

BLACKWELL
READINGS IN
MODERN
THEOLOGY

THEOLOGY AND SEXUALITY

CLASSIC AND
CONTEMPORARY
READINGS



Edited by _____

Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.



Blackwell
Publishing

Theology and Sexuality

Classic and Contemporary Readings

Edited by

Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.



**Blackwell
Publishing**

© 2002 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd
Editorial matter and arrangement © 2002 by Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

BLACKWELL PUBLISHING
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK
550 Swanston Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia

The right of Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

First published 2002

3 2007

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Theology and sexuality : classic and contemporary readings / edited by Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

p. cm. – (Blackwell readings in modern theology)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-631-21276-8 (hbk. : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-631-21277-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Sex—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Rogers, Eugene F. II. Series.

BT708 .T45 2002

233'.5—dc21

2001037565

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

The publisher's policy is to use permanent paper from mills that operate a sustainable forestry policy, and which has been manufactured from pulp processed using acid-free and elementary chlorine-free practices. Furthermore, the publisher ensures that the text paper and cover board used have met acceptable environmental accreditation standards.

For further information on
Blackwell Publishing, visit our website:
www.blackwellpublishing.com

Theology and Sexuality

Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology

General Editors: L. Gregory Jones and James J. Buckley
Duke University, North Carolina; Loyola College, Maryland

Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology is a series of constructive anthologies on important topics in modern theology. Each volume brings together both classic and newly commissioned essays on a particular theme. These essays will provide students and teachers in colleges, universities and seminaries with a critical entry to key debates.

For a full contents listing or for more information visit our website at
<http://www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk/religion>

Published works

The Theological Interpretation of Scripture

Classic and Contemporary Readings

Edited by Stephen E. Fowl

The Postmodern God

A Theological Reader

Edited by Graham Ward

Inquiring after God

Classic and Contemporary Readings

Edited by Ellen T. Charry

Theology after Liberalism

A Reader

Edited by John Webster and George P. Schnier

Theology and Sexuality

Classic and Contemporary Readings

Edited by Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.

for
Susan Dodson Rogers
1931–1999

Contributors

Marilyn McCord Adams is Horace Tracy Pitkin Professor of Historical Theology in Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Divinity at Yale University.

James Alison is a Catholic priest, theologian, and author.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) was a Dominican theologian.

St. Augustine (354–430) was Bishop of Hippo.

Karl Barth (1886–1968) was a Swiss Calvinist theologian.

John Boswell (1947–94) was A. Whitney Griswold Professor of History at Yale University.

Thomas Breidenthal is John Henry Hobart Professor of Moral Theology at the General Theological Seminary, New York.

Paul Evdokimov (1901–70) was a Russian Orthodox priest and theologian.

Susan A. Harvey is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Brown University.

Stanley Hauerwas is Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School.

Charles Hawes is Chaplain of St. Mary's House, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Robert W. Jenson is Senior Scholar for Research at the Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton.

St. John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) was Patriarch of Constantinople.

St. John of the Cross (1542–91) was the founder of the Discalced Carmelites.

Luke Timothy Johnson is R. W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament at Candler Divinity School, Emory University.

Mark D. Jordan is Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Religion at Emory University.

David Matzko McCarthy is Assistant Professor of Theology at Mount St. Mary's College.

Sebastian Moore, OSB, is at Downside Abbey.

Thomas Nagel is Professor of Philosophy and Law, New York University.

Oliver O'Donovan is Regius Professor of Moral Theology at Oxford University.

Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia.

George P. Schnier, SJ (1946–2000) was Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Regis College, the University of Toronto.

Jeffrey Stout is Professor of Religion, Princeton University.

Andrew Sullivan is Senior Editor of *The New Republic*.

St. Symeon the New Theologian (942–1022) was Abbot of Saint Mamas.

Rowan D. Williams was formerly Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University, and is now Archbishop of Wales.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Blackwell Publishers, especially Alex Wright, who commissioned this anthology, and L. Gregory Jones and James J. Buckley, in whose series it appears.

