

knew that the ancient astrological tradition stemming from Ptolemy held that this conjunction caused men to be attracted more to boys than women. Thus the tendency was not the product of a whim, but was foreordained by cosmic forces. However this may be, because of his fame and the changing temper of the times in which he lived, Michelangelo experienced unique pressures on his sexual self-understanding. These pressures are linked to—though they cannot explain—the special intensity of his art, the *terribilità* for which he is renowned.

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MIDDLE AGES

The Middle Ages constitute the major phase of European history that stands between classical antiquity (Greece and Rome), on the one hand, and the Renaissance, on the other. The beginning of the Renaissance can be placed with relative precision in fifteenth-century Italy, whence the new outlook spread in the following century to the rest of Europe. The other boundary, the end of classical antiquity, cannot be pinpointed, as the change was a gradual process beginning in the third century of our era and not completed until the fifth or even later. Moreover, to understand the formation of the Middle Ages it is necessary to look back even earlier: to the origins of Christianity. Inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ, the church did not achieve firm institutions until the latter half of the second century. At this time one can confirm the separation from Judaism, the consolidation of the canon of writings known as the New Testament, the crystalization of a system of governance based on bishops as presiding officers, and a growing roster of martyrs created by

official persecution—in attacks which were to have the ultimate effect of strengthening rather than smothering the church.

The Patristic Period and the Official Recognition of Christianity. From this time onwards comes a large body of exegetical tracts and theological disquisitions known as the Patristic writings. Taken as a whole, these texts tend to confirm the ascetic morality of the New Testament. In those rare instances where they depart from rigorism, as in relaxation of the ban on visual images, there was extensive and heated controversy, with both sides strenuously maintaining their positions. In the case of sex between males, no such debate occurred, a silence signifying that the matter needed no discussion, for the negative judgment of homosexuality enshrined in the Levitical prohibitions was incorporated in the constitution of the primitive church and reinforced by New Testament passages condemning sexual activity between males in particular and all forms of sexual depravity and impurity in general. Occasionally, the Fathers do attack the corrupt morals of pagan pederasty, warning their own flock not to yield to temptation.

The transition from the toleration and indifference which the pagan ancient Mediterranean world had shown toward homosexuality to the implacable intolerance and social ostracism of the later Middle Ages could not have been effected overnight. Apologists for Christian rigorism would like to begin *in medias res*, claiming that "the Church taught, and people universally believed" that homosexual behavior was a crime against nature for which an act of divine wrath had destroyed Sodom and the neighboring cities. But this Jewish legend embellished with Hellenic moralizing was only gradually inculcated into the mass mind, particularly in countries outside the classical world and ignorant of Palestine and its geographical myths.

Constantine the Great's Edict of Milan (313) transformed Christianity from

the faith of an embattled minority to what amounted to a state religion. Heretofore, the Roman empire had known no general antihomosexual legislation—the shadowy “Scantinian law” notwithstanding. In 342, however, the emperor Constantius issued a somewhat opaque decree making male homosexual conduct a capital crime. This enactment was followed in 390 by a more unambiguous antihomosexual statute, decreed by Valentinian II, Theodosius the Great, and Arcadius. It was Theodosius who consolidated the Christianization of the Roman empire by banning all competing faiths other than Judaism.

At the same time the ascetic ideal became diffused throughout Christian society, as monks took over leadership of the church, replacing the cultivated aristocracy that had earlier predominated. A key feature of asceticism was the exaltation of virginity for both men and women. Two polemical writings of St. Jerome, *Against Helvidius* (ca. 383) and *Against Jovinian* (ca. 393), advance arguments that condemn marriage altogether. Though St. Augustine and others modified this position, an aura of the less than ideal hung over even the limited acceptance of marriage for procreation only, and celibate monks and nuns became the culture heroes of the new society. Meanwhile Christian monasticism took shape.

Byzantium. The reign of Justinian (527–565) is remembered as a highwater mark of antihomosexuality. Of two novellae (new laws) referring to sodomy, one accuses the perpetrators of bringing on famines, earthquakes, and pestilences. Incorporated into the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, the great codification of Roman law undertaken at Justinian’s behest, they lent official sanction to the superstitious fear of the homosexual as a Jonah figure. Justinian’s court also made political use of charges of homosexual conduct to blackmail or discredit opponents, particularly of the Green circus faction. Needless to say, these measures did not stop same-sex activity in the ensuing centuries. A num-

ber of Byzantine emperors themselves are believed to have been homosexual, including Constantine V (741–775), Michael III (842–870)—who was murdered by his lover—Basil II (976–1025), Constantine VIII (1025–1028), and Constantine IX (1042–1055). Research is needed to document homosexuality in other sectors of Byzantine society. It is known to have flourished in the monasteries, and was an undoubted feature of urban life. There was also an interface, particularly in the later centuries, with Islamic homosexuality.

