Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Signature:

_____   _____
Niklas G. Rodewald   Date

Holy Queerness: Towards a Queer, Catholic Ecclesiology

By

Niklas G. Rodewald
Master of Theological Studies

Candler School of Theology

_____
Dr. Susan Reynolds
Thesis Advisor

_____
Dr. Helen Jin Kim
Interim Director, Master of Theological Studies Program

Holy Queerness: Towards a Queer, Catholic Ecclesiology

By

Niklas G. Rodewald
B.M., Berklee College of Music, 2015
M.M., The Catholic University of America, 2020

Thesis Committee Chair: Susan Reynolds, Ph.D.

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Candler School of Theology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theological Studies
2024

Abstract

Holy Queerness: Towards a Queer, Catholic Ecclesiology
By Niklas G. Rodewald

This thesis gestures towards a way out of the theological inertia that defines existing queer-Catholic discourse. Despite recent calls for meaningful dialogue with and more welcoming communities for LGBTQ+ Catholics, queer-Catholic discourse remains in a state of theological inertia, because the language of moral theology and queer theological interventions find themselves at loggerheads. As a result, well-meaning pastoral initiatives are hamstrung and LGBTQ+ Catholics find themselves still awaiting meaningful dialogue and welcoming communities. Emerging from this state of inertia will require new theological paradigms. As a work of constructive theology, this thesis constructs one such paradigm, a *hermeneutic of holy queerness.*

A hermeneutic of holy queerness is an interpretive lens, enabling theological reflection on queer performative acts, constructed at the intersection of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, John Paul II's theology of the body, and Ian McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei*. After constructing this hermeneutic, I apply it to both the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 and the tradition of female virginity within the first four centuries of the Church. This application of a hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals a subversive gender ambiguity deep within the heart of the Christian tradition, which in turn suggests approaching contemporary queer performativity with an attitude of discernment. Finally, this thesis applies a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the mystery of the Church, revealing an analogous relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action. In this way, a hermeneutic of holy queerness is able to draw connections between a theological-anthropological view of embodiment and the mystery of the Church in a more expansive way than the prevailing "nuptial hermeneutic" that dominates Catholic discourse on both gender and ecclesiology.

Holy Queerness: Towards a Queer, Catholic Ecclesiology

By

Niklas G. Rodewald
B.M., Berklee College of Music, 2015
M.M., The Catholic University of America, 2020

Thesis Committee Chair: Susan Reynolds, Ph.D.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Candler School of Theology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theological Studies
2024

Table of Contents:

Introduction: The State of Queer-Catholic Discourse

Speaking on issues queer and Catholic – let alone trying to live as queer and Catholic – is like entering an abandoned mineshaft with only a candle to light your way. There seem to be countless paths you could take, illumination is scarce, and the danger of a sudden explosion lurks behind every corner. Yet for many, this treacherous journey seems necessary. For some, it is necessary because we identify as queer and Catholic; for others, this journey is necessary to keep a loved one alive or a family together. For others, a friendship hangs in the balance.

Regardless of motivation, conversations about queerness and Catholicism are unfolding with greater frequency and openness. In October 2022, a Vatican document used the term "LGBTQ people" for the first time. In the same document, which summarized thousands of listening sessions held around the world, it became clear that the people of God yearn for more authentic dialogue on gender and sexuality:

> Among those who ask for a more meaningful dialogue and a more welcome space we also find those who, for various reasons, feel a tension between belonging to the Church and their own loving relationships, such as: remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, etc.[1]

The Church – seen as both institution and people of God – seems to agree that dialogue is necessary. Yet, when dialogue begins, it becomes clear this is not a simple dialogue, but rather a complex interchange of moral and queer theology with pastoral initiatives.

Moral theology addresses questions of same-sex relationships, sexual activity, gender identity, and gender-affirming healthcare. Queer theological interventions generally advance two goals: rendering foundational doctrines, such as creation, the Trinity, church, and sacrament, relevant to queer experience and reconstructing theological discourse by questioning the heteronormative assumptions that have thus far guided theological inquiry. Pastoral initiatives attempt to provide spiritual care and accompaniment to LGBTQ+ individuals within the existing

moral and theological landscape. To answer the questions within its particular domain, moral theology, queer theology, and pastoral initiatives adopt their own unique conceptual and linguistic frameworks.

These frameworks often produce limited insight because they are not capable of addressing concerns beyond their own, narrow scope. That is, the language of moral theology is frequently insufficient to address the concerns of queer theology, and the language of queer theology insufficient to address the concerns of pastoral initiatives, and so on. The failure of these areas to speak in terms applicable beyond narrow, disciplinary borders produces theological inertia: developments in queer-Catholic dialogue within one area fail to translate into developments within another area, hampering pastoral initiatives. As a result, LGBTQ+ individuals and their loved ones await in vain the "more meaningful dialogue" and "more welcome space" for which they yearn.

In Newtonian physics, inertia is overcome through the action of an outside force. Analogously, I contend that only a *paradigm shift* can overcome the theological inertia of existing queer-Catholic dialogue. If existing moral, queer, and pastoral frameworks are unable to generate meaningful dialogue, then theology stands in need of a paradigm that can overcome these limits. To this end, I will construct a *hermeneutic of holy queerness* at the intersection of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, John Paul II's theology of the body, and Ian McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei*. This hermeneutic is an interpretive lens, enabling theological reflection on queer performative acts. In applying this hermeneutic to a particular queer performative act, the theologian analyzes how the act 1) *subverts* the prevailing social and cultural constructions of gender within the act's own context, 2) *advances* God's Kingdom *through* its subversion of prevailing gender constructions, and 3) *reflects* the

eschatological significance of the human person created in the *imago Dei*. As such, a hermeneutic of holy queerness allows the theologian to recognize how God's Kingdom is advanced through the "gender trouble" of queer performativity.

A hermeneutic of holy queerness is one way of overcoming the theological inertia of existing queer-Catholic dialogue because it is able to produce insight across multiple theological areas. A hermeneutic of holy queerness can be applied to Scripture or elements of Christian tradition to reorient our understanding of the Christian past. It can also be applied to contemporary examples of queer performativity, inviting an attitude of discernment that seeks understanding of how grace may permeate queer performative acts in our own time and place. A hermeneutic of holy queerness may also be applied to elements of Christian doctrine, like the mystery of the Church, to produce renewed theological insight. Because of its capacity to speak to many distinct aspects of the queer-Catholic dialogue, it may be able to usher in a paradigm shift, changing the language and framework of existing queer-Catholic dialogue. Yet before exploring the theological insight a hermeneutic of holy queerness has to offer, it is important to define what precisely I mean by queer, and to chart the existing landscape of queer-Catholic dialogue with respect to moral theology, queer theology, and pastoral initiatives.

Queer, Queer Theory, and Queer Performativity

As queer resists the idea of stable definitions and categories, "defining" queer is inherently problematic.[2] Etymologically, the English word "queer" can be traced to the sixteenth century, where it was used to mean "strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric," as well as, "of questionable character, suspicious, dubious;" it may also have been used to refer to counterfeit bank notes.[3] By the eighteenth century, 'queer' could be used to mean "out of sort" or "unwell," and by the twentieth century, the term had been appropriated as a derogatory reference to

homosexuality.[4] From the beginning, queer has referred to something that challenges expectations, often with a negative connotation. In our own times, "queer" has been taken up by activists and theorists seeking to challenge heterosexual societal norms.

Queer Theory traces its origins to the 1990s, when it was first mentioned in an article by feminist scholar Teresa de Lauretis.[5] As an academic discipline, queer theory, "examines the prevailing intersections that occur between desire and language" and seeks "to (re)situate marginalized identities allied to sexual and gendered modes of cultural or political resistance based on hegemonic and heterosexual modes of surveillance and regulation."[6] Queer theory, then, looks at the relationship between desire, language, and power, with an aim towards political disruption of the status quo. To be queer, or to do queer, is to resist the identity categories, expectations, discursive power, and control of heteronormative society.[7]

Within the field of queer theory, *queer performativity* refers to a conceptual understanding of gender developed by American philosopher Judith Butler in Butler's seminal work, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.[8] Building upon Simone de Beauvoir's statement that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman," Butler develops a view of gender as a "repeated stylization of the body," as opposed to a stable identity category.[9] Viewing gender in this way allows Butler to offer a fundamental charge for queer performativity: "it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes."[10] Thus when I refer to queer performativity throughout this thesis, I am referring to performative acts that subvert gender and sexuality's status quo, in the service of concrete political aims, and yet leave gender and sexuality forever unfinished and open to new possibilities.

Queer Issues in Catholic Moral Theology

Catholic moral discourse on queer acts focuses primarily on same-sex sexual activity and moral questions raised by gender transition and gender-affirming healthcare, including hormone replacement therapy and various kinds of gender reassignment surgery. The Catholic Magisterium responds to moral questions of homosexuality through a theological framework of natural law. This framework considers human sexuality through a teleological lens with procreation as the primary end of human sexuality. As such, the Magisterium has a clear position on homosexual acts: they, like all non-procreative sexual acts, are "intrinsically evil," and any non-heterosexual orientation is an "intrinsic disorder."[11]

Natural Law provides a valuable framework for Christian ethics because it vigorously affirms creation's inherent goodness. Natural law theology presumes God created the world in a way that reflects God's wisdom and goodness and thus makes claims on human morality which, "considered as a part of that natural world, is also an expression of divine wisdom and goodness."[12] Natural law methodologies are inherently inductive, and traditional natural law methods use scientific knowledge to support normative claims about human morality, though many modern theorists see this as an overreliance on "biological structures at the expense of distinctively rational capacities."[13]

Applying natural law methodology to make normative claims about human sexuality is theologically controversial. The Catholic tradition, especially through Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, has held a "primary end/secondary end" view of human sexuality, where procreation takes primacy of place as the most important end (or good) of marriage and thus of sexual activity. As such, the Catholic Church has traditionally taken positions against masturbation, contraception, homosexual acts, and any other form of sexual activity that would obscure the

procreative end of human sexuality. As Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler note, a curious argument underlies this moral position: "that the primary end of specifically *human* marriage is dictated by humanity's generically *animal* nature."[14] That is, for the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church, the primary end of human sexuality is determined not by humanity's capacity for reason or love, nor humanity's creation in the *imago Dei*, but is rather based on rational analysis of biological phenomena that humans share with other animals.

Following the "personalist" turn of thinkers such as Dietrich von Hildebrand, the Second Vatican Council opted to see two ends of marriage – the procreative and the unitive – as *equal*, instead of upholding the traditional "primary end/secondary end" distinction.[15] By declaring the unitive dimension of marriage as equal to the procreative, this development of Catholic doctrine emphasized that the distinctly human capacity for *interpersonal love and communion* be placed on level ground with the generically animal capacity for procreation. This shift has ushered in a renewal of Catholic moral theology. Within this renewal, some theologians have defended traditional Magisterial teachings with renewed frameworks that balance the human capacity for love and communion with the animal capacity for reproduction. John Paul II's theology of the body, rooted in "gender complementarity," is the most notable example of such a theology. For John Paul II, the Genesis creation stories reveal the relationship between woman and man as one of mutual help. This principle leads John Paul II to conclude that women and men complement each other in their acting and their being, from physical, psychological, and ontological perspectives. As such, "it is only through the duality of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' that the 'human' finds full realization."[16] John Paul II contends that only a union between man and woman can achieve a fullness of communion thereby defending Magisterial teaching on homosexuality from an *interpersonal* perspective.

Other theologians argue that Vatican II's development of doctrine on marriage necessitates a change in moral teaching. These theologians advocate renewed theological frameworks that emphasize the richness and complexity of the human person. Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler propose their own concept of "holistic complementarity;" Margaret A. Farley provides a framework of "just love"; Lisa Fullam emphasizes a virtue ethics approach to both sex itself and marriage; and Craig A. Ford, Jr. proposes a queer natural law rooted in identity exploration, just to name a few.[17] For each of these theologians, post-Vatican II Catholic sexual ethics need to embrace the possibility of morally good, same-sex sexual relationships.

Because questions of gender transition and gender-affirming care are not questions of sexual activity or procreation *per se*, the Magisterium's teleological view of human sexuality is insufficient to address these moral questions. Having only seriously taken up these questions in recent years, the Magisterium has yet to articulate a clear, singular moral teaching on gender transition or gender-affirming healthcare. Complicating matters further, different Magisterial authorities – the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's (USCCB) Doctrine Committee and the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) – have addressed these questions using different theological frameworks. While both authorities advocate a Christian anthropology that regards gender transition with suspicion, the USCCB uses a teleological argument to condemn medical procedures that would "manipulate the human body," while the DDF emphasizes the moral dignity of acting in accord with the certain judgment of conscience.

The USCCB's Committee on Doctrine released a *Doctrinal Note* on March 20, 2023, to address questions of gender-affirming healthcare within Catholic hospitals. The document grounds itself in a natural law framework, affirming the goodness of the "natural order" as created by God. Just as the natural order reflects the wisdom of the Creator, so too does human

nature as a body-soul unity. Human bodies are created according to male-female sexual difference. Because the human person is a unity of body and soul, personal identity and biological sex cannot be separated.[18] As such, "genuine respect for human dignity requires that decisions about the use of technology be guided by genuine respect for this created order," that is, respect for the human person as body-soul unity.[19] As such, "manipulation of the human body" is only permitted for two reasons: repairing a defect in the body, such as "when it has been affected by some injury or ailment," and sacrificing a part of the body for the sake of the whole, which may be permissible under the principle of double-effect.[20] Under this reasoning, *any* gender-affirming medical intervention, including hormone replacement therapy or gender reassignment surgery, is *not* morally permissible because the intervention would not repair a bodily "defect," nor would it be necessary to preserve normal physiological function. Thus the USCCB's *Doctrinal Note* prohibits gender-affirming healthcare procedures out of a view of the human person as a body-soul unity, grounded in the Magisterium's theology of creation.[21] In contrast to the USCCB's approach, the Vatican's attempt at a document on gender-affirming care emphasizes conscience while treating specific medical interventions with ambiguity.

On April 2, 2024, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), the Vatican department responsible for doctrinal clarity, issued the declaration *Dignitas Infinita*, designed to clarify Magisterial teaching on gender, human dignity, and Christian anthropology. This Vatican document marks the first teaching pronouncement from a Vatican office concerning gender-affirming healthcare. Grounding the declaration in the "dignity of the human person" as defined by Vatican II, the document addresses issues that Magisterial authority sees as threatening full expression of human dignity in the contemporary world. Among these issues are "gender theory," which, according to the document, "intends to deny the greatest possible difference that

exists between living beings: sexual difference."[22] Believing that human dignity necessitates accepting one's body as a gift from God, the declaration reasons that "any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception."[23] Yet while the declaration opposes "gender theory" and "sex-change intervention," the document fails to define these terms or engage with specific philosophers, thinkers, or practices.

As such, this ambiguity leaves individual healthcare decisions squarely within the domain of conscience. Following Vatican II's teaching on conscience as a core element of human dignity, the document affirms that in following the certain judgments of conscience, even when contrary to official Church teaching, the individual *rightly* exercises moral dignity. Human beings owe this moral dignity to their "nature as creatures who are loved by God and called to love others."[24] Thus acting *against* one's conscience would undermine the sacredness of conscience as proceeding from the order of God's creation and the call to exercise moral agency in response to God's love. Ultimately, by creating an ambiguity of terms and re-affirming Magisterial teaching on conscience, the DDF document leaves trans and non-binary individuals to discern moral and healthcare decisions in conscience. By leaving concrete healthcare decisions within the domain of individual conscience, the Vatican's position stands in contrast to that of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, demonstrating the lack of a clear, singular position within the global Catholic hierarchy.

Ultimately, the conceptual and linguistic framework of Catholic moral theology presumes certain theological commitments. Teleological arguments, whether about human sexuality or medical procedures, presume a natural order proceeding from God's creative wisdom. Even the Vatican's theology of conscience is grounded in a theology of creation. God creates the human

person "to be guided by his own judgment and … to enjoy freedom."[25] Humanity lives up to the dignity of its creation when human beings respond to God's call through a free, moral response to God's creative love. In this way, moral theology derives *from* doctrinal convictions, but moral theology's frameworks do not offer new insight *into* those same convictions. As such, Catholic moral theology cannot respond to queer theological interventions given its existing framework.

Queer Theological Interventions

Queer theologians claim that queer acts reveal something of the mystery of God. By and large, queer theological interventions advance two goals: rendering foundational doctrines relevant to queer experience and reconstructing theological discourse by questioning the heteronormative assumptions that have thus far guided theological inquiry. These interventions unfold both outside of and within Catholicism.

