CHAPTER I

THE ANCIENT WORLD:
THE TRIUMPH OF AUGUSTINE

There is nothing inherent or inevitable about a society’s sexual norms. A community’s attitudes about sex are the consequence of a complex constellation of social, economic, scientific, cultural, political, biological, demographic, psychological, historical, medical, moral, and religious influences.

Throughout human history, what one culture deems natural, others condemn as perverse. In most societies, it is the man who takes the sexual initiative, but in others, such as the Hopi, Trobriander, and Maori, the woman is expected to make the first move. In some cultures, such as ancient Greece and traditional Eskimo, various forms of adultery are accepted, usually for men, sometimes for women. Some societies condemn (and even criminalize) premarital, oral, and same-sex sex, but many permit and even encourage such practices. Among the Siwana of Africa, for example, men and boys are expected to engage in anal intercourse as a perfectly natural form of sexual expression.

Moreover, there is often a subtle cause-and-effect relationship between different sexual practices. Polygamous societies, for example, usually have high levels of same-sex conduct both because of the shortage of women for unmarried men and the inability of husbands to satisfy their multiple wives. Similarly, wives in polygamous societies tend to be especially creative about mastering autoerotic practices. Among the polygamous Azande, for example, wives are quite expert at fashioning ingenious masturbatory devices from sweet potato roots and bananas.

Even within a single culture there are often sharp divergences between what the society condemns as inappropriate, immoral, or “unnatural,” what it prohibits through the criminal law, and what it informally tolerates in practice. Although sex seems never to be a matter of indifference, the variations in sexual attitudes and
norms from one society to another differ so greatly that no single culture can be regarded as “representative.”

“THE THINGS OF APHRODITE”

A good example of a sexual culture quite different from our own is that of Greece from the sixth to the fourth century B.C., when Greek culture attained its most impressive achievements in literature, philosophy, politics, science, and the arts. With good reason, we admire the classical Greeks as the progenitors of much that is brilliant in Western culture.

It is striking that these same Greeks generally eschewed “the legal enforcement of moral or religious notions of right sexual conduct” and left virtually every form of consensual sex to the private sphere.* Classical Greek morality and law focused not on private “sin,” but on whether an individual’s conduct was unjust or harmful to others.

The Greek gods indulged freely and notoriously in sexual pleasure. Aphrodite was the goddess of love and sexual rapture. Sex was “ta aphrodisia” – “the things of Aphrodite.” During the festival of Aphrodite, her priestesses had sexual intercourse with strangers as a form of worship, and the citadel of Acrocorinthus (Corinth) had consecrated courtesans who (for a “contribution”) would expertly honor Aphrodite with worshipful visitors.

In the myth Pasiphaë, Poseidon, angry at the neglect of an offering, inspired Pasiphaë, the wife of King Minos of Crete, with a violent passion for a particularly handsome bull. Desperate, Pasiphaë enlisted the assistance of Dædalus, a famous architect, who constructed an ingenious cow costume made of wood and hide. Pasiphaë concealed herself in the disguise and was thus able to satisfy her lust for the bull. As a result of that escapade, she later gave birth to the Minotaur. This myth is one of many involving Greek gods and various animals. Zeus himself variously

* There were, of course, exceptions, some involving cases prosecutions for corruption of morals, the most famous of which was the trial of Socrates.
became a bull, a swan, or even rain – all with the goal of seducing a pretty mortal.

The phallus was a potent symbol of fertility, a theme of central importance in Greek religion. Large models of the erect penis were carried in procession at festivals of Dionysus, and a pillar topped by the helmet of Hermes adorned with an erect penis stood at nearly every Athenian’s front-door. Like the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Romans, Chinese, and Japanese, the Greeks did not associate such symbols with indecency.³

THE GREEKS APPROACHED the human form with no sense that nudity was inherently shameful. In gymnasia, public competitions, beauty contests, dance performances, and the temple of Venus nudity was a normal feature of Greek life.⁴ Moreover, vases and terra cottas from the early Classical period depicted explicit scenes of intercourse, anal intercourse, masturbation, and fellatio,⁴ and Greek comedy could be quite bawdy. Aristophanes in particular portrayed sexuality in all its many forms.⁴ In Knights, the first play he did on his own and his personal favorite, he depicted masturbation, fellatio, and male-male anal sex:

SECOND SLAVE: Very good! Now, as if you were masturbating, slowly say “wallets” first, then “go away,” and then start speeding it up fast.
FIRST SLAVE: Wallets, go away, wallets go away, let’s go AWOL!
SECOND SLAVE: There, wasn’t that nice?

* To some extent this varied from one region to another. Athens was more reticent than Sparta, for example, about female nudity. Also, while athletes were nude for competitions, women were not allowed either as competitors or spectators.

* Most of the extant pottery dates from the period between 575-450 B.C. and was found in Italy, where Etruscans imported them. See Robert F. Sutton, Jr., “Pornography and Persuasion in Attic Pottery,” in Amy Richlin, ed., Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome 7-8 (Oxford University Press 1992).
FIRST SLAVE: Zeus, yes, except that I’m afraid that doesn’t bode well for my skin.
SECOND SLAVE: How so?
FIRST SLAVE: Because masturbators get their skins peeled off.

FIRST SLAVE: You’re going to be top dog of them all, of the market, the harbors, and the Pnyx! You’ll trample the Council, dock the generals, put people in chains and lock them up, suck cocks in the Prytaneum!

PAPHLAGON: And when you were becoming a man, what sort of trade did you follow?
SAUSAGE SELLER: I sold sausages, and now and then I also sold my arse.

Erotic songs and poems were also quite popular in ancient Greece. In Sparta, it was traditional on the feast of Dionysius for poets and other speakers to excite the people with licentious ditties and jokes. The Greeks of the Classical period saw no need for state censorship of art, theater, song, or literature because it was improperly sexual.

Greek literature playfully described women masturbating, either by hand or with the assistance of a device adapted to the purpose. The Greeks called such instruments baubon or olisbos. In The Two Friends, or Confidential Talk, by Herondas, two young women, at first embarrassed, then with passion aroused, converse about these olisboi. At the end of the conversation, the girl without a baubon hurries off to acquire such a “treasure” for herself. As the tale suggests, the Greeks regarded masturbation as a natural source of sexual pleasure. Greek vases depict people using olisboi in every possible manner, position, and combination.

Although Greek men were generally free to pursue premarital and extramarital sexual pleasure, this same freedom did not extend to women – at least not women of the upper class. Such

* Women were not always subjected to a strict sexual code. Herodotus recorded, for example, that although married women in Thrace were kept under a strict eye, unmarried women had sex as they pleased. He
women were almost always under the thumb of a father, husband, or other male relative. Their husbands were selected for them, and wives were usually excluded from public life. Husbands did not eat with their wives and rarely saw them outside the bedchamber.

In a society in which extramarital sex was acceptable for men, it is not surprising that prostitution was both commonplace and legal. The high class courtesans, or *hetaerae*, were generally better educated and more cultivated than Greek women of the upper class, who typically led rather restricted lives. The *hetaerae* knew how to engage statesmen, artists, and military leaders in refined banter and were skilled in the arts of pleasuring men. There were also more common prostitutes, as described in the fourth century B.C. by Xenarchus, who observed that in Athens there were “very good-looking young things in the whore-houses, whom one can readily see basking in the sun, their breasts uncovered, stripped for action and drawn up in battle-formation by columns, from among whom one can select whatever sort one likes.” As we shall see, male as well as female prostitutes were common in Classical Greece.

A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE of classical Greek sexual life was the practice of pæderasty. Married and other adult men often had sexual relationships not only with the *hetaerae*, but with adolescent boys. Such relationships were consistent with the Greek ideal of

found this custom remarkable, however. *Histories* 5.6 (“remarkable customs”). Moreover, the Greeks did not think of women as nonsexual. To the contrary, there are several haunting and beautiful references in Greek literature to the pleasure a wife finds in the conjugal bed and the hot tears she sheds when it is no longer shared. See Maarit Kaimio, “Erotic Experience in the Conjugal Bed: Good Wives in Greek Tragedy,” in Nussbaum, *The Sleep of Reason* at 105 (cited in note xx). Still, women of all classes were often portrayed as insatiable creatures, immoderately fond of sex. In *Lysistrata*, for example, the women become as frantic as the men for a return to their normal sex lives *Lysistrata* 718-19 (“I can’t keep them away from their husbands any longer.”). The extreme of women’s uncontrolled frenzy is seen in the tragedies, most disturbingly in the *Bacchae*, where Euripides tells of a mother tearing her own son limb from limb. See especially lines 1300ff (the messenger’s speech).
beauty, which was represented most perfectly by the male youth. Solon, the poet and lawgiver, wrote of loving “a lad in the flower of youth, bewitched by thighs and by sweet lips.”9 Even the mighty gods of Olympus, from Zeus on down, were represented in classical times as pæderasts, and such historical figures as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Alcibiades, and Pindar all had pæderastic relationships. Greek boys were not taught to see themselves as “either” heterosexual or homosexual (a distinction that did not really exist for another two thousand years), for Greek culture generally acknowledged that such desires could naturally coexist in varying degrees, just as we might think of the desires to engage in a variety of sexual acts.

The emphasis placed on these relationships varied in the different Greek states. According to the German scholar Theodor Däubler, “Any attack on the love of boys in Sparta’s prime would have . . . been considered unwholesome,”10 and it was thought shameful in Crete for a well-born boy not to have a male lover. The customs in Athens were conflicting. On the one hand, sophisticated men sought out pretty young men for lovers; on the other hand, some fathers hired guards for their sons “as soon as they’re old enough to be attractive.”11

These pæderastic relationships did not involve children, but post-pubescent adolescents, usually between the ages of fifteen and nineteen. Sex with boys who had not reached puberty was punished, sometimes quite harshly. Greek pæderasty assumed voluntary relationships based on principles of trust and mutual affection. Plato observed that the adult in these relationships did “everything lovers do for the boys they cherish.”12 They showered them with gifts, verses, attention, and love. These relationships were not always sexual, but they often were, typically involving interfemoral or anal intercourse, with the adult in the “penetrating” role.13

Although this may all seem puzzling – even shocking – to us, most Greeks of this era apparently accepted such relationships as quite natural. Among other things, it was a way for adult men to mentor and socialize young men, particularly of the aristocratic class. Xenophon attested that in such relationships the older man
took “pains to develop the character of his pupil, his ‘beloved,’ and pass on everything he knew to the boy.” And according to the historian H. I. Marrou, the “desire of the older lover to assert himself in the presence of the younger, . . . and the reciprocal desire of the latter to appear worthy of his senior’s affection, . . . reinforced in both . . . the ideal of comradeship.” Education in ancient Greece implied “a personal union between a young man and an elder who was at once his model, guide, and initiator – a relationship on which the fire of passion smoldered.”

Pæderasty played a role not only in education, but in combat as well. As Plato’s Phaedrus observed in The Symposium, “A handful of lovers and loved ones, fighting shoulder to shoulder, could rout a whole army.” The Greeks believed that such relations strengthened the military, but they also made fun of them. The comic poet Euboulos said of the Greek soldiers who besieged Troy for ten long years that “they never saw a hetaira . . . and ended up with arseholes wider than the gates of Troy.” Yet the central patriotic myth about the founding of Athenian democracy involved a pæderastic couple – Harmodius and Aristogeiton – who slew a tyrant and perished in the effort. (Think how differently Americans might think about homosexuality if our founding story involved Washington and his male lover leading their troops across the Delaware.)

Why didn’t the Greeks generally condemn this practice? Of course, we might as easily flip the question and ask: Why would they? After all, same-sex sex has been known throughout human history and has been regarded as natural in many societies. But many, perhaps most Greeks went beyond the mere acceptance of this practice and often described it as a particularly admirable form of human relation. Greek poetry and literature frequently associated such relationships with love, honesty, integrity, honor, and courage, and many Greeks believed that these relationships embodied the only form of eroticism that could produce pure, enduring, and truly spiritual love. In part, of course, this was due to the prevailing view that women were inferior beings who were inappropriate objects of the finer feelings. A man who wanted to love truly had to love another man.
To be sure, there were critics of Greek pæderasty. Plato described it as degrading and brutish; Aristotle once characterized it as depraved; and Plutarch had no use for it. The practice was accepted in differing degrees in different places, times, and social classes. Although it was prevalent in the upper class, it was not a universal feature of Greek life.

Beyond the specific practice of pæderasty, most Greeks were ambivalent about same-sex sexual behavior. Xenophon expressed the prevailing opinion when he observed that such conduct is a part of “human nature.” But same-sex sexual conduct between adult males was not universally accepted. Such relations were certainly lawful, but some, perhaps many, Greeks frowned upon them because they placed an adult male (rather than a youth) in the submissive sexual role. To many Greeks, that seemed unnatural.

Aristotle offered a theory of same-sex desire. He explained that when men collect a “superfluity of semen” they desire ejaculation, which is triggered by the pressure of intercourse. But some men secrete “little or no semen.” As a consequence, “they suffer from unsatisfied desires, like women,” and therefore assume the submissive role in sexual intercourse. Although Aristotle waffled on same-sex conduct among males, on balance he considered such behavior “natural.” After all, “when nature is responsible, no one would call such persons immoral, any more than they would women because they are passive in intercourse rather than active.”

