
“Born Again Is a Sexual Term”: Demons, STDs, and God’s Healing Sperm

Amy DeRogatis

In this article I examine the intersection between sexuality and spirit-filled bodies in American Evangelicalism. I am interested in investigating two issues: the sexual body as a site of spiritual battle and the use of popular science, especially the domain of genetics, as material evidence for this spiritual warfare. Specifically, I trace the increasingly spiritualized framing of marital intercourse in evangelical literature. To follow this trajectory, I highlight the spiritualized dangers of transgressive sexuality as well as the sexualizing of spirituality in evangelical sex manuals and deliverance manuals. This article centers around one text, *Holy Sex: God’s Purpose and Plan for Our Sexuality*, whose authors’ contend that sexually transmitted diseases are, in fact, demons lodged in genetic material that can be transferred through body fluids and bloodlines. The assertions about biology and demonic affliction made throughout the book are extreme and would be rejected by most

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readers of mainstream evangelical sex manuals. I argue that this book, though marginal, is not an irrelevant text. It reflects deep-seated anxieties about sexual bodies, spiritual concerns, and disease. Idiosyncratic though it may seem, *Holy Sex* taps into wider uncertainties about the spiritual vulnerability of the physical body found in contemporary evangelical literature.

EVERYTHING WENT TO HELL for the Reverend Ted Haggard in fall 2006. The senior pastor of the 14,000-member New Life Church, based in Colorado Springs, CO, was fired from his post after a former male prostitute, Mike Jones, accused him of paying for sex on a monthly basis for three years. He also claimed that Haggard used methamphetamines during the liaisons. Haggard, who had fought vigorously for a ban on same-sex marriage in the most recent state elections, denied the accusations at first. But, three months after the story broke, Haggard resigned as president of the National Association of Evangelicals, a group that reportedly represents thirty million born-again Christians. In a public letter to New Life members, he stated “The fact is I am guilty of sexual immorality. And I take responsibility for the entire problem. I am a deceiver and a liar There’s a part of my life that is so repulsive and dark that I have been warring against it for all of my adult life.”¹

Evangelicals, sexuality, drugs, dishonesty, and warring against the “repulsive and dark” part of life: the Ted Haggard scandal had it all. After three weeks of intensive therapy, Haggard declared himself “completely heterosexual” and confirmed that his sexual contact with men was limited to previous encounters with his accuser. His supporters sympathized with his struggles and admired his long-suffering wife. His opponents delighted in pointing out the hypocrisy and mocked his bold claim to be heterosexual in a matter of three short weeks.² Yet, for Haggard and his congregants, redemption was possible. For many

¹ The *Denver Post* ran regular articles on the Haggard case between November 6, 2006, and February 9, 2007. The articles are accessible through <http://denverpost.com>. The quotes are taken directly from the *Denver Post* articles. Haggard’s evangelical peers quickly responded. An oversight committee of local clergy reviewed the allegations and sent him to a “restoration” program in Phoenix, AZ, run by two evangelical pastors: Jack Hayford of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, and Tommy Barnett of First Assembly of God in Phoenix, AZ. The high-profile James Dobson of Focus on the Family—a national evangelical group based in the same city as New Life Church—was invited to participate but declined.

² Some familiar with the evangelical Ex-Gay movement, whether or not they agree with reparative therapy to “cure” people of their homosexuality, point out that “reprogramming” takes a lifetime; there is no quick fix, even for the most ardent believer (Erzen 2006). Erzen outlines the spectrum of beliefs in reparative therapy within the ex-Gay movement.

people reading this letter outside of the charismatic wing of evangelicalism, warring against a “dark side” provided an apt metaphor for his psychological turmoil and subsequent seedy behavior. Not so for Haggard and his constituents. For them, Haggard was harassed by real demons of sexual deviance, dark and repulsive forces he had been battling his entire life; Haggard conceded their presence and influence by calling himself “a liar and a deceiver,” names commonly attributed to Satan. There was nothing metaphorical about it. Haggard was ill, and he needed to be restored to spiritual health. In other words, he needed to be “delivered.”³

In this article I examine the intersection between sexuality and spirit-filled bodies in American Evangelicalism. I am interested in investigating two issues: the sexual body as a site of spiritual battle and the use of popular science, especially the domain of genetics, as material evidence for this spiritual warfare. Specifically, I will trace attitudes found in evangelical literature to an increasingly spiritualized framing of marital intercourse and to the spiritualized dangers of transgressive sexuality as well as the sexualizing of spirituality. There is a growing tendency within recent evangelical literature to view human sexuality as an opportunity for mystical contact with the demonic or the divine. This article focuses on one extraordinary text, *Holy Sex: God's Purpose and Plan for Our Sexuality*, co-written by Terry Wier and Mark Carruth, which contends that sexually transmitted diseases are, in fact, demons lodged in genetic material that can be transferred through body fluids and bloodlines. The extreme assertions about biology and demonic affliction made throughout the book come from the charismatic wing of evangelicalism, and would, I suggest, be rejected by most readers of mainstream evangelical sex manuals. But rather than dismiss *Holy Sex* as a marginal, irrelevant text, I argue that it is a book that

³ One of the participants in the “restoration,” the Reverend Jack Hayford founded The Church on the Way in Yan Nuys, CA, and The King's College and Seminary. He has written dozens of books and hundreds of hymns. In the media reporting about Haggard's restoration, there was no direct link made to deliverance, although Hayford affirmed that prayer and counseling was part of the private sessions. It is reasonable to assume that deliverance was part of the restoration based on information about his ministry posted on his web site. There are three examples of deliverance listed on his web site. First, under related ministries Hayford lists Cleansing Stream Ministries and explains it “is committed to partnering with pastors and churches in teaching and training leaders and maturing believers in personal cleansing, deliverance, and spiritual warfare so they can be released to serve, minister, and disciple others in the Body of Christ.” www.cleansingstream.org. Second, under “The Library” and then “Frequently Asked Questions,” Hayford answers: “What is a demon?” and provides several links to resources about the influence of evil spirits on believers. Third, under “OSPN” (Online School of Pastoral Nurture), there is a sample page of “Pastor Hayford on Deliverance: How the Ministry of Deliverance is to be Conveyed” http://www.jackhayford.com/ospn_sample_pages/deliverance.html.

reflects deep-seated anxieties about sexual bodies, spiritual concerns, and disease. Idiosyncratic though it may seem, *Holy Sex* taps into wider uncertainties about the spiritual vulnerability of the physical body.

