SODOMA SUBVERTITUR — The destruction of Sodom.
12th century mosaic , Palatine Chapel, Norman Palace, Palermo, Sicily.

Religious Roots of the Taboo on Homosexuality:

A Materialist View

by John Lauritsen

Preface to the 2012 electronic edition

The original 1974 publication of this monograph was an 8.5 by 11 inch pamphlet, which I printed myself on an AB Dick offset press at Come! Unity Press in New York City. Come! Unity Press was a quasi-anarchist collective, which insisted that every publication printed there be free to anyone who could not afford the cover price. For *Religious Roots* that was 75¢. All of us who used the press had to learn how to make plates, run the press, and bind our publications. I did the typesetting on a manual typewriter; there were no personal computers then, and professional typesetting would have been too expensive. Although never advertised or distributed commercially, *Religious Roots* sold several thousand copies. It was translated and published as a pamphlet in German (*Religiöse Wurzeln des Tabus der Homosexualität*).

Religious Roots has been superseded by my 1998 Pagan Press book, *A Freethinker's Primer of Male Love*. * Since 1974 my political thinking has changed, as well as my writing style — I no longer throw out such words as "bourgeoisie" or "class struggle". Nevertheless, I am happy to republish the pamphlet. From time to time people ask me if copies are still available, and I have to tell them that I have only three copies left — for myself. *Religious Roots* has historical importance, in that it helped bridge the new Gay Liberation movement and the older Freethought and Atheist movements. On the basis of this pamphlet, I was asked in 1974 to write an article for the venerable British monthly, *The Freethinker*, which since then has published many of my writings.

For this electronic publication, I have changed none of the words. Below, the outside and inside front covers are followed by the text. As an addition to the original appendix, I have added images of 12th century mosaics depicting the destruction of Sodom, which are in or near Palermo, Sicily, where as a young man I lived for half a year. These are followed by the inside and outside back covers.

— John Lauritsen, Boston 2012.

RELIGIOUS ROOTS

OF THE

TABOO ON HOMOSEXUALITY

A MATERIALIST VIEW

BY

JOHN LAURITSEN

DEATH OF PAN

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE MONEY, THIS PAMPHLET IS FREE TO YOU
SEE INSIDE COVER.

JUSTICE

THROUGH

SCIENCE !

[This is a much expanded version of a presentation made in New York City on 24 February 1974 to the Scholarship Committee of the Gay Academic Union.]

I. The Problem Defined

In almost every state, anti-homosexuality statutes describe the prohibited acts with such phrases as: "unnatural intercourse", "unnatural crimes", "infamous crime against nature", and "the abominable and detestable crime against nature".

In opposition, the Gay Liberation movement has put forward the slogan, "Gay is Good!"

And in today's *Times* (4/24/74) an article by Robert Gould in the magazine section, "What we don't know about homosexuality", describes division in the ranks of the psychiatric profession over the semantics of classifying homosexuality. The shrinks are in a tizzy over whether it should be called a mental illness or merely a "sexual orientation disturbance", and a few brave souls even feel there may be *nothing* wrong with it.

Basic questions are involved here — questions we must understand thoroughly and be able to answer correctly and persuasively if we hope to advance the struggle for homosexual rights. We must be able to present a reasoned analysis backed up by facts when we argue that the legal definition of homosexual acts as "unnatural" and the medical or psychiatric labelling of homosexuality as an "illness" are totally false.

The Robert Gould article quite dishonestly conveys the impression that we know almost nothing about homosexuality. The impression is given of a mysterious phenomenon requiring probably an extraordinary explanation to account for its occurrence.

Actually, we know a great deal — more than enough to say confidently that *there is nothing wrong about homosexuality*. It is not "unnatural". It is not a disease.

Homosexuality occurs because it is a component of the healthy human animal, not because of hormonal imbalance, psychic hermaphroditism, childhood traumas, bad genes, societal decadence, or any other such aetiological foolishness.

Our position that homosexuality is entirely all right is backed up by the

combined evidence of many disciplines, the most important being history, anthropology, statistical research, and studies of one sex-groups. I'll not go into this material, though I'd urge anyone who's not familiar with it to catch up with his/her homework. **(See Appendix, Bibliography.)**

Today I am going to focus upon the anti-homosexuality taboo itself. I'll use the word "taboo" in a broad sense to comprise the antihomosexual attitudes, myths, and practices of our culture as a whole.

For analytical purposes, the taboo is easier to see in historical perspective than is homosexuality itself. Whereas homosexual love has been practised in all societies of which we have record, and among all classes and types of people, the taboo on homosexuality is a historical variable.

Two ways of viewing the taboo against homosexuality.

Basically there are two ways one might view the taboo on homosexuality. Either,

Viewpoint one. The taboo has always existed and is an inherent and unchangeable feature of humankind — something which occurs spontaneously in human society — something expressing an "eternal truth" about how people ought to act. Inferentially, homosexuality is very likely some form of depravity, disease, or malfunction. If this view be held, then the historic persecutions of homosexuals, although excessive and inhumane, might nevertheless be understandable as the response of healthy people to loathsome and unnatural behavior.

This is the prevailing viewpoint. Consciously or not, it is the view held by most of those in our society, and probably by most of the psychiatrists. It is the view inculcated in everyone since childhood by the bourgeois institutions and propaganda apparatus.

Or,

Viewpoint two. The taboo on homosexuality is arbitrary and has *not* always been a part of human culture. Rather, antihomosexual attitudes and practices are limited in space and time, and derive from particular moral traditions. These moral traditions are in accord with specific forms of social and economic organization. The taboo on homosexuality is therefore not an eternal feature of human society, but a transitory historical phenomenon.

Although the second viewpoint has been suppressed over the centuries, it nevertheless is the viewpoint of reality. For quite some time a few people have had this understanding, which has been passed along in a sometimes

underground tradition.

For example, just after the turn of the century, Dr. Benedict Friedlaender, an activist in the German homosexual rights movement, concisely refuted a current notion that homosexuals represented an "intermediate sex" by writing: "A glance at the cultures of countries before and outside of Christendom suffices to show the complete untenability of the theory. Especially in ancient Greece, most of the military leaders, artists and thinkers would have had to be 'psychic hermaphrodites'." **

To make even clearer the historically transitory nature of homoerotophobia, let's trace the anti-homosexuality taboo to its point of origin. At a particular time and place, under particular circumstances, the taboo was born. It had a period of development and maturation. Soon, we hope, it will die.

The history of the taboo is essentially a history of religion. The taboo, as we shall see, is a theological conception of Judeo-Christianity.

Method and philosophy.

It will become clear that I am no friend of religion. However, I'll try to let the facts speak for themselves.

Although anti-homosexual attitudes originate in theological conceptions, some cautions are in order: religion is not the ultimate source of anything; rather, religion itself is the product of social forces. Further, religion changes as the needs of systems change, though with a certain lag (that is, superstitions tend to survive the forces that brought them into being). So it is not enough for us to locate the origin of antihomosexual attitudes — we must also account for their perpetuation.

I'll not go into a theory of religion other than to say that, in my opinion, religion (1) serves psychological needs and (2) has a material basis deriving from particular political and economic relations.

Philosophically, I am a materialist. I realize that this is a "dirty word", which the bourgeois ideologues strive to link to greed, "commercialism", etc. Actually, it means something quite different. A materialist believes such propositions as the following:

(1) the material world exists before and has priority over ideas, styles, consciousness, etc.;

(2) God did not create man — rather, human beings created Yahweh and a great variety of other gods and goddesses;

(3) there are no "eternal moral truths", no principles of "unchanging human nature". A materialist views any particular moral code as representing a society's state of development.