Aristotle’s comment contains a revealing observation, for in thinking about these questions the Greeks focused not on our contemporary distinction between homosexuals and heterosexuals, but on the quite different distinction between penetrative and submissive partners, which cuts across gender lines. The Greeks did not even have words to identify the categories “homosexual” and “heterosexual,” any more than we have words to capture the categories “people who enjoy fellatio” and “people who do not enjoy fellatio.” Same-sex sex was simply a type of sexual act. It did not define a type of person.
On the other hand, the Greeks had little tolerance for effeminacy, which they ridiculed as incompatible with a man’s role as defender of the state. The Greeks used the word *cinœdus* as a derogatory term for men whose feminine behavior and gestures incurred the community’s contempt. In *Clouds*, Aristophanes mocked conduct that would “make a man slack and effeminate,” and in *Thesmophoriazusae* he excoriated those adult men who “are men to women, and women to men.” Plato maintained that an adult man who adopted the passive role in same-sex intercourse could be rebuked for impersonating a female, which he deemed “against nature,” and Aristotle characterized such submission as unmanly.26

The Greeks also had a more negative view of male than female prostitution, and occasionally tried to regulate it. Athenian law held that a male citizen who sold himself sexually for money could not thereafter participate in political life. On the other hand, male prostitution was an ordinary and quite visible feature of everyday life in classical Athens, and the port of Piraeus teemed with brothels catering to every taste. As the historian David Cohen has observed, “there was no one ‘Athenian attitude’ towards homoeroticism.” Rather, there were “widely differing attitudes and conflicting norms and practices” that together reflected the “‘many-hued’ nature” of Greek homosexuality.27

In a community in which men often neglected their wives for boys or *hetaerae* and in which women were isolated from men, it is no surprise that *olisboi* were known to Greek women. (In Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, the women grieve the loss of the special leather *olisboi* that used to be made to perfection by the women of Miletus.) Female same-sex conduct, on the other hand, was apparently less common, and certainly less public, than male same-sex behavior. Images of sex between women appear on Greek vases and terra cottas, and, according to Plutarch, such relations were quite common in Sparta.

The poetry of Sappho, ancient Greece’s most brilliant woman poet, has usually been understood as a celebration of lesbian love. It has been said that Greek literature owes to Sappho, who was
born in 612 B.C. on the island of Lesbos, the “most memorable cries of love ever uttered by a human voice.” Although Sappho wrote more than twelve thousand lines of poetry, only seven hundred survive, many in barely intelligible fragments. Legend has it that her erotic poems were destroyed by Christian zealots. Because the Greeks of the classical era sought a stable rather than an expanding population, they employed many means of birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Men married relatively late, thus reducing the birth rate; coitus interruptus and anal intercourse were common forms of birth control; and women sought to avoid pregnancy by such methods as douching with urine and inserting lead ointment in the vagina. Abortion was common. The Greeks also used infanticide, primarily for children born out of wedlock.

At its core, the Greek approach to sexuality regarded erotic pleasure as a natural part of life that enriched rather than diminished the human experience. Although they often debated the value of sexual moderation, the Greeks neither inherited nor developed a belief that a divine authority had commanded the suppression of sex. For the Greeks, the concept of sexual “sin” simply did not exist.

THE ROMAN WAY

Roman sexual life was quite different from that of the Greeks. Indeed, the Romans deplored much about the Greeks, whom they regarded as “cunning, effeminate, and degenerate.” The early Romans were coarse, hard-working farmers and ruthless warriors. Whereas the Greeks gloried in the human form, the early Romans viewed nakedness as indecent. Roman literature is filled with condemnations of public nudity. Pliny the elder noted that, even with respect to statuary, “the Greek habit is to conceal nothing,” but “the Roman way . . . is to give the statues each a coat

* It is a tribute to the quality of Sappho’s poetry that it survived at all. For the most part, it survived because it was so widely quoted by others.
of armor.”

The satirist Lucilius argued that nakedness caused vice, and Cicero maintained that it triggered homosexuality, thus explaining the Greeks. As Cicero’s observation implies, the Romans also had a different view of same-sex sex. Such conduct was not unlawful in Rome, but neither was it particularly admired.

As in Greece, the phallus played a central role in Roman religious life. The Roman god Liber was honored by processions in which a large wooden phallus was carried on a cart and ultimately crowned by a matron. The phallus, which represented the divine creative force, was often worn as an amulet by women and as a charm on a necklace by children. Goblets shaped like phalluses were common. The god Priapus was portrayed with a giant phallus and statues of Priapus were often placed as guards in Roman courtyards and gardens.

Love had little to do with marriage in the early Roman republic. The match was usually made for economic reasons and the primary if not sole purpose of marriage was to produce heirs. A wife lived under the absolute authority of her husband, and the ideal role of the wife was steeped in austeritas — a kind of noble gravity. She was limited in her opportunities for culture and education and could not leave her house without her husband’s consent.

A bride’s virginity and a wife’s chastity were both expected and demanded. Although divorce was unknown in early Rome, a husband could have his wife put to death for adultery. As Cato the Elder explained: “If you take your wife in adultery you may freely kill her without a trial. But if you commit adultery, . . . she has no right to raise a finger against you.”

No one expected men to abstain from either premarital or extramarital sex. To the Roman, such a view would have seemed absurd. Writing a century after Cato the Elder, Cicero described as “out of touch” anyone who thought “young men should be forbidden to make love.” After all, he asked, “When was that not customary? When was it blamed? When was it not allowed?”

Prostitution flourished in Rome. As Seneca the Elder wrote, “he loves a prostitute — a usual thing.” Most prostitutes were
slaves, and every significant city had its brothels. As in Greece, high-class courtesans were common, but Roman courtesans were not as cultivated or well-educated as the hetaerae. Prostitution was taxed, and all prostitutes other than courtesans were required to register with the state. Although prostitution was not regarded as immoral, women of the aristocracy could not sell themselves for sex without risking a fine or banishment, and a free-born man could not marry a registered prostitute. Male prostitution was common, and male prostitutes even had their own holiday. Just as prostitution by women of the upper-rank was discouraged, a strong opprobrium attached to male citizens who became prostitutes.39

For the most part, neither Roman religion nor Roman law paid much attention to same-sex sex. Most Romans seem to have been largely indifferent to what we would today call one’s “sexual orientation.”40 There was a strong prejudice, however, against passive sexual behavior by adult male citizens (as distinct from non-citizens and slaves). The key distinction in Roman sexual culture was between those who penetrated and those who were penetrated, without regard to whether the latter were male or female. As in Greece, an adult male who accepted penetration invited scorn. Martial characterized a man’s desire to be penetrated as an “obscene itch.”41

The Latin word *mollis* (“soft”) was used to ridicule such men. The *mollis* included not only men who allowed themselves to be penetrated, but also those who used depilatories, curled their hair, and used lavish oils and perfumes. As one social critic biting observed, “The revolting pursuits of singing and dancing have taken hold of these effeminates; braiding their hair and thinning their voices to a feminine lilt, competing with women in bodily softness, beautifying themselves with disgusting finery.”42 Juvenal mocked the type:

* There is some evidence that both male-male and female-female marriages were recognized in Rome, but in context these references might merely be political slurs. Nero was said to have married men several times. On homosexual marriage in Rome, see Williams, *Roman Honosexuality* at 245-252 (cited in note xx).
Here’s a lad making his eyebrows long, with damp soot on a needle,
Here’s another taking a swig from a goblet shaped like a phallus,
Another one’s fixing his eyes, with a golden net on his long hair,
Here’s one in sky-blue checks, another in pale-green satin.

But while effeminacy might lay a man open to abuse, the traditional understanding among Roman men was that it was perfectly natural for a “real” man to penetrate boys and men as well as girls and women.44

THE END OF THE SECOND PUNIC WAR in 202 B.C. marked a profound change in Roman culture. After almost a century of sustained warfare, Rome finally dealt a fatal blow to Carthage. Rome now enjoyed the fruits of unprecedented power. It gained domain over extraordinary territory and wealth. Slaves by the millions flowed into Rome and the patrician class basked in its newfound opulence. During the Punic Wars, Roman citizen/soldiers were absent for years, even decades, at a time. In their absence, women began to gain some measure of independence. They were now able to obtain an education, learn music and poetry, make contracts, inherit property, and secure a divorce.

The Roman historian Velleuis Paterculus observed that “when the fear of Carthage was removed” the social transformation in Rome “was not a gradual process but a headlong rush. . . . Rome gave herself up . . . to pleasure instead of the use of weapons.”45 By the middle of the second century B.C., Pliny could report that the traditional chastity of women had disappeared. A century later, Livy commented that the influx of wealth had brought with it “the multiplication of pleasures.”46

In a famous jeremiad, Horace described the general state of affairs in Rome in 20 B.C.:
Each ripe maiden has learnt to love
soft Greek dances, and knows the arts
taught by shame, and is early practiced
body and soul in lewd loves.
then seeks younger adulterers,
while her husband’s at wine; she gives
any man the forbidden favors
hastily in the dark room. . . . 47

After the second century B.C., there was a sharp decline in both the number and stability of marriages. With the proliferation of slaves and the extended Pax Romana, Rome no longer felt the need to encourage childbearing to produce workers or soldiers. As families gained wealth, the concern over fragmenting a family’s estate through inheritance led the upper class to have fewer children. With changing expectations and opportunities, women had less need of marriage for economic security and men had less need of marriage for sex. Divorce became as common as marriage. It has been said that “women divorced their husbands because they were bored, husbands their wives because their wrinkles were beginning to show.”48

Same-sex sex became more prevalent, and male as well as female prostitution flourished. As sex outside marriage became more common for women as well as men, and as the desire for children decreased, Romans increasingly used contraception, abortion, and infanticide. Roman methods of contraception were as advanced as those that existed until the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the methods commonly used were coitus interruptus, anal intercourse, and wool plugs for the uterus impregnated with gummy substances or astringents, and possibly even a very early version of the condom.49

Concerned with the decline in Roman births, the Emperor Augustus enacted legislation in the final years of the first century B.C. imposing property disqualifications upon those who were childless, forbidding adultery by wives, and granting special privileges to parents with three or more children. In defense of this legislation, Augustus argued to the unmarried men of Rome, “What am I to call you? Men? You have not yet proved yourselves
to be men. . . . [Y]ou disdain to make Roman women the mothers of your children. . . . You are not such recluses that you live without women: not one of you eats or sleeps alone. All you wish is to have liberty for sensuality.”50 Wives convicted of adultery were to be publicly humiliated by being required to wear the toga, which previously had been worn only by prostitutes. But these laws had little effect. Cicero complained that what Rome needed was “less lust and larger families.”51 Despite Augustus’s pleas and Cicero’s protests, abortion became ever more prevalent. Juvenal, Rome’s most misogynist and cranky poet, observed that abortifacients had become so common that “hardly ever do you find” well-bred women giving birth.52

The radical shift in Roman sexual mores following the second Punic War was both condemned and celebrated. The historian Sallust complained that “women publicly sold their honor,”53 and Propertius described Rome as “a sink of lewdness.”54 Others, however, reveled in the new era. With more than a touch of irony, Horace cautioned would-be lovers to avoid married women:

Cease hunting married game: trouble and grief more often come to you than real enjoyment. . . .
I need not fear a husband interrupting me in my pleasure, shouting, smashing locks and the house a pandemonium, dogs barking, slams, cries, the woman jumping from the bed, the confidante weeping with terror, afraid for her back, the wife for her dowry, me for myself.55

His advice was to find either an unmarried woman or, better yet, a prostitute: “young men should drop in there [a brothel], rather than grind some husband’s private mill.”56 Similarly, the poet Plautus painted a picture of free-wheeling sensuality:

The highway’s free to all – walk where you like, but don’t make tracks through any walled preserve. Don’t touch a wife, a widow, or a virgin, a youth, or a freeborn child – take all the rest!57
ROMAN POETRY AND DRAMA in this era was filled with sexual innuendo, eroticism, and sensuality. Any suggestion that the law should interfere with free sexual (as opposed to political) expression would have been met with scorn. This was not the role of the state. This is not to say that the Romans had no sense of impropriety or bad taste. To the contrary, they clearly believed that certain words (not dissimilar to our own) and subjects were out of place in some circumstances.

Rome’s most famous poets spoke quite candidly of sexual matters. They wrote of licit and illicit love and of sexual antics of all kinds. Catullus could be quite crude when he responds to critics, “I will fuck you up the ass and make you go down on me,” whereas Virgil could write with painful intensity of Dido’s ill-fated love for Aeneas and Ovid could describe amorous relations with amused tenderness.

Ovid’s *Amores*, written in 43 B.C., conveyed a distinctive sensuality: “When she now stood naked before me, I could see no flaw in her whole person. What shoulders, what arms I saw and felt! The well-formed breasts, how fit to be caressed! How tense was her body beneath her swelling breasts, . . . how beautifully formed and wanton her buttocks, how youthfully slender her thighs! . . . Everything I saw was beyond reproach, and enchanted I pressed her naked form to my body.”

His *Art of Love* has been described as a “sophisticated manual of hedonism” designed to teach “the art of enjoying . . . a woman’s body as fully and delightfully as possible”:

And was that what overjoyed you, lascivious girl, those conquering fingers approaching your body? Trust me, love’s pleasure’s not to be hurried, but to be felt enticingly with lingering delays.