I begin by reviewing a recent turn in evangelical sex manuals toward spiritualizing marital sex. Unlike evangelical sex manuals published in the 1970s and 1980s that provided a biblical basis for sexual enjoyment within marriage (as well as helpful tips), a new generation of writers now focuses on the heightened spiritual experience of Christian sex. I will then explore how transgressive sex invites communion with the demonic through an examination of Protestant deliverance literature published over the past fifty years. In this section I highlight the sexual body as a site for spiritual battle. Finally, I will consider the relationship between sexually transmitted diseases and demons as an expression of the conviction that the truth of sin is inscribed in the flesh. The routing out of sexual sin to protect the vulnerable Christian body has become far more complicated than curbing transgressive sexual acts. Cleansing the body, according to *Holy Sex*, requires a thorough investigation of the sexual history of ancestors, an understanding that the demonically polluted body is genetically damaged, a confession, and purification through sexual rebirth in Christ.

SEXUALITY AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

This is not, of course, the first time in Christian history that demons have been connected with human sexuality (Brakke 2006; Frankfurter 2006). Diseased and sexually disordered bodies remained closely connected to both sin and evil throughout the history of Protestantism. Puritans and other early modern Christians, for example, viewed the body as porous and the female sexual body as particularly vulnerable to demonic penetration (Reiss 1999; Stephens 2002; Zika 2003). Indeed, well into the late twentieth century, the close relationship between physical and spiritual ailments has been expressed by many conservative Christians who believed that AIDS was God's punishment for sexual sins. Advances in scientific knowledge about the human sexual body did not necessarily overturn this perception; in fact, they tended to reinforce it. One needs to look no further than the debate regarding a biological basis of sexual orientation and the search for a "gay gene." Dean Hamer, for example, claimed that a DNA marker for being homosexual might be found on the X chromosome (of the twenty-third pair). Other researchers such as Simon LeVay theorized that the hypothalamus of gay men was similar to that of women (Davis 2008). For the majority of evangelicals who vigorously argued that

homosexuality is a lifestyle choice, homosexuality as a biological, in-born, non-voluntary act presented challenges to the view that heterosexuality is normative and according to God's design for humanity. This has led evangelical leaders toward what one scholar calls a "creative engagement" with culture through the use of molecular biology to legitimate their worldviews by both accepting and rejecting scientific theory and practice (Jenkins 2007: 1695). But for others, like the authors of *Holy Sex*, a biological basis for sexual orientation not only explains *why* people make sinful choices, but also provides material evidence that there is something deeply (i.e., genetically) disordered about people who participate in transgressive sex (McLaren 1999: 201; Mohler 2007). In a theological context in which homosexuality is contrary to God's design, popular science has not dispelled views regarding sinful sexual bodies and demonic influence: Instead it has provided a new vocabulary and the material evidence to identify evil—it resides in "damaged" chromosomes—or in the deep recesses of our brains, that is, in the most fundamental and intimate aspects of our biology.

In *Holy Sex*, Wier and Carruth argue that a sexually polluted body exhibits demonic corruption through the presence of disease and that individuals might unknowingly carry demonic genes inherited from sinful ancestors. Why at this point in time is it useful for some Protestant evangelicals to connect spiritual warfare with the sexual body? In part, this is due to the failure of the abstinence movement in the United States. In recent years, the emphasis in the abstinence movement has progressed from rejecting premarital sex to warning against the dangers of *any* physical or emotional contact without the security of a marriage promise. Sex counselors, Christian therapists, and doctors have made the case that a "broken heart" is potentially emotionally damaging enough to lead the most virtuous adolescent down the path of physical and spiritual demise (Meeker 2002; Moslener 2009: 83–85).⁴

More important, perhaps, are the broader cultural questions regarding the meaning and significance of decoding the human genome.⁵ The mapping of the human genome allows for further research in determining causes and cures for genetic disorders and disease, but it also raises

⁴ According to Sara Moslener, Meg Meeker, a Michigan-based Christian pediatrician, argues that the emotional trauma of premarital sexuality is so severe that it can cause depression akin to posttraumatic stress disorder and in some cases self-hatred and suicide. In Meeker's practice, she counsels patients to become "secondary virgins" to purify the body and spirit (Moslener 2009: 83–85).

⁵ A genome is all of the DNA in an organism, including its genes. The thirteen-year Human Genome Project (HGP) coordinated by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Institutes of Health was completed in 2003. The project identified 25,000 genes in human DNA.

troubling ethical and theological questions about locating the truth of one's identity and value in one's genetic make-up (Hubbard 1990; Asch 1994; Blumberg 1994; Mansfield et al. 1999).⁶ Taking this view to its logical extreme, one could argue that who you are and how you behave in the world is determined not by your own will (or choice) but by the ultimate authority of your genes. Following this logic, the hidden truth of an individual's identity is coded into the most basic aspects of human physical being at the moment of conception and now is discernable under a microscope. If a genetic sexual "abnormality" can be explained but not changed by science, perhaps religious intervention is in order. Not surprisingly, *Holy Sex* suggests that for some there is a short leap from being genetically "damaged" to being genetically "demonized." The course of treatment in such cases begins with religious confessions, as we saw with the Reverend Haggard.

In order to understand *Holy Sex* within the context of American evangelicalism and in relationship to these larger cultural questions about identity, we must examine two distinct forms of evangelical literature: sex manuals and deliverance writings. Both types of literature tackle the problem of the relationship between spirit and flesh. *Holy Sex* purports to be a book about Christianity and sexuality; it shares some common themes, approaches, and assumptions with mainstream evangelical sex manuals. The focus of *Holy Sex*, however, is on the dangers of transgressive sexuality, specifically the evil that encourages the behavior, and in this it resembles deliverance writings. Readers of *Holy Sex* learn that the human body (including its genetic make-up) provides an arena for the battle between good and evil, which the authors describe and define in sexual terms. The human body can either be filled with the Holy Spirit or defiled by demonic residents.

