(rejection of family); Matt. 13:53–58 (rejection by hometown); Luke 10:29–37 (the good Samaritan).

30. Robert E. Goss, *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

31. Matt. 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:14–22.

32. Goss, *Jesus Acted Up*, 149–50.

33. Justin Chin, *Attack of the Man-Eating Lotus Blossoms* (San Francisco: Suspect Thoughts Press, 2005), 62–65.

34. "Kaui," in Andrew Matzner, *'O Au No Keia: Voices from Hawaii's Mahu and Transgender Communities* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2001), 112–13.

35. Van Darkholme, blog entry posted February 5, 2007, http://www.vandarkholme.com/journal/ 07journalfeb.html (accessed June 27, 2010).

36. See Lani Ka'ahumanu, "Hapa Haole Wahine," in Lim-Hing, *The Very Inside*, 451–52.

37. In postcolonial theory, hybridity refers to the "creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization." In other words, the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized gives rise to a "third space" that destabilizes such categories and "makes the claim to a hierarchical 'purity' of cultures untenable." See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 118.

38. *Symbolum Quicunque* ¶34, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 2:69 ("*Qui licet Deus sit et homo; non duo tamen, sed unus est Christus.*").

39. Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 114–16.

40. For an Asian American theological reflection on the hybrid nature of Jesus Christ, see Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 85.

41. Matt. 8:20.

42. See Eric Wat, "Preserving the Paradox: Stories From a Gay-Loh," in Leong, *Asian American Sexualities*, 78.

43. See Renée Leslie Hill, "Disrupted/Disruptive Movements: Black Theology and Black Power 1969/1999," in *Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone's Black Theology and Black Power*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 138, 147–48. For more about sexuality and the black church, see Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

44. Wat, "Preserving the Paradox," 80.

45. Ann Yuri Uyeda, "All at Once, All Together: One Asian American Lesbian's Account of the 1989 Asian Pacific Lesbian Network Retreat," in Lim-Hing, *The Very Inside*, 121.

46. See sources cited in note 2.

47. Kwok Pui-lan, "Asian and Asian American Churches," in *Homosexuality and Religion: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jeffrey S. Siker (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 59–62; Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 100–121.

9

Touching the Taboo: On the Sexuality of Jesus

KWOK PUI-LAN

Ta-boo *also* ta-bu [Tongan *tabu*] (1777) 1: forbidden to profane use or contact because of supposedly dangerous supernatural powers; 2 a. banned on grounds of morality or taste b. banned on constituting a risk.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

For us the meaning of taboo branches into two opposite directions. On the one hand it means to us sacred, consecrated; but on the other hand it means uncanny, dangerous, forbidden, and unclean.

Sigmund Freud[1]

Christianity's greatest taboo [is] Christ's sexuality.

Leo Steinberg[2]

Was Jesus a celibate, an asexual person? Was he gay or heterosexual? Did he have sexual needs or desires? What kind of sexual relations might he have had with Mary Magdalene and the prostitutes who trusted him as their friend? And who was his beloved disciple in John's Gospel? After more than two centuries of historical and interdisciplinary quests about what Jesus actually said and did, why do we know so little about the people with whom Jesus may have gone to bed? Did he sleep at all? Where did he sleep? Was he always by himself, alone? Why is the sexuality of Jesus shrouded in a thick cloud of mystery, forbidden even in the realm of imagination? If the scholars are interested in what Jesus ate, shouldn't they be more curious about the sexual life of Jesus?

The sexuality of Jesus is a highly tabooed subject in the Christian church and in the academy. How did this become a highly charged topic, such that merely touching on it becomes profane, dangerous, and risky? Do we assume

that decent, respectable, and objective scholars should never broach the subject? And should God-fearing and churchgoing folks not be interested at all?

RELIGIOUS TABOO AND THE SURPLUS OF MEANING

The word "taboo" entered the English language from Captain James Cooke's account of his third and last voyage to the islands of the Pacific. In 1777, he reached Tonga, or the Friendly Islands, and learned the Tongan word "tabu," which meant something forbidden.[3] Other travelers soon found out that similar ideas could be found in the Polynesian religious systems, signifying sacred objects, places, rituals, persons, or something expressing a "connection with the gods." For example, William Ellis of the London Missionary Society wrote in his *Polynesian Researches* published in 1829:

> The idols, temples, persons, and names of the king, and members of the reigning family; the persons of the priests, canoes belonging to the gods; houses, clothes, and mats of the king and priests; and the heads of men who were the devotees of any particular idol were always *tabu*, or sacred. The flesh of hogs, fowls, turtle, and several others kinds of fish, coconuts, and almost everything offered in sacrifice, were *tabu* to the use of the gods and the men.[4]

In 1888, James George Frazer wrote a short article on the system of taboo in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and he and other scholars used the term frequently in the study of "primitive" religion and magic. The word "taboo" exerted a fascinating grip on the religious imagination of the West, for it provided a vocabulary or a force field to talk about the risk, boundary, terror, and dread of the "sacred" as well as longing, desire, fascination, and possible transgression.