* For an example of sexual adventures in Roman Comedy, see Plautus, *The Pot of Gold*. Around line 800, Lyconides (young hero): “I confess I did your daughter wrong last Harvest Eve in a moment of intoxication and youthful ardour.” Euclio (girl’s father): “Oh my gracious goodness! You confess to such an abominable sin?” Translation by E.F. Watling (Penguin 1965).
When you’ve reached the place, where a girl loves to be
touched,
don’t let modesty prevent you touching her.
You’ll see her eyes flickering with tremulous brightness,
as sunlight often flashes from running water.
Moans and loving murmurs will arise,
and sweet sighs, and playful and fitting words.62

Ovid wrote playfully – and brilliantly – about homosexuality,
impotence, *ménages a trois*, and adultery, encouraging husbands
not to fret over much about a wife’s infidelity:

He’s so provincial who’s hurt by his wife’s adultery,
and he’s not observed the ways of Rome enough . . .
Why have beauty, if only chastity pleases you?
There’s no way they can go together.
If you’re wise, indulge the girl: forgo harsh frowns,
and don’t enforce the rights of an inflexible man. . . .63

Marcus Valerius Martialis, a bisexual poet who came to Rome
from Spain in 64 A.D., characterized his own work as “indelicate”:

For a whole night, I had a wanton mistress:
her lewd inventions were beyond compare.
Exhausted, then, I asked for something boyish,
she gave it me before I’d said my say.64

The *Satyricon* by Petronius, an unremitting work of irony and
satire, includes a tale of seduction told by an old man. When the
man was much younger and traveling in Asia he had been
charmed by the beauty of his host’s son. One night, he sneaked
into the boy’s bed to “give him pleasure for pleasure.” The boy at
first objected, threatening, “Go to sleep or I’ll tell my father!” But
the storyteller gradually overcame the youth’s reluctance, and the
boy “found a certain pleasure in” the man’s “naughty ways,”
eagerly whispering, “if you like, do it again”:

So . . . and after utilizing his kind permission, I slipped
off to sleep in his arms. But the stripling was not satisfied
with only one repetition. . . . [H]e woke me up from my slumbers, and, “Anything you’d like, eh?” said he. Nor was I, so far, indisposed to accept his offer. So working him the best ever I could, to the accompaniment of much panting and perspiration, I gave him what he wanted, and then dropped asleep again, worn out with pleasure. Less than an hour had passed before he started pinching me and asking, “Eh! why are we not at work?” Hereupon, sick to death of being so often disturbed, I flew into a regular rage, and retorted his own words upon him; “Go to sleep,” I cried, “or I’ll tell your father!”

Writers like Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Catullus, Tibullus, and Petronious presented male-male and female-female sex in a casual manner that exemplified later Rome’s relatively non-moral attitude towards such conduct. But in Rome, unlike Greece, such conduct was not idealized or romanticized. It was simply another form of sexual pleasure, like oral or anal sex, for those who chose to indulge in it.

Not surprisingly, early Christian writings attributed the fall of Rome in the fifth century A.D. to sexual depravity and moral degeneracy. In The City of God, for example, St. Augustine condemned Roman sexual customs. Although concerns about the moral slackness of Roman society, even among the Romans, long predated Augustine, these later attacks conveniently reinforced early Christian dogma. In fact, however, Rome’s standards of sexuality had little, if anything, to do with its collapse – more than six centuries after the second Punic War. Rather, a broad coalescence of factors – military, economic, administrative, demographic, political, and religious – contributed to the decline of the Roman Empire. The claim, however, reveals how vast a gap existed between the ancient world, particularly Greece and Rome, which generally regarded sex as a natural part of life, and the early Christian perspective, which viewed sex as an evil temptation that must be suppressed.
SUMERIANS, EGYPTIANS, PERSIANS, AND HEBREWS

THE SEXUAL BELIEFS of the early Christians evolved out of a complex swirl of religious, philosophical, and social practices and mores. In addition to the Greek and Roman cultures, several other traditions contributed to the foundation of Christian doctrine. The Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Persian, and Hebrew cultures all were precursors of Christianity.

In 3,000 B.C., some 2,500 years before classical Greece, the Sumerians established in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley of Mesopotamia the first well-integrated civilization. A largely agricultural people, the Sumerians accepted sex as a natural part of life. They saw no shame in sexual activity. Terra cottas from this era graphically depict intercourse, anal intercourse, prostitution, and same-sex sex. Erotic pleasure, me in the Sumerian language, was considered one of the divine powers. Sumerian literature candidly portrayed human love as intimately connected to both sexual pleasure and procreation. Temples were staffed by sacred prostitutes, who served as conjugal “intermediaries” between worshippers and the deity.

The Sumerians had no word for nudity, although they had a breathtaking number of terms for the sexual organs. Unlike the Romans and Greeks, who glorified the phallus, the Sumerians paid more attention to the female genitalia. In Sumerian poetry, the vulva is often equated with sweet foods, as in this royal love song of Shu-Suen from the Ur III period (c.2100 BC):

The beer of my [. . .], Il-Ummiya, the tapstress
is sweet
And her vulva
is sweet like her beer
and her beer is sweet! 68

Despite this admiration of the vulva, Sumer was a male-dominated society. A bride’s virginity was valued and her “best men” were accountable for her chastity. After the wedding night, they ceremoniously displayed the “bloody sheet” to prove they
had done their job well. Adultery with a married woman was regarded not as a sin, but as a trespass upon her husband’s property, like milking his cow. A man who committed adultery with a married woman would be castrated and disfigured or put to death; the wife would either be executed or have her nose cut off. As long as men avoided other men’s wives, however, they were free to do as they pleased. Same-sex sex was common, and anal intercourse was an accepted means of sex and contraception. Abortion and contraception were accepted practices.69

Like the Sumerians, the later Babylonians did not attach negative connotations to sex. It was a natural fact of life. Same-sex behavior was considered natural, and anal sex was a common means of contraception. Many figurines vividly depict both male-male and male-female anal intercourse, as do the texts of the era. Men were expected to engage in a wide range of sexual relations, and a husband’s extramarital liaisons were neither punishable nor condemned by society. A wife’s adultery, on the other hand, constituted an offense against her husband, and the wife’s punishment was severe. The Laws of Hammurabi stated that, “If a married lady is caught lying with another man, they shall bind them and cast them into the water.” However, if the husband took mercy upon his wife and wished “to let her live, then the king shall let [her] live.”70

Around 2000 B.C., the state began to regulate some forms of bestiality. The Code of the Nesilim provided that intercourse with a cow, pig, or dog was a capital offense. On the other hand, “if a man have intercourse with a horse or a mule, there is no punishment. But he shall not . . . become a priest.”71 (The distinction among the animals was apparently based on whether they were deemed sacred.)*

* The Hittites had similar rules about bestiality. The Assyrians, a more militaristic people, took a harsher view of some aspects of sexuality. Because the Assyrians were especially determined to expand their population, the Code of Assura, enacted in 1075 B.C., prohibited abortion and at least some forms of homosexuality. The law provided that “if a man have intercourse with his brother-in-arms, they shall turn him into a eunuch,” and that “if a woman of her own accord drop that which is in
Prostitution was pervasive in Babylon, and prostitutes were readily found in taverns, at harbors, or near city walls. Religious prostitutes – male, female, and neuter (eunuchs) – were associated with the temples of Ishtar (the goddess of love and sexuality). Herodotus described temple prostitution as a rite of passage in which every woman took part at least once in her life. If one was fortunate enough to have sexual relations with a priest or priestess, “the deprivations which beset him” would be kept away for an entire year. Babylonian texts describe sex in frank terms. The following illustrates the erotic nature of Babylonian love poetry:

My vulva is wet, [my vulva is wet],
I, the queen of heaven, [my vulva is wet],
Let the man on top [put his hand] on my vulva,
Let the potent man [put his hand] on my vulva.73

Similarly, Gilgamesh, the great Babylonian creation epic, describes Enkidu’s encounter with a woman:

She let fall her scarf
And revealed her vulva, so that he could enjoy her.
Boldly she kissed him on the mouth [“took his breath”]
And threw off her garments.
Then he stretched out on top of her,
And she showed him, this savage,
What a woman can do,
While he fondled and petted her. 74

The ancient Egyptians “greatly admired the penis.”75 Egyptian statuary, such as those of the god Min, often depict the god holding his huge, erect penis. Another god, Bes, was a dwarf with a disproportionately large penis. The Egyptians used large her,” they shall impale her and “not bury her.” Code of Assura §§ I.20, I.52. See Bullough, Sex, Society, and History at 30 (cited in note xx); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 58 (cited in note xx); See E. Neufeld, trans., The Hittite Laws 53, 57, 188 (Luzan and Co. 1951). Rechtsgeschichte book 447-448
puppet phalluses carried and “operated” by several women in parades celebrating Dionysus. The goddess Hathor epitomized female sexuality and was believed to have special powers to excite male desire. The offerings presented to Hathor at her shrines and temples included images of nude women, figures of the female genitals, and model phalluses. In Egyptian religious observances, women often played aggressively sexual roles, exposing their genitals, for example, in order to excite the gods.

The Egyptians had no aversion to incest in their ruling families, particularly among half-siblings. Anal and oral intercourse was common in Egypt, though the passive role in male same-sex anal intercourse was looked down upon because of its submissive posture. We know relatively little about female same-sex activity in ancient Egypt, although a dream book suggested that a woman who dreams of having sex with another woman will come to a bad end. Bestiality seems to have been accepted, perhaps because Egyptian gods were often depicted as having human bodies and animal heads. Herodotus chronicled seeing sexual relations between humans and animals in fifth century B.C. Egypt. He reported, for example, “a woman having open intercourse with a he-goat.”

The few legal restrictions on sexual conduct in Egypt, such as the condemnation of adultery by married women, were justified not in moral terms, but as necessary to protect the public order and the rights of husbands. A man who committed adultery with a married woman received “a thousand blows with the rod” and the wife had her nose cut off. Married men, on the other hand, were free to commit adultery with unmarried women, and many married men had concubines. Although the Egyptians had some reservations about abortion, contraception and abortion were both widely practiced. For contraception, the Egyptians used *coitus interruptus*, a spongy fabric inserted into the vagina to block the sperm, and a range of different spermicides, such as pulverized crocodile dung and a mixture of honey and sodium carbonate.

**UNDER CYRUS, THE PERSIANS** conquered most of the Near East in the sixth century B.C. Persian culture was shaped by the
Zoroastrian religion, which was premised on the teachings of the prophet Zarathushtra, who lived between 1500 and 1000 B.C. After seeing widespread misery and suffering in the world, Zarathushtra went into seclusion in the mountains of western Iran to seek wisdom. There he encountered the one god, Ahura Mazda, who shared with him secrets of the universe. Perfect, changeless, and transcendent, Ahura Mazda, “The Wise Lord,” was the supreme being through whom everything exists.

As Ahura Mazda’s prophet, Zarathushtra introduced into the world a new spiritual order and the good tidings of the coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness. He traveled the length and breadth of Iran preaching his new wisdom, finally converting the ruling house of Persia. Zarathushtra taught that there is an ongoing battle throughout the universe between good and evil, and that any deviation from the path of righteousness spells man’s destruction. He exhorted his hearers that every individual is free to choose for himself the path of righteousness or the path of wickedness. Man is thus the arbiter of his own destiny. He is responsible for the moral choices he makes and for the consequences of those choices. With strict discipline, man must subjugate his passions, eradicate evil thoughts from his mind, and conquer the animal within him. His allegiance to goodness must be constantly manifested by good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Zarathustra preached that if man resists temptation and makes the right choices, he will reap his reward in heaven. If not, he will find only retribution. The ultimate triumph of righteousness would usher in the Kingdom of Righteousness.

The generally permissive sexual beliefs and practices of Mesopotamia and Egypt were severely challenged by the invading Persians. Because man could serve righteousness and assail wickedness only with self-discipline, Zoroastrianism demanded that man rigidly control his desires. A man who voluntarily emitted semen other than to procreate was beyond atonement.

Zoroastrianism viewed female sexuality as the critical theological link between sexual desire and evil. It therefore condemned women as temptresses and demons. Although
women were necessary for reproduction, their allure and sexuality were otherwise dangerous seductions to evil. As Ahura Mazda is said to have admonished women, “I created you . . . with an orifice close to your buttocks, and sexual intercourse seems to you like the sweetest food is to the mouth.”

Zoroastrianism treated anal intercourse, whether by two men or by a man and a woman, with particular severity. The souls of those who committed it would be forever excluded from heaven. “Unnatural intercourse” was an even more “heinous” sin than slaying “a righteous man.” A person guilty of this act was an outlaw who could be killed by anyone. Zoroastrianism commanded that “if any one . . . shall see them in the act [of anal intercourse], and is working with an axe, it is requisite for him to cut off the heads or to rip up the bellies of both.”

Most of our knowledge of the early Hebraic tradition comes from the Old Testament and the Talmud. Hebrew culture first came into being between 2000 and 1500 B.C. As depicted in the Bible, sex was less about lust or romance than about political and economic relations. Sexual standards focused not on sin, but on social structure and justice, and sexual relations played a key role in molding the society of ancient Israel. Marriage was a carefully negotiated covenant between two families who had decided to bind themselves to one another. Men and women rarely chose their own marriage partners. This was the responsibility of the father of each household.

Hebrew culture favored early marriage and many children. Monogamy was the primary form of marriage, but polygamy was not uncommon. Solomon, who ruled from roughly 955 to 935 B.C., was reputed to have had 700 wives. Polygamy was especially familiar in ruling families, because of the need to negotiate alliances with neighboring states. In these harems, wives competed not just for the sexual attentions of the ruler, but also for the economic interests of the state of their parents.