EVANGELICAL SEX MANUALS: FROM SEXUAL TECHNIQUE TO SPIRITUALIZING SEX

Evangelical sex manuals published over the past fifty years provide biblically based alternatives to the booming industry in secular sex manuals. In form and content evangelical sex manuals are fairly

⁶ Disability activists have become increasingly concerned regarding genetic testing and counseling. Many argue that there is an implicit eugenics program underlining the concern to identify "normal" and "abnormal" genes. For example, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists changed its recommended guidelines in January 2007 to encourage all pregnant women (not just those over thirty-five years) to undergo genetic screening for chromosomal irregularities such as Down syndrome. Recent studies have shown that ninety percent of women who test positive for carrying a baby with Down syndrome terminate the pregnancy.

uniform, providing information about the physiology of sexual intimacy while emphasizing the sanctity and physical pleasures of intercourse within Christian marriage. The authors of best-selling books, such as Tim and Beverly LaHaye (*The Act of Marriage* [1978]), Clifford and Joyce Penner (*The Gift of Sex* [1981]), Ed and Gaye Wheat (*Intended for Pleasure* [1997]), and Douglass E. Rosenau (*A Celebration of Sex for Newlyweds* [2002]), promote their manuals over against secular sex publications, yet they freely borrow social and scientific information from them when it supports their theological and social goals (DeRogatis 2005).

The authors go to great lengths to link scripturally sound desires to “natural” sexual behaviors. Religious prescriptions regarding appropriate and transgressive behavior are enacted through the sexual body. In general, it is fair to say that mainstream evangelical sex manuals support conservative Christian values of heterosexual marriage and family by using a literalist interpretation of Scripture to reinforce these norms. The writers agree on the value and beauty of sexual intimacy between husbands and wives. Sexual intercourse, they explain, is created by God, articulated through Scripture, and requires practice throughout marriage to achieve pleasure. When evangelicals turn their attention to God in the bedroom, the authors claim, the carnal joys possible between husband and wife are endless. Similarly, the intimate union (sometimes termed “unitive function” or “unification”) that can only occur through sexual pleasure between husband and wife brings a couple closer to God’s plan for creation. As Rosenau explains, “God has a fantastic formula for your sex life. But great love-making is not for the immature and unskilled. Only Christ-like grown-ups in a committed marriage can make love as the creator designed!” (Rosenau 2002: x). LaHaye, Wheat, and others affirm that when practiced properly, born-again Christians have great sex.

In the past decade, a new group of writers has emerged seeking to balance out the literature on evangelicalism and sexuality. Authors such as Tim Allen Gardner, *Sacred Sex: A Spiritual Celebration of Oneness in Marriage* (2002), C. J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God* (2004), and Ricucci Gary and Betsy Ricucci, *Love that Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace* (2006), insist that evangelicals must discover the spiritual component of sex (Gardner 2002; Mahaney 2004; Ricucci and Riucci 2006). These authors claim indebtedness to the pioneers who taught born-again Christians to enjoy sexual intercourse within marriage but worry now that too much emphasis has been placed on the physical side of marital love. This is a clear distinction from earlier evangelical sex manuals that competed with secular manuals like Alex

Comfort's *The Joy of Sex* (1972) for a share in the sexual technique and methods market. Rather than concentrating on correct technique for sexual satisfaction, the writers urge spouses to consider the mystical possibilities of marital sex, an encounter they assert brings unity between their physical bodies and the divine. Here the relationship between spiritual instruction and erotic enjoyment moves beyond promoting exciting sexual intercourse as God's plan for Christian marriage; the goal instead is a direct encounter with the divine. As Tim Gardner explains in *Sacred Sex*, "Sex really is holy. It's a sacred place shared in the intimacy of marriage. And it's an act of worship, a sacrament of marriage that invites and welcomes the very presence of God. That's the meaning and benefit of holy sex" (Gardner 2002: 5). The purpose of sexuality within marriage is not only happiness or procreation, but also holiness.

This new generation of "spiritual" evangelical sex manuals explores a host of topics, including spiritualizing the human body and embodying the spirit. R. Marie Griffith's (2004) analysis of Christian diet books in *Born-again Bodies* shows that the fitness of the born-again body can be construed as directly or indirectly affecting an individual's relationship with the divine. Here too, the sanctioned activities of the Christian sexual body not only bring the reward of physical pleasure but also provide an avenue for communion with an eternal beloved. The couple's "unity" is not exclusive; "unity" includes the divine. Or, as Tim Gardner makes plain, "The number-one purpose of sex is neither procreation nor recreation, but *unification* In other words, the "Big O" of sex is not orgasm; it's oneness" (Gardner 2002: 48–49).

One question, however, goes unanswered in these books. If marital intercourse opens participants to the spirit world and grants unity with the divine, what happens during sexual encounters not sanctioned by God? *Holy Sex* fits into this new generation of evangelical sex manuals and takes up the question of the demonic side of sexuality. In it the authors contend that the human sexual body is the entry point for the divine and the demonic. The book discusses "God's original design for the ultimate expression of your sexuality" but does not contain the usual emphasis on sexual positions, techniques, and marital advice. Instead, the book details the spiritual consequences of illicit sexual activity on the human body.

Like most recent evangelical sex manuals, *Holy Sex* defines holy and transgressive sexual behavior, outlines the specific ways that the sexual body mediates faith, and relate spiritual purity to true erotic enjoyment. The stress placed upon the role of demons and public health issues sets this text apart from mainstream evangelical sex manuals. *Holy Sex*, like

most evangelical sex manuals, does not condemn all sex. Sexuality within the God-ordained parameters is viewed as part of the divine plan for creation. But, unlike other evangelical sex manuals, *Holy Sex* affirms the existence of sexual demons to illustrate that the born-again body is in grave danger. Even believers who refrain from sinful sexual acts are still at risk of demonic contagion. The portals of demonic entrance can be microscopic and inherited through impure genetic matter from ancestors and passed down to descendants. Every cell, every chromosome, every ovum, and every sperm is potentially vulnerable to demonic presence that reveals itself through disease. Believers who think they are pure of body and spirit might actually be carriers and transmitters of invisible evil. The only protection against demonic sexual disease is to scrutinize you and your partner's family trees, to confess your sexual sins and those of your ancestors, and to be sexually reborn in Christ. As the fall of Ted Haggard suggests, even the most ardent believer remains vulnerable to the attack of unseen malevolent forces. The fiercest spiritual battles are waged on sexual bodies.

Holy Sex is a far cry from the mainstream evangelical sex manuals that engaged the American reading public in the early 1970s and sent a uniform message: Christians can achieve sexual bliss through tried and true sexual techniques. *Holy Sex* warns that sensual fondling and sexual arousal will satisfy only carnal desires.

Many Christian marriage manuals would recommend that the wife buy a negligee and the couple learn some new lovemaking techniques. But this is only an effort to keep lust alive for a little while longer What the couple needs is to learn how to touch each other's spirits during sexual union. Even if they eventually become skilled enough to give each other the ultimate in physical stimulation, they still have not gone "all the way"—to a joining not only of bodies and souls, but also of spirits. (Wier and Carruth 1999: 77)

When married Christians "go all the way," the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of each person joins and unity with the divine is achieved. "Husbands, can you fathom loving God with your spirit as you make love to your wife and enjoying his presence in her, loving you back? Wives, can you receive Jesus as your spiritual husband, loving you through the body, soul and spirit of the man you married?" (Wier and Carruth 1999: 79). Sexual union, the authors explain, joins couples physically, emotionally, and spiritually to each other and to God.

