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As befits an article encouraging reflection, I would like to start with a personal anecdote. I recently heard a paper by a prominent literary scholar, which I thought would be an analysis of his encounter with a text. (I am familiar enough with current literary analysis to know that it would certainly not be an analysis of a text.) It turned out instead to be purely autobiographical. In talking about this later with a friend of mine from the Italian department, he told me that this was a new trend. As he put it: "We used to do Dante's life and works, then with New Criticism we did 'the work,' then with New Historicism we did Dante's works in their historical location, then with post-structuralism we did Dante and me, and now we just do me." This seemed a perfect one-sentence summary of the last five decades of literary criticism and a good model for my article, which will explore some of the ways in which women's history and gender studies over the last thirty years have intersected with church history, tracing what I see as the most important theoretical and methodological trends.

This article will, of course, be more than one sentence, but if I were to follow my friend's model exactly, here is what I would say: We used to do the Christian man (pretending, if challenged, that "man" was gender-inclusive), then we did men's ideas about women and marriage (viewing these as the same), then we did women and the family (again viewing these as the same), then we did gender (which was mostly about women), then we did sex (which was mostly about men), then we did post-Baudrillardian intertextual analysis of the phallologocentric subjectivity inherent in the multivocal (re)gendering of spiritual counter-architectural spacialities (or similar topics—this one in English means studying decisions by church committees to open day care centers and reduce the space devoted to the pastor's study). Now we do all of these.

When I chose to be a history major nearly three decades ago, I certainly did not anticipate focusing my research on women, and if I thought about "gender" at all, it was as something one considered (and bemoaned) largely when learning German nouns. The women's

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movement changed that, as it changed so much else. Advocates of women's rights in the present, myself included, looked at what we had been taught about the past—as well as what we had been taught about every other discipline—and realized we were only hearing half the story. Most of the studies we read or heard described the male experience—"man the artist," "man the hunter," "man and his environment"—though they often portrayed it as universal. We began to investigate the lives of women in the past, first fitting them into the categories with which we were already comfortable—nations, historical periods, social classes, religious allegiance—and then realizing that this approach, sarcastically labeled "add women and stir," was unsatisfying. Focusing on women often disrupted the familiar categories, forcing us to rethink the way that history was organized and structured. The European Renaissance and Enlightenment lost some of their luster once women were included, as did the democracy of ancient Athens or Jacksonian America. Even newer historical approaches, such as New Social History with its emphasis on class analysis and social science methodology, were found to be wanting in their consideration of differences between women's and men's experiences.

This disruption of well-known categories and paradigms ultimately included that topic long considered the proper focus of all history—man. Viewing the male experience as universal had not only hidden women's history, but also it had also prevented analyzing men's experiences as those of men. The very words we used to describe individuals—"artist" and "woman artist," for example, or "scientist" and "woman scientist"—kept us from thinking about how the experiences of Michelangelo or Picasso or Isaac Newton were shaped by the fact that they were male, while it forced us to think about how being female affected Georgia O'Keefe or Marie Curie. Historians familiar with studying women increasingly began to discuss the ways in which systems of sexual differentiation affected both women and men, and by the early 1980s to use the word "gender" to describe these systems. At that point, they differentiated primarily between "sex," by which they meant physical, morphological, and anatomical differences (what are often called "biological differences") and "gender," by which they meant a culturally constructed, historically changing, and often unstable system of differences.

Most of the studies with "gender" in the title still focused on women—and women's history continued as its own field—but a few looked equally at both sexes or concentrated on the male experience, calling their work "men's history" or the "new men's studies." Several university presses started book series with "gender" in their titles—"gender and culture," "gender and American law"—and scholars in

many fields increasingly switched from "sex" to "gender" as the acceptable terminology: "sex roles" became "gender roles," "sex distinctions" became "gender distinctions" and so on. Historians interested in this new perspective asserted that gender was an appropriate category of analysis when looking at *all* historical developments, not simply those involving women or the family. *Every* political, intellectual, religious, economic, social, and even military change had an impact on the actions and roles of men and women, and, conversely, a culture's gender structures influenced every other structure or development.

