

Liberation Theologies in the United States

An Introduction

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Gay and Lesbian Theologies

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Historical Backdrop

Early gay activism¹ targeted the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association—resulting in removal of the diagnosis of homosexuality as a “sociopathic personality disturbance, sexual deviation” in the *Diagnosis and Statistical Manual II*.² In addition, the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), the largest LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) organization in the world, and denominational church groups such as Dignity (Catholic) and Integrity (Episcopalian) were born to support gay and lesbian Christians in accepting their sexual orientation, integrating their sexual orientation with their faith practice, and attempting to humanize ecclesial opposition to homosexuality. Just as the “Black is Beautiful” slogan emerged in the 1960s, the 1970s produced the “Gay is Good” slogan.

The period that followed (commonly referred to as the “Reagan years”) was not so “good” for the LGBT community. The optimism of 1970s gay/lesbian theologies receded with the ravages of the AIDS pandemic and the escalating social hatred of the churches. As HIV/AIDS was in the national spotlight on nearly a daily basis, the Religious Right agenda drew an inextricable link with homosexuality and gays and lesbians. Many infected with HIV and those affected by HIV found themselves defensive in affirming that sexuality is a gift of God, despite the condemnation of churches.

The various groups of the Religious Right were focused on a wide variety of political issues from abortion to anticommunism. With the end of the cold war, the Religious Right turned its attention to the gay/lesbian movement, opportunistically using it as mechanism for fundraising and galvanizing its membership against the threat of an internal homosexual menace.³ In the 1980s, translesbians had responded to the AIDS pandemic as it affected gays, beginning a broad coalition based on HIV health issues and voluntarism in creating AIDS response organizations in every major city.

Coalitions of gays/lesbians expanded their concerns from a single-focused issue to face the challenges of multiple, intersecting forms of oppression. Gay men became concerned with women's issues such as reproductive freedom, sexism, and health issues, recognizing that lesbians had been there for their HIV gay brothers during the early ravages of the AIDS pandemic. AIDS activism and queer activism developed in response to social violence, apathy, negligence, and inactivity from the Reagan administration, discrimination, and the growing backlash from the Religious Right. In 1987, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) formed as a political activist movement of those infected with HIV, gays/lesbians, and their friends; they were united in their anger, in direct action, and in wearing black T-shirts bearing inverted pink triangles with the slogan "Silence = Death." They staged non-violent actions of civil disobedience, picketed legislators, and made confrontational challenges in public meetings and forums, including dramatic public actions at Wall Street, pharmaceutical companies, and the FDA: "The gay HIV-positive population fought the gross silence and inactivity of the Reagan administration; the bureaucracy of the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, and the medical establishment; the profiteering of the pharmaceutical companies; the discrimination of the insurance companies, the unenlightened policies of state governments, educational institutions, and churches."⁴ Not since Stonewall and the early 1970s was there such a burst of activism within the gay/lesbian community.

This activism was met with hate crimes. Queer Nation New York was formed in 1990 to protest the bombing of a gay bar, Uncle Charlie's; it drew over a thousand protesters. Queer Nation chapters arose in many United States cities to fight against homophobic violence and compulsory heterosexuality. They attempted to raise queer visibility, disrupting ex-gay organizations, staging kiss-ins in shopping malls, invading heterosexual spaces with leaflets and queer manifestos, and holding sit-ins and protests targeting the homophobic Cracker Barrel Restaurant chain, the Boy Scouts of America, and other heterosexist institutions. They shouted their mantra in heterosexual cultural spaces: "We're queer; we're here; get used to it." They were determined to make all public spaces safe for sexual- and gender-variant people.

ACT UP mixed sex with AIDS politics, mobilizing activists around issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation and then linking these issues with poverty, health care, the distribution of clean needles to drug users, prostitution, immigration law and reform, medical policies and research, drug accessibility, media hysteria, religious discrimination, and state and federal AIDS

policies. They inserted sex orientation and gender into a whole economy of culture politics. No longer was the single issue of gay analysis sufficient: multiple “isms” were confronted; ACT UP gay men followed lesbian feminists into the complexities of social and political analyses that linked issues of race, ethnicity, age, and economics with homophobia and blatant AIDS-phobia. This new paradigm required sophisticated economic, cultural, and political analyses that earlier identity politics could no longer manage very well. It required an epistemological cultural and intellectual shift that could handle the messiness of queer grass roots activism and cultural analyses inclusive of fluid sexual orientation and gender diversity.

Since the early 2000s, two essays and one book have attempted to discuss the evolution of gay and lesbian theologies to queer theologies.⁵ The challenge has been to examine the evolution from a different trajectory of theological development from my own earlier writings and those of Elizabeth Stuart. It is possible to follow the trajectories of gay/lesbian theologies along several evolutionary routes—apologetics, pastoral, liberation, feminist, and contextual theologies—to the development of queer contextual theologies. These routes were never linear or “straight” developments, for they crossed evolutionary routes and mingled with traditional theological disciplines in a very queer fashion. Moreover, they were deeply embedded in ecclesial and cultural developments within the gay/lesbian communities to such an extent that queer contextual theologies emerged not only in the United States but also in South America, the United Kingdom, and other countries.⁶

This explosion of resources was delineated by queer theologian Mark Jordan, pointing out that the bibliography of a 1966 Consultation on Theology and the Homosexual listed eighteen works—from Thomas Aquinas’s and Karl Barth’s negative positions on homosexuality to a few attempts to characterize homosexuality in somewhat more positive perspective.⁷ In that same talk, Jordan pointed to the exponential growth of monographs on religion and homosexuality, from 37 in the 1960s to 1,829 by the 2000s.⁸ There has been an explosion of religious discourse, both positive and negative, as the gay/lesbian communities have become more organized within American culture and churches.

Description

Gay Christians began their theological reflections about homosexuality with the intention to change the churches’ position on the issue. Sally Gearhart (United Methodist Church) and William Johnson (United Church of Christ) produced the first book of the 1970s, *Loving Women, Loving Men*:

Gay Liberation of the Church.⁹ Johnson and other contributors argued for the full inclusion of gay men and lesbians into the church, grounding their arguments in the validity and naturalness of loving the same gender. They picked up the reasoning of the 1960s sexual liberation movement and the advent of the birth control pill that widened the purpose of sexuality beyond procreation. It is noteworthy that Johnson attempted to liberate the church, while Gearhart reflected feminist and lesbian challenges to heteropatriarchy, urging an embodied theology over abstract theological systems. This difference between lesbian-feminist and gay theologies continued in more sophisticated theological enterprises from the 1980s into the next century. Few gay theologians, even today, speak of heteropatriarchy.

John McNeill's *The Church and the Homosexual* (1976) was not addressed merely to gay men and lesbians but also to institutional Catholicism.¹⁰ McNeill mustered cogent arguments from the biblical tradition, Roman Catholic natural law and moral theology, and pastoral experience of ministering to gays and lesbians. His book was ostensibly directed to Catholic priests, religious orders, church leaders, and educated Catholic gays and lesbians. McNeill's line of reasoning had all the precision of a Jesuit philosopher, undermining the traditional condemnations of homosexuality. What was revolutionary about *The Church and the Homosexual* is that McNeill gave careful attention to the biblical texts often erroneously applied to homosexuality. He followed in the earlier footsteps of Derrick Sherwin Bailey to understand the story of Sodom and Gomorrah as a condemnation of inhospitality rather than homosexuality.