The bride was ordinarily expected to be a virgin, and it was the responsibility of her father to ensure his daughter’s virginity by restricting her movements and associations. The bride’s
virginity was taken as a solemn indication of the stability of her father’s household and as an assurance that the covenant between the two families would be productive. If the bride’s father warranted her virginity, and she turned out not to be a virgin, her father forfeited his land and children and the men of the community were obliged to stone the bride to death. This was not a sexual offense, but a grievous species of fraud.81

The Biblical command to “be fruitful and multiply” played a central role in shaping the Hebraic sexual culture. A small, insular community that practiced neither intermarriage nor the conversion of outsiders, living in the midst of much larger and more powerful nations, at a time of rampant disease and plague, needed to procreate to survive. The biblical story of Sarah reveals the importance of reproduction in Hebrew society. When Sarah, the wife of Abraham, proved unable to have children, she provided Abraham with a surrogate to bear his sons and daughters. In this tradition, a wife was not shamed by designating a surrogate, because the arrangement was designed to protect her honor.82

As Song of Songs and Proverbs suggest, the ancient Hebrews embraced sexual pleasure, particularly within marriage. Talmudic writers went to great lengths to specify the minimal obligations in marital sexual relations and the Scriptures specified that husbands and wives had a duty to satisfy each other’s sexual needs. As stated in Proverbs, referring to a husband’s wife, “May you ever find rapture in loving her.”83 Moreover, the Old Testament had no strictures against oral or anal sex, and it did not prohibit sexual relations between unmarried persons.*

* The Talmud reflected a division of opinion about non-marital sex. The Babylonian sources in the Talmud show more acceptance of non-marital sex than the Palestinian sources. See Michael L. Satlow, Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality 320 (Scholar’s Press 1995). The Old Testament does express concern about intercourse with a virgin. If a man is caught doing this, he must pay the woman’s father fifty shekels and marry the woman. Deuteronomy 22:28-29 says that if a woman is found not to be a virgin on her wedding day, she must be stoned to death. But nothing in the Old Testament prohibits non-marital sex as such, and once a woman is not a virgin the Old Testament does not in any way
The offense of adultery, on the other hand, could result in the death penalty, but only if committed by a married woman. Adultery by a husband with an unmarried woman was not considered adultery. (A woman who had sex with a married man, however, was considered to have committed an act of “moral impurity.”) The prohibition of a wife’s adultery addressed the need to protect a family’s inheritance from illegitimate heirs. The Old Testament does not treat the fetus as a person and does not prohibit voluntary abortion by the mother. To the extent the ancient Hebrews recognized restrictions on sexuality, they tended to be ritualistic or pragmatic, rather than moral, in nature.

The biblical stories of Onan and Sodom have played a significant role in the evolution of Christian doctrine, and they therefore deserve a careful look. The story of Onan has been used to teach that masturbation is a sin; the story of Sodom has given us a name for unnatural intercourse. Both stories have arguably been misinterpreted.

The story of Onan reveals the importance of both procreation and the preservation of patrimony under Hebrew law. Under the Hebraic practice of “levirate” marriage, if a married man died without children, his brother was obliged to cohabit with his widow in order to produce a child. This practice, which flowed from the notion that marriage was not just to an individual but to a family, served several purposes. It perpetuated the name of the deceased brother, prevented the need for the widow to marry an outsider, and preserved within the family the inherited land of the deceased. The first-born son of the widow with the deceased’s brother was legally considered the deceased’s child.

Onan was Judah’s son, Er’s brother, and Tamar’s brother-in-law. After Er died, Judah instructed Onan to fulfill the levir’s responsibility. According to Genesis, Onan was angry that his and Tamar’s descendants “would not be counted as his own; so whenever he had relations with his brother’s widow, he wasted

condemn non-marital intercourse. The emphasis is on a woman’s virginity, not on non-marital sex as such.
his seed on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother.” By taking this action, Onan violated the levirate custom, sentencing Tamar to die as a widow without a child and denying his deceased brother his right to have his name and inheritance preserved. Onan’s action “greatly offended the Lord, and the Lord took his life.” 86

The essence of this story, and its core meaning for the ancient Hebrews, focused on Onan’s refusal to comply with the demands of levirate marriage. The ancient commentaries understood the episode as teaching fundamental lessons about obedience to the law, complying with God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply,” and honoring one’s family. Later generations, however, particularly Christian theologians, construed the story as a divine condemnation of coitus interruptus, contraception, and masturbation. Indeed, it is because of this distortion that masturbation came to be known as “onanism.” In fact, however, the ancient Hebrews prohibited neither masturbation nor contraception.87

THE STORY OF SODOM takes place in the time of Abraham. Sodom is first mentioned in Genesis in connection with Lot’s choosing a place to live. He is warned that “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.” Several chapters later, the Lord tells Abraham that because the sins committed in Sodom were “very great” he would have to destroy it. Abraham pleads with the Lord not to “destroy the righteous with the wicked,” and after some haggling the Lord agrees to spare Sodom if it contains ten righteous citizens.

Later, two angels arrive in Sodom and they are taken in by Lot, who “made them a feast.” The citizens of Sodom then surround Lot’s house and demand, “Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.” Lot replies, “I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man, let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing, for . . . they came under the shadow of my roof.”
When the mob attempts to break down the door to Lot’s house, the angels “smote” them with blindness. The following morning, the angels warn Lot to leave the city with his wife and daughters. The Lord then “rained upon Sodom . . . brimstone and fire” and destroyed both Sodom and its sister city, Gomorrah, “and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”

This story has been interpreted in Christian theology as revealing God’s condemnation of homosexuality. But that is almost certainly a misreading of the text and the other Biblical references to the event. The strongest support in the text for the anti-homosexual interpretation is the use of the word “know” (“that we may know them”) and Lot’s offer to send out his daughters in place of the strangers. The word “know” appears almost a thousand times in the Old Testament, and rarely means “know” in the “biblical sense.” The story of Sodom is the only place in the Old Testament in which the word “know” is said to refer to same-sex conduct. The sentence makes perfect sense if “know” means “know,” as in “see who they are.” Moreover, even if, as seems likely, the word “know” in this context means “in the biblical sense,” the story is clearly about rape (whether of the strangers or of the daughters) and inhospitality, not homosexuality.

Interestingly, a passage in Judges tells a story almost identical to the story of Lot. An old man in Gibeah takes in a stranger, the townsfolk gather at his door and demand that he “Bring the man out that we may know him,” and the old man offers his virgin daughter instead. When the crowd refuses the daughter, the guest shoves his concubine out to them. She is raped and abused all night, and found dead on the doorstep in the morning. This story has consistently been understood as a moral about hospitality, having nothing to do with homosexuality.

Although it may seem strange to us that such value is placed on hospitality, in the desert hospitality is a necessity of life. As the French Dominican scholar Roland de Vaux has explained, among nomads hospitality is not only a virtue, but a moral obligation. In the Hebraic culture, “the guest is sacred,” and “both Lot and
Gibeah are ready to sacrifice the honor of their daughters in order to protect their guests” from physical violence, “and the reason is stated in both cases: it is because the latter have come under their roof.”

The story of Sodom can plausibly be interpreted as condemning homosexuality, but such an interpretation misses its real point. Indeed, there are several subsequent references to Sodom in the Old Testament, none of which invokes homosexuality. When the prophet Ezekiel lists the sins of Sodom, he never mentions homosexuality: “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me.” Similarly, the New Testament makes several references to Sodom, none of which mentions homosexuality. Jesus himself apparently believed that Sodom was destroyed for the sin of inhospitality: “Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet, Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that site.”

As the scholar Mark Jordan has explained, no text in the New Testament “determines the reading of Sodom as a story about same-sex copulation.” To the contrary, the New Testament generally comprehends “that the sin of the Sodomites was some combination of arrogance and ingratitude.”

The early rabbinical texts clearly rejected the idea that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because their inhabitants were homosexual. Rather, they suggest that God rained “brimstone and fire” down upon the residents of these cities because they were greedy, selfish, cruel, and inhospitable. The eminent Jewish historian Josephus described the Sodomites as arrogant, boastful, insolent, and hostile to strangers. Later Talmudic scholars characterized them as haughty, selfish, vindictive, and xenophobic. To illustrate the Sodomites’ hatred of travelers, one ancient scholar suggested that if a wayfarer was too long for his
bed, the Sodomites would lop off his feet.’ Another ancient scholar reported that the Sodomites had burned a young girl to death because she had shared flour with a starving stranger. It was for these abominations that they were destroyed.\textsuperscript{95} That the story of Sodom became the root justification of the Christian denunciation of “sodomy” is a \textit{tour de force} of creative interpretation.\textsuperscript{96}

None of this is to suggest that the ancient Hebrews shared the Greek or even the Roman view of homosexuality. There is little evidence about the Hebraic attitude toward homosexuality before the Jewish exile, which followed the Assyrian conquest of Israel in the eighth century B.C. Thereafter, however, as the Israelites were dispersed and forced to live among the Gentiles, they increasingly sought ways to distinguish themselves from others in order to preserve their distinctive identity and existence. The Hebrews regarded paganism as a cult of evil spirits. As they spread throughout the Greco-Roman world, they were a race apart. Everywhere, they refused to assimilate, but adhered to their own – often peculiar – beliefs and practices.

This insistence on maintaining their separateness, and on rejecting the dominant Hellenist and Roman cultures, led post-exilic Jews to promulgate hundreds of biblical rules and rituals. In addition to the custom of male circumcision, these commands dealt with such diverse matters as beard and hair styles, dietary laws, wizards, the construction of columns, menstruation, idolatry, astrology, trances, treatment of the dead, charity, the shearing of sheep, grape picking, burning incense, eating raw meat, wearing tefillin, tattoos, not eating leftovers, theft, fraud, mourning, birds, eunuchs, slavery, muzzling oxen, utensils for eating, fruit trees, and latrines.\textsuperscript{97}

Not surprisingly, in a society attempting to preserve itself from the casual hedonism of its neighbors, among this multitude of rules were several dealing with sex, including adultery, incest, bestiality, and homosexuality. Thus, \textit{Leviticus}, the only place in the Old Testament that expressly mentions same-sex acts, provides:

\textsuperscript{1} He may have gotten the idea from the Greek myth of Procrustes, who either cut down or stretched his guests so they would fit their bed.
“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” And: “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.”

“Abomination” means impurity, and scholars differ on how to interpret impurity. While the other sexual acts listed in this verse are repeatedly condemned elsewhere in the Old Testament, this is the only place to mention same-sex behavior. Moreover, the Jewish religion was radically different from all others at the time, and one way (among many) to recognize and enforce that difference was to ban same-sex conduct. Although it is difficult to determine precisely when Leviticus was written (a matter that is hotly contested) or how much contact the Jews may have had with the Greek world before Leviticus was written, it is clear that the Jews despised the Greeks and that their desire both to condemn Greek values and to set themselves apart from the Gentiles could easily have been “expressed in an antagonism to homosexuality.” In any event, and whatever the origins of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, there is no evidence that the ancient Hebrews ever mounted a campaign against homosexuality or ever seriously punished homosexual conduct under Jewish law

A better reflection of post-exilic Hebrew values is that even at this difficult time in their history, the Jews generally did not prohibit premarital sex, oral or anal sex, masturbation, prostitution, contraception, pornography (except insofar as it was blasphemous), or lesbianism. The Hebrews believed “that when God looked on the world He had created, He said it was good, and that man should embrace it with praise and thanks.” Much of the Old Testament’s greatest poetry celebrates love and the pleasures of sexuality. It contains “no paeans to celibacy, no exhortations to preserve virginity,” and the “sin of Adam and Eve was not sex but rebellion against God.”
EARLY CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIANITY WAS NURTURED in Judaism’s cradle, but many other influences helped shape the beliefs and doctrines of the early Christians. The world in which the Church first made headway was desperate for “assurance against death, redemption from evil,” and cleansing of the soul. By the first century A.D., the classical gods of Greece and Rome had lost their power to inspire, and worship of the emperor, promoted by Augustus and his successors, gave less and less comfort to those who longed for a sense of meaning in an ever more uncertain world.

During the first five centuries of the Christian era, a vast gulf evolved between the ancient and Christian conceptions of sex. In antiquity, sex was generally regarded as a natural part of life deserving of appreciation for its unique capacity to give pleasure and generate new life. By the end of the fifth century, however, western Christianity had come to see sex as inherently unspiritual and negative, as an evil temptation that must be conquered. The early Christians sought redemption through renunciation of the world and subjugation of the body. Every means was employed, including sustained prayer, fasting, solitude, mortification of the flesh, and above all, sexual continence. This emphasis on sexual asceticism did not originate with Judaism, but with powerful countercurrents of paganism and Hellenistic philosophy.

JESUS SAID LITTLE ABOUT SEX. He criticized adultery (although showing compassion for an adulteress), opposed divorce in the absence of adultery, and warned in the Sermon on the Mount that “whosoever look on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Later Christian theologians appropriated this verse as “proof” that Jesus condemned sexual desire. But, in context, the text clearly refers to offenses against the marital relation rather than to sexual desire in general.

In another, even more ambiguous, passage, the disciples asked Jesus whether it was “not good to marry.” Jesus replied that “all men cannot receive” such an injunction, adding that “there are
some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” 106 Some Christian theologians interpreted this reference to men making “themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” as implying that service to God demands a self-imposed abstinence from sex. Others interpreted it more literally and castrated themselves. Apart from these cryptic references, Jesus was silent on the subject of sex.107

A central question of the apostolic age concerned the continuity of the Christian Church with Judaism. From the beginning, the Church was profoundly aware of its direct connection to the values, stories, and prophecies of the Old Testament. The early Church drew its membership primarily from the Jewish community, and Christianity appeared at first as just one more sect within the heterogeneous Hebrew culture. But unlike the Jews, who struggled to avoid assimilation and maintain their separate identity, the Christians were determined to convert nonbelievers.

Thus, the very same rituals and idiosyncrasies that had enabled the Hebrews to remain apart now posed an obstacle to those who sought to bring men to Christ, for the pagans scorned Judaism’s circumcision of males, dietary laws, dress codes, and myriad other peculiarities that the Jews had designed to keep them separate from the Gentiles. This led to a bitter dispute between those Christians who insisted on maintaining a faithful adherence to strict Hebrew tradition and those who urged a radical abandonment of the Old Testament.