At the same time that "gender" appeared to be replacing both "women" and "sex" in academic discourse, sex returned, but now in the form of sexuality. Though scholars initially debated the appropriateness of using a word devised in about 1800 for earlier periods and published books with titles like "Before Sexuality," they eventually gave up their objections; the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* began publication in 1990, and the HQ 1–100 section of the library (that on the history of sexuality) began a growth trajectory akin to that experienced by the HQ 1100 and 1200 (women's history) two decades before. As befit a scholarly discipline in the post-modern era, the history of sexuality quickly developed its own distinctive body of theory, with book titles heralding the "queer Renaissance" and "queer Iberia."

Studies focusing on the history of Christianity were among the earliest in women's history, gender studies, and the history of sexuality. The first volume of Roland Bainton's *Women of the Reformation* appeared in 1971 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House), and the first articles on women and the Reformation (by Miriam Chrisman, Nancy Roelker and Charmarie Blaisdell) were published in a special issue of the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* in 1972. Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* was published in 1973 (Boston: Beacon Press), Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in Jewish and Christian Tradition* was published in 1974 (New York: Simon and Schuster), and Natalie Davis's *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* appeared in 1975 (Stanford: Stanford University Press). The first article in *Church History* with a woman's name in the title appeared in 1973—George Balsama's article on "Madam Guyon, Heterodox"—a mere forty-two years after the journal began publication. The word "women" itself appeared in the title of an article in *Church History* in 1976, though the word "lady" had actually shown up thirty years earlier, in an article in 1945 by Johannes Knudsen titled "The Lady and the Emperor" on the Roman noblewoman Domitilla, who was supposedly banished under the persecutions of Diocletian.

No journal focusing on any aspect of women's lives has as long a history as *Church History* or *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, of

course, but the women's journals that began publication in the 1970s did regularly include articles on the history of Christianity. In its first volume (1976), *Signs* included an article by James Brundage, "Prostitution in Medieval Canon Law," and in its third volume (1975) *Feminist Studies* contained an article by JoAnn McNamara, "Sexual Equality and the Cult of Virginity in Early Christian Thought." In terms of gender, Lyndal Roper's " 'The Common Man,' 'The Common Good,' 'Common Women': Reflections on Gender and Meaning in the Reformation German Commune," appeared in *Social History* in 1987; Clarissa Atkinson, Constance Buchanan, and Margaret Miles' *Shaping New Vision: Gender and Values in American Culture* was published in 1988 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press); and Jean Brink, Allison Coudert and Maryanne Horowitz's *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe* in 1989 (Kirskville, Mo.: Sixteenth Centory Journal Publishers). The very first article in the first issue of *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (1990) was on a Christian topic—Ruth Karras' "Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend"—and the new men's studies journals (*Journal of Men's Studies, Men and Masculinities)* that began publication in the 1990s also had articles on Christian issues, such as Kenneth Cuthbertson's "Coming Out/Conversion: An Exploration of Gay Religious Experience." (*Journal of Men's Studies* 4).

Initially, articles in *Church History* suggested that the history of Christianity was going to be a bold leader in the history of sexuality. The very first volume of *Church History* in 1932 had an article by John McNeill on "Medicine for Sin as Prescribed in the Penitentials," predating by more than fifty years the intense interest in penitential literature more recently shown by James Brundage and Pierre Payer. McNeill, however, completely avoids talking about sex, and his quotations from penitentials refer to every deadly sin except lust. In the following year, William Sweet does discuss sex in "The Churches as Moral Courts of the Frontier," though he is actually more concerned about liquor. Even this limited interest in sex did not continue in the pages of the journal, however, for considerations of sex—or its absence in the form of celibacy or virginity— do not show up again until the 1970s.

It would be nice to think that the prominence of religion in the early development of women's and gender history resulted from clear recognition on the part of all scholars of the many intersections between these fields, but this is not the case. At the same time that the studies I have just noted were being published—and for many years afterward—specialized studies and general surveys of Christian history completely ignored their implications; none of the surveys of medieval or Reformation Christianity on my shelves published in the

1970s and 1980s include any discussion of women as a group, and many include no mention of any woman by name.