In fact, the discussion of "taboo" with its various shades of meanings has initiated some of the most innovative and groundbreaking contributions in the study of religion. Émile Durkheim, in the early twentieth century, turned to the Australian Aborigines to show that the sacred/profane duality corresponds to the universal distinction formulated by every culture between taboo and transgression, the individual and the collective, and euphoria and dysphoria. His study of the so-called "elementary" forms of religious life (1912) aims to present a sociological theory of religion.[5] Rejecting the older definitions of religion as beliefs in the supernatural or divine, Durkheim stresses that religion is an observable phenomenon and a social fact, arising out of the nature of social life itself. In his analysis of totemism as the most primitive religious form, he argues that the totemic animal or plant, which is considered sacred or taboo, is in fact the clan itself divinized. Religion, as the repository of the group's collective sentiments and values, functions to maintain its solidarity and continuity.

In a sharp contrast to Durkheim, Sigmund Freud traced the origin of religion to a taboo located not in society, but in the psyche—the unconsciousness derived from the desire to murder the father and possess the mother. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud amasses a wide range of religious data from the

Aborigines, the Melanesians, the Battas of Sumatra, and various tribes in Africa to show that the psychic life of these "savages" has close parallels to the infantile period of child development. He proposes the provocative thesis that the totemic system and its exogamous stipulations are related to the incest dread of the primitive people. The incest dread is "a subtle infantile trait and is in striking agreement with the psychic life of the neurotic."[6] While the mature person has freed himself from these incestuous desires, the neurotic has not been able to break free from the psychic infantilism. Later, in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud develops the idea that religion is based on the helplessness of children and the need for protection to allay fears and dangers of life. Religion is portrayed as a collective neurosis in which the father is projected and sublimated in the father-image of God.[7]

Several decades later, British anthropologist Mary Douglas presented yet another theory on taboo through the perspectives of purity and pollution. Defilement and pollution, she argued, is based on society's classification of order and disorder, as well as external and internal boundaries. The rituals of purity and impurity both create and display the symbolic patterns of meaning of society and foster unity in experience of the group. Since the publication of her influential text *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), biblical scholars and students of early Christianity have used its insights to study identity formation as well as the religious practices and prohibitions of the early Christian communities.[8]

As we have seen, the deployment of the term "taboo" allows these authors to present different theories or schema to understand religion and its relation to social life, the human psyche, the creation of meaning, and the erection of boundaries. I apply some of their insights to analyze possible frames of meaning for the greatest taboo in Christianity: the sexuality of Jesus. I am interested not so much in what the silence suppresses, but in what such silence enables—the surplus of meaning that is created and constructed. By treating this topic as a taboo, the Christian church has exerted enormous power over believers' sexual life in intimating what they are supposed to do or not do to their bodies.

Many theologians who have written on the taboo surrounding the sexuality of Jesus point to the historic church's ambivalent attitude regarding human sexuality and a church hierarchy that is deeply homophobic. Robert Goss, for example, has written:

> Early Christianity understood Jesus as remaining unmarried, and he became a model of celibacy for elite Christians and more recently a model of compulsory heterosexuality for contemporary fundamentalist Christians. Jesus has remained a symbol of asexuality for Christian sexual puritans. For nearly two millennia, elite Christians kept Jesus and sexuality totally apart from each other in order to maintain their purity agenda. Sexual puritans have surrounded human sexuality with prohibitions, regulations, and restrictions. The denial of human sexuality within spirituality is damaging to the human spirit because it alienates Christians from their own sexual selves and from their own bodies.[9]

That Jesus must be seen as asexual, unmarried, and celibate is a direct result of an erotophobic church maintained for a long time by a celibate, male, and dominating clerical hierarchy. They have projected onto Jesus their values and ideals as a means to control behavior and maintain their sacred status. Almost like the Aborigines' totem system, the asexual Jesus functions to perpetuate the social values of these elite males.

