Beyond ‘Lesbians and Gays in the Church’

New Approaches to the Histories of Christianity and Same-Sex Desire

‘The Annunciation’, 1892 (oil on board), Solomon, Simeon (1840-1905)
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At Birkbeck, University of London
25-26 September

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Friday 25 September 2015, Birkbeck, University of London

9am: Registration, Room B03, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD

9.30am: Conference welcome, Mark Chapman and Dominic Janes

9.45-11.30: Before and into Modernity 1, chair Dominic Janes

Aelred of Rievaulx’s Queer Time and Space, Ben Ambler and Robert S. Sturges
Variability: Beyond Equality in the Eye of God, Chris Mounsey
One-Sex and Two-Sex Theories: Beyond the Modern Mix, Adrian Thatcher
Crypto-Catholicism, or, do We Need to Queer the Origins of the Gothic Revival?, Matthew Reeve

11.30-12 coffee break

12-1.30: Before and into Modernity 2, chair Timothy Jones

The Tradition of Homophobia: Changing responses to same-sex relationships in Serbia, Nikolas Jovcic-Sas
Past and Present: Re-reading Victorian Sexology in Contemporary Christian Practice, Frederick S. Roden (skype)
Sexual Ethics in the Shadow of Modernism: George Tyrrell, André Raffalovich and the Project that Never Was, Philip Healy

1.30-2.15: Lunch

2.15-3.45 Processes of Lesbian and Gay Liberation 1, chair David Bos

The End of Sodomy: Derrick Sherwin Bailey and the Emergence of the ‘Homosexual’ in the Church, Timothy Willem Jones
The Church of England and Homosexual Relationships in the 1970s, Matthew Grimley,
They Found a Niche: Same-Sex-Attracted People in Australian Anglicanism, David Hilliard

3.45-4pm: Tea

4-5pm: Keynote Lecture: Ritualism, Camp, and Theologies of Divine Beauty, Mark D. Jordan

7.00pm Book launch, Dominic Janes, Visions of Queer Martyrdom, Gay’s the Word Bookshop, 66 Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AB
Saturday 26 September, Birkbeck, University of London

10am: Registration and coffee, Room B03, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD

10.45-12.15: Processes of Lesbian and Gay Liberation 2, Keith Sharpe

‘Christ and the Homosexual’: An Early Manifesto for an Affirming Christian Ministry to Homosexuals, Bernard Schlager (skype)
Religion and the Mobilization of Dutch LGBs, 1977-1996, David Bos

12.15-1 Lunch

1-2.30: Contemporary Issues and Debates 1, chair Adrian Thatcher

The Queerness of Saints: Inflecting Devotion and Same-Sex Desire, Donald L. Boisvert (paper to be read)
Exploring the New Creation: Eschatological Imagination and the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions, Rémy Bethmont
The Queer Christ: Same-Sex Desire and Biblical Exegesis, Keith Sharpe

2.30-2.45 Coffee

2.45-4.15: Contemporary Issues and Debates 2, Mark Chapman

Mixed Messages: Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis on Homosexuality, Marco Derks
Blessings and Beatings: A Tale of Two Transsexual Women and the Church, Claire Jenkins
Popular Music, Sacred Forms, and Sexual Freedoms, Jennifer Carlberg

4.15-4.30: Closing remarks, Mark Chapman and Dominic Janes
Abstracts

Keynote Lecture

Ritualism, Camp, and Theologies of Divine Beauty

Prof. Mark D. Jordan, Harvard University

It is trite to associate Anglo-Catholic liturgical sensibility with sexual deviance and so with camp. It has been trite—not to say, notorious—for well over a century. Still the association’s terms remain ambiguous. They also serve opposing rhetorical purposes. For some enemies of Anglican ritualism, the link was supposed to prove that fancy liturgies and unscriptural theologies were mere masks for sinful desire. The same evidence of connection authorized writers of gay history or advocates of queer identity to claim parts of church history for the story of not-so-hidden homoeroticism. And so on. Many of these sexual readings of high-church sensibility neglect what is most striking in it: the effort to discover a theology of divine beauty capacious enough for queer desires. Such a theological discovery requires us to rethink the ambiguous term ‘camp’. It also allows us to connect ritualist medievalism with other theologically-laden sensibilities—like artistic and literary ‘modernism’. I hope to draw out some of this latent theology by meditating on a single example: a monastic church by Ralph Adams Cram that used to feature, alongside other shrines, a plaque commemorating the liturgical practice of T. S. Eliot.