Engaging in sex unites body, soul, and spirit. The authors explain that *Holy Sex* is based on the principle of "God's Law of Sexual Union,"

a biblical guideline to bring humanity closer in line with God's will for all of creation. To begin with, the authors contrast "God's Law of Sexual Union" with the sexual indulgences that are driven by demonic forces eager to build a "Kingdom of Sexual Perversion." Any sexual act outside of heterosexual marriage is not just contrary to God's will it is demonic. The stakes are high. Not only does illicit sex endanger an individual's soul; it also counts as a loss in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. Once one has sexual intercourse, he or she is bound forever to the partner even if the lovers eventually marry others. Sex is not just a physical act; it is spiritual, emotional, risky, and potentially eternal. The sexual body is the arena for the battle between good and evil. The tie that binds is sexual intercourse, not marriage.

The state of the soul is visible on the flesh. Wier and Carruth agree with other evangelical writers that bodies are created to express love through heterosexual intercourse. But their concern is with the body as a spiritual battlefield, not as a sexual playground. The health and purity of the human sexual body—one free of sexual diseases or sexually disordered behavior—reflects the state of the soul. Like the authors of mainstream evangelical sex manuals, Wier and Carruth borrow heavily from contemporary popular science literature to prove their points. Unlike earlier manuals that looked to sex experts and sex surveys of the 1960s and 1970s (such as Masters and Johnson), these authors refer to public health literature to support their contention that dangerous transmissions travel through illicit sexual intercourse. The authors redefine what public health officials identify as diseases carried through bodily fluids. Wier and Carruth contend that sexual diseases are physical signs written on the body, even lodged sometimes in genes that indicate demonic encounters or affliction. Here religious beliefs are embodied through sexuality, and the spirit is revealed vividly on the flesh.

Empirical research and nature prove that orthodox sexuality furthers the Kingdom of God. The direct relationship between the sexual and the spiritual begins on microscopic levels of the body with the chemistry of sexual attraction. In *Holy Sex* sexual attraction is a matter of hormones and natural chemicals such as testosterone, pheromones, oxytocin, and endorphins; they surge and level in brains and bodies to produce quantifiable, physical manifestations of desire. All current scientific research, the authors explain, proves that God designed humans with a natural capacity to become *physically* attracted to their mates. In addition to biologists, the authors also rely on psychologists who argue that the first sexual encounter—positive or negative—has a lasting effect, imprinting a model for future sexuality.

But sex is not only a matter of biology and psychology. Wier and Carruth emphasize that sex has chiefly a spiritual dimension. Sexual unions bind spirits as well as bodies. During sexual intercourse, they explain, a Christian's spirit reaches out and joins with the spirit of one's spouse, extending the kingdom of God. If a spirit reaches out to an unclean spirit during sexual intercourse, an attachment to a demonic spirit is possible. Rather than extending the kingdom of God, spirit and body will be defiled. In the event, the unhappy person is now bound to demonic forces eager to build the "Kingdom of Sexual Perversion."

DELIVERANCE LITERATURE: DEMONS AND THE PHYSICAL BODY

Going "all the way" in *Holy Sex*, therefore, has serious spiritual consequences beyond those discussed in mainstream evangelical sex manuals. This is because *Holy Sex* is responding not only to secular sex manuals but also to mainstream evangelical sex manuals. It is moreover, written in the context of deliverance literature, yet in *Holy Sex* there is a shift in the construction of demons and their relationship to the body. In early deliverance writings of the 1970s and 1980s, the authors imagine demons as personified vices that are organized in military ranks assaulting weakened wills. *Holy Sex* fits in this tradition, but the book expresses a new understanding of demonic biological assault as insidious, microscopic agents that are transferred genetically through bodily fluids.

Numerous deliverance books, such as Donald Basham's *Deliver Us from Evil* (1972), Frank Hammond and Ida Mae's *Pigs in the Parlor* (1973), Francis MacNutt's *Healing* (1974), Kenneth McAll's *Healing the Family Tree* (1982), Alex W. Konya's *Demons: A Biblically Based Perspective* (1990), and Derek Prince's *They Shall Expel Demons* (1998), outline the spiritual warfare raging between demonic forces and ordinary humans (Pentecost 1969; Basham 1972; MacNutt 1974, 1995; Bubeck 1975, 1984; Unger 1977; Hammond and Mae 1973; Peterson 1979; Harper 1983; McAll 1982; Peck 1983, 2005; Dickson 1987; Bufford 1988; Konya 1990; Prince 1998, 2006). According to these authors, demonic influence, obsessions, and possession are proven occurrences, and deliverance ministers can provide help for people harassed by demonic spirits. The writers debate the extent to which a believer is vulnerable to attack by demons. Some claim that it is impossible for a believer to be harassed by demons; others argue that the faithful are particular targets and great prizes for Satan when they fall. All the writers agree that an invisible war is being waged between the forces

of evil and those of good, and humans are caught in the struggle. One author, Merrill F. Unger, writes,

It was my privilege to participate with several other believers in a prayer session on behalf of a young born-again man who was severely troubled by demonic powers harassing him. Only as the demons were faced, forced to give their names, and challenged through the power of God's word and on the basis of Christ's shed blood did it turn out that the vile spirits of lust were the most vexing and, in this case, the most resistant. (Unger 1977: 120–121)

Typically in this literature, demons are named for a vice or destructive emotion, such as greed, blasphemy, hatred, abuse, pessimism, jealousy, or any other manner of evil that might enter a believer's body. According to the authors, the demons of lust and sexual perversion present particularly daunting challenges both to the afflicted and to the deliverance minister, who may "catch" the problem by close proximity.