While we may not agree with Freud's bold psychoanalytical interpretation of totemism, his highly imaginative proposal points to the significance of imagination and fantasy in constructing what the society or group holds as taboo. Freud regards the danger and prohibition surrounding the sacred totem as primitive people's way to express what is unspeakable and unimaginable: incestuous desire and dread. In the case of Jesus, suggestions that Jesus might have any kind of sexual relation have been met with disbelief, disgust, and even strong protest. In Nikos Kazantzakis's book and the subsequent movie, the last temptation of Jesus is portrayed as the carnal desire of a thirty-something man and his wish to have children and a family. The spiritual vocation of Jesus and his desire for love and domestic life are seen as constantly in conflict with one another. The movie met with scorn and protest because the erotic desire of Jesus was considered off-limits, belonging to the realm of the unimaginable. Even the milder proposal by William Phipps that Jesus as a rabbi was most likely married according to the social customs of his time irritated a broad spectrum of people, and the author received personally threatening letters. Phipps learned the hard lesson that "religion becomes explosive when mixed with sex, for the responses were related less to the historical than to the hysterical."[10] It can be expected that the iconoclastic suggestion that Jesus might have been gay in plays like *Corpus Christi* would be condemned as blasphemous, outrageous, and transgressive. Why is it that Jesus cannot be imagined either as heterosexual or gay, or as someone who is sexual? What does this have to say about a Christian tradition, as Richard Rambuss describes poignantly, that finds "Jesus' exposed and macerated body to be paradoxically both a sight of horror, shame, and defilement ***and*** a vision of astonishing, even erotic beauty?"[11]

Mary Douglas's treatment of pollution and taboo invites us to look at the sexuality of Jesus through the cultural-anthropological lenses of meaning making, classification systems, and the delineation of external and internal boundaries. Applying queer theory, which questions precisely the rigid and binary constructions of gender and sexuality, gay and lesbian theologians have offered new images and symbols of Jesus. In *Jesus Acted Up*, Robert Goss argues that Jesus is the queer Christ, who is God's embodied solidarity, with justice and love for oppressed gay and lesbian outsiders.[12] British theologian Elizabeth Stuart presents the model of friendship as a way to reimagine Jesus' life and ministry: "One could say that the essence of Jesus' ministry was simply befriending—the formation of mutual, equal, loving, accepting and transforming relationships."[13]

Prompted by queer studies and the turn to the body in postmodern discourse, the sexual body of Jesus is not off-limits anymore. Jesus on the cross, at once tortured and bruised, yet an icon for devotion and fascination, has attracted the attention of scholars from diverse disciplines. In a hilarious article, Stephen Moore traces the discussion of the physique of Jesus in the early church fathers: Jesus was not tall and not handsome, according to the image provided by Isaiah. Moore satirically compares this image of Jesus to the rather attractive and appealing faces of Jesus on some contemporary book covers.[14] In his highly inventive and disturbing book *God's Gym*, Moore furnishes data about the tortured body and the resurrected body of Jesus and the bodies of Yahweh, with graphic illustrations of physical pain and visions of bodybuilding and the perfectibility of male bodies.[15]

Recent scholarship has also focused on the sexual body of Jesus as featured in the devotional literature of medieval monastics and English poets. For example, Mark S. Burrows studies the erotic and sensual sermons on the Song of Songs by Bernard of Clairvaux as resources for constructing an erotic Christology. Preaching to his fellow monks, Bernard deployed a deeply passionate and sexually explicit language to describe kissing and touching the feet and body of Jesus as a "tender lover."[16] Among the Protestants, as Richard Rambuss has shown, seventeenth-century English poets and writers such as John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, and Thomas Traherne displayed a kind of "closet devotions," by which he means courting a desirable and beautiful Savior and expressing oneself in a homodevotional manner (male God and male devotee).[17]

While I find the above discussion of the sexuality of Jesus and homoerotic devotion to Jesus fascinating and helpful to the development of a healthy and inclusive Christian sexual theology, my plotting of the "surplus of meaning" of the untouchable taboo of Jesus' sexuality follows a different path. My focus will be on the following questions:

(1) If the historical quest for Jesus aims at recovering the "historical" man, not a mythical savior, how does that historical consciousness alter or change our way of looking at the sexuality of Jesus?

(2) What does the silence on the sexuality of Jesus tell us about the intersection between Jesus' gender, sexuality, and race? I have found relatively little discussion of Jesus' race either in the feminist debate on the masculinity of the Savior or in the gay and lesbian recovery of homoerotic religious relationships.

(3) What does the sexuality of Jesus as depicted by the nineteenth-century historical quest tell us about the construction of sexuality of Europe at the time?

My intention is to interrupt a discourse on the sexuality of Jesus defined largely by the imagination of white scholars, which tends to isolate sexuality from social, racial, and cultural dimensions. I begin with an analysis of Jesus within the larger sociocultural matrix of the body politics of European bourgeois society.

JESUS AND BOURGEOIS BODY POLITICS

Serious talk about sexuality is inevitably about society.