Outside of Catholicism, Patrick Cheng, Marcella Althaus-Reid, and Linn Marie Tonstad are among the most significant voices. Patrick Cheng, an openly gay Episcopal priest, takes a systematic approach, queering each of the persons of the Trinity in light of major theological doctrines, such as revelation, Trinity, creation, sin, sacrament, and church. Cheng reads each of these doctrines through the "sending forth of radical love," which he parallels to paradigmatic queer experiences.[26] Whereas Cheng is fundamentally concerned with reading queer experience *into* theology, Marcella Althaus-Reid's *The Queer God* is concerned with "theological queering," which she understands as "the deliberate questioning of heterosexual experience and thinking which has shaped our understanding of theology, the role of the theologian and hermeneutics."[27] For Althaus-Reid, it is not enough simply to read queer experience into existing theological paradigms; those very paradigms have to be questioned by queer experience. Moreover, Linn Marie Tonstad's *God and Difference* is an attempt to rethink Trinitarian

theology through the lens of queer and feminist theology. Tonstad sees a contemporary effort to "work out" Trinitarian difference "in terms of sexual difference."[28] For her, this presents a problem because, in doing so, a Trinitarian theology that *ought* to value difference instead reinforces male hegemony. As such, Tonstad uses systematic theology alongside queer and feminist theory to creatively recast Trinitarian theology.

Within Catholicism, there have been few attempts to queer systematic theology until recent years. Miguel H. Díaz's recent book, *Queer God de Amor*, is a significant recent attempt at queering Catholic theology. Inspired by Juan de la Cruz's poetry, Díaz relates mystical trinitarian theology within Juan's poetry to "the daily lived experiences of human sexuality and the sexual subject."[29] After establishing the bedroom as a *locus theologicus,* Díaz "queers Juan's notions of divine and human persons as a way to deepen the Catholic analogical imagination," thus revealing that theological "queerness" is "essential to affirm the mystery of God."[30] In ecclesiology, Ish Ruiz argues that a rediscovery of the *sensus fidelium* through a synodal ecclesiology would involve a "transformation of the church through the action of the Holy Spirit revealed through the lives of the faithful."[31] Recognizing that LGBTQ+ persons are already actively involved in the Church and serving in a variety of roles, Ruiz argues that "their authentic life witness should be listened to and affirmed as a valid expression of grace."[32] Such a synodal ecclesiology goes beyond mere "inclusion" of LGBTQ+ persons, but ultimately leads the Church to become more "queer" in recognizing the grace that its queer members embody.

Such queer interventions challenge the heavily metaphysical language of Catholic moral theology. Rather than emphasizing the teleological order of God's creation, these interventions emphasize the *mystery* of God who transcends our limited human capacity for understanding. As such, queer interventions question whether moral theology's linguistic and conceptual

framework truly reflects *God's* creative wisdom or whether it instead reflects *human* understanding, conditioned by heteronormative assumptions. Because queer interventions question the very terms of the traditional moral theological debate, moral theology is unable to directly respond on its own terms. Yet these queer interventions, concerned as they are with fundamental issues of Christian doctrine, rarely develop their own robust moral theology. Theological inertia is thus born: traditional moral theology is unable to respond to queer interventions that question the basis of its methodology and queer systematic interventions have yet to produce robust moral theology as a legitimate alternative to the traditional terms of debate. This theological inertia hampers well-meaning pastoral initiatives that try to address the spiritual needs of LGBTQ+ Catholics within existing moral and systematic frameworks.

LGBTQ+ Pastoral Initiatives in the Catholic Church

As far back as the late 1960s, Catholic church leaders, clergy, and queer people themselves began initiatives to meet the pastoral needs of gay and lesbian Catholics.[33] Over the last decade, Fr. James Martin, S.J. has become the most prominent voice for the pastoral inclusion of queer Catholics. In 2016, dismayed by the American Catholic hierarchy's unwillingness to condemn homophobia in the wake of the Pulse nightclub shooting, Martin authored *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity.*[34] He provides a pastoral foundation for dialogue between the institutional Church and the LGBT community, between which Martin sees that "a chasm has formed."[35] This chasm obstructs genuine communion between the two groups; as such, a bridge is needed. Drawing from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Martin sees both the institutional Church and the LGBT community as having a responsibility toward the other, by way of respect, compassion, and sensitivity.

Martin believes that the institutional Church has an obligation to cultivate personal relationships with LGBT Catholics, use the language that the LGBT community uses for itself, and stop firing LGBT people from positions within the Church. Additionally, Martin suggests that the institutional Church refrain from using harmful language, such as "intrinsically disordered," to describe LGBT people. On the side of the LGBT community, Martin believes that LGBT Catholics should look upon the hierarchy "in their humanity, in their complexity, and amid the burdens of their ministry," seeing the bishops, even those who may mistreat the LGBT community, as brothers in Christ.[36] Additionally, Martin provides Scriptural reflections, where all Catholics can reflect on LGBT identity and its connection to the Word of God. Martin's book, and the Outreach website and conference that the book has spawned, are much needed pastoral resources. Yet they do not move the theological or doctrinal needle. Pastoral dialogue emphasizes accompaniment, personal encounter, human dignity, and respect. It does not call for a re-examination of Church teaching; it does not break significant theological ground. Precisely because Martin's pastoral approach does not address core moral or systematic questions, it faces significant obstacles, around which there is no easy path.

Yet when the institutional Catholic Church has seen fit to engage the pastoral needs of queer Catholics, it has generally employed the type of pastoral model that Martin encourages. Without changing doctrine, documents from the Vatican and local bishops' conferences have encouraged accompaniment, encounter, dignity, and respect for queer individuals.[37] Most recently, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released *Fiducia Supplicans*, a declaration on blessings that opened the door for same-sex couples to receive a priestly blessing. This pastoral initiative serves as a case study in theological inertia hampering the efficacy of well-meaning pastoral initiatives unaccompanied by doctrinal or theological shifts.

***Fiducia Supplicans:* A Case Study in the Effects of Theological Inertia**

In *Fiducia Supplicans*, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith offered a context and set of conditions under which one could "understand the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church's perennial teaching on marriage."[38] This pastoral gesture towards same-sex couples was met with immediate hostility in many parts of the Church. In response to this document, Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo wrote on behalf of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar that, "the African Bishops' Conferences emphasize that people with homosexual tendencies must be treated with respect and dignity, while reminding them that unions of persons of the same-sex are contrary to the will of God and therefore cannot receive the blessing of the Church."[39] In effect, the African Bishops reject the Vatican's premise that Church blessings can convey a pastoral response to couples in irregular situations without compromising the Magisterium's moral teachings on same-sex unions.

In response to these objections, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a clarifying press release emphasizing the *insignificance* of the same-sex blessings it had just authorized. Blessing couples in "irregular situations" constitutes a blessing of the "couple" (i.e. of the two individuals) "but not of their unions."[40] Therefore, same-sex blessings are "obviously" not marriage, nor do they constitute "an 'approval' or ratification of anything either."[41] As such, the blessings should last about "10 or 15 seconds" and "must not take place in a prominent place within a sacred building, or in front of an altar, as this also would create confusion."[42] Moreover, the press release gives each local bishop "the power of discernment *in loco*," thus permitting any bishop who feels that such blessings would sow confusion over the Church's moral teaching to ban these blessings within his own diocese.[43]

Though *Fiducia Supplicans* sought a pastoral response to the concrete needs of couples in "irregular unions," including same-sex couples, its efficacy was hampered by theological inertia. Because this pastoral response was not accompanied by any moral or theological shift, opposition was inevitable. Moreover, the Vatican's insistence on responding to pastoral needs *within* existing moral and systematic frameworks virtually guaranteed that the blessings proposed by *Fiducia Supplicans* would be of limited efficacy. After all, if *Fiducia Supplicans* is grounded in existing moral doctrine, then any clergy who believe that blessing a same-sex couple would cause moral confusion is as free to prohibit such a blessing after the declaration as they were before. In the end, a pastoral initiative designed to create a "more welcome space" is of limited efficacy because it is unaccompanied by shifts in moral or systematic theology. *Fiducia Supplicans*, a well-meaning pastoral initiative, thus bears witness to the theological inertia caused by moral and queer theological frameworks talking past each other. For this reason, queer-Catholic discourse stands in need of a paradigm shift.

The Need for a Paradigm Shift

With traditional moral-theological language unable to respond to queer theological interventions and with queer theological interventions so far being unable to produce a robust alternative moral theology, queer-Catholic discourse is stuck in theological inertia. The limited efficacy of current pastoral initiatives bear witness to this inertia and, as long as it remains, LGBTQ+ individuals and their loved ones await in vain the "more meaningful dialogue" and "more welcome space" for which they yearn. In Newtonian physics, inertia is only overcome by the action of an outside force. In a similar way, I believe that only a *paradigm shift* can overcome the theological inertia that dominates queer-Catholic discourse.

A paradigm shift constitutes a radical change in perspective. As such, an effective paradigm shift must be capable of exploring interconnection; it must operate out of conceptual and linguistic frameworks with broad applicability across both moral and queer theological arenas. I propose a *hermeneutic of holy queerness* as a catalyst for this paradigm shift. Because I construct this hermeneutic at the intersection of queer theory and the Catholic theological tradition, a hermeneutic of holy queerness is capable of bridging the existing gap between traditional moral theology and queer theology.

Yet paradigm shifts do not merely resolve tension. Instead, they change our methods of inquiry and understanding. Catholic theology is rooted in an *historical tradition* and looks towards an *eschatological future*. Therefore, any paradigm shift in Catholic theology must fundamentally effect our relationship to both the past and the future. With respect to the past, a hermeneutic of holy queerness, as this thesis will show, enables a *ressourcement* of Catholic tradition vis-à-vis queer performativity. By applying a hermeneutic of holy queerness to both queer performativity and the mystery of the Church, a hermeneutic of holy queerness allows for a renewed understanding of the Church's eschatological destiny vis-à-vis an analogous relationship between sacramental ecclesiology and queer performativity.

A Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness

In Chapter 1, I construct a hermeneutic of holy queerness at the intersection of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, John Paul II's theology of the body, and Ian McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei*. Butler's theory of gender performativity offers a means of analyzing queer performative acts in relation to the social-cultural constructions of gender to demonstrate how "gender trouble" can subvert and reconstruct existing notions of gender. Yet an uncritical appropriation of Butler's theory jeopardizes

essential Christian doctrine, such as creation and the incarnation, because it does not fully account for the sacredness with which Christians, who await the transfiguration of the material world, must view matter and human bodies. John Paul II's theology of the body, despite being problematic on several fronts, suggests that any performative view of gender within Catholic theology will need to reconcile queer performativity with Christian doctrines of creation and the *imago Dei*. Using Bernard Lonergan's distinction between objects in the "world of immediacy" and in the "world of meaning," along with Ian McFarland's eschatological interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's view of the *imago Dei*, I propose such a reconciliation in the form of a *hermeneutic of holy queerness*.

A hermeneutic of holy queerness is an interpretive lens for gleaning theological meaning from acts of queer performativity. In applying this hermeneutic to a particular queer performative act, the theologian analyzes how the act 1) *subverts* the prevailing social and cultural constructions of gender within the act's own context, 2) *advances* God's Kingdom *through* its subversion of prevailing gender constructions, and 3) *reflects* the eschatological significance of the human person created in the *imago Dei*. Because a hermeneutic of holy queerness analyzes how grace may be at work within queer performative acts, it can be said to analyze the effects of grace, understood as God's self-communication. Such analysis in turn allows for a deeper understanding of the Divine Mystery. Yet the true test of a hermeneutic of holy queerness's potential to shift Catholic theological paradigms lies less in its intellectual framework and more in the fruit born from its application to particular performative acts.

Chapter 2 applies a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 and the tradition of female virginity within the first four centuries of the Christian Church, enabling a *ressourcement* of Catholic tradition vis-à-vis queer performativity. In theology,

ressourcement looks "to the past for norms or practices or mind-sets that can be used in changing, correcting, or at least qualifying" the state of present theological norms, practices, or mind-sets.[44] Reading the Ethiopian eunuch and the tradition of female virginity through a hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals a deep *historical tradition* of gender ambiguity and subversion within Christian Scripture and praxis. This historical tradition in turn disrupts the Magisterium's "gender ideology" rhetoric, revealing the Magisterium's gender essentialism and complementarity as a form of playing God by rendering human identity a matter of personal or institutional choice. Against the contemporary Magisterium's essentialist and complementarian view of gender, the historical tradition of gender ambiguity and subversion invites contemporary theologians to view acts of queer performativity through a lens of discernment, asking how such acts might, in their subversiveness, reveal something of the mystery of God. I point to Justin Tanis's transgender theology as a model of such an approach. Because a hermeneutic of holy queerness invites this *ressourcement*, it can serve as a catalyst for shifting Catholic theological paradigms with respect to historical tradition.

Chapter 3 applies a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the mystery of the Church in order to chart an analogous relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action. This analogous relationship provides a more expansive connection between the human person and the Church than the connection between theology of the body and nuptial ecclesiology, which is commonly cited by the Catholic hierarchy. The chapter begins by placing Avery Dulles's model of the Church as Sacrament in conversation with Kimberly Hope Belcher and Judith Butler. For Dulles, following Karl Rahner, the Church can be understood as the "primordial sacrament" because it continues, in history, the presence of the Incarnation. As a sacrament, the Church is "a sign of grace realizing itself" and thus embodies a necessarily dynamic character.[45] Here an

important connection emerges between sacrament and ritual action. In the sacramental economy, "meaningless" ritual behaviors, discursive language, and sensory experiences map onto complex symbols to produce sacramental effects that draw individuals and communities nearer the Divine Mystery. Similarly, as Butler points out, gendered identities are produced through the performance of culturally intelligible markers of gender. These markers may, in and of themselves, appear "meaningless," yet their performance within a social discourse renders them intelligible via a complex web of social meaning and "produces" a culturally intelligible, gendered identity. Both gender and sacraments thus exhibit *efficacious ritual performativity*, that is, they both produce the reality they signify by mapping performative acts onto complex webs of meaning, thereby transforming individual and communal identities.

Through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, the efficacious ritual performativity of sacramental action is seen to be queer in its subversion of earthly injustice through solidarity. Drawing on M. Shawn Copeland's work on racism and eucharistic solidarity, I argue for an inherent relationship between efficacious ritual performativity, solidarity, and the actualization of the eschatological Church. I conclude the chapter by arguing that an analogous relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action also allows us to see a sacramental dimension within queer performative acts.

I hope that this thesis offers a new way of relating queerness to Catholic theology. By emphasizing performative action, I hope that we can continue to develop new methods and means for discerning the presence of grace in the lives and actions of queer individuals today. Such development is necessary not only to break out of the theological inertia that currently paralyzes queer-Catholic discourse, but also to bring the Church nearer to its eschatological destiny. *Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!*

Chapter 1: A Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness

Though paradigm shifts radically re-orient our perspective, they rarely emerge from a vacuum. Instead, paradigm shifts often bridge seemingly unrelated fields of knowledge, thereby upending prior assumptions and changing the way we think about a question. In the case of existing queer-Catholic discourse, traditional Catholic moral theology and queer interventions in systematic theology find themselves at loggerheads, hampering pastoral outreach to LGBTQ+ Catholics. Catholic moral theology presumes an anthropology, rooted in a "natural order," that sees gender as *metaphysical*. This view of *gender essentialism* rejects a separation between gender identity and biological sex.[46] Moreover, this view holds that God creates human beings according to sexual difference. In contrast, queer theology sees gender as *socially constructed*, rooted not in biological difference but in *performative action*. On the surface, these two views of gender appear contradictory. Yet I contend that a hermeneutic of holy queerness, constructed at the intersection of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, John Paul II's theology of the body, and Ian McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei* can bridge the chasm between Catholic moral theology and queer theological interventions, affecting a paradigm shift in existing queer-Catholic dialogue.

I begin this argument by surveying Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity as a tool for analyzing the subversive potential of gendered acts. I then provide an overview of John Paul II's theology of the body, along with scholarly criticism of the same work. I argue that, while John Paul II's theology is problematic Biblically, philosophically, and anthropologically, it does make a powerful case that any performative view of gender in Christian theology needs to reconcile gender performativity with the doctrines of creation and *imago Dei*. To this end, I believe that Bernard Lonergan's distinction between objects in the "world of immediacy" and

those in the "world of meaning" can reconcile gender performativity with the doctrine of

creation, while Ian McFarland's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas can reconcile gender

performativity with the *imago Dei*. At this intersection, a hermeneutic of holy queerness

emerges.

A *hermeneutic of holy queerness* is an interpretive lens through which a theologian

analyzes performative acts in three ways. First, the theologian analyzes how a particular act

subverts the gender constructions of its own cultural context. Next, the theologian analyzes how

the act *advances* God's Kingdom *through* its subversion of cultural gender norms. Finally, the

theologian analyzes how the act *reflects* the eschatological significance of the human person

created in the *imago Dei*. As such, a hermeneutic of holy queerness provides a lens by which the

theologian can analyze the religious and theological meaning of performative acts.