McNeill's book (translated into numerous languages) was moderate from the perspective of contemporary queer theology, yet it was as revolutionary in its time as any queer theology in recent years. It turned Catholic moral arguments upon themselves from the findings of psychology and scripture. McNeill made a strong case for a new pastoral approach to the condition of homosexuality and the treatment of Catholic homosexuals. He did not accept the judgments of earlier Catholic moral theologians that those gays/lesbians unable to change their sexual orientation had to live a life of forced abstinence.

In 1978, McNeill's book was followed by both Tom Horner's *Jonathan Loved David* and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott's and Letha Scanzoni's *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*²¹ Horner expanded the biblical readings beyond the apologetic texts to find traces of homoeroticism in the stories of Jonathan and David and Ruth and Naomi; he was the first to give a systematic gay reading of the scriptures. Mollenkott, an evangelical Christian and profes-

sor of English literature, and Scanzoni, a sociologist, make a strong case for approaching homosexuals through the Golden Rule.

Although it was published in 1980, John Boswell's *Christianity, Homosexuality, and Social Tolerance* was written during the optimistic freedom of gay liberation in the late 1970s.¹² Boswell's work initiated a biblically based resistance, precipitating an apologetic battle against reading of biblical texts often (mis)applied to homosexuality by its ecclesial opponents while simultaneously engaging gay critics for optimistic readings of Christian texts and social history.¹³ The Yale historian remained stubbornly a member of the Roman Catholic Church, and he became a zealous gay theological apologist, speaking both to gay/lesbian denominational conventions and to sympathetic, liberal churches. His evangelical missionary project of reclaiming a vision of a less-virulent and homophobic Christianity resulted in empowering the gay/lesbian Christian movement in the 1980s, but it also antagonized gay critics alienated from a violent Christianity.¹⁴ When a 20th-century history of queer Christianity in the United States is written, John Boswell will be one of the leading pillars that strengthened denominational groups such as Integrity and Dignity and the MCC.¹⁵

These pioneers in the 1970s strengthened the nascent formation of denominational groups and the MCC congregations, but perhaps more important, they empowered a future generation of queer Christian scholars who are committed to finding the liberating resources within Christianity to fight against hatred and intolerance of gays and lesbians.

Gay theology in the 1980s centered on two issues: biblical texts that were used to justify homosexuality as sin and psychological issues of sexual orientation to deconstruct moral theologies based on natural law. It found itself in an apologetic mode attempting to make cosmetic changes within the churches to justify acceptance of gay/lesbians while dealing with the onslaught and tragic numbers of deaths among gay men.

Gay theology did not address the issue of sexism; it was unable to make theoretical connections between misogyny and homophobia or to connect homophobia to other forms of oppression. The writings of Chris Glazer (1980), John McNeill (1988), and John Fortunato (1982), among others, hardly cited the lesbian theologies of Carter Heyward or Virginia Moltenkott.¹⁶ Although Boswell's earlier work was important to the gay/lesbian Christian movement in the 1980s, it had a major shortcoming in that almost all the material that Boswell covered was male homoeroticism, while the history of female homoerotic relations and desires within Christianity was conspicuously absent. Only in the 1990s did Bernadette Brooten's *Love*

between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism provide a correction to the absence of female voices in Boswell's work in early Christianity.¹⁷ This early gay theology focused on the expulsion of "out" gay male and sometimes lesbian clergy, the denial of ordination to gays/lesbians, and the refusal to bless same-sex unions. Theological anthologies—with gay/lesbian, closeted, and straight contributors—responded with an apologetic for or against church statements on the issue of homosexuality.¹⁸ These writings remained reactive to church statements about homosexuality. Gay theology remained a negative apologetic, reacting to the backlash from the Religious Right and conservative forces within mainline Christian denominations.

On Halloween, 1986, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger released his infamous letter on homosexuality: *Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*. There was nothing pastoral about the letter, which described gays/lesbians as "intrinsically evil" and "objectively disordered." Ratzinger's letter ignored all scientific evidence on the biological and psychological basis of homosexuality and disregarded all contemporary biblical exegesis applied to homosexuality. It was a violent, mean-spirited, and aggressive letter, intending to curb Dignity, reduce pastoral sensitivity to gay and lesbian Catholics, and deny the scientific trend toward a more open and tolerant society in the United States.¹⁹ John McNeill spoke out against Cardinal Ratzinger's letter to the U.S. bishops. This set in motion a process of McNeill's expulsion from the Society of Jesus. The noted Protestant biblical scholar John Wink wrote to McNeill: "John, when the Vatican imprudently slammed the door on you, the gust of wind it set off blew open hundreds of doors. In the craftiness of God, I swear your impact will be increased exponentially."²⁰

Immediately, McNeill then wrote *Taking a Chance on God*, one of the first positive books on gay Christian spirituality, brokering topics on hospitality, compassion, and discernment of spirits for gays living with homophobic institutional Christianity that promoted fear, shame, guilt, and self-hatred. He brought his experience as a gay psychotherapist to his philosophical training in the writings of Maurice Blondel to validate the revelatory experience of gays and lesbians. Both *Freedom, Glorious Freedom* and his autobiography, *Both Feet Firmly Planted in Midair*, elaborate on the painful process of expulsion from the Jesuits and his finding joy in his discernment process to obey and follow Christ over the Vatican and his Jesuit superiors.²¹ McNeill provides a personal example to gay and lesbian Christians of how to discern the spiritual value of their erotic love and their experiences over the destructive authority of the Catholic Church.

Gay theology inevitably became problematic in its singular focus on gay male issues, excluding lesbian voices. The theological split along gender lines between gays and lesbians started in the late 1970s with the feminist movement, the rise of gay liberation, and radical lesbians. This cultural split between gays and lesbians slowed in the early years of the AIDS pandemic, as lesbians stepped forward to respond to the escalating HIV infection and death rates of gay men with their involvement in AIDS service organizations.

Carter Heyward, a lesbian Episcopal priest and theologian, developed a lesbian feminist liberation theology. Her book—*Our Passion for Justice* (1984)—began to critique patriarchal Christianity, articulating a relationship between homophobia and misogyny. Four years later, Heyward's book—*Touching Our Strength*—continued her critique of heterosexist Christian theology, offering an alternative constructive theology embodied in the erotic.²² Carter Heyward expanded the black lesbian poet Audre Lorde's notion of the erotic by describing the erotic as our power in relation or mutuality.

