

# Bibliography for an Exploration of Spiritual Sexuality

Anand, Margo

*The Art of Everyday Ecstasy*, 1998

"Ecstasy is an often misunderstood word and I admire Margot Anand for broadening its definition. I recommend *The Art of Everyday Ecstasy* to anyone who wants to realize their ecstatic potential for living a life in which the spirit and everyday experience are intricately interwoven."

--Deepak Chopra

Bonheim, Jalaja

*The Hunger for Ecstasy, Fulfilling the Soul's Need for Passion and Intimacy*, 2001

In *The Hunger for Ecstasy*, Jalaja Bonheim explores what keeps us from living a spiritually fulfilling life. In our natural pursuit of ecstasy-that far-from-sinful state of rapture without which we cannot thrive-we often don't realize what it is we're chasing, and thus end up with shallow attainments: a new pair of shoes, a fast car, a meaningless one-time sexual encounter. In our materially abundant but spiritually starved culture, it's easy to be misguided. Jalaja provides the know-how and the discipline necessary to direct your desire toward that which will best nourish your soul: the divine.

Too often living a sacred life has meant checking your spiritual self at the door of the bedroom. Jalaja analyzes the traditional western understanding of the divine, sterile male and encourages you to dispense with conceptions of God that might cause you to feel shameful about your sexuality. In easy-to-understand terms, Jalaja shows how sex indeed is a yearning for the infinite, and she provides practical tips on how to experience beautiful, sacred sex in the context of an ecstatic life. Far from urging casual sex, Bonheim celebrates commitment and encourages you to nurture a long-time relationship, including marriage, while recognizing it doesn't have to last forever to be sacred-nor should you be wondering if it will.

Cooley, Paula; Farmer, Sharon; Ross, Mary Ellen

*Embodied Love, Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values*, 1987

This is a classic text of essays on feminism, love, and spirituality. Its contributors make up a list of some of the most influential feminists voices in religion. Of particular note is chapter eight, "Relational Love: A Feminist Christian Vision." In this essay, author Linell E. Cady argues for themes that have come to characterize feminist view of love: mutuality, relationality, and eros.

Douglas, Kelly Brown

*Sexuality and the black Church, a Womanist Perspective*, Orbis Books 1999

This book tackles the "taboo" subject of sexuality that has long been avoided by the Black church and community. Douglas argues that this view of Black sexuality has interfered with constructive responses to the AIDS crisis and teenage pregnancies, fostered intolerance of sexual diversity, frustrated healthy male/female relationships, and rendered Black and womanist theologians silent on sexual issues.

Eberley, Ronald

*The Unnatural Law of Celibacy, One Married Man's Struggle to become a Roman Catholic Priest*, 2002

"Ron Eberley is a 66-year-old father of five who at 52 began his studies for the Roman Catholic priesthood....But four years into his seminary training he met Jan, who was studying to become a pastoral minister, and they fell in love. Ron had to leave the seminary program, but he continued and completed his theological studies...Ron has never given up the hope to become a married priest. There is a provision in Canon Law whereby the Church can grant a dispensation to a married man to receive the Sacrament of Orders. Numerous Protestant clergymen have been allowed to become priests and remain married on this basis. But Ron discovered that when a life-long Catholic seeks this dispensation all lines of communication to Rome through his local bishop are closed. In light of the critical shortage of priests and the terrible pedophile scandals plaguing the celibate priesthood, this closure, this deafness, this stonewalling is itself scandalous."

Eisler, Riane

*Sacred Pleasure, Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body, New Paths to Power and Love*, 1996

From Sumer to ancient Athens and Rome, medieval Europe, the Islamic world and traditional China, rigidly male-dominated societies, argues feminist historian Eisler (*The Chalice and the Blade*), relied on pain or the fear of it to maintain hierarchical relations of dominance and submission. Patriarchy, she believes, represses sexuality, distorts the natural bonds of erotic pleasure and love between men and women and diminishes women's status. Drawing on archaeological evidence and Paleolithic and Neolithic art, Eisler argues that prehistoric societies were relatively free of the domination, exploitation and misogyny that have marked Western societies up to the present. She emphasizes that Christianity's hostility toward sex and, particularly, women's sexuality has conditioned men and women to accept coercion and repression. Discussing abusive child-rearing practices, genital mutilation, natural childbirth, abortion, sex education, the men's movement, AIDS and much else, Eisler outlines a new sexual ethic that aligns pleasure with our capacity to feel and act empathically. Her visionary, passionate scholarship is a revealing psychosexual exploration of love and power relations.