II. History of the Taboo

Judaism

Homosexuality flourished throughout the ancient world: among the Scandinavians, Greeks, Celts, Sumerians, and throughout the "Cradle of Civilization": the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the Nile Valley, and the Mediterranean Basin. The art and literature of these peoples offer testimony to an unhindered acceptance and often exaltation of same-sex love. At this time, there were not "homosexuals" (as a noun), only homosexual acts. Nowhere is there evidence that anyone was set apart as different from his fellow men, even semantically, because of engaging in homosexual acts.

Commenting on ancient Greece, the Danish psychiatrist, Thorkil Vanggaard, writes, "[paiderasty] was not considered a transgression, to be tolerated, nor was it felt to betoken any laxity in moral standards; it was a natural part of the life-style of the best of men, reflected in the stories of the gods and heroes of the people." (*Phallós*)

The anti-homosexuality taboo was born among the ancient Hebrews. It first appears in the sayings of reformers in Hellenistic Judaism as they attacked the sexual practices of neighboring fertility cults.

The ancient Hebrews developed sexual attitudes drastically different from the rest of the world. According to some authorities, the sex-negative orientation developed about 700 BC, following the Babylonian Exile; before this, the Hebrews, like other Asiatic peoples, had also allowed homosexuality, including male prostitution, as a part of temple worship.

An impudent apologist for the Judeo-Christian tradition, Canon Derrick Sherwin Bailey of the Anglican Communion, has this to say:

> "The sexual ethics and practice of the Hellenic world contrasted strongly with that of Judaism. The Greeks had always displayed a certain insensibility to the notion of moral 'purity' in sexual matters, and their

> hedonism and sensuality, though generally moderated by the idea of *sophrosunē*, was liable at any time to degenerate into barely disguised licentiousness. The social attitude thus engendered was favorable to venereal indulgence; both hetairism and the lower forms of prostitution flourished, and the *paiderastia* in which male homosexual relationships were idealized, and to some extent institutionalized, led to a widespread toleration of unnatural practices." (*Sexual Relation in Christian Thought*)

Now, as human societies evolved, religions came into being and died away. Religions changed. Very broadly speaking, there were trends from religions in which female deities were more prominent, typically involving worship of a Great Mother or Moon Goddess and her male consorts, to religions in which male deities predominated. There was also a tendency from many to fewer deities, from polytheism to monotheism.

Judaism represented absolute monotheism and male supremacy. One true God. No goddesses.

Fear and hostility characterize the Hebrew attitude towards all sexuality. Consider the cursing of Eve:

> "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception
> In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children
> And thy desire shall be to thy husband
> And he shall rule over thee." (*Genesis* 3:16)

Here the male supremacist deity lays down the law for women. The feminine role is to be one of degradation, repentance for sins, groveling submission to male authority.

What exactly *were* the sins of our Mother Eve? Sexual pleasure and the pursuit of knowledge. And if one were to defend our woman ancestor, one would have to maintain that the human body and reason were good, in opposition to the entire Judeo-Christian tradition, (If the Jews pioneered in branding the body as shameful, I think we have to give first prize historically to the Christians for their hatred of the human intellect.)

Apologists for the Judeo-Christian tradition have attempted various explanations for the taboo against homosexuality. Canon Bailey views it as an unfortunate misinterpretation of the Sodom and Gomorrah story (*Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*). Others claim the Jews were

attempting to maintain cultural autonomy rather than repress sexuality as such. These explanations are not at all convincing.

The keynote of Hebrew sexual morality was *prudishness*. The beautiful sculpture of the Greeks and other "heathen" peoples was anathematized as "uncovering of nakedness". Indeed, dozens of Old Testament passages apply exclusively to prohibitions against viewing the unclothed body (e.g., *Leviticus* 18:6-19). Anxiety on this score became an obsession of pathological degree

Hatred of the body is evident in the practice of circumcision, through which the Hebrews felt uniquely bound to their deity. This mutilation of the male sexual organ causes the nerves under the foreskin to atrophy, thus greatly reducing the potential for sexual pleasure.

The Hebrews considered themselves the "chosen people" of a jealous and vindictive god, morally superior to their neighbors. They developed a sexual code unlike anything in the ancient world. Mosaic law made thirty-six crimes punishable by death; one-half (18) involved sexual relationships of one kind or another.

For two men who made love to each other, the law stated:

> "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." (*Leviticus* 20:13)

The penalty for males guilty of homosexual acts was death by stoning, the most severe penalty. Adulterers, in contrast, were put to death by the more humane method of strangulation.

There was no prohibition against female homosexual acts *per se*. In consequence, for the nearly three millennia following, it was almost always male homosexual acts, but not female, that were outlawed. *The taboo on homosexuality is a taboo on sex between males*.

Rigid sex-roles were imposed for both men and women, including a ban on transvestitism: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abominations unto the Lord thy God." (*Deuteronomy* 22:5)

The Hebrews came to associate homosexual practices entirely with foreign customs. They referred to the "way of the Canaanite" or the "way of the heathen" rather than name practices which in time became *unnameable*. To them, the Sodom and Gomorrah story vividly illustrated the wrath of Yahweh

against an alien people for their *alien* practices. Several Old Testament passages link homosexuality to the worship of Ashtoreth and Baal (a semitic moon goddess and her lover), a cult into which the Hebrews were especially prone to lapse, as well as to the worship of Belial and other deities. Like homosexual acts, anything connected with a rival religion was an "abomination", an abomination from which there was great danger of "pollution" or "defilement". At the same time that sodomy and Baal-Ashtoreth worship were considered alien and totally set apart from anything Hebrew, they were also felt to be such potent agents of "pollution" that, offered the slightest opportunity, they would quickly infect everyone in the community.

This concept of "pollution" from a rare and exotic disease lasted into modern times. At the time of the Oscar Wilde trials in England, some seemingly educated men thought there could not possibly be more than one or two dozen sodomites in London; nevertheless, they equally felt that if the vice were not immediately stamped out with the greatest severity, the entire youth of that city would become corrupted.

Christianity

Let theologians quibble over exactly what elements went into the *mélange* that became Christianity. For our purposes, we can say that the Christians carried forward the Jewish sexual code. To this were added elements of ascetic neo-Platonic philosophy and bits and pieces of the mystery cults that were flourishing in the decay of the Roman Empire.

A strident note of erotophobia was added by Saul of Tarsus, sometimes known as "St. Paul". His neurotic formulations left a great impress and did much to influence Christian practice towards homosexuals.

Paul's hysterical railings against sensual pleasure account for dozens of New Testament passages. He writes:

> "God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of the error which was meet." (*Romans* 1:26,27)

We note the phrase, "that which is against nature", a formulation to enter the criminal codes of Christendom.

