

“How the Ancient Greeks viewed Pederasty and Homosexuality” by Tim Brinkhof, *Big Think*, January 13, 2013; “LGBTQ+ Holocaust Victims Remembered for the First Time by German Parliament” by Christopher Wiggins, *The Advocate*, January 27, 2023; *Christianity’s American Fate* reviewed by D. G. Hart, *The Wall Street Journal*, October 4, 2022.

Big Think’s publisher promises weekly essays on “what’s counterintuitive, surprising and impactful”. There’s nothing in this article that should be “surprising” to any well-informed biblical scholar. But it will enlighten those in the pews who buy into whatever illiterate preachers push as allegedly “proof texts” from Paul against all same-sex couples today.

Brinkhof, an articulate journalist of history, illuminates what so very many churchgoers have been misled to believe from their pulpits and from Religious Right publications on homosexuality and the Bible. That the ancient world’s “homosexuality” isn’t our days’ homosexuality, either by description or by interpretation needs to be understood and Brinkhof illustrates this with his references to ancient texts and historic art.

He discusses the different views on *pederasty* in different Greek city states. It was a common cultural phenomenon in Sparta, as a *tutorial relationship* between a boy at his reaching 12 years of age, and an older man as his mentor in many aspects of his life. This mentor acted as an additional father figure and the relationship expired when the youth became a man. However, over in Athens, this tutoring custom was outlawed. None of it, though, should be confused with what we know today as childhood rape or the trafficking in underage prostitution of youths for the financial gain of their pimps.

Paul was familiar with the ancient custom of same-sex rapes of defeated soldiers by those who’d defeated them, *insulting* them as “women” to be *used* for sex. This was not about today’s experience of homosexual orientation and seeking to address unchosen sexual orientation through a committed, loving relationship of a same-sex marriage.

The Advocate, America’s longtime LGBTQ+ periodical, publishes news that, for the first time, the German Bundestag honors LGBTQ+ Holocaust victims of the Nazis. The paper features a disturbing photograph of these prisoners wearing their identifying pink triangles on their stripped prison clothes as they’re marched to further Nazi punishment.

This latest Holocaust memorial in Berlin also noted post-war prejudice and continuing oppression that Germans endure for their homosexual and gender identities. Under the Nazis, these despised prisoners “were murdered, castrated, or used in horrendous medical experiments in concentration camps.” Barbel Bas, now president of the Lower House, said, in this remembrance: “The harshest fates were suffered by these many thousands of women and men who were deported to concentration camps as a result of their sexuality. Sometimes, on false pretexts. They found themselves on the very bottom rung of the so-called ‘camp hierarchy’ and were exposed to constant violence with absolutely no protection.”

Our most “woke” LGBTQ+ generation at today’s American private and public colleges, universities and at the very strictest of Bible Institutes, have no truly actual, experiential sense of what real horrors they *escaped* in all that they now *fear* as “homophobia” –

whether it was institutionalized under the deadly Nazi regime or under Communism in the USSR, Mao’s China or in North Korea today, or in the violence of Islam for centuries after centuries and down to today’s deadly Islamist terrorists all across the globe.

Hart is an articulate historian of religion and society at Hillsdale College. He sets the historical context by recalling: “When Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell Sr. were alive, people knew that the former, a poster boy for evangelicalism, was winsome, and the latter, a fundamentalist TV preacher and head of The Moral Majority, was not.” Today, as Hart rightly objects, “‘evangelical’ carries most of the baggage fundamentalists packed. In elite academic and media circles, white evangelicalism is often associated with Christian nationalism, white supremacy, misogyny and distrust of science.”

Reviewing a new book, *Christianity’s American Fate* by David Hollinger, a retired Berkeley professor, Hart faults Hollinger’s mix-up of “fundamentalist” and “evangelical”, noting that, “he begins by claiming, correctly, that fundamentalism was parent to evangelicalism. He leaves out that evangelicals tried to correct for fundamentalist cussedness with a kinder, gentler version of conservative Protestantism. Mr. Hollinger cannot accept that rebranding because 81% of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump in 2016”. Actually, Trump’s “religion” is *his own takeaway* from the *very liberal* “religion of positive-thinking” by Norman Vincent Peale. Even Ike’s 1950s rival, liberal Unitarian, Adlai E. Stevenson, well-nailed Peale by saying, “I find [the Apostle] Paul appealing, but Peale, appalling.” As Hart discerns Hollinger’s misreading of Trump’s “religion”, there’s also Hollinger’s misreading of his “evidence of evangelical toxicity”.

Hart perceives, in Hollinger’s book, a “surprisingly wooden analysis from a historian with an impressive record of explaining America’s intellectual elites”. Hart notes that Hollinger “recommends cosmopolitanism and warns readers about Christians who lack it.” Again, Hart picks up on a *politically correct elitism* of these self-styled “woke” who must always, at whatever cost to themselves or to others, distance themselves from all the alleged “evangelicals”, while honestly misunderstanding or deliberately caricaturing them. But what else is new! It’s all there, throughout the history of Christianity. As Jesus cautioned his first disciples, he cautions us today: “I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. So be as cunning as snakes, but as innocent as doves.” (Matt 10:16)