Papers in Order of Presentation

Aelred of Rievaulx’s Queer Time and Space, Prof. Ben Ambler and Prof. Robert S. Sturges, Arizona State University

Noting that desire need not be expressed genitally, we suggest that Aelred’s emotional orientation toward his male monastic friends, evident in his Spiritual Friendship, may be understood in terms of queer temporal and spatial frames that resist straightness, the heteronormative, and the reproductive. Discussing his move from the eroticized spaces of school and court to that of the chaste monastery, Aelred risks transforming his past melancholically, as a loss that must be disavowed rather than mourned. However, he successfully claims this spatial move as one that allows a pleasure-based temporality, removed from the reproductive temporality of lay, straight life.
Drawing on recent theories of queer time and space, we suggest that both the written ‘space’ of Aelred’s dialogues and his literal, enclosed monastic space may be understood as locations where the pull of repro-normative temporality is less influential and more subject to contemplation, variation, and experimentation. For Aelred, reproductive time and relationships serve only as metaphors for non-reproductive male-male intimacy: his monastic life, rather than forcing a melancholic disavowal of male-male desire, allows him to reimagine the monastery as an all-male garden of Eden. Evoking the prelapsarian freedom from reproductive teleology, Aelred’s conception of a Utopian space makes time for an affective jouissance whereby same-sex love follows temporal lines toward unity with God. Past (Eden), present (the monastery), and a Utopian futurity coalesce as an alternative both to straight, reproductive time and to melancholic time.

We thus might consider normative sexuality to exert less of a pull on people like Aelred not just because their cloistered lives are physically removed, but also because they live at a different pace, removed from the orbit of a postlapsarian, reproductive temporality. In a sense, one of the factors that might enable such deviance is the low pull exerted by traditional modes of attraction within the frame of reference of the dialogue or the enclosed, religious space. As gay marriage gains acceptance in the Western Church and we seek our own futurity, Aelred’s conception of love and devotion in a queer time and place invites dialogue: a folding of space and time between past cloister, and present community.

Variability: Beyond Equality in the Eye of God, Prof. Chris Mounsey, University of Winchester

God made us all different, but we have for centuries called out for moral values that never shift or change, and which in the event fit no-one. This paper will argue that rather than morality being the ground given upon which we should build our lives, throughout history, and still today, our lives are the ground given upon which morality is built. This is, I believe, because of a faulty vision we have of God demanding equality, whereas if we understood God’s work another way, then we would realise that as each singularity was created in God’s multifarious image, we should never look for conformity, only diversity; never equality, only variability. Looking at the world this way, we find that first people, then the law, and finally the church accepts moral change and development. The paper will centre on the history of the Reformation of Manners after Charles II’s Libertine court, in the work of Aphra Behn and Jonathan Swift.

One Sex and Two Sex Theories: Beyond the Modern Mix, Prof. Adrian Thatcher, University of Exeter
Thomas Laqueur has famously argued that prior to the 18th century, men and women were regarded as a single one-sex continuum. In my lecture I will i) illustrate that, with regard to the Christian tradition (to which he barely refers), his analysis is correct; ii) demonstrate that official Catholic, Anglican and Evangelical teaching about sexuality is an incompatible mix of one-sex and two-sex theories; iii) suggest that the solidification of two-sex theories in the 19th century, hardened opposition to 'homosexuality'; and iv) indicate a ‘new approach’ to a theology of desire.

Crypto-Catholicism, or, do We Need to Queer the Origins of the Gothic Revival?, Dr Matthew Reeve, Queen’s University, Kingston

‘Rococo Gothic’ is a rather menacing phenomenon: blending elite, cutting edge urban modernity with the architecture of medieval Catholicism, it seems to be a style at odds with itself, a paradox wrapped in paradoxes. In the historiography of English art, the ‘Rococo Gothic’ of Strawberry Hill and other sites has been embraced or dismissed as a flimsy but fun style, a mode of play, an ‘ornamental’ rather than ‘real’ architecture. But scholars have, to date, been broadly dismissive of the religious objectives (playful, satiric, or appropriatively earnest) of the patrons of the style - its fundamental referent, after all, is the architecture of pre-Reformation English Catholicism. Seeking to rectify this blind spot, this paper considers a variety of homosocial and homosexual communities and their pivotal role in the shaping of a taste for the Gothic in England c. 1725-75, from Francis Dashwood’s monks of Medmanham Abbey to Horace Walpole’s “brother monks” at Strawberry Hill. These communities appropriated the Gothic for its queer or libertine connotations (or occasionally both). They embraced and developed a variety of broadly religious conceits - faux masses, monastic dress, monikers such as ‘nuns’ and ‘monks’ to describe prostitutes, all within Gothic architectural settings. As such, the Gothic became re-enscribed with meaning in a sexual mise-en-scène. This paper explores the art and architectural patronage of these early circles and considers the meanings of their ‘crypto-Catholicism’ within the context of the Gothic Revival generally.