Judith Butler's Queer Performativity

Whereas traditional Catholic moral theology contends that human sexual difference

proceeds from God's creative wisdom, Judith Butler argues that the stable identity categories of

male and female are human social and cultural constructions. For Butler, there are two primary

problems with seeing gender as a stable category of identity: first, the political dynamics that

define a "woman" serve only to reinforce patriarchal power structures; second, the idea of a

"person" only becomes intelligible through "socially instituted and maintained norms of

intelligibility."[47] In Butler's view, this second problem leads to the collapse of the gender binary.

With respect to feminism's potential to reinforce patriarchy, Butler critiques feminists

who base their political resistance on universal claims of "womanhood." This, Butler holds, is

simply mimicking the tactics of the patriarchy. Just as the patriarchy holds that the masculine is

the universal and the feminine is simply that which is "other-than" the masculine, some feminist

critics see all oppression against women as operating along a vertical axis of patriarchy. Butler

rejects the idea that oppression women may face due to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation,

or any other origin, is due exclusively to patriarchy. This universalization "constitutes an

appropriative act that risks a repetition of the self-aggrandizing gesture of phallogocentrism,

colonizing under the sign of the same differences that might otherwise call that totalizing concept

into question."[48] As such, a reduction of all oppression faced by women to a singular

"patriarchy" fails to do political justice for "women," since it reinforces the universalizing

concept of oppression that is itself the core of misogyny and patriarchy. By necessity, seeing

"woman" as a stable category of identity for political purposes paradoxically reinforces the very

systems of oppression that necessitate political resistance: "the insistence upon the coherence and

unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and

political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed."[49]

From the political, Butler gestures towards metaphysical. "Persons" become identifiable

as gendered selves through their "conformity with recognizable standards of gender

intelligibility."[50] According to Butler, one cannot exist as a gendered self *alone*. Rather, existing

(or acting) as a gendered self is a dialectic done within a cultural context. Butler puts it this way:

"'I feel like a woman' is true to the extent that Aretha Franklin's invocation of the defining Other

is assumed: 'You make me feel like a natural woman.'"[51] My experience of gender, if it is to

have any meaning whatsoever, requires that an Other, a Thou, recognize this experience.[52] As

such, the Other must have some means of differentiating between genders if it is to recognize my

experience of gender. Thus, the gender binary is born: "one is one's gender to the extent that one

is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender

within that binary pair."[53]

For Butler, society produces a gender binary appearing as stable "substance" through a perceived unity of sex, gender, and desire. This unity is only possible through a "stable and oppositional heterosexuality."[54] Rejecting the notion that gender is a "natural" result of sexed bodies, Butler argues that gender *produces* sex. To understand Butler's argument, consider what society holds to be constitutive of a "natural" and "sexed" body: so-called "natural maleness" involves an XY chromosome pair, the presence of a penis and testes, and a variety of secondary sex characteristics, such as facial hair, pubic hair, and an Adam's apple, which appear during puberty. So-called "natural femaleness" involves an XX chromosome pair, the presence of a vagina and ovaries, and a variety of secondary sex characteristics, such as breast development, pubic hair, and rounding of the hips. Though these characteristics comprise "natural" and "sexed" bodies, unusual variations exist; these variations include "males" with an XX chromosome pair and "females" with an XY chromosome pair.

For Butler, examining the phenomena of XX-males and XY-females provides insight into the construction of binary sex, as it reveals the arbitrariness of our "male" and "female" categories. To demonstrate this, Butler considers research on chromosomal variations by David Page. Page and his associates claim that a DNA sequence on the Y chromosome functions as "the binary switch upon which hinges all sexually dimorphic characteristics."[55] They named this DNA sequence TDF, or testis-determining factor, and it is thought to be responsible for "sex-determination," which in turn provides a genetic explanation for the existence of so-called XX-males and XY-females. Butler senses a problem with this conclusion: on what grounds do we presume to name people with XX chromosomes *male* and those with XY chromosomes *female*? All XX-males in the study were unable to produce sperm and all the ovaries of all XY-females lacked germ cells, rendering ovulation impossible. With chromosomal markers and reproductive

capacity unable to determine sex, the only criteria for considering XX-males as *males* or XY-females as *females* is the presence of external genitalia; thus the designation of male and female was made prior to any scientific exploration into the question of genetics. According to Butler, Page pursues the question of "how the 'binary switch' gets started, not whether the description of bodies in terms of binary sex is adequate to the task at hand."[56] For Butler, as for Freud, "it is the exception, the strange, that gives us the clue to how the mundane and taken-for-granted world of sexual meanings is constituted."[57] Upon encountering gender variations that destabilize the coherence of biological sex, our culturally-determined hierarchy of values emerges more clearly, and we recognize that we implicitly value some of these characteristics (external genitalia) over others (chromosome pairing) as determinative of "sex". In this way, a culturally-determined understanding of gender *produces* a construct of sex that masquerades as "natural".[58]

For Butler, our culturally-determined hierarchy of values produces sex in service of a "compulsory heterosexuality" that regulates gender, sex, and desire to further biological, kinship, and cultural reproduction.[59] Because Page and his colleagues implicitly define sex as possession or lack of testes, Butler claims that they, "conflate sex-determination with male-determination, and with testis-determination."[60] What constitutes maleness is therefore equated with external genitalia and femaleness is reduced to a lack of this genitalia. For this notion of sex to have the appearance of consistency, it requires a corresponding notion of masculinity and a complementary notion of femininity, with the two linked by heterosexual desire. Thus, an interdependent relationship between sex and gender emerges: gender produces sex because of the cultural value given to biological phenomena. Once produced, sex reinforces the binary gender structure. This binary structure in turn requires and produces heterosexual desire to maintain the intelligibility of a perceived natural unity. The problem, of course, is that this "natural" unity is

constructed and constituted by a consistent repetition of gendered *acts* believed to represent the "natural." Butler thus concludes that "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result."[61]

Butler defines gender as, "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[62] Gender is thus revealed to be performative: it is produced and sustained by a series of acts. These acts are not simply individual but are rather acts done within a social dialectic: boys learn how to dress, speak, and behave from the adult male figures in their life; similarly, girls learn how to dress, speak, and behave from the adult female figures in their life. Even when one chooses to rebel against the norms of culture, rebellion is only intelligible to the extent that it uses the language of the prevailing binary frame. If the cultural construction of gender is seen as a script, "the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space" and, when it makes unique interpretations, it does so "within the confines of already existing directives."[63] Yet the notion of gender as performative enables possibilities: not only can one perform gender in a way that imitates and reproduces the existing appearance of the natural, but one can "make gender trouble" in a way that subverts the "naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power."[64] If the status quo was produced through gender performativity, then it stands to reason that it may also be subverted and displaced through gender performativity as well.

While *Gender Trouble* was originally written as a contribution to feminist thought, gender performativity – as well as the political possibilities it promised – quickly influenced the world of queer politics and queer theory. In politics, Butler's idea that performative acts function in a subversive and disruptive way influenced the tactics of advocacy groups emerging during

the HIV/AIDS crisis, including ACT UP, the Lesbian Avengers, and Queer Nation.[65] In queer theory, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explicitly applied Butler's theory of gender performativity to queer performative acts.[66] While the question had been implied in *Gender Trouble*, Butler explicitly connects gender performativity and queerness in the essay "Critically Queer." In this essay, Butler lays out the fundamental charge of queer performativity: "[queer] will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes."[67] Seen in this light, queer performativity must not limit itself to same-sex love, LGBTQ+ movements, or any particular, historical reality.[68] Rather, the only criteria for something to be queer is that it subvert gender and sexuality's status quo, in the service of concrete political aims, and yet remain forever unfinished and open to new possibilities.

For anyone wishing to analyze queer performative acts from a theological perspective, Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a valuable tool. By naming gender as a constructed reality that might be constructed differently, gender performativity invites the theologian to analyze how performative acts might subvert and reconstruct gender *for religious and theological purposes*. At the same time, when appropriating gender performativity for theological inquiry, the theologian faces an important question: is a wholesale appropriation of gender performativity – or any constructionist view of gender – compatible with the importance that Christianity places on *matter* and the *physical body* as sites of theological reflection?

Matter and Bodies in Christian Theology

The inherent goodness of matter and the physical body mark the Christian Scriptures. The book of Genesis begins with a story of God creating the physical universe. At each stage of creation, God speaks a creative act into being and then sees that it is "good." After creating

human beings in the flesh, God looked out over all of creation and saw that it was "very good," bearing witness to the inherent sacredness of the material and created world.[69] Paralleling the first creation account in Genesis, the prologue to the Gospel of John testifies that the "Word" of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, "became flesh and lived among us."[70] The book of Revelation closes the Christian Scriptures with a vision of a renewed creation – "a new heaven and a new earth."[71] Emerging from this deep Scriptural emphasis on the inherent goodness of matter, Karl Rahner, one of the most important Catholic theologians of the last century, argues that Christian belief must view matter as eternal, awaiting transfiguration in and through the Risen Christ.

For Karl Rahner, the Christ event is not simply concerned with the forgiveness of human sin but rather concerns the final triumph over death, enabling all of creation to participate in God's own life. Because Jesus Christ is the Word made *flesh*, both divine and fully *human*, in Christ's sacrifice on the cross "a part of this world freely and radically gives itself to God in complete love and obedience and is fully taken up into God."[72] This entrance of the creaturely into the divine is not limited to Christ's humanity. Rather, as part of the physical and human world, Christ becomes "the embryonically final beginning of the glorification and divinization of the whole of reality."[73] Thus through Christ's resurrection, all material creation awaits its final transfiguration in the glory of God. If material creation is not simply passing away, but is rather awaiting this final transfiguration, then Christians must have an elevated view of physical matter and, by consequence, human bodies. As Rahner points out, Christians are "the most sublime of materialists … more crassly materialistic than those who call themselves so," because Christians believe that matter is eternal and in the process of glorification in and through Christ's resurrection.[74]

Constructionist views of gender, equating reality with linguistic dialectic, seem to oppose such an elevated view of matter. As Vivien Burr notes, "social constructionism is not claiming that language and discourse merely have a strong influence on our perception of reality. What we know as reality is itself a social construction."[75] In a constructionist worldview, the material world – outside of perception colored by human dialectic – is not *real*. For a Christian, such a view is problematic: God creates, dwells among, and redeems *material creation*, regardless of whether or how this creation is known to the human mind. To suggest things only become *real* when they are *known as reality* through the complexities of human consciousness risks subordinating God to human knowledge, reducing God to a construct of the human mind. The Christian theologian, then, cannot uncritically adopt a constructionist view of reality without the risk of undermining central Christian commitments.

Against such a constructionist view of reality, John Paul II's theology of the body affirms the importance of material creation and human bodies by viewing biological sex as definitional of the human person. John Paul II's theology, in its powerful affirmation of the embodied and sexual human person, makes it possible to see the physical, biological, and sexually differentiated human body as an integral part of creation, awaiting transfiguration in and through the Risen Christ. Despite these strengths, scholarly critics argue that theology of the body ultimately fails to provide an adequate Biblical, philosophical, and anthropological analysis of the human person, thus inviting theologians to craft a more expansive theology of embodiment.

John Paul II's Theology of the Body

John Paul II's theology of the body is an eclectic theory that claims to combine Thomistic thought, phenomenology, and scriptural interpretation. Through a personalist interpretation of Thomistic thought, John Paul arrives at "the importance of basic goods and the human person,"

while phenomenology reveals "that these goods have an existential character."[76] Yet these philosophical lenses find their true meaning only through scripture, which "provides the theological basis for responsible love guiding all human activity and relationships."[77] John Paul II's theology operates through a nuptial hermeneutic and, fittingly, begins with an interpretation of a New Testament passage concerning marriage.

In Matthew 19:4-5, some Pharisees ask Jesus whether divorce might be acceptable. Jesus responds by quoting Genesis: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'?"[78] For John Paul II, Jesus's appeal to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 is significant: "Quoting these words almost '*in extenso*,' as a whole, Christ gives them an even more explicit normative meaning."[79] This meaning, the late pope argues, is nuptial in character:

> the human body, with its sex – its masculinity and femininity – seen in the very mystery of creation … [it] contains 'from the beginning' the 'spousal' attribute, that is, *the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift* and – through this gift – fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence.[80]

Thus, John Paul II sees in Jesus's answer to the Pharisees a justification for reading the Genesis creation narratives through a nuptial hermeneutic. Such a reading produces John Paul II's views of both gender essentialism, which maintains that sexual difference proceeds from God's creative act, and gender complementarity, which maintains that women and men exist in a relationship of mutual dependence through which both women and men actualize their full humanity.

The first creation account in Genesis expresses a gender essentialism supported by theological and metaphysical reflections on gender. Theologically, Genesis 1:27 expresses "only the objective fact and defines the objective reality" when it connects creation of male and female

to creation in the image and likeness of God.[81] The subsequent verse, containing God's blessing

and command to "be fruitful and multiply" links the "objective reality" of male and female with

procreation. As such, both "male and female" and procreative purpose are seen as theologically

connected to the creation of the human person in the *imago Dei*. The first creation story also

offers a metaphysical definition of the human person:

> to the mystery of his creation ("in the image of God he created them") corresponds the perspective of procreation ("be fruitful and multiply"), of coming to be in the world and in time, of "*fieri*," which is necessarily tied to the metaphysical situation of creation: of contingent being ("*contingens*").[82]

In this reading of Genesis, which owes a great debt to Thomistic metaphysics, human beings'

creation as male and female in the image of God reflects their contingent nature and dependence

upon God. Procreation becomes a sign of this reality. As such, John Paul II sees any attempt to

question *either* the gender binary *or* humanity's procreative imperative as an attempt to surpass

the human person's status as a contingent being, an attempt to usurp the creator. The first

creation account provides a theology and metaphysics of gender essentialism: "male and female"

is willed by God from the beginning, is linked to procreative purpose, and reflects human nature

as wholly dependent upon God for one's existence.

If the first creation account in Genesis helps John Paul II to construct a view of gender

essentialism, the second creation account helps him to construct a view of gender

complementarity. The second Genesis creation account "constitutes in some way the oldest

description and record of man's self-understanding … it is the first witness of human

consciousness."[83] At the beginning of creation, "even though man is surrounded by the

innumerable creatures of the created world, he realizes that *he is alone* (cf. Gen. 2:20)."[84] God,

recognizing this original solitude, creates woman "in order to help [man] escape from this

situation of solitude."[85] From the beginning, "the creation of woman is thus marked … by the

principle of help: a help which is not one-sided but *mutual*. Woman complements man, just as man complements woman."[86] Moreover, this "help" that characterizes gender complementarity, "is not referring merely to *acting*, but also to *being*."[87] As such, it is not a mere physical or psychological complementarity, but also an ontological one: "only through the duality of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine'" does the "'human' [find] full realization."[88] Owing to the ontological nature of this complementarity, John Paul II argues that sex is not merely an attribute of an individual but "in some way is 'constitutive for the person.'"[89] What precisely John Paul II means by sex being "constitutive of the human person," we cannot fully know as "the late pope does not unpack" what he means by it.[90]

John Paul II's theology of the body now comes into focus. God creates "male and female" and this creation reflects the *imago Dei*. One might summarize that, in John Paul II's view, this creation of "male and female" makes procreation possible, and humanity's procreative dimension reflects its metaphysical nature as contingent being. Aware of this situation, the first man recognizes an original solitude and God responds to man's original solitude by creating woman. Man and woman thus exist in a relationship of mutuality and complementarity, one that penetrates not only their actions but also their ontological nature. As such, John Paul II holds that sex is "constitutive" of one's personhood. This understanding of gender complementarity forms the bedrock for John Paul II's theology of marriage.