The So-Called “Dark Ages” in the West. In Western Europe the year 476 is the traditional date for the end of the Roman Empire, which was succeeded by barbarian kingdoms controlled by monarchs and gentry of Germanic origin. In their northern European home some Germanic tribes had prohibited certain types of homosexuality. According to a much-discussed passage in Tacitus “cowards and shirkers and the sexually infamous (*corpore infames*) are plunged in the mud of marshes with a hurdle on their heads” (*Germania*, 12), but close analysis of this passage shows that the Latin terms paraphrase Old Norse *argr* and that the text as a whole refers to cowardice in battle, not sexual conduct in private life. In apparent continuation of this tradition the medieval Scandinavians associated passive homosexuality with cowardice, subsuming both under the aforementioned epithet *argr*. In the fifth century when the Vandals took possession of Carthage in North Africa, they supposedly suppressed effeminate homosexuality with great brutality.

Despite this background, however, the barbarian kingdoms showed relatively little interest in antihomosexual legislation. The Germanic penal codes that replaced Roman law in territories detached from the Western Empire make little mention of homosexual conduct and have no term that in any way corresponds to the later notion of sodomy. Exceptionally, in seventh-century Visigothic Spain a particularly severe regime persecuted Jews

and subjected homosexuals to the novel penalty of castration, clearly under the influence of inchoate canon law. Charlemagne (768–814), otherwise distinguished for his impressive program of administrative and cultural reform, contrived only to repeat the old prohibitions in a routine manner. The church, in the hands of manor-raised sons and brothers with little spiritual calling, was weak and ineffective.

What would appear to be the most important legal document from Western Europe in the period 500–1000 is in fact a forgery. Yet forgeries are sometimes even more revealing of the climate of opinion than authentic documents, for they express what their devisers would *like* the case to have been. A capitulary, supposedly issued by Charlemagne in 770, was actually written by one Benedict Levita about 850. The author shows interest in a number of sexual offenses, including sodomy. Apparently for the first time, he explicitly connects the penalty of burning at the stake with God's punishment of Sodom. A novel element is his ascription of the Christian defeat in Spain to the toleration of sodomy—echoing the old Germanic preoccupation with cowardice, but also anticipating the role of the sodomite as a scapegoat for all of society's ills and misfortunes, from earthquakes to reverses in battle.

More significant for the long run was the church's innovation of the penitential system for chastising sins according to their gravity. For the early Christians, still anticipating the imminence of the Second Coming, to commit a sin was an ineradicable blemish for which one must suffer the full dire penalty at the hour of Judgment. In time, however, the church began to modify this severity. In exchange for a specified penance the sinner could wipe his or her slate clean. This major change seems to have begun in the Celtic Church, from which we have the first main body of manuals, the Penitentials. These books assigned penalties in ascend-

ing order of severity ranging from simple kissing through mutual masturbation and interfemoral connection through oral and anal intercourse. They made due allowance for the age of the partners and occasionally mentioned lesbian behavior. The penalties vary considerably, from as little as 20 to 40 days' restriction of liberty for mutual masturbation to as much as 7 to 15 years for sodomy itself. We know little of the way these procedures worked in practice, but a certain amount of "plea bargaining" probably occurred. While the death penalties remained as part of inherited Roman law (civil as distinct from canon law), they do not seem to have been much imposed, if at all, in the early Middle Ages. With much of the countryside unconverted and unadministered, it would have been difficult to enforce draconian measures. The laws and regulations of this period are virtually the only source for the occurrence of homosexuality; no surviving documents record the disciplining or punishing of an individual or group of individuals by ecclesiastical or secular courts.