Ellison, Marvin M.

**Erotic Justice, A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality, 1996**

"The crisis of sexuality is properly located in the eroticizing of the dominant/subordinate social relations and in the distortion of love by racism, sexism and other injustices. Sexuality and the quality of life are dialectically related to the wider social order. All aspects of human life, including eroticism, are shaped by power specifically gender inequities, race supremacy, classism, and cultural elitism. A constructive social ethic must keep this person-structural connection in focus." –Marvin M. Ellison

Farley, Margaret

**Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics, 2006**

This long-awaited book by one of American Christianity's foremost ethicists proposes a framework for sexual ethics whereby justice is the criterion for all loving, including love that is related to sexual activity and relationships. It begins with historical and cross-cultural explorations, and then addresses the large questions of embodiment, gender, and sexuality. Following this is a normative chapter that delineates the justice framework for sexual ethics. Though the particular focus is Christian sexual ethics, the framework is broad enough to have relevance for multiple traditions of sexual ethics. The remaining chapters focus on specific issues in sexual ethics, including same-sex relationships, marriage and family, divorce and second marriage, celibacy, and sex and its negativities.

Ferder, Fran and Heagle, John,

**Tender Fires, The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality, 2002**

Ferder and Heagle, therapists and codirectors of TARA Therapy and Renewal Associates, a Catholic psychotherapy center near Seattle, have created a fascinating and rare thing: a work that deals unashamedly with sexuality, engages spirituality, and yet is sufficiently discreet so as not to give offense to impressionable young persons. To their credit, they view both sexuality and spirituality in complex and nuanced ways and by no means view the questions that arise as simple.

Fortune, Marie M

**Love Does no Harm, Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us, 1995**

In this straightforward, easily readable guide, Reverend Marie M. Fortune discusses the process of ethical decision-making in intimate relationships. Starting with the premise that "love does no harm," Fortune offers a set of guidelines that can assist people of all ages in making sexual choices. But before turning to the guidelines themselves, *Love Does No Harm* includes broad reflections on why sexual choices are difficult, what social and cultural forces make them more difficult than they might otherwise be, and how the individual can choose to express her or his sexuality in ways that are pleasurable, intimate, and sensitive to the needs and rights of others. *Love Does No Harm* makes no assumptions about individuals' age, sexual orientation, or the type of intimate relationship in which they are involved.

Fox, Matthew,

**Creation Spirituality, 1991**

For those new to the works of Matthew Fox, and for those eager to learn his thoughts after his Vatican-ordered public silence, comes this introduction to creation spirituality--Fox's framework for a far-reaching spirituality of the Americas.

Passionate and provocative, Fox uncovers the ancient tradition of a creation-centered spirituality that melds Christian mysticism with the contemporary struggle for social justice, feminism, and environmentalism.

Basic to Fox's notion of creation spirituality is the gift of awe--a mystical response to creation and the first step toward transformation. Awe prompts indignation at the exploitation and destruction of the earth's people and resources. Awe leads to action.

Showing how we can learn from each other, Fox's spirituality wedds the healing and liberation found in both North and South America. *Creation Spirituality* challenges readers of every religious and political persuasion to unite in a new vision through which we learn to honor the earth and the people who inhabit it as the gift of a good and just creator.

**Whee! Wee! We! All the Way Home 1976**

One of Matthew Fox's earliest books, this title explores the importance of ecstasy in the spiritual life. Fox considers the distinction between "natural" ecstasies (like sex) and "tactical" ecstasies (like meditation); he goes on to consider that a truly authentic mysticism must be sensuous in its orientation, so to cultivate the maximum amount of ecstasy for the maximum amount of people. From there he spins out to consider how we need a communal mysticism -- in his words: "We shall become ecstatic together or else we'll become extinct together." Few spiritual authors are so honest about the importance of ecstasy/sensuality in life--or in mysticism. Years ahead of its time when first published in 1976, this book is still bold and relevant today. Perfect for anyone who thinks mysticism needs to get out of the head and into the body.

