

5-7-2014

# Envisioning Queer Culture: Toward a Theological Framework for Reimagining Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

Danielle Dempsey

Loyola Marymount University, danidempsey@hotmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Ethics in Religion Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Dempsey, Danielle, "Envisioning Queer Culture: Toward a Theological Framework for Reimagining Sexuality and Sexual Orientation" (2014). *LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations*. 140.

<http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd/140>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu).

**Envisioning Queer Culture: Toward a Theological Framework for Reimagining Sexuality  
and Sexual Orientation**

**By**

**Danielle Dempsey**

**A Thesis Presented to the  
Department of Theological Studies  
Loyola Marymount University**

**In partial fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Theological Studies**

**May 7, 2014**

**Table of Contents**

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. <i>Disruptive Christian Ethics: Action-based Sexual Ethics and the Problems of Homophobia and Heterosexism</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. New Natural Law Theory and Human Dignity</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3. <i>The Sexual Person: Toward a renewed Catholic Anthropology and a Same-Sex Inclusive Sexual Ethic</i></b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4. Marginalized Communities and <i>the Quest for the Living God</i></b>	<b>36</b>
<b>5. Envisioning Sexuality in Light of Cultural Pluralism</b>	<b>48</b>

### Abstract

In this thesis, I argue that both the Church and the Queer Community will benefit from a reexamination of Church teachings on sexuality. I argue that the Church's current position on sexuality does not uphold its own teaching on the importance of human dignity, because a sexual ethic that opposes homosexuality contributes to the marginalization of members of the Queer Community. I then argue that Michael Lawler's and Todd Salzman's *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* provides a revisionist theory on sexual ethics that is inclusive of same-sex couples while also paying deference to the fundamental elements of the Church's teaching on sexual ethics. Having suggested that a revisionist sexual ethic such as Salzman's and Lawler's serves as a cohesive response to the Church's existing position on sexuality, I appeal to Elizabeth Johnson's framework in *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*. Johnson argues that individuals who experience marginalization are an asset to the Christian Church because they offer unique insights into God. I propose that instead of approaching homosexuality solely in terms of ethics, Johnson's framework allows us to regard members of the Queer Community in terms of the contributions they have to offer the Church. Finally, I employ David Tracy's methodology in *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* and propose that in light of postmodernity, we ought to use a pluralistic model when approaching a multiplicity of belief systems as well as when approaching the multi-faceted nature of sexuality. I conclude that in doing so both the Church and the Queer Community will benefit from the Queer Community's full and open participation within the Catholic Church.

## Introduction

The meaning of sexuality and sexual acts is a topic subject to ongoing social and theological debate. One provocative issue that continues to receive extensive theological, pastoral, and moral reflection is homosexuality. In this thesis, I argue that both the Catholic Church and same-sex oriented individuals<sup>1</sup> will benefit greatly from a reexamination of the Magisterium's existing position on sexual ethics in light of contemporary understandings of sexual orientation as well as cultural pluralism. I suggest that the Magisterium's position (which falls under the category of traditionalist theories on sexuality) as well as the sexual ethic proposed by New Natural Law Theory, both of which denounce homosexual sex acts, perpetuate the problems of homophobia and heterosexism as outlined in Traci West's *Disruptive Christian Ethics: Why Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. These problems are worthy of more attention on the part of the Church because they contradict the teaching established by John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae*, which stresses the utmost importance of upholding every individual's human dignity.

Having discussed traditionalist and New Natural Law theories on homosexuality in conjunction with *Evangelium Vitae*, I propose that Todd Salzman's and Michael Lawler's *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* provides a revisionist theory on sexual ethics that is inclusive of same-sex couples while also adhering to the fundamental elements of Church teachings on sexual ethics. Operating from the premise that Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology serves as a cohesive and meaningful response to the problematic aspects of the Magisterium's current sexual ethic, I discuss same-sex oriented individuals and couples in conjunction with Elizabeth Johnson's *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*. I argue that like the other marginalized groups Johnson discusses in her

book, same-sex oriented persons provide us with many new insights into relating to and engaging with God. Finally, appropriating David Tracy's framework for cultural pluralism in *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*, I argue that sexual orientation ought to be understood in terms of culture and community rather than appealing exclusively to action and morality.

The Magisterium's existing teachings on sexuality and sexual acts warrant further examination because they do not uphold the Church's own teaching on the importance of human dignity. A sexual ethic that opposes homosexuality contributes to the marginalization of same-sex oriented individuals. An action-based sexual ethic, particularly one that mandates exclusively that a sexual act be both conjugal and procreative, evaluates the morality of homosexual acts without regarding sufficiently the dignity of homosexually-inclined individuals. Because of this lack of consideration for the human dignity of same-sex oriented persons, the current Church teaching on homosexuality is detrimental not only to homosexually-inclined individuals but also to the Catholic Church as a whole. Protestant thinker Traci West's *Disruptive Christian Ethics* discusses the problems of heterosexism and homophobia as they affect practitioners of Christianity. West's call for the use of experience as a determinant criterion will prove useful within a context as well. Incorporating experience into our discernment of sexual ethics will help resolve the heterosexism and homophobia that the Magisterial position on homosexuality perpetuates. The similar but more extreme views purported by New Natural Law Theorists such as John Finnis. Finnis as well as his contemporaries claim to base their sexual ethics upon the Magisterium's position. However, I contend that New Natural Law Theory contributes explicitly to the heterosexism and homophobia that West describes, and subsequently debases same-sex oriented individuals.

In order to uphold the human dignity of homosexually-oriented persons, we must first move away from a sexual ethic that denounces homosexual sex acts. Salzman's and Lawler's *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* provides an alternative sexual ethic that, as I will demonstrate, is faithful to the core of Church teachings on sexual morality and is also inclusive of same-sex couples. I contend that Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology is a useful and necessary response to the Church's current procreative and act-based sexual ethics. I then engage Elizabeth Johnson's *Quest for the Living God*. Johnson proposes that in our continued attempt to understand and relate to God, we must defer to the unique insights of individuals and communities on the margins of society, such as the impoverished, women, African Americans, and the Latino/a Community. Using Johnson's framework, we can envision homosexually-oriented individuals in a similar way.

In order to understand same-sex oriented individuals in terms of their membership within a marginalized group, we must propose a methodology that conceives of these persons not in terms of sexual activity but rather in terms of sexual orientation and community. David Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* calls for an approach to theology that engages with non-Christian peoples and traditions in an attempt to spread the foundational truths of Christianity as well as to discover new and different ways of perceiving these individuals. I argue that we might use Tracy's methodology to understand sexuality and sexual orientation in terms of pluralism as well. Just as Tracy argues on behalf of the value of cultural pluralism and diversity, I suggest that there is value in the diversity and plurality of sexualities and orientations within and amongst Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans/Queer-identified individuals, or what I refer to as members of the Queer Community, today.

## **Chapter 1: *Disruptive Christian Ethics: Action-based Sexual Ethics and the Problems of Homophobia and Heterosexism***

Currently, the Magisterium maintains that a conjugal act that allows for procreation is the only morally sanctified form of sexual behavior.<sup>2</sup> Traci West's *Disruptive Christian Ethics* discusses homophobia and heterosexism within Christianity and the ways in which they are harmful to same-sex oriented persons and couples. She explains that "homophobia is primarily a fear of same-sex desire, attraction, and physical expressions of intimacy; this includes fear of the same-sex desire of another as well as of one's own feelings of same-sex desire."<sup>3</sup> Homophobia manifests itself in a number of ways ranging from subtler instances such as ignorant statements to more serious incidents such as violent crimes.<sup>4</sup> The effect of homophobia upon same-sex oriented individuals manifests itself in many ways. For example, research has been conducted that suggests same-sex oriented individuals (same-sex oriented youths in particular) are at a higher risk for depression and suicide.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, same-sex oriented individuals are at a serious risk for becoming victims of hate crimes.<sup>6</sup> These are two amongst numerous examples of the ways in which homophobia pushes same-sex oriented individuals and couples to the margins of society. I would add that homophobia is often not characterized exclusively by fear of homosexuality. Homophobia is also frequently coupled with hatred or disdain for homosexually-inclined persons by virtue of the fact that they are homosexually-inclined.

Related to homophobia is the problem of heterosexism, which "comprises acts and practices that confer superior worth, status, and power upon heterosexuals and heterosexuality."<sup>7</sup> Though the two terms share many similarities and are often comorbid, heterosexism commonly possesses a more overarching presence, one that pervades spheres that may not be overtly (or at least openly) homophobic. Heterosexism is unique in this regard because it is arguably harder to



identify and also remains comparatively more societally acceptable. It is a problem that may not be as blatant or apparent, but as a result it is in many ways more difficult to address. West describes the unique challenges heterosexism poses for homosexually-oriented individuals, suggesting that “[m]ost importantly, heterosexism comprises cultural and institutional rewards for persons who identify themselves as heterosexual and penalties for anyone who refuses to claim this label for their sexual identity.”<sup>8</sup> Heterosexism denotes not only a view or an attitude, but also privilege, one that heterosexual persons experience – and one of which they both wittingly and unwittingly take advantage.

The ramifications of heterosexism are important in this regard as well, because oftentimes even those who do not oppose homosexuality (or who might even consider themselves advocates of equal rights and treatment for same-sex oriented persons and couples) are unaware that they (if often unintentionally) contribute to the subjugation of these individuals. Perhaps one of the more obvious ways same-sex couples suffer at the hands of heterosexism is the fact that in many states, they are not legally allowed to marry. In states in which they cannot marry, same-sex couples are denied over a thousand rights granted to opposite sex couples.<sup>9</sup> Given these disparities in equal rights and treatment, it is crucial to address and resolve homophobia and heterosexism if we are to work towards a theological framework that is inclusive of openly same-sex oriented persons and couples and that is also effectively and deliberately sensitive to these problems.

West’s discussion of heterosexism and homophobia reveals to us that experience is extremely useful in addressing these problems. West’s chapter on heterosexism and homophobia includes the testimonies of openly same-sex oriented women and their encounters with homophobia and heterosexism as well as their resultant suffering. These interviews, conducted

with leaders in Christian churches and ministry, depict instances of homophobia and heterosexism within a specifically Christian setting. One subject of West's interviews, Lynice Pinkard, reflects on her struggle to overcome homophobia:

I've worked very hard at decolonizing my spirit and trying to help other people decolonize theirs, starting by just giving voice to the pain, to the struggle. It's fatal to love a God who does not love you. It's fatal to any person to love a God or to perceive of a God that does not love you and to worship that God.<sup>10</sup>

As Pinkard expresses, same-sex orientation is more often than not characterized by pain and struggle. This suffering is the result of personal marginalization at the hands of people's speech, actions, beliefs, as well as structuralized discrimination in such forms as legislation and in the case of this thesis, official Church doctrine. Pinkard does not, in my opinion, embellish how it feels to 'perceive of a God who does not love you.' In my own experience, to try to worship a God whose love one believes one does not deserve can prove both psychologically and spiritually traumatizing. I echo that the process of self-acceptance for a same-sex oriented person is indeed a decolonization of the spirit: one must relinquish both external and internalized heterosexism and homophobia to recognize one's own self-worth. As Pinkard indicates, this type of homophobia can and has proven to be tragic, even fatal, for many same-sex oriented persons.<sup>11</sup> As we continue, we will see in more detail why and how an action-based sexual ethic that precludes homosexual activity contributes to the suffering and detracts from the human dignity of homosexually-oriented persons. Keeping in mind West's discussion of the problems of homophobia and heterosexism within the Church, I will now explain in more detail the Magisterium's position on homosexuality, particularly as expressed by Cardinal Josef Ratzinger in his "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons."

### **Traditionalist Sexual Ethics: The Magisterium**

Ratzinger's "Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons" addresses the theological significance and moral status of same-sex attraction and homosexual behavior, as well as the position he suggests pastoral ministry ought to assume towards individuals experiencing same-sex attraction.<sup>12</sup> His views on the nature of sexual attraction as well as his understanding of the needs of same-sex oriented individuals will prove relevant to the problems I raise in this thesis. I hope to demonstrate that his position ultimately contributes to the marginalization of homosexually-inclined persons. To his credit, Ratzinger is careful to stress that when addressing same-sex attraction, the entirety of one's personhood must be taken into consideration. Referring to 'homosexual persons' rather than 'homosexuality' demonstrates a very slight nod to an issue I argue is worthy of far more attention, that is the consideration of the entire and overall worth of same-sex oriented individuals as human beings. In some ways, Ratzinger attempts to make this same assertion in his letter. He describes the importance of the wholeness of the person in relation to a person's sexuality, stating:

The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Everyone living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental Identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life.<sup>13</sup>

Ratzinger asserts that the fundamental nature of a person cannot be reduced to his or her sexual attractions. A person's identity is one characterized not by sexuality, but by the grace of God. To contemplate fully the nature of one's personhood, sexual orientation must be understood in conjunction with both the "problems and difficulties" facing that person as well as his or her "challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts." I am in many ways in agreement with

Ratzinger's assertions here. When developing a useful framework for interpreting Church teaching, it is important to consider both the persons affected by the teaching (in this case same-sex oriented individuals) as well those truths that the Church believes to be universal and absolute. My understanding of a framework that does so effectively, however, is drastically different than Ratzinger's.

