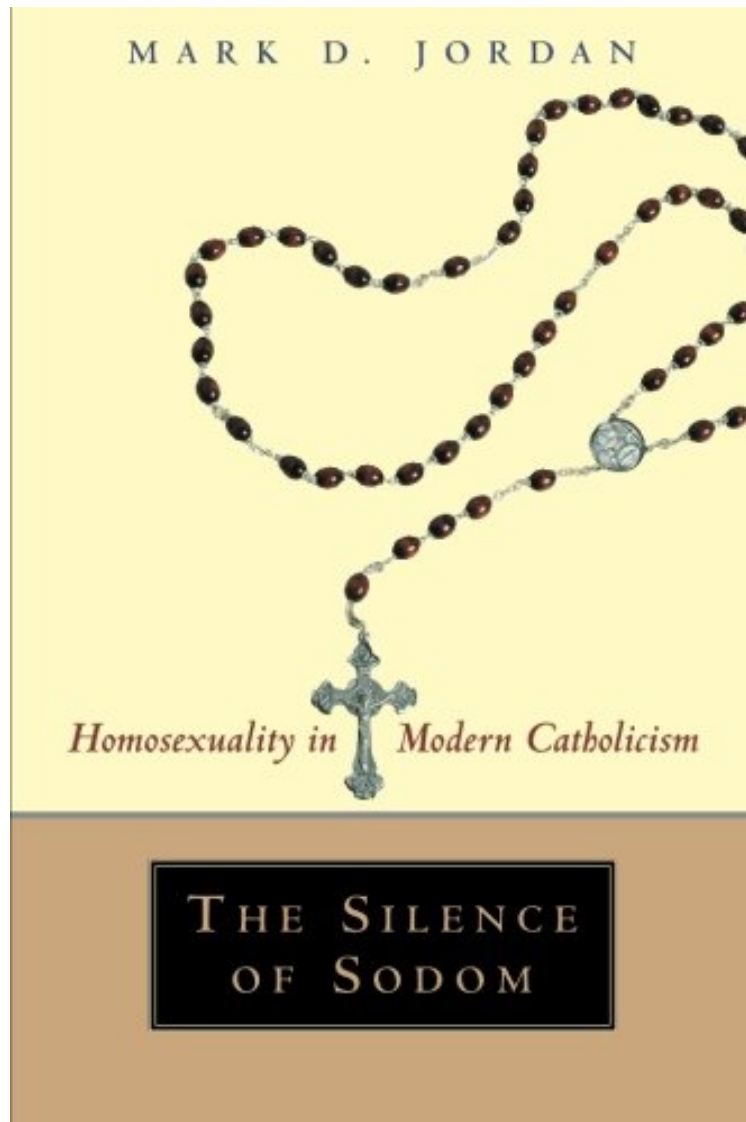


(Read ebook) The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism

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Mark D. Jordan

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Mark D. Jordan : The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism:

27 of 37 people found the following review helpful. Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism By William H. DuBay Mark Jordan breaks rank with D.S. Bailey, John McNeil, S.J., and John Boswell, who preceded him in writing about homosexuality and the Roman Catholic Church. His keen analysis of homoeroticism in the life of the church,