Thomas Laqueur[18]

To contemplate Jesus' sexuality, we have to "think through the body," to borrow a phrase by feminist critic Jane Gallop.[19] In the case of Jesus, we have to think through the social, cultural, and religious configurations that mark a masculine-sexed Jewish body in the modern period. The discussion of the body of Jesus invariably brings us to the fertile and richly textured nexus of the emerging discourse of sexual difference from the late eighteenth century, the use of racial stereotypes in social and political theories, and the colonial discourse of European or Aryan superiority. As Mary Douglas has rightly observed, "The human body is always treated as an image of society and that there can be no natural way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension."[20] I would argue that the silence around Jesus' body and sexuality points to the anxiety about the external and internal boundaries of the bourgeois body over race, gender, and sexuality. The body of Jesus—as the incarnate flesh of God—brings into sharp relief the demarcations between the sacred and the profane, power and danger, margins and boundaries reproduced by a bourgeois society that was undergoing rapid changes, when at the same time some of the foundations of its religious belief were severely challenged.

Since theologians in the nineteenth century were preoccupied with the quest for the historical Jesus, we might assume that they would provide a lot of data about Jesus as a Jewish person. The historical quest was supposed to separate the myths and legends about Jesus from his real life through a critical scrutiny of the Gospels. The fact that Jesus was a Jew would require these scholars to pay attention to the Jewish environment in the nascent period of Christianity and to the Jewish scholarship of that particular period. But the opposite seemed to be the case, as there was a steady avoidance of Jesus' Jewish background among biblical scholars and theologians from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Susannah Heschel has called this disturbing and ironic phenomenon "the Protestant flight from the historical Jesus."[21] Instead of a fully embodied Jewish Jesus, the liberal theologians presented a universal Christ centered on his unique religious consciousness. What Jane Gallop observes as the wrong turn of the male European philosophical tradition is equally applicable to the theological tradition: "Rather than treat the body as a site of knowledge, a medium for thought, the more classic philosophical project has tried to render it transparent and get beyond it, to dominate it by reducing it to the mind's idealizing categories."[22]

In the early part of the nineteenth century, F. C. Bauer and the Tübingen School had attended to Jesus' Jewish background in order to delineate the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and the dynamic struggle between Jewish and gentile Christianity. Although Judaism was invariably cast in a negative, nationalistic, and conservative light, these scholars at least took into serious consideration that Christianity developed out of Judaism. Since the 1860s, however, Heschel argues that various reconstructions of Jesus' life had moved the spotlight away from his Jewish milieu more toward his consciousness of a unique relationship with God as the basis of a generalized, liberal moral teaching. She cites as evidence the third edition of *Life of Jesus* by D. F. Strauss (1864), *Life of Jesus* by Ernest Renan (1863), and the far-reaching influence of Albrecht Ritschl's liberal theology.

Heschel offers several reasons for this flight from the Jewish Jesus. First, these theologians harbored old and stereotypically negative perceptions of Judaism, and they wanted to proclaim that Christianity was a new religion created and inaugurated by Jesus. At the same time, their historical studies were largely based on the works of Christian scholars, for they were also quite ignorant of Jewish scholarship on the Second Temple period and the work of Abraham Geiger on the internal struggles among the Jewish community in Jesus' time. Second, these theologians followed the lead of liberal theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who championed the position that Jesus was the founder of a new religion and developed a unique and extraordinary religious consciousness. His Jewish cultural and religious environment had to be deemphasized in order to foreground the ingenuity and creativity of the genius or hero Jesus. For Strauss, Jesus was a unique, highly distinguished person, who felt himself one with his heavenly Father and by means of his exalted character exerted a decisive influence on humanity.

The third and the most significant reason for our discussion is that these scholars, notably Ernest Renan, introduced racial categories to the study of Jesus to demonstrate the superiority of the Indo-Europeans over the Semites. Renan suggested that Jesus' conception of divinity and his relation to God as father and son was "his grand act of originality; there was nothing here in common with his race."[23] Renan also insisted that when Jesus adopted the Jewish maxims of the synagogue in his teachings, Jesus imbued them with a superior spirit and clearly saw the insufficiency of the Mosaic law.[24] In the debate of racial politics of the second half of the nineteenth century, Renan tried hard to show that Christianity had gotten rid of the vestiges of Judaism and was the Aryan religion par excellence. Such a de-Judaization process in the study of the inception of Christianity, Heschel notes, leads to the dehistoricization of Jesus, the tendency toward anti-Semitism, and the subsequent argument that Jesus was in fact an Aryan who fought against Judaism.[25] The beliefs in the superiority of the Aryan race and Christianity as the highest form of religion helped to justify Europe's domination and colonization of the majority of the world's peoples.