Paul chose to be celibate, and regretted that everyone could not follow his example: "For I would that all men were even as I myself". (I Corinthians 7:7)

However, for those weaklings unable to forego sex completely, Paul offered the sole alternative of life-long, monogamous, heterosexual marriage:

"But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." (I *Corinthians* 7:9)

Paul associated male homosexuals with effeminate males, and he excluded both from the "kingdom of God":

> "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind .,. shall inherit the kingdom of God." (I *Corinthians* 6:9,10)

And for sheer arbitrary silliness, Paul condemned long hair for men as being unnatural:

> "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (I *Corinthians* 11:14)

> Although, of course, women would have long hair:

> "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for hair is given her for a covering." (I *Corinthians* 11:15)

According to Canon Bailey, there was little legislation during the first three Christian centuries regulating sexual relationships, "although from the earliest times we find precepts inculcating a high standard of moral conduct and threatening the delinquent with ecclesiastical sanctions or divine retribution." (*Sexual Relation in Christian Thought*)

Bailey can be counted on to whitewash Christianity at every opportunity, and we may be sure that the lot of homosexuals among the early Christians was not a happy one.

The Council of Elvira in 300 AD denied last rites to pederasts.

Early in the 4th century AD, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. From this point begin the sufferings of homosexuals on a world scale.

342 AD. A decree of the Emperor Constantius imposed the death penalty for sodomy.

390 AD. Valentian instituted death by burning, a previously unknown mode of execution, which recalled the punishment meted out by Yahweh to Sodom and Gomorrah.

395 AD. An edict of Theodosius banned all religions other than Christianity. Loyalty to the State demanded loyalty to the tenets of the Christian religion, including its code of sexual morality. Here begins the equation: heresy = treason, an equation which in time will become three-way: homosexuality = heresy = treason.

529 AD. Justinian the Great closed the Platonic Academy in Athens, thus putting an end to classical learning. The Academy had flourished for nearly a thousand years.

538 AD. Justinian codified Roman law. He prescribed torture, mutilation, and castration for homosexual men. His edict, *Novella* 77, condemned sodomites to death "lest, as a result of these impious acts, whole cities should perish together with their inhabitants", a reference to the Sodom and Gomorrah myth. The edict spoke of "diabolical and unlawful lusts" and reasoned that "because of such crimes there are famines, earthquakes & pestilences".

Justinian's edict portrays male homosexual acts as a clear and present danger to the State, thus articulating the equation of male-to-male sex with treason. It calls upon "the most illustrious prefect of the Capital ... to inflict on them the most extreme punishments, so that the city and the state may not come to harm because of such wicked deeds." And the edict goes so far as to threaten "the most illustrious prefect" himself with punishment should he be lax in finding and punishing all those guilty of such offenses.

Gibbon gives the following account of Justinian's policies:

> "[Justinian] declared himself the implacable enemy of unmanly lust, and the cruelty of his persecutions can scarcely be excused by the purity [probably ironic] of his motives. In defiance of every principle of justice, he stretched to past as well as future offenses the operations of his edicts, with the

> previous allowance of a short respite for confession and pardon. A painful death was inflicted by the amputation of the sinful instrument, or the insertion of sharp reeds into the pores and tubes of most exquisite sensibility; and Justinian defended the propriety of the execution, since the criminals would have lost their hands had they been convicted of sacrilege. In this state of disgrace and agony two bishops, Isaiah of Rhodes and Alexander of Diospolis, were dragged through the streets of Constantinople, while their brethren were admonished by the voice of a crier to observe this awful lesson, and not to pollute the sanctity of their character, Perhaps these prelates were innocent ... A sentence of death and infamy was often founded, on the slight and suspicious evidence of a child or a servant, and pederasty became the crime of those to whom no crime could be imputed." (*History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)

Justinian issued a second edict, *Novella* 141, against male homosexual acts in 544. It employs even more extreme language:

> "... such as have gone to decay through that abominable and impious conduct deservedly hated by God. We speak of the defilement of males, which some men sacrilegiously and impiously dare to attempt, perpetrating vile acts with other men."

And the edict refers to homosexuality as "very *madness* of intercourse", "*plague*", "*disease*", and "conduct so base and criminal that we do not find it committed even by brute beasts". Those who committed such acts "have been *contaminated* by the *filth* of this impious conduct". (Translations of the *Novellae* from *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* by Canon Bailey; emphases mine.)

This language is most interesting in that it not only contains phrases virtually identical to those in Anglo-American sodomy statutes, but it also anticipates the decadence theories found in the anti-homosexual and anti-Marxist mythology of 20th century Stalinism, and the disease notions found in the superstitions of present-day psychiatrists, and the "filth" language used by the typical Yahoo.

We might note in passing that the ruling classes do not always feel themselves bound by the moral codes they pass down to the masses. Justinian was no paragon of virtue, and many stories are recorded of the affairs, both

heterosexual and homosexual, of his wife, the Empress Theodora. She was alleged once to have been so excited by observing men being castrated that she was compelled to masturbate on the spot.

The effect of Justinian's policies is summed up by Thorkil Vanggaard:

> "Thus what was originally an exclusively Jewish attitude towards homosexuality and phallic symbolism had gained ascendancy over the whole Christian world. A true Christian believer was marked out, from then on, by his unconditional condemnation of everything homosexual. Correspondingly, homosexual acts were regarded as unshakable proof of heterodoxy." (*Phallós*)

From this time onwards, laws in all Judeo-Christian states were stamped in the mold set by Justinian. Sodomy was not treated rationally in Christendom until some thirteen centuries later, when penal reforms in France followed the Great Revolution.

During the dark ages, homosexual offenders were punished by excommunication, denial of last rites, castration, torture, mutilation, death by burning, and burial in unsanctified ground. Some Christian fathers even felt it necessary to perform mutilation upon the *corpses* of the offenders. Sodomy, heresy, and treason became equated (foreshadowing the McCarthy period in America, when again homosexuality and treason were linked.)

The persecution of homosexuals was part and parcel of the intolerance of the Middle Ages. Jews, Moslems, pagans, scientists, and "heretics" were all treated with the utmost viciousness.

Christianity did not come to power in Europe because the pagans rushed ecstatically into the arms of the Church. In fact, worshippers of the pre-Christian religions indigenous to Europe generally preferred the old faiths — and indeed, those whose rites included fresh air, music, dancing, food and drink, and sexual orgies, must have found Christianity morbid. It was through force of arms, over the broken bodies of pagans, that Christianity held sway over Europe.

Heretical cults were repressed ruthlessly. In 1209, Pope Innocent (sic) called for a crusade in France against the Albigenses, practitioners of a heretical cult that adumbrated Protestantism. The papal policy amounted to total genocide over a large area of France.

> "When the papal legate, Arnold, Abbot of Citeaux, was asked how heretics were to be distinguished from true believers, he is reported to have said, 'Kill all; God will know his own.' It was the Abbot's pleasure to report back to the Pope that in Beziers alone 'nearly twenty thousand human beings perished by the sword. And after the massacre the town was plundered and burnt, and the revenge of God seemed to rage over it in a wonderful manner.' The crusaders spared 'neither dignity, nor sex nor age,' several thousand heretics being slain in the Church of Mary Magdalene where presumably they had falsely sought refuge. When tired of quick deaths, the crusaders grew dilatory and amused themselves by tearing out eyes and subjecting the heretics to other tortures. Innocent himself grew sick of the slaughter and publicly deplored the ardor of his troops, but he was unable to stop them. The faithful were enjoying themselves depopulating the south of France, confiscating property, settling political quarrels, extending baronial domains, and always fighting under the banner of the one true God. The immediate supply of heretics lasted the crusaders twenty years and it is estimated that a million of them were exterminated before the end of a century." (From *Man and his Gods* by Homer Smith)

From the repression of a related heretical cult originating in Bulgaria comes the English word, "bugger". Westermarck gives the following account:

> "During the Middle Ages heretics were accused of unnatural vice as a matter of course. Indeed, so closely was sodomy associated with heresy that the same name was applied to both. In 'La Coutume de Touraine Anjou' the word *herite*, which is the ancient form of *heritique*, seems to be used in the sense of 'sodomite'; and the French *bougre* (from the Latin *Bulgarus*, Bulgarian), as also its English synonym (bugger), was originally a name given to a sect of heretics who came from Bulgaria in the eleventh century and was afterwards applied to other heretics, but at the same time it became the regular expression for a person guilty of unnatural intercourse. In medieval laws sodomy was also repeatedly mentioned together with heresy, and the punishment was the same for both." (*Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*)

Grim as the situation was in Christendom, homosexuality continued to flourish all along in lands outside the sphere of Judeo-Christian influence. No

anti-homosexual taboo existed in China, Japan, India, the Arab countries, Africa, or pre-Columbian America. Some of the greatest literature of these countries exalts same-sex love. During the occupation of Japan following World War II, the United States military commanders were shocked at the acceptance of homosexuality by the Japanese people.