Gilligan, Carol

**The Birth of Pleasure, 2002**

A psychologist's fine-tuned ear and a scholar's penchant for illuminating key ideas with precise literary citations enable Carol Gilligan to trace love's path in *The Birth of Pleasure*. Her extensive research on children's communications and couples in crisis has revealed a rather disturbing truism: a child's inborn ability to love freely and live authentically gets thoroughly squelched by patriarchal structures. She shows how daughters' voices are systematically quieted, sons are shamed into masculinity, and those who pursue "inappropriate" knowledge or rapacious expressions are punished.

Gudorf, Cristine,

**Body, Sex and Pleasure, Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics, 1994**

Perhaps no other single moral issue today is as hotly contested, or as divisive, as sexuality. Offering a bold and hopeful vision of how Christians - and all people of goodwill - can view this explosive topic, ethicist Christine Gudorf proposes nothing less than a sweeping challenge to traditional Christian teaching on sexual roles, activities, and relationships. Deftly drawing on Scripture, natural law, historical and contemporary Catholic and Protestant theology, the social sciences, and, significantly, the lived experiences of today's women and men, Gudorf presents a carefully crafted and systematic reconstruction of Christian sexual ethics. Her aim, above all, is to engender appreciation, not rejection and shame, of our bodies and our sexuality. Contending that body, sex, and pleasure are divine gifts revealing God's grace, Gudorf emphasizes the need to understand sexual desire as a positive good, a source of love and commitment. She further explores the relationship between sexuality and reproduction, arguing that "procreationism" - the assumption that the sole aim and ultimate end of sexuality must always be offspring - is unjust and oppressive. Written with insight, clarity, and compassion, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure* is a provocative and compelling call to all women and men to reject the damaging influence of body/soul dualism - and, ultimately, to do justice to the Incarnation, the central revelations of Scripture, and human dignity.

Heyward, Carter

**Touching our Strength, The Erotic as Power and the Love of God. 1989**

A leading feminist theologian affirms the sacredness of mutually empowering relationships and sexual pleasure. In *Touching our Strength*, Heyward sets out to make the case for erotic mutuality as a form of liberation. She cuts down the patriarchal understanding of theology and calls for an inversion of social power, using modern lesbian relationships as the ultimate example of equality and sensuality. Throughout this book the author pairs erotic ecstasy with the power of God, claiming in the end that it is only by embracing the Christa (female Christ) as metaphor that cultural justice can be realized.

Holt, Sandra

**Intimacy, Human and Divine, 2001**

Sandra Holt compares our relationship with God with our most intimate relationships with other humans. The book reads as erotic spirituality; the Song of Songs is explored and commentated on, there are quotes from Julian of Norwich, Ignatius and stories from Sandra's own experience.

Hooks, Bell

**Feminism is for Everybody, Passionate Politics, 2000**

In this engaging and provocative volume, bell hooks introduces a popular theory of feminism rooted in common sense and the wisdom of experience. Hers is a vision of a beloved community that appeals to all those committed to equality, mutual respect, and justice.

Hooks applies her critical analysis to the most contentious and challenging issues facing feminists today, including reproductive rights, violence, race, class, and work. With her customary insight and unsparing honesty, hooks calls for a feminism free from divisive barriers but rich with rigorous debate. In language both eye-opening and optimistic, hooks encourages us to demand alternatives to patriarchal, racist, and homophobic culture, and to imagine a different future.

Hooks speaks to all those in search of true liberation, asking readers to take look at feminism in a new light, to see that it touches all lives. Issuing an invitation to participate fully in feminist movement and to benefit fully from it, hooks shows that feminism-far from being an outdated concept or one limited to an intellectual elite--is indeed for everybody.

Jung, Patricia Beattie, Hunt, Mary, Balakrishnan, Radhika

**Good Sex, Feminist Perspectives from the World's Religions, 2001**

This groundbreaking collection of 11 articles by women from eight countries and seven religious traditions challenges male-defined ideas of sexuality that have constricted women by denying them pleasure and autonomous agency and threatening their well-being and, sometimes, lives. The essays critique "dominating forms of inclusivity and blanket generalizations," explore the high price sexuality has exacted of many women, propose "concrete suggestions for social changes, so that women may experience good sex," analyze interpretations of sexuality, and suggest "ways women might faithfully resist normative constructions of their sexuality." While the contributors do not always agree, they do recognize the importance of global and interdisciplinary perspectives and affirm the tension women experience when they work for change from within a repressive tradition.