Mutuality is a vision of justice by which the power of God calls us to reconcile ourselves, one to another, in an effort to usher forth our most liberating, creative possibilities and futures. Mutuality, unlike equality, signals relational growth and change, and it constitutes an invitation into shaping the future together.²³ Heyward's erotic theology highlights a cocreative language of grace, and she focused on mutual relationships that questioned the dualistic bifurcations of heterosexist constructions of gender and sexuality. Her stress on relationality brought Heyward into a social constructionist approach to sexual identity as queer theory was beginning to take shape. Heyward's theology was the most significant and sophisticated lesbian theological work of the 1980s, and it would influence the development of the gay theologies of J. Michael Clark, Daniel Spencer, Gary Comstock, and Marvin Ellison; the lesbian theologies of Mary Hunt and Kathy Rudy, and the queer theologies of Robert Williams and Robert Shore-Goss [formerly Goss].²⁴

The theological significance of Carter Heyward was that she not only provided a theological bridge for dialogue between gays and lesbians but also prepared for the evolution of queer theologies and the later inclusion of bisexual and transgendered voices. The push for inclusion of lesbian voices influenced gay theology, expanding beyond its white, middle-class male parameters and addressing issues of gender, patriarchy, class, and race. For example, Clark's post-Christian theology developed insights from

Heyward's erotic theology into his ecotheology, influencing the development of Spencer's *Gay and Gaia*. Ellison's *Erotic Justice*, deeply influenced by Heyward, is one of the finest theological attempts to analyze the intersections of sexism, race, homophobia, and able-bodiedness. Finally, it took until the 1990s before gay/lesbian theology entered into dialogue with queer theorists, including the voices of bisexual and transgendered Christians. This explosion of scholarly activism transformed gay theology into queer theology and widened its dialogue partners.

A watershed year for gay theology was 1993, with the publication of Comstock's *Gay Theology without Apology*, Clark's *Beyond Our Ghettoes*, and [Shore-]Goss's *Jesus ACTED UP*.²⁵ Clark spoke with clarity and power as an openly HIV+ theologian to incorporate ecofeminism and Heyward's erotic justice-oriented theology into a gay environmental liberation theology. Comstock's book appealed to mainline Protestant denominations in the midst of divisive polarization over the inclusion of gays and lesbians. *Jesus ACTED UP* drew its audience from marginalized queer Christians within denominations, the MCC congregations, justice-oriented Christians, and queer Catholics.

The first theological works to use the word "queer" were Williams's *Just as I Am* (1992) and then *Jesus ACTED UP* (1993). Gay theology was attempting to fit politically into the American Academy of Religion, and "queer" was a term that made many gays and lesbians uncomfortable because it had been a derogatory epithet. However, both Williams and Shore-Goss trace gay/lesbian theological roots to the AIDS activism of ACT UP and Queer Nation in the late 1980s and early 1990s where LGBT activists and their heterosexual allies described themselves as queer. In *Jesus ACTED UP*, Shore-Goss described queer as "a term of political dissidence and sexual difference. It is part of the movement to reclaim derogatory words from oppressive culture."²⁶ In later writings, Shore-Goss wrote, "according to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, 'queer' as a verb means 'to spoil the effect of, interfere with, to disrupt, harm, or put in a bad light.' Queering an already spoiled and exclusive Christianity is to make it more inclusive for translesbigays."²⁷ For his theological enterprise, Shore-Goss found his dialogue partners with the French gay cultural critic and philosopher Michel Foucault, the beginnings of queer theorists in the early 1990s, and queer activism. At the gay and lesbian academic conference at Harvard University in 1990—"The Politics of Pleasure"—gay and lesbian academics in all disciplines engaged in conversations with queer and AIDS activists.²⁸ Elizabeth Stuart notes that *Jesus ACTED UP* marked a transition from gay and lesbian theology to queer theology:

Jesus ACTED UP remains a watershed in gay and lesbian theology for even though he did not follow Foucault's theory all the way through his book, [Shore-]Goss nevertheless flagged up the issues of discourse and identity. [Shore-]Goss also demonstrated a commitment to radical political action and a feminist and sex-positive theology did not have to involve a sweeping dismissal of the tradition. . . . [Shore-]Goss proved that it was possible to still do theology and be committed to gay and lesbian liberation.²⁹

Queer theology is, in many ways, a branch of liberation theology, deriving from the roots of the Latin American, African American, and feminist liberation theologies. It shares much of the same methodologies as other liberation theologies, perhaps in closest resemblance to feminist liberation theologies because of the fact that heterosexism is embedded in cultural sexism.

In the 1990s, other theologians began to self-identify as queer in their theologies: Nancy Wilson, Kathy Rudy, Ibrahim Farajaje-Jones, Mark Jordan, Justin Tanis, Lisa Isherwood, Elizabeth Stuart, and Marcella Althaus-Reid.³⁰ Queer theologies look at the separation of sexuality from spirituality and its destructive effects, and in the spirit of Christian ethicist James Nelson, queer (as well gay and lesbian) theologies tried to reconnect.³¹ Queer theory destabilizes essentialist notions of sexuality, identity, and gender; it renders fluid these cultural concepts and practices once considered stable. British scholar Jeremy Carette notes that queer theory destabilizes the essential self and the truth of Christian theology; he notes, "To queer religion is to queer the foundations of theology, its monotheism, its monosexuality, and its monopoly of truth. In the queer space of theology, we find 'ambiguity' and 'not knowing,' a performative self, which can . . . imaginatively recreate the symbolic." Later Carette asserts, "If Christianity is entwined with the discourse of sexuality, then to queer sexuality is simultaneously to queer the symbolic of theology."³² Queer theology is a "transgressive reinscription" of Christian symbols, practices, and theological truths that have excluded LGBT folks.³³

The theology of same-sex marriage and queer marriage follows the grass-roots practice of LGBT religious groups. There is debate on which church—Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, United Church of Christ, or Metropolitan Community Church—was the first to initiate the practice of blessing same-sex unions. Nevertheless, the Metropolitan Community Church has blessed over 100,000 same-sex unions from its beginnings in 1968. It has been joined by some Episcopal churches and the United Church of Christ; clergy in other denominations have blessed same-sex

unions “sub rosa” or as acts of public protest. The marriage equality movement from the 1990s to the present—especially with the recognition of same-sex civil unions in several U.S. states and same-sex marriage in Massachusetts—has propelled the development of queer theologies of marriage.

Theological reflection has resulted from two cultural factors. The horrific tallies of HIV among gay and bisexual men led to the development of queer families and the LGBT baby boom. Extended families of care were created around folks dying of HIV. Queer people and their friends became adept at the skill of creating new families of choice. The second factor was the reactionary movement of the Religious Right to promote “traditional family values” and the cultural hysteria that led to numerous state initiatives to define marriage as between one man and one woman. With missionary zeal, historian John Boswell lectured about the discovery of Christian liturgical texts that celebrated same-sex unions. His book—*Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*—fueled the cultural debate on same-sex marriage. His work provoked a storm of criticism to debunk the possibility that the uncovered rites were same-sex marriages. Much criticism has been leveled at his scholarship for its interpretative excesses of studying more than sixty manuscripts from the 8th to the 16th centuries. Boswell concluded that the brotherhood rites (*adelphopoiesis*) “most likely signified a marriage in the eyes of most ordinary Christians.”³⁴ There was no evidence that ordinary Christians viewed these brotherhood rites as marriages. Boswell hoped his retrieval of these rites could be used by LGBT Christians to justify a liturgical theology for blessing same-sex unions. Alan Bray’s posthumously published book *The Friend* demonstrates how Christian same-sex couples celebrated their friendship with church rites.³⁵ Bray is less extravagant in his claims than Boswell, and he is enough of a historian to make the disclaimer that modern homoerotic relationships and friendship differed from premodern notions of same-sex friendships. Both works resulted from the cultural and religious wars over marriage; both highlighted that same-sex friendship rituals occurred. These brother and friendship rituals provided the cultural antecedents for LGBT ritualizations of their relationships.

