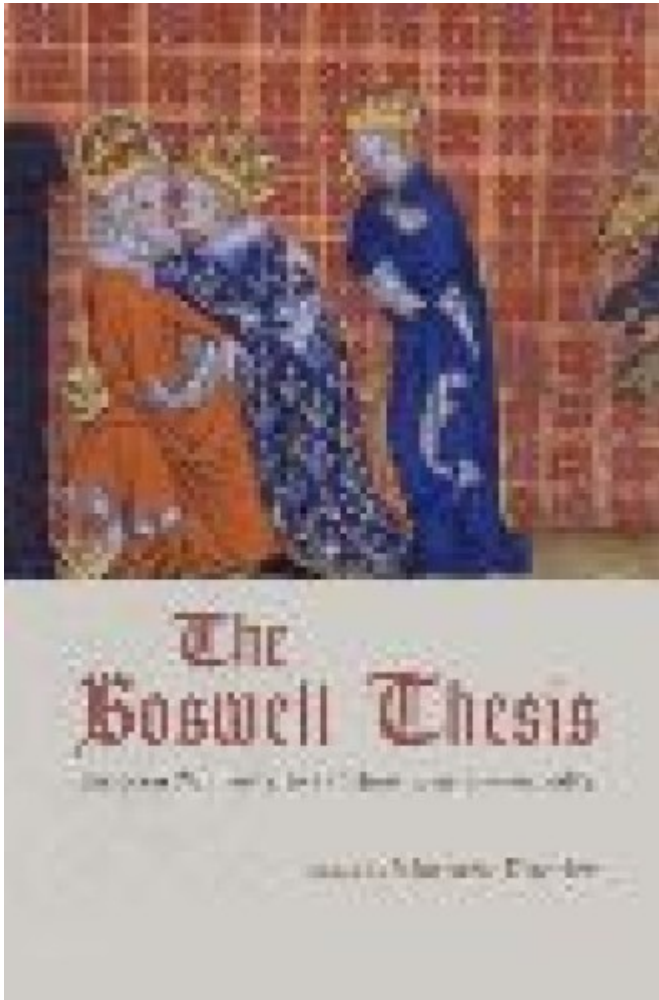


# BookMarks

Books in the [August 22, 2006](#) issue

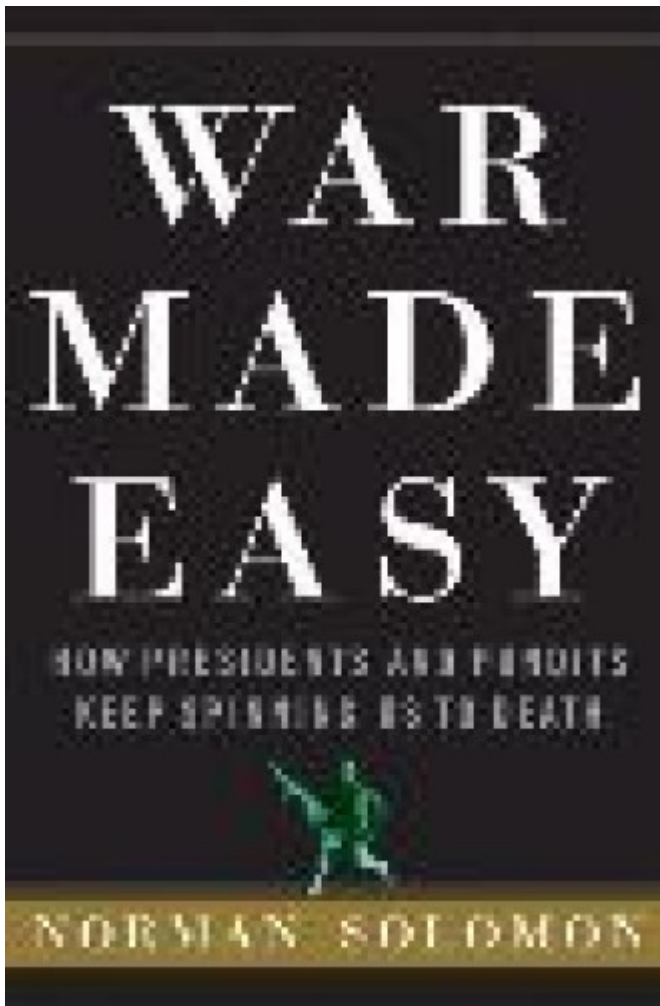
## In Review



### **The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality**

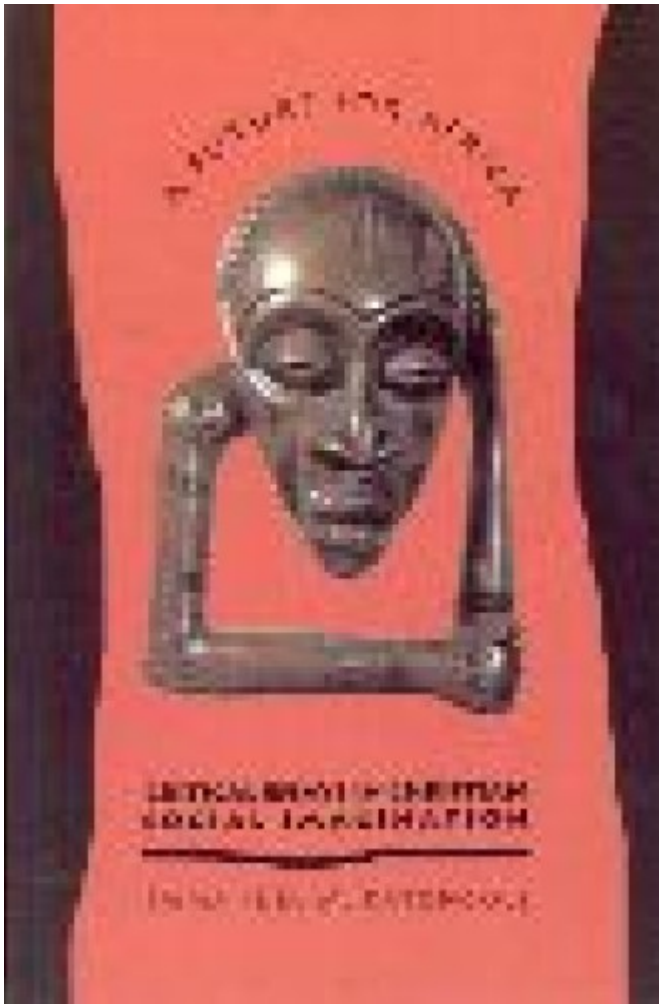
Matthew Kuefler, ed.

University of Chicago Press



**War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death**

Norman Solomon  
John Wiley



## **A Future for Africa: Critical Essays in Christian Social Imagination**

Emmanuel M. Katongole  
University of Scranton Press

Over a quarter of a century has passed since John Boswell published his landmark book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, in which he argued that Christianity isn't inherently antigay. Indeed, he contended that early medieval Christians demonstrated a remarkable tolerance toward homosexuals and that it was not until the 12th and 13th centuries that the church developed animosity toward homosexuals. The essays in this book look sympathetically, though not uncritically, at Boswell's contribution to scholarship about homosexuality and the place of gays in contemporary culture.

Democratic governments that commit troops to battle must win the support of the people and maintain that support for the duration, especially when things go badly on the battlefield. While Americans are willing to support their leaders in times of war so long as they believe that the cause is just, once they start to have doubts about the cause or the success of the mission, as was true of Vietnam and increasingly is true of Iraq, the leaders are on shaky ground, which only intensifies the need to ratchet up the war propaganda, playing on both the fears and the loyalties of the people. As Solomon shows, arguments for war are recycled from one war to the next, yet people tend to fall for them again and again—and the media play a role in shaping opinion toward war.

Katongole's essays show the promise of taking the work of Stanley Hauerwas (about whom this Ugandan Catholic priest has written a book) to Africa. The church is growing rapidly on that continent, yet the author stresses the church's inability to embody a specific social reality with concrete practices of peace. Instead, the church usually sees itself as a "spiritual" contributor to such "political" projects as deploying Western-derived aid or building the nation-state. The church is unable to offer an alternative to or a hedge against the violence and political corruption endemic to so much of the continent. The church needs, in Sallie McFague's terms, to be a "wild space," where new social and political configurations are imagined and lived out, offering alternatives to Africa's penchant for imitating the violence of its colonial oppressors.