Post-Exilic Judaism denied physical love between David and Jonathan as well as other possible positive Old Testament allusions. In part because of a great number of variants in its Septuagint version, Samuel is textually difficult; attempts to emend הָודֵי (I, 20:30) to show that Saul cursed Jonathan as "the hetairos [passive partner] of the son of Jesse [David]" and to prove that David and Jonathan "kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David spent" [I, 20:41] by reinterpreting הַגַּדַּל from "exceeded" (in emotion) to "ejaculate" do not convince most scholars, although I 18:1 and 26 do at least imply homoeroticism, if not homosexual acts, between the heroes.¹

Several passages in the Old Testament refer to קדֵשִׁים ("holy ones") who were male temple prostitutes (I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, II Kings 23:7). Despite repeated campaigns to root them out, these prostitutes continued to serve their male clients for at least four centuries of Israel's existence, flourishing for a time in a wing of the Jerusalem Temple itself. Scholarly interpretations seeking to link them with some kind of generalized Near Eastern sacralization of sex as fertility are problematic since union with them by other males (their only plausible clientele) was by definition sterile. . . . On one occasion they are referred to as "dogs" (Deut. 23:18), an appellation paralleled in Semitic texts from other regions. Some scholars employ the Greek term ἱεροδολόοι for both the male and female temple prostitutes.²
Sometime after the return from Babylon in 538, priests and scribes split between what may be crudely characterized as aristocratic, Hellenized, but on some points literalist, Sadducees and allegorical, moralistic, "bourgeois," nationalistic Pharisees. Probably as early as the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt in 167 and probably by 142 when the Hasmoneans came to power, though there are no clear references before c. 100, those parties formed. Neither questioned the Torah's "multiply and be fruitful;" both felt that their controlled heterosexuality, ritual punctiliousness, and other virtues ranked them above corrupt, contaminated Gentiles. For the Essenes, a lower-class fringe group, we have no clear reference by name before Josephus and Pliny the Younger, although some Dead Sea scrolls date as early as the second century B.C. Philo Judaeus (c. 20 B.C.-c. 45 A.D.) did mention the "therapeutae" who seem to be of similar philosophical persuasion but of a higher social class. More chaste and self-righteous than either of the leading schools, Essenes and despairing poor including those around John the Baptist demanded stricter morals, perhaps summed up in the Sermon on the Mount's admonition against even lusting after sex, and put their faith in an imminent Messiah who would end their tribulations. In some ways Jesus may have been sterner than the Pharisees he attacked and the Sadducees who judged him:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew, 5: 27-28)

All Jewish sects condemned sodomy, partly to set themselves off from Gentiles, and subscribed to the Holiness Code's death sentence for "men who lie with men:"

According to the Holiness Code of Leviticus (in its present form, probably of the fifth century B.C.), "If a man also lie with man-kind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination (tō'ēḇāh): they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." (Leviticus 20-13, reinforcing the earlier prohibition in 18:22). From this dire injunction, which applies to male homosexuals only, stem all later Western laws prescribing the death penalty for sodomy. Although our sources are silent as to how frequently the Levitical penalty was enforced (the
method was probably stoning), it was endorsed, with new arguments, by some later Jewish rigorist thinkers, notably Philo of Alexandria (first century of our era). . . . The aversion of the religious leaders of the Jewish community after the return from the Babylonian captivity to the "abominable customs" of their heathen neighbors, combined with the Zoroastrian prohibition of homosexual behavior, inspired the legal novellae added to the Holiness Code of Leviticus in the fifth century before the Christian era that were to be normative for Hellenistic Judaism and then for Pauline Christianity, and the designation of homosexual relations as an "abomination" or an "abominable crime" in medieval and modern sacral and legal texts echoes the wording of the Old Testament.³

By the time of Ezra in 458 all interpreted Sodom and Gomorrah as well as the outrage at Gibeah homosexually.⁴ Talmudic sages worried that Jews might be infected by this sin so common among Gentiles, especially Greeks, but casuistically required two witnesses to a warning before the act, thus rendering conviction virtually impossible. No record exists of stoning or other executions for sodomy although in such a polygamous society with slavery and segregation of women it must have been rife even among the non-Hellenized majority.