In the early 1990s, Robert Williams wrote one of the first theological texts, claiming that queer marriages are sacramental and that they form a school of love.³⁶ He roots this argument within a Protestant theology of marriage derived from the notion of companionship. Williams notes that the values present in same-sex marriages are mutuality, an ability to make and keep intentional agreements, and sexual involvement. He notes that queer marriages, like heterosexual marriages, can be a school of love for queer Christians.

From his earliest work, Robert Shore-Goss argued for the sacramental quality of same-sex marriages. He develops Catholic moral theologian Andre Guindon's application of sexual fecundity to same-sex unions,³⁷ and he argues for the sacramentality of same-sex marriages that reflect more closely the egalitarian power relations, mutuality, and love of God's reign. In later writings, Shore-Goss takes the notion of procreativity, a theological strategy that is used to justify the purpose for heterosexual marriage, and queers it by deconstructing its monolithic application to heterosexual couples and by demonstrating that same-sex couples have adopted a number of procreative strategies.³⁸ Shore-Goss thus argues for a position of equal rites, and that churches extend the blessing of marriage to same-sex couples as well as opposite sex. Procreativity can no longer be the theological justification for heterosexual marriage alone.

In 1997, Shore-Goss and Amy Strongheart presented a collection of essays on the construction of families.³⁹ A number of the essays directly address the theological aspects of marriage. The strength of the volume encompasses the diversities of translesbigay relationships by expanding the traditional definitions of friendship, marriage, families, and community. Within that volume, Mary Hunt challenges patriarchal constructions of marriage and the danger of applying them to same-sex unions. She understands same-sex unions within a framework of friendship, for such a friendship model allows for partner equality and mutuality rather than gender hierarchies with heterosexual marriages.⁴⁰

As the 2004 presidential election centered on the definition of and protection of marriage, Marvin Ellison provided a timely progressive Christian ethical analysis of same-sex marriage. His book *Same-Sex Marriage* underscores how patriarchal Christian notions of marriage have had little to no concern over justice for women. He argues for a justice ethic that same-sex couples should have equal access to the legal status and benefits of civil marriage that heterosexuals have. Ellison calls for a Christian rethinking of marriage and family to include LGBT marriage, and he ends with a prevailing image of God as "both unmarried and promiscuous lover, the divine lover whose love is not limited to only a certain people or groups, but rather expansively takes in all creation."⁴¹

Queer theologian Mark Jordan jumps into the fray of the same-sex marriage debate by revealing how Christians have for centuries quarreled over the theological elements of marriage. In fact, Christian marriage theologies have no unchanging core teachings; often, they resulted from the cultural improvisations from theological controversies on the legitimacy of sexuality and cultural shifts on notions of family.⁴² Jordan explores out of the bounds

same-sex relationships, noting that the betrothal often has greater significance than the blessing in same-sex relationships. His discussion of same-sex marital theology unmasks the inconsistencies of marital theologies that attempt to prevent its recognition. What is really subversive about Jordan's *Blessing Same-Sex Unions* is that he names Christian fears:

The most urgent challenge for Christian marital theology has been to prevent the universality of the agapic feast from reaching erotic relationships—how to prevent the agapic community from enactment as erotic community, Christianity as latent polyamory. . . . When sex unions are imagined as suspiciously unbounded erotic relationships, they call up theological scripts developed to rebut the challenge of polygamy and (more urgently) to delimit unbounded Christian love, agape itself.⁴³

For many Christians opposed to same-sex marriage, queer relationships are perceived as a threat to marriage because the churches have forged “incoherent accommodations” between ascetic imperatives of denying sex and allowing erotic desire for procreation within marriage. Jordan notes at the heart of the Eucharist, “The indiscriminate feast is the joining of many, body to body, regardless of sex, with the one and the many body of Jesus, from whose sex Christology has been a long and terrified flight. Joining bodies promiscuously is the great Christian mystery.”⁴⁴ Jordan names the fear surrounding same-sex marriage: fear of unbridled erotic desire and the promiscuous joining of bodies. Along with Jordan, there have been several Christian theological explorations of polyamory, including Shore-Goss's article titled “Proleptic Sexual Love.”⁴⁵ Queer theological reflections on marriage, erotic desire and new configurations, and nonheterocentric (and patriarchal) models of families provide a liberating edge and challenge to Christian “family values” and its incoherent theologies of marriage.

Transgendered theologies have emerged as part of the queer paradigm for theologizing around gender, destabilizing fundamentalist and rigid notions of gender, and proposing a wide and queer range of fluid masculinities, femininities, and hybrid mixtures. Male-to-female transsexual Victoria Kolakowski and female-to-male Justin Tanis have pioneered transgendered theological reflection with contextual transgendered readings of scripture.⁴⁶ Tanis expanded his D. Min. dissertation into *Transgendered Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*. He documented from surveys of transgendered folks how they understood gender as a calling and how God was intimately part of their process of the revelatory experience of transitioning:

Through trans and intersexed bodies, God reveals Godself to be a Creator who loves diversity and variation, a Creator who improvises and varies the melodies that call each person into being. Through such bodies, we see the intricate differences that make an individual a unique creation and a fluid transition from one being to another. Trans bodies show us that dichotomous ways in which we have viewed bodies are not God's ways because our bodies make it difficult to divide humans into two ways. We are the in-between, created in the image and likeness of God.⁴⁷

Tanis's theology is totally body-centered, where Trans (his capitalization) bodies manifest the cocreation between God and humanity of what bodies are and what they become. Transsexuals are not only exercising their freedom to cocreate their bodies but also, in turn, manifesting the process of God's self-revelation within transitioning bodies. Tanis's body theology becomes a means of preparing faith communities to become more welcoming and hospitable to transgendered folks.

In *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach*, lesbian feminist Virginia Mollenkott came out as male-identified.⁴⁸ She systematically deconstructs the validity of a binary gender system, exploring the biological middle group of intersexuality and cultural constructions of gender diversity. Mollenkott proposes an omnigender paradigm for comprehending gender diversity and understanding such diversity within a Christian theological framework. *Omnigender* includes a wide range of gender expressiveness, from masculine males on one side of the spectrum to feminine females on the other, and between those two poles, including transsexuals, intersexed folks, cross-dressers, drag queens and kings, gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who are infinitely expressive of the divine. She argues that males perpetrate the most physical violence against gender women and gender-variant folks. Mollenkott returns to the rich traditions of Christianity to mine gender-bending saints, queer texts such as Ephesians 5:25–27 that point out the gender *aporias* of the nuptial imagery of Christ and the Body of Christ, and the poet John Milton's notion of angels switching genders at will and reveling in their nuptials. Mollenkott thus undermines Christian gender fundamentalism and erotophobic symbols for a queer Christianity that is far more humane and more affirming of God's queer diverse gender creation.