My principal misgiving toward Ratzinger's position is the fact that while he discusses sexual orientation in conjunction with the wholeness of the person, he ultimately aims to pass evaluative judgment that addresses sexual behavior exclusively. Ratzinger is careful to stipulate that a person's sexual attraction is only one component of that person's humanity. I wholeheartedly agree that a person should not be reduced to her or his sexual orientation. However, this distinction is only the beginning of what ought to be a much larger conversation about the fullness of one's personhood. Not only should a person's humanness not be reduced to his or her sexuality, but, what is more, a person's sexual orientation should not be reduced to his or her sexual behavior. This is the operative foundation upon which I dissent with Ratzinger's position in his letter. For Ratzinger, in order to uphold our dignity as human beings, we must resist engaging in any immoral sex act, including homosexual activity:

What is at all costs to be avoided is the unfounded and demeaning assumption that the sexual behaviour of homosexual persons is always and totally compulsive and therefore inculpable...As in every conversion from evil, the abandonment of homosexual activity will require a profound collaboration of the individual with God's liberating grace.<sup>14</sup>

Ratzinger suggests here that it is "demeaning" to assume that individuals experiencing same-sex attraction are incapable of controlling their sexual urges. What I glean from his sentiments is that to hold those with homosexual attractions to different standards than those with heterosexual attractions does a disservice to the wholeness of one's personhood, as we are all persons created by the grace and in the image of God.

In the name of the innate goodness of a person, Ratzinger calls for “the abandonment of homosexual activity.” While Ratzinger does well to acknowledge the importance of the entirety of a human being, his conclusions render his assertions thereof ineffectual. The first necessary distinction lacking in Ratzinger’s position is his belief that any and all engagement in homosexual activity automatically signifies an individual’s inability to control his or her sexual urges. If one is to consider the wholeness and humanness of a person, it is insufficient to pass evaluative judgment based solely on a person’s actions. Ratzinger acknowledges that sexual attraction is only one component of the entirety of a person. I argue that likewise, sexual activity is only one element of a person’s sexuality. To appreciate fully the complex and unique circumstances that each individual faces, a framework’s evaluative criteria for discerning sexual ethics must consider far more than one’s actions. This is where the problematic nature of the Magisterial teaching on the sanctity of sexual acts becomes more apparent.

The Magisterium teaches that the only sanctified sexual act is one that takes place between a married man and woman, and allows for procreation.<sup>15</sup> As the Church describes the ideal romantic union as one between a married man and woman that includes a conjugal open to procreation, same-sex couples are consequently adversely affected by this teaching in at least three ways that deserve more theological reflection as well as pastoral attention. First and most obviously, same-sex couples are not recognized as an ideal union because they are seen as not being “complementary.” Complementarity in this case signifies heterogenital complementarity, or penile-vaginal intercourse. By the Magisterium’s standards, the unitive and procreative aspects of complementarity are prerequisite to determining the sanctity of a sexual act. We will see that this is a concern for the Magisterium as well as New Natural Law Theorists, as traditionalist and New Natural Law theories both reaffirm the Augustinian theory (later

appropriated by Thomas Aquinas) that the underlying, deeper nature of complementarity essentializes a specifically heterosexual union.<sup>16</sup> Prioritizing heterosexual sexual intercourse places heterosexual union and heterosexuality in a position of superiority, consequently placing any other form of sexual activity in a position of inferiority. This dichotomy perpetuates the type of heterosexism West describes.

Secondly, though same-sex couples (or any couple) have the option to adopt, same-sex couples can only procreate by means of assisted reproduction, a practice that the Church also condemns in light of its teaching on sexual activity. While, on the one hand, the exact point that the Church makes is that homosexual behavior is condemnable by virtue of the fact that it does not allow for procreation, this position may also be seen in a different light. The very reason that the Church understands as a reason to denounce homosexuality might also be the exact same reason that others perceive a reason not to. Is it just to punish same-sex oriented individuals for an inclination that even the Magisterium concedes is inherent, that is not evil in itself, and the origins of which are unknown?<sup>17</sup> If the Church is willing to posit that the cause of homosexual orientation is ambiguous and that the consequential same-sex attraction is not by necessity a sin in itself, then I fail to see why Ratzinger concludes that homosexuality is a “tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil” and therefore “an objectified moral disorder.”<sup>18</sup> If the Magisterium is willing to accept the possibility that homosexual inclination is not a sin, then why not reopen the question as to whether acting upon homosexual inclinations ought to be deemed sinful by its very nature? These are the kinds of questions that must be asked if we are to address the heterosexism of the Magisterium’s position on homosexuality.

Since these first magisterial sexual standards dictate that a sex act must be heterogenitally complementary and must also allow for the possibility of procreation, the third implication for

same-sex couples is that they are therefore prohibited from marrying. The lack of recognition of a sacred union between two same-sex oriented individuals is not the only problematic and hurtful result of this teaching. Church teaching on homosexuality though designed only to prohibit certain actions adversely affects homosexually-inclined people, not just their actions. By being told not to act upon their homosexual inclinations, they are not simply being told not to have sex. They are being told that they are not allowed to get married, start their own families, or participate in the Church if they choose to live out the romantic and sexual elements of their natures. This perpetuates a stigma that I find to be counter to the Church's belief in the importance of every human's inherent worth, particularly as expressed in *Evangelium Vitae*.

It is important to reiterate that the Magisterium does note the importance of the human dignity of homosexually-inclined persons. I do not contend that the Church does not care about the dignity of same-sex oriented individuals, but rather that the Church's existing teaching detracts from the very dignity the Magisterium wishes to uphold. Once again, to his credit, not only does Ratzinger discuss the inherent worth of homosexually-inclined persons as being equal to that of any other person, Ratzinger also speaks out against the poor treatment of same-sex oriented individuals:

It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law.<sup>19</sup>

This distinction does not, however, adequately respond to the needs of same-sex oriented individuals today. The differentiation between action and orientation does not address adequately the marginalization that these individuals experience. The prevalent adversity facing homosexually-oriented persons suggests that the whole person, not just the person's behavior, is

affected by the Magisterium's condemnation of homosexuality. Though the Church stresses the distinction between the person and the act and reaffirms the importance of treating all human beings with compassion, I find that in an effort to care effectively for homosexually-inclined individuals, the Church must make a more collective effort to address the implications this teaching has on their perceived worth as well as their treatment.



## Chapter 2: New Natural Law Theory and Human Dignity

Even more detrimental to a homosexually-oriented individual's human dignity than the Magisterium's position is the sexual ethic proposed by New Natural Law Theory (NNLT). In this chapter, I examine New Natural Law Theory as it relates to the Church's teaching on human dignity. Though similar to other traditionalist theories including that of the Magisterium's, I argue that New Natural Law Theory is distinct in the degree of its lack of regard for the dignity of same-sex oriented persons. What is more, it is not only heterosexist in nature, but, in the case of thinkers such as John Finnis, it demonstrates and even advocates views that are overtly homophobic in nature. Revisionists Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, authors of *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology*, credit John Finnis amongst the thinkers that developed New Natural Law Theory, explaining that "[a]ccording to NNLT, the person is essentially...a rational agent whose choices are to actualize and realize basic or intelligible goods."<sup>20</sup> There are a total of eight basic human goods. The eighth good (and the good most relevant to this thesis) is the basic good of marriage.<sup>21</sup> All of these goods, which also include human life, knowledge and aesthetic appreciation, skilled performances of all kinds, self-integration, practical reasonableness or authenticity, justice and friendship, and religion or holiness, relate to New Natural Law Theory's understanding of the nature of human beings as well as how New Natural Law Theorists believe human beings are called to behave "naturally."<sup>22</sup> This theory derives from the works of Thomas Aquinas, who postulates that humans by their very nature are oriented, above all else, towards doing good and avoiding evil.<sup>23</sup>

According to Thomistic theory, the relationship between goods and acts is universal and immutable.<sup>24</sup> For New Natural Law Theorists, this belief mandates a set of absolute norms dictating univocally those actions which are good and those which are evil. We will see how

these absolute norms can prove problematic when we investigate their understanding of the basic good of marriage. New Natural Law Theorists' position on homosexuality in many ways reaffirms the Magisterium, defining heterosexual marriage as a basic good,<sup>25</sup> and subsequently defining sexual acts in terms of that good.<sup>26</sup> Finally, New Natural Law Theory "judges all other [sex] acts to be non-marital, and therefore, unnatural, unreasonable, and immoral."<sup>27</sup> There are notable differences that distinguish the Magisterium's position from New Natural Law Theory. However, New Natural Law Theorists contend that their position finds its basis within the Magisterium's teaching on sexuality, an assertion that is both inaccurate and problematic.

While New Natural Law Theory regarding sexuality is overtly homophobic, the Magisterium teaches that the human person, called to be a witness to Jesus's Resurrection, must uphold the dignity not only of him or herself, but of every person.<sup>28</sup> The primary distinction I would like to draw between New Natural Law Theory and the Magisterium's position pertains to the difference between methodology and theory. The Church's methodology in determining sexual ethics warrants reexamination because it is ineffective in upholding the dignity of same-sex oriented persons. As we will see, New Natural Law Theory, especially as articulated by John Finnis, harbors a disdain for same-sex orientation at the very core of its theory, and is therefore more detrimental to same-sex oriented persons. I will now discuss the Church's teaching on human dignity in order to illuminate this point.

Historically, the Catholic Church has been a vocal and powerful champion of social justice. This loving and compassionate nature of the Church is delineated in John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae*, in which he reaffirms Church teachings on human dignity in light of issues facing the Church at that time. In keeping with the Church's position on human dignity, John Paul II asserts that the Church is called to speak out on behalf of those who have no voice.<sup>29</sup>

Today there are many groups that are on the margins of society, including same-sex oriented individuals, that struggle to have their voices heard. A most lamentable hardship facing same-sex oriented persons is a result of negligence on the part of a magisterial action-based sexual ethic. Such an ethic ignores fundamental questions that cannot be reduced to the discussion of the sex act itself. Are same-sex couples capable of or, more importantly, *worthy* of engaging in loving, committed, meaningful romantic relationships? Are the effects that Church teachings on sexuality have upon homosexually-inclined individuals proportional to the original intent of these teachings? These are critical questions that cannot be answered by interpreting the morality of a person exclusively in terms of his or her behavior.

The degrading nature of any anti-homosexual ethic is particularly illuminated by the works of such New Natural Law Theorists as John Finnis. While I argue that the Magisterium's official position on homosexuality is primarily heterosexist, works such as Finnis's "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation,'" are demonstrative of not only heterosexist but also explicitly homophobic and subsequently derogatory attitudes towards same-sex oriented persons. Finnis, credited by Salzman and Lawler as an authority in the field of New Natural Law Theory,<sup>30</sup> is unfortunately one amongst many examples of accredited Catholic scholars who purport comparably heterosexist and homophobic views (Finnis's article "Law, Morality and 'Sexual Orientation'" originally appeared in the *Notre Dame Law Review*).<sup>31</sup> In cases such as these, silence on the part of the Church suggests a passive acceptance of New Natural Law Theorists' views. The Church's silent approval contributes consequently to the homophobia and heterosexism perpetuated by such views and therefore detracts from the human dignity of same-sex oriented individuals. Finnis's condemning characterization and argument against

homosexuality in his article will demonstrate the ways in which the Church will benefit from reexamining the magisterial position on sexuality.

Finnis's article discusses the moral nature of homosexuality in conjunction with some of the legislation that regulates it. He summarizes what he refers to as "the standard modern [European] position" on homosexuality: "[T]he state is not authorized to...make it a punishable offence for adult consenting persons to engage in private, immoral sexual acts (for example, homosexual acts)."<sup>32</sup> I am concerned about Finnis's position on the legality of homosexuality and "homosexual conduct" and even more so about his moral interpretation that informs it. According to Finnis, the state has the right to enforce "public morality," and, legally discouraging homosexual conduct, falls under this category.<sup>33</sup> For example, Finnis reaffirms the state's "authority to discourage...homosexual conduct and 'orientation' (i.e., overtly manifested active willingness to engage in homosexual conduct.)"<sup>34</sup> Even the use of quotations around the term demonstrates his disapproval of homosexuality. The utilization of quotation marks connotes his misgivings about the validity of the very existence of sexual orientation, or more specifically, homosexual orientation. Here we can already detect a discrepancy between New Natural Law Theory and official magisterial teaching on homosexuality. Ratzinger's letter, already in publication at the time of Finnis's article, validates the existence (though certainly not the moral sanctity) of homosexual orientation. In fact, Ratzinger uses the term orientation in reference to sexual orientation three times throughout the letter. He cautions against "the living out of this orientation in homosexual activity"<sup>35</sup> and later refers to "homosexual orientation"<sup>36</sup> specifically and "sexual orientation"<sup>37</sup> more broadly. The problematic elements of Finnis's position will become even more apparent as I continue my examination of his article.

Finnis supports laws that structurally favor heterosexuality. For example, he advocates the government's right to "maintain the legal position whereby the age of consent for lawful intercourse is 21 for homosexual but 16 for heterosexual intercourse."<sup>38</sup> Apart from finding his view of homosexuality and homosexual acts problematic in itself, I also find the premise of his argument to be logically fallacious. As we know, the Church teaches that the only sanctified sex act takes place between a married man and woman and allows for procreation. If one is to propose that the state institute laws discouraging homosexuality, then should there not also be laws discouraging sex outside of marriage, and oral sex and anal sex, and masturbation, and use of birth control? If Finnis advocates a law that legalizes sex between heterosexual couples at age 16 and homosexual couples at age 21, then what of a law that allows married couples to have sex at 16, and unmarried couples to have sex at 21? I find that Finnis's argument and others like it contradict Church teaching on sexuality on two principal levels. First, Finnis's position neglects the basis upon which the teaching was written. The Church deems homosexual acts impure because they prohibit procreation. Any ethic that denounces homosexuality ought to be held accountable for this double standard, as Church doctrine deems homosexuality immoral on the same grounds that it likewise deems sex acts outside of conjugal, procreative intercourse immoral. To propose that the law campaign against same-sex couples and "homosexual conduct" but not these other types of acts renders Finnis's level of disdain toward homosexuality disproportionate<sup>39</sup> as well as counter to Church teachings not only on sexuality but also on the importance of human dignity.