specifically among the clergy, has more in common with Raymond de Becker, who, in *The Other Side of Love*, wrote convincingly on the latent homosexuality of Christianity. Jordan also writes convincingly on the homoeroticism that continues to attract so many young men to join the Catholic clergy. The church's liturgy, music, and art continue to offer outlets for expression that are acceptable among a celibate clergy. There is probably no other religion so disturbed by homosexuality. Echoing Michel Foucault, Jordan states that the homophobia of recent church pronouncements is a new, modern phenomenon adopted from the modern state's need to control sexuality. This position supports that of Garry Wills, who, in "Papal Sin," shows how the modern papacy has become obsessed with the need for absolute authority. "In the last few centuries," Jordan writes, "Catholic life has been ravaged by the requirements of absolute obedience. Whether seen from the inside or outside, the distinguishing mark of modern Catholicism has often seemed obedience and nothing more. The theological virtues are no longer faith, hope, and charity, but submission, submission, submission." He quotes Nietzsche's description of Catholicism as "a continuing suicide of reason." Jordan writes, "Nietzsche is astute to single this out as a distinctively Catholic pleasure--the protracted, the deliciously painful self-mutilation of a magnificent mind undoing itself in obedience." We wonder, if Jordan rejects the authority of the Pope, how is he different from a Protestant, and why does he fret so about finding a place for homosexuality within the Catholic church? In rejecting the concept of gay identity as an oppressive role that is a function of homophobia, Jordan follows the prevalent consensus of sociologists, who have confirmed Kinsey's assertion that there is no such thing as a homosexual. "We should feel contrition," Jordan writes, "for having pretended to have a sexual identity, when what we had were desires, memories, and loves." Yet, why does he persist in labelling people as if there were two kinds of people on earth, "gay" and "straight." In failing to perceive the term "homosexual" as too large an umbrella to tell us anything meaningful about a person's behavior or feelings, he missed a unique opportunity to clarify our language about sex. Jordan calls for a new language, but what we need is not a new language about gay and lesbian lives but about how all people can accept and integrate homoerotic pleasures and feelings into their lives and their faith.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A GAY CATHOLIC LOOKS AT HOMOSEXUALITY IN CATHOLIC CULTURE By Steven H Propp Mark Jordan is a gay theologian and medievalist and professor of Religion/Catholic Studies at Emory University, and has also written books such as *Recruiting Young Love: How Christians Talk about Homosexuality*, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, *The Ethics of Sex*, *Blessing Same-Sex Unions: The Perils of Queer Romance and the Confusions of Christian Marriage*, etc. He notes in the first chapter of this 2000 book, "In what follows, I consider the multiple forms or places of male homosexuality within modern Catholicism... It is worth doing so for a number of reasons... first, the Catholic church remains the most powerful of Christian organizations... Even in the United States... Catholic bishops enter aggressively into public debates over homosexuality and other matters of sexual morality. They are able to do so because religious condemnation remains the most potent homophobic rhetoric. So the features of Catholic homosexuality are particularly consequential outside the church. Second, Catholic homoeroticism has a distinguished and varied history... because of centuries of compulsory priestly celibacy and... all-male religious orders. Third, and most importantly, the Catholic management of same-sex desire has been decisive in European and American histories of what we now call 'homosexuality.' ... Catholicism has been one of the most homoerotic of widely available modern cultures, offering encouragement, instruction, and relatively safe haven to many homosexuals... you cannot understand Catholic homosexuality unless you begin with the clergy." (Pg. 7-8) He admits, "Who am I to write this book? Who am I to say such things?... I am neither a former priest nor a former religious... I am not such a moral theologian... If I were not 'out,' my criticisms would be dismissed as evidence of closeted gayness. I am 'out,' so they can be dismissed as my agenda." (Pg. 13) He adds, "This book is not a remedy for the failure of Catholic teachings on homosexuality. We are not ready for full Catholic teachings about same-sex love... The book is, instead, a rudimentary vocabulary, a first dictionary, of the unexpectedly varied expressions of Catholic gayness." (Pg. 16) He notes that [former] Cardinal Ratzinger "scoffed at the view of homosexuality as an 'inalienable right'... he attacked a number of theological 'trends': 'Indeed, it has come to pass that bishops... have placed churches at the disposal of "gays" for their gatherings.' ... Note, by the way, that Ratzinger spoke the word 'gays' in English. He knew that his particular enemies were American activists." (Pg. 31-32) He observes, "American seminaries and houses of religious formation have also undergone changes over the last forty years---and in no single direction... If it is now amazing to recall the rigidity of seminaries in the 1950s, it is equally odd to remember some of the wilder experiments during the 1960s and 1970s. I have heard dozens of stories about the whims of autocratic directors in seminaries that were built to resemble Venetian palaces and run rather like them. But I also remember seminaries in the early 1970s where seminarians would bring their girlfriends or (more rarely) boyfriends to evening meals presided over by the rector. Or seminary 'rec' rooms that resembled particularly fey piano bars." (Pg. 142) He asks, "Why do so many gay boys grow up to be priests?" Because they are promised an exchange of their anguished identity as outsiders for a respected and powerful identity as an insider. Because they want to remain in the beautiful, queer space of the liturgy. Because they are drawn to public celebration of suffering the redeems. Because they want to live in as gay a world as the Catholic church offers." (Pg. 159) He says, "A gay priest ordained by a homophobic community to invoke the male body of its God---That is an endless source of irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and sharp humor. Camp is not so much a feature of Catholic