The Tradition of Homophobia: Changing Responses to Same-Sex relationships in Serbia, Nikolas Jovcic-Sas, King’s College London

In his book Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe, the late Harvard historian John Boswell presented an in-depth study into of the tradition of Christian brotherhood rituals from Europe and the near East. Developing the ideas first laid out in his previous book Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality Boswell postulates
that the brotherhood and sisterhood rituals collated within the book served as a form of 'gay marriage' within the cultures they existed - taking place in Western Europe until the 14th century and in the Eastern Orthodox Church as late as the early 20th century. Of the rituals contained within the book two from 19th century Serbia - arguably one of Europe’s most virulently homophobic nations. From pride parades ending in bloodshed to the unrelenting condemnation of the Orthodox Church: over the last decade Serbia has become a country synonymous with homophobic scandal - so if we are to believe Boswell’s theory, how could Serbian attitudes towards same sex relationships change so dramatically in the space of 100 years. Focusing on the birth of the Serbian state between the late 18th century and the early 20th centuries, I will build on the research of Boswell to discover Serbia’s brotherhood rituals or ‘Братотворению’. As we observe Serbia change from Ottoman vassal to Western European style Kingdom, we will explore how shifting political influences redefined Serbia’s attitudes towards sex and sexuality and postulate theories for the decline of this ancient Christian tradition. In this research I have translated several sources that have - to my knowledge - ever been translated into English before on the subject of brotherhood rituals.

Past and Present: Re-reading Victorian Sexology in Contemporary Christian Practice
Prof. Frederick S. Roden, University of Connecticut

This talk will highlight significant shifts in understandings of homosexual acts and orientations with respect to moral theology: in both historical and contemporary frameworks. As co-editor of a translation of an 1896 work that provides an ethical justification for same-sex desire - a tract written by a Roman Catholic layman and informed by his faith - I wish to contextualize conversations about ‘being’ and ‘doing’, ‘identities’ and ‘acts’ for our own time and place through the lens of the past. Marc-Andre Raffalovich, an independently wealthy Jewish aesthete, stylized himself into a gentleman scholar and scientist of inversion. A competitor of Oscar Wilde who famously rescued (Father) John (‘Dorian’) Gray when he fell out of favor, Raffalovich corresponded with all the major continental and British sexologists of the fin de siècle. In writing his magnum opus, Uranisme et Unisexualite, published the year after Wilde’s trials and imprisonment for ‘gross indecency’, Raffalovich adopts the voice of the natural theologian, the ethical man of science. By then a Catholic convert, he establishes a neo-Platonic hierarchy of desires and actions, wherein homoeroticism maintains its place within a male homosocial framework. Lapses of the ideal of chastity are Augustinian cupiditas in praxis; ‘natural’ law is queered as Raffalovich rewrites the ‘love that dare not speak its name’ as a variant, not an abomination - and essentializes the invert as simply another human type.
Uranisme, which will be published in its first English translation in 2015 by Palgrave, has not found great favor with contemporary gay and queer theorists. Raffalovich divides sheep and goats (good versus bad homosexuals); he praises celibacy (for homosexuals, the equivalent of Pauline marriage is Platonic friendship - better to lapse occasionally than to burn). The little attention paid to the Uranisme has resulted in a failure to recognize Raffalovich's potential for contemporary queer re-readings and sexual ethics. The text offers a bridge between premodern (and pre-Modernist) Catholic understandings of the sexual body and postmodern notions of identity. In this talk, I would seek to present Raffalovich’s thought with attention to current theoretical, theological, and practical imperatives.

Sexual Ethics in the Shadow of Modernism: George Tyrrell, André Raffalovich and the Project that Never Was, Philip Healy, Kellogg College, University of Oxford

‘I wish to Heaven all our ethical and moral treatises could be burnt and forgotten and that we were forced to study the whole subject afresh from Nature & from facts’, George Tyrrell to André Raffalovich (24 November 1908). In 1896, André Raffalovich (1864-1934) converted to Roman Catholicism and published his treatise, Uranisme et Unisexualité, in which he argued that homosexuality was neither a disease nor a crime; the book also set out an ethics of homosexuality. In the following year, George Tyrrell (1861-1909) published Notes on the Catholic Doctrine of Purity for circulation among his fellow Jesuits. It was a pastorally sensitive attempt to deal with the laity’s scruples in the area of sexual thoughts and desires. Raffalovich and Tyrrell were drawn together by their interest in sexual ethics in particular and in contemporary theology more generally. Tyrrell became the leading British exponent of what came to be called Modernism, and which was condemned as heretical by Pius X in 1907. Tyrrell and the other Modernists wanted to interpret traditional Christian doctrine in the light of contemporary thought. Tyrrell believed that Raffalovich was well placed to undertake a similar project for sexual morality. Although Raffalovich declined to do so, Tyrrell’s letters to his friend intimate what that project might have looked like. This paper will review Raffalovich and Tyrrell’s work on sexual ethics, including the 50 or so extant letters from Tyrrell to Raffalovich.