I wish to thank the National Humanities Center for support during a leave year 1998–9 when I began this project. At the Humanities Center I am especially grateful to Robert Connor, the Director; Kent Mullikin, the Deputy Director; Karen Carroll, the wonderful Coordinator of Editorial Services; and the splendid librarians, Alan Tuttle, Jean Houston, and Eliza Robertson, who not only found all sorts of out-of-the-way materials, but found them fast and often even xeroxed them – tremendous help for an anthologizer.

I wish to thank the University of Virginia for additional support during 1998–9, for Summer Research Grants in several years, as well as for a University Seminar Research Grant that allowed me to teach this material twice. Thanks also to Library Express On-Grounds, which delivers books, xeroxes, and electronic files to my office or computer, especially Lew Purifoy and Winston Barham.

And I wish to thank the students of those seminars; my research assistant, Trent Pomplun; and my indexer, Willis Jenkins.

Finally, I wish to thank Derek Krueger for moral support.

For errors I have only myself to thank.

The publishers gratefully acknowledge the following for permission to reproduce copyright material.

"Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syriac Perspective," by Susan Harvey, from *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 43 (1993): 106–30. Used by permission of St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly, 575 Scarsdale Road, Crestwood, NY 10707.

"The Appeal to Experience," by G. P. Schnier, from *Journal of Theological Studies* 53 (1992): 40–59 (1992). Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press Journals.

Extracts from *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), Episcopal Church, USA.

"Betrothal Service" and "Order of Second Marriage" from *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic and Apostolic Church*, 6th ed., trans. Isabel Hapgood, pp. 291–3 and 302–5. Reprinted by permission of Antiochan Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, New Jersey.

Extract from the "Office of Same-Sex Union," Grottaferrata Gamma B II, in John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, Villard Books, 1994, pp. 294–8.

"Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day" (II), English Traditional, Sandys 1833.

Augustine, "The Good of Marriage," partially translated in *Marriage in the Early Church*, ed. and trans. David G. Hunter, *Sources of Early Christian Thought*, pp. 102–21. Reprinted by permission of Augsburg Fortress Publishers, Minneapolis.

"Homily on Marriage," partially translated as *Sermon on Marriage* in *On Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), pp. 81–8. Used by permission of St. Vladimir's Press, 575 Scarsdale Road, Crestwood, NY 10707.

"Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life," by John Chrysostom, in *A Comparison of Treatises by John Chrysostom*, trans. David G. Hunter, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, 13, published by Edwin Mellen Press, 1988, pp. 162–3. Reprinted by permission of Edwin Mellen Press.

"Hymns of Divine Love 15," St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Hymns of Divine Love*, trans. George A. Maloney, pp. 51–8, 2nd ed. March 1999, published by Dimension Books Inc. Reprinted with permission.

St. John of the Cross, "The Spiritual Canticle: Songs Between the Soul and the Bridegroom," in John Frederick Nims trans., *The Poems of St. John of the Cross*, a bilingual edition, 3rd ed., published by University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 3–17, odd-numbered pages only. Reprinted by permission of University of Chicago Press.

"An den Etnologen Rolf Italiaander, Hamburg," from *Offene Briefe 1945–1986*, by Karl Barth, ed. Diether Koch, in Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesadt,

eds., *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe V Briefe*, pp. 542–3 © 1984. Reprinted by permission of Theologischer Verlag, Zurich.

Extract from *The Epistle to the Romans* by K. Barth, trans. from the 6th ed. by E. C. Hoskyns, 1933. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Oxford University Press.

Thomas Nagel, “Sexual Perversion,” in *Mortal Questions*, published by Cambridge University Press New York, 1979, pp. 39–52. Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press New York.

Jeffrey Stout, “Moral Abominations,” from *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents*, by Jeffrey Stout. Copyright © 1988 by Jeffrey Stout. Published by Beacon Press. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

Sebastian Moore, “The Crisis of an Ethic Without Desire,” in *Jesus the Liberator of Desire*, published by Crossroad, 1989, pp. 89–107. Reprinted by kind permission of the author.