REACTION TO HELLENIZATION

After the onset of Hellenization in 332, priests and scribes split between what may be crudely characterized as aristocratic, Hellenized, but on some points literalist, Sadducees and allegorical, moralistic, "bourgeois," nationalistic Pharisees. Probably as early as the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt in 167 and probably by 142 when the Hasmoneans came to power, though there are no clear references before c. 100, those parties formed. Neither questioned the Torah's "multiply and be fruitful;" both felt that their controlled heterosexuality, ritual punctiliousness, and other virtues ranked them above corrupt, contaminated Gentiles.

In the Hellenistic era, Judaism split into sects. The aristocratic and Hellenized Sadducees were given to a literalist interpretation of the Pentateuch, which after its reworking, ascribed to Ezra (f.c. 458) had become normative for the Jewish community. The moralistic, nationalistic, and "bourgeois"
Pharisees, if that term can be applied to the Judea of the second century, allegorized scripture. An elite group among them also Hellenized. Their sons even frequented the gymnasium established by Jason, brother of the conservative High Priest Onias III, near the Temple in Jerusalem with their foreskins sewn back together (\(1\) Maccabees X:XX). Those parties probably existed as early as the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt in 167--sparked by opposition to the Hellenizing policies of the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes--and almost certainly by 142 when the Hasmoneans (a dynasty sprung from the Maccabees, descendants of the rural priest Mattathias, who had led the uprising against the Hellenizers) took advantage of Roman protection to form an independent state, the kingdom of Judea, known as the Second Commonwealth. Neither party questioned the Torah's injunction to "Be fruitful and multiply;" both believed their marriage-oriented heterosexuality, ritual punctiliousness, and above all their worship of the one true God to rank them above the Gentiles who worshipped false gods and goddesses and wallowed in shameful and degrading vices of which pederasty was one of the most heinous. Although certain Hellenized Jews in Alexandria and Asia Minor frequented gymnasia and probably indulged in Greek-style pederasty, who tended to marry for the first time at 18 girls of 15, Jews approved polygamy and harems replete with concubines as well as wives. All Jewish sects, including later and lesser splinter groups such as the Essenes, rejected and condemned male homosexuality in accordance with the provisions of the Holiness Code.

**THE MACCABEAN UPRISING**

A year after his accession, Antiochus IV (176-164) appointed as high priest Joshua (or Jesus) who Hellenized his name to Jason and to turn Jerusalem into a polis named Antioch. As impecunious as all Seleucid sovereigns since the Peace of Apamea in 188 imposed tribute to Rome upon them, he built a gymnasium, introduced Greek dress and customs, and tried to suppress everything Jewish. Elite youths had their foreskins resewn to exercise nude, since considered the worst act of apostasy. The high priest paid for sacrifices to Hercules at Tyre. His brother outbid him by offering to collect more tribute for Antiochus. Riots and massacres ensued after the .

In 175 B.C.E. Judean priestly and lay nobility, eager to enjoy the benefits of Hellenistic civilization, seized on the ascent to power of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (God-manifest) as the occasion to carry out a "reform." They first had the High Priest Onias III's brother Joshua, who assumed the Greek name Jason, depose Onias by purchasing the high priesthood for himself by offering Antiochus considerably
more than the usual tribute of 300 talents. Jason then offered Antiochus another 150 talents for "permission to establish by his authority a gymnasion and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. . . . He at once shifted his country-men over to the Greek way of life" (2 Macc. 4:9-10; see also 1 Macc. 1:13).

Thus Jason and the reform party transformed Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city named Antioch (in honor of the ostensible "founder," Antiochus IV). They organized the citizen-body, probably recruited from the upper priestly families and gentry interested in "modernizing" the society. The establishment of a gymnasion and an ephēbion were essential to the city's Hellenistic constitution. These provided education appropriate for the training of young men for participation in the citizen-body, according to the usual Greek pattern. The gymnasion was built directly under the citadel on the temple hill itself. "The noblest of the young men" were induced "to wear the Greek hat" (the sun hat symbolic of Hermes), and "the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar. Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling arena after the call to the discus, disdaining the honors prized by their fathers and putting the highest value upon the Greek forms of prestige" (2 Macc. 4:12, 14-15). Hellenizing Jews ashamed of the symbol of their traditional covenant with God, now embarrassingly evident when they participated in the games naked, sought to "remove the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant" (1 Macc. 1:15).  