Much feminist scholarship also ignored religion, either because of hostility toward the subject or because the vast majority of work in women's and gender history came to focus on the modern world. The Berkshire Women's History conferences, for example, always the best gauge of what's hot in feminist historical scholarship, had very few sessions in the 1980s on either religion or the premodern period. (And because most of the sources regarding women in the premodern West come from the realm of religion, these two omissions are closely related.) In 1995, Ursula King wrote, "The study of religion itself is not only marginalized, but mostly invisible in women's studies courses, whether in the United States, Britain, or other European countries. The very considerable work of feminist theologians and religious scholars by and large has not been integrated into the curricula of women's studies courses nor is it taken into account in the formulation of feminist theory concerning research methodology or the restructuring of academic disciplines."[1] In terms of scholarship on sexuality, though the first volume of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (published in 1976) clearly labeled Catholic confession and Protestant examination of conscience as the beginning of the "transformation of sex into discourse," his successors and disciples were much more interested in secular issues and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus those of us who worked on women and/or gender and Christianity often felt doubly marginalized, first by church historians and theologians (which did not surprise us) and second by historians of women/gender/sex (which sometimes did surprise us, and certainly hurt more).

Explaining the significance of religion to our feminist colleagues generally occurred at professional conferences, but clarifying the significance of gender often occurred also in the classroom. In the midst of trying to explain this exciting new category of analysis to our colleagues and students, and in particular trying to get them to see the distinction between gender and sex, that distinction became contested. Not only were there great debates about where the line should be drawn—were women "biologically" more peaceful and men "biologically" more skillful at math, or were such tendencies the result solely of their upbringing?—but some scholars wondered whether social gender and biological sex are so interrelated that any distinction between the two is meaningless. Their doubts, and thus our own, came from four principle directions.

1. Ursula King, *Religion and Gender* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), 219–220.

Biology

1st Souce of Doubts: Hermah-rodites

One of these was from biological scientists attempting to draw an absolute line between male and female. Though most people are born with external genitalia through which they are categorized "male" or "female" at birth, some are not. Their external genitalia may be ambiguous so that they are medically labeled as hermaphrodites. In earlier times most hermaphrodites were simply assigned to the sex they most closely resembled, with their condition only becoming a matter of historical record if they came to the attention of religious, medical, or legal authorities (church court records often yield the most information); in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this gender assignment was sometimes reinforced by surgical procedures modifying or removing the inappropriate body parts. Because the external body could be ambiguous, scientists began to stress the importance of internal indicators of sex difference. By the 1970s chromosomes were the favored marker and quickly became part of popular as well as scientific understandings. In 1972, for example, the International Olympic Committee determined that simply "looking like" a woman was not enough, but that athletes would have to prove their "femaleness" through a chromosome test; an individual with certain types of chromosomal abnormalities would be judged "male" even if that person had been regarded as "female" since birth, and had breasts and a vagina but no penis. The problem with chromosomes is that they are also not perfectly dichotomous, but may involve ambiguous intermediate categories, so that more recently the anatomical roots of sex differences have been sought in prenatal hormones.

The intensity of the search for an infallible marker of sex difference and the uncertainties in most "biological" markers have indicated to many scholars that cultural notions are certainly influencing science in this area, and that "gender" may actually determine "sex" rather than the other way around. It is certainly cultural norms rather than biology that allow us to make gender assignments during the course of a day; not only are chromosomes and hormones not visible, but in most of the world's cultures clothing hides external genitalia. Religious texts that posit a dichotomous gender scheme are part of these cultural influences, of course; it is God's creation and naming that first distinguishes between male and female in Genesis, not God's response to their preexisting bodies.

Second Source of Doubts: 3-4 Genders

A second source of doubts about the distinction between sex and gender was anthropology. Though most of the world's cultures have a dichotomous view of gender, occasionally cultures develop a third or even a fourth gender. In some cultures, gender is determined by one's relationship to reproduction, so that adults are gendered male and female, but children and old people are regarded as different

genders; in such cultures there are thus four genders, with linguistic, clothing, and behavioral distinctions for each one. In a number of areas throughout the world, including Alaska, the Amazon region, North America, Australia, Siberia, Central and South Asia, Oceania, and the Sudan, individuals who were originally viewed as male or female assume (or assumed, for in many areas such practices have ended) the gender identity of the other sex or combine the tasks, behavior, and clothing of men and women. Some of these individuals are hermaphrodites and occasionally they are eunuchs, but more commonly they are morphologically male or female. The best known of these are found among several Native American peoples, and the Europeans who first encountered them regarded them as homosexuals and called them "berdaches," from an Arabic word for male prostitute. Now most scholars choose to use the term "two-spirit people" and note that they are distinguished from other men more by their work or religious roles than by their sexual activities; they are usually thought of as a third gender rather than effeminate or homosexual males. Comparative ethnography thus indicates that in many of the world's cultures, gender attribution is not based on genitals or on the words of a creator and may, in fact, change throughout a person's life.