John Paul II, selections from *The Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis of the Book of Genesis*, published by St. Paul Editions, *L'Osservatore Romano*. Reprinted by permission of *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Paul Evdokimov, selections from “Introduction” and “Marriage and the Monastic State,” in *The Sacrament of Love: The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel and Victoria Steadman, published by St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press in 1985, pp. 15–19, 21–2, 41–5, 65–71, and 81–3. Used by permission of St. Vladimir’s Press, 575 Scarsdale Road, Crestwood, NY 10707.

“Faithfulness” by Robert W. Jenson, from *Dialog* 14 (1975): 38–41. Reprinted by permission of Blackwell Publishers Limited.

“The Relationship of Bodies: A Nuptial Hermeneutics of Same-sex Unions” by David Matzko McCarthy in *Theology and Sexuality* 8 (1998): 96–112. Reprinted by permission of Sheffield Academic Press.

“Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God’s Triune Life” by Eugene F. Rogers from *Sexual Orientation and Human Rights in American Religious Discourse*, eds. Martha Nussbaum and Saul Olyan. Copyright © 1998 Oxford University Press Inc. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.

Extracts from the “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons.” Reproduced by permission of Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001.

Mark Jordan, “The Pope Converts: Imagination, Bureaucracy, Silence,” ch. 1 in *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in the Catholic Church*, published by

University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 1–17. Reprinted by permission of University of Chicago Press.

“Alone Again, Naturally: The Catholic Church and the Homosexual,” by Andrew Sullivan, from *The New Republic*, Nov. 26, 1994, pp. 47, 50, 52, 54, 55. Reprinted by permission of *The New Republic* © 1994 The New Republic Inc.

Excerpt from “Faith Healing” from *Collected Poems* by Phillip Larkin. Copyright © 1988, 1989 by the Estate of Phillip Larkin. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, LLC. This excerpt also reproduced by courtesy of Faber and Faber Ltd.

Stanley Hauerwas, “Gay Friendship: A Thought Experiment in Catholic Moral Theology,” in *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified*, published by T. & T. Clark, 1998, pp. 105–21. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

Rowan D. Williams, “The Bodies Grace,” 10th Michael Harding Memorial Address – Institute for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality, 1989, reprinted in *Our Selves, Our Souls and Bodies: Sexuality and the Household of God*, ed. C. Hefling, Cowley Press, 1996. Reprinted by permission of Lesbian & Gay Christians.

“Trinitarian Friendship: Same-Gender Models of Godly Love in Richard of St. Victor and Aelred of Rievaulx” by Marilyn McCord Adams, Horace Tracy Pitkin Professor of Historical Theology in Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Divinity, Yale University.

Copyright 1986 by Charles Hefling. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Our Selves, Our Souls and Bodies* edited by Charles Hefling, from the essay *Sanctifying Nearness* by Thomas Breidenthal, published by Cowley Publications, 28 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111. www.cowley.org (1 800 225 1534)

Introduction in *Uncommon Calling: A Gay Man's Struggle to Serve the Church* by Chris Galser, published by Westminster John Knox Press. Copyright © 1988 Chris Galser. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press.

Charles Hawes (chaplain of St. Mary's House, University of North Carolina at Greensboro), sermon at Richey/Smith wedding, Black Mountain Presbyterian Church, May 28, 1994. Used with permission.

“Disputed Questions: Debate and Discernment, Scripture and the Spirit” by Luke Timothy Johnson, in *Commonweal*, Jan. 28, 1994. Copyright (c) 1994 Commonweal Foundation, reprinted by permission. For subscriptions call toll-free 1-888-495-6755.

“Theology amidst the Stones and Dust” by James Alison, from *Faith Beyond*

Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay. Reprinted by permission of Darton Longman & Todd Ltd. and Crossroad Publishing Co., New York.

The publishers apologize for any errors or omissions in the above list and would be grateful to be notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in the next edition or reprint of this book.

Introduction

What is the body for? What does marriage mean? What is the purpose of Christianity? What does God want with sex, anyway?

A remarkable convergence is emerging with short, catechetical answers to questions like these from among Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox writers. The convergence is remarkable both because it comes from so many corners, and because it arises from an area in which the arguments have usually been particularly long and dreary: theology and sexuality.