In the 13th century, St. Thomas Aquinas carried the taboo to full maturity, justifying the persecution of homosexuals with logic characteristic of feudal absolutism. According to Aquinas, "*right reason declares the appointed end of sexual acts is procreation.*" Aquinas followed up this brilliant insight with equally brilliant reasoning: homosexual acts cannot result in procreation; therefore (having always been known to be
sinful), they must necessarily fall into the category of *peccata contra naturam* (sins against nature).

The gravest of the *peccata contra naturam* was bestiality, next
in seriousness was sodomy (which included other homosexual practices). The least serious *peccatum contra naturam* was masturbation. Nevertheless, Aquinas considered masturbation far worse than forcible rape. The reasoning was simple: rape, even though it might cause injury to another person, could still result in procreation; therefore, it could not be *peccatum contra naturam* — whereas masturbation ...

By the middle ages, sodomy came to be *peccatum illud horribile inter Christianos non nominandum* (the sin so horrible that it must not be mentioned in the presence of Christians). The *peccatum illud horribile inter Christianos non nominandum* phrase still occurs as late as the 19th century in English writing on criminal law. Death by burning became the punishment of choice throughout Europe. Persons were burned alive for sodomy in France as late as the latter part of the 18th century. Usually sodomy cases — like cases of heresy and witchcraft, with which sodomy was often equated — were tried in ecclesiastical courts. The offenders were then turned over to the secular authorities for punishment. The impression given by Christian commentators, that the Church acted as an agent of clemency against harsh secular governments, is the opposite of the truth.

As well as having been the objects of extensive persecution throughout the dark and middle ages, homosexuals became major victims of the Inquisitions. According to Henry Kamen:

"Homosexuality in the Middle Ages was treated as the ultimate crime

> against morality, and the standard definitions of it refer to the 'abominable' or the 'unspeakable' crime ... The usual punishment was burning alive." (*The Spanish Inquisition*)

The Spanish Inquisition lasted until well into the 19th century. It is possible that the word, "faggot", now used as a pejorative for male homosexuals, originated from the practice of burning homosexual offenders at the stake. "Faggot" means a bundle of sticks tied together for burning. Such medieval phrases as "fire and faggot" and "to fry a faggot" refer to burning heretics alive. Heretics who recanted were obliged to wear an embroidered figure of a faggot on their sleeve. Hence, the word may have been progressively extended from a bundle of fuel sticks, to the method of execution, to major victims of the Inquisition, homosexuals.

When sexual offenders were burned at the stake, the trial records were destroyed with them, probably as a measure against "pollution". Overlooking this customary practice with typically Christian honesty, the apologist, Canon Bailey, makes the asinine claim that it is difficult to find evidence the death sentence was ever carried out. Bailey's concern, however, is not to end the wrongs done homosexuals, but rather to defend his church from the attacks of "rationalists". A study of the Inquisitions alone indicates that countless tens of thousands of homosexual men were tortured and murdered through the practice of Roman "Catholic" Christianity.

In England, generally, the situation seems to have been less desperate than on the Continent, though the death penalty still applied, as in all Christendom. In 1533, in the reign of Henry VIII, a statute was enacted which decreed death by hanging for "the detestable & abominable Vice of Buggery committed with mankind or beast": Prior to this, say in the reign of Richard I, men were hanged for sodomy, though on a common law basis. With the separation of Church and State, the State took over the criminal law, including the enforcement of sodomy laws. In effect, the State took on the responsibility of enforcing theological dictates that in time ceased to be recognized as theological.

1730. Amsterdam under Calvinist Christianity. Trials of over two hundred men and boys for sodomy. A series of "plakats" or notices were put up, calling upon the citizenry to furnish the authorities with any knowledge they might have, directly or indirectly, of homosexual acts. They were to supply information about times, places, and persons involved. Any citizen knowing of

such offenses and remaining silent would himself be subject to punishment. On the other hand, informers would receive a reward of 100 silver ducats and be guaranteed anonymity.

Records of the sentences remain for 154 defendants. Ninety-one were fortunate to be banished, five were sent to prison (where three died), and one man was branded in some way. At least fifty-seven were put to death, by a variety of means. Two were beheaded, eleven were hanged only, four were hanged and then burned to ashes, five were strangled, twenty-five were strangled and then burned, eight were singed or scorched and then strangled, and two were drowned by being thrust head forward into barrels filled with water.

The burning of the already dead was a measure against "pollution", testimony to the fear of "defilement" from homosexual acts, which can be traced to Justinian's edicts and the writings of Paul and the Hebrew prophets. In one case, the ashes of the executed sodomites were taken in a ship and disposed of out at sea, so great was the fear of pollution.

Now, I am going to skip very quickly up to the present time, so we can see what the taboo on homosexuality is like today.

1791, France. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, the Constituent Assembly introduces legislation leaving homosexual acts unpunished.

1810. The Napoléon Code, following and a consequence of the Great French Revolution. Homosexual acts between consenting adults in private are absolutely unpunished in countries under Napoleonic jurisdiction.

1861. The death penalty for sodomy finally abolished in England.

1889. The death penalty for sodomy abolished in Scotland.

1895. The Oscar Wilde trials in London. Wilde sent to prison under new statute outlawing "gross indecency" between males, even in private. Anti-homosexual witch-hunt ensues; homosexuals panic, leave country, become fully aware of their own oppression. The British press unanimously condemns Wilde. Bernard Shaw can get no literary figures to sign a petition for Wilde, other than a few fellow socialists. In the German press, one of only two newspapers to defend Wilde was *Die Neue Zeit*, the most prestigious journal of the Second International; the *Neue Zeit* article soundly counterposed a historical-anthropological perspective on homosexuality to the theological concept of "unnatural acts".

1897. An activist homosexual rights organization — the Scientific

Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komittee*) — founded in Germany.

1917. The Russian Revolution, led as was the French Revolution by materialists. All laws against homosexual acts scrapped totally by the Bolshevik government. Their position was to treat homosexuality "exactly the same as so-called 'natural' intercourse". Punishment would occur "only when there's an injury or encroachment upon the rights of another person". (quotes from The Sexual Revolution in Russia by Dr. Grigorii Batkis).

1921-1932. Five Congresses of the World League for Sexual Reform. At its peak, over 130,000 people belonged to organizations affiliated with the League.