The Carolingian empire, poor and weak because Muslims controlled the Mediterranean and shut it off from world trade, collapsed when Charlemagne's grandsons warred over their portions of the legacy. Meanwhile, invaders came from all sides: Saracens by sea from the south, Magyar horsemen from the east, and, worst of all, Northmen from Scandinavia who, as their epics and sagas mostly written in thirteenth-century Iceland reveal, had their own form of homosexuality. Wreaking the worst devastation on Ireland and England, which like Normandy they eventually conquered and settled, the Northmen came in their long boats to ravage western Europe. The later Carolingians and their local officers, the counts, could not cope with the disintegrating empire. Consequently local strong men, barons, built wooden castles and manned them with knights, the new heavily armored horsemen developed by the Carolingians. A baron domi-

nated the neighborhood from his rough castle, where he lived with his knights and squires, who often slept on pallets around the big center room, with the baron and his lady enjoying separate quarters. Commonly before 1000, knights did not marry, living rather like cowboys of the Old West in the one big room, occasionally seducing serving wenches, peasant girls, and inexperienced nuns. Such opportunities notwithstanding, a good deal of "situational homosexuality," especially between the knight and his squire, must have taken place. Evidence of such involvements is fragmentary, but it can be gathered among the Anglo-Norman, Northern French, and Provençal nobility, as well as among German royal families (witness Frederick II).

The Central Middle Ages. After 1000 an extraordinary economic advance in Western Europe spurred the growth of towns and educational institutions. Especially during "the Renaissance of the twelfth century" a remarkable body of homosexual love poetry in Latin reflects a highly sophisticated literary culture of a restricted upper crust. No evidence indicates that the text circulated generally among even the small community of the literate. Moreover, classical literary commonplaces and allusions suffuse this medieval Latin poetry. While it would be wrong to dismiss the texts as mere literary exercises, they cannot be regarded as direct and candid reflections of experience either. In addition, a tradition of effusive **friendship** among monks should not be confused with avowals of sexual passion. One is confronted then with what must be termed gay literature, but one that allows few conclusions about gay life in general.

Yet other less beguiling evidence survives. A passage from a late twelfth-century British historian, Richard of Devizes, gives a glimpse of a homosexual subculture that coexisted in medieval London with other marginalized elements of society, while Walter Map, an Englishman who had studied in Paris, complained of homosexuality there. In keeping with

the German proverb "City air makes one free," the towns were increasingly the refuge of individuals uncomfortable living elsewhere. The migration of gay men and women to urban centers had begun. The new conditions of town life probably inspired the enactment of new sodomy legislation, beginning with that of the Council of Nablus in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1120.

The authorities after 1000 became very interested in religious deviation or heresy. Perhaps the most formidable of these spiritual movements of dissidence was Albigensian dualism, which flourished particularly in the south of France. This heresy was believed, not altogether wrongly, to have come from the Balkans, from the Bulgarian Bogomils in particular. Their French persecutors applied the term *bougre* (*bulgarus*; bugger) to them, and by extension to heretics generally, from the beginning of the thirteenth century, which saw the establishment of the papal **Inquisition**. The association of heresy with sodomy, a recurring feature from this point onwards, gave *bougre* an additional meaning, that of sodomite. In English this sense has usurped the older one of "heretic," though the term is also used for heterosexual anal intercourse and for sexual relations with animals. Yet another medieval transformation gave *bougre* the meaning of **usurer**, someone who lent money at prohibited rates of interest. The attacks on the heretics are major historical exemplars of the orchestration of popular fears and prejudices by clerical and lay authority to punish actual deviation and to cow the rest of society into continued submission. The most notorious instance is Philip the Fair's repression of the **Templar Order** for heresy and sodomy in the early fourteenth century.

To the disciplining and purification of the people assured by the "two swords" of church and state corresponded a regimentation of higher knowledge, symbolized by the Scholastic movement. The best known figure in this trend is

Thomas Aquinas, whose *Summa Theologica* (1266–73) remains an imposing point of reference. As is well known, Aquinas created a new synthesis by weaving Aristotle together with the Patristic corpus, imparting to the whole a transcendent sense of order which compels comparison with the great Gothic cathedrals. Aquinas' classification of unnatural vice was to have resounding influence over the centuries. After a brief mention of masturbation, he divides unnatural intercourse into three kinds: with the wrong species (bestiality), the wrong gender (homosexual sodomy), and the wrong organ or vessel (heterosexual oral and anal intercourse), and declares that such sins are in gravity second only to murder.

If a certain degree of toleration or indifference to homosexuality had prevailed previously, after the end of the thirteenth century the individual known to have engaged in homosexual activity was both a criminal and an outcast, without rights or feelings that church or state needed to recognize in any way. Not to denounce and persecute him meant complicity. The penalties for homosexual activity between males (rarely between females, and then only when an artificial phallus was employed) ranged from compulsory fasting to confinement in irons, running the gauntlet, flogging with the cat o' nine tails, the pillory, branding, blinding, cutting off the ears, castration, and perpetual banishment. The death penalty prescribed by Leviticus was rarely enforced, but when it was, it took the form of hanging or burning at the stake. Some of the inhuman punishments of the Middle Ages lingered into the early nineteenth century, when the reformers of the criminal law secured their abolition by denouncing them as survivals of superstition and fanaticism.