Paul of Tarsus, a zealous and Romanized Jew who became an intensely religious Christian, found a middle road. Dedicating himself to bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul advocated the rejection of traditional Hebrew rituals, but acceptance of the Old Testament as a holy book to be construed in the light of Jesus. To bring converts to Christianity, Paul interpreted the Mosaic Law not as “God’s permanent will,” but as a “temporary and provisional measure given by God to a hard-hearted people to prevent lapses into worse things.” The Old Testament, in other
words, implied “a negative judgment on Judaism.” These compromises with Hebrew tradition alienated the “Jewish Christians,” who saw Paul and his followers as “dangerous trimmers” who would cast aside “the unalterable religion revealed to Moses” in order to make their faith more palatable to pagans. After a furious debate, the issue was finally resolved at the Council of Jerusalem in 49 A.D., which concluded that pagan converts to Christianity would not be bound by the requirements of Mosaic Law. In short order, the Jewish Christian community disappeared.\textsuperscript{108}

Although St. Paul jettisoned most of the commands of Mosaic Law, he advocated a very specific message about sexual conduct. In his \textit{Epistle to the Romans}, he condemned the “vile affections”\textsuperscript{109} of the idolaters: “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 toward one another, men with men working that which is unseemly.”\textsuperscript{110} Not only was same-sex behavior condemned, but, Paul added in a letter to the Corinthians, that anyone who engaged in fornication (non-marital intercourse) would not “inherit the kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{111}

Paul, who was celibate himself, preached that complete sexual abstinence was the ideal course for a good Christian, but he accepted some need for compromise:\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{quote}
It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence; and likewise also the wife unto her husband. . . . For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.
\end{quote}
Paul’s message was a departure from the prevailing view of the ancient world, for he unequivocally declared non-marital sex immoral and same-sex sexual sex “unnatural.” On the other hand, Paul did not restrict marital sex only to procreation and did not condemn sexual pleasure within marriage. Not only did he implicitly acknowledge the naturalness of sexual desire, but he emphasized that husband and wife “must not refuse each other.” As for procreation, Paul thought it essentially irrelevant, because the Kingdom of God was imminent. As he put it, “the time is short.” “Neither in Saint Paul’s teachings nor in the New Testament as a whole,” wrote the English clergyman Derrick Sherwin Bailey, “was there any comprehensive or systematic treatment of sexual matters” or morals.

With the passing of the apostolic age and the final destruction of Jerusalem as the Jewish capital in 135 A.D., the center of gravity of the expanding Christian Church gradually shifted to the great cities of Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. In general, the Roman Empire was tolerant of minority religions, as long as they did not threaten Roman rule. But unlike Judaism, which posed no threat to the state, Christianity was determined to convert nonbelievers. As it succeeded, it came increasingly to be seen as a danger. The Empire was not pleased at the prospect of losing control of its subjects’ religion, and a challenge to the pagan emperor-cult was not only sacrilegious, but seditious. By the end of the first century, the persecution of Christians had begun in earnest.

At the same time that it struggled to survive persecution, the Church had to wrestle with fundamental questions of internal authority, and it was in the second century that the patterns of Christian doctrine began to emerge. Christian theology evolved in the complex crucible of the Roman Empire, and as the early Christians moved beyond the ambit of the Jewish synagogues they found themselves in a twilight world of Hellenistic philosophy, pagan mythology, and Gnostic mystery.

During this pivotal stage in the development of Christian theology, the Church Fathers had to contend with several rival
philosophical/religious movements, each of which left a significant mark on Christian doctrine: Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and Manichæanism.

Stoicism had its roots in the philosophy of the ancient Cynics, who taught that happiness is independent of physical circumstances. The Stoics refined this into a belief that “no man is free who is not a master of himself,” and that mastering desires enabled clear reasoning. Anything that tempted man’s flesh or impaired his self-control might lead to immoderation and irrationality, and therefore triggered special concern. Musonius Rufus, in the first century A.D., wrote that the only purpose of sex was procreation and that sex for any other purpose, including pleasure, was reprehensible.119

Epicurus, the fourth century B.C. philosopher, maintained that “sexual intercourse never benefited any man,”120 and his follower Carus Lucretius argued three centuries later that sexual desire was a sickness that man should avoid entirely.121 Seneca condemned as “shameful” too much love of one’s wife, warning that “a wise man ought to love his wife with judgment, not affection,” and should “not be borne headlong into copulation.”122 Stoicism had little impact on the Greeks or Hebrews, but it had some appeal to the Romans. It was the early Christians, however, who found much that was congenial in Stoic ethics. As the jurist and philosopher John Noonan has observed, “Stoicism was in the air the intellectual converts to Christianity breathed” and “half consciously, half unconsciously, they accommodated some Christian beliefs to a Stoic sense.”123

Neo-Platonism was founded by Plotinus, a third-century A.D. Greek-speaking Egyptian who was one of the most influential thinkers of his era. Plato had taught that the soul is an immaterial entity that existed prior to the body and will continue to exist long after the body’s extinction. Building upon Plato’s dualist distinction between the material and immaterial worlds, Plotinus argued that although the material world is evil, it nonetheless reflects an intelligible order that is held together by Nature, which itself is good. He maintained that pervading all reality is the longing of man for union with the One, and that the human soul is
challenged to undertake this ascent. To attain this mystical goal, man must first free himself from his body and from the allure of sensory perceptions. Thus, like the Stoics, the Neo-Platonists urged abstinence from all sensual pleasures.¹²⁴

Gnosticism was perhaps the most potent force contesting the rise of Christianity. The Gnostics were a collection of highly decentralized and diverse sects who shared a common set of mystical beliefs that were themselves derived from Iranian mythology, Jewish mysticism, Greek and Chaldean philosophy, pagan magic, and Christian texts. Like the Neo-Platonists, the Gnostics shared the pagan belief in dualism. They preached that there was an infinite and unbridgeable gap between the spiritual and material worlds.

The material world, which came into existence as the result of some catastrophic primeval disorder, or fall, in the higher realm, was inherently evil. The Gnostics taught that man possesses a spiritual essence that yearns to shed the material world and to return to its true home. Such redemption could be achieved only by gaining secret knowledge, or gnosis, and opening one’s eyes to the truth of man’s miserable condition. The secret the Gnostics claimed to know was a creation myth that purportedly explained man’s pathetic and meaningless existence. Only the initiates had access to this knowledge.

These views led most Gnostics to a rabidly ascetic life, with rules for the mortification of the flesh and sexual continence, so the soul might be liberated from the bonds of the material world. These Gnostics maintained that man will die as long as women bear children. Eternal life will come only when man ceases procreation. To support this view, they pointed to Jesus, who neither married nor had children, and to Paul’s statement, “It is good for man not to touch woman.” Thus, Gnostic leaders like Marcion and Justin Cassianus taught that the only way to defeat death was to forswear marriage, disavow sexual intercourse, and abjure procreation. The New Testament, they argued, demanded universal celibacy as the way to salvation. Other Gnostics went so far as to call for castration as a fundamental act of faith.³²⁵
The various strands of Gnosticism exerted a powerful pull on early Christians, and second and third century Christian theologians launched a furious counterattack. Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, characterized Gnosticism as “a ragbag of heathen speculations with bits taken from different philosophers to dress out a bogus, anti-rational philosophy.” Other Christians, however, pursued the course of co-option and attempted to meld Gnostic and Christian beliefs. Justin Martyr, for example, who converted to Christianity in the middle of the second century, echoed the Gnostic view that individuals seeking to achieve salvation should forego all sexual relations, even within marriage. At one point, he described approvingly a Christian youth who had asked doctors to emasculate him to ensure his bodily purity. Taitian, a disciple of Justin Martyr, taught that sexual intercourse had been invented by the Devil, and his followers characterized marriage as a polluted and foul way of life. Clement of Alexandria added that a man who married “for the sake of begetting children must practice continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife” and so that “he may beget children with a chaste and controlled will.”

Manichæanism arose out of the teachings of the third century prophet Mani, who lived in southern Babylonia and was crucified in 277 A.D. Mani’s religion embodied elements of Zoroastrian, Greek, Gnostic, Christian, and even Buddhist philosophy. A radically dualistic religion, Manichæanism held that “in the beginning there were two substances divided from each other.” One was “the kingdom of light,” the other “the land of boundless darkness.” The Prince of Darkness and his demon sons attacked and vanquished the Kingdom of Light. The Prince of Darkness then copulated with his wife and produced man, who is fallen and lost. Mani taught that when man procreates he replicates the forces of evil and chains his soul to the Devil. The only path to salvation was to withdraw completely from the temptations of the material world and the contaminations of the flesh. Above all, procreation was defiling and must be shunned. From the end of the third century, Manichaeanism swept like a firestorm across Egypt, Palestine, Greece, Asia Minor, North Africa, and Europe.
The Church’s defeat of these rivals was among the most critical victories in Christian history. But in the process of beating back the forces of Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and Manichæanism, the Church absorbed many of their values. By the end of the third century, the Church’s attitude towards sex had been more profoundly shaped by the influences of pagan mysticism and dualism than by the more earthy view of the Old Testament.130

During the first century A.D., the Apostolic Fathers, those early Christian writers who had had personal connections to the Apostles, were not much interested in the concept of sexual sin. For the most part, they emphasized Jesus as “the lawgiver, the bestower of knowledge, immortality and fellowship with God.”131 The Church’s concern with sin came later, when it wrestled with the beliefs of Gnosticism and Manichaeanism.

During this era, the Church’s Scriptures consisted exclusively of the Old Testament, which the early Christians construed as a Christian book that spoke of Christ on every page. The writings that eventually became known as the New Testament had not yet been elevated to canonical Scripture. A key question in the middle of the second century was whether Christians could simply pick and choose from among the many different doctrines, interpretations, and stories that were then floating in the air, or whether they were bound to certain fixed texts that would be granted special status by the Church. The first formal suggestion of a canon of New Testament writings did not occur until the middle of the second century, and the final designation of a fixed list of books was not complete until the sixth century.

In the meantime, the Church had to settle on an approved means of Scriptural interpretation. If the Old and New Testaments comprised the Word of God, how was the Word to be construed? After all, the Church had to justify its abandonment of most of the Mosaic Law, including some six hundred rituals and restrictions commanded by God in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. The early Christians concluded that “the fatal error of the Jews was to let themselves be beguiled by the literal sense of Scripture.”132 The
Bible could not be taken literally, but must be interpreted through a process of “allegorical exegesis.” That is, the sacred text must be understood “as a mere symbol, or allegory, of spiritual truths. The literal, historical sense, . . . plays a relatively minor role, and the aim of the exegete is to elicit the moral, theological or mystical meaning which each passage, indeed each verse and even each word, is presumed to contain.”

It is interesting to trace how the interpretative methodology of “allegorical exegesis,” which we might analogize to a radical form of judicial activism, colored by the pagan strains of Gnosticism and Manichæanism, enabled the Church Fathers to transmogrify the Old Testament myth of Adam and Eve into the most fundamental tenet of Christian theology governing human sexuality.

If God is beneficent, why do misery and evil exist? Justin Martyr was one of the first Christian theologians to consider this puzzle. Born around 100 A.D. in Flavia Neapolis (present-day Nablus), some thirty miles north of Jerusalem, Justin was raised as a pagan. He became a Neo-Platonist, but converted to Christianity in about 130. For the rest of his life, he taught and defended the Christian religion in Asia Minor and Rome, where he suffered martyrdom in the year 165. Along with several of his followers, Justin was ordered by the Roman Prefect Rusticus to sacrifice to the gods. When he refused, he was scourged and beheaded. In such works as Apologies and Dialogues, Justin reasoned that Adam’s disobedience of God’s command placed the entire human race under a curse. He vividly described malign demons, swarming everywhere, who have obsessed men’s bodies and souls, corrupting them with temptation and vice. It was Adam’s fall, he concluded, that had caused man’s suffering and grief.

Irenaeus, born near Ephesus sometime in the first half of the second century, took this a step further. In 180, Irenaeus was appointed Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, which was then deeply “infected” with Gnosticism. Like Justin, Irenaeus believed that the essence of Adam’s sin was his disobedience of God’s command. Man’s natural state had been one of blessedness. He had been created immortal, radiating perfect innocence and health. From
this happy state, however, he fell, being condemned to suffering and death.

But why were all men afflicted with misery because of Adam’s disobedience? Why would God condemn all men for the sin of only one? Irenaeus reasoned that all men must have been seminally present in Adam, and Adam’s disobedience was therefore the disobedience of all men. Because all men share Adam’s guilt, his deed was justly the source of all men’s mortality and enslavement to the Devil. With the coming of Christ, however, God gave man a second chance. Just as Adam, by his disobedience, had introduced death and sin, Christ, by His obedience, had reintroduced the possibility of purity, redemption, and immortality.135

This next brought Christian theologians to the question of free will. If an individual had no capacity to prevent Adam’s disobedience, why should he be punished for it merely because he had been “seminally” present in him? Were all men really to “blame”? Born in about 160 in Carthage, Tertullian was the son of a centurion. As a pagan, he shared the pagan prejudices against Christianity until his conversion in 197. He embraced Christianity with ardor and sharply criticized the Roman persecution of Christians. “We conquer by our death,” he wrote, for “he who is condemned before your tribunal is absolved before God.” He exhorted Christians to “let curiosity give place to faith” and thus pave the way to salvation.

Tertullian posited that each man is responsible for his own acts. But, building upon Irenaeus, he added that free will is not the only source of sin. Rather, “every soul is counted as being in Adam until it is re-counted as being in Christ, and remains unclean until it is so re-counted.”136 Tempted by Eve, Adam had “infected the whole race by his seed, making it the channel of damnation.”137 For this reason, even the newborn child is tainted by original sin. But salvation could come through acts of free will.

