelik word dat daar geen eenstemmigheid oor die presiese betekenis bestaan nie. Wat wel uitstaan, is dat dit hier gaan oor losbandige praktyke en die prostitusiebedryf wat so welig getier het in die Romeinse beskawing.

Ons versoek

Die NAV verklap niks van die groot wolk van onsekerheid rondom hierdie teks nie, maar skep die indruk dat dit klinkklaar en duidelik is, dat praktiserende homoseksuele mense hel toe gaan! Hierteen moet ons beswaar aanteken en vra dat daar nie so `n definitiewe verwysing na homoseksuele persone gemaak sal word nie, aangesien die teks self dit nie so onomwonde noem nie! Ons wil versoek dat `n volgende Bybelvertaling iets van hierdie onsekerheid oor die presiese betekenis moet weergee. Vanweë die moeilikheidsgraad van hierdie Griekse terme, wil ek dit nie eers waag om `n vertalingsvoorstel aan te bied nie...! Dalk sou dit die wysste wees om liever glad nie te raai nie en hierdie woorde eerder weg te laat - maar met `n voetnota wat verduidelik dat daar twee woorde is wat weggelaat is vanweë hulle onduidelike betekenis. So nie, moet dit duidelik uitkom dat dit hier gaan oor losbandigheid en nie oor "mense wat homoseksualiteit beoefen" nie.

1 Tim 1:10

Die wanvoorstelling

"Mense wat homoseksualiteit beoefen" skep dieselfde probleem as in 1 Kor 6:9 - en dis trouens weer die Griekse woord "arsenkoitai" wat hier voorkom. Volgens die vertaling lyk dit asof iemand wat homoseksueel is, maar daarin slaag om selfbeheersing toe te pas en nie uiting aan sy/haar drange gee nie, "veilig" is (by God?), maar een wat (hardnekkig) voortgaan om dit te beoefen, is in die moeilikheid! Die vertaling skep die indruk dat die betekenis voor die hand liggend is en asof daar geen onduidelikheid oor die betekenis bestaan nie.

Die werklike omstandighede

Vergelyk dit met wat reeds by 1 Kor 6:9 gesê is oor arsenokoitai. "Man + beddens" kan verskillende dinge beteken. Ons moet aanvaar dat "beddens" `n eufemisme is vir seks, maar dan is dit nog geen uitgemaakte saak eers, dat dit gaan oor homoseksualiteit nie. Dit kan dui op manne (of mense) wat in verskeie beddens rondslaap as prostitute, maar die woord self gee geen aanduiding dat dit mans met ander mans is nie - dit sou selfs ook kon dui op die beddens van vrouens!

Ons voorstel

"Mense wat homoseksualiteit beoefen" is net eenvoudig té vêr verwyder van die Griekse woord "man + beddens". Waarvan ons wel seker kan wees, is dat dit hier gaan oor immoraliteit of seksuele losbandigheid en daarom stel ons voor dat die vertaling daardie aspek moet weergee - en nie die indruk by die oningeligte Bybelleser skep (soos in die NAV) dat ons hier `n duidelike verwysing na homoseksualiteit het nie.

Clobber texts

Problem formulation

Based on a few Bible texts many people are convinced that gay people are not acceptable to God, and that they have to forego their sinful lifestyle before they can be saved. However, what do some specific texts really say?

In March 2001 the Reforming Church formally requested the SA Bible Society to remove the term "homosexual", or any allusion to it from future translations of the Bible. We quote the justification for this request:

[Genesis 19:5](#) (parallel to [Judges 19:22](#))

The misrepresentation

Many people turn to the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative to illustrate what God's opinion is of homosexual people: he destroys them with fire and sulphur! As a result of the wording of Gen 19:5 the Afrikaans translation (NAV) reinforces the misconception amongst Afrikaans Bible readers that the Sodom story relates to homosexuality – "Where are your visitors? Send them out, so we can have sex with them!" (CEV). Readers will all interpret the word sex as an expression of the Sodomites' lechery – to which this text most certainly does not refer!

The real circumstances

This text does not refer to "intercourse" at all. In reality it is a frightening reference to mass rape!