Kennedy, Eugene

**The Unhealed Wound, The Church and Human Sexuality, 2001**

The Catholic Church has not yet learned to speak gracefully and truthfully about sexuality, according to Eugene Kennedy's *The Unhealed Wound*. Kennedy's book blends history, psychology, theology, and journalistic storytelling in a sophisticated and humane analysis of where and how Catholic teaching about human sexuality has gone wrong. Teaching that flesh and spirit are locked in a battle with each other, the Catholic Church has treated human sexuality as a bane of human existence, not a gift from God. *The Unhealed Wound* argues that Catholicism will have a hard time righting its teachings because so much of its power as an institution depends on keeping its members in "a frightened and dependent state" regarding their own sexual impulses: "This emphasis on power diminishes [Catholicism's] true authority to help ordinary men and women put away childish things and grow up even by small steps.... the way, imperfect but tolerant of failings, we become human." --Michael Joseph Gross

Klein, Marty

**America's War on Sex: The Attack on Law, Lust and Liberty (Sex, Love, and Psychology), 2006**

President George W. Bush says that, "In our free society, people have the right to choose how they live their lives." But our government and the Religious Right are successfully: - censoring what you read, hear, and see; - limiting your access to contraception; - legislating "good moral values;" - brainwashing your kids that God hates premarital sex, and that it ruins lives. The Right has politicized private life, expanding the zone of "public" sexuality. This guarantees policies that will worsen social problems and increase personal anxiety, providing "proof" that sexuality is fundamentally negative--so citizens demand more sex-negative policies. With examples ripped from today's headlines, with brutal honesty and a wicked sense of humor, Marty Klein names names, challenges political hypocrisy, and shows the financial connections between government and conservative religious groups that are systematically taking away your rights. And, in the process, changing American society--forever.

Lawrence, Raymond J.

**Sexual Liberation: The Scandal of Christendom (Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality Series), 2007**

Sex sells, they say, but even today, it is considered forbidden, wrong, or sinful by many in the Western world. This book is an account of the strange ways sexual pleasure has been devalued, even demonized, in the West by the forces of Christendom and its legacy in the modern world. It tells the story of how sex came to be regarded by societies throughout the ages as perverse, sinful, and wrong, and how the motivations of a few have lasted centuries and colored our view of sex and sexuality even today.

McFague, Sally

**Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language**

This book is an eye-opener. The issues surrounding the uses of masculine and feminine metaphors for God can be complicated and emotional, but Sallie McFague tries to keep to the issues of metaphor and theology as suggested in the title. This book was written before her later book "Models of God" which refers back to this one several times. She does a fine job of showing us the power of metaphors to shape our thoughts and practices in religious matters. As a feminist she advocates reform rather than revolution, believing that there is room in the Christian tradition for equality of males and females. She says the governing metaphor of Christianity is liberation. Those who have not yet realized the governing role of metaphors in expressing and shaping our religious thought may find this book unsettling at first, but those who stick with the argument will be enriched. This is a smaller book than "Models of God" and worthy of careful attention.

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey,

**Sensuous Spirituality, Out of Fundamentalism, 1992**

Mollenkott's story is part autobiography of her journey away from fundamentalism and toward self-acceptance as a lesbian feminist, part proclamation of the importance of liberation and diversity within the human family, part a discussion of "interpretive communities" with focus on the les-bi-gay community, and part theological reflection on the role of the erotic in spirituality. Mollenkott enriches her discussion with reference to John Milton's scriptural interpretation in defense of divorce for incompatibility. She also offers a comparison between the "handmaid of the Lord" in Luke's description of Mary and of the handmaids in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* ( LJ 2/1/86). This latter comparison leads to themes of freedom and its power in Mollenkott's analysis, themes that support diversity, sensuousness, and the mystical.

**The Divine Feminine, Biblical Imagery of God as Female, 1983**

This very readable little book, written for the popular audience, provides an extremely helpful resource for those who are struggling with issues of inclusive language and images for deity. Mollenkott does a fine job of summarizing, in brief and understandable terms, some of the present controversies related to gender-language for God. She is clear that the Bible contains "massively more" male-oriented images and language for God, but she subscribes to what she calls the "half-full theory" rather than the "half-empty theory"-meaning that the female images which are in the biblical texts should delight and challenge us with their presence rather than make us mourn their lesser number. Indeed, from Mollenkott's evangelical perspective, the presence of those female images constitutes "a very strong argument" for the inspiration of Scripture exactly because they run so counter to the conscious patriarchy of the cultures in which they arose.

