



Recruiting Young Love: How Christians Talk about Homosexuality

Mark D. Jordan

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In the view of many Christians, the teenage years are simultaneously the most dangerous and the most promising. At the very moment when teens are trying to establish a sense of identity and belonging, they are beset by temptation on all sides—from the pressure of their peers to the nihilism and materialism of popular culture. Add the specter of homosexuality to the mix, and you’ve got a situation ripe for worry, sermonizing, and exploitation.

In *Recruiting Young Love*, Mark D. Jordan explores more than a half century of American church debate about homosexuality to show that even as the main lesson—homosexuality is bad, teens are vulnerable—has remained constant, the arguments and assumptions have changed remarkably. At the time of the first Kinsey Report, in 1948, homosexuality was simultaneously condemned and little discussed—a teen struggling with same-sex desire would have found little specific guidance. Sixty years later, church rhetoric has undergone a radical shift, as silence has given way to frequent, public, detailed discussion of homosexuality and its perceived dangers. Along the way, churches have quietly adopted much of the language and ideas of modern sexology, psychiatry, and social reformers—deploying it, for example, to buttress the credentials of anti-gay “deprogramming” centers and traditional gender roles.

Jordan tells this story through a wide variety of sources, including oral histories, interviews, memoirs, and even pulp novels; the result is a fascinating window onto the never-ending battle for the teenage soul.

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