The men of Sodom intended to intimidate and belittle the two "spies" who entered their city without invitation, by subjecting them to violent physical harm. According to the people of Sodom the two visitors entered the city after sunset, and were accommodated by Lot (himself still a foreigner in Sodom) in a clandestine way. Tribal wars and plundering were common occurrences in those days, and night visits by strangers were not tolerated. What the men of Sodom threatened to do, was undoubtedly a homosexual act, but this does not mean that they harbour a homosexual orientation. (To this day it happens that heterosexual persons engage in homosexual acts, but this does not necessarily imply that they have a homosexual orientation. This often occurs in prisons, but the moment they are released from incarceration they return – according to their true nature – their focus to members of the opposite gender). In this instance it is essential to differentiate whether the Bible refers to homosexual persons with a homosexual orientation, or whether it refers to heterosexual people who become involved in a homosexual act. It is evident that Gen 19:5 refers to the latter. The fact that Lot offered his daughters to the men of Sodom proves that Lot did not see them as homosexual men!

[Ezekiel 16:49](#) interprets the sins of Sodom as complacency, pride and the repudiation of destitute people (there is no mention of homosexuality).

Our request

The sentence "...so we can have sex with them" is deceptive and in no way represents the frightening threat (an imminent mass rape) which is inherent in the context of the text. To the modern reader this insinuates a perverse suggestion in which the men of Sodom wish to satisfy their carnal desires, whereas it does not deal with (homo)sexual overtures at all, but implies a brutal expression of power. Their intention was to punish, inflict pain and insult Lot's two visitors. As this is our view, we request that this verse be retranslated to indicate the underlying threat. A possible solution could be "We will teach them a lesson."

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

The misrepresentation

Surely this must be one of the crudest errors of translation (NAV) in the Afrikaans Bible . "...You may not have a homosexual relationship" [literal translation]. To the average Bible reader it would appear that God is directly addressing gay people, and that He is condemning them. As a result this verse is often employed to make gay people in a fixed relationship doubt the propriety nature of their relationship. Two deceptive terms are used in this Afrikaans translation, namely "homosexual" and "relationship". Neither of these terms appears, or is implied in the original Hebrew text.

The real circumstances

The "you" addressed in this verse is not directed at a gay person or couple, but at the average Israelite (man in the street). The translators made use of an anachronism by using the word "homosexual". This is totally inappropriate and it does not appear in the Hebrew text. The term "homosexual" was only coined and used in the human sciences towards the end of the eighteenth century. The original readers or audience of Leviticus would have had no idea of what was meant by "homosexual" or "heterosexual". Obviously, they must have been aware of sex between two people of the same gender, even if they didn't have terminology to label it. This phenomenon is as ancient as the hills! They did not however, have the sophistication in those early days to distinguish the fact that some people could be psychologically and physically attracted to members of their own gender. According to their frame of reference all people were "heterosexual", while some were capricious enough to desire sexual contact with their own gender. This "tendency", which must have been present in their society, is not mentioned or even suggested anywhere in the Bible.

The homosexual act referred to here, is a highly specific phenomenon and means of expression, which may NEVER be equated to the sociological appearance of human behaviour which today is known as "gay" or "homosexual". These are two highly diverse issues which have very little in common with one another other than the physical act.

This Leviticus text specifically addresses idolatry, as was practiced in the countries neighbouring Israel. The semantic flag in this verse is the Hebrew word *to'eba*, an exclusive cult word, which signifies that this injunction is aimed at cult practices. It is a work which expresses God's aversion, abhorrence and rejection of cultish practices. At the beginning of chapter 18 the teaching clearly indicates that it refers to the heathenish idolatry practices of Israel's neighbours. It expressly states that these methods may not be used as a way of worshipping God.

The heathen tribes worshipped their gods through incest, child sacrifices, bestiality and homosexual acts. In that context the homosexual acts committed had no relation to what we recognise as a "homosexual orientation". It was merely employed as cult activities, and as part of their worship of idols, and more particularly within their fertility rituals.

