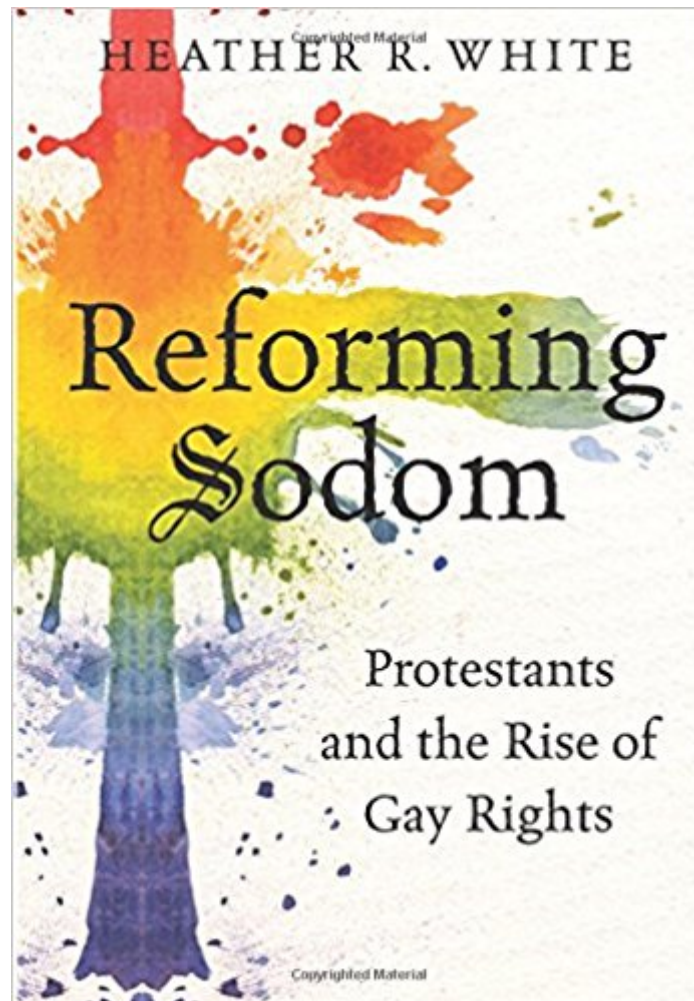


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Reforming Sodom: Protestants And The Rise Of Gay Rights



Synopsis

With a focus on mainline Protestants and gay rights activists in the twentieth century, Heather R. White challenges the usual picture of perennial adversaries with a new narrative about America's religious and sexual past. White argues that today's antigay Christian traditions originated in the 1920s when a group of liberal Protestants began to incorporate psychiatry and psychotherapy into Christian teaching. A new therapeutic orthodoxy, influenced by modern medicine, celebrated heterosexuality as God-given and advocated a compassionate "cure" for homosexuality. White traces the unanticipated consequences as the therapeutic model, gaining popularity after World War II, spurred mainline church leaders to take a critical stance toward rampant antihomosexual discrimination. By the 1960s, a vanguard of clergy began to advocate for homosexual rights. White highlights the continued importance of this religious support to the consolidating gay and lesbian movement. However, the ultimate irony of the therapeutic orthodoxy's legacy was its adoption, beginning in the 1970s, by the Christian Right, which embraced it as an age-old tradition to which Americans should return. On a broader level, White challenges the assumed secularization narrative in LGBT progress by recovering the forgotten history of liberal Protestants' role on both sides of the debates over orthodoxy and sexual identity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a very timely book, given that this year's LGBT History Month is about people who have made the leap of faith. There is very little material available on them so this book fills a gap

with much needed information. Judging by the extensive footnotes, the author has clearly done her homework. The author dispels two myths: 1) that Christianity since its inception condemned homosexuality. In fact, it wasn't until the 1940s that the word "homosexual" was used in the RSV to translate words that never meant that in the past. Evangelicals regarded even this translation as "liberal" and their New International Version (not so much an accurate translation as a document to back up fundamentalism) quickly replaced even the King James Bible. 2) many clergy and other religious leaders worked tirelessly, long before Stonewall, to further the rights of gay and lesbian people. An early pioneer of pastoral counselling was Henry Fosdick. He introduced it as something similar to the Roman Catholic confessional and was stumped when his first client was a gay young man. He consulted with others and eventually came to the conclusion that what was needed was unconditional acceptance. This was in contrast to psychologists who worked in the military with the aim of weeding out homosexuals. Although English, Derrick Sherwin-Bailey's work crossed the Atlantic. His work on biblical texts was the beginning of the dismantling of the power of the "lobber texts." It's a supreme irony that a judge used this text to justify his sentencing of someone – he seemed unaware that Bailey was arguing in the other direction. And what happened to the First Amendment about separating the state and judiciary?) from religion?

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