Deliverance literature published in the United States increased dramatically in the 1970s. According to Michael Cuneo in *American Exorcism*, charismatic deliverance ministry began in earnest in the 1960s, hit a peak in the 1970s, and continues to maintain credibility for many Americans.⁷ The charismatic movement within the traditional mainline churches was influenced by the Pentecostal movement, which, since its founding at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906, has had a history of connecting healing miracles with exorcism.⁸ Protestant charismatics, including Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Lutherans, among others, place an emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the transformative power of God working through them. Charismatics embrace the spiritual gifts of the New Testament such as speaking in tongues and the power to discern the world of spirits that circulate around them. They often characterize healing the

⁷ Cuneo contends that the rise in interest and practice of deliverance is consistent with the growth in the therapeutic approach to self-transformation and healing that became more mainstream in American culture during this time. "Despite being cloaked in the time-orphaned language of demons and supernatural evil, deliverance was surprisingly at home in the brightly lit, fulfillment-on-demand culture of post-sixties America" (Cuneo 2001: 126). Cuneo also credits the 1971 publication of William Peter Blatty's recounting of a child's possession in *The Exorcist* and the release of the 1973 film *The Exorcist* with adding to the cultural appetite and demand for demon deliverance.

⁸ The belief that demons caused illness was common knowledge among late-nineteenth century holiness people and from the beginnings of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century. "Everyone knew that evil spirits caused most illnesses. Therefore in many cases divine healing involved exorcism of the tormenting spirit" (Wacker 2001: 92).

body of infirmities such as cancer, asthma, and poor vision or of addictive behavior such as alcoholism or obesity as ridding the body of “cancer demons” or “demons of gluttony.”

Although demon deliverance among Protestants receded after World War II, according to Cuneo, it came back into favor among Pentecostals in the 1960s and caught on in some charismatic circles at the same time. The person generally credited with promoting charismatic deliverance is Don Brasham; especially through his work as a deliverance minister and his widely read book, *Deliver Us from Evil*. By the 1970s, there were a number of popular titles circulating between Protestant and Catholic charismatics that outlined the basic theology that demons are real supernatural forces that seek to afflict Christians and non-Christians in their everyday lives. Fortunately, spirit-baptized Christians can discern demons and deliver people from them through prayer and healing. As the authors became better known, many developed a reputation for being “professional” deliverance ministers. The deliverance authors freely reuse each other’s dramatic stories as well as examples from their own pastoral experiences, testifying to the biblical truth of demon affliction—as true today, they claim, as it was in Jesus’s time.

Deliverance practitioners do not represent mainstream evangelicalism or mainstream evangelical theology about spiritual warfare. One evangelical writer who is deeply concerned with what he considers to be the sham of the deliverance movement writes, “The key to supernatural protection in the invisible war is not found in *exorcising* demons, but in *exercising* spiritual disciplines” (Hanegraaff 2002: 110; Lawless 2002: 24). Though deliverance writers may represent a marginal group within evangelicalism, American popular interest in deliverance grew rapidly after the 1973 Hollywood hit *The Exorcist*. Then the practice of deliverance gained legitimacy a decade later when psychotherapist and best-selling author of *The Road Less Traveled* M. Scott Peck (1978) became a born-again Christian and began chronicling exorcisms that he performed on patients (Cuneo 2001: 42–49). Cuneo credits Peck’s first exorcism book *People of the Lie* with “giving exorcism its first real jolt of middle-class respectability” (Cuneo 2001: 46). In a 2005 best-seller *Glimpses of the Devil: A Psychiatrist’s Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption*, a book dedicated to his mentor, the infamous late exorcist and author Malachi Martin, Peck presents the dramatic cases of Jersey and Beccah, two women harassed by demons. Peck insists that although Harvard Medical School trained him to find psychological reasons for ailments, he has come to believe firmly that some maladies are evil in origin and can only be cured by exorcism. In Peck’s clinical (and colorful) narrative, the onus of the exorcism is

always on the “patient” who must exert her will to choose not to believe the lies of demons. Even children in impossibly abusive situations are ultimately responsible for their spiritual choices. For Peck, the mind is always the locus for demonic entrance and disturbance.

While Peck lent credibility to the movement from his psychological perspective, many other deliverance writers turned their attention from the mind to the body. Peck’s firm belief that mental illness can be the result of demonic influence is closely aligned with the faith-healing tradition that calls Jesus and the Holy Spirit to mend physical and mental “brokenness.” Some believers practice healing that connects spiritual mal-evilence to clinical conditions such as epilepsy, Alzheimer’s, and, in one case, autism (Logan 1995: 147). Deliverance writer Prince claims to have used his spiritual gifts to heal someone of a “genetic disorder,” and another of food allergies, and to have delivered people from demons of epilepsy, blindness, deafness, muteness, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, stroke, paralysis, and diabetes (Prince 1998: 192–202, 2006: 111). In his rendering, the human spectrum of bodily distinctiveness is cause for alarm and must be made normative. The physically normative body—free of illness, free of quirks such as lactose intolerance—represents a truly godly body.

Prince is not the first deliverance writer to connect physical ailments with evil. Somatic representations of evil and the anthropomorphizing of demons stretches back to the most popular writers of the 1970s. Frank Hammond and Ida Mae’s *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance* first published in 1973 remains perhaps one of the most influential deliverance text among a Protestant readership. The book is a no-nonsense manual for identifying demons with a step-by-step approach to expunging them. The emphasis is on personal—not professional—deliverance. Throughout the book the authors deploy the common deliverance military metaphor of soldiers waging war against spiritual enemies on the frontline of battle. Demons are invaders, battle tactics must be followed, and spiritual weapons must be brandished, so that victory will be achieved when the kingdom of God is saved. The demons are organized in military ranks of soldiers and commanders, with princes and viceroys above them.⁹ The title refers to the book’s

⁹ The military organization and personification of demons is represented well in Frank E. Peretti’s popular apocalyptic novels. In *This Present Darkness* (Peretti 1986) and the sequel *Piercing the Darkness* (Peretti 1989), a battalion of demons fights heroic angels over the eternal souls of humankind. Angels are supported by the prayers of the faithful who provide “prayer coverage” while demon soldiers employ evil tactics to infiltrate and control society. One scholar notes that the main conduits for demonic control in Peretti novels are meditative practices and channeling in New Age Religions, educational institutions, the media, the government, and corporations. These arenas are crawling with demons seeking to control children and their faithful

comparison of present-day demons to unclean animals (pigs) under Jewish purity laws. Just as pork defiles the body, so too do demons (Hammond and Mae 1973: 3). Christians who wish to live in purity must cleanse their bodies of unclean spirits to prepare a tidy home for the Holy Spirit. The authors go to great pains to demonstrate that believers do not need to look further than themselves for the power to overcome indwelling demons. Demons, according to the Hammonds' reading of Matthew 12:43–45, seek a body "home" in which to reside.¹⁰ And they note that demons speaking through a person during a deliverance often scream: "This is my house!" (Hammond and Mae 1973: 2). These spiritual enemies have no right to inhabit a believer's body, which belongs to the Holy Spirit. All believers have the authority to cast out demons given to the apostles by Jesus in Mark 16:17.¹¹ "We today have the same authority and power for ministry that was given to the church initially," the Hammonds proclaim, "This power and authority of Jesus' name are given that the believer might overcome demonic power" (Hammond and Mae 1973: 8). Demons, they argue, must be treated as evil trespassers with the wicked intent of building Satan's kingdom one body at a time.