What is surprising is that these practices aimed at increased heterosexual fertility – and was totally unrelated to the homosexual orientation of people of the same sex who were attracted to one another. God's commandment is not aimed at homosexuality, but at homosexual practices as a means of idol worship aimed at a god. Stated differently, God did not want Israel to worship him in the same way in which the heathens worshipped their gods! This commandment is directed at idol worship – as is evident in the entire passage – and not against being gay or against a gay relationship!

Also: The Hebrew scriptures are directed at heterosexual men. In the new Afrikaans translation of the Bible the focus is shifted – and now is directed to gay men and gay women! This is a totally new approach that completely changes the original intention of Scripture, and as such is impermissible.

In the original Hebrew text there is no reference to a “relationship”, but this word has been adopted in the Afrikaans translation, and creates the impression that God objects to gay relationships. (It would appear that the generally accepted principle subscribed to by the Afrikaans ministry at the time of the new translation influenced them to the broadly viewed perception that the intrinsically homosexual person cannot be changed, but that it may not be practiced – and worse still- may not be couched in a relationship. They opine that such people should consider the feelings of others and live a celibate life!)

The Reforming Church encourages an ideal culture among gay people to try and form permanent relationships. The above text creates the impression that gay relationships are the worst form of sin, and should be avoided at all costs.

Our request

Please return to the more direct 1933 Afrikaans translation, and add a footnote, or a descriptor in the Glossary at the back in which it is made clear that the verse refers to cultish behaviour as a form of idolatry, and that it does not refer to a homosexual orientation.

OR

Another alternative is the dynamic equivalent translation method, where the meaning is transposed into a modern idiom, without detracting from the original meaning of the text. A possible interpretation could be: “Do not think that you can create communion with God by practicing exotic/extraordinary sexual deeds. Avoid any cult that supports such behaviour, because this is unacceptable to God.”

Romans 1:26 and 27

The misrepresentation

People often employ this text to try and prove that homosexuality is “against nature, abnormal, deviant and against the Creator’s plan.

The real circumstances

In this text the apostle Paul is not discussing homosexuality as a sociological phenomenon. He is commenting on the heathen idolatry which was a common practice in Rome. Similar to the situation mentioned in Lev 18:22, this exposition discloses the homosexual practices used as cult rituals in fertility practices. Again this is not a debate concerning people with a homosexual orientation who are attracted to others of a similar disposition, but refers to “heterosexual” people who practiced homosexual acts as part of their idol worship to induce fertility.

The semantic tags indicative of this argument are the mentioning of idols in verse 23 and reference to cultish practices such as “serve” and “worship” in the context of “they served and worshipped God’s creation instead of God” (Rom 1:25)

When studying Paul’s argument in the greater framework of the chapter it again becomes evident that he is not condemning homosexuality but idolatry.

Note the following: Paul starts by describing the heathen cult practices of the Romans and criticises them for always thinking up new ways to do evil (verses 28 to 30). He then turns to Jewish cults (2:1-29) and also harangues them for the evil fruits of their labours – in spite of their sanctimonious upholding of the law. The crux of his diatribe becomes evident in Rom3:21-22, where he states that God does not have Romans or Jews as his favourites, but that He redeems anybody providing they have faith. What Paul stresses here is that the sensual practices of the Romans have not brought

them any closer to the only true God, and likewise that the sterile legalistic worship of the Jews have not brought them closer to God. The only path to redemption is by faith in Jesus Christ (verse 22).

How then should we understand Paul's description of "actions against nature"? Many wish to interpret this as an offence against the law of creation. The Greek word for nature is *fusis* which clearly has the same meaning as the word used by him in 1 Cor 11:14, where he declares that it is against nature (*fusis*) and dishonourable for a man to wear his hair long! It seems that Paul uses the word synonymously with "norm" or "habit". The acceptable norm of the time was that women wear their hair long, and that men should wear their hair short. (If it only depended on nature, both men and women would have worn their hair long!) Paul's view of actions against nature implies actions that surprise or shock, as it is incongruous of the behaviour of some people, and therefore against their nature.