The End of Sodomy: Derrick Sherwin Bailey and the Emergence of the ‘Homosexual’ in the Church, Dr Timothy Willem Jones, La Trobe University

An historian, theologian, and Anglican priest, Derrick Sherwin Bailey’s work on sex and marriage between 1944 and 1969 transformed both Christian and secular
understandings of sexuality. For most of the 1950s, Bailey worked for the Church of England Moral Welfare Council [MWC]. In that time, amongst many other things, he authored the Church’s evidence to the Wolfenden Committee recommending the decriminalization of male homosexual sex. He also wrote the groundbreaking *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (1955), which was the first text to revise dominant readings of scripture used to condemn homosexual sex, in particular, the Sodom and Gomorrah story. Almost unknown today, Bailey’s work was enormously influential in the development of positive theologies of sexuality, and was used by protestant churches around the Anglophone world as they became involved in the turbulent sexual politics of the 1970s. It also formed the foundation for the secular revisionist historiographies produced by later scholars such as John Boswell and Mark Jordan. Yet in his lifetime, Bailey’s pioneering theological and political work for homosexual reform was eclipsed almost entirely by the revolutionary changes of the gay liberation movement. In many ways, Bailey’s political rejection and scholarly neglect in his later years mirrors the elision of Christianity from the then emergent history of sexuality. This paper examines Bailey’s legacy in the history and theology of sexuality. Eschewing dominant frameworks of secularisation, it deploys a postsecular lens to consider the conditions of possibility for sexual change in religious institutions, and also the relationship between religious change and wider social change in sexuality.

**The Church of England and Homosexual Relationships in the 1970s, Dr Matthew Grimley, Merton College, Oxford**

This paper examines the debate about homosexual relationships in the Church of England in the 1970s, a debate that has largely been forgotten during more recent and high-profile conflicts. In 1978 a Church of England report on *Homosexual Relationships*, known as the Gloucester Report, asked whether ‘homosexual relations might not in some cases, although by no means all, be as genuine expressions of love as other human relationships?’ In addressing the issue of homosexual love from a pastoral and ethical perspective, the report went further than earlier Anglican reports, which had primarily been about the legal status of homosexuals, and too far for many arguments. An impasse ensued, with conservative evangelicals demanding that the report be rewritten or suppressed. This paper will explore Anglican attempts to rethink teaching on homosexuality in the 1970s, amidst vociferous criticism from both the nascent gay rights movement and conservative pressure groups like the Nationwide Festival of Light. It will argue that the consensual, paternalistic reformism that had characterised Anglican statements on homosexuality and other moral issues in the 1950s and 1960s was no longer acceptable in the more entrenched political culture of the 1970s. Homosexual Christians demanded recognition from the Church, and a role in the re-articulation of its teaching, while conservative evangelicals became
increasingly preoccupied with homosexuality as a symptom of wider moral decline. The debate over the Gloucester Report thus represented a transitional moment in Anglican attitudes to same-sex love.

They Found a Niche: Same-Sex-Attracted People in Australian Anglicanism, Dr David Hilliard, Flinders University

Until the 1980s the Anglican Church was the largest religious denomination in Australia, claiming the adherence of some 30-40 per cent of the population, so it may be assumed that a significant proportion of same-sex-attracted Australians have had an Anglican connection. However, the subject of homosexuality as a moral problem or pastoral issue was almost totally absent from public discussion in Anglican Church circles before the 1960s. The traditional teaching of the Church that homosexual activity is always sinful was unchallenged. Yet there is evidence that same-sex-attracted people from the mid-nineteenth century onwards found spaces within Australian Anglicanism where they obtained emotional and spiritual fulfilment and, in some cases, found partners and maintained discreet social networks. These spaces provided acceptable opportunities to escape from the family-centred life of the ordinary suburban or small-town parish. Men were often drawn to cathedrals in the capital cities and to inner-urban Anglo-Catholic churches, teaching in church schools and theological colleges, church choirs, bush brotherhoods and religious communities, overseas missionary work, and pastoral and evangelistic work among young men. Single women who may have been same-sex-attracted found satisfaction through teaching in girls’ schools, leadership in youth organisations or full-time work in the church as missionaries or deaconesses. Many same-sex-attracted individuals did not regard themselves as homosexual or lesbian; some of them married. From the 1960s there was a greater level of self-awareness, and during the 1970s some Anglicans became active in gay rights organisations. In the second decade of the twenty-first century Australians have generally become more accepting of gays and lesbians but this tolerance has also led to closer scrutiny of individuals and institutions. Those niches in the Anglican Church that once provided a breathing space for same-sex-attracted people have either changed their shape, faded away or become obsolescent.