While the Jewish identity of Jesus had to be suppressed in order to fit into the racial politics of the bourgeois order, what about his masculine sex? We will see that the race and gender of Jesus intersected in the European imagination or fantasy of a Jewish male body. In *The Making of the Modern Body*, the contributors have shown that at the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged

in Europe a new interpretation of the body and the relation between the two sexes along with intense debates about the sexual differences between the male and the female. Cultural historian Thomas Laqueur argues that since the Greek period, the female had been treated as a replica of the male in the one-sexed hierarchical model of human anatomy and physiology. Women were seen as having the same sexual organs as men, except these organs were inside rather than outside because women were believed to have less heat in their bodies than men. But this traditional view could no longer be sustained during the time of the Enlightenment, when philosophers argued for human equality and dignity for everyone, and not just for one sex. The liberal thinkers thus had to come up with new interpretations of the body. Laqueur writes:

> Liberalism postulates a body that, if not sexless, is nevertheless undifferentiated in its desires, interests, or capacity to reason. In striking contrast to the old teleology of the body as male, liberal theory begins with a neuter body, sexed but without gender, and of no consequence to cultural discourse. The body is regarded simply as the bearer of the rational subject, which itself constitutes the person.[26]

Although nineteenth-century theologians clearly presumed Jesus to be male, and although the image of a genius-hero derived from aesthetics and art better suited ideals of the masculine at the time, there had not been much interest in the sexed body of Jesus. While quest after quest has undertaken the *religious* or messianic consciousness of Jesus, there has been no concomitant quest for the *sexual* consciousness of Jesus. The internal relation of Jesus to his Father was seen as having little to do with his bodily needs or functions.

But the liberal presupposition of a sexless body tells only half the story, for such a theory does not explain the real world of male domination over women, of sexual division of labor, and of different sexual desire and passion. In physiology, anatomy, and philosophical discourses, the hierarchical model, which construed the female body as lesser, gradually gave way to a biology of the incommensurability of the two sexes, with intensified discussions of sexual difference, prompted in part by the first wave of the feminist movement in Europe.[27] The tortuous debate on sexual difference reflected the changing body politics of society, with the demand for the redrawing of the boundaries between the public and private roles of women, access to education and job opportunities, and the redistribution of power and privileges.

The rhetoric of sexual difference was much related to the rhetoric of race, as both were presumably based on biological or anatomical distinctions. Just as women are differentiated from men by their reproductive organs and biological functions, Jews are distinguished by a practice inscribed on the body—infant male circumcision. Sander L. Gilman argues that in the anti-Semitic climate in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, circumcision was unconsciously equated with castration, and Jewish manhood was thought to be less than masculine: "The mutilation of the penis was a feminizing act."[28] Anti-Semitism projected onto the Jewish body the powerlessness of the Jews as analogous to the powerlessness of the female—at a time when both Jews and women were gaining more power in the society of Western Europe. For Freud, the diseased body of the Jews—the sexuality of the Jew associated with circumcision or castration—created a kind of anxiety, if not neurosis, in the Aryan, who feared that he would become a Jew himself.[29] Thus an interesting triad was created: the fearful and anxious Aryan male, the castrated female, and the circumcised Jewish male. If women without a penis are considered somewhat inferior to men, the Jews with their penis circumcised are also seen as less than masculine. Daniel Boyarin notes that there is still a widespread assumption that being Jewish in Western culture renders a boy effeminate, who may be labeled a sissy or a Jewish male femme. The feminization of the Jewish male and the belief in Jewish male passivity have also been associated with queerness in a homophobic European environment.[30]

Thus, I would suggest that the flight from the historical Jesus might have been caused not only by his Jewishness, as Heschel has convincingly demonstrated, but also by anxiety with his masculine body. The Jewish sexed body of Jesus serves as an uneasy marker both of racial and ethnic difference and of the tension in the construction of masculinity and femininity. It would seem much safer and prudent to theologize about Jesus' inner religious consciousness as generic human than to touch the volatile, unstable, and dangerous sexed body of a Jew. To borrow Freud's terminology, the anxiety of white men over their own sexuality and masculinity in maintaining purity and control of the bourgeois body had to be suppressed and sublimated in the universalistic representation of Christ. It was this universal Christ, abstract and separated from his particular Jewish context, who was proclaimed by missionaries and colonial officials as the savior of all peoples, at the name of whom every knee should bow. In the next section, I discuss how an asexual description of Jesus and his teaching justified the moral superiority of the European bourgeoisie and colonization.