Moore, Thomas,

**The Soul of Sex, Cultivating Life as an Act of Love, 1998**

Thomas Moore has written a number of inspiring books on living a soulful life, including *Care of the Soul* and *Soul Mates*. Now this psychologist, theologian, and former Catholic monk explores the relationship between sex and spirituality in a thoughtful new book, *The Soul of Sex*. We tend to think of sex only as a physical act, Moore writes, or in the context of the role it plays in a relationship. But really, nothing in our everyday lives connects us so readily to our emotions, to our passions and fantasies, to the experience of being outside of ordinary clock time. In short, Moore writes, "nothing has more soul." By tracing the way that beauty, sensuality, pleasure, and eros are represented in history, philosophy, mythology, and religion, Moore hopes to show readers how recognizing the connection between sex and the soul can enrich not just our sexual lives, but our spiritual lives as well.

Nelson, James B

**The Intimate Connection, Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality, 1988**

Nelson's is a fresh work, easy read, yet has depth in his honest self disclosure. As peacemakers men will have to allow intimacy and physical intimacy will be a challenge for we seem to automatically link intimacy with genital sexuality. If we link intimacy with our spirituality we will see again the sexual. Nelson raises the question and starts your thought but does not resolve the tension with a solution. But he serves us by helping us to acknowledge the nature of the problem of men getting to know men in meaningful not competitive ways. Spirit, sex, homophobia, are well defined and he helps create a framework to move from, to move toward peace.

**Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology, 1978**

Nelson, Professor of Christian Ethics, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, addresses theological ethics applied to human sexuality in a readable and beautiful way that sets a standard for Christian discussion of the issues. The book shows that sexuality is as central to our humanity as it is to our love of God. It presents both traditional and unconventional sexuality issues within the context of God's grace. It presents empirical data, ethical method, and theological perspective to help all Christians think constructively about human sexuality. Chapters include: 2. Embodiment in sexual theology; 5. Love and sexual ethics; 7. Morality of sexual variations; 8. Gayness and Homosexuality: Issues for the church; 9. The sexually disenfranchised; 10. The church as sexual community.

Nelson, James B and Longfellow, Sandra

**Sexuality and the Sacred, Sources for Theological Reflection, 1994**

This volume is rooted in two convictions: first, sexuality is far more comprehensive and more fundamental to our existence than simply genital sex, and, second, sexuality is intended by God to be neither incidental nor detrimental to our spirituality but a fully integrated and basic dimension of that spirituality. The authors address what our sexual experience reveals about God, the ways we understand the gospel, and the ways we read scripture and tradition and attempt to live faithfully.

Ryan, Thomas (Ed)

**Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality, 2004**

This small, spirited book, a collection of reflections contributed primarily by the participants of a retreat and edited by its sponsor, an authority on spirituality, examines the role of the human body in the Christian spiritual life. It asks us to recover a conviction of the goodness of our bodies and how God created us so that we can reclaim a positive, healthy attitude toward our individual bodies, toward the social body, the community around us, including the Church, the "earthbody," the body of the natural world, and become spiritually whole.

Spong, John

**Living in Sin: A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality, 1988**

Is celibacy the only moral alternative to marriage? Should the widowed be allowed to form intimate relationships without remarrying? Should the church receive homosexuals into its community and support committed gay and lesbian relationships? Should congregations publicly and liturgically witness and affirm divorces? Should the church's moral standards continue to be set by patriarchal males? Should women be consecrated bishops? Bishop Spong proposes a pastoral response based on scripture and history to the changing realities of the modern world. He calls for a moral vision to empower the church with inclusive teaching about equal, loving, nonexploitative relationships.

Yantzi, Mark

**Sexual Offending and Restoration, 1998**

Yantzi provides new ways to address the pervasive problem of sexual abuse, explaining how to deal compassionately and hopefully with those who offend. He also calls for readers to have similar understanding and compassion toward those who have been victimized by sexual wrongdoing.

Wilson, J. Christian

**Jesus and the Pleasures, 2003**

*Jesus and the Pleasures* explores Jesus and his relationship to the pleasures of human life. Wilson contends that Jesus, fully human, accepted the pleasures of life, and that denying such pleasures runs counter to God's desire that we live abundantly. The pleasures of life are more than fun and amusement—they provide the framework for joy and fulfillment, for living what we call the good life. *Jesus and the Pleasures* shows us that Jesus is the guide who sets the foundation for that framework.