Christ and the Homosexual: An Early Manifesto for an Affirming Christian Ministry to Homosexuals, Prof. Bernard Schlager, Pacific School of Religion

In 1960 United Church of Christ minister Robert Wood borrowed $1000 from his life insurance policy to publish *Christ and the Homosexual*, a work that called for a radical reappraisal of traditional Christian condemnations of homosexuality and the unapologetic acceptance of homosexuals in church and society. Published
under his own name and with a run of 5,000 copies, the book would be reviewed positively by several homophile publications and serve to launch Wood’s lifelong ministry of writing, speaking, and activism in support of homosexuals.

Although Wood never came out of the closet during his 30-year career as a parish minister, he did not shy away from engaging in a wide-ranging public ministry to advance the cause of homosexuals: through countless writing projects and dozens of speaking engagements; persistent lobbying for change within his denomination at all levels; a 53-year (and still counting) correspondence with hundreds of individuals from all walks of life; and participation in numerous secular and religious homosexual-rights organizations.

In this paper I argue that *Christ and the Homosexual* challenged American Christians to change their views on homosexuality and homosexuals. Through work in his own denomination, Wood sought to convince church leaders that they should not only address homosexuality as an important moral issue of the day but also provide much-needed pastoral care for the many (and largely invisible) homosexuals in the pews of their congregations. Through his work with secular homosexual-rights organizations, he strove to convince those alienated by Christianity that they should not abandon the church which, he argued, could be reformed to accept and embrace homosexuals.

I explore several bold proposals made in this book (which formed a basis for Wood’s work in subsequent years) that many mainline American Protestant denominations would struggle with from the 1960s through the early 2000s: the advancement of civil rights for homosexuals; the construction of pro-homosexual theologies; the education, ordination, and career placement of out homosexuals; and marriage equality. I argue that there is no other person within this influential American denomination who has worked as long and as tirelessly as has Wood to realize new and positive religious approaches to the issue of homosexuality and to improve the lives of homosexuals in church and society.

(A note on sources: I utilize a variety of sources from the Robert Wood Archive at The Congregational Library in Boston, Massachusetts, in this article: the author’s notes and early drafts of *Christ and the Homosexual*; his voluminous personal correspondence from the 1940s through the 1990s; and an unpublished biography of Wood. In addition, I draw upon an oral history interview that I conducted with the author in July of 2012.)


The 1969 Stonewall Riots may well be the most well documented and extensively discussed moment in queer history. Less known, however, is the behind-the-scenes involvement of an Episcopal congregation that provided meeting spaces to the gay
liberation movement that formed in the years following the Stonewall Riots. Between 1969 and 1975, the Church of the Holy Apostles served as an unofficial community center for a rapidly growing gay and lesbian social movement. It provided meeting space to the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activist Alliance—the two largest and best-known gay liberation groups that formed shortly after Stonewall—as well as nearly a dozen other gay and lesbian social and political organizations that spent significant time on the church’s premises. So frequently did organizations meet there that events announcement in gay newspapers in the early 1970s listed only ‘CHA’, for Church of the Holy Apostles, for meetings that took place at the church.

My presentation traces the particular story of Holy Apostles with attention to its place in two important developments. The first is the early support of the New York Episcopal leadership for gay rights. Holy Apostles was one of several urban churches—most of them Episcopal—that provided meeting space to gay and lesbian groups. My paper, thus, shows how churches were part of the urban gay world out of which gay identity politics took shape. A second contextual development is the involvement of urban churches in leftist organizing and activism more broadly. Urban liberal Protestant churches were a nearly ubiquitous staging ground for the social movements of the radical left during the 1960s and 70s. The attention to the behind-the-scenes developments at Holy Apostles connects to the largely overlooked story of progressive church involvement with the notoriously secularist movements of the political left. Black Power, Young Lords, Women’s Liberation, and other groups frequently met in church basements and community rooms. Taken together, my paper challenges the secular framing of U.S. gay liberation politics and leftist history and it shows how leftist and liberationist activists’ public critiques of religion overlapped with on-the-ground relationships with congregations, clergy, and religious spaces.