Finnis fails to pay due respect to the dignity of homosexually-inclined persons (or what he problematically refers to as "homosexualist 'lifestyles'")<sup>40</sup> that the Church mandates. That Finnis's views on homosexuality are degrading to same-sex oriented persons becomes even more

evident when he compares homosexuality to the act of bestiality as well as the act of eating excrement. In fact, he posits that there is “a distinction between behavior found merely (perhaps extremely) offensive (such as eating excrement), and behavior to be repudiated as destructive of human character and relationships,” such as homosexuality.<sup>41</sup> His assertion that the former is “merely offensive” whereas the latter is “destructive of human character” seems to suggest that he actually considers homosexual sex acts to be morally inferior to the act of consuming excrement. Finnis goes on to make the claim that “[t]he deliberate genital coupling of persons of the same sex is repudiated for a very similar reason” to the “the instinctive coupling of beasts” because homogenital coupling “treats human bodily life, in one of its most intense activities, as appropriately lived as merely animal.”<sup>42</sup> While attempting to illustrate the magnitude to which he believes homosexual sex acts are a commission of evil, I find that Finnis, by comparing homosexual acts between two consenting adults (often in situations that I would argue do *not*, by necessity, preclude the possibility of love) to consuming feces and performing sexual intercourse on animals, has rendered his own argument absurd.<sup>43</sup>

Finnis’ position is not only offensive; it is also counter to official Church doctrine. In his letter on the pastoral care of homosexual persons, Ratzinger reminds us that “[t]he intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law.”<sup>44</sup> I fail to see how Finnis’s reduction of homosexual activity to the consumption of feces or to the engagement of sexual activity with animals respects the dignity of same-sex oriented individuals in word, in action, and in law. Same-sex oriented persons as well as the Church will benefit from working towards a sexual ethic that reenvision the moral nature of homosexuality and the human dignity of homosexually-oriented persons. Doing so will not only more uphold the inherent dignity and worth of homosexually-inclined individuals, it will also uphold the Church’s teaching on the

importance of human dignity. In discussing Pope John Paul II's teaching on human dignity as expressed in *Evangelium Vitae*, I hope to demonstrate more clearly the ways in which both traditionalist and New Natural Law theories on homosexuality fail to uphold this teaching and propose ways in which we might do so more effectively.

### ***Evangelium Vitae* and Human Dignity**

*Evangelium Vitae* reiterates the Catholic Church's call to minister to all people, regardless of creed, sexual orientation, or any other number of personal and cultural differences between and amongst all peoples.<sup>45</sup> Inspired by Jesus's teachings throughout the Gospels, the Church is particularly concerned about those who lack the power to care for themselves: people who have no voice, and who are oppressed, marginalized, stigmatized, or otherwise mistreated. It is with this calling to protect the lives of all people and most especially the disenfranchised in mind that Pope John Paul II expresses concern towards various practices the Church believes detracts from human dignity. *Evangelium Vitae* stresses the importance of upholding and protecting human life as well as all the ways the members of the Church are called to do so. John Paul II asserts that all human beings are to "be protected with loving concern," especially those who are not in a position to protect themselves.<sup>46</sup> It is this aspect of Church teaching regarding human life as well as John Paul II's call to stand up "on behalf of those who have no voice"<sup>47</sup> with which I am particularly concerned as it relates to same-sex oriented individuals. Certainly, in addition to the unborn and the infirm (the subjects with which *Evangelium Vitae* is primarily concerned), all marginalized individuals deserve this same pastoral care on the part of the Church.

In many ways, the Church already does great work on behalf of the marginalized.

*Evangelium Vitae* cites the historical support of such groups as immigrants and the working class

as only two amongst numerous instances in which the Church has championed those who are oppressed.<sup>48</sup> The Church does well to prioritize the care of and ministry towards many of these disenfranchised groups, and there are many positive implications of John Paul II's position in the encyclical. Christians certainly have the responsibility, and the collective Church in particular has the power, to effect positive change in society, a society that as John Paul II suggests, as a whole often does little to promote the celebration of life.<sup>49</sup> However, as we will see, if the Church aims to support the integrity of all people, then the consequences of the views expressed in *Evangelium Vitae* for same-sex oriented persons must be more thoroughly addressed and redeveloped when necessary. *Evangelium Vitae* addresses issues regarding both orthodoxy and orthopraxy as they relate to human dignity and the celebration of life, and the conclusions at which John Paul II arrives are both complex and thorough. Expressing the Church's position that human life is sacred from the moment of conception and remains so until death, John Paul II asserts that aborting a life, even one that does not yet exist independently of the mother, or conversely, a life that is on the brink of death, is diametrically oppositional to the Church's high regard for human life.<sup>50</sup> In addition to abortion and euthanasia, *Evangelium Vitae* addresses the importance of human dignity within interpersonal relationships, especially in regards to sexual activity and procreation. The high value the Church places upon procreation informs the Church's understanding of the sacrament of marriage, and more broadly, what it means to celebrate life.

For the Church, marriage is a sacramental way of honoring God and therefore the life God granted us.<sup>51</sup> Though this ideal is seemingly simple, there are many nuances that result from the Church's conception of an idyllic marriage as well as the requisites for celebrating life that negatively impact same-sex oriented persons. In the celebration of human life, the Church not



only places a premium on procreation, but also asserts that procreation must never be separated from marital union.<sup>52</sup> The essentialist view that the Church expresses in regards to marriage and procreation as well as gender complementarity subsequently, if not also indirectly, places heterosexuality in a position of hierarchical superiority. It is evident then that if heterosexuality is the superior, then homosexuality therefore becomes the inferior.<sup>53</sup> What is more, the condemnation of homosexual behavior presupposes that same-sex couples are incapable of engaging in sanctified, loving romantic unions. In our search for a revised sexual ethic, it is important to address the experiences and feelings of same-sex oriented individuals in finding answers to important questions. Are same-sex couples capable of falling in love? Are they capable of celebrating each other romantically in a manner that is not constituted by lust, but indeed celebrates life and each other, perhaps in a manner different – but not lesser - than the one the Church currently sanctifies?

Though *Evangelium Vitae* does not directly discuss homosexuality, the teachings surrounding human dignity that it addresses directly implicate same-sex couples in that they can neither marry nor procreate and therefore, by the standards expressed in the encyclical, contribute to a culture of death, rather than the celebration of life.<sup>54</sup> Though the Church only addresses the sex act, homosexually-oriented individuals are consequently instructed not to live out an innate part of who they are. They are denied the same rights of opposite-sex couples because the Church does not recognize their right to marry or to participate fully in the Church if they choose to live out their homosexuality.<sup>55</sup> Publically expressed opposition to homosexuality by such an influential institution as the Catholic Church structurally reinforces the marginalization of same-sex oriented individuals and perpetuates heterosexism and homophobia. It is certainly inaccurate to suggest that the Church intends to reinforce discrimination of any

kind. However, the distinction the Church attempts to make between “homosexual persons” and homosexual relationships is one that appears to be lost on many individuals. New Natural Law Theorist Finnis’s article, for one, neglects to treat same-sex oriented individuals with the love and respect to which the Church professes that every person is entitled. Finnis and many others with hateful feelings towards same-sex-oriented people mistakenly believe that their homophobic views are supported by the Church. Heterosexism and homophobia are thus the collateral damage resultant of the Church’s refusal (at best) to recognize both same-sex marriage and homosexual sex acts as morally acceptable and (at least) to speak out against the works of such authors as Finnis. As John Paul II tells us in *Evangelium Vitae*, Church teaching is designed to keep in mind the best interest of all of its members.<sup>56</sup> The Magisterium argues that the teachings presented in *Evangelium Vitae* as well as the Church’s position on homosexuality provide us with the most useful methods of discerning sexual ethics. In the case of *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II seeks to uphold the dignity not only of ‘those without voices’ but also those who engage in the types of actions he denounces in an attempt to guide them away from committing acts that detract from a person’s dignity. Today, heterosexism and homophobia detract from the dignity of same-sex oriented persons. It is therefore detrimental to define sexual morality in a way that condemns homosexual behavior outright.

Is it fair for homosexually-inclined persons to be born (even the Church concedes that homosexuality is likely predetermined)<sup>57</sup> into a situation that, according to the Church, makes them unworthy of the marital covenant? In denying same-sex couples this right, does the Church contend that same-sex couples are incapable of feeling authentic romantic love for one another? Are homosexually-inclined persons incapable of participating in romantic union with another individual on a mutually exclusive, committed, loving level? Are they incapable or unworthy of

engaging in such a covenant between themselves and God? And what of those who do desire to be in holy union with God and their beloved? Must they decide between their beloved and the institutions of the Church? In these and similar cases, upholding the ideal of procreation to the detriment of same-sex oriented individuals detracts from their dignity inasmuch as it denies those individuals whose hearts long for the type of fulfilling relationship with God that the Church describes the right to full participation in the Church. For this reason, we must work towards a sexual ethic that is inclusive of same-sex couples.

### **Chapter 3: *The Sexual Person: Toward a renewed Catholic Anthropology and a Same-Sex Inclusive Sexual Ethic***

The last two chapters have outlined and subsequently called into question both traditionalist and New Natural Law theories regarding homosexuality. In Chapter 2, I postulated that a sexual ethic that opposes homosexual acts is degrading to homosexually-inclined persons, thus violating Church teaching on the importance of human dignity as outlined in *Evangelium Vitae*. I then posited that to uphold the human dignity of same-sex oriented individuals we must allow openly same-sex oriented persons and couples to participate fully within the Catholic Church. The first step to becoming more inclusive of same-sex oriented individuals is developing a sexual ethic that does not presuppose that all homosexual sexual acts are condemnable. As opposed to traditionalist and New Natural Law theories, revisionist theories seek to move away from action-based sexual ethics, as well as to reduce the emphasis on heterogenital complementarity and procreation. Doing so allows revisionist theorists to establish a framework that is much more sympathetic towards homosexual orientation and subsequently more inclusive of same-sex couples.

Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler establish a framework for sexual ethics in *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology*. Their book incorporates the foundational precepts of Catholic sexual ethics while also reimagining sexual ethics in a way that is inclusive of same-sex couples. The revisionist anthropology of Salzman and Lawler stands in contrast in many ways with the work of New Natural Law Theorists such as Finnis. However, Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology roots itself in the Catholic tradition and even draws upon some of the same teachings and theologies used by traditionalists and New Natural Law Theorists. The primary points of contention between traditionalists and New Natural Law

Theorists, on the one hand, and revisionists such as Salzman and Lawler, on the other hand, lie primarily within the interpretation of the sources that inform their positions.

Both traditionalists and revisionists, for example, draw upon Thomistic theory in support of their own theories. New Natural Law Theorists derive their sexual ethic from the Thomistic theory on the basic good of marriage, deeming heterosexual marriage as a basic good, and subsequently judging “all other sexual acts to be nonmarital and, therefore, unnatural, unreasonable, and immoral.”<sup>58</sup> Salzman and Lawler describe this appropriation of the concept of basic goods, suggesting that “traditionalists focus on the essential, universal, and classicist dimensions of those values or goods.”<sup>59</sup> Contrastingly, “revisionists focus on the existential, particular, and historically conscious fundamental values or basic goods in relation to the moral life.”<sup>60</sup> While traditionalists and New Natural Law Theorists assert that there are universal, absolute norms defining such basic goods as marriage, revisionists draw upon only one absolute norm, simply, do good, and avoid evil.<sup>61</sup> In addition, revisionists place a higher emphasis on particularity and historical consciousness in discerning their understanding of basic goods.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, while revisionist theory draws different conclusions, revisionist sexual anthropologies such as Salzman’s and Lawler’s operate from many of the premises upon which New Natural Law Theory also bases its position. We will see that some of the areas upon which traditionalists/New Natural Law Theorists and revisionists disagree depend more upon the interpretation of common sources rather than the utilization of different sources.

Salzman and Lawler argue that “[h]istorical consciousness has profound implications for the meaning, knowledge, and particular instantiations of the basic goods.”<sup>63</sup> Historical consciousness benefits groups such as same-sex couples in that it accommodates changes and developments throughout our history that traditionalists and New Natural Law Theorists cannot,

due to their somewhat narrow interpretations of Scripture and tradition and subsequent belief in absolutist norms. Salzman and Lawler elaborate upon the concept of historical consciousness, stating that “[w]hile recognizing the universal rational inclination of human beings towards the basic goods, historical consciousness also emphasizes their particularity.”<sup>64</sup> This approach adheres to the universal teaching of the Church by way of Thomistic basic goods while also being sensitive to the particularity of such groups as same-sex oriented individuals and couples. This latter notion is made even more evident by Salzman’s and Lawler’s assertion that “[a]s the instantiation of goods that provide human beings with a rational basis for choice, the basic goods and their aspects are particularized in light of history, culture, context, relationships, conceptual schemes, and social structures.”<sup>65</sup> I would like to underscore the utility of culture, context, and relationships in determining a framework that is more sensitive to and inclusive of same-sex oriented individuals and couples. These are invaluable criteria in determining sexual ethics. In this thesis, I expand upon this concept, asserting that the distinctive culture, context, and relationships of same-sex oriented persons warrant a framework for homosexuality that encompasses more than sexuality and ethics. Revisionist theory begins to accomplish this by establishing a sexual anthropology that favors the entirety of the person rather than considering exclusively the person’s actions.