1934. The Soviet Union. The Revolution has degenerated. Stalin reintroduces a law against homosexuality, with punishment of up to eight years in jail. An ex-seminary student, Stalin brought to a near standstill the educational offensive against religion; he made abortion a crime again, and called for strengthening the family, in total betrayal of Marxism.

1934. Germany. The Nazis crush the sexual reform movement and begin full scale persecution of gay men, who become targets for extermination, to be shot without trial, or sent to the concentration camp gas chambers. The fascists did this under the banner of "moral purity" (the same "moral purity" Canon Bailey condemns the ancient Greeks for lacking). The Nazis thrived on mysticism and superstition, and made criticism of religion grounds for expulsion from the newspaper profession.

1955. Israel. Debate in the Knesset, where socialists and liberals attempt to liberalize laws against homosexuality. Their efforts fail, according to Kurt Hiller in Ratioaktiv, "wrecked" by the "stubbornness of the orthodox blockheads who unfortunately ruled with them". Hiller comments: "That representatives of an ethnic minority that has been horribly persecuted should themselves persecute an equally harmless and guiltless biological minority — what sentiment could arise in a thinking person other than boundless contempt!" (Kurt Hiller, a leader of the homosexual rights movement from the first decade of the 20th century, died in 1972, at the age of 87.) The anti-homosexuality laws are still on the books in Israel; a second attempt to liberalize them in 1971 also failed.

III. The Taboo Today

The taboo on homosexuality is very much alive today. Sometimes its religious origins and character are obvious; more often they are not. Let's look at a few arenas of struggle:

The American Psychiatric Association

Why is it that the psychiatrists are unable collectively to face reality, to accept the fact that homosexuality per se is neither a "disease" nor a "disorder", nor the product of hormonal imbalances, bad genes, unhappy childhoods, or anything of that sort? The professional status of these psychiatrists must be pretty fragile, for they seem determined not to expose the concepts and practices of their field to scientific evaluation — scientific evaluation which at minimum would require admitting relevant historical, anthropological, statistical, and other evidence, not to mention Freud's discovery that homosexual impulses exist in everyone, unconsciously if not consciously. All this evidence renders absurd the notions of Doctors Bergler, Bieber, Socarides, Hatterer, and their cohorts.

Wainwright Churchill provides in two sentences a perfectly adequate refutation of all the convoluted psychiatric theories about the aetiology of homosexual behavior. He writes:

> "Since homosexuality has always been considered grossly abnormal during Christian times in the West, explanations of it have been sought far and wide ... It is only because we have learned to regard homosexuality as extraordinary that we have insisted upon an extraordinary explanation of it." (*Homosexual Behavior Among Males*)

I submit that the psychiatrists are in their present quandary because their heads are so mucked up with theological concepts that they cannot and will not recognize reality. Some of them also have a vested interest in the *status quo*, since oppression provides a continuing source of patients.

Intro 475 (now Intro 2) New York City Council

The only consistent and organized opposition to this bill, which would have provided some basic human rights for those whose sexual orientation includes their own sex, came from Roman Catholics and orthodox Jews. According to a

New York Times account, the recent defeat of Intro 2 in committee was mainly due to the concerted efforts of the Hassidic rabbis, who successfully intimidated even liberal council members from Brooklyn. (Since the above was written, Intro 2 was voted out of committee; it remains to be seen what will be its fate before the full City Council.)

The New York State Sodomy Laws

Opposition to change is led by the Roman Church. In the 1960s, when an attempt was made to liberalize the laws, the Catholics successfully mobilized to defeat the reform attempt. The Roman Church, a remnant of feudal absolutism in the epoch of capitalist democracy, can be counted on to oppose homosexual rights just as strongly as it opposes a woman's right to make decisions about her own body — to choose abortion.

The Manchester Union Leader

A huge headline in the 18 January 1974 *Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader* ("New Hampshire's Largest Daily Newspaper") reads: "PERVERTS WILL FLOCK TO UNH". The headline and numerous articles and editorials to follow, was in response to a court decision granting recognition on the University of New Hampshire campus to the Gay Students Organization. An editorial entitled "Judicial Madness", signed by the publisher, William Loeb, is interesting for its violently religious rhetoric. Loeb refers to the gay students as "homosexual degenerates" and "a bunch of filthy scum". He writes:

> "... it has been one devil of a bad week for the decent people of New Hampshire who are trying to protect their children and themselves, but especially their children, from the corruption of those who would try to turn New Hampshire and the rest of the United States into a Sodom and Gomorrah.
>
> "This newspaper wonders whether Judge Bownes, for instance, realizes just how far out of step he is with the moral principles and the wishes of the people of New Hampshire when he tells the UNH Board of Trustees that they *must* recognize and grant every privilege to a group of sodomites at the University of New Hampshire, men and women who are practicing every filthy rite that has been banned by Holy Writ and which has been described in the Bible as the epitome of evil and degeneracy." (Editorial by

William Loeb in the *Manchester, New Hampshire Union Leader*, 18 January 1974)

IV. Conclusion

These facts have painted a pretty dark picture. One might wonder whether there be anything good about Christianity? What about the "Christian principles" of love, brotherhood, peace, and so on?

In my opinion, yes, Christianity has had its good features — Christianity, like everything else, contains contradictions. But we must make the appropriate generalizations. No matter how much the gentlemen of the cloth may blather about "charity", etc., the fact is that historically the Christian Church has been an egregious practitioner of hatred, intolerance, and violence.

No doubt there have been persons sincerely inspired to kindness or noble action by the stated Christian principles of love, peace, and brotherhood. But a correct evaluation says that Christianity represents not the realization, but rather the alienation of these principles.

Before the possibility that human beings might behave in a civilized and rational manner towards each other, Christianity has imposed, like a prophylactic, the demand for physical and intellectual mortification.

The Christian viewpoint is that human beings are by nature so vicious that they will only be good to each other if they are tricked into it — only on the basis of lies! What contempt this shows!

The first truly human society will be based, not on superstition, not on lies, but on science, which in historical perspective is still young. At this point of human development, all religion, especially the Abrahamic forms, are united at the common altar of Reaction. As Freud rightly argues, "our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere." (*Future of an Illusion*)

It is no wonder that religion, by presenting human needs in unrealizable forms, provides a powerful buttress for obsolete and unjust political-economic relations. If the vast majority of people who are not members of the capitalist class have been trained to deny freedom, they will hardly be motivated to take power away from the exploiters. Intellects warped and deadened by religious indoctrination will provide poor guides for the replacement of the old and the construction of a new society.

A brief digression suggesting a few ways the taboo supports class society.

The taboo on homosexuality offers a unique weapon in the arsenal of class society for keeping people down. Here, a basic component of human sexuality, the potential for affectionate and sensual relationship with half of the population, has been transformed into a source of guilt and horror. And the great fear surrounding homosexuality is not entirely irrational, in view of the blood Christians have shed to uphold their taboo on it.

As the religious origins of the taboo are not generally known, we may be sure that millions of American males are now consumed with intense fear and guilt, blaming themselves for not fitting into the mold of stereotyped exclusive heterosexuality that is laid down as though it were "natural" and an eternal truth about the male human. The bourgeois propaganda apparatus, acting consciously, has synthesized links between exclusive heterosexuality, being a "real man", faith in capitalism, patriotism, acceptance of authority, belief in "God", courage, and whatever it chooses to present as the "eternal" virtues of the moment.