Soon after at the small town of Modein northwest of Jerusalem, the aged priest Mattathias slew the Seleucid officer who had raised a pagan altar and the Jew who complied with his order to sacrifice at it. The rebels against the "abomination of desolation" fled to the hills. Mattathias' four sons led by Judas took charge, called Hasmoneans after the old priest's grandfather or Maccabeans after Judas "the hammer" or "the hider," the etymology being a bit uncertain. Forced by Rome out of Egypt, which he had just almost overrun in hopes of bolstering his fisc,
the embittered Antiochus pillaged the Temple in 168, razed the walls, and ensconced a garrison of Greeks and Hellenized Syrians in a citadel erected near the Temple which was consecrated to the Olympian Zeus to whom swine's blood was offered on the altar. The Torah was burnt and harlots were introduced to the Temple in which a statue of Zeus was erected. Unable to suppress the Jewish revolt because he was busy fighting the Parthian uprising, Antiochus sent against Judas generals who failed and in any case retired upon his death (164).

Judas liberated Jerusalem, demolished the gymnasium, and cleansed the Temple, rebuilding it exactly three years after its desecration, but he could not dislodge the garrison. In the confusion surrounding the accession of Demetrius, Jason managed to consolidate his power by making peace with the Hasidim, the "pious party" who had at first opposed his insistence on fighting on the Sabbath and a treaty with Rome.

**INDEPENDENCE OF JUDEA UNDER ROMAN PROTECTION**

In 142 Judas's brother Simon secured independence by capturing and demolishing the citadel and dates began to be reckoned from "the first year of Simon, High Priest, commander and leader of the Jews." After his son John Hyrcanus (135-105) had resisted renewed Seleucid incursions and gained finally their alliance, he converted the Idumaeans, bringing prosperity but quarrelling with the Pharisees who condemned his combination of the high priesthood and temporal power. His sons' support of the Sadducees provoked Pharisaic criticism. Pompey intervened in the bitter succession dispute of his sons and sacked Jerusalem, slaying twelve thousand including the priests at the altar. Neither Gabinius nor his successor Crassus who plundered the Temple could restore order. In 51, thirty thousand Jews were enslaved for supporting the Parthians. Judea suffered in the wars between Caesar and Pompey.

An unusual amount of city building and a big influx of Greeks aggravated tensions in Palestine; parasitic cities preyed on Jewish peasants. From the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt, which was never really stamped out, poorer Jews persisted in fighting their Hellenized upper class as well as their Greek masters. After the Maccabees, who at their height ruled an area comparable to modern Israel, succumbed in 63, the Romans installed the repressive Herod in 41, reducing the size of his kingdom and favoring the Greek cities over the Jewish countryside.

Talmudic sages worried that Jews might be infected by a sin so common among Gentiles, especially Greeks, but casuistically required two witnesses to a warning before the act, thus rendering conviction virtually impossible. No record exists of stoning or other executions for sodomy although in such a polygamous society with slavery and segregation of women it must have been rife even among the non-Hellenized majority.

In the same year, 1855, two significant events occurred. Jacob Bernays published in the first volume of the Jahresbericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars «Fraenckelscher Stiftung» in Breslau an article which proved that the poem of pseudo-Phocylides was a Jewish forgery of the first pre-Christian or the early part of the first Christian century. This didactic work, which condemns not only male homosexuality but also lesbianism (v. 192), shows that Hellenistic Judaism was already extending the prohibitions of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 by analogy to female homosexuality. At the same time Adolf Hilgenfeld, writing in Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, 25: 453, concluded that Romans 1:18-32 was absent from Marcion's text of the epistle and that the passage, which makes no mention of Christ or the Church, was in all likelihood a Jewish diatribe against idolatry interpolated in toto into the Pauline work.

