

John was Christ's catamite ("cinedo di Cristo"). Thus present research suggests that the idea was diffused from Italian heterodox currents, which are still, however, insufficiently known. In the post-Stonewall years in New York—in the 1970s—the most successful gay religious organization was the Church of the Beloved Disciple. Although the ascription of the orientation is doubtful and unproven, some would place St. John at the head of a host of "gay saints," including St. Sebastian, Sts. Sergius and Bacchus, and St. Aelred of Rievaulx. But the erotic activities and sentiments of these figures are also shadowy, and as yet the ranks of the beatified, as determined by the Roman Catholic church, contain no absolutely bona fide, certified homosexual individual.

Historical research reveals a complex dialectical trajectory of the particular matter in question: first, the identification of John with the anonymous Beloved Disciple; followed by tentative, perhaps largely unconscious medieval hints of a kind of mystical marriage between Christ and his favorite. The carnal element comes into the open in the sixteenth century, but in a scoffing, heretical context. Finally, some modern homosexuals have sought to give a positive interpretation of the presumed relationship as a religious warrant for the dignity of gay love. All these developments reflect a legendary embellishment of laconic scriptural texts. The true relationship of Jesus Christ and his mysterious Beloved Disciple will probably never be known.

**BENEDICT, RUTH F.
(1887–1948)**

American anthropologist. Benedict became known to a large public through her popularized characterizations of whole cultures as having particular personalities. Unsatisfied with a marriage contracted in 1914, she enrolled in the New School for Social Research in 1919

and was influenced by students of Franz Boas (1858–1943) to study with the master himself at Columbia University. She earned her Ph.D. in 1923 with a dissertation on the distribution of the concept of the "guardian spirit" in native North America. In subsequent years as Boas's "right-hand" administrative subordinate and chosen successor she did fieldwork among the Zuñi and Cochiti in the American Southwest.

Although her collections of folklore are known to specialists, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, 1934), her book applying the "Apollonian" character to the Zuñi and contrasting them to the "Dionysian" Kwakiutl studied by Boas, and the "treacherous" Dobu studied by Reo Fortune, made her famous. This book introduced simplistic characterizations of primitive cultures to a wide audience as a means of demonstrating the variability (and thus malleability) of "human nature"—with passing mention of different conceptions of homosexuality (pp. 262–65). Benedict was noted for a lack of sympathy for male students. She had a coterie of younger women around her, including her most famous student, Margaret Mead (1901–1978), with whom she was sexually, intellectually, and politically involved during the last two decades of her life (both had relationships with other women as well, and Mead with several men, including her three husbands). Aiming to contribute to psychological war efforts, the two pioneered "the study of culture at a distance" during the Second World War, working with persons in New York who had been raised in cultures of strategic interest. Benedict wrote about Romanian and Thai culture, as well as her famous discussion of militarism and aestheticism in Japanese "national character," *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston, 1946). As with her characterization of Zuñi as free of conflict, her interpretation of Japan has had numerous specialist critics—and many readers.

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New York: Morrow, 1984; Margaret M. Caffrey, *Ruth Benedict: Stranger in This Land*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988; Margaret Mead, *An Anthropologist at Work*, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1959; Judith Schachter Modell, *Ruth Benedict*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

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BENTHAM, JEREMY (1748–1832)

English philosopher and law reformer. Bentham was the founder of the Utilitarian school of social philosophy, which held that legislation should promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. As a law reformer, he attacked statutes based on what he perceived as ancient prejudices and asked instead that laws justify themselves by their social consequences, that is, the promotion of happiness and diminution of misery. His *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) was eventually extremely influential in England, France, Spain, and Latin America where several new republics adopted constitutions and penal codes drawn up by him or inspired by his writings.

Bentham's utilitarian ethics led him to favor abolition of laws prohibiting homosexual behavior. English law in his day (and until 1861) prescribed hanging for sodomy and during the early nineteenth century was enforced with, on the average, two or three hangings a year. Bentham held that relations between men were a source of sexual pleasure that did not lead to unwanted pregnancies and hence a social good rather than a social evil. He wrote extensive notes favoring law reform about 1774 and a fifty-page manuscript essay in 1785. In 1791, the French National Assembly repealed France's sodomy law but in England the period of reaction that followed the outbreak of the French Revolution made reforms impossible. In 1814 and 1816 Bentham returned to the subject and wrote lengthy critiques of traditional homophobia which he regarded as an irrational prejudice leading to "cruelty and

intolerance." In 1817–18 he wrote over 300 pages of notes on homosexuality and the Bible. Homophobic sentiment was, however, so intense in England, both in the popular press and in learned circles, that Bentham did not dare to publish any of his writings on this subject. They remained in manuscript until 1931 when C. K. Ogden included brief excerpts in an appendix to his edition of Bentham's *Theory of Legislation*. Bentham's manuscript writings on this subject are excerpted and described in detail in Louis Crompton's 1985 monograph on Byron. Bentham's views on homosexuality are sufficiently positive that he might be described as a precursor of the modern gay liberation movement. Bentham not only treats legal, literary, and religious aspects of the subject in his notes, but also finds support for his opinions in ancient history and comparative anthropology.

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Louis Crompton

BERDACHE

Though mostly applied to the Indians of North America, this word was originally a Persian term, *bardag*, that spread to Europe by the sixteenth century (Spanish *bardaxa* or *bardaje*; French *bardache*). It meant a boy or young man who was kept by a man as his male courtesan. This term clearly referred to the passive partner in male/male anal intercourse, while the name applied to the active partner was *bougre* (French) or *bugger* (English). When French explorers came to North America, they referred to individual Native Americans as "berdaches."

While the emphasis of the Europeans was clearly on the homosexual aspects, in their references to sodomy and the more neutral word *berdache*, American Indian cultures focused on the gender role of the androgynous male. Before the