For John Paul II, marriage cannot be understood outside of its procreative dimension. Reflecting on Genesis 4:1, in which Adam "knew" Eve and she "conceived and bore Cain," John Paul writes that "the mystery of femininity manifests and reveals itself in its full depth through motherhood, as the text says, 'who conceived and gave birth.'"[91] In a like manner, "what also reveals itself is the mystery of the man's masculinity, that is, the generative and 'paternal'

meaning of his body."[92] While John Paul II understands femininity through "the feminine body in its typical expression of creative love," masculinity is understood less through the body and more through the fact that Scripture attributes "to the earthly father the participation in the divine work of transmitting life, and perhaps also in the joy present in the statement, 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good' (Gen. 1:31)."[93] The creative potential of masculinity and the maternal feminine are joined in a "communion of persons" through marriage and that communion forms something that neither man nor woman could form on their own.[94]

Philosophically, this "communion of persons" requires an expression of love, which John Paul II understands in two ways. Seen negatively, love entails a refusal to treat another person as an object or as a means to an end; seen positively, love entails a total gift of self to another.[95] Sexual intercourse within marriage is a primary expression of this love. Yet marital sexual intercourse is not only an expression of love, but may be called "a language of the body in truth."[96] The truth expressed in sexual intercourse encompasses two dimensions. In the first place, it expresses both the unitive and procreative ends of marriage. Yet it also reflects what John Paul II sees as a more fundamental, anthropological truth – that in marital sexual intercourse "the masculine and feminine biological and psychological elements are ontologically linked in a unified whole."[97] As such, "these two dimensions by definition eliminate the possibility of moral homosexual acts and moral nonreproductive heterosexual acts, even between a married couple."[98]

John Paul II's theology of the body is admirable in its affirmation of the human person as an embodied and sexual being. As Megan DeFranza points out, this is no small achievement, as John Paul II's theology of the body affirms the body "in the face of a long tradition of

devaluation."[99] Grounding his theology in the Genesis creation stories, John Paul II's theology of the body powerfully centers God's creation of the universe and the matter contained within it. Moreover, John Paul II sees a strong connection between sexually differentiated human bodies and interpersonal communion. The human person is not self-sufficient, but rather stands in need of help. This basic need is marked not only by differences between male and female bodies, but also by procreative potential, which marks human beings as contingent, relying upon God's help for their existence. Human beings realize their full humanity through both interpersonal and sexual communion, which manifests God's grace through sacramental marriage. In this deep connection between physical and interpersonal union, John Paul II's theology of the body reflects the "sublime" view of material creation that Karl Rahner proposes. Embodied human persons, in John Paul II's view, are the fruit of God's creation and they await transfiguration in and through the Risen Christ. Human persons are actualized through interpersonal communion here on earth which prepares them for – and foreshadows – their final transfiguration with all of creation at the general resurrection. Yet while John Paul II's theology of the body does powerfully affirm the goodness and dignity of the human person as an embodied, sexual being, it has also faced significant criticism from the theological community.

Theology of the Body: Scholarly Criticism

Theologians have critiqued John Paul II's theology of the body along three lines. First, Biblical scholars criticize John Paul II for uncritically drawing ontological conclusions immediately from Biblical narratives. Second, philosophical theologians have argued that John Paul II operates from a philosophical lens that implicitly prioritizes "nature" over personhood, thus failing to sufficiently account for the complexity of the human person. This philosophical

critique gives way to an anthropological critique: theologians criticize John Paul II's theology of the body for failing to give due consideration to the diverse array of embodied humanity.

Critics contend that John Paul II's theology of the body is Biblically problematic because it draws immediate ontological conclusions from Biblical narratives without proper conversation with the Catholic interpretive tradition. In *Dei Verbum*, the Catholic Church's dogmatic constitution on divine revelation, the council fathers set forth two important charges for the Biblical interpreter. First, "the interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture."[100] Second, the Biblical interpreter must take into account "the living tradition of the whole Church."[101] John Paul II's interpretation fails on both counts.[102]

John Paul II claims that Genesis 1:27 offers "only the objective fact" that "male and female" is to be connected to the *imago Dei*. But this claim glosses over the fact that using "male and female" as an interpretive key to the *imago Dei* is nearly absent in the interpretive literature prior to Karl Barth.[103] Moreover, recent exegetical work on Genesis 1 has suggested that the *imago Dei* "refers to human rule, that is, the exercise of power on God's behalf in creation."[104] Such an interpretation is supported by semantic, historical, literary, and inter-textual evidence that John Paul II does not provide, suggesting that his interpretation does not meet the Catholic tradition's interpretive criteria. While it is true that Catholic tradition has generally accepted sexual difference as a part of God's creation, John Paul II's joining of "male and female" to the *imago Dei* represents a modern innovation without precedent. As Megan DeFranza points out, most theologians within the Western Christian theological tradition have sought a "substantive" view of the *imago Dei*, linking it to the soul and, by proxy, to human capacities like rationality,

love, or virtue.[105] This is certainly the case for Augustine and, to a limited extent, for Thomas

Aquinas. It seems curious that John Paul II, claiming a "Thomistic personalism," does not

attempt to reconcile his own view with that of St. Thomas, which I will explore shortly.

Finally, as Craig Ford points out, Genesis 1:27 is "completely unable to bear the weight

of an argument in favor of gender essentialism because the verse does not make an argument

about *what it means* to be embodied before God."[106] To remedy this problem, John Paul II

provides a phenomenological reading of the creation account in Genesis 2. This creates

unfortunate confusion over the term "man," as Luke Timothy Johnson explains:

> John Paul II wants, for example, to have the term "man" mean both male and female. But the Genesis 2 account pushes him virtually to equate "man" with "male," with the unhappy result that males experience both the original solitude the pope wants to make distinctively human as well as the domain over creation expressed by the naming of animals. Females inevitably appear as "helpers" and as complementary to the already rather complete humanity found in the male.[107]

Despite John Paul II's insistence on the fundamental equality of women and men in their

complementarity, his reading of Genesis 2 forces him into reflections where women virtually

never occupy a place of moral agency, thus undermining the whole project.[108] The

phenomenological reading of Genesis 2 thus fails to provide a sufficient explanation for what it

means to be embodied before God, which in turn casts doubt on Genesis 1:27's ability to sustain

the weight of the pope's argument for gender essentialism.

Philosophically, theology of the body claims to operate from the perspective of the

human person, yet too often this personalist language is defined in terms of "nature," rendering

the project, according to Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, "incapable of adequately

addressing the human sexual person."[109] For John Paul II, genuine love within a communion of

persons is only possible insofar as persons remain true to their nature – their masculinity and

femininity which come together most fully in their procreative dimension. While the

complementarity in theology of the body rooted in interpersonal communion permits moral sexual relationships for heterosexual couples unable to have children, John Paul II sees "heterogenital complementarity" as "the sine qua non" for the realization of authentic communion.[110] As such, there is a clear hierarchy of nature over person: the *personal meaning* that individuals find in relationship is only relevant to the extent that it conforms to John Paul II's biological understanding of nature. Because the biological is only one aspect of the human person, Salzman and Lawler note, John Paul II's theology of the body cannot be considered an authentic personalism. Authentic personalism, they contend, "takes the particular human person in his or her sexual complexity and formulates normative guidelines for sexual relationships out of a profound appreciation of that complexity, not on the primacy of heterogenital complementarity."[111] Theology of the body fails to recognize this complexity and thus cannot give a sufficient account of the human person.

This philosophical problem gives way to an anthropological problem: John Paul II's theology of the body fails to adequately consider the diversity of human embodiment. The most obvious omission is that of the eunuch. For John Paul II, the term eunuch "refers to the physical defects that make the procreative power of marriage impossible."[112] As such, the "natural" eunuch is simply defective; John Paul II does not ask what such bodies might reveal about the Divine Mystery. As we will see in the next chapter, theological reflection on the ambiguity of the eunuch can bear much fruit. For now it is sufficient to note that theology of the body fails to adequately consider the diversity of human bodies because it "fails to take seriously the liminal status of the eunuch as one who is neither (fully) male/masculine nor female/feminine."[113]

Eunuchs are not the only persons who find themselves omitted from theology of the body. As Luke Timothy Johnson puts it, John Paul II's strict emphasis on the male-female binary

"leaves out all the interesting ways in which human sexuality refuses to be contained" within the

binary "not only biologically but also psychologically and spiritually."[114] Among those left out

of this theology are gay and lesbian individuals, who "are also called to be loving, and in many

fashions to create and foster the work and joy of creation."[115] Moreover, his strict understanding

of masculinity and femininity leaves out a whole host of individuals who exhibit performative

dimensions of gender that clash with the pope's understanding: women who never become

mothers, men who do not see themselves as particularly "generative" or creative, those who

engage in drag performances, and transgender and non-binary individuals, just to name a few.

Ultimately, John Paul II's theology of the body is a not a theology for all bodies.

Theology of the body, despite providing a powerful affirmation of material creation and

the human body, falls short in its effort to provide an adequate theological account of the

embodied and sexual human person. In striving for a deep harmony between the "natural,"

physical, and relational dimensions of the human person, John Paul II falls prey to numerous

methodological problems and does not provide a compelling theological account of the human

person. Yet if theology of the body cannot give a full account of the embodied, sexual human

person, and if gender performativity, proceeding from a social constructionist perspective, seems

to undermine the theological significance of matter and bodies in Christian theology, what path

remains for the theologian to reflect upon the significance of embodied, interpersonal sexuality?

A Path Forward: A Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness

I contend that a synthesis of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and John

Paul II's theology of the body may represent a path of theological inquiry into embodied

personhood that addresses the inadequacies of either framework in isolation. In isolation,

Butler's theory of gender performativity cannot adequately provide a framework for theological

reflection on embodied personhood for two reasons. First, Butler is a philosopher, not a theologian, and Butler does not construct gender performativity as a religious or theological analytical tool. Second, as I have already shown, social constructionism does not distinguish between reality *per se* and reality as known through human consciousness and construction. Such a philosophical orientation risks undermining the elevated view of material creation and human bodies necessitated by Christian doctrines of creation, incarnation, and resurrection. John Paul II's theology of the body powerfully centers the doctrines of creation and incarnation through its emphasis on the Genesis creation accounts and the *imago Dei.* Yet while theology of the body addresses gender performativity's shortcomings, its methodological problems render it unable to convincingly account for the diversity of human embodiment. Therefore, I propose a hermeneutic of holy queerness as a synthesis of the two, rooted in gender performativity, yet taking seriously Christian doctrines of creation.

For a hermeneutic of holy queerness to effectively analyze humanity's diverse array of human embodiment, it must be rooted in gender performativity. Rooting this hermeneutic in gender performativity allows the hermeneutic to analyze subversive and unusual embodied expressions that would otherwise, like the eunuch in John Paul II's theology of the body, be seen as "defective" in essentialist and complementarian frameworks. These *queer* embodied experiences are bound together by their power to disturb constructed gender's status quo. As such, the theologian deploying a hermeneutic of holy queerness begins by analyzing how a particular performative act subverts the socially and culturally constructed status quo of gender, within the act's own context. Yet in order to discover *religious and theological meaning* of a performative act, it is not enough simply to analyze how the act subverts cultural constructions of gender, but rather how the act redounds to the Kingdom of God *through* its subversion of

culturally constructed gender norms. Of course, claiming that a particular act redounds to God's Kingdom is no simple task – how are human beings to know and demonstrate that a human act is participating in the reign of God? Such a question is itself worthy of much theological debate, but it will suffice here to say that the theologian employing a hermeneutic of holy queerness must make a compelling argument that a performative act manifests *grace*, understood as God's self-communication. If such an act can be said to manifest grace, then the act proceeds from the Divine Mystery and an analysis of its effects should provide insight into that same Divine Mystery.

Yet such an analysis needs the doctrine of creation to ground the analysis in divine revelation. Emphasizing the material creation of human bodies grounds a hermeneutic of holy queerness in the "sublime" view of matter necessary to uphold creation, incarnation, and resurrection as central Christian mysteries. In employing a hermeneutic of holy queerness, one way for the theologian to do this is by maintaining Bernard Lonergan's distinction between the "world of immediacy" and the "world of meaning." In acknowledging that a hermeneutic of holy queerness is only able to analyze performative acts in the "world of meaning," the theologian recognizes that the "world of immediacy" – the proper domain of God's creation – lies beyond the human intellect. Such an acknowledgement keeps the theologian from equating an analysis of performative acts with a complete account of God's creation. In turn, the theologian stands in awe of the "sublime" mystery of God's creation, the full comprehension of which lies beyond the horizon of words, meanings, constructions, or human action.

Doctrine of Creation

Bernard Lonergan's distinction between objects in the "world of immediacy" and objects in the "world of meaning" can help a hermeneutic of holy queerness frame its analysis of

performative acts in light of the doctrine of creation and the "sublime" view of matter that this

doctrine requires. Lonergan first speaks of objects in the world of immediacy. Objects in the

world of immediacy are prior to any name or description of them. These objects are sensed,

spatial, exist outside of human consciousness, and are "bound up in one's living and acting."[116]

Lonergan then speaks of a second type of object, one mediated by the world of meaning. This is

the object that "becomes socially understood, judged, and decided by the answer 'What is

it?'."[117] Applying this distinction to the task at hand, human bodies and their "sexual

characteristics," in their pre-named and pre-discursive form, are seen to exist as created by God

in the world of immediacy. They exist, in Lonergan's words, as "already, out, there, now, and

real."[118] Yet once these same human bodies enter human consciousness, they enter the world of

meaning. As such, by the time these bodies and their material characteristics enter consciousness,

they are understood through a whole array of social, cultural, and religious meanings.

Theologically, while God creates human bodies in the world of immediacy, human beings can

only ever encounter bodies in the world of meaning. A hermeneutic of holy queerness,

concerning itself with performative acts, analyzes embodiment in the world of meaning and does

not claim knowledge of the world of immediacy. As such, human bodies created by God in the

world of immediacy remain beyond the theologian's comprehension, thus inspiring a sense of

awe in the theologian who marvels before the "sublime" awe of God's creation.

     The distinction between objects in the world of immediacy and objects in the world of

meaning may at first appear to be a version of relativism. In fact, this distinction is a form of

objectivity, but one that presumes a perspectivist frame of knowledge. Relativism and objectivity

are distinguished by their approach to truth. Whereas relativism denies the possibility of attaining

genuine truth, objectivity affirms the existence of genuine truth and believes that human beings

are capable of knowing truth. Yet objectivity is not a simple or monolithic category. Bernard Lonergan holds that there are different types of objectivity corresponding to different types of objects. For objects in the world of immediacy, objectivity is simply a function of the object existing. Yet for objects in the world of meaning, because these objects must be known through cognition, objectivity takes on a tripartite structure. Sensory observation of the object provides an *experiential objectivity*. By considering and naming an object through human reason, one gains a *normative objectivity*. The experiential and normative objectivities combine to form a harmony between reason and experience, an *absolute objectivity.* Yet even this "absolute objectivity" retains an element of contingency because, "our knowledge of reality is never purely objective but is always conditioned by the knowing subject."[119]

This contingency is not a product of relativism, but rather of the knowing subject's limits. Whereas relativism believes that truth cannot be attained, Lonergan's distinction admits of both truth and the possibility of attaining truth. Lonergan's point is simply that any knowledge is inherently only *partial* and *perspectivist* because it is known by a human being, whose knowledge of reality is never perfect. From a theological perspective, human beings can only ever attain partial knowledge of God because the mystery of God surpasses all human knowing. As such, by analyzing performative gender acts within the world of meaning, the theologian employing a hermeneutic of holy queerness can attain genuine, objective knowledge of the theological meaning of performative acts. Yet this knowledge will never fully exhaust all that could be said of these acts' theological meaning, nor can it provide insight into human bodies in the world of immediacy. Such limitations, rather than reflecting the impossibility of attaining truth, reflect the limitations of human knowledge in the face of a transcendent God. Recognizing these limitations empowers the theologian to stand before the "sublime" mystery of God and

God's creation, thus guarding the theologian from equating theological knowledge with certain and complete knowledge of God or God's works.

I have now argued that a hermeneutic of holy queerness may be rooted in gender performativity, analyzing performative acts that subvert constructed gender's status quo, without compromising a Christian view of creation or the "sublime" view of matter such an emphasis necessitates. Yet there remain important elements from both gender performativity and theology of the body that still need reconciliation. First, Butler contends that queer performative acts must be "in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes."[120] Butler's point is that queer performativity reveals that there is no stable or final *end* of gender. Queer performative acts are not merely seeking to revise the constructed status quo to make it more inclusive or more amenable; they rather illustrate that any perceived "stability" within identity categories is a product of our construction and will ultimately be "queered" into ever new and expansive directions. John Paul II argues instead that binary sex ("male and female") not only emerges from God's creative action, but also reflects the *imago Dei* – the image and likeness of God in which human beings are said to be created in Genesis 1:27. Butler and John Paul II seem to hold disparate views, with Butler arguing that gender can *never* be stable and John Paul II maintaining that the stability of "male and female" is precisely how humanity reflects the *imago Dei.* I propose Ian McFarland's Thomistic reading of *imago Dei* as a path of reconciliation between these seemingly disparate views. Because McFarland's reading emphasizes the eschatological dimension of *imago Dei*, it allows queer performative acts to be seen as queering gender in grace-filled anticipation of humanity's eschatological embodiment, thus harmonizing performativity with the *imago Dei*.

Imago Dei and Eschatological Embodiment

The *imago Dei* is a highly contested theological category, with various schools of theology proposing conceptions of *imago Dei* rooted in humanity's rational and relational capacities. Traditionally, scholastic theology locates the *imago Dei* within the rational soul and thus with one's capacity for reason, love, or virtue. History has shown that rooting the *imago Dei* in rational or cognitive powers has led to dehumanization because it allows those in power to "question the humanity of those whose cognitive abilities they have judged somehow deficient."[121] Striving for a more universal conception of *imago Dei*, contemporary theologians often locate the *imago Dei* within relationality. John Paul II's connection of the *imago Dei* to humanity's creation as "male and female" is one example of such a relational conception of the *imago Dei*. Yet this relational view seems ill supported by scriptural exegesis, which emphasizes the connection between *imago Dei* and humanity's "dominion" over creation. Even aside from John Paul II's argument, relational conceptions of the *imago Dei* in general remain problematic because "relational criteria seem as open to exclusive interpretation as those pertaining to the use of reason or will."[122] Given this difficulty, it is tempting to simply jettison the category, or to at least jettison positive definitions of the *imago Dei*.