Tertullian added another wrinkle. Because Eve had caused the fall, women were at the root of all suffering and evil. As Tertullian put the point, women “are the devil’s gateway.”138 Every woman, he inveighed, is an Eve. Woman was “the first deserter of the
divine law,” woman had “destroyed man,” and woman had brought death to mankind and to “the Son of God.”

Even a woman’s “natural beauty,” he wrote, “ought to be obliterated by concealment and neglect, since it is dangerous to those who look upon it.” In a letter to his wife, Tetullian expressed his loathing of sexual intercourse and a longing for the afterlife when there will “be no resumption of voluptuous desire between us.”

SAINT AUGUSTINE AND THE PELOGIAN CONTROVERSY

It was Augustine who crystallized the western Christian tradition. Augustine was born in 354 in Tagaste, now Souk-Ahras, in Algeria. His father was a pagan. Like his predecessors Saint Jerome and Tertullian, Augustine gave himself up as a young man to lust and licentiousness, an experience that profoundly shaped his later theology. At the age of eighteen Augustine took up with a woman in Carthage, who bore him an illegitimate son. Under his mother’s powerful influence, he later abandoned his faithful concubine, sending her back to Africa, and promised to marry an underage girl. While waiting for her to reach the age of consent, he took up with another mistress. Eventually, he deserted them all. In his Confessions, Augustine recounted his experience as a young man:

Love and lust seethed together within me . . . swept me away over the precipice of my body’s appetites and plunged me into the whirlpool of sin . . . floundering in the broiling sea of my fornication . . . a frenzy gripped me and I surrendered myself entirely to lust.

The following year, Augustine embraced Manichaeanism, and for more than a decade, he devoted himself passionately to this sect. But he never moved up the Manichaean hierarchy, largely because of his difficulties with sex. Unable to control his desire, he
expressed his ambivalence about sex in his prayer: “Give me chastity, and continency, but do not give it yet.”

Augustine began to have doubts about Manichaean philosophy. Around 383 he traveled to Rome where he immersed himself in Neo-Platonism. He sought a life purged of the quest for honors, wealth, and sexual pleasure. Several years later, after struggling unsuccessfully to resist the temptations of the flesh, Augustine was finally baptized a Christian and committed himself to a life of celibacy. He returned to Tagaste and sought the “perfect” life, selling all his goods and giving the proceeds to the poor. Later, he was ordained a priest, and as his reputation and influence as a scholar grew, he was appointed Bishop of Hippo in around 396, a position he held for the next thirty-four years.

Having dedicated himself to continence, Augustine turned his pen against the temptations of sex. He initially directed his intellectual energies to refuting the “heresies” of Manichaeism. Writing as a convert from Manichaeism, his fascination with sexuality and evil flowed naturally from his personal experiences and intellectual training. But whereas the Manichees condemned procreation, Augustine turned the tables and condemned non-procreative sex. In *The Morals of the Manichees*, Augustine concluded that the sin was not reproduction, but lust.

There was nothing, he wrote, that brought the “mind down from the heights” more certainly “than a woman’s caresses.” In a critical leap, Augustine linked lust to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. He postulated that, while in Paradise, Adam and Eve never suffered the degradations of sexual desire. They controlled their genitals in the same way they controlled their hands. As creations of the higher realm, they experienced none of the carnal urges of the animalistic world. After the fall, however, they were afflicted with a crude and animalistic impulse – the insatiable quest for sexual satisfaction.

Augustine was bewildered by “this monstrousness”: “Why is it like this? The mind gives the body an order and it is obeyed at once. The mind gives itself an order, and it is resisted.” He lamented that man could not consciously control his sexual organs and, referring to the penis, he complained that “sometimes it
refuses to act when the mind wills, while often it acts against the will!"\textsuperscript{148} He referred to the sexual organs as indecent and dishonorable and admonished that they should be "detested."\textsuperscript{149} (One might wonder what Augustine thought about other involuntary actions, such as breathing, sneezing, coughing, blinking, and responding to pain.)

In any event, this phenomenon – the penis acting “against the will” – especially irked Augustine, who regarded involuntary erections, nocturnal ejaculations, and the intensity of sexual pleasure as definitive proof that human nature had fallen. Augustine termed this impulse to sexuality “concupiscence,” which he deemed less tractable than any other impulse to evil. As a result of the fatal legacy, man is easy prey to sin. Satan holds him captive, and can compel him to do his will. Man was cursed with an uncontrollable lust that can be relieved only through orgasm, a violent, sensual, degrading explosion that completely obliterates his rational faculties.

In Augustine’s interpretation, sex and lust were integral to Adam’s original sin. Others before Augustine had stressed our unity with Adam, but none had depicted so vividly our “complicity” with him. Moreover, Adam’s transgression had not been one of pride or disobedience, but of sex. Thus, every sexual act is born out of evil, and every child born out of evil is born into sin. It is through sex that man passes on sin from one generation to the next.

Man’s best hope for redemption lay in repudiating the sexual impulse and, with it, the burden of guilt inherited from Adam. Sex in any form is sinful, filthy, degenerate, defiling, and shameful, so only the celibate can hope to achieve the state of grace that had existed in the Garden of Eden. Through the brilliance of his intellect, the plague of his personal demons, the influence of his early Manichæan beliefs, and the magic of allegorical exegesis, Augustine managed to transform an Old Testament story about disobedience into a spiritual condemnation of human sexuality. In so doing, he shaped the future of Western society.\textsuperscript{150}
But there remained the problem of marriage and procreation. In the years immediately after the Crucifixion, the Apostles had taught that the Kingdom of God was near, so there was no need for humans to reproduce. But long before Augustine’s time it had become clear that the wait would be longer than anticipated. Because both the Old and New Testaments had acknowledged the legitimacy of marriage, Augustine reasoned that although celibacy was the ideal, those too weak to be celibate could engage in sexual intercourse in order to beget the next generation of Christians. But sex could only be between husband and wife and only for the purpose of procreation.

Moreover, even in those circumstances, intercourse must be performed without passion, pleasure, or delight. A corrupt vessel, the body should be used only for joyless, cold-blooded reproduction. Augustine condemned as sinful every other form of sex, including masturbation, oral sex, anal sex, same-sex sex, sex during menstruation, lactation or after menopause, and any effort to prevent pregnancy. “The will of God,” he maintained, was “not to serve lust” but “to see to the preservation of the race.” It was Augustine who, for the first time in the Christian tradition, condemned all sexual desire and pleasure for married and unmarried couples alike.

What did this mean for the vast majority of people who, in everyday experience, were unable to resist the lure of sexual pleasure? In Augustine’s words, “a cruel necessity of sinning” rests upon the human race. Indeed, without God’s grace, man has lost the ability not to sin, for “without God’s help we cannot by free will overcome the temptations of this life.” Moreover, God’s grace cannot be earned by good deeds, because such deeds are impossible without grace.

Augustine maintained that those who are granted grace have a measure of free will, for they may choose to accept or reject the capacity not to sin, just as Adam had that choice. But only a small part of mankind is offered God’s grace, and there is no way for man to know how God elects one person rather than another. Augustine explained that God makes this decision in the light of “a secret and, to human calculation, inscrutable justice.” Thus,
God has mercy on those He chooses to save; and hardens against those He chooses not to save. If this seems unfair, we must remember that all men are justly condemned, so “if God decides to save any it is an act of ineffable compassion.” In Augustine’s view, most people are “predestined to eternal death and damnation.”

In 411, Pelagius, an austere monk who had become a prominent teacher in Rome, directly challenged Augustine’s view of human nature. Pelagius maintained that Augustine’s claim that man was predestined to sin was an insult to the Creator. He contended that man is capable of choosing to act morally and to engage in right conduct, and that God had given man that capacity in order to distinguish him from the animals. He rejected Augustine’s assertion that man’s capacity to exercise free will had been warped as a result of the fall and dismissed what he characterized as Augustine’s Manichæan conception of original sin. Pelagius argued that God creates each soul independently, unsoiled by any original sin transmitted from Adam. Believing in personal responsibility, he reasoned that a God who can forgive humans their own sins surely would not damn them for the sins of others.

Pelagius did not deny that Adam’s disobedience had had disastrous consequences for man. It had deprived him of immortal life and exposed him to death and suffering. But, in Pelagius’ view, Adam’s transgression did not deprive man of the capacity to earn redemption by his own efforts alone. Indeed, he regarded as immoral Augustine’s belief that man’s nature is so corrupt that he is powerless to obey God’s commands. To Pelagius, the essence of morality requires an acknowledgement that without personal assent there can be no sin. He therefore denied that newborn children come into the world afflicted with original sin and without the ability to live a good life. Rather, he insisted that each individual is born with the potential to claim “I have injured no one, I have lived righteously with all,” and by choosing to live a just and moral life, earn salvation.
The Pelagians disdained Augustine’s condemnation of sex as unadulterated Manichæism. In their view, the sex impulse is perfectly natural, and nothing natural can be evil. They repudiated the conflation of concupiscence with original sin, and charged that Augustine was guilty of “defaming the good handiwork of the Creator under the influence of a hagridden attitude to sex” resulting from his own adolescent excesses. The Pelagians were not sexual libertines, though. They accepted that, as in all things, man must conform his sexual conduct to the commands of God. But they did not accept that there is anything inherently sinful about sexuality or that God had commanded what they deemed the extreme and artificial demands insisted upon by Augustine.158

THE PELAGIAN CHALLENGE led to a series of bitter theological disputes. It was in the resolution of these disputes that the western Christian Church fully embraced the Augustinian dogmas of original sin and sexual immorality. Augustine accused Pelagius of mendacity and of spreading heresies rooted in the old pagan philosophies. As the tenets of Pelagianism spread, Augustine responded with a series of brilliantly effective critiques defending the existence of original sin, the impossibility of a life without sin, and the necessity of grace for redemption.159

In an effort to halt the spreading “infection” of Pelagianism, sixty-seven bishops convened in a synod at Carthage in 416 to adjudicate the dispute. The bishops condemned Pelagius as a heretic and wrote Pope Innocent I to request his supreme sanction. Innocent accepted the conclusion of the bishops, and ordered Pelagius excluded from the Church. But Innocent died in 417, and his successor, Zosimus, reopened the matter, demanding that the bishops conduct a more thorough inquiry. Pursuant to this papal command, 200 bishops gathered in 418 in the Council of Carthage, which again branded Pelagianism as heretical. Thereafter, Pope Zosimus issued a papal encyclical categorically condemning Pelagianism, and the Roman Emperor Honorius banished all Pelagians from Italy. The doctrine of Pelagianism was
officially anathematized at the Council of Ephesus in 431, a year after Augustine’s death. Augustine's triumph was complete.¹⁶⁰

NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE MATTERED had Christianity gone the way of Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and Manichæanism. But, of course, it did not. During the first several centuries of the Christian era, the Romans persecuted the Christians for their heretical and seditious beliefs, but these persecutions were sporadic and failed to stamp out the Church. Conversely, they generated widespread attention, sympathy, and admiration. As Tertullian remarked, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”¹⁶¹ By the end of the second century, Christianity had begun to penetrate the higher classes of society, and during the third century the Roman Empire was so distracted by civil wars and barbarian invasions that it could no longer devote much attention to the growth of Christianity.

The critical moment was the conversion of the Emperor Constantine. The son of a Roman officer, Constantine was proclaimed Caesar by his troops in 306. During the ensuing civil war, Constantine, a pagan, had a vision that he would conquer under the sign of the Christ. After winning a stunning military victory, he declared in 313 that the persecution of Christians would no longer be tolerated. This stunned pagans and Christians alike. Imprisoned Christians were immediately released and received by their brethren in the faith with acclamations of joy. The churches filled, and those who had fallen away sought forgiveness. Constantine granted the Church one privilege after another. He awarded Church ecclesiastics special immunities from taxation and compulsory service, authorized the Church to inherit property, placed Sunday under the protection of the state, stripped the Roman civil courts of jurisdiction in suits in which Christian bishops claimed jurisdiction, and directed state officials to enforce the judgments of the ecclesiastical courts.

Although much has been made of Constantine’s conversion vision, he was not a mystic, nor even a man of much faith. He never understood Christian doctrine, and did not get around to
being baptized until he was on his deathbed in 337. His decision to endorse Christianity was as much political as religious.

Paganism was still the religion of choice for the vast majority of Romans early in the fourth century, yet the people had grown disenchanted with the stale myths and unedifying superstitions of polytheism. Increasingly, they were drawn to the spiritual convictions and moral strictures of monotheism in general, and Christianity in particular. Moreover, the Empire by this time was deeply divided and reeling from external invasion and internal strife. Rome’s military, legal, monetary, economic, transportation, policing, and trading systems had all fallen into disarray.

Fewer than ten percent of the Empire’s inhabitants were Roman. The population of Rome itself was predominantly Near-Eastern and Greek-speaking, and the streets of the capital thronged with Iberians, Gauls, Syrians, Berbers, and Dacians. The upper classes were consumed by power struggles, hedonism, and religious hysteria, and paid little attention to responsible rule. Alien religious cults, shrouded in mystery, magic, and escapist spiritualism, swept through the Empire. Assassinations were commonplace, and one mad, brutal, or incompetent despot followed another. After a thousand years of relative stability, it was a time of chaos, alienation, and foreboding. To Constantine, it must have “seemed that Christianity alone – a foreign religion transfigured by almost three centuries of proselytizing within the Empire – held out some hope of unifying the vast and heterogeneous collection of peoples contained within Rome’s wide frontiers.”

