

became exclusively, much less rigidly, leather. Most gay men, from all social strata, now went periodically to all bars. Hence, below surface differences, the bars of the seventies actually were more alike than they had ever been before. That fact represented the major change the decade brought, a loss of focus for the gay community. When Dixie's closed and Lafittes in Exile installed disco music, there ceased to be centers of the city's gay life; it lost its stratification to become diffuse and disorganized.

By contrast the gay pride movement in New Orleans proved notably effective, especially its political arm. In 1977 the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club grew out of a somewhat older gay literary salon called the Gertrude Stein Society and began political lobbying. In 1982 the GSDC gave way to NORCO, the New Orleans Regional Chapter of the Louisiana Gay Political Action Committee. NORCO has succeeded in electing a number of city council members and state legislators sympathetic to gay rights and in influencing gay rights ordinances and legislation.

Other aspects of the gay pride movement, for reasons directly traceable to the city's general lifestyle and its public culture, had both somewhat less as well as considerably more success than their founders hoped. *Impact*, the gay newspaper established in 1977, has, save for the brief period it was edited by Jon Newlin, never made a dent on the city's largely non-reading public. A new publication aimed at gay Christians is called *The Second Stone*. But gay parades and public drag contests, designed to pique, instead delighted the local population who simply coopted them and turned them into new civic festivals. "Southern Decadence," for example, a drag parade originated in 1974 as a protest march, is today the center event of the New Orleans Labor Day celebration.

The main effects of the AIDS epidemic of the eighties on the New Orleans scene have been the diminution of

drugs and the associated lifestyle, the disappearance of most public and bar sex, and the closing of most, but not all, bathhouses. There has been no official suppression, and gay life continued quite public, especially in the Quarter. Young people were markedly few on the public gay scene, and bars became more social and more entertainment-centered than at any time since the 1950s. Live music and even food again made their appearance in gay bars, whose patrons reflected the highest female-male ratio seen in over thirty years.

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NEW TESTAMENT

Consisting of twenty-seven short writings, the New Testament forms the second part of the Christian Bible. The first part of the Christian Bible, the Hebrew Bible or **Old Testament**, is considered authoritative by Jews, but the New Testament is not. Apart from this, the New Testament does have some value as a source book for the history of both the synagogue and the church, although a great part of it is of dubious merit as historical source material because it amounts to a series of testimonials of faith.

The Gospels. The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, with which the New Testament begins, are not biographies of Jesus but statements of belief. Mark, the earliest, was written as homiletic material to the new church in Rome, Matthew as a tract to convert Jews, Luke as a tract to convert Greeks, and John as a pseudo-gnostic treatise to win the pagans of the Orient, positing Jesus as the True Light of the world. Though the historical school would assign these gospels to the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, all four may have been composed as late as the time of Hadrian (117-138), as they begin to be mentioned and quoted only in the third quarter of the second century, and are recognized by all Christendom only in the last quarter. To take any one of them as an accurate life of

Jesus is to misunderstand them from the outset, though some of the information about Jesus may be accurate. He is depicted as an itinerant preacher, faith healer, and miracle worker who wandered through Judea, Galilee, Syria, and Trans-Jordan in the reign of Tiberius, when the prefect of the province of Judea was Pontius Pilate. He was accompanied by a small group of devoted followers of diverse social backgrounds, some with extensive property, others marginal types in the eyes of Pharisaic Jewry, the inner circle of his disciples being entirely male, but with some devoted women in their entourage.

The four gospels record Jesus as making no statement that focused explicitly on homosexual behavior or rendered a judgment in favor of either the Jewish or the Hellenic attitude toward it. The omission of this narrow area of sexual morality in no way means that he had no moral judgment on such matters. His statements on adultery and divorce (Matthew 5:27–32) and on that which “defileth the man: . . . adulteries, fornications . . . lasciviousness” (Mark 7:20–23) imply no weakening or abrogation of the code of sexual morality recognized by both Palestinian and Hellenistic Jewry, but instead a higher standard of morality that goes far beyond the conventional Judaic one; it is not just overt acts, but even thoughts and intentions that are condemned and banished from consciousness. Even if one takes the Sermon on the Mount to be a new ethical standard meant only for the elite of the proto-Christian community in contrast with the ritual and ceremonial observances minutely prescribed by the Old Testament for the priests and Levites—the elite of the old covenant—it still urges a broadening rather than a narrowing of the sexual taboos in the Holiness Code of Leviticus. The word *racha* in Matthew 5:22 may be a vulgar loanword (from Hebrew *rakh*) in Hellenistic Greek signifying the passive-effeminate homosexual whom both Jew and Gentile held in contempt; the meaning of the passage would then be that not

simply physical aggression and violence, but even verbal insults directed at the masculinity of the addressee are forbidden by the higher morality of the new faith.