The Later Middle Ages. In the fourteenth century the medieval synthesis began to break down, signaled by a climactic struggle between the papacy and the secular authorities. The only major

innovation in official attitudes toward homosexuality was a gradual shift to enforcement by the secular authorities, beginning in such Italian cities as Florence and Venice, which had become sensitive not only through their growth and diversity, but also through greater appreciation of the literary heritage of classical antiquity, permeated with pederasty. Even king Edward II of England was overthrown and murdered because of his homosexuality. What effects the Black Death (1348–49), Europe's greatest epidemic, may have had on sexuality are unknown, but the Jews, already persecuted since the Crusades, were made scapegoats. Certainly a vital urban subculture of homosexuality was alive at this time, though one catches only fleeting glimpses of it in the literature. With the coming of a new secular spirit in the Renaissance more detailed records of the life and attitudes of homosexual men and women finally emerge.

The disapproval of homosexuality in Western Christian civilization is the last and most pertinacious survival of medieval intolerance, one for which the church would now gladly disown responsibility, even while its political supporters do everything in their power to keep the archaic statutes on the books and frustrate liberal demands for the acknowledgement of gay rights. Even the medieval attitudes have not totally lost their respectability—witness the undisguised hatred and contempt which many display without compunction in regard to homosexuals, when they would be ashamed to avow such feelings toward members of religious communities other than their own. So the homophobia of today is a part of the "living past"—of the persistence of the beliefs and superstitions of the Middle Ages in the midst of an otherwise enlightened successor civilization.

See also Capital Crime, Homosexuality as; Common Law; Law, Feudal and Royal; Law, Germanic; Law, Municipal; Papacy.

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MILITARY

The relationship between homosexuality and the military profession is a complex and paradoxical one. The modern stereotype of the homosexual male as lacking in manliness is utterly belied by the masculine character of the traditional warrior who is also passionately attracted to his own sex. Instead of diminishing the warlike nature of the tribe, this tendency immensely strengthened its valor and endurance. The homoerotic bond fostered ideals of heroism, courage, resourcefulness, and tenacity among the warrior caste, and exalted these virtues to the apogee of public honor. Such was the case among the Dorians of ancient Greece in the seventh century B.C. and among the Samurai of feudal Japan.

Ancient Greece. The virile and warlike Hellenic tribes, migrating southward into the Peloponnesus and to the island of Crete, institutionalized the custom of *paidēasteia* (literally "boy-love"). This custom meant the love of an older warrior for a younger one, who corresponded to the squire or page attending the medieval knight. The attachment was always conceived as having an element of physical passion, sometimes slight, sometimes dominant and all-engrossing. If it originally designated the heroic devotion of comrades to each other, it was later extended to the more spiritual relationship that prepared a boy for intellectual life and for public service to the *polis* (city-state), and also to the unabashed sensuality recorded in the twelfth book of the *Greek Anthology*.

In Sparta and in Crete it was customary for every youth of good character to have his lover, and every educated and honorable adult was bound to be the lover and protector of a youth. The connection was intimate and faithful, and recognized by the state. The citizen of Sparta was a professional soldier throughout life; his landholding, cultivated by helots, assured him a sufficient income to devote himself to his obligations to the state. The Spartan form of pederasty was imprinted with virility, with male comradeship, and with fidelity; the physical aspect was secondary, though rarely absent. At home the youth was constantly under the gaze of his lover, who was to him a role model and mentor; on the battlefield they fought side by side, if need be to the death, as in the inscription commemorating the battle of Thermopylae: "O stranger, tell the Lacedaemonians that we fell here in obedience to our country's sacred laws." The pederastic spirit guarded the cradle of Western civilization against the Oriental despotism that a Persian victory would have imposed on the Hellenes.

Whether or not a formal abduction of the youth by his lover took place, the institution of military comradeship spread far and wide among the Greeks, and immense importance accrued to what was regarded as a cornerstone of public life, a recognized source of political and social initiative, an incentive to valor, an inspiration to art and literature, and a custom consecrated by religion and divine sanction. The ethos of the ruling caste was inculcated by pederasty, so that Pausanias of Athens could solemnly declare that the strongest army would be one composed entirely of pairs of male lovers. Stories of the heroic feats of such couples testify to the profound concern which the Greeks felt for the subject. The heroism of the Sacred Band of Thebes, organized on Pausanias' model, who perished to the last man in the battle of Chaeronea (338 B.C.) while fighting against the huge army of