In contrast, Vanessa Sheridan wrote first as a self-identified cross-dresser with her book *Cross Purposes*, and later she identified as a transgender woman.⁴⁹ Sheridan based her transgender theology on the principles and tenets of liberation theologies. She calls for gender-variant people to make

a place for themselves within Christian churches and join the struggle for justice and acceptance with the churches. The number of transgender theologies has blossomed in recent years, while bisexual theologies are almost nonexistent.⁵⁰

Sources Scripture

Since the 1970s, a critical mass of gay/lesbian scholarship on same-sex affectional preferences countered oppressive biblical readings supported by interpretative communities that were heteropatriarchal and often misogynist. Thus, many LGBT Christians, who journeyed into exile communities, found that they had to recover from the years of religious and homophobic biblical abuse from their previous churches. They found comfort in the LGBT scholars and their interpretative deflection of textual violence and abuse. As queer denominational groups, churches and synagogues formed in the late 1960s, and in the 1970s they created new interpretative communities engaging the scriptures not as enemy but as “friend.” The pastoral practices of those churches, synagogues, and denominational groups have used these texts as liturgical readings in the blessings of same-sex unions and providing legitimacy to their unions.⁵¹ LGBT Christians found themselves reflected in stories of Ruth and Naomi, Jonathan and David, and Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. These worship practices initially out-ed the homoerotic within the biblical text through communal imaginative readings. For example, John McNeill speaks of the gay centurion and his beloved boy: “Here we have the most direct encounter of Jesus Christ with someone who today would be pronounced ‘gay’ and Christ’s reaction is acceptance of the person without judgment and even eagerness to be of assistance to restore the *pais* (boy) to health.”⁵²

Ministers, such as Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, moderator of the MCC, counters pervasive biblical heterosexism by outing “eunuchs” and “barren women,” Ruth and Naomi, Jonathan and David, the gay centurion, Lydia in Acts, and Jesus as bisexual. In other words, she is reclaiming the text for the queer community when she writes, “The Bible must be a holy text for gays and lesbians because we are truly human, created by the God who created heaven and earth.” Queer folks are made in the image of God and thus have the right to be included within the text. Wilson articulates a tribal hermeneutic for gays and lesbians, reading eunuchs and barren women as gay, lesbian, and bisexual antecedents.⁵³

Outing the biblical text has had two methodological limitations: falling into an essentialist understanding of sexual identities, and giving over too much legitimation to the text for their contemporary erotic lives. Validation of queer erotic lives must come from within themselves, realizing the goodness and God's original blessings of their sexualities. Such a priori validation means that queer folks need to come out and recognize the blessing of their sexualities and their gender variations before they engage the biblical text. Theologian Gary Comstock writes: "Instead of making the Bible into a parental authority, I have begun to engage with it as I would a friend—as one to whom I have made a commitment and in whom I have invested dearly, but with whom I insist on a mutual exchange of critique, encouragement, support, and challenge."⁵⁴

Queer reading requires not surrendering to biblical authority as a parent but engaging the text as an equal, and in the encounter as friend, readers bring their own queer social context to the text. The authority of the text is located in the back and forth encounter of equals. For several decades, multicultural and contextual readings of the biblical texts were emerging. It was natural after African American, feminist, Hispanic, and contextual readings from Africa and Asia that LGBT contextual readings emerged. Stephen Moore has described queer engagements of biblical texts such as those typified by *Jesus ACTED UP*, *Take Back the Word*, and *Our Tribe* as "exegetical activism."⁵⁵ Exegetical activism really describes queer contextual readings of the biblical texts; it becomes a reading strategy of LGBT Christians to reappropriate the biblical texts for themselves. In *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*, the editors Mona West and Robert Shore-Goss wrote:

With the rise of postmodernism we have seen a shift in biblical hermeneutics that considers the role of the reader in assigning meaning to the biblical text. Not only have we come to realize that readers make meaning of texts, but readers also bring a particular "self" to the text which is shaped by a variety of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, religious affiliations, socioeconomic standing, education, and, we would add, sexual orientation.⁵⁶

Take Back the Word is a positive reading of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. The coeditors chose "take back the word" after playing around with a number of titles. "Taking back the word" indicated not only our queer reclamation of the biblical text for ourselves but also our Christian activist inclinations. In the preface, biblical scholar Mary Ann Tolbert writes:

In the case of queers . . . the fact that all texts, including the biblical texts, are generally ambiguous and indeterminate, thus requiring readers to refine and complete their meaning, is something of a two-edged sword. Since reading is always and inevitably a process in which the commitments, views, and cultural and social location of each reader profoundly influences the way those ambiguities and indeterminacies are decided, readers of texts become the co-creators of their meanings.⁵⁷

Tolbert recognizes that authoritative readings come not from the biblical text itself but from the assumptions that LGBT readers bring to it. Queer contributors foreground themselves as real flesh and blood readers, variously situated as they transgress heterosexist boundaries and even the sexual orthodoxies of gay and lesbian to include bisexual and transgendered contributors. Transgressing boundaries of dominant interpretative communities is a rebellious act that breaks the conceptual heterosexist interpretative lens and categories to biblical texts.

Take Back the Word was certainly not inclusive enough of all queer social locations, but it was a beginning, followed by Ken Stone's *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible* and, in the United Kingdom, Thomas Bohache et al., *The Queer Bible Commentary*, in which queer scripture scholars, theologians, and pastors provide contextual readings.⁵⁸ The contributors used feminist, queer, and postmodern approaches to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures to transgress the cultural imperialism of heteropatriarchy that has justified sexist, racist, heterosexist, and colonial readings. They bring their own contextually queer experiences to the reading of individual books of the Bible, suspicious of readings that have been traditionally oppressive to themselves and to other groups. In his review of the commentary, religion sociologist Andrew Yip wrote:

What I find more satisfying is the contributors' creative attempts to uncover queer sensibilities and subjectivities in each text. This involves lifting the veil on hitherto silenced voices of homoeroticism and same-sex intimacy and care (for example, the devotion between Ruth and Naomi in Ruth; and David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel), as well as casting queer-friendly light on passages that are on the surface not relevant to LGBT experiences. It is hard not to be moved by the thought of an LGBT Christian declaring with pride, confidence and honesty that, "God, you fashioned me in my mother's womb . . . For I am awesomely and wondrously made."⁵⁹

The queer contributors freed themselves from the decades of oppressive heterosexist interpretations of the scriptural texts and offered empowered and liberating interpretations compatible with LGBT lives.

Seminal Reports and Publications

Gay historians have pointed out that the early homophile organizations developed after World War II when gay and lesbian veterans settled in urban areas where they could support one another and organize as a movement. The popularization of psychoanalytic theories on homosexuality and its treatment dominated cultural discourse and supported the ecclesial language of the sin of homosexuality. Despite cultural and theological obstacles, there were two groundbreaking events. Published in 1948, the Kinsey study of male sexuality and homosexuality opened a door for understanding. Also groundbreaking for development of gay theology was Derek Sherwin Bailey's *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* in 1955.⁶⁰ Bailey, a British scholar and clergy, traced the development of homo-hatred from the biblical texts through the formation of Christian practice and theology in the early and late medieval ages. Bailey's work paved the way for the British *Wolfenden Report* (1957), leading to the legalization of homosexuality, and Bailey's work had deep influence on the nascent homophile movements and spurred the first explicit homosexual theology with Robert Wood's *Christ and the Homosexual* (1959).⁶¹ There were several attempts at the formation of homophile churches such as the Church of One Brotherhood, but these were short-lived experiments.⁶²

Protest Movements

Germinating in the 1960s was a series of cultural developments that would significantly affect the development of gay/lesbian theologies. The African American civil rights movement under Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders gained impetus in the 1960s. This led to Black theology and the beginnings of its liberation theology. The advent of the birth control pill, women's greater independence, and the rise of the feminist movement provided the matrix for feminist liberation theology with Mary Daly and others in the 1970s. Within Catholicism, Vatican II provided a reform of the archaic structures and theologies. In the Latin American sector, Gustavo Gutierrez's *The Crucified Christ* launched liberation theology.