Keeping in mind that heterosexual people practiced homosexual acts as part of their fertility rites in the worship of their idols, we can now understand why Paul stated that they acted against their nature. A heterosexual man involved in a sexual act with a heterosexual woman is behaving according to his nature. When two homosexual people are sexually involved they are also behaving according to their nature! But when a heterosexual person commits homosexual acts (even if it should be with a heterosexual motive to become more fertile) it is shocking and most definitely against nature! Paul must surely have been shocked by what he frequently witnessed in the heathen temples of the Romans – "normal" men and women – against their nature – performing sexual acts with temple prostitutes of their own gender.

Our request

Please insert a footnote or an annotation in the Glossary to say that Paul did not condemn homosexuality (or people with a homosexual orientation), but that he condemned idolatry practices in which homosexual behaviour was utilized for fertility rites.

1 Corinthians 6:9

The misrepresentation

"...or behaves like a homosexual will (not) share in God's kingdom." This text seems to revile all gay people who live according to their sexual orientation. I cannot but notice that the clergy involved in the translation of the Bible seem to maintain that someone may be homosexual, but may not live accordingly – a ban on the so called "practicing homosexual"! The average reader of the Bible understands and accepts the concept that gays will not be welcome in heaven.

The real circumstances

Many Bible commentaries state that this is an extremely difficult text to translate. Two Greek words are used, ie *malakoi* (soft people) and *arsenokoitai* (literally man & beds). *Malakoi* can be translated as soft men (and this in turn may be interpreted as feminine men!) but this Greek word could also have the simple moral connotation of spineless men without moral fibre. The word *arsenokoitai* has a totally obscure meaning. This word is only found three times in Greek literature, and this makes the true meaning unclear. As a result, one can declare 'so many translations, so many meanings' in which the translation of one could be influenced by the next. As an example one can compare the English translations: "those who are immoral with boys" (Jerusalem Bible); "sexual perverts" (Good News Bible); "perverted" (Phillips); "perverts" (NEB); "sodomites" (RSV); "abusers of themselves with men" (Revised Version); "those who defile themselves with mankind" (Authorised Version); and "pederasts" (Interlinear Greek testament). These multiple translations make it evident that there is no consensus regarding the accurate meaning of the word. What becomes prominently clear is that

this verse addresses the dissipated behaviour and temple prostitution which flourished rampantly in the Roman society.

Our request

The Afrikaans NAV translation does not reflect the cloud of uncertainty surrounding this text, but creates the impression that the meaning is undisputedly clear that practicing homosexuals will go to hell! We strongly object to this approach, and request that no distinct reference be made to homosexual people, as the original text does not clearly do so! We wish the next Bible interpretation to indicate the uncertainty regarding the true meaning of the text. Due to the complexity of these Greek terms, I will not even suggest a possible solution to the translation! It may even be wise not to guess the true meaning of the words and to exclude them, with a footnote explaining their omission due to their obscurity. If this approach is not acceptable, it should be made evident that this passage addresses licentiousness and does not refer to "people that practice homosexuality".

1 Timothy 1:10

The misrepresentation

"...people who are sexual perverts or who live as homosexuals..." creates the same problem as the 1 Cor 6:9 text, and in reality it is again the Greek word "arsenokoitai" which is used here. The translation from the original creates the impression that someone who is a homosexual, but who succeeds in living a celibate life and not to accede to his/her primal urges will be "safe" (in God?), but anyone who (stubbornly) perseveres in committing homosexual acts will be in trouble! The translation suggests that this interpretation is clear cut as if there can be no doubt about it.

The real circumstances

Compare this pericope with the explanation given regarding arsenokoitai in 1 Cor 6:9. "Man + beds" can have several meanings. We may assume the word "beds" is used euphemistically to suggest sex, but even then it does not imply homosexuality beyond a shadow of a doubt. It could imply that men (or people) sleep in various beds as prostitutes, but the word itself does not indicate that it only means men in bed with other men – it could even refer to the beds of women!

Our suggestion

"People who live as homosexuals" is too far removed from the Greek word "men + beds". It is however, evident that this text addresses immorality and sexual promiscuity, and we would therefore suggest that the translation should reflect this rather than creating the impression among uninformed Bible readers (as in the CEV) that this is a clear condemnation of homosexuality.