And there is a complex of vices covered by the word, "queer"; like the Old Testament word, "abomination", which was applied to sodomy, the word, "queer", is an expression of everything sacrilegious, contemptible, and disgusting. For an American male, being thought queer represents the total loss of honor; it is the Worst Thing in the World. Under the heading, bourgeois propaganda has linked such diverse phenomena as homosexuality, undue intelligence, antiwar activism, socialism, cowardice, questioning of authority, effeminacy, and sundry forms of nonconformity.

The profound significance of the fear of being considered queer lies in the fact that no one is completely free from the possibility of being labelled as queer.

Whites are not directly threatened by racism, and men are not directly threatened by male supremacy. But every man must put some effort into

acting so that he will not be considered queer.

The required non-queer role-playing goes to ridiculous extremes. In order not to be queer, an American male must be rigid, tough, aggressive, emotionless, and humorless. He may never express affection to another male, except under the guise of obscenity, drunkenness, or horseplay. Brutality is a potential ingredient of the non-queer male, as well as an underlying contempt for women.

The ideal non-queer male is an incomplete human being — a caricature who is incapable of forming a meaningful relation with either sex. In order not to be "limp-wristed", the non-queer male will make himself "stiff-wristed", and go around like a zombie with rigor mortis — all Just to prove he's not queer.

The fear of being thought queer is so intense in America as to be stronger than the fear of death itself. An article in the *Village Voice* (3/18/71) quotes a GI explaining how the Army could induce young American males to comply even with unpopular commands: "I know guys in Nam who completely disagreed with the war but would volunteer for dangerous missions as soon as their manhood was questioned."

On another level, advertising uses sexual issues to sell the whole range of capitalist commodities, from underarm aerosol deodorants, to automobiles, to military hardware. Comprehensively to go into how sex-role stereotyping and sexual repression are used to manipulate people in the interests of capitalism would require an analysis on many levels and of considerable length. However, all these things are subjects for other discussions, and I'll return to my original topic. (*End of digression.*)

My concern in this presentation has been on the level of fact and theory, with arriving at a correct understanding of the taboo against homosexuality. I have discussed neither strategy nor tactics for the gay liberation movement, which would have involved analysis on a completely different level. Our strategy must take into account the dismal facts that, according to a 1968 International Gallup Poll, 98% of adult Americans believe in an invisible spirit they call "God", 65% believe in an invisible place called "Hell", and 60% believe in another invisible spirit called the "Devil".

I conclude that the taboo against homosexuality is a transitory historical phenomenon, rooted in superstition from the past, and perpetuated by obsolete relationships, primarily political and economic, in present society.

Homosexuals were not persecuted over the centuries because of the revulsion good, decent, healthy people felt at loathsome and unnatural deeds. Far from it. We were persecuted because of arbitrary theological conceptions of morality peculiar to Judeo-Christianity.

Inasmuch as the sodomy laws represent codifications of religious morality, they are **unconstitutional**, for the Constitution expressly forbids the establishment of religion and provides for the separation of Church and State. The sodomy laws clearly represent established religion. However, in practice, generalized religion is very much established in the United States: the churches are not taxed on their immense incomes, references to "God" appear on our money and our courtroom walls, and prayers and sermons are frequently broadcast over radio and television.

I agree with the conclusion of a talk, "Sexual Morality", delivered to the 1929 Congress of the World League for Sexual Reform by Doctoresse Madeleine Pelletier, a member of the Anti-Catholic League in France. She said:

> "Freud has shown how much unhappiness is due to sexual deprivation. Rational human beings should throw off the chains imposed on them by superstitions from the past. It should not be forgotten that the fundamental object of religion and morality was to exploit the mass of the people in the interests of [those in power]. Today we believe that every human being has a right to happiness."

APPENDIX

A. Attitudes of the Early Sex Reformers

The motto of both the homosexual rights organization, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, and the World League for Sexual Reform was **Per Scientiam Ad Justitiam!** (Justice Through Science!). The men and women who were activists in the sexual reform movements of the first three decades of the 20th century were well aware that their causes were linked to the advance of science, and that superstition was always an enemy.

It was easy for activists in the German homosexual rights movement to see that the main opposition to their efforts to repeal Paragraph 175 (Germany's sodomy statute) came from clerical sources, primarily the Center Party, the

political arm of the Roman Catholic Church. Homosexuals did not forget the Reichstag debate of 1905, when the fight to repeal Paragraph 175 was led by the socialists (Social Democrats) under the leadership of August Bebel, the first politician to support homosexual rights; and the opposition to repeal was led by the Center Party. Whereas the key spokesman for the homosexual cause, the Social Democrat Thiele, proudly identified himself as a "heathen", his adversary, Dr. Thaler of the Center Party, invoked scripture and both *Novellae* of Justinian as grounds for retaining the sodomy statute.

At the Congresses of the World League for Sexual Reform, anti-clericalism was more the rule than the exception. Clergymen were noticeable by their absence. The delegates' approach was to be as objective as possible, a contrast to the genteelism, infantilism, and concern with "feelings" that have been so prevalent in gay liberation conferences nowadays.

In his talk, "Sex and Religion", given at the 1929 Congress in London, C.E.M. Joad made such comments as:

> "My thesis will be that this influence [Christian religion on sexual practice] has been almost invariably disastrous ... and that the decline of Christianity should, therefore, be welcomed and accelerated by persons advocating sexual reform".

And Professor Joad referred to religion as "a spiritual drug for the spiritually diseased", adding, "Healthy people do not need it."

Also at the 1929 Congress, Bertrand Russell gave a speech, "The Taboo on Sex Knowledge", which discussed the recent (1928) censorship of the lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*. In his description of events, we clearly see the operation of the silence taboo which traces back to the "*peccatum illud horribile inter Christianos non nominandum*" dictate. Russell said:

> "The condemnation of the Well of Loneliness has brought into prominence another aspect of the censorship, namely, that any treatment of homosexuality in fiction is illegal in England. There exists a vast mass of knowledge on homosexuality obtained by students in continental countries where the law is less obscurantist, but this knowledge is not allowed to be disseminated in England either in a learned form or in the form of imaginative fiction. Homosexuality between men, though not between women, is illegal in England; and it would be very difficult to present any

> argument for a change of the law in this respect which would not itself be illegal on the ground of obscenity. And yet every person who has taken the trouble to study the subject knows that this law is the effect of a barbarous and ignorant superstition in favour of which no rational argument of any sort or kind can be advanced."

Russell defined sex reformers as "those who wish to cleanse sex from the filth with which it has been covered by Christian moralists".

B. Bibliography

I have used a variety of sources, many of which are not in English or are difficult to obtain. This is intended merely as a beginning listing of books useful for understanding homosexuality from a historical perspective.

Bailey, Derrick Sherwin: *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*. Bailey's book contains useful information, but he is hostile to both homosexuality and the scientific outlook, and he is dishonest. He is a defender of the Church, Anglican-Roman style, and he will whitewash the crimes of Christianity whenever possible.

Churchill, Wainwright: *Homosexual Behavior Among Males*. The best general work.

De Becker, Raymond: *The Other Face of Love*. Eclectic and interesting, many good illustrations.

Eglinton, J.Z.: *Greek Love*. A defence of boy-love. Much valuable information, well indexed.

Ford, C.S. and Beach, F.A.: *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*. A classic. Human sexuality from anthropological and zoological standpoints.

Lauritsen, John and Thorstad, David: *The Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)*. Pamphlet. A greatly expanded version to be released in book form in October, 1974 from Times Change Press.

Licht, Hans: *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*. Scholarly and excellent.

