

talist and Christian Democratic opposition and seem to have entered a deadlock. As neither Christian Democrats, Liberals, nor Socialists have a majority in parliament, no party is able to enforce its views. Christian Democrats, though in agreement with such legislation, want exceptions to be made for schools and other institutions of a Christian character, exceptions which are unacceptable to the other parties. Equally frustrated have been attempts to lower the age of consent to twelve or to grant gay couples the right to adopt children.

Long considered to be the only representative of homosexuals and lesbians in the Netherlands, the COC nowadays is no longer the only gay and lesbian organization. Homosexuals and lesbians have organized in gay and lesbian caucuses in professional groups such as in health care, teachers' and civil servants' unions, in the police forces and the army, in religious groups, groups of elderly people and youths. Special groups or organizations have been set up for gay and lesbian (mental) health especially in regard to AIDS, and against anti-gay and -lesbian violence. At three universities (Amsterdam, Utrecht, Nijmegen) it is possible to take courses in gay and lesbian studies or research. Dutch universities organized two of the world's major gay and lesbian academic events: the "Among Men/Among Women Conference" in 1983 (University of Amsterdam) and the "Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality? Conference" in 1987 (Free University, Amsterdam).

In the eighties the Netherlands entered the AIDS era. This crisis seemed to reinforce the taboo on anti-homosexual expression, as a result of a widely-proclaimed compassion toward AIDS victims. In AIDS prevention, the gay and lesbian movement has become a negotiating partner of the government, carrying out a policy of restraint.

Despite all this progress, anti-gay violence seemed to increase; the Netherlands joined other countries in their hys-

teria about child abuse and incest, creating an exceedingly dangerous atmosphere for pedophiles and homosexuals alike. Moreover, question marks should be put beside some of the government's efforts to support gay and lesbian emancipation, since they are also used to control homosexuality in a heterosexual manner. Despite these shortcomings, the Netherlands continues to point the way to true homosexual emancipation.

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## NEW ORLEANS

This major port (population ca. 600,000) at the mouth of the Mississippi River was founded in 1718 as capital of the French colony of Louisiana. Sold to the United States in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase, New Orleans has long ranked as a major gay center and mecca for homosexuals from all over the American South.

Two main factors fostered the early development of New Orleans' exceptionally large gay community and continue to shape that community's unusual contours: the city's cosmopolitan character and its French heritage. To the diverse, largely male, French, Spanish, German, Indian, and African populations (including Jean Lafitte's pirates) assembled during the port's colonial decades, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries added successive, and still largely male, waves of Americans, Irish, Italians, Jews, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Filipinos, Latin Americans, still more French, and most recently a number of Vietnamese. And from its French colonial

period, New Orleans also inherited a high degree of racial, ethnic, and social toleration; a certain almost feminine *gentillesse*; a sure urbanity; and a distinctive public culture that still sets it apart from other American cities.

*The Nineteenth Century.* In the nineteenth century the lower strata of New Orleans' day-to-day illicit sex world centered, as in many other ports, on the waterfront, as well as in the grog shops and upstairs rooms of the French Quarter's Gallatin Street that ran along the wharves behind the French Market. The waterfront bars catered, from the beginning, to an unusually high number of Greek seafarers brought to the port by the Mediterranean trade patterns inherited from the city's French and brief Spanish (1763–1800) period. Such Greek bars even today remain heavily mixed, straight and gay.

A cut above the nightly grime of Gallatin Street, a number of public dance halls, called "ballrooms," catered to a sexually, racially, and socially mixed assortment of masked revellers. Each winter season these masked balls also became centers of the city's most famous, and traditionally its most sex-oriented, public festival, *Mardi Gras*.

The top stratum of nineteenth-century New Orleans gay society, while it might periodically drag through Gallatin Street and the ballrooms, more often frequented cafés, theatres, and restaurants. Unlike the rest of the United States, where bars, theatres, and restaurants remained largely rough male preserves, New Orleans, from the beginning, afforded respectable women the pleasure of attending. Consequently these institutions took on, in New Orleans, a gentle character, in the French mode, combining restaurant, bar, and coffee house, often along with music, into a neighborhood café. Moreover, New Orleans perpetuated the close connection the French had long made between food and sex. From their inception in the 1830s and '40s, great restaurants always had a series of private dining rooms upstairs,

each equipped not only with the usual dining furniture but, *de zigueur*, also with an ample and armless couch. The *intime* dinner and the *déjeuner galant* became, and remain today, fixtures of New Orleans social-sexual life for the affluent of all orientations.