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

The French cultural critic and postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault, who died of AIDS in 1984, became popular among feminists, gay/lesbian academic scholars, and gender/sex theorists. Foucault's three-volume work, *The History of Sexuality*, provided the intellectual, theoretical, and activist impulse for reflection on activists' appropriation of the term "queer," and queer became the paradigm that appropriated intellectual disruptive and transgressive potentialities of ACT UP and queer activism.⁶³ Queer theory became a reality in universities—especially, in departments of English literature and cultural studies. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Michael Warner, David Halperin, Judith Butler, and others pioneered constructionist models of sexuality and gender; these constructionist models were very much indebted to Foucault's deconstructive methods, rendering concepts fluid and instable.⁶⁴

Queer studies represented a paradigm or discursive shift in the way that scholars view sexual identity and gender. Queer theorists like Judith Butler comprehend gender as inscribed on the body through a performative repetition with subversive and critical potential. Butler argues for gender as taking the form of drag performance, thus rendering it as fluid. Queer theorists thus problematize gender and sexual diversities by unmasking the hegemonic social constructions of the sex/gender system:

Queer Theory is suggesting that the study of homosexuality should not be a study of a minority—the making of the lesbian/gay/bisexual subject—but a study of those knowledges and social practices that organize "society" as a whole by sexualizing—heterosexualizing or homosexualizing—bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions.⁶⁵

Queer literary scholar Michael Warner defines "queer" as a transgressive paradigm, representing "a more resistance to the regimes of the normal."⁶⁶ In *Saint Foucault*, classicist David Halperin defines queer:

Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers* [Halperin's italics]. It is an identity without an essence. "Queer," then demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative—a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or feels marginalized because of her or his sexual practices.⁶⁷

Queer theorists applied “queer” as a strategic method to deconstruct and expand the textual possibilities of cultural metanarratives—examining textual meshes, dissonances, absences, resistances, and disruptive potentialities.

The implications of queer theory for the reenvisioning of gay/lesbian Christian theologies of sexuality and gender became profound, opening single-issue analysis on sexual orientation to more complex social and cultural analyses of the sex/gender system. Gay/lesbian Christian theologies opened themselves to postmodern cultural studies and queer theory in academia and to queer activism, and the challenge of queerness became more inclusion. It questioned the dominant cultural use and political assumptions of the unity and the stability of sexual and gender identities. The previous border skirmishes of gay/lesbian theologies with Christian churches would be replaced by poststructuralist assault of queer theologies on Christianity and its theologies. It would be nothing less than storming the gates of the churches, disrupting the binary concepts of gender and sexuality on which many theological doctrines and scriptural readings were grounded.

Ongoing Issues

Marginalization of Queer Theology

There are two obstacles to queer theologies. First, gay/lesbian theologies and queer theologies tend to create anxiety in heterocentric Christian theologians, and they seldom read the works of queer theologians or review them.⁶⁸ It raises a subversive, albeit inclusive, theology that tears down the walls of ecclesial and theological exclusion. Second is the emergence of liberal gay/lesbian-affirming churches—mixed congregations sometimes affirming sanitized “gays” and “lesbians,” those folks who most resemble the majority of the congregation. The inclusion of diverse LGBT would make these churches shudder in terror. These are congregations that will not easily accept queer theologies but only gay and lesbian theologies that most likely resemble their own denominational theology.

Queer theologies will continue to be cutting edge, pushing radical inclusion and reenvisioning inclusive, queer theologies. Such theologies will find a home in denominations such as the MCC congregations or pluralistic, Christian justice communities, and courses in seminaries. The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion, Chicago Theological Seminary with its LGBT Religious Archives, and Emory University with its online bibliography of queer religious works are locations where queer theologies will prosper in the United States.⁶⁹

Ineffectiveness for Social Transformation

Criticism, in contrast, has been leveled at queer theory for its cultural ineffectiveness in providing a discourse and praxis for social transformation. Gay anthropologist Max Kirsch writes:

Queer theory has developed along a path that questions the basic tenets of past resistance movements while championing the right of inclusion. But despite the calls for recognition of diversity, it has done little to further a true inclusiveness that would have the ability to form communities of resistance. Again, this is primarily due to the insistence on the uniqueness of the individual and the relativity of experience. . . . But instead of focusing on the creation of a society that guarantees freedom and expression for all, it has focused on the individual as the site of change.⁷⁰

Kirsch's criticism of queer theory is well grounded, for queer theory as a form of cultural and literary criticism has, at times, been elitist, individualist, a self-expression of desire, a "white" dilettante exercise in deconstruction, and an academic imaginative counterdiscourse. What queer theory lacks is a vision to create a movement for social change that is gender variant and sexually pluralistic from multiple social locations of race, class, ethnicity, age, and differently able-bodied. There is disjuncture (although not in all cases) between academic queer theory and the praxis of queer social change. Another weakness is queer theory's inability to generate a political discourse of challenge.

Translesbigay theologies as they engage queer theory, however, have a different trajectory than just mere academic deconstruction. Queer theology brings queer theory into dialogue with an established theological rhetoric that has focused on personal liberation and social transformation. Liberation theologies are communal praxes, intimately connected to utopian visions of equality, justice, and compassionate care; they are grounded in prophetic traditions of personal and social transformation. Queer theologies involve not only the querying of Christian texts and symbols but the queering of them as well. MCC clergy and author Thomas Bohache argues that "a queer hermeneutic . . . will not only *queer* but it will *query*: It must be a questioning and turning over of layers of heteropatriarchal tradition to reveal what lies beneath."⁷¹ Queering represents a method of dislocation or transgression of fixed theological categories. For example, biblical scholar Halvor Moxnes uses "queer" as the best term to characterize Jesus: "To use the term 'queer' of Jesus describes the unsettling quality about him."⁷² Bisexual-identified

Latina theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid envisions the indecent Jesus among the poor LGBT in Argentina. The queer Jesus is prevalent in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered Christologies and theologies.⁷³ Finally, lesbian theologian Carter Heyward elegantly sums up the connection of queer theology with Christian practice for justice and social change:

The term "queer" as I am using it, let me be clear, is not simply a code-word for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and other ways of being at odds with dominant gender culture. "Queer" is not simply a reversal of a negative epithet so often hurled against GLBT folks in homophobic culture. "Queer" is not simply a synonym for being "odd," "unusual," or "out-there." Queerness is bigger than GLBT lives; queerness is more than a linguistic reversal; and queerness is way deeper than merely "odd." Queerness is public solidarity in the struggle for sexual and gender justice and of irrepressibly making connections to other struggles for justice, compassion, and reconciliation.⁷⁴

Heyward thus places queer theologies within the Christian mission for "justice, compassion, and reconciliation." This transforms queer theory with an explicit rhetorical tradition and praxis of social transformation.