clerical culture as its basic predicament." (Pg. 208) This book will interest those wanting a "gay-sympathetic" perspective on Catholicism.⁴¹ of 52 people found the following review helpful. Homosexuality and the Catholic Church in 2000 By slightlykooky For those of you who have read Boswell's two epics "Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality" and "Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe," this book doesn't present anything 'new,' in terms of scriptural translations/interpretations per se. However, it is probably one of the few recent books I've seen which focuses on the plight of homosexuality exclusively in the Catholic Church. The author discusses several of the Vatican documents (1975, 1986, 1992) on homosexuality as well as the American Bishops letter of 1997-8. What is most striking in his approach is Jordan's breakdown of the rhetoric of the Catholic Church. In order to better understand what the Church's statements themselves mean, Jordan enables the reader by breaking down the layers of 'silence' by the church: their background, and the rhetoric used to maintain the status quo. Stylistically, parts of the text seemed fragmentary. It did not help that almost every paragraph was separated by little ____ dividers, which distracted this reader to the overall thought process. Jordan borrows and builds on several notions from Sedgwick's "Epistemology of the Closet." I found the chapter on the 'Liturgy Queen' and Clerical Drag quite amusing. For a book focusing on 'catholic' issues with homosexuality, the last chapter offers the most promise by describing the possibilities of living as a lesbian/gay Catholic. Overall I'd give the book between 3 and 4 stars (3 and a half, if there was the option).

A 2000 Lambda Literary Award Finalist The past decade has seen homosexual scandals in the Catholic Church becoming ever more visible, and the Vatican's directives on homosexuality becoming ever more forceful, begging the question Mark Jordan tries to answer here: how can the Catholic Church be at once so homophobic and so homoerotic? His analysis is a keen and readable study of the tangled relationship between male homosexuality and modern Catholicism.

.com The Silence of Sodom by Mark D. Jordan, a professor of theology at Emory University, is a smart, graceful, important book about homosexuality and modern Catholicism. It transcends discussion of sexual identity and contends that theology cannot, fundamentally, be argued--it must be lived. "Serious moral theology cannot be principally the framing and manipulation of quasi-legal propositions. It must begin and end in the discovery of particular lives under grace." Consequently, Jordan writes, "lesbian and gay lives will have to become audible to the church, readable within it, before their graces can be discerned and described." The way for gay lives to become audible in the church, Jordan argues, is to demonstrate an intimate relationship between "'homosexuality' and holiness--that is, human fullness." To demonstrate that relationship, gay people must rethink their notions of identity by questioning the descriptive power of terms such as gay and homosexual, and perhaps even abandoning such terms. Gay Catholics, Jordan says, "should feel contrition for having pretended to have a sexual identity, when what we had were desires, memories, and loves. To be good homosexuals is, for Catholic men, to conspire with our old persecutors in a sin against ourselves. The homosexual is only the sodomite in approved drag." Abstruse jargon, sloppy thinking, and excessive pride are common pitfalls for writers who address simultaneously the subjects of Christianity and homosexuality. Jordan avoids all of these dangers. In plain language, with humility, he gently insists that readers join him in learning how to talk about sexuality and physical pleasure in a way that amounts to talking about Christian love. --Michael Joseph Gross From Publishers Weekly Jordan, author of the prize-winning *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* and professor of religion at Emory University, argues that the culture of Catholicism and gay culture have much in common. Analyzing Catholic documents on homosexuality, Jordan determines that the Church is often vague and imprecise, its rhetoric designed to confuse readers. Despite the Church's teachings that homosexual sex is a sin, says Jordan, Catholicism is shot through with homoeroticism--the musical, incense-filled Catholic liturgy attracts gay men, and gay men's "coming out" is not dissimilar from Catholic seminarians' demonstration of a priesthood call. Even the Eucharist is drawn into this analysis: according to Jordan, male Catholics eating the perfect body of a perfect man is a homoerotic act, too, and the "priest without faith who celebrates Mass" recalls "a hustler having sex with his client." This treatise is provocative, but not convincing. Jordan's modest claim at the beginning of the book--that the Catholic Church needs to honestly recognize its many gay Catholics, some of whom occupy positions of leadership--is compelling. However, his suggestion that Catholicism and homosexuality are somehow inherently bound up with one another because the stereotypical gay man's fixation with fine clothes is reminiscent of priests' suiting up in vestments reads more like a Saturday Night Live skit than a serious effort to reshape Catholic discussions about sexuality. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Jordan (religion, Emory Univ.; *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*) considers the conceptualization of male homosexuality within the context of the contemporary Catholic church. The first of the three sections seeks to "analyze the rhetoric of the church's bureaucratic speech about sexual morality" by examining Declaration Regarding Certain Questions of Sexual Ethics (1971) and Letter to all Catholic Bishops on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986). Jordan then investigates the hypocrisy and secrecy that surrounds clerical homosexuality. Finally, he dreams of ways to ameliorate the present situation, focusing on various approaches, such as those by organizations like Metropolitan Community Church and Dignity. The self-conscious sentences and fragmentary nature of the text, modeled on Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades*

Project, are not completely successful at teasing out the complicated nuances of this controversial subject.
Recommended for collections specializing in religion and Gay Lesbian Task Force issues.-James E. Van Buskirk, San
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