Vanggaard, Thorkil: *Phallós*. A flawed but stimulating thesis that "a homosexual radical [component] is inherent in the nature of all males — not just those who are inverse, but also the vast majority who are not". Vanggaard has a tendency to lapse into ahistorical and stereotypical thinking when dealing with such concepts as virility, aggression, dominance, etc.

C. Miscellaneous Quotations

"Think of the depressing contrast between the radiant intelligence of a healthy child and the feeble intellectual powers of the average adult. Can we be quite certain that it is not precisely religious education which bears a large share of the blame for this relative atrophy? ... Is it not true that the two main points in the programme for the education of children today are retardation of sexual development and premature religious influence? ... When a man has once brought himself to accept uncritically all the absurdities that religious doctrines put before him and even to overlook the contradictions between them, we need not be greatly surprised at the weakness of his intellect." (From *Future of an Illusion* by Freud)

FASCISM

Fascism is totalitarian monopoly capitalism. It occurs when capitalism in crisis is forced to abandon the ostensibly democratic norms under which it prefers to rule. Although the bourgeois media, as well as the Stalinist, have attempted to link fascism with the proliferation or tolerance of homosexuality, this is completely false. The real fascist position on sexual matters was expressed by their slogan, "moral purity"; and the fascist ideal was the familiar sexual repression ordained by Christian virtue.

> "The teaching of the youth to appreciate the value of the state and of the community, derives its strongest inner power from the truths of Christianity.... Loyalty and responsibility toward the people and the fatherland are most deeply anchored in Christian faith. For this reason it will always be my special duty to safeguard the right and free development

of the Christian school and the Christian fundamentals of all education." (From 1933 edict on education of youth by Hitler, quoted by Wilhelm Reich in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*)

"[On the training of a youth leader] ... he will serve Germany, and 'fulfillment of service to Germany is service to God.' True Leaders will see to it that the led shall not only follow, but learn to love the Leaders selected and appointed over them by The Leader (Adolf Hitler) himself. And 'who loves Adolf Hitler loves Germany; who loves Germany loves God.'" (From *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* by Robert Brady, inside quotes are from *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official Nazi newspaper)

"The man who, for his satisfaction in life, needs nothing but to eat and drink has never understood him who sacrifices his daily bread to appease the thirst of his soul and the hunger of his spirit." (From speech to the Nuremberg Congress, 1933, by Hitler, quoted by Reich, *op. cit.*)

"Homosexuality is the mark of Cain, of a godless and soulless culture which is sick to the core. It is the consequence of the prevailing view of the world and of life, the highest aim of which is love of pleasure. Professor Foerster has rightfully stated in his *Sexualethik*: 'Where spiritual heroism is made fun of and the sowing of one's wild oats is glorified, everything which is perverse, demonic and vile plucks up courage to manifest itself openly; indeed, it scoffs at the healthy as an illness and sets itself up as the standard of life.'" (From a fascist pamphlet quoted by Reich, *op. cit.*)

THE SOVIET UNION: BOLSHEVISM

The Socialist Revolution tries to root out all forms of superstition and injustice.

All Bolsheviks were excommunicated in October of 1917 from the Eastern Orthodox Church (to which few if any of them belonged anyway). All laws against homosexual acts per se were abolished in December, 1917.

On January 23, 1918, the new Soviet Government issued this decree:

"With respect to religion, the Russian Communist Party is not content to accept the already decreed separation of the church from the state and the

school. In short, it is not content with measures which also appear in the programs of bourgeois democracies, which have never been able to carry them through to the end anywhere in the world owing to the numerous factual connections between capital and religious propaganda.

"It is the conviction of the Russian Communist Party that only the realization of methodicalness and consciousness in the entire social and economic life of the masses will effect the complete withering away of religious prejudices. The Party is working toward a complete elimination of all the connections between the exploiting classes and the organization of religious propaganda. It has organized comprehensive scientific propaganda of an instructive and anti-religious nature. This propaganda contributes in a factual way toward the liberation of the working masses from religious prejudices. However, every effort must be made not to offend the feelings of the faithful, for this would only lead to an intensification of religious fanaticism." (quoted by Reich, *op. cit.*)

"Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality — Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called 'natural' intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters. Only when there's use of force or duress, as in general when there's an injury or encroachment upon the rights of another person, is there a question of criminal prosecution." (The official Soviet position, expressed by Dr. Batkis in the pamphlet, *Die Sexualrevolution in Russland*, Moscow edition 1923, German edition 1925, translated and quoted in *The Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* by John Lauritsen and David Thorstad

THE SOVIET UNION: STALINISM

Beginning in the mid-1920s, a counterrevolution takes place; a gangster bureaucracy, led by Stalin, takes power in its own interests. The original leaders of the revolution are purged, a process culminating in the Moscow Trials of the late 1930s, after which Stalin is the only member of Lenin's original Central Committee not to have been purged, exiled, or liquidated. With the degeneration of the revolution come back exploitation,

sexual repression, Christianity ... all the old shit.

In 1934, through the personal intervention of Stalin, all republics in the Soviet Union were required to adopt a law punishing male homosexual acts with imprisonment of up to eight years.

In analyzing the betrayal of the revolution as of 1937, Trotsky observed that the rehabilitation of the nuclear family, reversal of gains for women, a re-outlawing of abortion, and a more respectful approach to religion were all part of the same reactionary process.

> "Concern for the authority of the older generation, by the way, has already led to a change of policy in the matter of religion. The denial of God, his assistance and his miracles, was the sharpest wedge of all those which the revolutionary power drove between children and parents.... The storming of heaven, like the storming of the family, is now brought to a stop. The bureaucracy, concerned about their reputation for respectability, have ordered the young 'godless' to surrender their fighting armor and sit down to their books." (from *The Revolution Betrayed* by Trotsky)

THE REAL CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

"The social principles of Christianity have now had eighteen hundred years to develop....

"The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it.

"The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable.

"The social principles of Christianity transfer the consistorial councillors' adjustment of all infamies to heaven and thus justify the further existence of those infamies on earth.

"The social principles of Christianity declare all vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either the just punishment of original sin and other sins or trials that the Lord in his infinite wisdom imposes on those redeemed.

"The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt,

abasement, submission, defection, in a word all the qualities of the canaille; and the proletariat, not wishing to be treated as canaille, needs its courage, its self-feeling, its pride and its sense of independence more than its bread.

"The social principles of Christianity are sneakish and the proletariat is revolutionary.

"So much for the social principles of Christianity." (From "The Communism of the Paper *Rheinischer Beobachter*", by Marx)

BOURGEOIS MORALITY

"Morality is one of the ideological functions in this [class] struggle. The ruling class forces its ends upon society and habituates it into considering all those means which contradict its ends as immoral. That is the chief function of official morality. It pursues the idea of the 'greatest possible happiness' not for the majority but for a small and ever diminishing minority. Such a regime could not have endured for even a week through force alone. It needs the cement of morality....

"Whoever does not care to return to Moses, Christ, or Mohammed; whoever is not satisfied with eclectic hodgepodges, must acknowledge that morality is a product of social development; that there is nothing invariable about it; that it serves social interests; that these interests are contradictory; that morality more than any other form of ideology has a class character....