ASEXUAL JESUS AND COLONIZATION

> For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it. Thus the image of imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality. . . . Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. . . . On the subject of sex, silence became the rule.
>
> Michel Foucault[31]

Foucault begins his influential text *The History of Sexuality* with a discussion of the imperial prude. This is the only reference to the fact of the empire in his entire book. He then goes on to argue that such an image of the prude is a misguided reading of nineteenth-century sexuality because beneath the veneer of a repressive and policed Victorian bourgeois sexuality, there was incitement to produce discourses about sex: in the confessions to the clergy in the church, the hysterization of women's bodies, the pedagogic advice on children's sexuality,

the socialization of procreative life, and the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure. But as Ann Laura Stoler has pointed out, Foucault's fascinating "history" is biased and one-sided because he confines himself to the discourses taking place in the metropolitan West and leaves out completely the implications of empire-building in shaping "modern western sexuality."[32] Her critical engagement with Foucault's text leads to two important contentions. First, Europe's modern discourses on sexuality, just as cultural, political, and economic assertions, cannot be charted in or limited to Europe alone. Much of Europe's history has taken place outside Europe, which is critical to understanding Europe's self-definition. Second, the discourse on sexuality was much imbued with racial obsession, the technologies of power policing the bourgeois self, and the boundaries of the "civilized" European nations. She writes:

> Bourgeois identities in both metropole and colony emerge tacitly and emphatically coded by race. Discourses of sexuality do more than define the distinctions of the bourgeois self; in identifying marginal members of the body politic, they have mapped the moral parameters of the European nations.[33]

Applying Stoler's insights to our discussion, I argue that Foucault has overlooked one critical site of bourgeois discourse on sexuality: the sexuality of the natives or the colonized. In order to bolster the moral superiority and sexual purity of the European bourgeoisie, peoples of foreign lands were often portrayed as promiscuous, lustful, and polygamous in medical, missionary, and anthropological literature. Anthropologists have furnished much data about the strange courtship and marriage customs among the so-called primitive peoples. British sexologist and eugenicist Havelock Ellis and others found that there was a widespread natural instinct toward homosexual relationship among the "lower races."[34] At the same time, missionaries were busily debating whether polygamy should be allowed in Christian churches. How did the nineteenth-century discourse on sexuality, imbued with racial obsessions and polemics, influence scholars' construction of the sexuality of Jesus, who was seen as the moral teacher and the embodiment of human ideals in liberal thought?

Renan begins his *Life of Jesus* by placing Jesus in the history of the world in a kind of evolutionary framework. He says that humans distinguish themselves from the animals by being religious. He traces the beliefs in sorcerers in Oceania to the degeneration of the "hideous scenes of butchery" in the ancient religion of Mexico. The African peoples did not go beyond fetishism and the belief of material objects and their supernatural powers. Although the civilizations of China, Babylonia, and Egypt represented some progress, their contributions to human civilization were not important. For him, the religions of Babylonia and Syria never "disengaged themselves from a substratum of strange sensuality," and these religions continued to be "schools of immorality" and "only threw into the world millions of amulets and charms."[35] Although Renan does not explicitly discuss the sexuality of the natives, the sexual overtones in his condemnation of the world's other religions cannot be mistaken. Renan then goes

on to contrast these religions with the soul, faith, liberty, sincerity, and devotion of Christianity, which emerged out of the two races—the Aryans and the Semites—with the Aryans finally superseding the Semites.

With such a highly charged racial and sexual rhetoric, Renan's "Jesus" fits the projected image of a self-controlled, restrained, and morally superior bourgeois gentleman. In Renan's description, "an infinite charm was exhaled from his person," and he showed an amiable character. There was a common spirit felt among his followers, and the brotherhood of men, as sons of God, was seen as having moral consequences. Jesus demanded perfection, beyond the duties of the Mosaic law, and espoused the Christian virtues of "humility, pardon, charity, abnegation, and self-denial."[36] He preached about loving and forgiving one's enemies, being merciful, giving alms, doing good works, and showing kindness and charity to others. With such refined and sweet qualities, Jesus was celebrated and loved by many around him. But Renan says that Jesus never allowed human affection to interfere with his ministry and calling.

In one particularly telling passage that touches on Jesus' sexuality, Renan writes:

> Jesus never married. All his power of loving expended itself on what he considered his heavenly vocation. The extremely delicate sentiment which one observes in his manner towards women did not interfere with the exclusive devotion he cherished for his idea. Like Francis d'Assisi and Francis de Sales, he treated as sisters the women who threw themselves into the same work as he did; he had his Saint Clare, and his Françoise de Chantal. However, it is probable that they loved himself better than his work; he was certainly more beloved than loving. As happens frequently in the case of very lofty natures, his tenderness of heart transformed itself into an infinite sweetness, a vague poetry, a universal charm.[37]

Renan's Jesus sublimated his sexual desire to pursue his real vocation. Even his relations with the women of doubtful character, though free and intimate, were of an entirely moral nature and a means to carry out the will of the Father. Jesus evolved a religious ethic based not on outward behavior, but on the purification of the individual human heart. He was contented with praying, meditating, and maintaining a close relation with God. The Jesus that is inscribed on the pages of *Life of Jesus* is not value-neutral or scientifically reconstructed from the Gospels, but is heavily imbued with the bourgeois values and morality of Renan's high French culture.