3rd Source of Doubts: Trans-Sexuals

The arbitrary nature of gender is also noted in a third source of doubts, psychology. Individuals whose external genitalia and even chromosomal and hormonal patterns mark them as male or female may mentally regard themselves as the other, and choose to live and dress as the other, a condition the medical profession now calls "gender dysphoria." In the 1950s, sex-change operations became available for gender-dysphoric people who could afford them, and they could become transsexuals, thus making their physical sexual identity fit more closely with their mental gender identity; by the 1980s more than forty clinics in the United States were offering such operations. (This enterprise is shaped by gender in complex ways, as the vast majority of those who undergo sex-change operations go from male to female.) In the 1980s, some people also began to describe themselves as "transgendered," that is, as neither male nor female or both male and female. The relationship between sex and gender is further complicated by sexuality, for persons of either sex (or transgendered persons) may be sexually attracted to persons of the other sex(es), persons of their own, or everyone. The transgendered movement—loosely organized in the United States within an umbrella organization of local groups called the Congress of Representatives, and including several specifically Christian groups—is politically often associated with lesbian, gay, and bisexual groups, which has given

rise to the acronym LGBT for various centers and programs. Some adherents dispute this link, noting that the issue for them is gender, not sexual orientation, and that even LGBT does not capture the fluidity of gender and sexual identities strongly enough. (The boundaries between the physical body and cultural forces in the issue of sexual orientation are just as contested as those in the issue of gender, of course, as some scientists attempt to find a "gay gene" and others view all such research as efforts to legitimize an immoral "life style choice" or a futile search for something that is completely socially constructed.)

4th Source of Doubts: What constitu-des a woman?

The fourth source of doubts came from within history itself. As historians of women put greater emphasis on differences among women and became increasingly self-critical, they began to wonder whether "woman" was a valid analytical category. Some asserted that because gender structures varied so tremendously, and women's experiences differed so much depending on their race, class, religion, and other factors, there really is nothing that could be labeled "woman" whose meaning is self-evident and unchanging over time. What we commonly call "biology," from this perspective, is also a socially and historically variable construct—the word "biology" itself did not appear until 1802—and those who argue for a biological or physiological basis for gender difference (or sexual orientation) are "essentialists." These historians noted that not only in the present is gender "performative," that is, a role that can be taken on or changed at will, but it was so at many points in the past, as individuals "did gender" and conformed to or challenged gender roles. Thus it is misguided to think that we are studying women (or men, for that matter) as a sex, for the only thing that is in the historical record is gender.

All of these doubts about the clear distinction between gender and sex came together right at the point that history itself was undergoing the "linguistic turn," with its emphasis on discourse rather than events, individuals, or groups. The most radical proponents of this point of view argue, of course, that discourse is the only thing we can know in history, that because historical documents and other types of evidence are constructed, they are no different from literary texts; historians should thus simply analyze them as texts, elucidating their possible meanings. We should not be preoccupied with searching for "reality," because to do so demonstrates a naive positivism; Ranke's words about history retelling events "as they actually happened" are frequently quoted with particular scorn. Some poststructuralist historians assert that language determines, rather than simply describes, our understanding of the world; the body, for example, is not an

objective reality, but changes according to the way people perceive their bodies. Because people in past times perceived and experienced their bodies differently, those bodies really *were* different.

The linguistic turn elicited harsh responses from many historians, and it was particularly upsetting to many who focused on women. They asserted that it denied women the ability to shape their world—what is usually termed "agency" or "subjectivity"—in both past and present by positing unchangeable linguistic structures. Wasn't it ironic, they noted, that just as women were learning they *had* a history and asserting they were *part* of history, "history" became just a text and "women" just a historical construct? As Elizabeth Clark noted in her wonderfully titled *Church History* article in 1998, "The Lady Vanishes", "Why were we told to abandon subjectivity just at the historical moment when women had begun to claim it?"[2] For a period it looked as if this disagreement would lead proponents of discourse analysis to lay claim to "gender" and those who opposed it to avoid "gender" and stick with "women." Because women's history was clearly rooted in the women's rights movement of the 1970s, it also appeared more political than gender analysis, and programs and research projects sometimes opted to use "gender" to downplay this connection with feminism.