### ***Truly Human: A ‘Personalist’ Sexual Anthropology***

Salzman’s and Lawler’s sexual ethic does more to consider the entirety of the homosexually-inclined person by proposing an anthropology that favors personhood over action. They refer to this framework as a “personalist sexual anthropology.”<sup>66</sup> As I asserted previously, works such as those of Ratzinger and Finnis reduce a homosexually-inclined person (to varying degrees) to his or her sexual activity. Revisionist and personalist sexual anthropologies such as

Salzman's and Lawler's are far more sensitive to the entire personhood of homosexually-oriented individuals. In discussing their personalist sexual anthropology, Salzman and Lawler make an extremely important distinction:

The logical implication for sexual ethics of this shift to a more personalist, relation-centered natural law is that, while the Magisterium could, and indeed should, teach norms guiding sexual relationships, these norms cannot always be posited as absolutes of the unique existential context of human relationships.<sup>67</sup>

Here, Salzman and Lawler discuss a notion of critical importance to this thesis. They remind us that a revisionist sexual ethic does not seek to abandon Catholic tradition. Similarly, the intention of this thesis is not simply to refute traditional sexual ethics. Instead, it seeks to reimagine this particular element of the Catholic tradition so that same-sex oriented individuals and couples might participate more fully within it. The emphasis on "the existential context of human relationships," one that includes more than conjugal, procreative sexual relationships, is therefore the most effective way of doing so. It allows those same-sex oriented persons who wish to follow the teachings of the Church while also embracing the fullness of their sexualities to do both without compromising either. In short, it allows them to engage with the fullness of their personhoods.

We will continue to see that Salzman and Lawler attempt consistently to reinterpret rather than reject Catholic sexual ethics. I would like to address a deficiency within traditionalist and New Natural Law theories that revisionist theories such as those proposed by Salzman and Lawler attempt to reinterpret and subsequently resolve. Both the Magisterium and New Natural Law Theorists base their sexual ethics upon a normative set of claims and definitions of such words as 'conjugal' and 'intercourse.' While the dictionary defines conjugal as "of, pertaining to, or characteristic of marriage,"<sup>68</sup> the term is commonly defined as characterizing marriage

specifically between a man and a woman, which is the position that the Catholic Church and New Natural Law Theorists assume.<sup>69</sup> Another example of the limitations of normative definitions is the presumption that intercourse (or the only ‘valid’ form of sexual activity, as it were) refers specifically to penile-vaginal intercourse.<sup>70</sup> Rethinking definitions such as these allow us to work towards a same-sex inclusive sexual ethic while also bearing in mind Catholic teachings on sexuality.

The framework established by Salzman and Lawler seeks not to abandon the notion of sanctified marital unions or to reject the importance of restraint and moral discernment with regard to sexual activity. Instead, it works to revise normative claims and definitions proposed by both the Magisterium and New Natural Law Theory in a manner that does not denounce homosexual sex acts definitively. This can be done if in addition to conjugality we also reinterpret such concepts as intercourse and complementarity. Salzman and Lawler reconceptualize the meaning of intercourse, first noting that while the term is “frequently used as a euphemism for sex, [it] literally means ‘communication or dealings between or among people.’”<sup>71</sup> This conception of intercourse need not be understood essentially in terms of penile-vaginal sex between a man and a woman. Using this more comprehensive interpretation of the term we might posit a more exhaustive theological approach to it as well. Reexamining the term intercourse allows us to reconsider the circumstances in which we might engage in intercourse in a morally unitive (if not procreative and heterosexual) way.

Salzman and Lawler go on to explain that sexuality is not only physical; it is also emotional, psychological, spiritual, and relational.<sup>72</sup> These elements are essential components of a cohesive theological interpretation of sexual intercourse, which they describe as the “unique and particular expression of the communication-intercourse of our very being with a special



loved one.”<sup>73</sup> Certainly, one’s sexuality cannot be understood without taking into account the emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of one’s being. A more cohesive framework for sexuality and sexual ethics therefore takes into consideration not only the reality that homosexually-inclined persons experience the desire to engage in sexual acts with members of their own sex, but also asks what I find to be the far more important question, which is whether these individuals relate romantically to and indeed fall in love with members of their own sex.

Structuralized normativity is perhaps one of the most substantial obstacles to establishing a revisionist sexual anthropology. It is important, therefore, to challenge the inherent norms within traditionalist and New Natural Law theories. Not entirely dissimilar to traditionalists and New Natural Law Theorists, Salzman and Lawler describe their foundational sexual principle as one that emphasizes unitive sexual morality.<sup>74</sup> However, they seek to reinterpret certain absolutist claims that NNLT/traditionalists emphasize, including norms that essentialize procreation and opposite-sex gender complementarity. In Salzman’s and Lawler’s view, their sexual anthropology upholds traditional Catholic thought on the meaning of human sexuality, particularly as outlined in Pope Paul VI’s *Gaudium et spes*, “adding in brackets certain components of [their] own that are not contained in the document but are, [they] believe, faithful to the Catholic tradition’s understanding of the role and function of human sexuality in a marital relationship.”<sup>75</sup> Salzman’s and Lawler’s approach underscores the unitive aspect of complementarity without essentializing heterosexuality as a prerequisite for a sanctified sexual union. In doing so, they once again underscore the importance of the person’s being over the person’s sexuality, asserting that “[s]exual is an adjective that describes not only the actions of human beings but also their essential reality.”<sup>76</sup> In other words, “[h]umans can and may renounce sexual action; they can never renounce their intrinsic sexual being.”<sup>77</sup> This thesis seeks

to make that same point, that a person's sexuality is a defining characteristic whether that person chooses to embrace or reject his or her sexuality.

Same-sex oriented persons experience same-sex attraction regardless of whether they choose to act upon that attraction. What is more, even in their inaction, the lives of same-sex oriented persons are defined in part by this attraction, as they are then forced to either hide or deny that part of their personhood. This parallels the objection I raised to Ratzinger's letter on homosexual persons. Though Ratzinger acknowledges the innateness of homosexual inclinations, he falls short in that regardless of this concession, he still concludes that homosexually-inclined persons must reject this intrinsic element of their sexual beings. Salzman's and Lawler's call for a renewed Catholic anthropology proposes a valuable resolution to the shortcomings of this kind of sexual ethic.

Salzman's and Lawler's revisionist sexual anthropology must also contend with the notion of gender complementarity. Both complementarity and the related theological term 'truly human' are central to the current conversation surrounding Catholic sexual morality.<sup>78</sup> Paul VI's *Gaudium et spes* "declared that the sexual intercourse in and through which spouses symbolize their mutual gift to one another is to be *humano modo*,"<sup>79</sup> meaning "in a manner which is truly human."<sup>80</sup> The critical point of contention between traditionalist/New Natural Law Theory and revisionist theory derives from their respective understandings of what it means to be truly human. Salzman and Lawler consider the Magisterium's definitions of both biological and personal complementarity in delineating their own interpretation of what it means to be truly human. As Salzman and Lawler point out, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Homosexual Unions* reaffirms the Magisterium's assertion that the "human and ordered form of sexuality" must be both

conjugal and procreative.<sup>81</sup> Salzman and Lawler seek to both expand and amend the meaning of the term complementarity. The CDF asserts that “[s]exual relations are human when and insofar as they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of new life.”<sup>82</sup> Salzman and Lawler contend that while lacking the ability to procreate, homosexual unions are nonetheless capable of mutuality and complementarity in marriage.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, biological and personal complementarity need not be reduced to “*heterogenital* and *reproductive* complementarity,”<sup>84</sup> though the Magisterium continues to define these terms thusly<sup>85</sup>.

Salzman and Lawler employ David McCarthy’s position on sexual ethics, which argues for a “nuptial metaphor”<sup>86</sup> that is inclusive of heterosexual and homosexual couples. McCarthy grounds his position in the human body rather than essentialize heterogenital and reproductive coupling.<sup>87</sup> McCarthy asserts that “[g]ay men and lesbians are persons who encounter the other (and thus discover themselves) in relations to persons of the same sex.”<sup>88</sup> McCarthy’s understanding of complementarity moves away from penile-vaginal complementarity and focuses instead on the mental/spiritual components of complementarity. He goes on to argue that “[t]his same-sex orientation is a given of their coming to be, that is, the nuptial meaning of human life emerges for a gay man in relation to other men and a woman when face to face with women.”<sup>89</sup> Operating from McCarthy’s premise, homosexual sex acts are “truly human” in their relationships with members of their own gender in a way that is “a given of their coming to be.”<sup>90</sup> That is to say, to deny this aspect of their beings disallows same-sex oriented persons to be truly human. For revisionists, same-sex couples in their sexual and romantic relationships are *realizing* the entirety of their personhood rather than rejecting or detracting from it. To mandate that same-sex oriented persons deny this element of their personhood is to deny them the ability

to experience what it means to be truly human. Encouraging homosexually-oriented individuals to reject their natural inclination to relate romantically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, *and* physically to one another denies them the opportunity to realize the full extent of their personhoods. What is more, it denies them the ability to give and receive love in a way to which they may indeed naturally – and rightfully – feel compelled. Understanding Salzman’s and Lawler’s sexual anthropology as a sexual ethic that successfully refutes and subsequently provides a much needed amendment to the Magisterium’s position on homosexuality, we might now begin to imagine the nature of homosexuality in ways that do not perpetuate this ongoing debate over whether or not homosexual sex acts are morally sanctified. Instead, operating from a premise that presupposes that homosexual sex acts are indeed morally sanctified, we might begin to imagine the ways in which we can work towards allowing same-sex oriented persons and same-sex couples to be their truly human selves. More specifically, we can work towards a framework that allows same-sex oriented persons and couples to participate fully as members of the Church.

#### **Chapter 4: Marginalized Communities and *the Quest for the Living God***

In chapter 3, I explored a revisionist sexual ethic as a response to traditionalist and New Natural Law theories. I argued that Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology serves as a beneficial resolution to the deficiencies of the traditionalists and New Natural Law theories I addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, respectively. In contrast to traditionalists and New Natural Law theorists, Salzman's and Lawler's sexual ethic combats rather than contributes to the problems of heterosexism and homophobia as outlined by Traci West. Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology therefore upholds more successfully the importance of human dignity as expressed in John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae*. Salzman and Lawler accomplish both of these tasks while also adhering to fundamental Church teaching, particularly as expressed by the Thomistic principle of doing good and avoiding evil. A sexual anthropology such as Salzman's and Lawler's will allow same-sex oriented persons the opportunity to participate fully within the Church as well as express openly their romantic and sexual orientations. In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which, just as a revised sexual ethic will benefit same-sex oriented persons, so will the participation of same-sex oriented persons benefit the Church.

Elizabeth Johnson's *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* reveals the ways in which members of marginalized communities can deepen our understanding of God. Johnson contends that minority groups such as the impoverished, women, and individuals from religious and racial minorities experience God and engage in their practice of Christianity in unique and distinct ways. As Johnson explains, their unique insights in many ways derive from the suffering and marginalization to which these groups are subject. The same might be said for same-sex oriented individuals, who in their minority status likewise experience suffering and marginalization. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways that Salzman and

Lawler maintain that same-sex oriented persons must be included fully within the Church not *despite* but indeed *because* of their sexual orientations. Embracing their orientation towards members of their own sex is crucial to celebrating the full personhood of same-sex oriented persons.

In this chapter, I explore the framework Johnson develops in *Quest for the Living God*. I suggest that if we regard them as members of a marginalized group, same-sex oriented persons can be understood analogously with the groups Johnson discusses in her book. I will begin by delineating Johnson's methodology and then drawing upon specific examples she uses within her text. Johnson's introductory chapter "Ancient Story, New Chapter," explains that her framework does not seek to find a new God or even to find something brand new about God, but rather seeks new ways of understanding the same and everlasting God, in light of the changing times and peoples.<sup>91</sup> This perspective is useful to understanding sexuality through a different lens than that through which the Church has historically understood it. The Church regards homosexuality as a moral disorder against which any practicing Christian must struggle.<sup>92</sup> Using Johnson's methodology, we might posit that homosexuality is not only acceptable, but like the many other characteristics that define who we are, same-sex orientation can even be understood as a gift.