Other Aspects. The Christian tradition as we now have it, however, must have been purged by James the pious brother of Jesus, who took charge of the infant church soon after Jesus' death and held onto it until he himself was executed (ca. 44). He would hardly have let anything salacious about the relationships of the earliest apostles survive. The same is true of Paul of Tarsus, a Jew who came upon the Christian scene about six or seven years after the death of Jesus and reshaped the new sect largely according to his own thinking, in the process writing about two-fifths of what later became the canonical New Testament. Letters attributed to him number thirteen, although several of these (I–II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, and Ephesians), should be called pseudo-Pauline, for to attribute them entirely or at all to him raises numerous critical objections that are not easily answered by the traditional arguments.

There are explicit references to the morality of homosexual acts in Romans 1:26–27, I Corinthians 6:9–10, and I Timothy 1:9–10. The first is often mistakenly understood as the sole reference to lesbianism in the Bible, but is in fact a reinterpretation of the sin of the “daughters of men” who had intercourse with the “sons of God” (= fallen angels) in Genesis 6:1–2, 4, echoed in Testament of Naphtali 3:5, an *intertestamental* writing. The opening statement that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” (Romans 1:18) shows that the whole passage is a commentary on the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom, in both of which Paul sees retribution for violations of the natural order. There is no reference in the passage to the sexual behavior of Paul's Roman contemporaries, though implicitly the conduct of the gentile world is excoriated as transgressing the Judaic norms.

The passage in I Corinthians

6:9–10 is modeled on the Decalogue: those who violate its precepts will find themselves excluded from the Kingdom of God. The words *malakoi*, "effeminate," and *arsenokoitai*, "abusers of themselves with mankind," signify the passive and active partners in male homosexual relations respectively, rephrasing the explicit condemnation of both in Leviticus 20:13, which Philo Judaeus and Flavius Josephus alike show to have been universally upheld in the Judaism of the first century. The reference in Timothy parallels the one in Corinthians, with the same catalogue of evil-doers who are deserving of ostracism and punishment. For fundamentalists the sanctions expressed in these passages are absolute and beyond question, while the liberal Christian would seek to "reinterpret the Bible in the light of contemporary knowledge," and the gay Christian advocate must use every exegetical stratagem at his disposal to excise the offending texts from the canon of authority.

Apart from this standard group of three passages, the references to "dogs" in Paul and in Revelations 21:8 and 22:15 are probably not allusions to the *kelebh*, the Canaanite and Phoenician hierodule who prostituted himself in honor of Astarte. The story of the Centurion's servant in Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10 may suggest a pederastic relationship, since the servant "who was dear (*entimos*) unto him" may have been both orderly and bed partner. But the emotional or physical overtones of the tale are less important than Jesus' remark that "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," which foreshadows the conversion of the Roman Empire alongside the rejection of the new faith by Jewry. The "beloved disciple" in the Gospel of John alone is sometimes, usually not in a pious vein, asserted to have been a youth for whom Jesus' love was tantamount to a Greek pederastic attachment of the mentor to his protégé.

An eighteenth-century manuscript recently discovered and published by Morton Smith includes a passage that

refers to the "young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body," amplifying Mark 14:51–52, with the innuendo that Jesus had an homoerotic relationship with this otherwise mysterious disciple as well.

So the New Testament references to homosexuality fully echo the Judaic origins of primitive Christianity, even if the customs of the Hellenic world occasionally emerge from the backdrop of the narrative. These passages indicate that the primitive Church implicitly ratified Leviticus 18 and made its strictures part of its own constitution (Acts 15:20, 29). In due time the sexual morality of Hellenistic Judaism, interpreted in a rigoristic and even ascetic manner, became normative for Christian civilization.

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NEW YORK CITY

Settled by the Dutch in 1624 and acquired by the English in 1667, the New York colony (unlike most other American colonies) lacked the character of a religious haven; its emphasis was overtly commercial from the start. After American Independence (1783), the city became the major port of entry for millions of immigrants, chiefly European, some of each ethnic group staying behind to establish the city's cosmopolitan society. Given this demography, it would be expected that its gay subculture would be largely European in type, as it was—though with significant modifications for local conditions. In