The conversion of Constantine meant much more than the end of Christian persecution. From this point onward, the state became involved in the activities of the Church, and the Church became enmeshed in the decisions of the state. Persecution of those who dissented from Christianity increasingly played a role in imperial legislation, and over the next century the Empire moved decisively against paganism, forbidding sacrifices and destroying historic temples. Although Constantine did not establish Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Emperor Theodosius formalized this establishment at the end
of the fourth century. For all practical purposes, Christianity had conquered Rome.\textsuperscript{163}

Then, in 410, the Western world suffered the numbing shock of the sack of Rome by Alaric and the Goths, followed forty-five years later by the Vandals. In the next two hundred years, Rome's population declined from 1.5 million to 50,000. Filthy, ignorant, and diseased peasants carted off the charred remains of great temples and palaces to construct crude villages. Profound questions of divine providence arose in a mood of fear and desperation. Petronius described masses living in hopeless destitution, suffering from alienation, fear, frustration, and the lack of any sense of purpose in their lives.

Pagans charged that this unthinkable catastrophe was the result of Rome's abandonment of the gods whose favor had enabled it to achieve greatness. Christians responded that the sack of Rome was the inevitable consequence of centuries of sexual degeneracy and pagan dissipation. They proclaimed that the disaster was God's punishment for man's decadence and dissolution and an irrefutable sign that Christianity must now assume responsibility for man's future.\textsuperscript{164}

It was at this moment of despair and disillusion that the western Christian Church fully embraced Augustinian doctrine. The unique appeal of Augustinianism lay in its assertion of complete human dependence upon the sovereignty of God. Lacking free will, man had no alternative but to stand in awe of his Maker. With civilization crumbling before his very eyes and darkness drawing down all around him, what else was he to do?

Augustine's triumph was unprecedented in the history of man's attitudes about sex. Before Augustine, most societies had condemned adultery (at least by wives); some had denounced homosexuality, bestiality, and/or abortion; and a few had censured fornication and some forms of contraception. But no western culture had ever before condemned \textit{all} human sexuality except intercourse between a husband and wife for the sole
Every prior western culture had regarded most forms of sex as natural and properly pleasurable facets of human existence. By early in the fifth century, however, the western Christian Church left no doubt of its stance: sexual desire and its fulfillment, in all of its many manifestations, is sinful and must be suppressed.

From a theological perspective, it was by no means inevitable that the Church would accept Augustine’s bleak vision of human nature. Nothing in the Old or New Testament commands such an understanding, and his teachings had no noticeable impact on the Eastern Church. But in the West, with the calamitous collapse of the known world, it was Augustine who captured the dark mood of his time, and whose desolate vision of free will and sexuality set the stage for the Middle Ages, and beyond.165

* Augustine was not unique in his view. Musonius Rufinus shared this position, and it is the natural implication of certain lines of thought among the Stoics. The historian J. K. Dover reports that at least one attitude among the Greeks was that “a wise and virtuous man will not have intercourse except for the purpose of procreating legitimate offspring” Dover, Women in the Ancient World at 154 (cited in note xx). There were also moves in this direction in Zoroastrianism and Judaism. But it was Augustine who took a strand of thought and with great rhetorical skill turning it into accepted doctrine.

2 Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society* at 123 (cited in note 1). (Athenian legislation was not aimed at legal enforcement of “right sexual conduct.”) There was no unified “Greek law” during the time of the city-states. Each area had its own laws, and laws about sex varied. See, for example, Plato, *Symposium* at 182 a-c; Arnaoutoglou, *Ancient Greek Laws* 16-25 (Routledge 1998) (laws of Athens, Corinth).


6 See Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece at 314-315 (cited in note xx) (masturbation, story from Herondas); K. J. Dover, Greek Homosexuality 102 (Harvard 1978) (women using olisboi); St. John-Stevas, Obscenity and the Law 2-3 (cited in note xx); Holt N. Parker, “Love’s Body Anatomized: The Ancient Erotic Handbooks and the Rhetoric of Sexuality,” in Richlin, Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome 90-111 (cited in note xx) (the Greeks and Romans did not have obscene content as a specific genre). This is not to suggest that there were never efforts to restrain such sexual explicitness. In the fourth century B.C., Plato advocated the expurgation of the Odyssey to make it more suitable for young readers. Specifically, he called for the deletion of passages such as those describing the lust of Zeus for Hera because they were “not conducive to self-restraint.” Plato, The Republic 67 (Everyman edition 1935)

7 See Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece at 329-342 (cited in note xx) (prostitution and courtesans); Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards at 45-46 (cited in note xx); Flacelière, Love in Ancient Greece at 133-161 (cited in note xx) (chapter on courtesans; men were free to pursue extramarital relations.); Dover, Greek Homosexuality 132 (cited in note xx); Tannahill, Sex in History at 100-105 (cited in note xx) (on hetairai).

8 Xenarchus, The Pentathlete (fr. 4), quoted in David M. Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality 92-93 (Routledge 1990) (quote). Ancient Greece also had a large number of common prostitutes and brothels. Solon, the lawgiver, is reputed to have first brought female slaves to Athens to stock its brothels in approximately 600 B.C. Unlike the hetaerae, ordinary prostitutes and brothels paid a special tax. See Flacelière, Love in Ancient Greece at 138, 145 (cited in note xx) (Solon established brothels; ordinary prostitute paid tax, citing Demosthenes, Against Androtion).

11 Plato, Symposium (182-183 d)
12 Plato, Symposium (183 a), quoted in Flacelière, Love in Ancient Greece at 71 (cited in note xx) (Pausanias describes behavior normally considered humiliating being acceptable when done for love); Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece at 416-418 (cited in note Error! Bookmark not defined.) (age of boys in pederastic relationships).
13 See Dover, Greek Homosexuality at 91-92 (cited in note xx); Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards at 46 (cited in note xx); Arno Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality: A New View 21-27 (W.W. Norton 1971); David M. Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality 5, 47 (Routledge 1990) (summary of Dover’s findings, nature of male-male sexual relationships); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 100-103 (cited in note 1) (Greek toleration or encouragement of male-male sexual relationships); Dover, Classical Greek Attitudes at 148-152 (cited in note 3) (resistance, submission, and hero-worship in sexual relationships); Dover, Greek Popular Morality at 213-215 (cited in note xx) (“opportunity for seduction of a partner on the same social plane as himself”); Tannahill, Sex in History at 85-89 (cited in note xx) (summarizing debate over physical nature of pederastic relationships); Flacelière, Love in Ancient Greece at 72 (cited in note xx) (gifts from lover to beloved); Craig A. Williams, Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity 63-64 (Oxford University Press 1992) (Cornelius Nepos’s and Cicero’s mentions of Greek pederasty). See, e.g., Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite for myth of Zeus abducting Ganymede (“for his beauty, to be among the immortals and pour wine for the gods in the house of Zeus, a marvel to look upon, honored by all the gods”). There is no indication of a sexual relationship in this hymn. Hymn 5.202ff. Translation by Apostolos N. Athanassakis (Johns Hopkins 2004). Aeschylus’s epitaph mentions his wife, but no male lover.
14 Flacelière, Love in Ancient Greece at 88 (cited in note xx) (referring to Plato and Xenophon).
16 Bullough, Sexual Variance at 108-109 (cited in note 1) (unsupported statement in a general discussion of Plato). See David B. Dodd, “Athenian Ideas about Cretan Pederasty,” in Thomas K. Hubbard, Greek Love Reconsidered 33, 41 (Wallace Hamilton Press 2000); Tannahill, Sex in History at 86-88 (cited in note xx) (the early Greeks emphasized educational role, but “it seems probably that Greek pederasty . . . was one of those sentimental ideals that are pure in theory but a good deal less so in practice”).

Quoted in Dover, *Classical Greek Attitudes* at 152 (cited in note xx) (Eubulus fr. 120).


See Plato, *Symposium* 182B-D, 178C; Bullough, *Sexual Variance* at 102-103 (cited in note 1); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* 27, 49–51 (University of Chicago 1980); K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* 39–49 (London 1978) (eros and desire); Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* at 56–59 (cited in note xx). For examples of poetry by Theogis celebrating Greek pederasty, see Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome* 40–47 (cited in
note xx); S Humphries, The Family, Women, and Death 17 (London 1983).
For a more skeptical view of the Greeks' attitude towards pæderasty, see
Cohen, Law, Sexuality, and Society at 171-202 (cited in note 1) (on
homosexuality in Athenian culture, which "must be understood in the
context of a theory of social practice which emphasizes the centrality of
cultural contradiction and ambivalence").
22 See Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality at 27-39 (cited in note xx);
Bullough, Sexual Variance at 101 (cited in note 1); Thomas K. Hubbard,
"Pederasty and Democracy: The Marginalization of a Social Practice," in
Hubbard, Greek Love Reconsidered at 1, 10 (cited in note xx); Aristotle,
Nicomachaen Ethics 1148b15ff (discussing the difference between what is
brutish because of disease and brutish because of habituation).
(The tyrant Hiero on desiring Dailochus: "For indeed I desire from
Dailochus those things which human nature, perhaps, compels us to ask
from those who are beautiful . . . for I consider it sweetest of all to take
something away from unwilling enemies, but I also think favors from
willing boys are sweetest. For instance, the glances of one who returns
your love are sweet, and so are his questions and answers, and most
arousing are the fights and quarrels.
24 Aristotle, Problems, IV, 26 (879B-880A); Aristotle, Nicomachaen Ethics
7:5:3-5. See Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 49-
50 (cited in note xx); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 103-104 (cited in note 1).
For Aristotle's expression of a more negative view, see Aristotle, Problems
879bff.
25 See Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality at 33 (cited in note
xx); Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 58-59
(cited in note xx); Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 6-7 (cited in note xx);
Greenberg, The Construction of Homosexuality at 14 (cited in note xx);
Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality xxx (xxxx, 198x); Dover, Greek
Homosexuality at 60-68, 81-109 (cited in note xx) (same-sex desire as a
natural instinct, descriptions of courtship scenes on vases).
26 Aristophanes, Clouds (lines 991, 1045); Aristophanes, Thesmophoriazusae
(lines 134 ff.); Plato, Laws 836e, 841d; Aristotle, Rhetoric 1384a. See
Hubbard, Pederasty and Democracy at 7-11 (cited in note xx); Cohen, Law,
Sexuality and Society at 187-188 (cited in note 1) (citing Xenophon and
Plato).
27 Cohen, Law, Sexuality, and Society at 201-202 (cited in note 1) (nature of
Athenian sexuality). See Bullough, Sexual Variance at 101 (cited in note 1);
Dover, Greek Homosexuality at 20-21, 60-68, 81-109, 144-145 (cited in note
xx); Dover, Classical Greek Attitudes at 153 (cited in note xx); Flacelière,
Love in Ancient Greece at 81-82 (cited in note xx) (Athenian views);
Halperin, One Hundred Years of Homosexuality at 33, 88-101 (cited in note
xx); Dover, Popular Greek Morality at 215-216 (cited in note xx); Michel
Foucault, The History of Sexuality. R. Hurley, trans. (Random House 1978). See also Demosthenes, xix 284 (noting that male prostitutes were forbidden from speaking in the Greek assembly).


29 See Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece at 316-318, 618-620 (cited in note 4); Dover, Greek Homosexuality at 173-181 (cited in note xx) (Sappho, biographical information and literary fragments); Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality at 18-20 (cited in note xx); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 111 (cited in note 1).

30 See Norman E. Himes, Medical History of Contraception 79-82 (Schocken Books 1970); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 99 (cited in note 1).

31 See McNally, The Maenad in Early Greek Art at 138 (cited in note xx); K. J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle 205-216 (Oxford 1974) (On the complicated and complex Greek view of sexuality: Homer “accepted fornication as one of the good things of life” but never described it in detail. “[S]exual desire is a normal response to sensory stimuli; other factors are needed to generate love” which is not always a good thing.); Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece at 523-525 (cited in note xx) (“the attitude of the Greeks towards erotic [was] something that was . . . naïve and natural”); Flacelière, Love in Ancient Greece at 219 (cited in note xx) (the Greeks did not recognize “sin”); Dover, Greek Homosexuality at 170 (cited in note xx) (“there is no sign [in Plato or Aristotle] that a genital response to the bodily beauty of a younger male was regarded as a defect or impairment of male nature,” citing Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1148b 15-9a 20).

32 Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality at 45 (cited in note xx).

33 Pliny, N.H., xxxiv, 5 [10], quoted in Otto Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome 149 (George Routledge & Sons 1938). See also Cicero, On the Republic 4.4, quoted in Hubbard, Homosexuality in Greece and Rome at 337 (cited in note xx) (“But, in fact, how absurd the way these young men exercise in the gymnasia! How lax the military training for their young cadets. How free and unrestricted their amorous fondling.”).

34 See Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 63-71 (cited in note xx) (homosexuality in Rome); Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 4-6, 148-149 (cited in note xx) (original Romans were uncouth farmers, citing Lucilius); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 130, 137 (cited in note 1) (homosexuality in Roman history); Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece at 90 (cited in note xx) (quoting Cicero, who was in turn quoting the older Roman poet Ennius); Holt N. Parker, “The Teratogenic Grid,” in Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinners, eds., Roman Sexualities 47-65 (Princeton University Press 1997) (active/passive distinction in the ancient world and the rejection of passivity); Jonathan Walters,
“Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought,” in Hallett and Skinner, Roman Sexualities at 36 (cited in note xx) (relation of status to availability for penetration); Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 4-5, 69-70 (cited in note xx) (Roman views of nakedness not necessarily connected to concerns about inappropriate sexual behavior).

35 See Pliny, N.H., xxviii, 4 [7], quoted in Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 115 (cited in note xx). See Bullough, Sexual Variance at 130 (cited in note 1) (role of the phallus, Priapus); Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 115 (cited in note xx); Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 86-92 (cited in note xx); Clarke, Roman Sex 100 BC – AD 250 at 104-105 (cited in note xx).

36 Pliny, ap. Gell., x, 23, quoted in Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 32 (cited in note xx); Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards at 49 (cited in note xx); Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 47-56 (cited in note xx); Clarke, Roman Sex 100 BC – AD 250 at 104-105 (cited in note xx).