At the same time, the institution of *plaçage* (the keeping, by many white men, of free women of color as mistresses) found a parallel, albeit small by comparison, in some white men's keeping of free black youths as lovers. The latter practice continued after the abolition of slavery, more often than not with a black lover disguised as a manservant in a bachelor white man's house.

*From the Turn of the Century to World War II.* At the opening of the twentieth century, Gallatin Street died as a waterfront, crowded out by an expansion of the French Market's food stalls. New Orleans' new "monkey wrench corner," as sailors traditionally called the center of any port's tenderloin district, became lower Canal Street and the first blocks of Decatur, Chartres, Exchange Alley, and Royal streets, which run from Canal into the French Quarter. On these seedy blocks seamen's bars, pool rooms, penny arcades, and cheap hotels proliferated, and hustlers and prostitutes abounded, even as they do today.

Prohibition had little effect on heavy-drinking New Orleanians. Cafés kept their liquor under the bar instead of on top of it, and served it in coffee cups instead of glasses. Otherwise the city's social-sex life continued virtually as before. In addition to the national trends of the 1920s, the major changes the Prohibition decade saw were: (1) a largely homosexual nightspot, mixed male and female, operated as a sort of gay speakeasy in an apartment of the Lower Pontalba building, facing Jackson Square; (2) the fad of private "ether parties" involving that substance along with marijuana and cocaine; and (3) the rise of literary and theatrical circles that had heavy homosexual components.

Theatre devotees gathered at a small restaurant in the Upper Pontalba building that continued into the 1960s as Dottie Reiger's Alpine Café. The chief literary circle formed around Lyle Saxon and his black lover, whom Saxon fictionalized in his last work, *The Friends of Joe Gilmore*. Victor's Café, situated at the Chartres/Toulouse corner which had earlier been the site of the House of the Rising Sun (the city's most famous prostitution parlor, which gained international reknown when an old blues song about it became a worldwide hit after being recorded in 1964 by Eric Burdon and the Animals), became the literary circle's watering place.

With the end of Prohibition in 1933, bar-restaurants immediately blossomed in New Orleans. The heavily mixed (gay and straight) James' Beer Parlor on Royal Street at Toulouse became such a favorite with gay men and women that its corner remained the chief gathering place for gay people to watch nighttime Mardi Gras parades until these processions ceased entering the Quarter in 1972. A number of other bars also developed sizable gay components in the 1930s, most notably Mom's Society Page on Exchange Alley, Pat O'Brien's on St. Peter Street, and the Old Absinthe House on Bourbon Street.

The nineteenth-century masked ball tradition continued in the decayed form of shows featuring transvestite female impersonators, especially in black bars, of which the Dew Drop Inn off Louisiana Avenue uptown and the Caledonia Inn on St. Philip Street just outside the Quarter were the most celebrated. Both drew considerable white patronage, straight as well as gay. And by the late thirties, drag shows at the Wonder Bar and the My-Oh-My Club on the Lake Charles marina had become two of the city's most frequented tourist attractions. In the long view, the era's most important contribution, the architectural restoration of the French Quarter and its official recognition as an historic district, was spearheaded,

and has since been maintained, largely by the city's gay community.

During World War II, gay activities increased in New Orleans as in other American cities. The pool halls, poker rooms, and bookie joints that lined lower Canal Street functioned as easy pick-up spots, and any number of small hotels in the vicinity, such as the Teche, by then decayed from their former elegance, served as convenient trick parlors. Jackson Square in the middle of the Quarter, a jungle of overgrown vines, trees and shrubs at the time, became an all-night cruising ground, and the public men's room across the street in the French Market achieved national notoriety as "the blue grotto." The leader of one of the thirties' most famous all-girl orchestras opened Dixie's Bar of Music on St. Charles Avenue, a straight bar but favored by female and male gays as well. Exchange Alley added Wanda's Seven Seas and Mack's Oyster Bar to its collection of hustler dives.