As we enter the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, it appears that the division is less sharp; gender analysis is increasingly recognized as an outgrowth of women's history rather than its replacement and viewed as a related but separate approach. Historians using gender as a category of analysis no longer feel compelled to adopt an extreme poststructuralist approach, but many instead treat their sources as referring to something beyond the sources themselves—an author, an event, a physical body—while recognizing that they do not present a perfect reflection. Historians of the body, for example, who were originally completely devoted to discourse, have now begun to use the body to counteract that emphasis, arguing that people's lives included physical experiences that were not or could not always be expressed in words. These embodied experiences are difficult to recapture or study, but neglecting them, they now assert, leads to a history that is sanitized and cerebral rather than one that takes pain or pleasure seriously. Such previously heretical ideas are not simply being whispered by graduate students or discussed by positivist die-hards, but have reached the highest level; Joan Scott, for example, viewed by many as the arch-deconstructionist, recently gave

2. Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes," *Church History* 67 (1998): 3.

a paper at a women's history conference in Switzerland focusing on the body as an actual physical object. Whether the body she discussed had gender or had sex was not clear to me, but the battle over the distinction between gender and sex also seems to be winding down, with historians now more willing to view that distinction, as with so much else in gender scholarship, as historically contingent, variable, and complicated.

The most famous battles within women's and gender history have been fought over secular topics in the modern period, but historians focusing on Christianity have also been involved in skirmishes or protracted wars. For example, there is the dispute between Caroline Bynum and Rudolph Bell over how to interpret women's refusal to eat in the Middle Ages. Is this "holy anorexia" (Bell's term), a symbol of women's powerlessness within a patriarchal religion, or is it a way they gave their lives as well as the food they did not eat "religious significance." (Bynum's words)[3] Or the dispute between Lyndal Roper and Steven Ozment about Protestant patriarchal households—are these benign places where "fathers ruled" not much differently than they had earlier, or oppressive "holy households" in which arbitrary paternal power was supported by the state in new ways?[4] There is the dispute about how to interpret celibacy and virginity in the early church, with Jo Ann McNamara and Peter Brown on one side viewing this as a freeing option, a "new song" (McNamara's words) and a host of others on the opposite side arguing that it could only have been oppressive.[5]

The battles about women and gender within church history have at times been fought more keenly than those in secular history because they involve a generally unstated meta-question: Was Christianity a good thing or a bad thing for women? (A friend of mine calls this the Glinda-question, after the question posed to Dorothy by Glinda, the good witch in *The Wizard of Oz:* are you a good witch, or a bad witch?) Similar questions sometimes underlie secular history—Was the Renaissance a good thing or a bad thing for women? How about democracy? Labor unions? Psychiatry?— but they rarely evoke as much

3. Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
4. Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Lindal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).
5. Jo Ann McNamara, *A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries* (New York: Harrington Park, 1985); Peter Brown, *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

passion, nor do they have implications about the ultimate destiny of one's soul. (Well, perhaps psychiatry does.) The Glinda-question within Christianity also has many variants: Was monasticism a good thing for women? Was Protestantism or Catholicism better for women? Was missionary work freeing or oppressive for women?

Some of these battles, like that between conceptualizing what one does as "women's history" or conceptualizing it as "gender studies," are winding down, or the opponents are taking refuge in notions of historical contingency and complex categories of analysis. (Positions that might be summarized as "it depends. . . .") At the same time, new theoretical perspectives are adding additional complexity and bringing in new questions. One of these is queer theory, a field that began in the 1990s as in some ways a combination of gay and lesbian studies and poststructuralism. The gay liberation movement encouraged both public discussion of sexual matters in general and the study of homosexuality in the past and present. Like women's history, it challenged the assumption that sexual attitudes and practices or gender roles were "natural" and unchanging. Queer theory built on these challenges and on the doubts about the essential nature of sex, sexuality, and gender created by biology, psychology, anthropology, and history to highlight the artificial and constructed nature of all oppositional categories: men/women, homosexual/heterosexual, black/white. Some theorists celebrate all efforts at blurring or bending categories, viewing "identity"—or what in literary and cultural studies is often termed "subjectivity"—as both false and oppressive. Others have doubts about this (somewhat akin to doubts among many feminists about the merits of deconstruction), wondering whether one can work to end discrimination against homosexuals, women, African-Americans or any other group, if one denies that the group has an essential identity, something that makes its members clearly homosexual or women or African-American.