A further contribution of Judaism in the Hellenistic period to the evolution of homophobia was its emphasis upon the particular heinousness of sexual immorality. The Judaism of the intertestamental period held that God was long-suffering with all sins except sexual ones [supply footnote indicating Jewish sources]. This belief implied that homosexual activity was not just an offense to the deity, but by inciting his wrath an immediate threat to the continued existence of the community. Such a mentality led inevitably to the strictures of Justinian in his Novellae 77 and 141, and to the paranoid conception of homosexuality that finds echoes down to the twentieth century, when judges have formally ruled that even trivial homosexual acts should be punished because of the "social danger" which they represented-- a classic instance of the conversion of religious beliefs into quasi-sociological justifications of intolerance.

Not only did Judaism intrude its distinctive sexual morality into the Hellenistic world, Greek-speaking Jews even created a new terminology with which to stigmatize reproved and forbidden conduct. Pagan Greek authors had contrasted aselges (abstract aselgeia) for active sexual misconduct with akathartos (abstract akatharsia) for passive behavior, in line with the active/passive dichotomy that formed the semantic grid of their thinking; but Hellenistic Judaism redefined pornos "male prostitute" and porneia "prostitution" to subsume both categories, which Christian Latin (the Latin used by Christian authors from the close of the second
century onward) then rendered by fornicator and fornicatio, whence English fornication. It is under these designations that one should look for condemnations of homosexuality in later authors, even if such words as paiderasteia, malakia or tribades are nowhere to be found. The Judeo-Christian tradition had to create a whole new terminology with which to stigmatize prohibited sexual activity; it was not inherited from the pagan authors or even from vulgar Greek or Latin speech (though some descriptive terms are taken from the language of astrology), and remained foreign to pagan Greek and Latin authors down to the end of antiquity. Thus the line of semantic innovation is Biblical Hebrew > Jewish Hellenistic Greek > New Testament Greek > Christian Latin, which evolved in the Middle Ages into what is commonly called Church Latin and in turn shaped the terminology of sexual morality in the vernacular languages of Western and Central Europe.

In the Hellenistic Diaspora, within three generations Greek had become the native language of the Jews who settled in the newly founded colonies, and not only did they translate the canonical texts of their religion into Greek, but they even composed new ones modeled upon the earlier scriptures, often in a pastiche of the translation Greek of the Septuagint. These writings in Greek were ultimately rejected by the Synagogue, but they were adopted in part by the nascent Christian Church, and even those books which the Catholic Church repudiated as inauthentic continued to be copied and translated well into the Middle Ages, as shown by versions in such languages as Ethiopic, Armenian and Church Slavonic that in some instances preserve a lost Greek original. The so-called apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the intertestamental period are classic instances of the naiveté and credulity of the religious mind, as they were ascribed to authors who supposedly had lived many centuries earlier and could scarcely have known Greek--to Solomon, to the patriarchs of Genesis from the twelve sons of Jacob back to Enoch, even to Adam himself. That the primitive Christians could even momentarily have taken them to be genuine attests to the simplicity of their faith.

Rejected in toto by the Protestant theologians after the Reformation and excluded from Protestant editions of the Bible from the eighteenth century onward, these extracanonical writings were increasingly neglected even by modern scholarship, so that in the 1935-45 period there was virtually no study of them. Then the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947 and the Gnostic papyri at Nag Hammadi in 1946 revived interest in the documents of the intertestamental period, with the result that Canon Derrick Sherwin Bailey collected passages from them in his work. Largely dependent upon an English translation of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha published in 1913, Bailey was as helpless and uncritical in interpreting these texts as he was at almost every step and turn in his diatribe, but his work marked a beginning in an area that merits further and more competent investigation.
The Sibylline Oracles is a collection of apocalyptic writings forged in Greek hexameter verse in imitation of the heathen Sibylline books by Jews and later by Christians in their efforts to win heathens over to their faith. A passage written between 163 and 45 B.C. in Egypt, declares that the Romans "will launch on a course of unjust haughtiness. Immediate compulsion to impiety will come upon these men. Male will have intercourse with male and they will set up boys in houses of ill-fame and in those days there will be a great affliction among men" (III, 183-87). The same work contrasts the Jews favorably to all other nations: "They are mindful of holy wedlock, and do not engage in impious intercourse with male children, as do Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Romans, specious Greece and many nations of others, Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing the holy law of immortal God, which they transgressed" (III, 595-600). The Greeks are singled out for particular reproach: "Avoid adultery and promiscuous intercourse with males" (II, 762-64).