Just as Johnson suggests that groups marginalized as a result of their social status, gender, race, or ethnicity contribute new chapters to the ongoing quest for God, so might those individuals who are marginalized due to their sexual orientations. This notion of contributing a new chapter to an ancient story can be understood metaphorically and in many ways literally as well. As Johnson explains, "[p]eople who belong to a religion are initiated into a particular living tradition of encounter with the Holy."<sup>93</sup> Over the centuries, those who have encountered the Divine have to the best of their ability translated these experiences "into particular texts,

rituals and practices that captured what they felt and knew to be true.”<sup>94</sup> Many of these early accounts of encounters with the Holy inform the rich tradition of the Catholic Church, a tradition we know to be essential to the Church’s teachings on sexuality and countless other matters. Johnson points out that our insatiable thirst to understand God is rooted not only in tradition but also experience.<sup>95</sup> What is more, Johnson suggests that our search for God has traditionally been tied to experience.<sup>96</sup> In other words, it is nothing new to call upon experience in developing our theology of God. As she points out, our earliest traditions derive from the earliest accounts of encounters with God.<sup>97</sup>

While the Catholic Church prioritizes the importance of tradition, similar to West, Johnson suggests that it is equally important to account for experience in our quest to understand and engage with God. Johnson contends that the living God presents God’s self in continual, pervasive, and interminable ways.<sup>98</sup> This is evidenced by the dynamic nature of human beings as well as their varied practices of religion, both of which have developed and evolved over time. “Taken as a whole, the changing phenomenon of the world’s religions displays the character of enormous quest, an ongoing search for what is ultimate and whole.”<sup>99</sup> Our continued search for a God who is eternally just out of our reach will change along with our deepening understanding of this living God as well as our understanding of ourselves. To that end, Johnson bases her *Quest for the Living God* upon three principal premises. “First, the very nature of what is being sought is incomprehensible, unfathomable, limitless, ineffable, beyond description. The living God literally cannot be compared with anything in the world.”<sup>100</sup> Though the God we seek to understand is ultimately incomprehensible, human beings are called to strive to deepen their understanding of God despite the limited capacities of their human natures. As Johnson points

out, this ongoing struggle is evidenced by the changing natures of our religious practices and beliefs over time.<sup>101</sup>

Johnson's second premise states that our search for the living God continues "because the human heart is insatiable."<sup>102</sup> Flawed though we are as human beings, our constitution is built intrinsically to continue our journey towards God. "When it comes to matters of religion, as God-seekers of every age have testified, the human spirit cannot rest in any one encounter but, intrigued by the glimpse already gained, continues to hunger for more."<sup>103</sup> Though our understanding of God in this world will always remain incomplete, we are designed to continue our humble quest to deepen our union with God, despite our limitations. Our new and varied experiences provide us with new insights to our relationship with God and are invaluable to our search. Therefore, the third factor in our quest for the living God is the changing history of human cultures.<sup>104</sup> The premium Johnson places upon the dynamic nature of human cultures is akin to West, who emphasizes the importance of human experience,<sup>105</sup> as well as Salzman and Lawler, who likewise call for use of historical consciousness as a criterion in evaluating Catholic sexual ethics.<sup>106</sup> We will see in the next chapter that David Tracy similarly utilizes experience in his methodology. We saw in Chapter 3 that Salzman and Lawler propose that the universality of Catholic teaching and basic goods are particularized by varying instantiations of such elements as history, culture, context, relationships, conceptual schemes, and social structures.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Johnson suggests that our understanding of a universal God can be increased by the particularities of an extremely diverse and multi-faceted human population.

Johnson explains that our "experience of God is always mediated," or in other words, "made concretely available through specific channels in history."<sup>108</sup> As these channels change, so must our approach to understanding God. Our search for the living God "must be undertaken



anew if religious traditions are to remain vibrant and alive.”<sup>109</sup> Moreover, human beings are not only predisposed to continue this quest. As human beings, we are also *called* to do so. The “profound incomprehensibility of God coupled with the hunger of the human heart in changing historical cultures actually *requires* that there be an ongoing history of the quest for the living God that can never be concluded.”<sup>110</sup> Johnson’s three premises reveal to us that experience is essential to our understanding of God, that experience has historically been used as a component of this search for understanding, and that our unending quest for the living God enables us to perceive our universal Christian traditions as history in progress rather than as stagnant or immutable. It is for this reason that in our ongoing search we must look not at history, but at a diversity and multiplicity of *histories*. As we will see, as our Christian tradition was founded upon the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, we must look particularly at those histories wrought with their own suffering and hardships.

Before delving into her discussion of the points of view of particular groups, Johnson proposes three ground rules to guide us as we attempt to talk about God. First, Johnson reminds us that “the reality of the living God is an ineffable mystery beyond all telling. The infinitely creating, redeeming and indwelling Holy One is so far beyond the world and so deeply within the world as to be literally incomprehensible.”<sup>111</sup> It is by virtue of the fact that we cannot understand God fully that we must continue to strive to do so. That is to say, the goal is not to *find* God so much as it is to continue to search for God. It is the journey itself that is of the most importance. Second, “no expression for God can be taken literally. None.”<sup>112</sup> Johnson goes on to explain that “[o]ur language is like a finger pointing to the moon, not the moon itself. To equate the finger to the moon or to look at the finger and not perceive the moon is to fall into error.”<sup>113</sup> Given that we perceive God to be ultimately inconceivable, we ought not to limit the

scope of all that God encompasses to what we can grasp through human understanding. Therefore, it is crucial to seek continually to expand that scope. Johnson contends that to do, so we must center intentionally our focus on groups that reside outside of that scope, that reside on the margins. Following that logic, it is beneficial to use the experience of same-sex oriented individuals as one of our focal points. Johnson explains that thirdly, because no expression of God can be taken literally, we must necessarily give God many names.<sup>114</sup> Once again, we see here the vast possibilities when we understand that not only do we call God by many names but that God is alive and present amongst many communities.

Johnson contends that the experiences of marginalized communities ought to be incorporated more thoroughly and deliberately into our quest for the living God. The same can be said for homosexually-oriented individuals. The Magisterium's teachings on sexuality require a same-sex oriented person to choose between participating fully within the Church or engaging fully with their sexualities. In Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, I argued that because of this reality, the Magisterium's teachings on homosexuality neglect the personhood of homosexually-oriented individuals and consequently detract from their human dignity. In Chapter 3, I proposed that a revisionist sexual ethic such as that offered by Salzman and Lawler upholds the human dignity of same-sex oriented persons because their anthropology is inclusive of same-sex sexual activity and orientation. In this thesis, I also argue that the Church ought to recognize same-sex oriented individuals not only in the fullness of their sexualities, but also in the fullness of their entire personhoods. In order to do so, we must think of homosexually-oriented individuals in terms larger than sexuality and sexual ethics. Johnson's framework proves useful in this attempt. Using Johnson's framework, we can also regard same-sex oriented persons in terms of their experiences of marginalization, and more largely, as members of a (marginalized) community.

Having presented the tenets of Johnson's methodology for seeking the living God, I will now examine the ways in which her framework is actualized within her discussion of particular communities. Johnson's chapter "God who Breaks Chains" addresses the challenge that white privilege and racism pose for Christians who are members of racial minority groups. In this chapter, she discusses liberation theologies that have arisen as a result of African slavery as well as the caustic and lasting effects white privilege and racism continue to have upon Christians in general. Johnson discusses the African slave trade in America, and the insight into God that emerged from their struggles.<sup>115</sup> During this time the Christianity that slave owners taught to slaves was used as a mechanism for control. Despite the oppression of African slaves at the hands of white slave owners, African cultures, traditions, and customs endured. The combination of their exposure to Christianity and their success at retaining ties to their cultures resulted in two interesting phenomena. First, "[t]he enslaved people interpreted Christianity radically anew in light of their own experience of oppression."<sup>116</sup> Secondly, "they expressed this faith in the rhythms, styles of worship, and fundamental perspectives of their own original African traditions."<sup>117</sup> This brand of Christianity became a device of resistance, defiance, and liberation against the atrocities to which African peoples in America were (and in many ways continue to be) subjected for so long.

How did these enslaved peoples successfully adapt Christianity, originally a tool of their oppressors, and turn it into a tool of black liberation? Johnson describes the "kernel" of truth that African slaves drew from the message of their oppressors, reclaiming this fundamental truth as a message of hope – and in many ways, rebellion.<sup>118</sup> Similar to the "kernel of truth" of which Johnson speaks, Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology appropriates the core teachings of *Gaudium et spes* in an attempt establish a Christian sexual ethic that is not detrimental to same-

sex oriented persons and couples.<sup>119</sup> We will see from Johnson's explication the ways in which black liberation theology conceives of a Christianity that does not detract from the human dignity of black persons. Her methodology will add to Salzman's and Lawler's effort to conceive of a Christianity that does not detract from the human dignity of same-sex oriented persons and that also allows us to envision them as members of a Queer Community.

Johnson explains the core message of Christianity to which enslaved Africans were drawn, the story of the death of Jesus, and the belief that Jesus died and rose again for all peoples. "In resisting the staggering affliction of chattel slavery, [enslaved Africans] heard that Jesus died and rose again for all people, bond or free, black or white, rich or poor."<sup>120</sup> What is more, "[t]he insight glimpsed by enslaved Africans that God was a liberator of the oppressed gave them a powerful incentive to struggle for freedom, both spiritual and physical."<sup>121</sup> From this tragedy of slavery, we learn that if God truly loves all God's people, and if Jesus died for all people, then surely God must be present amongst and stand on the side of the oppressed.<sup>122</sup> Operating from the premise that God loves all people equally, we must posit that God does not condone the oppression or subjugation of any of God's people. What does this mean for Christian theology and for the theology of God in particular? What can this mean for the ways in which we understand same-sex orientation? Can we understand same-sex oriented individuals as members of a Queer Community? How does same-sex orientation change the ways in which homosexually-oriented individuals perceive of God and Christianity? In Chapter 1, West's interview of same-sex oriented church leader Lynice Pinkard tells us that "[i]t's fatal to any person to love a God or to perceive of a God that does not love you and to worship that God."<sup>123</sup> For this reason, we must appropriate Johnson's framework and retrieve the "kernel of truth"

within Christianity so that we do not systemize the oppression or degradation of any of our members, including same-sex oriented individuals.

Johnson discusses the two principal theological insights that have arisen as a result of slavery and the historical oppression of people of African descent, especially in the United States. These insights have taken shape primarily in the form of black liberation theology and womanist survival theology. Johnson describes black liberation theology as the study of God that pays deference to the situation of an oppressed community.<sup>124</sup> Black liberation theology draws primarily upon two Biblical passages: the Exodus, and the “resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was always on the side of the marginalized.”<sup>125</sup> Just as God freed the oppressed from Egypt, God continually “participates in the liberation of the oppressed of the land, now taking place in the struggle of black people for freedom.”<sup>126</sup> If God is truly the God of all peoples, then God certainly cannot stand on the side of the oppressor or support the degradation of any of God’s people. Black liberation theology starts from that premise, and it is a premise that will prove useful to expanding our understanding of same-sex orientation and same-sex oriented persons.

Just as by God’s very nature God does not condone oppression, God will not ignore the oppression of any of God’s people, or more specifically in the case of “The God Who Breaks Chains,” the institutions of white privilege and racism.<sup>127</sup> Johnson makes the insightful observation that understanding God to be ‘color-blind’ is therefore also problematic, in that it ignores the problems of white privilege and racism and seemingly neutralizes God’s pursuit of justice in the world. As black liberation theology understands it, God neither tolerates nor overlooks the plight of the marginalized. In fact, “God takes the side of those who are suffering, namely, black people. Black liberation theology puts the new wine of this insight into the new

wineskin of the new symbol: *God is black.*”<sup>128</sup> The black liberation theology movement calls for an abandonment of the stratified racism pervasive in all corners of society, and certainly within popular religion, specifically Christianity.<sup>129</sup> Only when we reject the notion of whiteness as the ideal and allow ourselves to be converted from the deeply rooted, systematic racism that continually infiltrates our society can we receive the true “gift of salvation, which is love of God and a true love of neighbor.”<sup>130</sup> The need to rid theology of stratified oppression is a notion upon which womanist survival theology expands. Similarly, in this thesis, I seek a framework for understanding both same-sex orientation and same-sex oriented individuals in a way that does not contribute to their marginalization.

Womanist theology in many ways parallels black liberation theology, but is centered specifically on the point of view of black women: “Womanist theology makes clear that in addition to racism, black women also suffer from bias against them due to their sex.”<sup>131</sup> Rather than emphasizing liberation, Womanist theology focuses on the survival of black women, drawing on the Bible story of Hagar, a female African slave, a story of both slavery and survival, offering many parallels to the struggle of African American women, including “slavery, poverty, ethnic prejudice, sexual and economic exploitation, rape, surrogate motherhood, domestic violence, homelessness, and single-parenting.”<sup>132</sup> Within womanist survival theology, we see that conclusions drawn from black liberation theology regarding race can be extended to womanist theology regarding gender. Johnson contends that “[w]e need to learn to see and honor the face of Christ in the faces of the poorest black women.”<sup>133</sup> In holding ourselves accountable for oppression and learning to see from the perspective of the most marginalized of God’s peoples, we may continue our quest for the living God with new and valuable insights. We can use Johnson’s framework and take it one step further to include same-sex oriented

persons amongst those who are oppressed and marginalized. The first step to doing so requires that we perceive same-sex oriented persons as members of a Queer Community.<sup>134</sup> Envisioning same-sex orientation in terms of community allows us to think about those other aspects in addition to their sexualities that characterize a same-sex oriented individual's personhood.

If we assume that we might better understand God from the perspective of other marginalized individuals such as the impoverished, women, as well as racial minority groups, must we not also look to the point of view of those who are marginalized due to sexual orientation and gender identity?<sup>135</sup> If we perceive same-sex oriented persons as members of their own Queer Community – and particularly members of a marginalized community - we might posit that they, too, provide us with unique insights into God. Unfortunately, the experience of members of the Queer Community has largely been characterized by suffering. West reminds us that as Christians we are called to address the problems of heterosexism and homophobia in the name of upholding the dignity of homosexually-oriented persons. Salzman's and Lawler's thorough and persuasive response to traditionalists and New Natural Law Theorists provides the scaffolding upon which we might build a framework that presupposes the inherent dignity of same-sex oriented persons and couples in the fullness of their sexuality and their engagement with members of their own sex. Johnson's *Quest for the Living God* advances our goal by pointing out the valuable contributions that marginalized communities stand to offer the Church. Her framework allows us to take the first step towards approaching homosexuality in terms larger than sexual behavior or sexual ethics, thus paying due deference to the entirety of members of the Queer Community. Amongst the groups Johnson cites are non-Christians.<sup>136</sup> This theory is discussed in more detail in David Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. In the next chapter, I discuss Johnson's theology of God in conjunction

with Tracy's theology of pluralism. I contend that Tracy's argument in favor of cultural and theological pluralism, which calls for inclusivity on the part of the Church, ought to extend not only to a multiplicity of religions, but also to a plurality of sexual orientations.