"The bourgeoisie, which far surpasses the proletariat in the completeness and irreconcilability of its class consciousness, is vitally interested in imposing its moral philosophy upon the exploited masses. It is exactly for this purpose that the concrete norms of the bourgeois catechism are concealed under moral abstractions patronized by religion, philosophy, or that hybrid which is called 'common sense'. The appeal to abstract norms is not a disinterested philosophic mistake but a necessary element in the mechanics of class deception. The exposure of this deceit, which retains the tradition of thousands of years, is the first duty of a proletarian revolutionist.' (From *Their Morals and Ours* by Trotsky)

THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION
Sensuality is a hateful disease and an evil that ought to be deadened and mutilated.

ARTICLE IX. Of Original or Birth-Sin. "Original sin ... is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that ... is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh ... (which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh,) is not subject to the Law of God.... concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin." (From the *Book of Common Prayer*)

"Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*." (The *Collect* for January 1; from the *Book of Common Prayer*; emphasis added, except for the *Amen*.)

# # #

* For descriptions of *A Freethinker's Primer of Male Love* and other Pagan Press books, click here. < http://paganpressbooks.com/BOOKLIST.HTM >

** From *Die Liebe Platons im Lichte der modernen Biologie*, Berlin 1909, translated and quoted in *The Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* by John Lauritsen and David Thorstad (New York 1974; Second Revised Edition Ojai, California 1995)

Mosaic in 12th century Cathedral, Monreale, Sicily. On the left, Lot is rebuffing men of Sodom, who wish to "know" (have sex with) the two androgynously attractive angels on the right. The two angels don't look particularly adverse to the Sodomites' proposal.

Mosaic in 12th century Cathedral, Monreale, Sicily. On the right, Lot and his daughters are fleeing from the destruction of Sodom. In the center, Lot's wife is about to be turned into a Pillar of Salt for having looked back at Sodom, thus suggesting that she was no prude herself. The phallic symbolism is pretty obvious.

12th century mosaic in the Palatine Chapel, Norman Palace, Palermo, Sicily. A fearful and unhappy Lot is rebuffing men of Sodom, who wish to "know" (have sex with) the two angels on the right. The Sodomites look like nice, rather attractive guys. The two angels are all atwitter, wide-eyed in anticipation of a romp with the Sodomites.

12th century mosaic in the Palatine Chapel, Norman Palace, Palermo. SODOMA SUBVERTITUR — The destruction of Sodom. Lot is fleeing Sodom, accompanied by his daughters, wife, and two angels. The woman in the center, Lot's wife, is about to be turned into a Pillar of Salt for looking back at Sodom. The angel on the right is also looking back, rather wistfully, but angels don't turn into pillars of salt.

Fire and Faggot

fagot or faggot (ME fagot, MF fagot, VL facus, Gk phakelos)

1. A bundle of sticks or twigs esp. as used for fuel, a fascine, or as a means of burning heretics alive. (Webster's 3rd Int.)

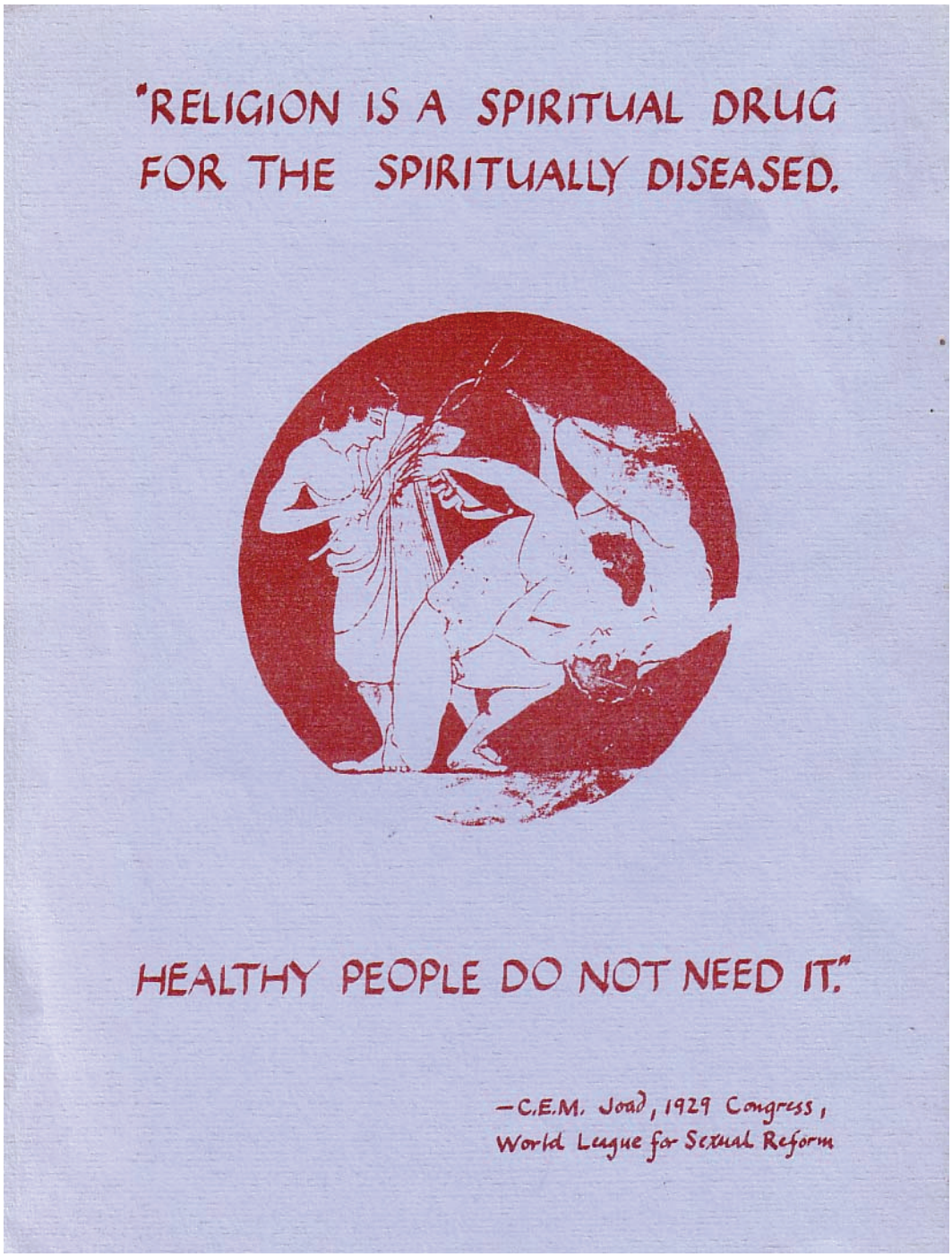
2. With special reference to the practice of burning heretics alive, esp. in phrase fire and faggot, and to fry a faggot, to be burned alive; also, to bear, carry a faggot, as those did who renounced heresy. Hence fig. the punishment itself. (Oxf. Eng Dict.)

3. The embroidered figure of a faggot, which heretics who had recanted were obliged to wear on their sleeve, as an emblem of what they had merited. (Oxf. Eng. Dict.)

4. A term of abuse or contempt applied to a homosexual.

"Homosexuality in the middle ages was treated as the ultimate crime against morality, and the standard definitions of it refer to the 'abominable' or the 'unspeakable' crime. ... The usual punishment was burning alive. (in The Spanish Inquisition by Henry Kamen)

GAY LIBERATION FRONT OF NEW YORK


"RELIGION IS A SPIRITUAL DRUG
FOR THE SPIRITUALLY DISEASED.
HEALTHY PEOPLE DO NOT NEED IT."
—C.E.M. Joad, 1929 Congress,
World League for Sexual Reform