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah also contributed to the development of the taboo on homosexuality. Originally a geographical myth explaining the barrenness and salinization of the area surrounding the Dead Sea, it underwent a process of growth that can be explained only by the association of ideas which such a phenomenon evoked in the mythopoetic consciousness of the ancients. The core of the legend is the notion of sterility, which evoked two etiological explanations: punishment for inhospitality and for sexual depravity. Jewish sages reiterated the story that the plain surrounding the Dead Sea had once been a lush garden with superabundant vegetation, but that in their prosperity the Sodomites refused all hospitality to those who set foot on their territory and were justly punished by the destruction of their city, whose territory was turned into an eternal wasteland.

But the notion of sterility also evoked the myth of retribution for sexual immorality, with the lex talionis decreeing that those who had "wasted their seed" in non-procreative acts should be punished by the eternal barrenness of their land. It is impossible to say just when each of the two interpretations of the aition of the destruction of Sodom began. It is certain only that the geological phenomena on the shores of the Dead Sea existed in the thirteenth pre-Christian century, when the invading Israelite tribesmen were beginning their conquest of Canaan, and that the Old North Arabic-speaking Bedouin roaming the eastern and southern periphery had an etiological legend that purported to explain them. Judaic rejection of the customs of the pagan Greeks focused on their distinctive sexual practices, first and foremost of which was pederasty. This antagonism brought the sexual motif to the fore in the Maccabean era as attested in the book of Jubilees, 16:5-6 (composed between 163 and 140 B.C., but preserved in full
only in an Ethiopic translation):

And in this month the Lord executed his judgments on Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Zeboiim, and all the region of the Jordan, and he burned them with fire and brimstone, and destroyed them unto this day, even as I have declared unto thee all their works, that they were wicked and sinners exceedingly, and that they defile themselves and commit fornication in the flesh, and work uncleanness on the earth. And in like manner God will execute judgment on the places where they have done according to the uncleanness of the Sodomites, like unto the judgment of Sodom.

This is the first text in which destruction by fire is named not just as the punishment of the Cities of the Plain, but as the fate of any commonwealth that encourages or even condones homosexual activity in its midst.

Elsewhere the book of Jubilees asserts (20:5-6):

And [Abraham] told [his sons and grandsons] of the judgment of the giants, and the judgment of the Sodomites, how they had been judged on account of their wickedness, and had died on account of their fornication, and uncleanness, and mutual corruption through fornication.

And guard yourselves from all fornication and uncleanness, And from all pollution of sin. Lest ye make our name a curse, And your whole life a hissing. And all your sons to be destroyed by the sword, And ye become accursed like Sodom, And all your remnant as the sons of Gomorrah.

Yet another work paralleling the story of the Deluge and the Sodom legend is the Testament of Naphtali, which forms part of the so-called Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, a Hellenistic work compiled in Greek from earlier Hebrew and Aramaic sources, some of which figure among the Dead Sea scrolls. The book purports to be a collection of testaments left by the twelve sons of Jacob inspired by their father's deathbed blessing in Genesis 49; early recognized as a forgery, it was excluded from the Old Testament canon of the Church, but continued to be copied and read, as it is preserved in the original and in Armenian and Church Slavonic translations. With a complex history that includes both Jewish and Christian interpolations, the Greek
version of the text probably reached its final form only in Christian circles in the middle of the second century. It had embroidered the Biblical episode to read:

The Gentiles went astray and forsook the Lord, and changed their order and obeyed stocks and stones, spirits of error. But ye shall not be so, my children, recognizing in the firmament, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created things, the Lord who made all things, that ye become not as Sodom, which changed the order of nature. And likewise the Watchers also changed the order of their nature, whom the Lord cursed at the flood, on whose account he made the earth without inhabitants and fruitless. These things I say unto you, my children, for I have read in the writing of Enoch that ye yourselves also shall depart from the Lord, walking according to all the lawlessness of the Gentiles, and shall do according to all the wickedness of Sodom" (3:3-4:1).