Theology and sexuality studies have often talked past each other or gone unheard in a shouting match. Charges of question-begging abound. That is particularly the case these days on the issue of homosexuality and Christianity. Thus liberals find that natural-law approaches beg the question of what's natural. Or they find that divine-command approaches beg the question of how God created us. Similarly, conservatives find that psychological approaches find no foothold in Scripture or tradition, or that constructivist approaches may remain theologically inert.

Numerous anthologies have appeared. They tend to support one side or the other. In rarer cases they announce debates. Both the one-sided and the debating anthologies tend to present hardened positions. More rarely still they claim to get "beyond the impasse." The current anthology originally approached that form. It was divided into biblical, liturgical, and classical resources, from which several modern positions derived: those who would prohibit homosexual activity, those who would permit it under marriage-like circumstances, and what I called an emerging consensus. That organization of the recent material, however, simply re-presented the format of debate.

The interesting thing about the dispute, however, was not at all the predictable debates, but how it had caused Christians generally, and not just those concerned with sexuality debates and culture wars, to recover marriage metaphors for the relation of God and God's people, and how it had begun to answer the question of what marriage might be for in the church, apart from what Evdokimov calls functionalisms of control of lust or procreation of children. I have found students often at a loss to say what marriage might be for. They tend not to believe that it is practically necessary any more to legitimate sexual intercourse or children, and they cannot imagine more for it to mean. It is the point of this volume to recover that "more," which is the ascetic more, the pearl of great price that the body might have more to mean. The late twentieth-century texts, conservative and liberal, all treat sexuality and marriage as ways in which God can produce human beings who become, over time, aware of grace and communities of virtue. The interesting thing was the recovery of rationales for our creation with bodies, the purpose of Christianity, of sexuality, of marriage, now without regard for the debates that had caused their recovery, and even without regard for one's position in those debates. One can agree with all of the positions below, whether one comes to them approving of same-sex marriage or not. For that reason, the essays now appear under theological rubrics, rather than under rubrics pro and con. The point is that both conservatives and liberals have much to learn from those recovering the tradition – which is to say, from each other – about the point of bodies, sexualities, marriages, and Christianity itself. Thus authors in this volume have proved able to answer the opening questions in ways like these:

The body exists to perceive and manifest the glory of God. It is in the body that God comes to meet and save and elevate human beings.¹

Marriage is a means by which a couple donate their bodies to be signs to the community of the faithful of God's reconciliation.² Marriage displays the promise-keeping that God practices in the trinitarian communion and toward Israel.³

Christianity has as its rationale the task of teaching us that God loves us as God loves God, that we may perceive ourselves, therefore, as occasions of joy.⁴

Sexuality is a sign that we cannot escape of our vulnerability to the neighbor⁵ and to God who "penetrates the creature . . . completely naked before Him," or, if you prefer a feminine metaphor, to Wisdom, who "envelopes all things."⁶ It is a means God can use to "catch us up into" God's own life,⁷ not least because it "ropes us into" commitments and disciplines from which also we cannot easily escape.⁸ Sexuality is primarily, therefore, for sanctification, not for satisfaction – or for the consummation that sanctification brings.

None of this means any kind of sex-mysticism or Christian tantra. A friend of mine wrote that Christian couples are worried enough that their sex life is not measuring up to society's standards; "the last thing we need is *spiritually*

significant sex, God help us!" Rather, what are significant are the commitments and disciplines, the practices of community and sanctification, that God and the church catch sexually linked couples up into. The goal here is the goal in all parts of human life – the fostering of faith, hope, and charity.

That goes especially when the raising of children comes into view. The great contribution of early Christianity to the raising of children had to do with its view of itself. Jesus himself was a humanly fatherless child, adopted by Joseph. Baptism was a rite of adoption. Through it Gentiles became children of the God of Israel. Monastic communities and others did a good deed unto Christ as they did it unto the least of their children when they adopted children abandoned in their midst. In raising natural children they enacted an analogate to the raising up of spiritual children to God in baptism. In this theology, as David McCarthy mentions, child-rearing becomes essentially the task of the faithful community, even if delegated to natural parents. From Chrysostom in the fourth century to Zizioulas in the twentieth, many authors have regarded compulsory procreation as undermining Christians' belief in the resurrection. Because the resurrection, rather than natural childbirth, secures the future for Christians, adoption becomes the type of child-rearing (the theologically correct way of understanding it), because it shows how childbirth and parenting, like baptism and godparenting, are not natural entitlements but reciprocal occasions for thanksgiving.