Yet I propose that an eschatological view of *imago Dei* is uniquely poised to reconcile gender performativity and theology of the body, because it allows the theologian to recognize queer performative acts as grace-filled anticipation of humanity's eschatological embodiment, thereby providing an alternative to John Paul II's relational view of *imago Dei*. Ian McFarland's eschatological reading of Thomas Aquinas, by connecting human intellect to eschatological participation in the Divine Mystery, provides just such an account of *imago Dei*.

At first reading, Thomas Aquinas's view of *imago Dei* appears to simply connect *imago Dei* to human intellectual capacity, but Ian McFarland argues that a proper interpretation of Thomas's view highlights divine grace every bit much as human potential. Thomas states that "man is said to be the image of God by reason of his intellectual nature."[123] Yet McFarland argues that one must read this definition in a "narrative context" that sees "God in Christ calling human beings" into Trinitarian participation. In this context, one finds in Thomas an "insistence that the divine image should be understood as a state" realized "in the concrete act of knowing and loving God"; which in turn draws attention to the "temporal character of human knowing."[124] Humanity's exercise of intellect is thus intimately bound to God's grace that draws human beings into knowledge and love of God. Owing to this connection between human intellectual potential and divine grace, McFarland demonstrates that the Thomistic understanding of *imago Dei* is not a simple matter, but rather one encompassing three degrees of participation.

For Ian McFarland, Thomas Aquinas's three degrees of human participation in the *imago Dei* are rooted not in any human's intellectual capacity *per se*, but rather in humanity's "potential realization" of the divine image in glory.[125] For Thomas, humans participate in the divine image in the first and lowest way when they exercise the capacity for reason that exists within the soul. In so doing, they "generate" an "inner word in a way that is analogous to the Father's generation of the divine Word" and so participate in the *imago Dei*. In the second degree, human beings participate in the *imago Dei* when they receive knowledge through God's grace. In the third and highest degree, the image of God is present in human beings in "the perfected knowledge enjoyed by the saints in glory."[126] As such, human participation in the *imago Dei* is not so much a function of one's human capacities, but is instead primarily a function of grace drawing human beings towards their eschatological destiny. The image of God, therefore, is "realized in

creatures as they come to participate in God's own self-knowledge."[127] Eschatological

participation in the Divine Mystery thus grounds human participation in the *imago Dei*.

Because the highest participation in the *imago Dei* is connected to eschatological

participation in the divine life, lesser, temporal participation in the *imago Dei* via human intellect

must be understood *through* eschatological realization of the divine image in glory. As Ian

McFarland points out, "this eschatological reality casts its light backwards on to the whole of

human existence in time in such a way that the *imago Dei* can be said to be virtually present in

the understanding from the moment of creation."[128] Put another way, our understanding gets

"caught up" in our eschatological destiny so that, through God's grace, we are already

participating – and have participated since the moment of creation – in the image that we will

fully enjoy in heaven. McFarland explains:

> As God images God in the eternal conception of the Word in the bosom of the Father, so
> we participate in the image as our minds are informed by this same Word by the grace of
> the Holy Spirit. Since this conforming of our minds to God's Word occurs only when and
> as that Word encounters us in Christ, for us to be "in" the image of God depends finally
> upon our being "in" Christ as the one Word who gives the divine image definite
> content.[129]

As such, temporal human intellectual exercise takes on its theological significance as

participation in the *imago Dei* through the eschatological glorification of human minds as they

are conformed more perfectly to God's Word.

A conception of human intellectual participation in the Divine Mystery, when understood

holistically as eschatological embodiment, provides a framework for understanding queer

performative acts as participation in the *imago Dei*. As I have already discussed, contemporary

theologians like Karl Rahner understand resurrection as endowing meaning on created matter.

Christ's resurrection is not simply about the forgiveness of human sins but is rather the

beginning of the transfiguration of all creation. As such, eschatological participation in divine

life is not merely intellectual participation, a conforming of the human mind to the divine mind. The eschaton, encompassing material creation, is also the glorification of human bodies responding to the grace of God's self-communication. Thus what Ian McFarland claims of intellectual acts taking their meaning from the eschatological conforming of human minds to God's Word also holds true for human bodily acts. Embodied human actions, like human intellectual actions, can be said to participate in the *imago Dei* as they reflect in the temporal sphere a participation of the eschatological, glorified body. As queer performative acts subvert constructed gender through their participation in the heavenly embodiment, they may be said to participate in the *imago Dei* as dynamic motion towards the eschatological body.

A hermeneutic of holy queerness, in order to glean theological meaning from queer, performative acts, should therefore analyze performative acts in light of their participation in the *imago Dei*. In order to do this, the theologian will need to show how a particular performative act subverts existing constructions of gender for the sake of signifying eschatological embodiment within the temporal realm. This eschatological view of *imago Dei* harmonizes Butler's gender performativity and John Paul II's theology of the body because it places the "end" of gender in the eschaton. As such, gender in *earthly life* can be said to have no final "end," in accord with Butler's theory, and yet seen through a theological lens of material creation's ultimate transformation, the physical human body *does* have a final, eschatological end.

A Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness

At this point, the analytical framework for a hermeneutic of holy queerness, constructed at the intersection of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, John Paul II's theology of the body, and Ian McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei* emerges with some clarity. A hermeneutic of holy queerness is an interpretive lens through which a theologian analyzes

performative acts in three ways. In applying this hermeneutic to a particular queer performative

act, the theologian analyzes how the act 1) *subverts* the prevailing social and cultural

constructions of gender within the act's own context, 2) *advances* God's Kingdom *through* its

subversion of prevailing gender constructions, and 3) *reflects* the eschatological significance of

the human person created in the *imago Dei*.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a powerful tool for analyzing a

performative act's ability to subvert prevailing social and cultural constructions of gender.

Butler's view of gender as a "repeated stylization of the body" shifts the emphasis of gender

from metaphysical identity to performative action. This shift enables the theologian to explore

the theological and religious meaning of queer performative acts, which the theologian does by

demonstrating how queer performative acts manifest grace and thus redound to God's Kingdom.

Yet Karl Rahner's view of the resurrection as beginning the glorification of *material creation*

cautions the theologian against reducing gender purely to linguistic discourse. As John Paul II's

theology of the body reminds us, genuine Christian theological analysis of gender must affirm

God's creation of human bodies. A hermeneutic of holy queerness does this by analyzing

performative acts in what Bernard Lonergan calls the "world of meaning," while acknowledging

that God creates pre-discursive human bodies in the "world of immediacy." Finally, Ian

McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei* allows the theologian to analyze queer

performative acts according to their participation in the *imago Dei* qua a performative act's

participation in eschatological embodiment. Yet the true test of a hermeneutic of holy

queerness's potential to shift Catholic theological paradigms lies less in its intellectual

framework and more in the fruit born from its application to particular performative acts. This

application forms the subject of Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Subversive Gender Ambiguity and Theological *Ressourcement*

Theological paradigm shifts change theology's relationship to the historical past. As the theologian approaches the Christian tradition from a new paradigm, the tradition reads differently, opening up new insights that reshape theology's understanding of its past. In turn, paradigm shifts invite *ressourcement*. Theological *ressourcement* looks "to the past for norms or practices or mind-sets that can be used in changing, correcting, or at least qualifying" the state of present theological norms, practices, or mind-sets.[130] In this chapter, I argue that applying a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 and to the tradition of female virginity within the four centuries of the Christian Church causes a paradigm shift by revealing a deep *historical tradition* of gender ambiguity and subversion within Christian Scripture and praxis. This historical tradition in turn disrupts the Magisterium's "gender ideology" rhetoric, revealing the Magisterium's gender essentialism and complementarity to be a form of playing God by rendering human identity a matter of personal or institutional choice. Against the contemporary Magisterium's essentialist and complementarian view of gender, the historical tradition of gender ambiguity and subversion invites a *ressourcement* that sees acts of queer performativity through a lens of discernment, asking how such acts might, in their subversiveness, reveal something of the mystery of God. Justin Tanis's transgender theology models such an approach.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the "gender ideology" rhetoric promulgated by the Catholic Magisterium. Such an analysis reveals the rhetoric of "gender ideology" to be a tool of power, distorting language and creating intellectual strawmen to cement Magisterial authority through a strategy of universalization. Queer theology rejects this universalization via an emphasis on the particularities of grace-filled queer experience. A hermeneutic of holy queerness

provides an interpretive lens for re-discovering the particularities of grace-filled, queer performative witness within Christianity's historical tradition. In applying a hermeneutic to the Ethiopian eunuch, the eunuch's ambiguous identity demonstrates the constructedness of gendered identities. In being baptized, the eunuch reveals that Christ's universal invitation to salvation does not depend on one's actual or perceived identity. I then apply a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the tradition of female virginity within the early Church. Female virginity within the early Church reveals that the "male and female" binary inadequately describes God's creation. Moreover, early female virgins are shown to model the *imago Dei* in their gender ambiguous witness to humanity's participation in the eschaton. Through these examples, a hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals a deep Christian tradition of gender ambiguity which invites a *ressourcement* of theology's relationship to queer performativity. Given the ability of gender ambiguity within the Christian tradition to reveal something of the Church's universal mission and humanity's eschatological participation, contemporary queer performative acts may be best analyzed through a lens of discernment. The chapter concludes by arguing that Justin Tanis's transgender theology models such a *ressourcement* in the contemporary theological landscape.

Magisterial Rhetoric: "Gender Ideology"

Building off John Paul II's theology of the body, the Magisterium holds to a strict interdependence between the categories of sex, gender, and marriage. The Magisterium categorizes anything that falls outside of its own teachings as the "ideology of gender," which

> denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time.[131]

The Magisterium's argument goes something like this: the problem with "gender ideology" is that, in separating gender identity from biological sex, this ideology denies the complementarity of the male-female binary. This binary, the Magisterium contends, is divinely ordained and can be demonstrated through John Paul II's theology of the body. Therefore, when human beings deny this divinely created binary, they assume the role of God – they "fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator."[132] Such a position is problematic: scholars take issue with John Paul II's theology, the foundation of Magisterial teaching, from Biblical, philosophical, and anthropological perspectives. This critique ultimately concludes that theology of the body is unable to theologically account for the diverse array of embodied human experience. In this chapter, I will show that the Magisterium's framework of "gender ideology" is rhetorically problematic because it fails to take disagreement seriously, opting instead to create intellectual distortions that obscure serious theological debate.

Rhetorically, the Magisterium uses their ecclesial authority to define the terms of the debate. They gather "all opposition to current magisterial teaching with respect to sex and gender" and name it as ideology.[133] For the Magisterium, *all* opposition to gender complementarity becomes opposition to God's creative wisdom; the Magisterium does not admit of the possibility that one might oppose its framework on theological grounds. Moreover, despite exhorting a "listening" path for "dialogue" on issues of gender and sexuality, Magisterial documents demonstrate a remarkable ignorance of trans and nonbinary experiences.[134] James Martin S.J. points out that, in the Magisterium's formulation,

> transgender people are being "provocative" and are either consciously or unconsciously trying to "annihilate the concept of 'nature.'" Friends and family members who have accompanied a transgender person through their attempts at suicide, their despair over fitting into the larger society, or their acceptance that God loves them will find that sentence baffling and even offensive.[135]

In their rhetoric casting all opposition to its teaching as ideology, the Magisterium does not acknowledge the diversity of theological opinion on gender, sexuality, and marriage. The Magisterium also uses their limited understanding of gender theory to project intentionality and action onto LGBTQ+ individuals in ways that do not correspond to the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people.

While defining the terms of the debate helps the Magisterium to control the narrative on gender and sexuality, it also allows the Magisterium to misrepresent its opponents' views. Thus, as Craig A. Ford, Jr. puts it, the Magisterium has a problem of "creating intellectual strawmen and generating a field of intellectual distortions that do nothing to clear up the terms of what is actually being debated."[136] To illustrate his point, Ford considers the following text from the Pontifical Council for the Family, attempting to explain the origins of gender ideology:

> Starting from the decade between 1960-70, some theories (which today are usually described by experts as "constructionist") hold not only that generic sexual identity ("gender") is the product of an interaction between the community and the individual, but that this generic identity is independent from personal sexual identity … the ideology of "gender" found a favorable environment in the individualist anthropology of radical neo-liberalism. Claiming a similar status for marriage and de facto unions (including homosexual unions) is usually justified today on the basis of categories and terms that come from the ideology of "gender."[137]

This bold and sweeping claim is supported by a footnote citing "Marxism," "structuralism," the "sexual revolution," and "a certain radical and extreme feminism" as key contributors to gender ideology.[138] None of these terms are defined and the only individuals named in the document associated with these movements are Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, Margaret Sanger, and Simone de Beauvoir.[139] Ford points out the absurdity of such a claim:

> Marxists (who generally divide the world into those who have access to the means of production and those who don't) would be surprised to hear that they were "individualists." These same Marxists would be even more surprised to find that they were parties to "radical neo-liberalism," which, on its face, would seem to be more at

home within certain libertarian forms of capitalism, like those put forward by Milton Friedman in his classic *Capitalism and Freedom*.[140]

Moreover, considering that this document was published in the year 2000, Ford finds it shocking that such a document would "nearly completely [ignore] all scholarship from the 1980's and 1990's, the two decades in which queer theory – the field of study that looked at gender and sexuality critically – began to take off."[141] What we are left with is an intellectual strawman: a sweeping and unsupported generalization of any and all philosophical, sociological, experiential, and theological perspectives that depart from the Magisterium as belonging to an ideology, formed by an unexplained coalescence of divergent intellectual schools and persons.

Thus, the Magisterium can be said to rely on three rhetorical devices to generate intellectual distortions: defining the terms of debate in a way that forces all opposition into a constructed ideology, refusing to acknowledge wide diversity in theological thought or queer experience, and controlling the narrative by misrepresenting its opponents' views. These rhetorical devices are tools of power: rather than seek genuine dialogue and truth, the Magisterium obscures the terms of debate. Instead of engaging fruitfully with diverse theological perspectives, the Magisterium casts all disagreement with its anthropology as undermining the Christian doctrine of creation. Instead of engaging with the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, the Magisterium projects onto them ideological motivation. Instead of entering into thoughtful dialogue with contemporary philosophical discourses of gender, the Magisterium creates an intellectual strawman against which to argue. In each case, the Magisterium uses its authority and repressive power to silence any dissenting voice as that of ideology.[142] This use of power, which Patrick Cheng calls "theological bullying," seems to serve a singular purpose: to bind queer bodies and experiences in submission to a reified universalism, rooted in a "male and female" binary that is simply unable to reflect humanity's diversity.[143] Yet queer theology,

refusing to be bound by the Magisterium's universalizing narratives, contests Magisterial rhetoric.

"Language Twisted Around Bodies": Queer Resistance of Identity

Queer theology disrupts universalizing language. Mark D. Jordan describes queer theology's disruptive power in an anecdote about deciding on a reading list for a course on queer theology: "I added texts only to take them off. I begged recommendations, studied other course plans, even – I blush – even followed the pimping suggestions of Amazon. Still the reading list would not settle into the shape of a story."[144] Jordan goes on to consider common framings for queer theology – "Christianity's long postponed encounter with all the specters of pleasure," queer theology's "[return] to the gospel prophecy of bodies subtracted from strategies of useful reproduction," queer theology's stubborn reminder that "the erotic is more than a storefront in the mall of commodity fetishes."[145] Yet none of these narratives satisfy because none captures the full scope of queer theology. Recalling Marcella Althaus-Reid's words that queer theology is "a first person theology: diasporic, self-disclosing, autobiographical and responsible for its own words," Jordan locates the beginning of queer theology's task in the disruption of identity: "to refuse the metaphysics of identity is to reject the reduction of language that identities require."[146] Queer theology is a resistance to universalizing narratives because "a queer self can only be 'told' in dis-integrations, in-consistencies, language twisted around bodies until it rips."[147]

Language twisted around bodies. This striking image describes both the aims of Magisterial rhetoric and those of queer narratives that contest this rhetoric. Magisterial rhetoric consolidates and misrepresents opposition, contorting bodies and experiences to fit its own constructions of gender. This is a strategy of *universalization*. Yet queer narratives emphasize the *particularities* of grace-filled human experiences that contest the Magisterial narrative at

every turn. These narratives disrupt Magisterial rhetoric: they twist language until the *language itself* – as opposed to the body it attempts to constrain – rips and falls apart, freeing the previously confined body to reflect God's grace in all its diverse particularities. Looking back at the Christian tradition through a hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals many examples of gender ambiguous performativity that contest the Magisterium's universalizing rhetoric and invite *ressourcement* of Catholic tradition vis-à-vis queer performativity. Two such examples are the Ethiopian eunuch and the tradition of female virginity in the early Church.

Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness: the Ethiopian Eunuch

In applying this hermeneutic to a particular performative act, the theologian analyzes how the act 1) *subverts* the prevailing social and cultural constructions of gender within the act's own context, 2) *advances* God's Kingdom *through* its subversion of prevailing gender constructions, and 3) *reflects* the eschatological significance of the human person created in the *imago Dei*. Analyzing the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:26-40 through a hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals that the eunuch subverts prevailing social and cultural constructions of gender through a series of ambiguities. These ambiguities in turn destabilize ancient discourses on gender, slavery, sexuality, and religion. The eunuch's ambiguities, according to Sean D. Burke, function akin to a drag performance by making the constructedness of gender visible to the reader of the story.[148] In demonstrating the constructedness of gender, the eunuch disrupts Magisterial "gender ideology" rhetoric. Yet the eunuch does not merely serve to subvert prevailing gender constructions, but also to build up God's Kingdom. As Burke points out, by destabilizing ancient discourses, the eunuch's baptism actualizes the Church's universal mission by effectively baptizing each of the eunuch's possible identities. Finally, the eunuch reflects the eschatological significance of the

human person created in the *imago Dei* through the grace-filled election of the eunuch for baptism by God.

The text of Acts 8:27 creates an initial gender ambiguity by referring to the eunuch as both a eunuch (εὐνοῦχος) and a man (ἀνήρ). As Burke points out, the ancient world did not recognize eunuchs as male: aside from Acts 8:27, there is but a single instance in extant, ancient literature that juxtaposes the terms εὐνοῦχος and ἀνήρ.[149] Instead, Sean D. Burke contends that ancient discourses stylize eunuchs as "not-men, half-men, effeminate males, girls, hybrids of male and female, and/or neither male nor female."[150] In this cultural context, Acts 8:27 calls into question the gender categories of the ancient world by identifying the story's protagonist as both a eunuch and a man.

This gender ambiguity is complicated by a second ambiguity, that of social location. Acts 8:27 refers to the eunuch as an official of the court (δυνάστης), implying access to both power and wealth. Yet the power of a court eunuch in the ancient world depended upon their prepubescent castration. Because this castration would blur the line between male and female, eunuchs had little to no social standing in the ancient world and therefore occupied a position of absolute dependence on their owner or benefactor. As such, "the power of the court eunuch depended on their ambiguity or liminality."[151] Burke argues that the eunuch in Acts 8:27 destabilizes the ancient distinction between freeperson and slave because, while the eunuch wielded significant power, this power is entirely dependent upon another. Moreover, this ambiguity of social location intersects with the eunuch's gender ambiguity because the eunuch "embodies a loss of masculinity that produces an absolute dependence on a woman."[152]

In considering ancient discourses on sexuality, a third ambiguity emerges. While the Christian tradition has largely followed Philo in associating eunuchs with chastity, Philo's

opinion was a minority one. More often, ancient discourses "sexualized eunuchs as objects of sexual penetration and/or as dangerous, gender-deviant figures who could unman men by penetrating their wives."[153] In this context, a new ambiguity emerges: on the one hand, as both a man (ἀνήρ) and an individual of power (δυνάστης) the eunuch would be presumed to be an active, penetrating sexual partner; yet as a eunuch he is portrayed as "a figure who is expected to be penetrated by others and/or a figure whose gender-deviant penetration of others is feared because it threatens to undo the masculinity of 'real men.'"[154] Thus stylized as eunuch, man, and individual of power, the Ethiopian eunuch destabilizes ancient discourses on sexuality.

Sean Burke highlights one final ambiguity in the Ethiopian eunuch: religious identity. Early in the story, it appears as though the eunuch may be a diasporic Jew: he has been to Jerusalem to worship (8:27) and is reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah (8:28). Yet as a eunuch, he would be denied admission to the House of Israel according to Mosaic law: "no one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord."[155] Similarly problematic is the interpretation of the eunuch as a Gentile convert; while he listens to Philip's proclamation of the gospel (8:34-35) and inquires about baptism (8:36), seeing the eunuch as a Gentile convert would undermine the significance of Cornelius's conversion in Acts 10. Rather than advocating for one of these interpretations, Burke suggests that the author of Luke-Acts may well be purposely rendering the eunuch's religious identity ambiguous.

Burke contends that these ambiguities are significant because, unable to determine the eunuch's "natural" identity, the eunuch's actions take center stage; these actions, analogous to a drag performance, subvert ancient constructions of masculinity. As Burke points out, drag performances become subversive when they make visible "the constructedness and performativity of gender without reinforcing the norms that produced a particular construction of

gender."[156] In this case, the eunuch's ambiguities leave the story's reader unable to determine which identities are "natural" and which are "performed," leaving the reader with only questions:

> Is this a eunuch performing a man, or is this a man performing a eunuch? Is this a foreigner performing an Ethiopian, or is this an Ethiopian performing a foreigner? Is this an elite slave or a freedman performing a powerful official, or is this a powerful official performing an elite slave or a freedman? Is this a sexually penetrated person performing a gender-deviant sexual penetrator, or is this a sexual penetrator performing a gender-deviant, sexually penetrated person? The eunuch can *perform* any or all of these identities, but the audience cannot definitively conclude that the eunuch *is* or *is not* any particular one of them.[157]

The eunuch's ambiguous religious identity, too, leaves the reader with questions: is this eunuch a Jew who was later castrated? A non-Jewish God-fearer? A curious Gentile? One simply cannot know. Yet all these ambiguities – and the unanswered questions that they raise – make the eunuch a *queer* figure, one whose identity resists the constraints of language and the metaphysics of identity, one who disrupts and subverts ancient constructions of gender.

As a queer figure, the eunuch is also a disruptive figure today, challenging the gender ideology rhetoric put forth by the Magisterium. First, the eunuch's castration contests the clean division of humanity into clearly male and clearly female. We do not know why the eunuch was castrated – for political reasons? For economic reasons? Because the eunuch had ambiguous genitalia from birth? What we do know is that, because of his castration, the eunuch occupied a body that contemporaries saw fit to classify as neither male nor female. Second, the eunuch challenges the Magisterium's claim that ambiguous gender identities are the result of "personal choice," an attempt to play God. In the eunuch's question-inducing "drag performance," it becomes clear that it is not the *eunuch* making choices about their identity, but rather those who *encounter* the eunuch who make these choices. One *chooses* to read the eunuch as male (or not), a symbol of chastity (or not), a Jew (or not). The eunuch's ambiguity simply makes these readings possible.[158] Ironically, the case of the Ethiopian eunuch reveals that it is not so much

queer individuals, but rather those who, like the Magisterium, espouse gender essentialism and complementarity, that "play God" by making human identity a matter of personal choice.

A hermeneutic of holy queerness also reveals, in the eunuch's baptism, a gender performativity that disrupts social and cultural constructions of gender through grace-filled action that anticipates and actualizes God's Kingdom. That the eunuch's various ambiguities disrupt ancient discourses of gender and sexuality should, by this point, be evident. The question that confronts us now is: why? What is the point of this disruption? The key to answering this question is considering the Acts of the Apostles as an origin story. Numerous Biblical scholars suggest that Acts is a historical-mythological account of the early Church's origins.[159] In this context, Acts is "not only the story of how a small community of Jesus-believers converted multitudes of people to faith in Jesus … it is simultaneously the story of how that small community of Jesus-believers was itself converted in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus."[160] The encounter of Peter with Cornelius provides the prime example of the church itself being "converted" through its proclamation of the Gospel.[161] In a similar way, a hermeneutic of holy queerness sees the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch as calling the early Church to its own kind of conversion. Burke explains:

> The fulfillment of the community's divinely mandated and divinely directed mission required that Jesus-believers themselves be converted from their attachment to their society's constructions of identity. They had to learn that baptism and table fellowship in Christ did not depend on a person's identity as Jew or gentile, man or unman, male or female, penetrator or penetrated, free or slave, citizen/native or foreigner. In fact, they had to learn that baptism and table fellowship in Christ did not depend on being able to determine a person's identity at all. These identity categories and the very demand that a body conform to them had to be deconstructed, in order that all bodies might matter.[162]

In other words, the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in all his ambiguities serves to emphasize the universal invitation to salvation through Christ. The deconstruction of identity does not emerge out of secular ideology, but rather from the need to affirm the universality of Christ's

mission. Moreover, this baptism is not simply a lesson for the early Church to follow, but in baptizing the eunuch (and all his ambiguities), the early Church is *actualizing* universal mission: man/unman, male/female, free/slave, citizen/foreigner, Jew/not-Jew are all entering the universal mission of the Church through the baptism of one, ambiguous individual. As such, through ambiguous identities, the eunuch subverts ancient constructions of gender for the sake of advancing the universal mission of the Church, that is, to advance God's Kigndom.

A hermeneutic of holy queerness also allows the eunuch's baptism to be understood as a sign of the *imago Dei*. In baptism, one is "formed in the likeness of Christ."[163] Formed into a "new creation" through participation in Christ's death and resurrection, baptism constitutes a union with Christ.[164] When the eunuch asks Philip "what is to prevent my being baptized," he is asking a serious question; as Burke points out, "all the ambiguities in the eunuch's identifications provide reasons to prevent him from being baptized."[165] For Philip to proceed with the baptism implies that the eunuch, in all the eunuch's ambiguities, has the capacity for union with Christ's death and resurrection. Moreover, this baptism occurs because an "angel of the Lord" appears to Philip and gives him instructions that lead him to the eunuch. This baptism is not the result of a gender-ambiguous individual begging for mercy for his participation in gender ideology; it is rather the result of God *electing* the eunuch's baptism, and the eunuch responding to that gracious choice. If God elects the eunuch's baptism as a participation in Christ's death and resurrection for the purpose of actualizing Christ's universal invitation to salvation, then the eunuch's ambiguities must be seen to reflect something of the "new creation" in Christ that will constitute the eschatological body. The baptism of the eunuch, including the eunuch's embodied ambiguities, thus reflects in the temporal sphere a participation of the eschatological, glorified body, signifying the *imago Dei*. In this gracious choice, God can be seen as revealing, through

the ambiguous body of the eunuch, God's own transcendence of the "human distinction between the sexes."[166]

Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness: Female Virginity in the Early Church

From the Ethiopian eunuch, I now consider the Christian refusal of marriage known as virginity.[167] While I believe that Christian virginity of any era, including our own, can be read through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, I will focus on female virginity as understood and practiced in the first four centuries of Christian Church. Seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, early Christian female virginity destabilizes the construction of a universal class of women, thereby subverting the gender constructions of the early Church. This subversion advances the Kingdom of God because it is done in service to the "sexless" eschatology common within the early Church. As a temporal embodied participation in the eschatological, glorified body, the witness of early female virgins reflects the eschatological significance of the human person created in the *imago Dei*. Seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, the witness of female virgins within the early Church disrupts magisterial rhetoric of "gender ideology" and invites the contemporary Church to view queer performative acts through their eschatological significance.

In the Church's earliest days, a question arose asking whether women who had made a commitment to virginity might remove their veils during worship. This theological question dates at least to the time of Paul.[168] On the surface, this question may appear to be one of appropriate church attire, but the heart of the question is whether a commitment to virginity allowed a woman to overcome or transcend the "mark" of her sex. In the early Church, veils symbolized "female sexual difference and gendered subordination" while functioning as "coverings for sexual allure."[169] Removing a veil claimed separation not only from the stigma of

sexual activity, but also from one's identity as female. Yet in many instances, early ecclesial

communities supported female virgins in doing precisely that.

In second century Carthage, for example, a group of young girls committed to virginity

and were encouraged by the local Church to worship with heads unveiled. As Peter Brown points

out, they may have been given a prominent position within the worshipping community; for the

Carthaginian Church "the uncanny, non-normal state of dedicated virgin girls, raised above the

shame and splendidly unveiled, stood for a fleck of divine glory in a dark world."[170] Sexual

continence was seen as a mark of overcoming the world and, by proxy, overcoming the female

sex. While these unveiled virgins caught the wrath of Tertullian – a wrath that would remain

influential within Latin Christendom – the embrace of unveiled virgins as a sign of having

transcended the boundaries and distinctions of sex remained influential in the Christian East.[171]

Not only did virginity afford women the opportunity to cast off their veils and transcend

the mark of sex, but virginal commitments also offered women in the early Church

unprecedented opportunities in education and church leadership. Jerome, for example, presided

over a community that included consecrated virgins dedicated to studying the Scriptures. For

Jerome, such a practice was defensible because the woman who had committed herself to

virginity was no longer regarded as a woman: "observe what the happiness of that state must be

in which even the distinction of sex is lost. The virgin is no longer called a woman."[172]

The Cappadocian Fathers, too, espouse the idea that a woman committed to virginity is

no longer to be considered a woman. For example, in Gregory of Nyssa's hagiography of his

sister, Macrina, Gregory wonders aloud "whether it is fitting to designate [Macrina] by her

[female] sex, who so surpassed her sex."[173] Indeed, it is Macrina's virginity and excellence in

"philosophy" – by which Gregory means the ascetic life – that allows her to become "father,

teacher, tutor, mother, giver of all good advice" to her younger brother, Peter.[174] For Gregory, Macrina's virginity is what permits her to occupy a role of family leadership and authority otherwise unavailable to women in the Cappadocian church.

Read through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, the female virginity in the early Church disrupts gender constructions by calling into question the virgin's status as a woman. As a result, constructing a universal class of women becomes impossible, demonstrating the inability of the "male and female" binary to account for the diverse array of embodied humanity. Female virgins in the early Church disrupt prevailing gender constructions by performing social and religious functions not otherwise available to women – removing their veils, studying Scripture, and being exemplars of the ascetic life. As we have seen, early Christian theologians justified women fulfilling these functions by calling into question *their status as female*. Only by suggesting that they had lost or transcended the mark of their sex could male theologians like Jerome and Gregory justify the performativity of Christian virginity.

Early theologies of virginity seemingly accomplish two contrary results. On the one hand, these theologies attempt to consolidate women into a single, monolithic class. From a Butlerian perspective, this theology tries to cement patriarchal power: by removing committed virgins from a constructed category of women, male theologians reinforce the binding power of social control over female behavior. On the other hand, the fact that male theologians felt it necessary to separate virgins from women at all is a response to subversive virginal performativity. As Butler points out, while "gender trouble" subverts gender constructions, it does so "within the confines of already existing directives."[175] If early Christian virgins were not at some level recognizable as women, there would be no need to theologize the performative acts – like removing veils and studying Scripture – that subverted the constructions of women in the early

Church. In theologizing the performative acts of female virgins, early theologies of virginity call into question the usefulness of the "male and female" binary itself. If a binary model of gender is so limiting that those who opt out of marriage cannot be contained within it, then how much more those whose bodies fail to conform to the binary? If the virgin cannot be male or female, then how could the eunuch, the intersex person, or the individual with ambiguous sexual characteristics? Once one admits that the binary cannot account for virginity, one realizes that the binary is incapable of accounting for a whole host of phenomena within God's creation.

A hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals that female virgins in the early Church subvert gender constructions in service of a "sexless" eschatology common within the early Church. Within the early Church, virginity as a means of transcending sexual difference was not merely a metaphor for some idealized social equality; instead, it reflected a sexless eschatology anchoring early Christian theologies of virginity and gender. Drawing on Scriptures including Matthew 22:30, 1 Corinthians 7, and Galatians 3:28, early Christian theologians such as Tertullian and Origen saw marriage, sexual activity, and reproduction as realities that reflected the passing state of the world as we know it.[176] Such an eschatology even led Origen to allegedly castrate himself as a sign of the sexless, eschatological body. In doing so, Origen would have lost many of his male sexual characteristics, including a beard, seen as a marker of wisdom and authority. Origen thus became "a walking lesson in the basic indeterminacy of the body."[177]

In his interpretation of Genesis 1:27, Gregory of Nyssa held that human beings were originally created as "non-sexed" and, "that it was only *en route*, so to speak, to the Fall that 'man' was distinguished from 'woman.'"[178] Seen in this light, Sarah Coakley describes Gregory's view of gender as "a life-long ascetical programme, a purification and redirection of *eros* towards the divine, a final withdrawal from the whirligig of marriage, child-rearing, the

quest for social status and financial security."[179] For the early Church, gender was a marker of this world only, tied to passing institutions of marriage and reproduction. The early Church saw the virgin, in her renunciation of sexual activity, to have overcome the mark of sex and to participate in heavenly life.