For a demon to enter, a door must be opened. The primary portal for the demon's entrance is a vulnerable or weakened will. This can happen as a result of sin, difficult life circumstances, or what the Hammonds call "the ruse of inheritance." Any willful sin, such as greed or envy, creates an opening for evil spirits. "When a man yields to temptation he sins in the flesh. Through such sin the door is opened for the invasion of the enemy. Then he has a compounded problem—the flesh and the devil. The solution is two-fold: crucify the flesh and cast out the demons" (Hammond and Mae 1973: 24). Children in unhappy households are especially vulnerable to demon attacks because they are weak and often not spiritually protected by their parents. Additionally, people who are told that they will be just like their unstable parents—either physically, mentally, or emotionally—may become so terrified of this prediction that they unwittingly invite demons to torment them based on that fear. Frank Hammond relates his own history with the "ruse of inheritance."

parents. Against all encroaching odds the forces of good, gathered in small communities, wage war through personal salvation and prayer (Howard 1994).

¹⁰ Matt. 12:43–45: "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' When it comes it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So it will be also with this evil generation."

¹¹ Mark 16:17: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues."

Many members of his family had died from heart attacks, and a doctor warned him that he likely would develop heart problems, a few years later he suffered two heart attacks. Rather than fall into despair, he enlisted the help of his congregation to heal him of his demon of heart attacks. "That was five years ago," Hammond reports, "and I have never had another pain in my chest and no longer expect to have one. I do not accept the proffered inheritance of the devil but accept the healing and health of the Lord Jesus" (Hammond and Mae 1973: 26). Hammond guessed that he was suffering from a demon, but he also writes that one can have the spiritual gift or discernment (such as experiencing physical pain in the presence of a demon) or one can detect a demon by common symptoms presented in the afflicted person. These physical and psychological symptoms include emotional problems, mental problems, speech problems, sex problems, addictions, physical infirmities, and religious error (Hammond and Mae 1973: 28–30).

A house (body) filled with the Holy Spirit must keep the doors closed to prevent future demonic intrusion. For the Hammonds, like so many other deliverance practitioners, this is a matter of maintaining a strong will. One of the primary means that the will is weakened is through mental illness. Of the many demons that can afflict an individual, the demons of schizophrenia are, according to the Hammonds, the most often misdiagnosed by the medical profession. Ida Mae received a revelation from God that instructed her on the relationship between demons and mental health. According to her account, God directed Ida Mae to draw her hands on a piece of paper and, in a striking resemblance to palmistry, guided her to write the name of specific demons on each finger and the palms of her hands. What Ida Mae discerned is that schizophrenia always begins with the demon of Rejection, and this demon can enter even in the womb. "Schizophrenia," she argues, "can be demonically inherited. Notice I said 'demonically.' By that I mean it is not in the blood system, not in the genes—it is in the demons!" (Hammond and Mae 1973: 125). Either the parent has rejected the child and created an opening for that particular demon, or the mother has this demon and through close proximity with the child, the Rejection demon gains entrance.¹² This account provides an important

¹² Many deliverance manuals follow this model of parental rejection leading to demonic affliction. Some authors such as Derek Prince go so far as to argue that prenatal rejection can cause demonic affliction on a fetus. Besides prenatal demonization through exposure to parental "false religions" such as Buddhism and Hinduism, Prince writes: "other negative forces may also affect an unborn child and expose it to demonic influences. A mother may resent or even hate the baby in her womb. Perhaps the mother is not married or the father is unfaithful and irresponsible, or the mother may simply not want the child This (lack of love) will turn in to a deeper

and instructive contrast with *Holy Sex*. The Hammonds contend that demons are not part of a genetic inheritance and demons are not transferred through bloodlines. Demons seek entrance through a weakened or vulnerable personality through the “ruse of inheritance” (the fear of inheriting genetic traits) and close proximity to others who are afflicted. Women tend to be likely transmitters because pregnancy and childrearing bring them in close and constant proximity to children whose wills to resist spiritual forces are weak.

The spiritual battles depicted in early 1970s deliverance literature made use of conventional warfare metaphors and focused on the will as the main entrance of the body. Thirty years later in *Holy Sex*, the spiritual battle is waged on the physical body itself. The primary avenues for demonic entrance are bodily openings and fluids. The demons are not metaphor; they are literal and assume material form. Other contemporary deliverance writers concur. Prince affirms that there are nine orifices through which a demon might enter and exit the human body. Typically demons evacuate bodies through the mouth accompanied by physical signs such as choking, coughing, and occasionally vomiting. “When a demon is coming out, some people—usually women—may go on screaming without receiving any release. This indicates that the demon has stopped in the narrow section of the throat and is holding on there to avoid being expelled” (Prince 1998: 214). Elsewhere Prince confirms that demons come through all sorts of bodily thresholds. For example, in one case, the demon of doubt entered a boy through his left ear while the demon of masturbation frequently enters through pores in the fingers (Prince 1998: 212). In *Holy Sex*, however, the primary routes for demonic entrance are bodily fluids including blood, semen, and saliva. Sexual activity, in this text, is the principle arena for demonic activity.

That is not to say that sex is evil. On the contrary, contemporary deliverance authors affirm that God created humans as sexual beings and attest to the sanctity and holiness of intercourse within heterosexual Christian marriage. It is so important that one writer contends, “Withholding what is due the marriage partner is a perversion of sexuality, sometimes carried out in the mistaken belief that Scripture teaches that sex is for procreation alone” (Bufford 1988: 109). Any sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage, however, such as homosexuality or adultery, is illicit and creates an open doorway for demons to

wound: rejection. Many babies are born with the spirit of rejection already in them” (Prince 1998: 104–105).

enter the body. A body that transgresses God's design for sexuality remains open to the forces of evil. The physical body, therefore, must be protected from demonic intrusion. Deliverance ministers write about prayer coverage, which both shields individuals from demons and supports angels who fight demons. Spiritual armor, put on through faith and prayer, is necessary to protect the body and soul. Most important, these writers emphasize the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to *fill up* the believer and not allow space for demons to enter the body.