## Chapter 5: Envisioning Sexuality in Light of Cultural Pluralism

In Chapter 4, I discussed Elizabeth Johnson's framework for the theology of God, which explores Christianity within such marginalized groups as the impoverished, women, and members of racial minority groups.<sup>137</sup> Johnson argues that individuals who experience marginalization are an asset to the Church because they offer unique insights into God.<sup>138</sup> I proposed that the same can be said for same-sex oriented individuals. I argued further that same-sex oriented persons, as members of a Queer Community, can be understood as one amongst many unique and valuable reflections of God. Building on the discussion of earlier chapters, I then proposed that instead of approaching homosexuality solely in terms of ethics, we ought to also perceive same-sex oriented individuals as members of a Queer Community, one that, like other marginalized groups, will provide us with new insights into God.

In this chapter, I employ David Tracy's method for cultural and theological pluralism in *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. I propose using Tracy's methodology, in addition to non-Christian persons in traditions we ought to envision sexuality in terms of cultural pluralism as well. Tracy argues that Jesus is present not only within Christian communities, but since God created all people, Jesus is present amongst and across all religious and cultural groups worldwide.<sup>139</sup> He suggests that in engaging with members of other cultures (or more specifically, members of other religions), not only will we further our call to spread the message of Jesus, but we will also discover new and unique ways of understanding Christianity.<sup>140</sup> In this chapter, we will see that Elizabeth Johnson's framework, which asks what insights marginalized groups have to offer the Church, combined with Tracy's methodology for understanding and incorporating these insights will aid in our process of searching for a theology that is inclusive of same-sex oriented individuals and that will

subsequently uphold the human dignity of members of the Queer Community more effectively than the Church's existing doctrine on homosexuality.

In *Blessed Rage for Order*, Tracy states “[t]hat the present situation in theology is one of an ever-increasing pluralism is by now a truism.”<sup>141</sup> Tracy's sentiments, written in 1975, have become all the more true today. In developing a pluralist theological method, Tracy argues that cultural diversity and the array of customs, beliefs and practices throughout the world today is beneficial to Christianity.<sup>142</sup> After delineating Tracy's position, I expand upon his approach and suggest that his methodology is useful in reexamining the Church's understanding of sexuality. Operating under the assumption that cultural pluralism is a valid – and valuable – theological framework, understanding sexuality in the same manner also proves beneficial to same-sex oriented individuals. Tracy offers his pluralistic methodology as a response to the postmodern paradigm in which we currently live. The implications of postmodernity are explained by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza:

[P]reviously one could assume a particular philosophy or worldview as a standard one could appeal to link theology and culture....This philosophy...served as an accepted philosophical standard. Today, however, no single philosophy or philosophical view exists as such a standard or cultural medium for theological reflection.<sup>143</sup>

In an age where there no longer exists a uniform method of theological or moral discernment, institutionalized religions such as the Catholic Church are faced with the challenge of responding to this shift in thought while also adhering to those beliefs which they profess to be universally true.

Theologians such as Tracy offer methods of cultural and theological pluralism as a response to this postmodern shift, arguing that there is both validity and utility in the variety of beliefs and cultures today. For pluralists such as Tracy, postmodernity represents not so much a challenge but an opportunity. He explains that his book attempts to “provide hope that we may,

after all, be able, in our post-modern period, to learn...from postmodernity.”<sup>144</sup> Postmodern thought has engendered most broadly the theory that there is legitimacy to a number of differences in cultural customs and belief systems. In addition, postmodernity has influenced our understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation. The Magisterium’s existing position on sexual ethics, which condemns same-sex sexual acts, has recently been called into question by an array of thinkers both within and outside of the Catholic tradition. In regards to this postmodern shift, Tracy asserts that “the present pluralism of theologies allows each theologian to learn incomparably more about reality by disclosing really different ways of viewing both our common humanity and Christianity.”<sup>145</sup> In engaging with non-Christians, not only will we realize our call to spread the message of Jesus, we will also discover new and unique ways of understanding Christianity.<sup>146</sup> Tracy’s methodology for seeking these insights will aid in our process of searching for a more comprehensive and inclusive sexual ethic.

Before discussing cultural pluralism, I will first explore both terms individually. This will aid our effort to understand homosexuality in terms of the diversity and marginalization of various cultural groups as discussed by Tracy and Johnson, respectively. In *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*, Michael Paul Gallagher suggests that most broadly, culture signifies “a coming together of different elements such as meanings, values, symbols, beliefs, practices and so on.”<sup>147</sup> Gallagher asks useful questions in this regard: “Do we construct culture, or does culture construct us? What is the process of production behind the accepted forms and practices of culture? Who controls the vehicles of cultural formation? How can we participate in the creation of culture?”<sup>148</sup> The question as to whether culture is inevitable or incidental impacts Tracy’s position as well as my own. Who is (or who ought to be) involved in the construction, process, and participation of the formation of culture is the question I explore in

my attempt to reframe Catholic sexual ethics, as our understanding of the term culture and the various communities present in and amongst cultures is essential to the topic in question in this thesis.

I would also like to define my use of the term plural(ism). The term plural has different connotations when referring to plurality and two related terms, pluralization and pluralism. I accept the literal definition of the word plural(ity): many, or large in number.<sup>149</sup> I understand pluralization to mean the process through which our world is currently becoming increasingly culturally diverse.<sup>150</sup> I consider pluralism to mean the diversity of cultures, customs, belief systems, and religious traditions and practices in the contemporary world, as well as the belief in the importance of this plurality.<sup>151</sup> Note that Tracy's use of this term is evaluative in the sense that he argues in favor of pluralism as a framework for his theology.<sup>152</sup> This thesis appropriates his use of the term. Keeping these considerations in mind, I can now address more effectively cultural pluralism as it relates to Tracy's *New Pluralism in Theology*.

### **Christianity and Self-Transcendence**

Similar to the questions Gallagher poses, Tracy points out that the calling into question of our beliefs and preconceptions is a theologically beneficial exercise because it forces us to consider in greater detail not only what we believe, but also why we believe it.<sup>153</sup> In engaging with others as well as with our own faith more deeply, we might reach out to those groups that are currently on the margins of the Church. While the Church professes a belief in truths that are both universal and infallible, Christian teaching also stipulates that every human possesses the inherent ability to receive the truth of the Gospel.<sup>154</sup> Given this belief, Tracy posits that Christian

fact *by necessity* exceeds what we describe as explicitly Christian and, in its transcendence, universal Christian truth becomes implicit amongst those who do not claim Christianity as their religion. In relation to the transcendent nature of the Christian message, Tracy appropriates Bernard Lonergan's concept of self-transcendence:

One lives authentically insofar as one continues to allow oneself an expanding horizon. That expansion has as its chief aim the going-beyond one's present state in accordance with the transcendental imperatives: "Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, develop and, if necessary, change."<sup>155</sup>

Tracy rightly asserts that as human beings we are called to expand our own horizons and in so doing develop a better appreciation of the situation facing ourselves as well as the world around us. Tracy's call for theological pluralism, which aims to be more inclusive of non-Christian persons, parallels Salzman's and Lawler's call for same-sex inclusivity on the part of Catholic sexual ethics. Salzman and Lawler as well as Tracy stress the important role that historical consciousness ought to play in any theological methodology. Tracy argues that the celebration of the new pluralism in theology serves as a meaningful response to our current paradigm of postmodernity. As we no longer operate under a common standard for evaluating truth, we ought to approach other traditions with the perspective that they too might possess truths that transcend the confines of Christianity. Tracy's explanation here is invaluable to the position that theology and subsequently the Church ought to be more open to adapting to humanity's dynamic nature. We can do so because of, not in spite of, the Church's infallible teachings.

Using Tracy's methodology, rather than regarding these beliefs as alternative truths, in non-Christian traditions we might discern *alternative* expressions of the *same* truths. Likewise, we might also then recognize not only the validity of belief systems and practices in addition to Christianity, but also a diversity of sexual orientations in addition to heterosexuality. In keeping with the discussion of non-Christian peoples and traditions, I will now address the question as to

what we mean when we profess that Christianity is uniquely salvific.<sup>156</sup> The significant presence of non-Christian religions and beliefs as well as that of non-heterosexual persons are cause for reevaluating whether the practice of Christianity is uniquely salvific, or similarly, whether the practices of heterosexuality or chastity are sanctified exclusively. While certain beliefs might find themselves definitively at odds with Christianity, we see from Tracy's argument that pluralism in itself does not pose any inherent contradiction to the beliefs that Christianity holds to be absolutely true.

Tracy's pluralistic method engages in "philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in common human experience and language, and upon the meanings present in the Christian fact."<sup>157</sup> What is seen here is a negotiation between the common humanity in all peoples and the infallible truths of Christianity. This negotiation might also be understood as an engagement between the particularity of a specific culture and the universality of Christian teaching. The challenge to establishing a coherent framework for a pluralistic theology is discerning that which is essential to Christianity, and that which can be adapted to accommodate the particularities of a given culture. For Tracy, in order to reflect theologically upon common human experience, we must engage in the process of cultural analysis.<sup>158</sup> Cultural analysis allows us to appreciate those elements of other cultures that upon initial investigation we might fail to grasp, but with whom we ultimately share common human experience(s).<sup>159</sup> Tracy's method of cultural analysis echoes Salzman's and Lawler's call for historical consciousness as well as West's and Johnson's emphases of human experience. Similar to Tracy, Johnson cites non-Christians amongst the groups from whom we can gain valuable wisdom and insight into God.<sup>160</sup> Tracy's discussion of cultural analysis is also reminiscent of Gallagher's question as to what is fundamental versus what is incidental to the formation as well as our understanding of

culture.<sup>161</sup> Cultural analysis allows us to engage more deeply with other cultures as well as to question our own preconceptions about what culture is, what culture ought to be, and to reflect upon whose voices most often go heard or unheard within our culture.

As I have argued, Current Church doctrine on sexuality diminishes the personhood of same-sex oriented persons. Inasmuch as they are not allowed to participate fully within the Church if they choose to enact fully their sexual and romantic orientations, they are forced to reside outside the Church or to reject an innate part of their personhood if they decide to participate within the Church. Consequently, their voices go largely unheard within the Church as well as throughout our wider society. The Catholic Church has historically been a voice for the unheard, and a champion of human dignity. The silence and more importantly the silencing of same-sex oriented individuals warrant a reexamination of any cultural beliefs and expectations that effect this reality. Traditionalist and New Natural Law Theorists contribute to the silencing of same-sex oriented individuals. The first step to rectifying this problem is implementing an inclusive, revisionist sexual ethic such as that proposed by Salzman and Lawler. Furthermore, we must start thinking more deeply about the entirety of same-sex oriented persons. Salzman and Lawler draw upon McCarthy, who suggests that same-sex oriented persons discover themselves in their encounters with members of their own sex.<sup>162</sup> Similarly, Johnson suggests that members of marginalized groups in their unique experiences and their suffering can offer valuable contributions to the Church. Tracy likewise proposes that non-Christians, *by virtue* of the fact that they are non-Christian, can provide us with new ways of understanding our own faith. By conducting an investigation as to what is fundamental versus what is incidental about our understanding of culture, we might also then posit that same-sex oriented persons are valuable to the Church *because* and not *in spite* of their sexual orientations. Tracy provides us

with a useful methodology for reinvestigating our understanding of culture so we might in turn work to envision sexual orientation thusly.

In addition to engaging in the process of cultural analysis, Tracy's methodology searches for a balance between experience and tradition. He asserts that "the two principal sources for theology are Christian texts and common human experience....Christian theology will attempt to show the appropriateness of its chosen categories to the meanings of the major expressions and texts of the Christian tradition."<sup>163</sup> Scripture and tradition convey what Tracy refers to as Christianity's "universalist claim."<sup>164</sup> Pluralist theology evaluates the practices of non-Christian traditions based on their concurrence with the fundamental teachings of Christianity. This "universalist claim" describes the proclamation of the Gospel, a message that transcends such elements as context and culture.<sup>165</sup> An omnipotent, omnipresent God must surely be accessible within non-Christian contexts. That is to say, that while, on the one hand, the Church might perceive non-Christian traditions as contradictory to Christian teaching, on the other, the universality of the Christian message pertains not *incidentally* but *directly* to the particularity of these cultures.

From these distinct contexts we might discover new insights into God and our Christian faith. For Tracy, it is necessary therefore to defer proportionately to experience in addition to Scripture and tradition. As we saw, similar calls to utilize context and experience are also present within the works of West in her discussion of heterosexism and homophobia as well as Salzman and Lawler in their sexual anthropology and Johnson in her theology of God. As all these thinkers point out, in utilizing the criteria of experience and context, we might better understand the unique circumstances of the peoples of today. In the case of marginalized groups, if we appreciate the extent to which these persons experience suffering, for example, we are



more likely to become concerned about their plight. An obstacle to addressing the problem of marginalization is the problem of normativity, or our presumptions about what we believe to be true.<sup>166</sup> In Chapters 1 and 2 I highlighted some of the normative claims put forth by traditionalists and New Natural Law Theorists. By their understanding, implicit within the term intercourse is specifically penile-vaginal intercourse,<sup>167</sup> and a “truly human” sexual act must never separate both the unitive *and* the procreative aspects of complementarity.<sup>168</sup> Salzman and Lawler debunk these normative preconceptions by pointing out that there are other elements implicit within both terms. Intercourse, for example, also signifies interaction and communication between individuals,<sup>169</sup> and complementarity in addition to being physical is also psychological, spiritual, emotional, and relational.<sup>170</sup> From Salzman and Lawler we see the ways in which challenging normativity allows us to rethink our understanding of sexuality and sexual ethics. Similarly, Tracy points out the ways in which questioning normative claims about culture can enhance our understanding of non-Christian traditions and peoples.