In light of recent international queer theology summits, it is critical to end this chapter with a couple of observations about the further development of queer theologies.⁷⁵ First, the future of theological studies will see greater networking and collaboration of self-identified queer theologians and biblical scholars across disciplinary, ethnic, and racial boundaries, between academic theologians and church leaders, setting up centers for archival work, mentoring a future generation of queer scholars and activists and queer clergy. Second, queer theologies will multiply and hybridize as they develop queer folks from different cultural, social, and international contexts. Third, queer theologies will continue to envision, foster, and nurture a countertheological (albeit "perverse," "indecent," or "queer") imagination that challenges churches and societies with the vision of radical inclusion. Even with this publication, several queer theologians are embarking on a venture to produce a text of queer theologies, comparable to *The Queer Bible Commentary*, as an attempt to prepare for the challenges of the next generation of queer scholars who will develop a queer *Summa Theologica* that will reenvision sexuality diversity and gender variance and thoroughly reenvision liberating theologies and praxes grounded in economic justice, compassion, peacemaking, and love.

NOTES

1. In the United States, Reverend Troy Perry, thrown out of his church for being gay, founded the Metropolitan Community Church in 1968, now the largest LGBT organization in the world. The following year, the Stonewall Rebellion marked the birth of the gay/lesbian liberation movement in the United States, and it became the catalyst for the rise of a public gay/lesbian subculture.

2. Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

3. For a history of the Christian Right's construction of the gay and lesbian menace, see Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 25–136. For a somewhat insider, now outsider, perspective, see Mel White, *Religion Gone Bad: The Hidden Dangers of the Christian Right* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

4. Robert [Shore-]Goss, *Jesus ACTED UP: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 51.

5. Robert [Shore-]Goss, "From Gay Theologies to Queer Sexual Theologies," in *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus ACTED UP* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2002), 239–258; Daniel T. Spencer, "Lesbian and Gay Theologies," in *Handbook of U.S. Theologies of Liberation*, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2004), 264–273; and Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetition with a Critical Difference* (Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate, 2003).

6. For example: (Argentina) Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2001); (Argentina) Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (New York: Routledge, 2003); (Brazil) Andre Muskopf, *Uma brecha no armário: Propostas para uma teologia gay* (São Paulo: CEBI [Center for Biblical Studies], 2005), available at http://www.cebi.org.br/pub_detalhes.php?produto_cod=317<http://www.cebi.org.br>; (Brazil) Talar Rosa, *Homossexuais e o Ministério na Igreja São Leopoldo* (Rio Grande do Sul: Oikos, 2005), available at <http://www.oikoseditora.com.br/precos.html> - #26; (United Kingdom) Elizabeth Stuart, *Just Good Friends: Towards a Theology of Lesbian and Gay Relationships* (London: Mowbray, 1995); and (Australia) Michael Carden, *Sodomy: A History of Christian Biblical Myth* (London, Equinox, 2005).

7. Handout from Mark D. Jordan: "Consultation on Theology and the Homosexual," prepared August 22–24, 1966, at the Queer Theology Summit, Emory University, February 23–24, 2007, available at http://web.library.emory.edu/r_guides/studies/LGBT/QueerReligion.html.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Sally Gearhart and William R. Johnson, eds., *Loving Women/Loving Men: Gay Liberation and the Church* (San Francisco: Glide, 1974).

10. John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, and McMeel, 1976).

11. Tom Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); Virginia Mollenkott and Letha Scanzoni, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978).

12. John Boswell, *Christianity, Homosexuality, and Social Tolerance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). On Boswell's thesis and reclamation of gay voices in history, see

Matthew Kuefler, ed., *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Homosexuality and Social Tolerance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

13. For an assessment of Boswell's evangelical mission, see Mark D. Jordan, "Both as a Christian and as a Historian': On Boswell's Ministry," in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Homosexuality and Social Tolerance*, ed. Matthew Kuefler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 88–107.

14. Some of the harshest gay critics published work to undermine Boswell's thesis; their work arises from institutional Christianity's hostility to homosexuality. For example, Warren Johansson, Wayne R. Dynes, and John Lauritsen, *Homosexuality, Intolerance, and Christianity: A Critical Examination of Boswell's Work*, available at <http://www.galha.org/ptt/lib/hic/index.html>.

15. Bernard Schlager, "Reading *CSTH* as a Call to Action: Boswell and Gay Affirming Movements in American Christianity," in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Homosexuality and Social Tolerance*, ed. Matthew Kuefler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 74–87.

16. Maury Johnson, *Gays under Grace* (Nashville, TN: Winston-Derek, 1983); Chris Glaser, *Come Home* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990); John McNeill, *Taking a Chance on God* (Boston: Beacon, 1988); and John Fortunato, *Embracing the Exile* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982).

17. Bernadette Brooten, *Love between Women: Female Homoeroticism in Early Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

18. For example, Robert Nugent, ed., *A Challenge to Love: Gay and Lesbian Catholics in the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); and Jeannine Grammick and Pat Furey, eds., *The Vatican and Homosexuality* (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

19. For understanding Roman Catholic rhetorical statements on homosexuality and its closeted priesthood and hierarchy, see Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 31–40. Jordan has understood the doublespeak of institutional Catholicism on the issue of homosexuality in Jordan, *Telling the Truth in Church: Scandal, Flesh, and Christian Speech* (Boston: Beacon, 2004). These two books are derived from his earlier project: *The Invention of Sodom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Donald Boisvert and Robert E. [Shore-] Goss, eds., *Gay Catholic Clergy and Clerical Sexual Misconduct* (New York: Haworth, 2005).

20. Quoted in John R. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Boston: Beacon, 1993), 241.

21. John R. McNeill, *Freedom, Glorious Freedom* (Boston: Beacon, 1995); and McNeill, *Both Feet Firmly Planted in Midair* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

22. Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice* (New York: Pilgrim, 1988); and Heyward, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).

23. Heyward, *Touching Our Strength*, 34.

24. For gay theologies, see J. Michael Clark, *A Defiant Celebration: Theological Ethics and Gay Sexuality* (Garland, TX: Tangelwild, 1990); Daniel T. Spencer, *God and Gaia: Ethics, Ecology, and the Erotic* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1996); Gary David Comstock, *Gay Theology without Apology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1993); and Marvin Ellison, *Erotic Justice* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996). For lesbian theologies, see Mary Hunt, *Fierce Tender-*

ness: *A Feminist Theology of Friendship* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); and Kathy Rudy, *Sex and the Church* (Boston: Beacon, 1997). For queer theologies, see Robert Williams, *Just as I Am: A Practical Guide to Being Out, Proud, and Christian* (Crown, 1992); and Robert [Shore-]Goss, *Jesus ACTED UP: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* (San Francisco: HarperSan-Francisco, 1993).

25. J. Michael Clark, *Beyond Our Ghettos: Gay Theology in an Ecological Perspective* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1993); Comstock, *Gay Theology without Apology*; [Shore-]Goss, *Jesus ACTED UP*.

26. [Shore-]Goss, *Jesus ACTED UP*, xix, 38–40.

27. Robert E. [Shore-]Goss, *Queering Christ: Beyond Jesus ACTED UP* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2002), 250.

28. David Halperin surveyed ACT UP activists on what book they carried with them. The number one answer was Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), vol. 1. David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16. This illustrates what I experienced firsthand at the conference on the politics of pleasure, held at Harvard University, November 1990. There ACT UPers, queer street activists, and LGBT academics all quoted Foucault. No author at the time captured the queer imaginations of such diverse LGBT folks.

29. Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Differences* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate), 86.

30. Nancy Wilson, *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995); Rudy, *Sex and the Church*; Ibrahim (Elias) Farajaje-Jones, "Breaking Silence: Towards an In-the-Life Theology," in *Black Theology*, ed. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 2:139–159; Mark Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gendered Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2003); Lisa Isherwood, *Liberating Christ: Exploring the Christologies of Contemporary Movements* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1999); Elizabeth Stuart, *Religion Is a Queer Thing* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1997); and Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

31. James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979); Nelson, *The Intimate Garden: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); and Nelson *Body Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

32. Jeremy Carette, "Beyond Theology and Sexuality: Foucault, the Self, and Que(e)rying of Monotheistic Truth," in *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*, ed. James Bernauer and Jeremy Carette (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 225, 228.

33. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 323–324.

34. John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 191.

35. Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also Bray, "Friendship, the Family, and Liturgy: A Rite for Blessing Friendship in Traditional Christianity," *Theology and Sexuality* 13 (2000): 15–33.

36. Williams, *Just as I Am*, 206–216. See also Williams, "Toward a Theology for Gay and Lesbian Marriage," in *Christian Perspective on Sexuality and Gender*, ed. Adrian Thatcher and Elizabeth Stuart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 279–300.

37. [Shore-]Goss, *Jesus ACTED UP*, 136–138.
38. [Shore-]Goss, *Queering Christ*, 113–139.
39. Robert [Shore-]Goss and Amy Adams Squires Strongheart, eds., *Our Families, Our Values: Snapshots of Queer Kinship* (New York: Haworth, 1997).
40. Mary Hunt, “Variety Is the Spice of Life: Doing It Our Ways,” in *Our Families, Our Values: Snapshots of Queer Kinship*, ed. Robert [Shore-]Goss and Amy Adams Squires Strongheart (New York: Haworth, 1997), 97–106.
41. Marvin Ellison, *Same-Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 166.
42. Mark D. Jordan, *Blessing Same-Sex Unions: The Perils of Queer Romance and the Confusions of Christian Marriage* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2005), 100–110. He bases some of his work on earlier insights in Jordan, *The Ethics of Sex* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).
43. Jordan, *Blessing Same-Sex Unions*, 165.
44. *Ibid.*, 166.
45. Robert [Shore-]Goss, “Proleptic Sexual Love: God’s Promiscuity in Christian Polyamory,” *Theology and Sexuality* 11, no. 1 (2004): 52–63.
46. Victoria Kolakowski, “Toward a Christian Ethical Response to Transsexual Persons,” *Theology and Sexuality* 6 (1997): 10–31; and Tanis, *Trans-Gendered Theology*.
47. Tanis, *Trans-Gendered Theology*, 166.
48. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001).
49. Vanessa S. (Sheridan), *Cross Purposes: On Being Christian and Crossgendered*, (Decatur, IL: Sullivan, 1996); and Sheridan, *Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgendered Christian* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2003).
50. Virginia Mollenkott and Vanessa Sheridan, *Transgender Journeys* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2003); Leann McCall Tigert and Maren C. Tribassi, *Transgendering Faith: Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004); and Pat Conover, *Transgender Good News* (Silver Spring, MD: New Wineskins, 2002). Bisexual theology is at its very beginnings; for example, Debra R. Kolodny, *Blessed BiSpirit* (New York: Continuum, 2000). From Argentina, Marcella Althaus-Reid writes as a bisexual theologian.
51. Gay/lesbian liturgical practice in same-sex unions frequently used the scriptural texts of Ruth 1:16–17, 1 Samuel 18:3, and 2 Samuel 1:26. See Elizabeth Stuart, *Daring to Speak Love’s Name* (London: Hamish, Hamilton, 1992), 54, and Kittredge Cherry and Zalmon Sherwood, eds., *Equal Rites* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 100.
52. McNeill, *Freedom, Glorious Freedom*, 132.
53. Wilson, *Our Tribe*, 112, 120–131.
54. Comstock, *Gay Theology without Apology*, 11.
55. Stephen D. Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 209.
56. Mona West and Robert E. [Shore-]Goss, Introduction to *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*, ed. Mona West and Robert E. [Shore-]Goss (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000), 4.
57. Mary Ann Tolbert, Foreword to *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*, ed. Mona West and Robert E. [Shore-]Goss (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000), x.

58. Ken Stone, ed., *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001); and Thomas Bohache, Deryn Guest, Robert [Shore-]Goss, and Mona Wests, eds., *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London: SCM, 2006). See also Ken Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts: Food and Sex, and Bible in Queer Perspective* (New York: T and T Clark, 2005); Tom Hanks, *The Subversive Gospel* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000); and Deryn Guest, *When Deborah Met Jael* (London: SCM, 2005).
59. Andrew Yip, "The Gay Guide to God's Word" (A Review of *The Queer Bible Commentary*), *London Times*, April 6, 2007, available at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=208541§ioncode=40>.
60. Derek Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (New York: Longmanns Green, 1955).
61. *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution* ("Wolfenden Report") (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957); and Robert Wood, *Christ and the Homosexual* (New York: Vantage, 1959).
62. Mark D. Jordan, "Theater of the Soul," paper delivered at the Queering the Church Conference at the Boston University School of Theology, April 19, 2007. It will be forthcoming in a volume on Queering the Church to be published by SCM.
63. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*; and [Shore-]Goss, *Jesus ACTED UP*, 181–190.
64. Here are some classics: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999); David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Halperin, *Saint Foucault*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Butler, *Bodies Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993). For surveys of queer theory, see Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory. An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); William Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); and Donald Hall, *Queer Theories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
65. Steve Seideman, ed., *Introduction to Queer Theory/Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 13.
66. Warner, introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet*, xxvi.
67. Halperin, *Saint Foucault*, 62.
68. Bjorn Krondorfer presents clusters of anxieties in heterosexual theologians over queer works: indifference, boundary violations, the gay-of religion, autobiographical insertions, and erotic confessions. Bjorn Krondorfer, "Who's Afraid of Gay Theology?" *Theology and Sexuality* 13, no. 3 (2007): 257–274. In *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism*, all the contributors, except for Mary Hunt, never mention former Jesuit John McNeill. Patricia Beattie Jung and Joseph Andrew Corey, eds., *Sexuality Diversity and Catholicism: Towards the Development of Moral Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001).
69. Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry, Pacific School of Religion, available at <http://www.clgs.org/>; LGBT Religious Archive Network at Chicago Theological Seminary, available at <http://www.lgbtran.org/>; and Emory University, available at http://web.library.emory.edu/r_guides/studies/LGBT/Queer_Religion.html.
70. Max H. Kirsch, *Queer Theory and Social Change* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 131.

71. Thomas Bohache, "Embodiment as Incarnation: An Incipient Queer Christology," *Theology and Sexuality* 10 (2003): 25.
72. Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 6.
73. [Shore-Goss], *Jesus ACTED UP*, 61–86; [Shore-]Goss, *Queering Christ*, 170–184; and Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 94–124.
74. Carter Heyward, available at <http://www.episdivschool.edu/worship/Sermon%20CH%202%2019%2004.htm>.
75. The Queer Theologians Summit at Emory University on February 22–24 was cosponsored by Mark D. Jordan at Emory, the Human Rights Campaign, and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion.

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