Related questions about identity, subjectivity, and the cultural construction of difference have also emerged from postcolonial theory outside of the United States and Critical Race Theory within it. Postcolonial history and theory has been particularly associated with South Asian scholars and the book series Subaltern Studies, and initially focused on people who have been subordinated by virtue of their race, class, culture, or language. Critical Race Theory developed in the 1980s as an outgrowth (and critique) of the civil rights movement combined with ideas derived from Critical Legal Studies, a radical group of legal scholars who argued that supposedly neutral legal concepts such as the individual or meritocracy actually masked power relationships. Both of these theoretical schools point out that

racial, ethnic, and other hierarchies are deeply rooted in social and cultural principles, not simply aberrations that can be remedied by legal or political change. They note that along with disenfranchising certain groups, such hierarchies privilege certain groups, a phenomenon that is beginning to be analyzed under the rubric of critical white studies. (This is a pattern similar to the growth of men's studies, and there is also a parallel within queer theory that is beginning to analyze heterosexuality rather than simply take it as an unquestioned given.)

Queer theory, postcolonial studies, and critical race theory have all been criticized from both inside and outside for falling into the pattern set by traditional history, that is, regarding the male experience as normative and paying insufficient attention to gender differences. Scholars who have pointed this out have also noted that much feminist scholarship suffered from the opposite problem, taking the experiences of heterosexual white women as normative and paying too little attention to differences of race, class, nationality, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. They argue that the experiences of women of color must be recognized as distinctive and that no one axis of difference (men/women, black/white, rich/poor, gay/straight) should be viewed as sufficient. These criticisms led, in the 1990s, to theoretical perspectives that attempted to recognize multiple lines of difference, such as Critical Race Feminism and postcolonial feminism. Such scholarship has begun to influence many areas of gender studies, even those that do not deal explicitly with race or ethnicity, and further complicates all categories of analysis. (Those of us who attempt to keep all these categories in mind are sometimes wistful of the time when only race, class, and gender mattered, and think often on the aphorism, "In heaven you get to think about only one thing at a time.") Despite the complexities it introduces, it appears this cross-fertilization will continue, as issues of difference and identity are clearly key topics for historians in the ever-more-connected twenty-first century world.

Replicating the pattern of women's history and the history of sexuality, most queer and postcolonial theory has largely focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has not used religion as one of its key categories of difference. If Christianity is discussed, it is as a peripheral element in the main story of imperialism or nationalism, or as a monolithic cultural force lurking in the background, invoked but not interrogated. (I am thinking here of off-hand references such as those to "America's Puritan tradition. . . .") This avoidance or disinterest in religion—and particularly in Christianity—and the focus on the modern period leads to scholarship, I would argue, that is somewhat rootless. Ideas and concepts float in without an explicit discus-

sion of their origins, which often turn out to be in Christianity. Analyses that include this grounding would allow both for a longer historical perspective and for more interesting comparisons.

Here are several examples of what I mean. Discussions of race in North America frequently cite the 1691 Virginia statute that marked the first use of the word white: "Whatsoever English or other white man or woman being free shall intermarry with a negroe, mulatto, or Indian man or woman bond or free shall within three months after such marriage be banished and removed from this dominion forever."[6] Though the basic law is gender neutral, the preamble is gender specific, warning of the "abominable mixture and spurious issue which hereafter may encrease in this dominion, as well by negroes, mulattoes, and Indians intermarrying with English, or other white women." Studies note that this very first law sets out the binary notion of race that would dominate North America, and defines all persons of mixed race, as well as Native Americans, as black. That law was not the first to make a binary distinction in matters pertaining to interracial sexual activity, however; thirty years earlier, the Virginia Assembly declared that: "If any *christian* [my emphasis] shall committ fornication with a negro man or woman, hee or shee soe offending shall pay double the fines imposed by the former act."[7] This statute ignores the fact that some Africans were Christians, but it highlights the fact that religion clearly played a role in early notions of whiteness.