Religion and the Mobilization of Dutch LGBs, 1977-1996, Dr David Bos, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

For decades, the social acceptance of homosexuality has been higher in the Netherlands than in any other (European) country. In 1981 already, merely 25% of the Dutch respondents of the European Values Survey said that homosexuality was ‘never justified’ (cf. Sweden 39%, Denmark 38%, Great Britain 47%). Since then, this percentage has decreased even further (2008: 8%; cf. Sweden and Denmark 12%, Great Britain 23%). Both in scholarly literature and in public debates, this development is often explained from secularization – if only because objections to homosexuality remain significantly stronger among Dutch citizens who attend a religious gathering at least once a week. Yet, there is reason to believe that the social acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands at least partly results from religious change - notably the revolutionary changes in Dutch Catholicism after
1958, exemplified by the 1966 New Catechism (an international bestseller) and the 1966-1970 Pastoral Council of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands. In a way, the emancipation of Dutch ‘homophiles’—as they were then commonly called—was connected with the emancipation of Dutch Catholics and the evolution of the pastoral ministry, both in the Catholic and in mainline Protestant churches. In the early 1960s, when very few homosexual men and women dared to show their faces or raise their voices, Catholic and mainline Protestant clergy—who had come to regard ‘pastoral counseling’ as their core task—began to not only listen to them in the privacy of their parlors but to publicly speak out on their behalf, advocating understanding, acceptance and sometimes even equal treatment.

In my paper I will describe how in the course of the 1970s and 80s, while social acceptance steadily increased, religion was more and more seen as inherently hostile to homosexuality—or even as the root of the evil of ‘homophobia’. I will argue that this can be partly explained from religious changes within the Netherlands, notably the Vatican’s attempts to curb the Dutch Catholic revolution by appointing one conservative bishop after the other (Simonis in 1970; Gijsen in 1972, etc.) and the rise of Dutch evangelicals, who singled out homosexuality as an omen of the end of times. Moreover, the ‘oppositional pairing of religion and homosexuality’ in public discourse seems to have been a response to the international return of ‘strong religion’ (Almond, Appleby & Sivan 2003), alias la revanche de Dieu (Kepel 1991), exemplified by the Iranian revolution and the rise of the US Moral Majority. In the Netherlands, these religious changes served to mobilize the gay and lesbian movement. For one thing, it led to the country’s second LGB demonstration, in 1977 (the first having taken place in 1969), against the US evangelical Anita Bryant—and to the third, in 1979, against mgr. Gijsen, the conservative Catholic bishop of Roermond. The latter event was dubbed ‘Pink Saturday’, because many shops in the city of Roermond were decorated pink—not on the occasion of the march, but on the occasion of Easter. ‘Pink Saturday’ (Roze zaterdag) grew into an annual tradition—the Dutch (and Belgian) version of Gay Pride. Until 1996, when the first Amsterdam Canal Parade was held, it served as the Netherlands’ most important yearly LGBT event. In my paper I will analyze public responses to these marches, especially with respect to the perceived relations between religion and homosexuality.

The Queerness of Saints: Inflecting Devotion and Same-Sex Desire, Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University

Saints in the Christian tradition have long been the source of intense religious care and attention. In the Catholic context in particular, saints occupy a primordial place in the church’s devotional culture. This devotional culture is marked by its deeply rich and intricate levels of sensory experience, including the erotic. Examples abound throughout history of the multiplicity of ways in
which saints have served as privileged means for the expression not only of religious fervour and piety, but also of physical and sexual desire. It will be the core argument of this paper that this includes fervent expressions of same-sex longing and desire. Devotion to saints, in other words, can be a richly privileged means by which LGBTQ people can claim a legitimate place for themselves in Christian religious communities. Drawing on my own work as well as that of scholars such as Virginia Burrus and Robert Orsi, and through the use of a number of case studies, the paper seeks to ‘queer’ devotion to saints, thereby hopefully opening up creatively unstable spaces for the expression of same-sex desire and longing in Christianity.

**Exploring the New Creation: Eschatological Imagination and the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions**, Prof. Rémy Bethmont, Université de Paris 8

A positive Christian approach to homosexuality has alternated between an apologetic streak (trying to prove, in particular, that the Bible is not as negative on the subject as one may think) and a pioneering, exploratory streak that relates to Christian sources in a way that allows gays and lesbians to affirm their particular experience as located at the heart of Christian tradition. While acknowledging some indebtedness by the latter to the former, this paper will focus on the pioneering streak. The pace of change in many Western countries over same-sex issues in the last 25 years and the successful outcome of political campaigns for same-sex marriage has greatly impacted the development of this Christian LGBT pioneering streak since the 1990s. Homosexuality today in the West is less associated with a queer critique of the bourgeois family and has largely taken on the discourse of ‘family values’. Western gay and lesbian Christians are no exceptions and one may wonder to what extent the lesbian and gay Christian imagination is still fired by the resources provided by the monastic tradition and monastic friendships, for example, to conceive of gay and lesbian relationships in a Christian perspective (something which was important to Michael Vasey, to mention but one gay theologian). Holy matrimony seems to be the template that is increasingly used to conceive of these relationships.