Almost comically, the second allusion is to one of the unambiguously polytheistic episodes of the primal history embedded in the text of Genesis (and acutely embarrassing to the medieval Jewish commentators because it was the prototype of the union of the Holy Ghost with Mary which in the logic of Christian theologians conferred upon Jesus two natures, the divine and the human), which is here turned into a denunciation of paganism. The two catastrophe myths of Genesis, the universal deluge and the conflagration apocopated to a mere four cities in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, are here paralleled in accordance with the Jewish tradition that ascribed common elements of depravity to both (later Jewish tradition and commentary blamed both on sexual misconduct, among other sins). That the Testament of Naphtali directly inspired the passage in Romans 1:18-32 beginning "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven" is proven by the Greek words that connect the two episodes in both: homoios de kai, attested in all manuscripts of the pseudepigraphic text of Naphtali but corrupted to homoios te kai in some New Testament witnesses.

The other source of the passage in Romans is a denunciation of idolatry in Wisdom of Solomon (14:12-27), a work composed in Hebrew but expanded in its Greek version, which became part of the Apocrypha:

For the devising of idols was the beginning of fornication, And the invention of them the corruption of life. Among the evils flowing from the worship of idols are:
Defiling of souls, confusion of sex,  
Disorder in marriage, adultery, and wantonness.  
For the worship of those unnameable idols 
Is the beginning and cause and end of every evil.

Thus Judaism not only condemned homosexual behavior, but identified it as a vice resulting from paganism and idolatry, in particular the myths of the Greek and Roman gods and their pederastic love affairs, a notion that has perplexed modern commentators on Romans who are unable to grasp the logic by which the author derives from heathen religious practices what is to them self-evidently a biological or psychological phenomenon.

In conclusion, Hellenistic Judaism supplied four sources of homophobia to the later Christian tradition:

1) The emphasis which it placed upon the particular heinousness of sexual immorality, which had been wholly foreign to the Greek religious mentality;

2) The creation of a new Greek vocabulary with which to stigmatize homosexual and other tabooed erotic behavior;

3) The uncompromising condemnation of male homosexual activity, which it judged worthy of the death penalty and ranked just below murder;

4) The reinterpretation of the Sodom legend to stress the homosexual depravity of the inhabitants as the sole and sufficient motive for the supernatural destruction of the city.

All these themes found expression in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha and in the writings of Philo Judaeus and Josephus Flavius, which, composed in Greek, even though repudiated and forgotten by the Synagogue, formed part of the legacy of Hellenistic Judaism to the nascent Christian Church.

These findings leave no doubt whatever that Judaism had already anticipated in full the later Christian stance toward homosexuality, generalizing the prohibition and exemplifying its divine sanction by the destruction of Sodom. Other texts in the first-century authors Philo Judaeus and Josephus Flavius--the second of whom was writing for pagan readers--confirm this analysis: Judaism formally condemned all sexual expression outside of lawful marriage, even holding that marital intercourse should be solely for the purpose of procreation. There was nothing left for St. Paul or St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas to invent: the complex of beliefs was inherited by Christianity from Hellenistic Judaism at the very moment that the new faith separated to become an independent religion.
This unbroken crescendo of texts undermines the claim of Canon Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Father John McNeill and Professor John Boswell that Christianity was not intrinsically homophobic at its origin. Nothing could be further from the truth. By the end of the Hellenistic period Judaism not only uncompromisingly condemned male homosexuality, but ranked it on a par with murder; and this understanding of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 entered the constitution of the primitive Church. Only the weakness and political marginality of the early Christian communities prevented them from enforcing their moral judgment by law, though very likely within their own ranks they promptly excommunicated individuals whom they discovered to be guilty of "unnatural vice."