The postwar forties saw the opening of the Starlet Lounge at Chartres and St. Philip streets and of Tony Bacino's on Toulouse near Bourbon; both remained infamous for a decade. In the front room of Bacino's a bartender called the "White Roach" and black pianist and singer Ginny and Gracie entertained a mixture of tourists and locals under the eye of black doorman "Tune," while in the slave-quarter bar to the rear, across the patio which connected via typical narrow passageways to neighboring bars, an outrageous French-speaking Cajun drag queen called "Candy Lee" regaled a largely gay crowd with coarse humor. And a few blocks away on the corner of Bourbon and St. Philip, the Café Jean Lafitte opened in an old blacksmith shop to become one of the most elegant gay bars in the country, though it continued, as did all New Orleans bars of the period, to have many straight patrons as well.

*The Postwar Period.* When authorities closed the poker halls and bookie

joints of lower Canal Street in the 1950s, their back-room sexual activities moved into several old cinema theatres, by then reduced to showing bawdy films: the Avenue Theater on St. Charles, the Globe, the Tudor, and the Center on Canal, and the Gaiety in the Quarter. At the same time, Exchange Alley's House of the Fencing Masters, a rough bar commonly called Ivan's after its owner, inherited some of the spillover. Air travel in the fifties also greatly increased the city's daily number of tourists and the annual Mardi Gras crowds. Dixie moved her bar into the Quarter, at Bourbon and St. Peter, and it, along with the Café Lafitte in Exile, which moved from the blacksmith shop to the corner of Bourbon and Dumaine, became the twin hubs of gay life, with exclusively gay patronage. New black bars such as the Golden Feather on St. Bernard Avenue and the Dream Castle on Frenchmen Street also sprang up. At the same time the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the city's nearby beach resort, developed gay bars such as the Cafe Ko-Ko and Charley's Hideaway, but they remained, like the black bars in New Orleans, a straight-gay mix.

The increased crowds of the 1950s not only forced a certain anonymity upon individuals, but also caused bars to dispense first with food service and later with live entertainment, both long their hallmarks. These changes had two profound effects on the city's gay life. Without food and entertainment to bind them together, male and female homosexuals began to drift apart, and a few lesbian bars opened, the earliest ones on the Tchoupitoulas Street waterfront uptown, well outside the Quarter. Sheer numbers also produced the phenomenon of bar sex. The 1957 Mardi Gras crowds in Dixie's developed small groping circles that suddenly became daisy-chains, the idea of which, despite Dixie's and other bar owners' efforts to stop it, rapidly spread. Before 1960 such "public" sex was a commonplace in New Orleans gay bars, precursors by over

a decade of the orgy rooms that became a national fad in the 1970s.

The baby-boom generation reached its twenties in the late sixties and seventies and their presence multiplied the number of gay bars and baths in New Orleans, as elsewhere. Establishments followed the sixties' bifurcated sense of style: urbane elegance on the one hand and hippy hedonism on the other. But in New Orleans the two mixed more than elsewhere, for the **Counterculture's** emphasis on freedom of choice and street life found easy accommodation in New Orleans' traditionally tolerant attitude and festival culture.

Dancing, for example, which had never before been part of the New Orleans gay bar scene, became common, if only briefly, for dancing was traditionally so much a part of the city's daily life that gay natives saw no advantage to having it in their ever more crowded bars.

The unusual mix of the 1960s produced one particularly notable bar, Las Casa de los Marineros at the corner of Decatur and Toulouse. Beginning in the fifties as a Latin American seaman's bar, it nightly assembled in the sixties an extraordinary collection of artists, intellectuals, street people, gays, workers, college students, and young society couples, to become a remarkable microcosm.

The 1970s saw another enormous jump in the number of gay bars and the New Orleans version of coming out of the closet. By 1980 the city had nearly thirty gay bars, almost all within the one square mile constituting the Quarter, an average of a bar every third block. Even the Greyhound Bus station sported a gay bar, black and wild. And the local bars reflected something of the segmentation of the gay community that was occurring nationally, but with a difference. The specialization that characterized bars in other American cities during that decade remained in New Orleans a cosmetic difference. Leather bars, for example, never

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.

*Lucy J. Fair*

## 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