While the Western theological tradition ultimately rejected the sexless eschatology of the early Church, theologians in the West continued to see virginity as a participation in heavenly life. Augustine emphasized that while marriage and sexual activity can be oriented towards legitimate goods, "virginal chastity and freedom through pious continence from all sexual intercourse is the portion of Angels, and a practice, in corruptible flesh, of perpetual incorruption."[180] Because virginity practices "an heavenly and angelic life in an earthly mortal state," Augustine revered virginity as a more perfect practice than marital chastity.[181]

Similarly, Thomas Aquinas argues that virginity's superiority is evident through both Divine Revelation and human reason. For Thomas, the evidence from Divine Revelation was clear: not only does Paul counsel virginity in 1 Corinthians 7, but Christ himself chose to be born of a virgin and to remain a virgin throughout his earthly life. With respect to human reason, virginity's superiority is the result of its direction towards a divine, and not merely human, good. Because virginity "is directed to the good of the soul in respect of the contemplative life, which consists in thinking 'on the things of God,'" it is said to be a more excellent state than marriage, which "is directed to the good of the body, namely the bodily increase of the human race, and belongs to the active life, since the man and woman who embrace the married life have to think 'on the things of the world.'"[182] Such theological views, while neither denying sexual difference nor holding to a sexless eschatology, nevertheless permitted committed virgins to act and to occupy roles otherwise unavailable to women, in service of the glory of God.[183]

Finally, a hermeneutic of holy queerness reveals female virginity as a temporal embodied participation in the eschatological, glorified body, thus reflecting the *imago Dei*. Human beings are eschatological beings and Christian anthropology fittingly understands our humanity "in terms not only of what we are, but of what we might be."[184] Paul describes the eschatological dimension of humanity in this way: "and all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."[185] Through God's self-communication manifest in the incarnation, human beings embark upon a transformative journey until we are ultimately drawn into the fullness of God's glory. In this light, virginity stands as a witness on earth to a heavenly reality: separated from the "this-world" realities of childrearing and marriage, virginity symbolizes the glorified body that will be in heaven. Understood through the Thomistic lens of *imago Dei* in chapter one, the virgin stands as a marker, in the temporal world, of how the fulness of the *imago Dei* will reside in humanity at the eschaton. Whether one favors the "sexless eschatology" of the early Church or the "participation" model of Augustine and Aquinas, virginity is a powerful witness to the eschatological glorification of humanity.

Early Christian virginity disrupts Magisterial rhetoric of "gender ideology." By emphasizing the eschatological dimension of the human person within ecclesial communities, early Christian virgins demonstrate the inability of the "male and female" binary to accurately reflect God's creative action. Fidelity to the eschatological dimension of personhood may entail the choice to renounce marriage, which – by proxy – destabilizes constructions of "male and female" that have marriage as their *telos*. Far from a radical autonomy that seeks to replace the Creator, early Christian virginity disrupts constructions of gender out of profound love for humanity's eschatological communion with God. Far from being a "materialistic" view of

gender, this view emerges out of humanity's spiritual reality. Far from emerging out of "neoliberal," "Marxist," or "radical feminist" thought, this subversive gender ambiguity emerges from the heart of the Church's tradition.

Early Christian virginity further unmasks Magisterial accusations of "gender ideology" as projection. It is not "gender ideology" that tries to "replace the Creator," but rather the Magisterial insistence that God's infinitely complex creation of humanity fit inside a reductive "male and female" binary. It is not "gender ideology" that adopts a "materialistic" view of the human person, but rather the Magisterium who, unwilling to see beyond the earthly *telos* of procreation, wages war against eschatologically minded views of gender. It is not "gender ideology" that carries the mark of "modernism," but rather the Magisterium who, through a decidedly modern theological anthropology, silences the ancient traditions of the Church.

From Antagonism to Discernment: a Call to the Contemporary Church

A hermeneutic of holy queerness helps us to re-read the Ethiopian eunuch and female virginity within the early Church as examples of gender ambiguity at the heart of Christian tradition. Through the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism, we see a gender ambiguous figure who stands as powerful testimony to Christ's universal invitation to salvation. Through female virginity in the early Church, we recognize the inadequacy of our "male and female" binary, rooted in marriage and reproduction, to account for the myriad of ways one might respond to God's invitation as an embodied self. As a hermeneutic of holy queerness shifts paradigms, changing our relationship to the historical past, it invites us to question how this renewed understanding of the past might change our present theological mindsets. That is to say, this renewed understanding of the past invites us to *ressourcement*, looking "to the past for norms or

practices or mind-sets that can be used in changing, correcting, or at least qualifying" the state of present theological norms, practices, or mind-sets.[186]

Reflecting on the Ethiopian eunuch and female virginity within the early Church challenges the contemporary Church to a course correction from antagonism to discernment vis-à-vis queer performative acts. Both the Ethiopian eunuch and female virginity in the early Church invite us to see gender ambiguous acts as communicating something of God's grace to the Church. In the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism, the Church learns to see that ambiguities of identity are not obstacles to baptism and participation in Christ's universal mission. In female virginity, the Church comes to see a witness, in the temporal sphere, of eschatological embodiment, serving as a reminder that earthly conceptions of gender stand to be transfigured in the eschaton. What we understand gender to be in the present, rooted in marriage and child-rearing, will somehow be transfigured in light of God's glory in the eschaton. Early female virgins bear witness to this transfiguration. In the contemporary Church, the Magisterium has an antagonistic relationship with those who identify as queer, using "gender ideology" as a tool of power to subordinate queerness to the Magisterium's own constructions of gender. The Ethiopian eunuch and female virginity in the early Church disrupt this antagonism, unmasking it as projection. I propose that, instead of the Magisterium's antagonism, an attitude of discernment may provide a better approach to queer performativity within the contemporary Church.

Existing moral-theological rhetoric, as I discussed in the introduction, emphasizes a "natural" order of creation, gender, and sexuality. Yet queer witness, especially in the subversive gender ambiguous witness of the Ethiopian eunuch and female virginity in the early Church, challenges this "natural" order. Is what the Magisterium calls "natural" actually a reflection of God's creative wisdom, or does it simply reflect human constructions passed off by Magisterial

authority as God's creative wisdom? Because gender ambiguous performativity, as evidenced in this chapter, *can* manifest grace and serve God's Kingdom in a variety of ways, it seems that a more expansive moral approach to queer performativity would be one of *discernment*. Rather than judging acts by a supposed "natural" order that fails to account for the diversity of human embodiment, asking whether and how a performative act may manifest grace seems like a stronger moral approach with a capacity to analyze a much greater variety of acts.

Given the presence of gender ambiguity within the heart of the Christian tradition, it becomes clear that God's grace is capable of working through gender ambiguity. As such, perhaps the contemporary Church would be better served by approaching queer performativity from an attitude of discernment, seeking to understand in prayer and reflection how particular performative acts may reflect God's grace. Such an attitude resists the universalization that has thus far marked the Magisterium's approach and encourages an openness to the vast array of embodied human expressions. Theological approaches that link gender to discernment, such as Justin Tanis's transgender theology, can help the contemporary Church to approach queer performativity with an attitude of discernment.

Gender as a Calling: Justin Tanis's Transgender Theology

Protestant theologian Justin Tanis, himself a transgender man, argues that gender can be understood as a calling. In this light, transgender individuals provide a unique witness to God's incarnation, manifesting in flesh the invisible Word of God, heard deep within the human heart. Tanis's emphasis on gender as a calling provides a model for theological approaches to queer performativity that operate out of a spirit of discernment rather than a spirit of antagonism.

Tanis argues that the two creation accounts of Genesis, read together, demonstrate that God intends the created human being for wholeness and congruity of body and soul. Thus "being

one with our bodies is a spiritual task, given to us by God through the act of creation itself."[187]

The malleability of our bodies is written into creation as our bodies undergo a multiplicity of

changes throughout our lifespan. Each new phase of life brings with it new, bodily changes, and

an embodied theology of creation sees these experiences of bodily change as revelatory signs of

God's presence within us.

     If God truly enters the human condition, then the basic experience of bodily humanity

takes on incarnational significance. As bodies naturally experience change, these changes – for

example, the destruction and regrowth of cells, the effects of aging, weight variance – become

incarnational signs of a God who constantly re-creates and sustains creation. Trans people, far

from being excluded in this incarnational embodiment, reflect it in a unique way through their

intentional and deliberate response to the call of gender. In this way, they reflect a Creator who

relishes "diversity and variation."[188]

     For Tanis, being transgender is a call from God, a "holy invitation to set out on a journey

of transformation of body, mind, and spirit."[189] While all people receive some call from God,

trans people have a particular calling "to a way of embodying the self that transcends the

limitations placed upon us."[190] Through this calling "trans bodies … speak of a collaboration

between God and humanity in co-creating what our bodies are and what they will become."[191]

     In listening to a call to become a co-creator in what God desires a trans body to become,

the trans person becomes a witness to the process of grace's self-manifestation in Word

becoming flesh. What begins as inner certainty is gradually made manifest in bodily transition,

allowing the transitioning person to witness God's creative design as their body is transformed:

> I have learned many things about my body that I did not know before I transitioned, like
> the fact that my beard grew in red, like the Irish ancestors that are part of my genetic
> heritage, or that my muscles and fat can regroup themselves to make my hips, my face,
> my waist all look different than they were before. I have learned that my muscles have

considerably more strength in them when they are fed by testosterone than by estrogen, and that my moods depended more on my hormones than I was ever willing to admit.[192]

Striking parallels exist between this experience of a transitioning body and Pauline language of incarnation. For Paul, Christ is the "image of the invisible God" and the "firstborn of all creation" through whom all creatures are created and held together in being.[193] The transitioning body becomes a sign of incarnational embodiment, manifesting in flesh the invisible Word of God, heard deep within the human heart. In this incarnational theology, Tanis models a theological approach that views queer performativity through a lens of discernment, instead of the Magisterium's current antagonistic lens.

In this chapter, I have applied a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 and the tradition of female virginity within the first four centuries of the Christian Church, enabling a *ressourcement* of Catholic tradition vis-à-vis queer performativity. Both the Ethiopian eunuch and witnesses of female virginity demonstrate an abiding presence of gender ambiguity within the heart of the Christian tradition. As we recognize this grace-filled gender ambiguity within the Christian tradition, our relationship to Christianity's historical past shifts and invites us to the work of *ressourcement* – looking to the past as a means of correcting our present course. In this case, the gender ambiguity of the Christian tradition disrupts Magisterial rhetoric of "gender ideology" and invites the contemporary Church to shift its relationship with queer performativity from one of antagonism to one of discernment. Justin Tanis's transgender theology models such an approach for the contemporary Church in seeing the transgender experience as a sign of incarnational embodiment, manifesting in flesh the invisible Word of God, heard deep within the human heart. From this chapter's emphasis on the historical past, the next chapter will explore the eschatological future by applying a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the mystery of the Church.

Chapter 3: A Hermeneutic of Holy Queerness and the Mystery of the Church

Under the papacy of John Paul II, theology of the body's "male and female" nuptial complementary became not just a model for understanding gender and sexuality, but also a model for understanding the Church. Theology of the body, as Tina Beattie points out, "represents the body as having a sexual language, expressing the truth of the human created for communion in interpersonal relationships."[194] This sexual language of the body is, in contemporary Catholic ecclesiology, analogous to the "spousal" relationship between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church as Bride. Yet the analogy does not stop here. As Pope Francis commented in response to a question on women's' ordination, there is also a "complementarity" of masculine and feminine *within* the Church, in the form of distinct "Petrine" and "Marian" dimensions of Church:

> In Catholic ecclesiology, there are two dimensions to consider: the Petrine dimension, from the apostle Peter, and the apostolic college, which is the pastoral activity of the bishops; and the Marian dimension, which is the feminine dimension of the Church and this I have said more than once. I ask myself: who is most important in theology and in the mystic of the Church: the apostles or Mary on the day of Pentecost? It is Mary! The Church is a woman. She is "la Chiesa" (in Italian), not "il Chiesa" ... and the Church is the spouse of Christ. It's a spousal mystery.[195]

The "spousal mystery" of the "male and female" binary becomes an analogy for understanding the Church. This "nuptial ecclesiology" is, in turn, used to defend ecclesial practices within the institutional Catholic Church, such as an all-male priesthood. Yet if theology of the body's gender complementarity is unable to account for the full array of grace-filled embodied expressions present in human relationality, it would seem to follow that a nuptial ecclesiology, constructed in relation to theology of the body, may be unable to account for the fullness of grace-filled embodiment that constitutes the Church.

Just as the first chapter constructed a hermeneutic of holy queerness capable of providing a more expansive framework for theological reflection on queer gender performativity than theology of the body can provide, this chapter gestures towards a *queer sacramental ecclesiology* that provides more expansive insight into the mystery of the Church than nuptial ecclesiology can provide. I construct this queer sacramental ecclesiology by locating sacramental action as a primary place of encounter between ecclesiology and gender performativity. At this point of encounter, gender and sacramentality share in *efficacious ritual performativity*, meaning that they both produce the reality they signify by mapping performative acts onto complex webs of meaning, thereby transforming individual and communal identities. For both gender and sacraments, this efficacious ritual performativity may be seen as queer.

Just as queer performativity, analyzed through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, subverts existing gender constructions to advance God's Kingdom, sacramental action, seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, subverts earthly injustice for the sake of eschatological participation through the solidarity it inspires. A hermeneutic of holy queerness can reveal queer performativity reflecting the *imago Dei* when performative acts provide temporal representations of eschatological embodiment. In an analogous way, a hermeneutic of holy queerness applied to sacraments reveals that sacraments both anticipate and actualize the eschatological embodiment of the communion of saints. Owing to this analogous relationship between sacramental action and queer performativity, revealed through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, queer performativity and a queer sacramental ecclesiology are mutually enriching.

The chapter begins with a discussion of Avery Dulles's *Models of the Church*. For Dulles, an American theologian writing shortly after Vatican II, the Church can only be understood through multiple theological models, held in tension with each other. Such an

approach, I argue, is inherently queer and thus an appropriate starting point for constructing a queer sacramental ecclesiology. Yet Dulles's model of the Church as Sacrament, which sees the Church as continuing the mystery of the incarnation in history, forms the place of encounter for ecclesiology and queer performativity. Placing Dulles in conversation with Kimberly Hope Belcher, I argue that both gender performativity and sacraments exhibit efficacious ritual performativity because they both produce the reality they signify by mapping performative acts onto complex webs of meaning, thereby transforming individual and communal identities. Just as queer performativity, seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, subverts existing constructions of gender for the sake of God's Kingdom, the Church as Sacrament, seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, subverts earthly injustice through efficacious ritual performativity that calls the earthly Church into a solidarity that actualizes the eschatological Church. M. Shawn Copeland's work on racism and eucharistic solidarity models this relationship between efficacious ritual performativity and the eschatological Church. I conclude the chapter by arguing that the analogous relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action enables us to see a sacramentality within queer performative acts. As such, the analogous relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action, made possible through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, forms a more expansive understanding of the human person and the Church than the relationship between theology of the body and nuptial ecclesiology.

Avery Dulles and Models of the Church

For Avery Dulles, mystery is at the heart of the Church's identity. Acknowledgement of this truth comes with two significant implications: first, the Church as mystery "implies that the Church is not fully intelligible to the finite mind" of human beings; second, it implies that, "the reason for this lack of intelligibility is not the poverty but the richness of the Church itself."[196]

How, then, are human beings to understand the Church if, by its very nature, it defies understanding? Dulles believes that finite human beings best enter into the infinite mystery of the Church through the use of images and models. Images, emerging from the concrete experience of the faithful, retain a symbolic power that stirs echoes beyond our rational and emotional selves; images touch both soul and psyche. Yet when these images are subjected to critical evaluation and reflection, they have the capacity to deepen theoretical knowledge of a given reality. In this way, images become models. Models of divine mystery are not simply scale-replicas of mystery: they are instead more akin to analogies, offering a partial but incomplete rendering of a mystery.

This point – that models offer an accurate but necessarily incomplete representation of mystery – is central to Dulles's argument. Because models are incomplete by nature, any single model used by itself will be inadequate. Using a single model, or too few models, "will misplace the accent, and thus entail consequences that are not valid."[197] In order to compensate for the inadequacy of any single model, Dulles believes that the theologian must employ "a combination of irreducibly distinct models."[198] By using multiple models simultaneously, the theologian is able to render more aspects of the mystery of Church intelligible to the finite human understanding; moreover, the use of multiple models simultaneously allows the theologian to curb the ways in which a particular image, considered on its own, might lead to a misunderstanding of the Church.

Dulles's methodology might be considered "queer" in its insistence that the Church cannot be understood through a simple definition or singular model. Several queer theologians have argued that Christianity is queer in its disruption of stable identity categories and binaries.[199] In a certain respect, Dulles is doing just that: by emphasizing the Church as a mystery, Dulles is essentially arguing that any attempt to define the Church in a simple or stable

way undermines the richness of the Church's identity. Moreover, by claiming that images for the Church first arise from the faithful and then are developed into models by theologians, Dulles implies that the images and models used to understand the Church will necessarily shift with temporal and cultural change. In fact, owing to this belief, Dulles sees a contemporary "crisis of faith" as "in very large part a crisis of images": "City dwellers in a twentieth-century democracy feel ill at ease with many of the biblical images, since these are drawn from the life of a pastoral and patriarchal people of the ancient Near East."[200] The idea that an image or model of one age may fade into obsolescence in another age can be seen as queer because it resists the notion of the Church's identity being stable or static through time and space.