Whatever the case is, the friendship and the marriage template may both be seen as part of a fundamentally eschatological spiritual adventure, inspired by the work of queer theologians such as James Alison, to name but one. It leaves behind what one might call the natural paradigm of much Western theology by which the final destiny of human beings is understood as the return to the original purity and order of Creation in the garden of Eden. This paper will focus on the material for the blessing of same-sex unions authorised by the Episcopal Church in 2012. It has sought to produce an inspirational, eschatological picture of the Kingdom of God, in which both friendship and marriage are put on the same plane within the larger category of covenanted relationships. This is still a tentative picture, however,
whose consonance with the experience and aspirations of Episcopalian gay and lesbian couples may vary. My reflections will be based on participant observation at the Episcopalian Consultation on Same-Sex Marriage held in Kansas City in June 2014, follow-up conversations with some attendees one year later and considerations on the new material on marriage and same-sex blessings presented to the 2015 General Convention.

The Queer Christ: Same-Sex Desire and Biblical Exegesis, Dr Keith Sharpe

It is a commonplace in present day public discourse to hear Christian spokespersons confidently assert that homosexuality is clearly condemned by God in the Bible. Indeed for those Christian groupings of a conservative evangelical persuasion, having just lost the battle over women bishops in the Church of England, assent to this proposition has seemingly now become the ultimate test of orthodoxy, a sort of sexual Custer’s Last Stand on the supreme authority of Scripture. And yet the Biblical texts pointed to as proof of divine hostility to gays are few in number, are highly ambiguous, and have been interpreted differently in different historical periods. The story of Sodom for example was not used as justification for the persecution of homosexuals before the 12th century.

In this paper it is argued that the so-called ‘clobber verses’ so frequently cited are far from the definitive condemnation of same-sex intimacy some Christian leaders claim them to be. Such claims are themselves historically contingent, culturally relative and mainly driven by social anxieties about male identity, patriarchy and heteronormativity. Furthermore in both Old and New Testaments there are textual instances of positive imaging of same-sex desire which are largely ignored by the mainstream churches. In exegesis of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 questions should be asked about quite why a powerful Roman centurion would be so desperately concerned about a sick young male slave who was easily replaceable. Famously Jesus cured the boy and praised the Centurion’s faith. Prima facie this is a decidedly queer thing for the single saviour to do. There are many other examples of Christ behaving queerly, not least in relation to his own love for the man only ever referred to in the gospels as ‘the beloved disciple’. The principal thesis of this paper is that it is this queer Christ which is the real end-point of the overarching biblical narrative of inclusive universal salvation, and that narrow-minded prejudiced attempts to deploy isolated verses to exclude gay people are in the process of becoming as socially and intellectually unacceptable as the Biblical exegesis which used to justify slavery.

Mixed Messages: Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis on Homosexuality, Marco Derks, Utrecht University
In 2007, Human Rights Watch included Pope Benedict XVI in its “Hall of Shame” for “actively promoting prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people”. Two years earlier, just after Ratzinger’s election, the US gay magazine *The Advocate* had introduced him to its readers as the “Antigay German cardinal”. Eight years later, that same magazine chose his successor, Pope Francis, as Person of the Year 2013. This is illustrative of the different ways in which both Popes have been perceived across the globe - especially in the West - with respect to their (presumed) attitudes towards homosexuality. Although the ways in which media have contrasted both popes is not always justified - after all, both have claimed that the Roman Catholic Church’s official teaching on homosexuality hasn’t changed and will not change - I think there are still some remarkable differences and developments.

Besides of looking at the internal logic of the way they have addressed ‘the issue of homosexuality’, I will address questions like: What is the possible impact of certain societal and ecclesial developments in the last couple of decades (secularisation in the West; the growth of Christianity outside the West; the legalisation of same-sex marriage in an increasing number of countries or states; etc.) on how they have understood their (internal and external) role as Pope as well as the role of the Roman Catholic Church, Christians in general or even “religion(s)” in general when it comes to addressing questions about homosexuality? What urgency - if any - to address homosexuality do they show (e.g. pastoral, doctrinal, societal, ideological etc.)? Against which worldviews do they fight (secularism, liberalism, consumerism, communism, Marxism, etc.) and who are their intended audiences? And what is, so to speak, their ‘target’ (e.g. same-sex marriage, same-sex relationships in general, same-sex sexual acts, homosexual identity)?