37 Cicero, Pro caelio XX, 48, quoted in Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 55 (cited in note xx).


39 See Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards at 47 (cited in note xx); Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 56-63 (cited in note xx); Christianity, Sexual Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 77 (cited in note xx); Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 38-47 (cited in note xx); Thomas A. J. McGinn, Prostitution, Sexuality and the Law in Ancient Rome 248-287 (Oxford University Press 1988). A decree in the beginning of the first century A.D. forbade a woman whose grandfather, father, or husband was a Roman knight to earn money by selling herself to lovers. See Tacitus, Ann., ii, 85, cited in Kiefer, Sexual Life in Ancient Rome at 59 (cited in note xx).

40 Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 4 (cited in note xx) (“Roman men were not encouraged by their cultural heritage to categorize, much less evaluate or judge, sexual acts and agents on the basis of whether only males or males and females were involved.”); Parker, The Tertogenic Grid at 47-65 (cited in note xx) (active/passive distinction in ancient world and its rejection of passivity).

41 Quoted in Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 180 (cited in note). See Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 60-61, 194 (cited in note xx).

42 Quoted in Williams, Roman Homosexuality at 148 (cited in note xx).

44 See Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* at 73-83 (cited in note xx); Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* at 7-8, 18-19, 23, 77-78, 96-124, 128, 172-181 (cited in note xx).


48 Tannahill, *Sex in History* at 121 (cited in note xx) (quote, divorce generally).


52 Quoted in Richlin, *Pliny's Brasserie* at 210 (cited in note xx).


54 Propertius (ii, 32, 41m ff.), quoted in Kiefer, *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome* at 45 (cited in note xx).


Catullus, Poem 16, translation (previously unpublished) by Martha Nussbaum; Virgil, *Aeneid*, especially lines 700-705; Ovid, see generally *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*.


55 Petronius, *Satyricon* (ch. 11, LXXXV et seq.).

56 It was well-known in Rome that many emperors had male lovers. Perhaps the most famous of these relationships was between Hadrian and his young Greek lover, Antinous. After Antinous drowned while crossing the Nile in 130 A.D., it was said that Hadrian wept “like a woman.” Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* at 84-85 (cited in note xx). See Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* at 60-61, 194 (cited in note xx).

57 See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (vi, 9).


75 Bullough, *Sexual Variance* at XXX (cited in note 1).

76 Herodotus II. 46, quoted in Lise Manniche, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt* 28 ((Kegan Paul International 1987) (quote). Herodotus may have witnessed a ritual act. He notes that the same word mean “he-goat” and “Pan,” a god portrayed as part goat and devoutly worshipped in the province where the act occurred.


79 See Bullough, *Sex, Society, and History* at 31-33 (cited in note xx) (Zoroastrian prohibitions on anal intercourse); Chosky, *Evil, Good and Gender* at 9-30 (cited in note xx); Bullough *Sexual Variance* at 67-69 (cited in note 1).


83 *Proverbs* 5-19.


63 Genesis 38: 8-10.

67 Although Talmudic scholars occasionally interpreted the story of Onan in terms of coitus interruptus, this was not the prevailing view, and the practice was commonly used as a means of contraception in biblical times, along with vaginal cups, occlusive pessaries, postcoital ejection, and a wide variety of potions. See King and Stager, Life in Biblical Israel at 56-57 (cited in note xx); Matthews and Benjamin, Social World of Ancient Israel at 116 (cited in note xx); Noonan, Contraception at 10-12, 34-36 (cited in note xx); Tannahill, Sex in History at 74-75 (cited in note xx); de Vaux, Ancient Israel 37-38 (cited in note xx); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 78 (cited in note 1); Noonan, Contraception at 11 (cited in note xx); Keith Hopkins, “Contraception in the Roman Empire,” 8 Comparative Studies in Society and History 124, 142-143 (1965); David M. Feldman, Birth Control in Jewish Law ch. 8 (New York University Press 1968); Linda Gordon, Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America 5 (Grossman New York 1976); Eckart Otto, “False Weights in the Scales of Biblical Justice? Different Views of Women from Patriachal Hierarchy to Religious Equality in the Book of Deuteronomy,” in Matthews, Levinson and Frymer-Kensky, eds., Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible 128, 138-140 (cited in note xx); Phipps, Was Jesus Married? At 25 (cited in note xx).


69 See Daniel A. Helminiak, What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality 45 (Alamo Square 2000).

70 Judges 19-20.

71 de Vaux, Ancient Israel 10 (cited in note xx).

72 Ezekiel 16: 49-50.


75 See Josephus, I Antiquities of the Jews 94-95; Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 109a; Genesis Rabbah, Parashah 49:6; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer; Nahmanides (Ramban) Commentary on Genesis; Numbers Rabbah 9:24
(midrash); Nahum M. Sarna, JPS Torah Commentary on Genesis 135 n.5. (These cites came off the Internet.)

96 Judges, 19:22 ff. See, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 92-98 (cited in note xx); Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition 2-6 (London 1955); John McNeil, The Church and the Homosexual 42-50 (xxxxx 1976); de Vaux, Ancient Israel 10 (cited in note xx); Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 113-114 (cited in note xx).


99 Bullough, Sexual Variance at 85 (cited in note 1).

100 See Klawans, Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism at Introduction (cited in note xx); Helminiak, What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality at Ch. 4 (cited in note xx); Mary Douglas, Leviticus as Literature 2-5 (Oxford 2001); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 75, 181 (cited in note 1); Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition at 43-45 (cited in note xx); Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 97-101 (cited in note xx); King and Stager, Life in Biblical Israel at 59 (cited in note xx). For an analysis of the differences among the many Old Testament rules dealing with diet, rituals, sexuality, and so on, see Klawans, Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism (cited in note xx); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth (Fawcett Columbine 1992); Douglas, Leviticus as Literature at 238-239 (cited in note xx).

101As noted earlier, the ancient Hebrews frowned upon intercourse with a female virgin and required the man in such circumstances to offer a bride-price to the girl’s father and to marry the girl, if the father so desired. Moreover, many rabbis taught that “the primary goal of sexual intercourse is procreation” and therefore discouraged “non-procreative sexual liaisons.” Satlow, Tasting the Dish at 262 (cited in note xx). See Matthews, Levinson and Frymer-Kensky, eds., Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible at 79 (cited in note xx). The Hebrew tradition also had many ritual rules that treated the deposit of semen anywhere but in the female vagina as impure. Thus, “if a man’s seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the evening. And every garment, and every skin, whereupon is the seed of copulation, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening.” Leviticus 15: 16-18. This was a ritualistic rule, however, rather than one based on morality or sin. There was a difference between ritual impurities, which were easily removed and limited to the person, and
moral impurities (for acts including adultery, incest, and bestiality), which contaminated the land. See Bullough, Sexual Variance at 78 (cited in note 1); Klawans, Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism 26-27 (cited in note xx); Tannahill, Sex in History at 74-75 (cited in note xx) (Hebrew contraception, story of Onan); de Vaux, Ancient Israel 36-37 (cited in note xx); Leviticus 18:24-30. Blasphemy was a capital offense. See Leviticus 24:15-16.

102 Karlan, Sexuality and Homosexuality at 66 (cited in note xx).


105 Matthew 5:28. See also Matthew 19:9 (“Whosever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and who so marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”); Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:11-12. See Bullough, Sexual Variance at 175-176 (cited in note 1).

106 Matthew 19:10-12.

107 See Bullough, Sexual Variance at 179 (cited in note 1); Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Sexual Relation in Christian Thought 72 n.11 (Harper 1959); Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality at 70 (cited in note xx); Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 114-115 (cited in note xx); Phipps, Was Jesus Married? at 72-73 (cited in note xx); Frederick C. Grant, An Introduction to New Testament Thought 321 (New York 1950).


109 Romans 1:26. The King James translation of atimia in this verse is “vile.” There is some question over whether this is an accurate translation. Daniel Helminiak suggests that Paul’s use of the word in this context indicates only something that is not socially acceptable, rather than “ethical condemnation.” See Helminiak, What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality at 91 (cited in note xx).

110 Romans 1:26-28.

111 I Corinthians 6:9-10.


113 Paul characterized sexual misconduct as merely dishonorable; he used much stronger language in condemning murder and hubris. See Romans 1:28-32.
Paul thought modest expressions of affection were acceptable and even suggested that Christians kiss one another. Over time, however, the erotic overtones of even a simple kiss became too much for western Christians, who came to believe that any physical contact undermined pure chastity. See Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* at 111-112 (cited in note xx).


See Lucretius, *De Rerum natura*, IV, 1052-1120, quoted in Bullough, *Sexual Variance* at 166 (cited in note 1).


See Evans, *Sex and Salvation* at 54-67 (cited in note xx); Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* at 128-130 (cited in note xx).

Chadwick, *The Early Church* at 74 (cited in note xx).
Another strand of Gnosticism took the opposite approach, argued that they were bound by no laws because they possessed the unique gnosis that guaranteed them salvation regardless of what they did in this life. See Noonan, *Contraception* at 63-69.


133 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 31, 36, 57-70, 165 (cited in note 104); (importance of writings of the Apostolic Fathers; Tertullian’s insistence that the Apostles were the sole authorities; outlining the development of the New Testament canon; Apostolic Fathers less preoccupied with sin than the writers of the New Testament were).

134 See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 168-169 (cited in note 104) (using Justin’s views to summarize Apologists’ conception of Christ’s effect “on fallen man.”)

135 See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 171-173, 353 (cited in note 104) (Irenæus’s teachings on original sin and redemption; Ambrose and Ambrosiaster on Adam’s role.); Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* at 139-141 (cited in note xx).

136 Tertullian, *De an*. 40.


142 Tertullian, *Confessions*, xxxxx, quoted in Karlan, *Sexuality and Homosexuality* at 72 (cited in note xx) (Must confirm this quote in *Confessions*).


146 Augustine was not the first to make this leap. Philo, a Jew born in Alexandria near the end of the first century B.C., linked Stoicism with Judaism. He argued that the fall of Adam and Eve had been the result of sexual desire, and that this was the Stoics’ Original Sin. See Bullough, *Sexual Variance* at 160-170 (cited in note 1); Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 15-19 (cited in note 104); (development of Platonism and neo-Platonism) Chadwick, *The Early Church* at 56 (cited in note xx).


148 Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence 1, 6. See Phipps, Was Jesus Married?* at 170 (cited in note xx)


151 Augustine, Against Faustus 22.30, quoted in Noonan, Contraception at 121 (cited in note xx). This is not to say that all sexual sin is equal. Augustine regarded anal and oral intercourse as particularly evil: “A use against nature is execrable in a prostitute, but more execrable in a wife.” Indeed, “when a husband wants to use a member of the wife not permitted to be used for this, it is more shameful if the wife permits it to happen to her than to another woman.” Augustine, The Good of Marriage 11.12, quoted in Noonan, Contraception at 131 (cited in note xx). A husband who uses any form of contraception is no better than an “adulterer,” and a wife who resor to contraception is no better than a “harlot.” Augustine, Marriage and Concupiscence 1. 15-17, quoted in Noonan, Contraception at 136 (cited in note xx).

152 See Augustine, De nuptiis et concupiscientia, I, 17 (xv); Bullough, Sexual Variance at 193-194 (cited in note 1); Tannahill, Sex in History at 142-143 (cited in note xx) (celibacy and marriage in the Church); Noonan, Contraception at 119-139 (cited in note xx); Gordon, A Social History of Birth Control at 6-7 (cited in note xx); Kelly, Early Christian Traditions at 363-369 (cited in note xx); Chadwick, The Early Church at 232-234 (cited in note xx); Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 165 (cited in note xx); Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards at 50 (cited in note xx); Karlen, Sexuality and Homosexuality at 75-76 (cited in note xx); Phipps, Was Jesus Married? at 172-173 (cited in note xx); Bailey, Sexual Relation in Christian Thought at 49-59 (cited in note xx). Augustine was not the first Christian to argue that the only acceptable sex is intercourse within marriage for the purpose of procreation. More than a century earlier, Clement of Alexandria had asserted that “to have sex for any purpose other than to produce children is to violate nature.” Clement, Paedogogus 2.10. See Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality at 147 (cited in note xx).

153 Augustine, De perfect. iustit. hom . 9.

154 Augustine, Enarr. in ps. 89, 4.

155 Augustine, Ad. Simplic. I, 2, 14-16.

156 Kelly, Early Christian Traditions at 369 (cited in note xx).

157 Pelagius, De vita christ. 6 (PL 40, 1037. See Chadwick, The Early Church at 227-228 (cited in note xx); Kelly, Early Christian Traditions at 337-339, 360 (cited in note 104) (Julian of Eclanum “dismissed Augustine’s teaching as pure Manicaheism”).

159 See Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione libri*; Augustine, *De spiritu et litera*; Augustine, *De perfectione justitiae hominis*; Augustine, *De natura et gratia*; Augustine, *De gestis Pelagii*.

160 See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 361-370 (cited in note 104); (Augustine’s theories on original sin); Chadwick, *The Early Church* at 232 (cited in note xx).

161 Quoted in Chadwick, *The Early Church* at 29 (cited in note xx).


163 See Chadwick, *The Early Church* at 120-128, 152-153, 166, 287-288 (cited in note xx); Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 5 (cited in note 104) (“the Church was to enjoy the often embarrassing favour of the State”); Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality* at 67 (cited in note xx); Tannahill, *Sex in History* at 136 (cited in note xx) (Church as successor to Imperial Rome).


165 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* at 371-374 (cited in note 104) (Augustine’s influence on early theology, council of Arausiacum); Tannahill, *Sex in History* at 160-161 (cited in note xx) (asserting that sin came to play a more important role in Christian morality than redemption).