Pluralistic theology as well as an inclusive sexual theology must necessarily challenge the accepted norm as to what is true or untrue, what is moral or immoral, and so forth. Tracy’s pluralist methodology challenges normativity in that it calls into question whether Christianity is the only viable mechanism for expressing “Christian fact”<sup>171</sup> and engaging in relationship with God. There is cause for concern toward normativity in that it tends to value the perceived majority over the minority in a way that juxtaposes the mainstream with those who either do not conform or who do not fit into what is considered to be the norm. Individuals who do not adhere to these standards are pushed subsequently to the margins of society. In the context of the United States, for example, Christianity is the dominant religion, and is often consequently regarded as the normative religion there.<sup>172</sup> Within the context of sexual orientation, the same

can be said for heterosexuality. Tracy's inclusivist framework responds to this call in a manner that is both widespread in its reach and theologically cogent in its non-exclusive engagement with Scripture and tradition. What is more, it considers the human dignity of those beyond or outside of a specifically Christian or normative scope.

In addition to benefiting those outside the Church, Tracy reminds us that engaging with other cultures will benefit Christianity as well.<sup>173</sup> The interaction between Christianity and various other cultures is often described using the term inculturation. Most broadly, the term inculturation signifies the interaction between universality and particularity.<sup>174</sup> More specifically, inculturation refers to the mutual influence between the presence of Christianity in a given locality and the culture already present there. In *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique*, Gerald Arbuckle describes inculturation as a "dialectical interaction between Christian faiths and cultures."<sup>175</sup> The term dialectical is significant here as it implies that each party both teaches and also learns from the other, signifying the mutuality of the experience that the thinkers in this thesis articulate. Also pertinent is Arbuckle's explanation that "as no one culture has normative status in expressing the truths of faith, those truths are translatable into all cultures."<sup>176</sup> Arbuckle's claim that "no one culture has normative status in expressing the truths of faith" parallels Tracy's assertion that our perception of culture is often informed by normative preconceptions.<sup>177</sup> In addition, Arbuckle's and Tracy's critiques of culture help us readdress Gallagher's questions as to *whom* as well as *how* one participates in this construction.<sup>178</sup>

As I discussed, Gallagher questions who controls and/or participates in "the process of production behind the accepted forms and practices of culture."<sup>179</sup> Gallagher's question points out that what many view as a given (i.e., the normativity and/or superiority of a particular belief,

practice, and so forth) may actually be a construct. This parallels my discussion of Salzman and Lawler and their reconceptualization of normative understandings of such terms as conjugality, intercourse, and complementarity. West, Salzman and Lawler, Johnson, and Tracy all remind us that it is essential to take into consideration that there are many influences that inform one's perception of truth. Sometimes what is true and what is normative are not one and the same. This notion helps us to rectify the process by which normativity contributes to marginalization, and to incorporate more voices into the formation of our culture. As Christians, we must take care not to marginalize non-Christians or any individuals we consider to be the "other." The marginalization, oppression, or stigmatization of any individual is inimical to the Christian message. We must take care then to create a space within our Church for those individuals such as same-sex oriented persons who currently reside on the margins. In our continued effort to uphold the Christian message, at the heart of which is the call to love one's neighbor,<sup>180</sup> we must hold ourselves accountable for any belief or practice that detracts from a human's dignity, particularly in the case traditionalist and New Natural Law theories, both of which contribute to the subjugation of same-sex oriented individuals.

In discussing our concern for those who suffer, it is useful to bring up once again the concept of self-transcendence. Drawing from Lonergan, Tracy asserts that the transcendental imperatives call us not only to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, but also to develop, and, if necessary, change.<sup>181</sup> It is the latter two imperatives that are of fundamental importance when addressing the issue of pluralism, as well as the nature of sexuality. In light of our pluralistic, postmodern paradigm, the Church will benefit from a change in its view of sexual ethics, particularly because the condemnation of homosexuality contributes to the marginalization and subsequent suffering of members of the Queer Community. To that end,

Tracy poses some crucial questions in relation to the suffering of God's people: "Is not the God of the Jewish and Christian scriptures a God profoundly involved in humanity's struggle to the point where God not merely affects but is affected by the struggle?"<sup>182</sup> Like Johnson, Tracy asserts that not only does God care about the suffering of all God's people; God is *on the side* of those who suffer.<sup>183</sup>

Tracy is apt to point out that God's love is indeed so boundless that God is available to all of humanity, and more importantly, that God is concerned about the struggle of all humanity. Tracy then asks, "Can the God of Jesus Christ really be *simply* changeless, [and]...unaffected by our anguish and our achievements?"<sup>184</sup> Christianity certainly professes a belief in a God that is responsive to humanity's anguish. Operating from this premise, we might surmise that God is thus concerned about the struggles of the Queer Community. With regard to humanity's achievements, a pluralistic framework perceives the development and evolution of human thought as demonstrative of the progress rather than the deterioration of our ability to engage with and reflect God on Earth. It is our responsibility to utilize developments, discoveries, and improvements we have made since the foundation of Christian scripture and tradition. Incorporating new theories regarding culture as well as sexuality will help us to do so.

In Chapter 1, I reaffirm Traci West's assertion that same-sex oriented persons reside on the margins of the Church and of society due to the stigma caused by heterosexism and homophobia. The suffering of homosexually-inclined individuals warrants a reexamination of any teaching that does not allow them to participate within the fullness of their personhood. Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology is invaluable to the cause that strives for the full inclusivity of same-sex oriented individuals and couples. Most obviously, an inclusive sexual ethic will benefit homosexually-oriented individuals because it will allow them to participate

fully and openly within the Church. Operating from this premise, Johnson and Tracy allow us to start to think about the ways the larger Church will also benefit from this interaction. Sensitivity to marginalization holds us accountable for those institutions that are harmful to marginalized persons and communities. Moreover, the suffering these individuals inform their relationship with God, shaping these individuals' experiences as well as their encounters with God.

These unique and distinctive aspects of the living God present within marginalized communities deepen our understanding of the Christian faith and our relationship with God and one another. Tracy makes a similar argument on behalf of theological pluralism. He argues that God is alive and present within and across peoples of all cultures and traditions. More to the point, he argues that non-Christian peoples and traditions *by their very non-Christian nature* reflect God in new and different ways. Tracy suggests that the Church will benefit from what he believes is a valid postmodern critique toward unyielding and unquestioned beliefs in universal and normative truths.<sup>185</sup> As we know, Tracy's methodology does not seek to abandon Christian truth. Instead, he seeks to expand it to include more individuals than those who explicitly call themselves Christians. This is not entirely dissimilar from Salzman's and Lawler's expansion of Catholic sexual ethics to include more than exclusively heterosexually-oriented persons and couples.

Just as Tracy argues that the interaction between Christians and non-Christians will be mutually beneficial, I contend that so will the interaction between the Church and the Queer Community. Salzman and Lawler demonstrate that it is possible to incorporate same-sex oriented persons and couples into the Church's framework for sexual ethics. Can we also use Tracy's appropriation of the postmodern critique and his methodology for cultural pluralism to posit that there might also be legitimacy to a multitude of sexualities and orientations? I believe

we can, and more importantly, I believe we should. Tracy validates the moral status of non-Christians, whom he believes are valuable by virtue of the fact that they are non-Christian. It stands to reason, then, that there is value not only in a diversity of belief systems but also in a diversity of sexual orientations.

Tracy's appropriation of the transcendental imperatives allows us to posit that change might be seen as an instrument rather than an obstacle to the profession of the Christian faith. Tracy poses this idea, asking, "Is not intelligent and responsible change a positive not a negative factor in all our experience?...How then do we move from this...insistence that God precisely as *the perfect one* must be changeless?"<sup>186</sup> The answer is simple: We are only human insofar as we are affected by and relate to other humans.<sup>187</sup> That we are relational and responsive in our interaction with others suggests that God, likewise, is active and responsive in the lives of all God's people. That we are affected by those around us instills not only our ability but also our *need* to respond to the suffering and marginalization of our neighbors. The fact that there exists such a significant number of persons who do not call themselves Christians is cause to re-envision our understanding of salvation, and to rectify any belief that does not respond to this reality. We must likewise envision an understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation that both considers and embraces the realization that there also exists a significant number of persons who find themselves outside the sphere of heterosexuality.

It is crucial to incorporate cultural pluralism into Christian theology not only for the sake of reimagining the meaning of non-Christian traditions, but also for thinking about our own tradition in new and different ways. The same can be said for being more inclusive of the Queer Community within the Church. Operating from Tracy's premise, it is clear that as humans, and particularly as Christians, we are affected necessarily by the plight of all God's people. We must

therefore readdress – and as Tracy reminds us, when necessary, change<sup>188</sup> – our understanding of sexuality and sexual orientation in the name of benefiting the Queer Community as well as our larger Church.

### CONCLUSION

In light of the suffering of the Queer Community, the Church is called to address the problems of heterosexism and homophobia as outlined by Traci West. As John Paul II reminds us in *Evangelium Vitae*, we are called to uphold the human dignity of every person. The Church cannot do so while also professing a sexual ethic that condemns homosexuality. Salzman's and Lawler's *The Sexual Person* works toward this goal of upholding the human dignity of members of the Queer Community. Salzman and Lawler provide us with a sexual ethic that prioritizes romantic union and interpersonal complementarity over procreation and heterogenital complementarity. Their framework, founded upon Thomistic reasoning that suggests that above all else we must do good and avoid evil, thusly also adheres to foundational Church teaching. Salzman's and Lawler's framework for sexual ethics also serves as a meaningful response to the problematic elements of the Church's existing teachings on sexuality. Salzman's and Lawler's sexual anthropology plays a crucial role in our effort to create a space for members of the Queer Community within our Church. Elizabeth Johnson's framework in *Quest for the Living God* allows us to progress even farther in our quest to relate to and reflect God on Earth, by reminding us of the valuable contributions marginalized communities have to offer. David Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order* argues similarly that individuals outside the sphere of Christianity help us to understand our own tradition in new and unique ways. Recognizing not only a multitude of religions and cultures but also the multi-faceted nature of sexuality, we might surmise that

members of a Queer Community, *by virtue* of their Queerness, enrich our Church and enhance our ability to engage with each other and with God.

Christian teaching professes the belief that *every* human being is made in the image of God. Every person shares an innate humanness, characterized and blessed by the grace of God.<sup>189</sup> With this in mind, we see that inclusion of the Queer Community is beneficial not only to non-Christian traditions, but also to Christianity. Salzman's and Lawler's revised sexual ethic in conjunction with Johnson's framework for the theology of God and Tracy's methodology for cultural pluralism allow us to move toward a conversation that does not simply argue in favor of same-sex orientation. A framework that envisions sexuality in terms of cultural pluralism allows us to regard same-sex oriented individuals as members of a Queer Community, a community amongst countless others that reflects God in unique and valuable ways. A framework that embraces a Queer Community gives us hope that we might someday begin a conversation that no longer asks whether homosexuality is morally acceptable, but that already believes this to be true.



---

<sup>1</sup> This thesis specifically addresses homosexuality and homosexual attraction. In an attempt to be as inclusive as possible of the many different orientations and identities that those who experience homosexuality claim, including but certainly not limited to lesbian, gay, bi, fluid, pansexual, and omniseual, etc., I refer to homosexuality specifically in terms of attraction, orientation, inclination, etc., using such terms as same-sex or homosexually-oriented or inclined. Later, when I address same-sex attraction in terms of culture and community, I use the term “Queer.”

<sup>2</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 14

<sup>3</sup> Traci C. West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 142.

<sup>4</sup> West, 142

<sup>5</sup> Michael King, “A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people,” *BMC Psychiatry*, 2008, accessed 2014, <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/8/70/>.

<sup>6</sup> Additionally, same-sex oriented people are at a high risk for becoming the victims of hate crimes (“Issue: Hate Crimes,” *Human Rights Campaign*, accessed 2014, <http://www.hrc.org/issues/hate-crimes>).

<sup>7</sup> West, 142

<sup>8</sup> West, 142

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Michon, “Federal Marriage Benefits Denied to Same-Sex Couples,” *Nolo: Law for All*, 2013, accessed 2014, <http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/same-sex-couples-federal-marriage-benefits-30326.html>.

<sup>10</sup> West, 161

<sup>11</sup> Michael King, “A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people,” *BMC Psychiatry*, 2008, accessed 2014, <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/8/70/>.

<sup>12</sup> Ratzinger’s letter is one amongst numerous Church letters and teachings regarding sexuality. While Ratzinger’s letter does not necessarily represent the Church’s position on sexuality writ large, I choose to discuss this particular letter in detail because the views expressed in the letter are demonstrative of Church teachings on sexuality with which I take issue in this paper. It is important to realize, however, that it is one amongst many official letters and teachings that address sexual behavior.

<sup>13</sup> Josef Ratzinger, “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,” *The Holy See*, 1986, accessed 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19861001\\_homosexual-persons\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html), 16.

<sup>14</sup> Ratzinger, 11

<sup>15</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, accessed 2014,

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html), 14.