**Blessings and Beatings: A Tale of Two Transsexual Women and the Church**, Dr Claire Jenkins

The transgender theorist Sandy Stone (1993) in her essay, *The Empire Strikes Back: a post-transsexual manifesto*, described the magnitude of theoretical understanding transsexual identity: ‘Here on the gender borders at the close of the twentieth century, with the faltering of phallocratic hegemony and the bumptious appearance of heteroglossic origin accounts, we find the epistemologies of white male medical practice, the rage of radical feminist theories and the chaos of lived gendered experience meeting on the battlefield of the transsexual body: a hotly contested site of cultural in-scription, a meaning machine for the production of ideal type. Representation at its most magical the transsexual body is perfected memory, inscribed with the ‘true’ story of Adam and Eve as the ontological account of irreducible difference, an essential biography which is part of nature. A story
which culture tells it, the transsexual body is a tactile politics of reproduction constituted through textual violence. The clinic is a technology of inscription (Stone 2006:230). Stone referred to a number of theoretical and conceptual arguments which she saw as coalescing around the transsexual body itself essential to transsexual understanding of self-identity. In this extract she draws attention to the feminist work against transsexuality; the deconstruction of the essentialisms of gender and sex underpinned by the traditions of the Abrahamic religions; the long social anthropological history of trans people (Morgan and Towle 2002; Feinberg 2006); the medical practice of twentieth century sexologists and the lived materiality of trans people’s daily experience.

Changing sex/gender has long been an ambivalent issue for the Christian church. The Council of Constantinople in 691 A.D. forbid cross-dressing by both women and men. In the medieval Feast of Fools laymen and clergy alike dressed as women yet the church tried to suppress transvestism labelling it as heretical. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431 by the Inquisition of the Catholic church because she refused to stop dressing as a man yet in 1920 she was canonised as St Joan (Feinberg 2006). In 2008 ‘Pope Benedict XVI has suggested that the need to save mankind from a destructive blurring of gender roles is as important as saving the rainforests.’ (BBC 2008), whereas in 2015 Pope Francis welcomes a transgender man at the Vatican (Roberts 2015). In this paper I will argue that the church still has a muddled view of sex/gender embodiment by drawing on my recent (2013) PhD empirical research at Sheffield University. This research investigated the intimate familial relationships of transitioning transsexual people and in it I will explore the contrasting encounters of two transsexual women with the church.

Popular Music, Sacred Forms, and Sexual Freedoms, Jennifer Carlberg, University of Leeds

Of late, academic scholars addressing popular music commonly use functionalist definitions of religion in order to argue that contemporary musical subcultures and their respective scenes fulfill the roles formerly assigned to organized religions. (Please see, for instance, Rupert Till’s text, Pop Cult.) Nonetheless, these sorts of arguments do little to engage with the many dialogues concerning the roles played by religions, narratives of individual empowerment, and ethics in the public sphere, nor their supposed newfound political importance (e.g. Jürgen Habermas, Judith Butler, et al’s The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere). In addition, these sorts of arguments do little to engage with the various perspectives of queer theorists, nor their discussions of music and sexuality (e.g. Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga et al’s Queering the Popular Pitch).

Gordon Lynch’s cultural sociological approach to the ‘sacred’, however, provides more analytical purchase in such discussions, especially when engaging
the perpetual appearance and evolution of varied, competing sacred forms in our increasingly pluralist societies. By ‘sacred’, Lynch points to forms that are not necessarily identified with a particular organized religion yet still exert normative claims over collective social behavior. For instance, within Western democracies, ‘human rights’ constitutes one of many sacred forms. Whenever multiple sacred forms exist, Lynch argues, they form hierarchies, wherein ‘a subjugated form—if not cast as a profane source of pollution—can also remain a latent presence and potentially be animated as a strong focus for moral and emotional identification at a later point in time’ (80). Sexual rights and LGBT political freedoms, I propose, might serve as examples of subjugated forms, ones perhaps complicating Lynch’s hierarchy.

This paper examines LGBT rights within popular music as an example of the hierarchical sacred phenomena identified by Lynch. In particular, I investigate this issue in regards to those artists who either identify as LGBT or align themselves with causes that support various LBGT political agenda seeking equality, such as Cyndi Lauper, Madonna, and Lady Gaga. Through a case study comparing the performances comprising the Queen Reunion tour of 2013-2014, which foregrounds the sexuality of Adam Lambert, with the band’s more canonical performances, which presented the sexuality of Freddie Mercury in a more ambivalent fashion, I analyze the complex transition from a world in which the sacredness of chastity and ‘natural’—that is to say, heterosexual—sexuality seemingly gives way to a new situation in which the previously subjugated sacredness of sexual human rights and freedoms becomes less subjugated. But I also aim to complicate such an ideal trajectory by attending to the recent writings of queer theory that describe increased queer visibility in the media as a paradoxical condition, one capable of maintaining ‘a visible-invisible state’ (e.g. editor Kevin G. Barnhurst et al’s *Media/Queered: Visibility and its Discontents*, 11).