While Renan's best-selling *Life of Jesus* attracted a large audience, Ritschl's liberal understanding of Christology cast a long shadow on German theology. Karl Barth charged liberal Protestant thought in general and Ritschl in particular as "the very epitome of the national-liberal German bourgeois of the age of Bismarck."[38] Ritschl believed that Jesus was the founder of the perfect religion, in contrast to all other religions. He regarded Judaism as politically nationalistic and Buddhism as a kind of cosmology which does not balance the ethical and religious aspects of faith. These non-Christian religions are secondary and incomplete, for the life of Jesus provides the source for the knowledge of God:

> Christianity, then, is the monotheistic, completely spiritual and ethical religion, which, based on the life of its Author as Redeemer and as Founder of the Kingdom of God, consists in the freedom of the children of God, involves the impulse to conduct from the motive of love, aims at the moral organization of mankind, and grounds blessedness on the relationship of sonship to God, as well as on the Kingdom of God.[39]

Ritschl sought to combine the historical critical study of the New Testament with his dogmatic theological interests to present the Christian faith intelligibly within the context of nineteenth-century German thought. His Jesus is a moral exemplar, who embodies the highest ideals of human life. Christians should strive for Christian perfection, which corresponds to the example set by Jesus himself. In his instruction on Christian life, Ritschl commends the virtues of obedience to God, humility, patience, fidelity to one's vocation, self-control and conscientiousness, and love of one's neighbor.[40] Such a morally superior, diligent, and self-denying Jesus met the ideals of the German bourgeoisie, who were playing an important role in the expanding power of Prussia, a political move that Ritschl supported.

Ritschl devoted much of his last decade to studying the history of pietism and included an interesting comparison of Catholic piety with Protestant piety under the influences of Lutheranism and Calvinism. He had a lengthy and detailed exposition of Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs, which he said epitomized the Catholic approach. He noted Bernard's use of erotic language, such as kissing the Lord's feet, hands, and mouth, to describe the union between Christ and the individual soul. Bernard described the love for God as sensuous, passionate, and powerful. Just as Luther disapproved of Bernard's interpretation of the Song of Songs, Ritschl wrote that this perspective on the love of Christ was from the very beginning alien to Protestant piety. He said that this kind of mystical union might be expected of monks who did not have to face the temptations of the secular world, but Protestant Christians had to conduct their everyday life through their trust in God and in the redemption of their sin and guilt. Thus, for Ritschl, Catholic piety allowed for more "sentimental pathos" and "sentimental desire" for the unity of the spirit with Christ, while Protestant piety, influenced by Lutheran and Calvinism, tended to be more austere and ascetic because of a different understanding of grace. He wrote: "The certainty of reconciliation as it is expressed in trust in God is the necessary presupposition of sanctification for the protestant Christian, whereas for the Catholics the enjoyment of redemption in tender intercourse with the redeemer is a possible appendage to their sanctification."[41]

In Britain, the theological climate was quite different from that on the European continent; British theologians had not produced texts as influential about the life of Jesus as had Renan, Strauss, and Schweitzer. But this does not mean that they were not concerned about the historical-critical study of the Bible. In fact, one of the dominant concerns in Anglican theology at the turn of the twentieth century was the Incarnation, as theologians tried to harmonize the

Christ of dogma with the picture of Jesus presented by the historical study of Scriptures. John Robert Seeley was credited with producing the first English book on the life of Jesus, *Ecce Homo: A Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ*, published in 1865. Seeley had the model of the British Empire in mind when he talked about the kingdom of God and the ministry of Jesus. Emphasizing the royalty of Jesus, he argued that Jesus was the founder and legislator of a new theocracy, a new Christian Commonwealth. Through obedience to his laws and teachings, his followers can become subjects or citizens of the Christian republic.[42] Although this Christian Commonwealth is universal and open to all, Seeley believed that human beings are not all equal and gifted. He upheld the authority of the father over the child, the husband over the wife, and the master over the slave. He also justified British colonial rule in India by arguing that the Indians were not capable of ruling themselves and would revert to instability and anarchy if the British left.[43]