<sup>16</sup> Hans Küng, *Christianity: Essence, History and Future* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994), 292-293.

<sup>17</sup> Ratzinger, 3

<sup>18</sup> “Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder” (Ratzinger, 3).

<sup>19</sup> Ratzinger, 10

<sup>20</sup> Todd A. Salzman and Michael G. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 58

<sup>21</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>22</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>23</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>24</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>25</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>26</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>27</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58.

<sup>28</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 5

<sup>30</sup> According to Salzman and Lawler, New Natural Law Theory was “developed by Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, and their colleagues” (Salzman and Lawler, 58).

<sup>31</sup> John M. Finnis, “Law, Morality, and ‘Sexual Orientation,’” in *The Catholic Church, Morality, and Politics*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Leslie Griffin, (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 313.

<sup>32</sup> Finnis, 313, original brackets

<sup>33</sup> Finnis, 315-17

<sup>34</sup> Finnis, 313

<sup>35</sup> Ratzinger, 3

<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger, 11

<sup>37</sup> Ratzinger, 16

<sup>38</sup> Finnis, 314

<sup>39</sup> Traci West discusses the prevalence and ramifications of societal homophobia and heterosexism in *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women’s Lives Matter* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 141-179). The discrepancy in many ways speaks for itself, not only on a theological but also on a societal level. Either every couple that has sex before marriage or uses birth control, for example, ought to be prevented from marrying, or better yet, same sex couples ought to be allowed to do so.

<sup>40</sup> I find that adding an –ist (or an –ism) to the end of a word makes it inherently more evaluative. Finnis’s disdain for homosexuality is apparent in his phrasing here, and I am likewise intentional in referring to ‘procreationism’ in the same manner, as my paper will continue to demonstrate my disagreement with traditionalist sexual ethics and my affirmation of the revisionist perspective (Finnis, 324).

<sup>41</sup> Finnis, 318

<sup>42</sup> Finnis, 318-319

<sup>43</sup> I imagine Finnis is attempting to use the device of *reductio ad absurdum* here but in my opinion he fails to do so convincingly, rendering his own argument absurd instead.

<sup>44</sup> Ratzinger, 10

<sup>45</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 1

<sup>46</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 81

<sup>47</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 5

<sup>48</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 5, 8

<sup>49</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 21

<sup>50</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 14

<sup>51</sup> Kevin Knight, “Sacrament of Marriage,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2009, accessed 2014,

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09707a.htm>.

<sup>52</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 14

<sup>53</sup> This teaching prioritizes heterosexuality, marriage and procreation and therefore implicates not only same-sex oriented individuals and couples but also individuals who are celibate, couples who are not married, and couples who cannot or choose not to reproduce, for example.

<sup>54</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 12

<sup>55</sup> Ratzinger, 10-12.

<sup>56</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 5

<sup>57</sup> Ratzinger, 3

<sup>58</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 58

<sup>59</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>60</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>61</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 99

<sup>62</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>63</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>64</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>65</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>66</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 67

<sup>67</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 103

<sup>68</sup> Dictionary.com, “conjugal,” 2009, accessed 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/conjugal?s=t>.

<sup>69</sup> *Evangelium Vitae*, 13

<sup>70</sup> Normative definitions of physical acts relating to sexuality are rampant. Similarly problematic is the definition of the word virginity, which is defined as someone who has never had sexual intercourse, meaning penile-vaginal

intercourse (Dictionary.com, “Virgin,” 2009, accessed 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/virgin?s=t>). Even more troubling is the legal interpretation of rape, which is defined as penetration (thereby determining that males who are forced to have sexual relations but are not actually penetrated were not legitimately raped [Eric Holder, “Attorney General Eric Holder Announces Revisions to the Uniform Crime Report’s Definition of Rape,” January 2012, accessed 2014, <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/January/12-ag-018.html>]).

<sup>71</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 126

<sup>72</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 88

<sup>73</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 126

<sup>74</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 124-126

<sup>75</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 124

<sup>76</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 125

<sup>77</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 125

<sup>78</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 138

<sup>79</sup> Salzman and Lawler, original emphasis

<sup>80</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, accessed 2014,

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), 49.

<sup>81</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, 2003, accessed, 2014,

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20030731\\_homosexual-unions\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html), 7.

<sup>82</sup> CDF, 7

<sup>83</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 140

<sup>84</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 140, original emphasis

<sup>85</sup> CDF, 7

<sup>86</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 144

<sup>87</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 144

<sup>88</sup> David McCarthy, “The Relationship of Bodies: A Nuptial Hermeneutics of Same-Sex Unions” in *Human Sexuality and the Nuptial Mystery The Relationship of Bodies: A Nuptial Hermeneutics of Same-Sex Unions*, ed. Roy R. Jeal (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 212-213.

<sup>89</sup> McCarthy, 212-213

<sup>90</sup> McCarthy, 212-213

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 9.

<sup>92</sup> Ratzinger, 3

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, 9

<sup>94</sup> Johnson, 9

<sup>95</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>96</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>97</sup> Johnson, 9

<sup>98</sup> Johnson, 9

<sup>99</sup> Johnson, 9

<sup>100</sup> Johnson, 12

<sup>101</sup> Johnson, 12

<sup>102</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>103</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>104</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>105</sup> West, 142

<sup>106</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 98

<sup>107</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 99-100

<sup>108</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>109</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>110</sup> Johnson, 13, original emphasis

<sup>111</sup> Johnson, 17

<sup>112</sup> Johnson, 18

<sup>113</sup> Johnson, 18

<sup>114</sup> Johnson, 21

<sup>115</sup> Johnson, 113

<sup>116</sup> Johnson, 114

<sup>117</sup> Johnson, 114

<sup>118</sup> Johnson, 114

<sup>119</sup> I do not wish to draw a direct parallel between slavery and the current status of same-sex orientation within the Church, and I want to be sensitive to the discrepancies between the two. However, I find that the methodology of retrieval Johnson describes is also useful to the Queer Community.

<sup>120</sup> Johnson, 114

<sup>121</sup> Johnson, 115

<sup>122</sup> Johnson posits, “God’s signature deed is liberation. There is no God except the God who participates in the liberation of the oppressed of the land” (Johnson, 125).

<sup>123</sup> West, 161

<sup>124</sup> Johnson, 123

<sup>125</sup> Johnson, 123

<sup>126</sup> Johnson, 123

<sup>127</sup> Johnson describes the problems of white privilege and racism, stating:

“Whiteness is pervasively normative, whereas the marker ‘black’ gets added to people who deviate from that norm, a small point that signifies a lifetime of difference. . . . Black experience means daily existence in a system of white racism. Therefore, the question for black theology from the perspective of the black community necessarily becomes, ‘How can we speak about God without being associated with the oppressors of the land?’” (Johnson, 123-124)

<sup>128</sup> Johnson, 124, original emphasis

<sup>129</sup> By ‘popular religion’ I mean to describe commonly practiced religion, or the religion of the people, in this case ‘popular’ or commonly practiced Christianity.

<sup>130</sup> Johnson, 125

<sup>131</sup> Johnson, 126

<sup>132</sup> Johnson, 127-28, in reference to Genesis chapters 16 and 21

<sup>133</sup> Johnson, 129

<sup>134</sup> In addition to the inclusive language of the term, I have selected the term Queer Community in an attempt to envision same-sex oriented persons in terms of their personhood rather than their orientation. In so doing I have the following definitions of the term community in mind: “a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage” as well as “a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists” (“Community,” dictionary.com, accessed 2014, (“Community,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/community?s=t>). Like members of other marginalized communities as well as the Christian community, I believe the borders of this community to be porous rather than absolute.

<sup>135</sup> Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis does not me allow to address gender identity, particularly trans-identified individuals within the lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer community. What is more, I cannot do justice to the vast vocabulary and language members of this community use to describe their orientations and identities. In deference to this magnitude and diversity, I have chosen to use the term “queer,” which is not limited to but includes same-sex orientation.

<sup>136</sup> Johnson, 153

<sup>137</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 9.

<sup>138</sup> Johnson, 9

<sup>139</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 43.

<sup>140</sup> Tracy, 43

<sup>141</sup> Tracy, 1

<sup>142</sup> Tracy, xvi

<sup>143</sup> Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 66.

- <sup>144</sup> Tracy, xvi
- <sup>145</sup> Tracy, 3
- <sup>146</sup> Tracy, 43
- <sup>147</sup> Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 16.
- <sup>148</sup> Gallagher, 15
- <sup>149</sup> “Plural,” dictionary.com, accessed 2014, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/plural?s=t>.
- <sup>150</sup> I suppose it is debatable in and of itself whether or not the world is indeed undergoing a process of pluralization. Tracy’s work is best understood under the theory that we are living in a paradigm with peoples of many differing cultures that include a multitude of religious traditions, customs, belief systems, ethnicities, norms, mores, and so forth.
- <sup>151</sup> While the term pluralization is not of primary significance within this paper, it is nonetheless important to address the distinction between the two. While pluralization reflects a theory that there is indeed a diverse multiplicity of cultures in the world today, pluralism is a more evaluative term in that it professes a belief in the legitimacy and value of pluralization.
- <sup>152</sup> Tracy, xvi
- <sup>153</sup> Tracy, 91
- <sup>154</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, trans. Anton C. Pegis, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), 63- 66.
- <sup>155</sup> Tracy, 96
- <sup>156</sup> Paul VII, *Humanae Vitae*, The Holy See, 1968, accessed 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html).
- <sup>157</sup> Tracy, 43
- <sup>158</sup> Tracy, 69
- <sup>159</sup> Tracy, 91
- <sup>160</sup> Johnson, 153
- <sup>161</sup> Gallagher, 16
- <sup>162</sup> McCarthy, 212-213
- <sup>163</sup> Tracy, 45
- <sup>164</sup> Tracy, 44
- <sup>165</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, accessed 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html), 78.
- <sup>166</sup> “The Normativity of Meaning and Content,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2009, accessed 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meaning-normativity/>.
- <sup>167</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 126
- <sup>168</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 49
- <sup>169</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 126
- <sup>170</sup> Salzman and Lawler, 88
- <sup>171</sup> Tracy, 43
- <sup>172</sup> Frank Newport, “Christianity Remains the Dominant Religion in the United States,” Gallup, 2011, accessed 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/151760/christianity-remains-dominant-religion-united-states.aspx>.
- <sup>173</sup> Tracy, 3
- <sup>174</sup> Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), xvii.
- <sup>175</sup> Arbuckle, xvii
- <sup>176</sup> Arbuckle, 169
- <sup>177</sup> Tracy, 91
- <sup>178</sup> Gallagher, 15
- <sup>179</sup> Gallagher, 15
- <sup>180</sup> Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1950), 92-103.
- <sup>181</sup> Tracy, 96
- <sup>182</sup> Tracy, 177
- <sup>183</sup> Johnson, 124
- <sup>184</sup> Tracy, 177, original emphasis

<sup>185</sup> Tracy, 1

<sup>186</sup> Tracy, 178, original emphasis

<sup>187</sup> Tracy, 178

<sup>188</sup> Tracy, 96

<sup>189</sup> Ratzinger, 16

---

## Bibliography

- Arbuckle, Gerald A. *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique*.  
Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: God*, translated by Anton C. Pegis.  
Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, Press, 1955.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal  
Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*. 2003, accessed, 2014.  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20030731\\_homosexual-unions\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html).
- Dictionary.com. Accessed May, 2014. [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com).
- Finnis, John M. Law, Morality, and ‘Sexual Orientation,’” in *The Catholic Church, Morality,  
and Politics*, edited by Charles E. Curran and Leslie Griffin. New York: Paulist Press,  
2001.
- Fiorenza, Frances Schüssler. *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*. Minneapolis:  
Fortress Press, 1991.
- Gallagher, Michael Paul. *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture*. Mahwah:  
Paulist Press, 1997.
- “Issue: Hates Crime.” Human Rights Campaign, 2014. Accessed 2014.  
<http://www.hrc.org/issues/hate-crimes>
- John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*. The Holy See, 1995. Accessed 2014.  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html).
- Johnson, Elizabeth. *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*. New

- 
- York: Bloombury Publishing, 2007.
- King, Michael. "A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people," *BMC Psychiatry*, 2008, accessed 2014, <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/8/70/>.
- Knight, Kevin. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2014. Accessed May, 2014. <http://www.newadvent.org>.
- Küng, Hans. *Christianity: Essence, History and Future*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994.
- McCarthy, David. "The Relationship of Bodies: A Nuptial Hermeneutics of Same-Sex Unions." In *Human Sexuality and the Nuptial Mystery The Relationship of Bodies: A Nuptial Hermeneutics of Same-Sex Unions*, edited by Roy R. Jeal. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007.
- Michon, Kathleen. "Federal Marriage Benefits Denied to Same-Sex Couples." *Nolo: Law for All*, 2013. Accessed 2014. <http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/same-sex-couples-federal-marriage-benefits-30326.html>.
- Newport, Frank. "Christianity Remains the Dominant Religion in the United States." Gallup Poll, 2011. Accessed 2014. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/151760/christianity-remains-dominant-religion-united-states.aspx>.
- Paul VI. *Gaudium et spes*. The Holy See, 1965. Accessed 2014. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).
- Paul VII. *Humane Vitae*. The Holy See, 1968. Accessed 2014.



---

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html).

Ramsey, Paul. *Basic Christian Ethics*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1950.

Ratzinger, Josef. "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons." The Holy See, 1986. Accessed 2014.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19861001\\_homosexual-persons\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html).

Salzman, Todd A. and Lawler, Michael G. *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008

Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

West, Traci C. *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.