Discussions about the significance of "blood" in the construction of race also profit by being clearly grounded in the discourses of religion, family, class, and nation out of which racialized notions developed. Religious beliefs were often conceptualized physically as blood, with people regarded as having Jewish, Muslim, or Christian blood, and after the Reformation, Protestant or Catholic blood. The most dramatic expression of this occurred, of course, in early modern Spain, where "purity of the blood" became an obsession, but it was also true elsewhere. A father choosing a wet nurse for his children took care to make sure she was of the same denomination, lest, if he was a Catholic, her Protestant blood turn into Protestant milk and thus infect the child with heretical ideas. (It is interesting that this idea did not carry over into racialized notions of blood, for in the colonial context, though blood was race-specific, breast milk was not. I don't

6. William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature* (1823; facsimile reprint, Charlottesville: University of Virgina Press, 1969), 2:86.
7. Hening, *Statutes*, 2:170.

know exactly how this happened, but it is the type of fascinating issue that emerges when considerations of race and religion are linked.)

Children born of religiously mixed marriages were often slightly mistrusted, for one never knew whether their Protestant or Catholic blood would ultimately triumph. The same was true of children born of other relationships that mixed blood—noble blood and common blood, French blood and German blood. Conceptualizing all of these types of identity as "blood" naturalized these and made them appear innate; sexual contacts across such fundamental dividing lines could thus be made to appear threatening and dangerous. Links between religious and racial notions of blood have been well studied for Jews or Jewish converts in Spain and its empire, and for the Gaelic Irish in Ireland, but much less so for other areas, despite the importance of Christian authorities in creating and maintaining the hierarchies based on those notions.

If children of mixed blood were distrusted, those who attempted to hide or alter their identity were even more so. Much queer theory has focused on the constructed and performative aspects of gender and sexual identity and has been fascinated by the idea of "passing"—gays passing as straight, blacks passing as white, men passing as women—and the outrage it sometimes occasioned. It strikes me that Christian history might again offer some interesting early examples, beginning, perhaps, with Peter's attempt to "pass" as someone who was not associated with Christ. It also might offer early examples of those who went beyond "passing" to identity transformation. We tend to view religious affiliation as volitional, and that notion is at the core of the missionary enterprise. But converts are also dangerous: they challenge the categories of self and other through which identities are constructed, and always carry with them a part of their former selves. So, of course, do transsexuals, whose experiences in discovering their sexual identity are often described in language similar to that of religious enlightenment. Thus along with the handful of examples of transvestites and hermaphrodites in the past, the much more common experiences of converts might be very helpful in historicizing the creation and alteration of identity.

Readers of this journal may have no difficulty in seeing the value of incorporating Christian developments into recent theoretical directions. I hope these examples have also suggested the reverse, however—that studies of the process of conversion might very well benefit from comparisons with sex-change operations or with coming out as a gay person, or that discussions of Reformation-era Christianity that do not take into account the Church's role in establishing racial identity are incomplete. Queer theory, postcolonial studies, and Critical

Race Feminism all offer approaches to issues that are central to religious history, both in terms of research and in terms of what we present to students.

That suggestion may be going too far, however, for it is evident that gender studies and even women's history have not made the inroads they should, that, in Elizabeth Clark's very recent words, "the hoped-for 'paradigm shift" has had "less than overwhelming success."[8] Though some of our elder colleagues may feel history has been "corrupted by excessive preoccupation with gender studies" (a comment made last month by a reviewer of an article for the *Sixteenth Century Journal)* particularly in materials designed for the classroom—which more than anything else shapes how we will present the history of Christianity to the future—we have not even gotten to the stage of "add women and stir" in many cases. A much-advertised and lavishly-produced source reader in Christian history published in 2001 by Blackwells, for example, Alister McGrath's *Christian Literature: An Anthology* includes writings by only two women, Julian of Norwich and Dorothy Sayers, along with those of eighty-nine men, including Shakespeare, Trollope, and Garrison Keillor. Euan Cameron's magisterial textbook, *The European Reformation,* published in 1991 by Clarendon, gives women and the family (linked, of course) four pages out of five hundred. Scholars—even those at the senior level—who decide to focus on women are criticized for ignoring more significant work. (Elsie McKee, for example, told me she was both teased and reproved for spending time producing her wonderful edition and biography of Katharina Schütz Zell instead of her "important" editions of Calvin.) *Church History* may decide to publish a special issue on "Biblical Interpretation and the Construction of Christian Sexualities" (69, no. 2 [2000]), in which several articles ground themselves explicitly in queer and/or feminist theory, but this does not guarantee the articles will be read. Special issues highlight, but they also ghettoize.