DEMONS AND THE SEXUAL BODY

As the material body is transformed into a spiritual battleground, the authors of *Holy Sex* sexualize the language they use to describe the combat between good and evil. This is perhaps the single most striking difference from both the mainstream evangelical sex manuals and older deliverance literature. In the battle to keep the sexual body holy, the authors employ images of insemination and pregnancy to ground their spiritual concerns in the human sexual body. God's Holy Spirit is like *holy sperm*. The believer must become *pregnant* with God's spirit. The language is significant because it demonstrates the biology and physicality of the spiritual battle. The Holy Spirit is sexualized and masculinized to impregnate the believer who is in turn feminized. The salvific male seminal fluid acts to form a prophylactic shield by creating a state of holy pregnancy.

Holy pregnancy is consistent with a particular interpretation of scripture. Wier and Carruth point out that the Greek word *sperma* translated as seed in many biblical passages (such as God's "seed" in 1 John 3:9) is also the Greek word for sperm.¹³ The body, the authors contend, is not just a tidy house swept clean for the Holy Spirit (as the Hammond's imagine it); it is a fertile womb that will be filled with either evil or good seed. The porous human sexual body is imagined as female and serves as a gateway for spiritual forces. Yet, both men and women are open to holy insemination or to demonic invasion. Wier and Carruth explain that a sinful sexual union creates fragmented spiritual beings. Illicit sex does not build spiritual wholeness but breaks each person's spirit into pieces; it makes them vulnerable to demonic intrusion. This, according to the authors, is the true meaning of STDs, sexually transmitted demons, "It seems that sexual sin—more than any

¹³ 1 John 3:9 "Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God."

other type of sin except occult practices—opens a spiritual doorway, or breaches some type of God-ordained protective barrier, which allows demonic access to the bodies, souls, and even spirits of persons involved” (Wier and Carruth 1999: 83). The only way to exorcize the demons is to be born again in Christ.

Not surprisingly, their notion of “born again” differs from mainstream evangelical literature. “Born Again,” the authors explain, “is a sexual term.” To receive God’s cleansing spirit, the petitioner must become open to God’s healing sperm.

God’s Word is like His spiritual sperm. Knowing what we do about genetics, we could even say that, like the genes carried in the head of a sperm, God’s Word carries God’s characteristics. So, for you to be ‘born again,’ God’s Word, His sperm, must be implanted in your heart by the Holy Spirit. If your heart chooses to receive His Word, a new spirit will be birthed within you. (Wier and Carruth 1999: 111)

Once spiritual conception occurs, demons will then evacuate from the body. Here the authors rely on scientific conceptions about the transfer of genetic material at insemination to define “born again.” The implanting of God’s sperm forms a barrier to shield the transmission of demons through bodily fluids during illicit sexual activity. Sexuality, genetics, and theology are merged. Born again is a sexual term.

In *Holy Sex* “sexually transmitted demons” are not simply a rhetorical parallel to STDs or an apt metaphor for disease transmission or contagion. The demons are literal beings, they travel through fluid such as blood and semen, they are lodged in genetic material, and their presence is revealed on the flesh by sores and warts and other visible signs. Even when there is no obvious physical sign, a demon might be present. In the same way that sexually transmitted diseases sometimes remain invisible without a microscope and can vary in symptoms, STDs are also invisible to the untrained eye and afflict victims to varying degrees. The authors note,

Some promiscuous people seem to have quite a number of sexual experiences before becoming infected with a curable sexually transmitted disease. Other less fortunate ones become infected with an incurable STD, such as HIV, during their first sexual encounter. I have seen a similar range of risk for contracting sexually transmitted demons (Wier and Carruth 1999: 85).

Just as STDs are real and those troubled seek a medical or pharmaceutical cure, demons also are real and need to be expelled from the body by a trained deliverance professional (see “note” on image marked “Table 5.1”). Sexually transmitted diseases exhibit on the physical body through pain, warts, lesions, fever, and other manifestations. These same symptoms can be attributed to the presence of STDs. In both cases there is a diagnosis, a plan for procedure, and the prospect of a cure. The body, infected with diseases or demons, reveals the truth of sexual transgression.

Table 5.1 Some Typical Symptoms of “Infection” with a Sexually Transmitted Demon
<p>Spiritual Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing, seeing, or sensing demonic spirits • For Christians: an inability to sense or hear the Holy Spirit
<p>Mental/Emotional Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An uncontrollable compulsion to repeat a sexual sin, in spite of the risks of catching a disease, being arrested, being publicly exposed, losing your job, or destroying your marriage • Unrelenting negative feelings, such as depression, anxiety, fear, and unrelieved guilt • Obsessive and disturbing thoughts that you cannot silence
<p>Bodily Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusual, unpleasant, or disturbing sensations in your body • Unexplained pain that does not respond to medication • Symptoms of disease that do not respond to medical treatment <p><i>Note: Some of these symptoms can have causes other than demonic ones. Having just one of these symptoms does not mean you have a demonic infestation. But having one or more in each category is a strong indication that you might. I recommend seeking help from a reputable Christian counselor who has broad experience in dealing with mental, emotional, and spiritual problems, and expertise in deliverance.</i></p>

Image taken from: Wier and Carruth (1999: 83).

The authors of *Holy Sex* seem to realize their discussion of STDs will alienate some readers. Rather than authorizing their viewpoints by making reference to other evangelical sex manuals, they instead cite

deliverance literature. "So, while the information I am presenting here may be shocking or unbelievable to some, I believe it reflects the current consensus of those ministers who have learned how to deal with the demonically afflicted by using the special abilities or gifts given by the Holy Spirit" (Wier and Carruth 1999: 83). For those steeped in the deliverance literature, sexual demons are alive and well. Sexually transmitted diseases and demons, the authors explain, are not easily discernable to the untrained eye. Yet bodies are vulnerable to both. Sexual sin, they argue, breaches a protective barrier placed by God and angels around a person and allows the demonic access to bodies and souls. The risks of demonic infection are comparable to any other sexually transmitted infection. Ultimately for those who engage in transgressive sex, some people are luckier than others.

SPIRIT AND FLESH: GENETICS

The relationship between spiritual warfare and bodily genetics is the most distinctive aspect of this text. It is, however, not unique to these authors. The genetic transfer of holiness or evil in *Holy Sex* builds on a growing belief among some deliverance writers and practitioners in intergenerational demons. A few deliverance writers claim that inherited demons are lodged in genes and argue that spiritual health is conditioned genetically in the same way as physical health. Others, in the tradition of the Hammonds, believe this is part of a "ruse" to scare believers into thinking that they are ill. Many deliverance writers see a direct connection between the immoral behavior of ancestors and the probability of demonic harassment of descendents (Dickson 1987: 219-221; Bufford 1988: 109; Logan 1995: 107, 110-111). Despite these variations, Wier and Carruth's claim that demons are lodged in genetic material is the next step in the evolution of deliverance literature from a vulnerable will to a porous body.