Writing less than a decade after the British suppression of the formidable Indian national struggle in 1857, Seeley portrayed Jesus as an enlightened king; Jesus had royal pretensions and power, yet used them with patience and restraint. Seeley wrote: "For the noblest and most amiable thing that can be seen is power mixed with gentleness, the reposing, self-restraining attitude of strength."[44] Jesus was also full of sympathy and appreciation, and his combination of greatness and self-sacrifice had great appeal to his followers. Jesus did not win them over by power and might, but through moral example, benevolence, and the relief of their suffering. Just as the British did not conquer India, as Seeley would argue, but ruled over the Indians because of the Brits' alleged innate superiority, he argued that "in Christ's monarchy no force was used, though all power was at command; the obedience of his servants became in the end, though not till after his departure, absolutely unqualified."[45]

Seeley discussed the pursuit of pleasure and bodily gratification in Jesus' legislation for the new kingdom. He said the sensualist would make bodily comfort and pleasure his goal for life while forgetting that he also possesses the soul. The Stoics and the ascetics, on the other hand, seek discipline and coercion of the body. Seeley argued that Jesus did not deprecate the life of the body since he had healed the sick, attended weddings and banquets, and sometimes been accused, along with his disciples, of indulgent behaviors. Yet Jesus directed followers' attention to seek the kingdom of God first and not in worldly pursuits. Temperance and moderation are necessary to safeguard against what Seeley called sensualism and excessive pursuit of pleasure.[46]

At the end of the nineteenth century, Anglican theologians were preoccupied with the issue of Incarnation, prompted partly because of the theories of evolution and partly because of the critical study of the Bible. Commenting on that particular era of Anglican theology, Arthur Michael Ramsey remarks: "The Incarnation was the centre of a theological scheme concerning nature and man, in which Christ is both the climax of nature and history and the supernatural restorer of mankind."[47] Charles Gore's Bampton Lectures, published as *The*

Incarnation of the Son of God in 1891, laid down some of the basic questions that were explored over the next several decades. Gore was concerned with the question, How could the fully human Jesus be the incarnated Son of God? Gore went to great lengths to defend the full humanity of Jesus and dismissed any form of docetism: "He passed through all stages of a human development, willing with a human will, perceiving with human perceptions, feeling with human feelings."[48] Defending passionately the doctrine of Christ's two natures, Gore maintained that God the divine Creator humbled himself to take the form of the creaturely life of humanity.

Gore and his contemporary theologians were more interested, however, in the preconsciousness of Jesus in their kenotic theory of incarnation than in the embodiment of a fully enfleshed Jesus. The debate focused on the idealistic discussion of whether Jesus had to give up his divine knowledge and consciousness when he assumed the personality and nature of a human being. Gore insisted that Jesus is fully human with human consciousness, the perfect exemplar of what humankind should be: "We contemplate Jesus Christ, the Son of man, in the sinlessness, the perfection, the breath of His manhood, and in Him we find the justification of our highest hopes for man."[49] Jesus' sinlessness was seen in his exercise of moral freedom over temptations, which include lust of the flesh, worldliness, and pride. Jesus is the perfect example for sinners, for he overcomes "the tyranny of passions, the disorder of faculties, the inward taint and weakness."[50] Once again, the body, desire, and passion were seen as obstacles and hindrances that needed to be suppressed in order to become a perfect human.

As I have shown, the taboo of Jesus' sexuality in the nineteenth-century quest of the historical Jesus served not only to discipline individual sexual behavior, but also to maintain racial boundaries and cultural imperialism to facilitate the expansion of Europe. Jesus' sexed body provided a provocative site for the inscription and projection of powerful myths about sexuality, race, gender, and colonial desire. By emphasizing the humanity of Jesus and touting the superiority of Christianity as an ethical religion, the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie linked human perfection to the "cultivation of the self." In contrast to the sexualized natives and the lower classes, Jesus was seen as exemplifying bourgeois ideals: controlling his passions, managing his desires, and sublimating his bodily needs. Such ethical demands guaranteed the hygiene, purity, and health of the bourgeois body.

While I appreciate the efforts of gay, lesbian, and queer theologians in breaking the taboo about the sexuality of Jesus, I have argued that the control of the body and sexuality must be consistently placed in its larger social, economic, and political contexts. For me, a transgressive re-imagining of the sexuality of Jesus calls for the simultaneous emancipation of multiple Others: the sexual Other, the Racial and Ethnic Other, and the Religious Other. This can only be done through a vigorous analysis of how Christianity's most powerful symbol—Jesus—has been deployed to provide religious sanction for heteronormativity, capitalism, and colonialism in the past and new forms of oppression in the present.

NOTES

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PART 3

Gender, Race, and Sexual Identities