

Questions related to Homosexuality in Antiquity

1. In his otherwise sweeping narrative, *Homosexuality & Civilization* (Harvard University Press, 2003), Louis Crompton omits any discussion of homosexuality in Ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia and begins his chronicle with the Greeks and their exuberance for pederasty (sexual activity involving a man and a boy). Crompton then lays the blame for centuries of gay persecution at the feet of the post-classical West, which chose to pattern itself on Judeo-Christian condemnation of homosexual behavior. Crompton's thesis is that the world was comfortable with homosexuality until Judaism came along and vilified it, leading to all the abuse and discrimination that followed. While evidence from Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia regarding homosexuality is slight, there is some which suggests that Jewish and Christian attitudes did not stand in sharp contrast to these earlier civilizations. In other words, Judaism and Christianity were not alone in their opposition to homosexuality but were aligned—at least to some extent—with prior moral and legal constructs. Choosing between Ancient Egypt and Assyria (a major Mesopotamian empire), which of these civilizations expressed its disapproval of homosexual behavior in a legal code and which in a moral code?
2. How strongly do the Jewish and Christian scriptures condemn homosexual behavior? Be specific in regard to both scriptures.
3. How did Greek and Roman “desire for boys” differ regarding the boy's background?
4. How common was bisexual behavior among Greeks and Romans? Give an example.
5. What, in your opinion, is the biggest implication that Greek and Roman sexuality has for us today? Explain as fully as possible in the space provided.