In *Holy Sex* the authors maintain that the best protection against physical and spiritual contamination "for the sake of your children yet to be born" is "to look for a spouse who comes from a godly lineage, someone whose ancestors valued virginity and obeyed God's commandments for sexual purity. Otherwise, you increase your risk of marrying into a disease-ridden family and passing on those diseases to all of your descendants" (Wier and Carruth 1999: 49). Wier and Carruth draw from missionary and physician Kenneth McAll, who argues in *Healing the Family Tree* that individuals suffer psychological and emotional trauma by being spiritually bound to living and dead people. Based on his years of work with "demonically afflicted people," McAll cautions

that “the bondage of the living to the dead, whether to ancestors, to those not related, to still-born, aborted or miscarried babies, or to those who once inhabited a particular place now occupied by the living, can present considerable difficulties in diagnosis” (McAll 1982: 7). The most effective strategy for discovering the name and particular problem of the harassing spirit is to draw up a family tree. Somewhere in the ancestral line, a demon is hiding.

Besides genetically inherited demons or direct sexual encounters with demonically infested persons, demons may also enter one’s body through handling or viewing any object that is “cursed,” such as pornography. Pornographic materials put people at risk because, the authors of *Holy Sex* explain, “demons commonly congregate around these objects and use them as tools to ensnare and control people” (Wier and Carruth 1999: 87). Pornography also is dangerous because it degrades sexuality and it can produce bodily responses, such as orgasm, that physically weaken the body’s defenses against demonic intrusion. “Orgasm lowers our natural defenses against spiritual invasion. Being in a state of intoxication, where your reasoning power cannot function, is often reported to facilitate demonic invasion” (Wier and Carruth 1999: 86). Here the authors echo earlier deliverance literature that emphasizes a weakened will to create a threshold for the demonic. A weakened sexual body—physically and mentally—provides an entryway for demons.

Demons are transmitted through illicit sex, through infected bloodlines, and by handling cursed objects, particularly sexual materials. According to *Holy Sex*, these are concrete means by which demons operate in the physical world and afflict sexual bodies. Born-again Christians who understand the dangers, who keep their bodies and spirits pure, and who follow God’s design for human sexuality will be part of God’s kingdom. Their healthy bodies reflect their pure spirits, and the erotic joy they experience through sanctioned sexual intercourse unites them with the divine. Those who stray from biblical sexual mandates will become infected with demons exhibiting as demons and will pass this evil on to future generations through damaged genetic material. Those unlucky souls will need to undergo a sexual conversion, that is, to be reborn spiritually with God’s healing sperm.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars have reflected on the close relationship between demons and sexuality in the history of Christianity, from Jesus’s dramatic exorcisms in the New Testament to contemporary apocalyptic

fiction that equates sexual deviance with the reign of the antichrist.¹⁴ Within the context of contemporary deliverance literature, demons of lust, sexual perversion, and adultery seek entry points through the vulnerable sexual body and exhibit on the flesh through the physical signs associated with disease. In the context of mainstream evangelical sex manuals, there is something else to notice. The recent emphasis on STDs points to changing concerns within at least some parts of the evangelical reading culture. While it is difficult to say exactly who is buying and reading these books, it seems clear that the authors are writing to an assumed audience different from the mainstream evangelical sex manual readers. The authors' aim is not to instruct Christians in sexual techniques to enhance marriage but to demonstrate that marital sex is holy. Further, the writers argue that their view of sexuality and the body is not only scriptural but also consistent with science. To prove the point the authors state, "You will see that everything that modern medical science is discovering about sexuality confirms this principle, and that scientific discoveries support every biblical commandment for proper sexual behavior" (Wier and Carruth 1999: 12). Rather than staking a claim in the secular sex manual industry as mainstream evangelical manuals do, *Holy Sex* positions itself in discussions of public health concerns by suggesting that science and the Bible are in agreement about the transmission of diseases and the significant role of genetics in future generations of holy bodies.

In *American Exorcism*, Michael Cuneo argues that the rise of deliverance ministries and literature is due in part to the influence of the American popular entertainment industry, noting that the release in the 1970s of *The Exorcist* and the publication of popular exorcism books coincided with a precipitous rise in American interest in demon deliverance. This fascination with exorcism, he contends, took hold in the post-1960s therapeutic culture that promised quick fixes to any problem and the promise of a renewed life free from past addictions, compulsions, abuse, or any other demon (Cuneo 2001: 272–273). I argue that the extreme assertions of *Holy Sex* make sense within the context of evangelical sex manuals that over the past decade have become increasingly spiritualized. More importantly, the demonic side of *Holy Sex* that echoes deliverance literature also represents an engagement with a larger cultural discourse regarding the role of genetics in predicting disease and creating personal identity. In this case, disease connected to

¹⁴ Tim F. LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *The Left Behind* series published by Tyndale Press. Comprising sixteen books in all (the first published in 1995), the series follows a Christian apocalyptic endtimes narrative including the rapture and tribulation.

biblical sexual injunctions is translated into evidence of demonic presence in genetic material. Whether this genetic state compels an individual toward “ungodly” sexual acts or it creates sexually diseased genes that are unknowingly transferred to a spouse or children, here, in *Holy Sex*, sexuality and salvation are intimately linked.

Holy Sex provides an instructive example of the Christian sexual body as a testimonial site. Religious prescriptions and beliefs become embodied through sanctioned or transgressive behavior. The sexual body is both an avenue and an arena for unity with the demonic or the divine. The true state of the spirit is revealed through the health of the body, which manifests concrete signs of sexual misconduct, including the transgressions of past generations inherited through genes. *Holy Sex* finds support for the spirit world, and specifically demonic activity, through scientific research on sexually transmitted diseases. The truth that demons operate on the human sexual body is demonstrated through science and visible on the flesh. The sanctioned activities of the Christian sexual body bring the reward of physical pleasure, and create an avenue for communion with the divine. These pure and holy disease-free, spirit-filled bodies—communing with the divine through biblically sanctioned marital intercourse—will reproduce future generations of believers. Spirit and flesh, fully engaged in “godly” sexual acts, will, according to *Holy Sex*, further the kingdom of God.

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