Multiple criteria have motivated the inclusion of readings in this collection. Earlier texts provide liturgical and classical theological resources cited or taken for granted in the contemporary essays, that students often will not read, teachers sometimes will not have, and scholars occasionally will not be aware of, unless they appear in the same volume.

The selections also share an attitude toward the appeal to "experience," a prominent feature of modern theology. Liberals appeal to gay and lesbian, divorced and remarried folks' "experience" to get a hearing from conservatives. Conservatives in turn castigate the "experience" as having vitiated the standing of the ones reporting it. What grants authority with one group undermines it in another. The arguments prove more fruitful when couched in other terms. Because of this indirection, the book might almost be called "After the Body." In the essays that follow, experience is always mediated through reason, tradition, sense of the faithful, the work of the Spirit – because only as mediated is experience communal and communicable.

As I was putting together this anthology, I was also planning another book, to be called *After the Spirit* (under contract for Westview). Its topic is in part the continual lip-service and equally continual lack of substance accorded the Holy Spirit in modern Christian thought. Committed to talk of the Spirit by its tradition, modern Christian thought has increasingly little to say about it. Spirit talk in the twentieth century is ever more invoked, and ever more

substance-free. The Spirit, who in classical Christian discourse “makes all things new,” had, in modern Christian discourse, become boring.

It did occur to me that I was writing books at two ends of a spectrum, body and spirit. But it was not until I had an urge to get organized that I realized what was happening. It was hard to divide the “spirit” books from the “body” books. I was duplicating articles to file them in two places at once. I was reaching for a center from two ends.

What if the Spirit had grown boring because it no longer had anything to do with the body? And what if bodily experience led to mutual dismissal because too individualist, because my subjects no longer dared argue in terms of a common Spirit?

In the first four centuries of the Christian era, talk of the Holy Spirit was almost always strictly tied to talk of holy places, holy people, and holy things. It did not float free of bodily existence as it does in modern Christian thought. Indeed, it was embodied. One locus was baptism, in which the Spirit descended upon a person. Another was the Eucharist, where, according to the Syriac tradition, it dwelt as a fire in consecrated bread and wine. A third was unction, in which “oil is the dear friend of the Holy Spirit,”⁹ as Ephrem the Syrian wrote. It breathed on the water at creation; it moved in Mary’s womb; it animated the churches; it appealed to the senses as light, fire, incense, wine, and song. The Spirit was not merely transcendent; it was immanent in bodily things.

Christian worship constructs the body liturgically. So, for example, the notorious asceticisms of Symeon the Stylite – one of a number of such saints who spent years standing atop a pillar – turn out to be keyed to the mass and the calendar. Symeon’s own ecclesiastical superiors, worrying lest his self-denial would lead to death, persuaded him to put them at the service of others. So he was induced to preach from his pillar, the people processing in and out as if at mass – and restricting his homilies to reasonable length. He was encouraged to save his greatest austerities for penitential seasons: he must eat more in ordinary time so as to eat less during Lent. One hagiographer even suggested that in standing on pillar-top he made of his body a living sacrifice rising like incense up to God. His body becomes a communicative sign, a liturgical formation – or as the traditional language would put it, imbued with the Spirit. (See Susan Harvey, “The Sense of a Stylite.”¹⁰) The same kind of liturgical construction of the body is going on when modern Christian groups decide who may marry, who may offer themselves as communicative signs to the community.

Thus the anthology opens with two essays that may seem off-topic – but they provide crucial context. Susan Harvey’s “Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syriac Perspective” argues that the liturgy, as the place in which the body comes most explicitly to perceive and manifest God’s glory, rather than sexuality, is the site from which to understand Christianity’s construction of