

extant Greek literature. As a result, its literal meaning is difficult to determine; its etymological roots are "man-active-bed" or, perhaps, "lying-with-men," depending upon how you form the reconstructed roots. Since we have no other instances of its use anywhere in Greek literature, the question of its meaning beyond the bare bones of its etymology is wide-open for debate. For example, if **ἀρσενοκοῖται** refers to homosexuals why did Paul use such an obscure - indeed, otherwise unknown and possibly self-coined - term when there are multiple Greek words which were commonly used to describe various kinds of homosexual activity? For example, if homosexuality was intended, why did Paul not use the term **ἀρσενοκοῖται** (*arsenokoitai*), or "man-passive-bed," indicating a male who takes the inactive role sexually.

As for what **ἀρσενοκοῖται** actually means, there are several superior alternatives to the traditional translation of "homosexual" or "sodomite." It may, indeed, mean a male prostitute who takes the active role sexually, in which case what Paul would have been meaning was either a "hustler" or, more commonly, a "gigolo."

In short, while **ἀρσενοκοῖται** certainly references a form of sexual behavior, Paul's failure to use one of the common terms for general homosexual practice leads us to conclude that his intention is not general but, rather, specific. Just as the references to πόρνοι ("fornication") and μοιχοὶ ("adultery") are specific forms of sexual activity that violate the law, so also **ἀρσενοκοῖται** is a specific form of sexual activity that violates the law. Etymologically, it seems to reference a male who is sexually active in bed, which could just as easily reference a heterosexual male prostitute as a homosexual one. Perhaps the best translation for this word should simply be "male-prostitute," with the kind of male-prostitute being irrelevant (i.e., either kind would be abhorrent). This conclusion has the advantage of being in keeping with the context of both the 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy passages, as well as refraining from introducing into the text material which simply isn't there.

A further possible meaning for this word may be understood from within the context of Greek culture: pederasty. While foreign to the twenty-first century western-mind, during the first century it was not considered unusual for an older, respected and established man to take a young teen-age boy as his sexual companion.⁶ **ἀρσενοκοῖται** might be understood as a reference to the older male pederast in such relationships, though this is by no

⁶ While not unusual, it was nevertheless a practice which was ridiculed by many pagan philosophers and writers of the time.