Studies of women and gender within church history (and history in general) are also very unevenly distributed geographically and chronologically. Studies of women's experience or that use gender as a category of analysis in the twentieth-century United States or in early modern England, for example, number in the hundreds, while those that focus on Portugal or Poland in any period may be counted on one hand. This unevenness is related, not surprisingly, to uneven growth in women's studies courses and programs, which is in turn related to

8. Elizabeth A. Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History," *Church History* 70 (2001): 395.

the structure of higher education around the world and the ability or willingness of institutions of higher education to include new perspectives and programs. By the late 1970s, hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada offered courses in women's history, and many had separate programs in women's history or women's studies. Universities in Britain, Israel, and Australia were somewhat slower to include lectures and seminars on women, and universities in western and eastern Europe slower still, with scholars in the 1990s still reporting that investigating the history of women could get them pegged as less than serious and be detrimental to their future careers. The same disparity appears in seminaries, with many of those in the United States now having student bodies more than 50 percent female (and the women are *not* all in church music or parish education), while those in Europe remain much more male. It also shows up in conference participation and publications. Between 20 and 35 percent of the presenters at the sessions at the American Historical Association sponsored by American Society of Church History in recent years have been female, a share that is matched by the number of articles in *Church History* in the last five years written by female authors. By contrast, Ursula King has recently analyzed the participation by women in the congresses of the International Association of the History of Religion, and she finds that women only gave about 10 percent of the papers in 1980, 1985, and 1990.

Ten percent is better than the statistics from the 1908 IAHR conference, in which women gave 6 percent of the papers, or the statistics from the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation,* in which women made up about 5 percent of the biographical entries, or the statistics from the *Encyclopedia of Religion,* in which women made up about 3 percent of those who merited a biographical entry as a scholar of religion. Twenty to 35 percent is certainly much better than zero to ten, which was the standard percentage of articles by female authors in *Church History* in its first fifty years of publication.

Twenty to thirty-five is not fifty, of course, and ten to twenty—the percentage of articles focusing on an individual woman, groups of women, ideas about women, or anything having to do with gender, family, and sexuality in *Church History* in the last ten years—is also not overwhelming. Thus it may not be surprising that many of us (myself included) wince at using the word "church history" to describe what we do and may even have difficulty identifying ourselves, for example, as "Reformation historians." Those of us who have been at this a while may be tired of being missionaries, particularly as we have had a double mission, proclaiming the significance of religious history to our feminist friends and colleagues, and of women and

gender to our friends and colleagues in church history. We have made a few converts in both camps, but sometimes we are also tempted just to pass—pass as a feminist unconcerned about religion with our feminist friends, pass as a religious historian who occasionally happens to work on women at other times.

Passing (or Nicodemism, to use a term more appropriate for this journal) is not a healthy state, however, either spiritually or psychologically, and most of us who have been involved in the intersection of religious and gender history will continue our double-headed missionary attempts, which occasionally become crusades. We are buoyed up in this by the great interest our students show in such matters, and, to be truthful, by comments such as those made by the manuscript reviewer for *Sixteenth Century Journal* I quoted earlier (who also termed "the litany of race, class and gender" a "cancer," apparently forgetting, though perhaps not, that as the editor of that journal I would be reading his review). Circling back to the autobiographical, I will never forget an agitated response I received to my first paper on women's religious writings in the Reformation, a mild discussion mostly of hymns and advice for children. The material was certainly less dramatic than the stories of midwives and prostitutes I had earlier told as a historian of women's work, but it provoked the comment, expressed with great hostility: "You're not talking about women, you're talking about what women *think!*" A research direction that proved this challenging to established notions was clearly one in which I had to continue, a situation that will no doubt motivate the next generation of historians interested in these issues as well.

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