While I think that Dulles's methodology can rightly be called queer, this sort of queerness seems to be of limited utility. As Linn Marie Tonstad points out, "any complex symbol system is inherently queer" in this way.[201] Thus, claiming simply that the Church is queer because it destabilizes identity categories fails to say anything unique about Christianity – the same thing could be said about virtually any religion, or any text, that relies on the use of symbols to communicate a variety of meanings. Moreover, as Tonstad points out, "instability is one way to characterize the very nature of *stabilizing* certainties in Christian theology."[202] Thus, while Dulles's methodology *is* queer, if one were to stop at naming his methodology as queer – rather than diving deeper and asking how queerness can and should destabilize the means by which binaries and stable identity categories maintain power – one's queer theology would have limited capacity to actually effect the radical change in understanding that queerness purports to accomplish. Noting that, I return to Dulles's models of the Church with an eye towards exploring an analogous relationship between queer performativity and the sacramental action that comprises the Church as Sacrament in Dulles's ecclesiology.

Models of the Church: Grounded in Vatican II's Ecclesiology

Writing in 1974, just a few years after the close of Vatican II, Dulles's methodology in *Models of the Church* is representative of the broad ecclesiological shifts that came with Vatican II. From the Council of Trent through Vatican I, the idea of the Church as a *societas perfecta* dominated Catholic ecclesiology.[203] This *societas perfecta* was believed to be instituted by Christ, to be the perfection of all human *societates*, based on hierarchy with exclusive "divinely authorized power to sanctify, teach, and rule."[204] Moreover the Church needed to be visible within the world and membership was seen as necessary for salvation.[205]

By contrast, in *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church promulgated by Vatican II, the council fathers begin by noting that, "the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race."[206] The difference is immediately clear: whereas before Vatican II, the Church was seen as *societas perfecta* into which any who desire salvation must enter, through Vatican II, the Church became the "people of God," united to Christ by their common baptism and belief.[207] Moreover, the image of the Church as *societas perfecta* takes a back seat to the idea of the Church as a "sign and instrument" reflecting the light of Christ. This sacramental image of the Church presented in *Lumen Gentium* indeed built upon the earlier liturgical reforms of the council which, as Massimo Faggioli notes, "called for a Church reform that was more centered on the Eucharist and ministry" than on structures that resemble more "the juridical structure of the Roman Empire" than Christ's teachings.[208]

Yet at the same time the council did not reject the hierarchical structure of the Church. As John O'Malley puts it, the Council stressed that while baptism "is the basis for equality in the church," the sacrament of Holy Orders "is the basis for inequality."[209] Yet even the power and

authority that come with Orders and participation within a clerical hierarchy are intended to be

exercised through servant leadership, "so as to encourage the active engagement of everybody in

the work of the Church."[210] So, while equality in baptism among the people of God remains

central for the Council, it does not use this image as a replacement for the image of the Church as

societas perfecta, but rather to *complement* this image. Thus the Council, as Faggioli notes,

"restored a fundamental balance within Catholic ecclesiology: between juridical and

communional dimensions of the Church."[211] No longer could a single image, model, or definition

of the Church suffice; from Vatican II onwards, Catholic ecclesiology must live within the

uncomfortable tensions of a variety of models, images, and metaphors, all grasping after a

mystery that defies being named.

This shift in ecclesiology created what Faggioli calls a "building site," an opportunity for

new ways of understanding the nature of the Church to be tested and tried by the people of

God.[212] Dulles, then, can be seen as using the very tension within the conciliar documents to

form a ecclesiological methodology. In *Models of the Church*, Dulles does this by highlighting

the contributions of – and tensions between – five models of the Church that he sees as having

emerged as paradigmatic in the early postconciliar period: the Church as Institution, the Church

as Mystical Communion, the Church as Sacrament, the Church as Herald, and the Church as

Servant. Though a fully developed queer ecclesiology would need to make use of each of these

models, I will use the Church as Sacrament as an entry point for discussing the deep connections

between gender performativity and sacramental action.

The Church as Sacrament: Efficacious Ritual Performativity

For Dulles, a sacrament can be understood as "a socially constituted or communal symbol

of the presence of grace coming to fulfillment."[213] This definition highlights three essential

characteristics of sacraments. Above all, a sacrament is a sign of God's grace. Yet it is not

simply a symbol of grace, but it is rather an efficacious sign that produces or intensifies that

which it signifies. Finally, sacraments cannot be experienced alone, but are structured

dialogically; as Dulles puts it, sacraments take place "in a mutual interaction that permits the

people together to achieve a spiritual breakthrough that they could not achieve in isolation."[214]

Sacraments are fundamentally rooted in Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ is understood

as the Sacrament of God. Considered from the lens of a Christology from above, as God's Word

Incarnate, Jesus Christ represents God's full acceptance of humanity, notwithstanding human

sinfulness. Despite humanity's failure to uphold its covenant with God, God chooses still to enter

into human history and to redeem it through the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and

resurrection. As such, Christ is seen as God's Sacrament because, in Christ and through a

dialectic with human history, God enters into and redeems humanity. Considered from the lens

of a Christology from below, Jesus Christ signifies humanity's "faithful response to God and to

God's recognition of that fidelity."[215] As the Letter to the Hebrews indicates, Christ, despite

being the Son of God, "learned obedience through what he suffered."[216] This obedience of Christ

includes a painful, though complete, response in faith to the Father's mission of salvation. In so

doing, Christ becomes not just a model but an efficacious sign of humanity's fidelity to God and

to God's acceptance of that fidelity for the salvation of the world.

Flowing from the nature of Christ as God's Sacrament, the Church is understood as the

primordial sacrament, because it continues, in history, the presence of the Incarnation.[217] For

such a presence to continue in the world, the institutional and structural elements of the Church

play an important role: without these visible signs of unity – that is, unity between Christian

communities as well as continuity between the Church of the present age and the Church of the

apostles – the Church would be unable to be seen as "the sign of our redemption in and through the historical Christ."[218] Yet structures and institutions in themselves are insufficient to be considered sacraments: as previously stated, sacraments must produce or intensify what they signify; a sacrament must be "a sign of grace realizing itself."[219] As such, the Church as Sacrament has a necessarily dynamic character; it is not so much a static institution as it is motion or event.

Here an important connection needs to be made between sacrament and ritual action. As Kimberly Hope Belcher points out, there are two ways in which sacraments can be said to be effective: they are "culturally effective in organizing human life and theologically effective in integrating human persons into the life of God."[220] Because human beings encounter God through human culture, culture – though not in and of itself divine power – takes on a central role in one's journey into God's own life. While one's cultural and human life is certainly organized in part by symbols, it is also organized in other ways: "human habits and discipline, 'meaningless' ritual behaviors, and unexamined sensory experience, for example."[221] As such, these ritual elements of human life play an important role in the sacramental economy and one's embodied life of faith. The ritual actions inherent in sacramental life "allow practitioners to transform their identities" to resemble more and more the Triune God.[222] Thus the salvific effects of sacraments rely not only on the symbolic meaning of the sacrament, but on the deep connection between ritual action and symbol, by which sacrament takes on a character of dynamism and motion that moves individuals and ecclesial communities nearer to the Divine Mystery.

This connection between ritual action and symbol within the sacramental economy strikes a chord of resonance with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. As I discussed

in the first chapter of this thesis, Butler understands gender to require the acknowledgement of an Other.[223] To be a woman or a man is to be recognized as such by another; because human life is organized culturally, recognition as woman or man is dependent upon one's performance of culturally intelligible markers of gender. The acts that comprise culturally intelligible markers of gender may, in and of themselves, appear "meaningless;" yet their performance within a social discourse renders them intelligible via a complex web of social meaning and thus produces a culturally intelligible, gendered identity. In other words, just as in the sacramental economy "meaningless" ritual behaviors and sensory experiences map onto complex symbols to produce sacramental effects that transform individual and communal identities more and more into the Divine Mystery, so too in the realm of gender do "meaningless" actions and bodily markers map onto complex social constructions to produce culturally intelligible, gendered identities. Thus, just as gender is revealed to be performative in nature, I contend that sacraments also constitute a kind of performativity, involving God's grace working through culturally intelligible ritual action, to transform individuals and ecclesial communities to resemble more and more the Divine Mystery.

If, as Dulles argues, the Church as Sacrament is to be seen as motion or event, one might say that it is the Church's performative, sacramental action that enables recognition of the Church as Sacrament. The Church becomes a "sign of grace realizing itself" when grace impels human beings to "prayer, confession, worship, and other acts whereby the Church externally realizes its essence."[224] Thus the Church as Sacrament requires that Christians corporally and concretely express, in action, the grace given them by the Holy Spirit. Through these performative acts, "the Church signifies what it contains and contains what it signifies."[225]

Through ritual performativity inspired by the grace given to believers through the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes more and more a Sacrament of Christ's redeeming grace.

The Church as Sacrament retains a significant eschatological character: while the visible structures of the Church serve to remind humanity of God's Kingdom and the invitation to eternal life, because God's grace is at work in the concrete performative acts of the people of God, the Church "is able to discern and celebrate the gifts of God" to humanity.[226] As such, the Church becomes a "symbolic embodiment of the Kingdom;" that is, until the end of time, the Church is immersed in a process of becoming the very Kingdom that it both symbolizes and actualizes here on earth.[227] This raises a question: while many theologians posit that sacraments themselves will cease to exist in heaven, will the Church continue to abide at the close of history? Dulles answers in the affirmative: the resurrection of the body implies that God's grace will be expressed by the saints in embodied form. Therefore, humanity's "experience of God will presumably be expressed through a whole network of tangible and social signs, and the sum total of these signs will constitute the heavenly Church as sacrament."[228]

Seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, the eschatological dimension of the Church as Sacrament may be seen as queer. Queer gender performativity, seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, subverts constructed gender in service of God's Kingdom. Analogously, the Church as Sacrament, seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, subverts earthly injustice through efficacious ritual performativity that calls the earthly Church into a solidarity that anticipates and actualizes the eschatological Church. M. Shawn Copeland's work on racism and eucharistic solidarity models this relationship between efficacious ritual performativity and the actualization of the eschatological Church.

Racism and Eucharistic Solidarity

M. Shawn Copeland presents a juxtaposition between racism – seen as an "antiliturgy" that wounds and terrorizes the black body – and eucharist, seen as "a countersign to the devaluation and violence directed towards the exploited, despised black body."[229] Racism and white supremacy degrade black bodies, and Copeland details this horrific abuse. The identification of the wood of the cross with the wood of the lynching tree has a long history within African American literary, musical, and theological traditions, yet Copeland is concerned about the implications of racism for the celebration of eucharist. She asks: what does the abuse of black bodies mean for the Christian community gathered around the eucharistic table?[230]

Copeland proposes that the dangerous memory of the tortured and murdered body of Jesus Christ that becomes the subject of Eucharistic *anamnesis* be identified with the black bodies of those tortured and murdered by the antiliturgy of racist white supremacy. If through the sacraments we recognize the abiding presence of Christ's grace that in mystery unites the Church gathered as the Body of Christ, then threats to black bodies constitute a threat to Eucharistic communion. Moreover, "sacraments form and orient us to creation, to human persons, and, above all, to the Three Divine Persons."[231] Racist white supremacy, on the other hand, promotes a disorder that runs contrary to the "order" and "counter-imagination" to which sacraments call the Church.[232] What, then, is the Church doing when it is gathered at the eucharistic table in a world that devalues black bodies?

First and foremost, the Church in its celebration of the eucharist bears witness to Christ who "gathers up the remnants of our memories, the broken fragments of our histories, and judges, blesses, and transforms them."[233] Yet this transformation is incomplete if it ends at the eucharistic table. To be truly re-ordered towards communion with the Trinity requires a commitment to a eucharistic solidarity that "sets the dynamics of love against the dynamics of

domination."[234] This solidarity can never be mere pity but must be a compassion that calls for tangible signs of genuine repentance and conversion.[235]

Seen through Dulles's framework, racism calls the Church to performative, sacramental action around the eucharistic table. The celebration of eucharist allows the Church to witness to the efficacious grace of Christ, mediated through the Holy Spirit, which transforms a bruised and broken world into the Kingdom. As long as racist white supremacy exists here on earth, this transformation remains incomplete: the dangerous memories of tortured and abused black bodies remind the Church of this incompleteness and call it to solidarity. Re-ordered and refreshed from the eucharistic banquet, the Church is called to a praxis of eucharistic solidarity that in turn leads it to deeper conversion. Through this conversion, the Church as Sacrament takes one step closer to actualizing the heavenly Kingdom that it symbolizes and anticipates here on earth. Sacrament and solidarity, therefore, become the dynamic events that move the Church along its pilgrim path of becoming the Kingdom of God, a path that finds completion only in the eschaton.

In applying a hermeneutic of holy queerness to the mystery of the Church, sacramental action is revealed as queer through the solidarity it inspires, which in turn actualizes and anticipates the eschatological Church, that is, the communion of saints' embodied response to God's grace through a "network" of corporeal and social signs. Just as a hermeneutic of holy queerness analyzes how a particular performative act subverts constructed gender in service of the Kingdom of God, a hermeneutic of holy queerness analyzes how the mystery of the Church "subverts" earthly injustice through solidarity that draws the Church nearer its eschatological end. M. Shawn Copeland's analysis of racism and eucharistic solidarity models this queer function of sacramental action.

So far, I have shown that a hermeneutic of holy queerness, when applied to the mystery of the Church, reveals an analogous relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action. I have used this analogous relationship to demonstrate a connection between efficacious ritual performativity, solidarity, and the eschatological Church. Yet the analogous relationship between sacramental action and queer performativity can also be used to enrich our theological understanding of performative acts. Thus, I conclude this chapter by arguing that queer performativity, by reflecting the eschatological dimension of the *imago Dei*, exhibits a distinctively sacramental quality.

The Sacramentality of Queer Performativity

In Chapter 1, I used Ian McFarland's Thomistic interpretation of *imago Dei* to argue that queer, performative acts can be said to participate in the *imago Dei* as they reflect in the temporal sphere a participation of the eschatological, glorified body. As dynamic motion towards the eschatological, glorified body, I contend that grace-filled queer performativity functions within the Church in a way analogous to sacramental action. Much as the Church, gathered around the eucharistic table, bears witness to God's transformation of the eucharistic elements into the Body and Blood of Christ, broken for the world, those who engage with queer performativity bear witness to God's transfiguration of human bodies from their earthly to their heavenly form. Yet just as God's transfiguration of the world through the eucharist remains incomplete if it does not lead to a practice of Eucharistic solidarity that seeks the eradication of racist white supremacy here on earth, the transfiguration of human bodies remains incomplete unless it leads to a solidarity that seeks the eradication of patriarchy and forms of sexual and gender oppression that undermine human dignity.

The sacramentality of holy, queer performative acts comes into view: the Church as Sacrament in the age to come will consist of the saints expressing God's grace in embodied ways through their resurrected bodies. That bodily expression of grace will transcend the "male and female" binary geared towards earthly realities of marriage and reproduction. Queer performative acts, seen through a hermeneutic of holy queerness, reflect the *imago Dei* in their anticipation of the eschaton. Because queer performative acts both anticipate the eschatological body and subvert earthly constructions of gender, they can be understood to participate in the eschatological Church while also affecting the life of the Church in the present age.

These performative acts function in a sacramental fashion that is analogous to the eucharist. As Kimberly Belcher, following Jean-Luc Marion explains, eucharistic action does more than simply make present the Body and Blood of Christ or the salvific event of Christ's Paschal Mystery; rather, in the eucharistic action, "the eschatological oneness of the world-in-God advents."[236] What Belcher means is that eucharistic action accomplishes something of bringing our world nearer to its eschatological fulfillment while also anticipating that same fulfillment. Moreover, this meaning, "is revealed by the fact that mundane nourishment and supersubstantial fullness occupy the same frame."[237] That is, in Eucharist we "[lay] open the center of history to the work of Christ" by lifting up the elements of creation that represent our most ordinary human needs and seeing God transform those elements-in-us in a way that anticipates eschatological fulfillment while actively transforming creation into what it is to be at the end of the present age.[238]

In an analogous way, grace-filled queer performativity sets before God human persons-in-action in dialogue with the constructed meanings that society has mapped onto biological differences. God's grace animates performativity in such a way that it signifies – through its

subversion of limited, earthly constructions of gender – both the transfiguration of eschatological embodiment and the transfiguration of the Church as it becomes the eschatological Kingdom of God. The effect of these performative acts, much like eucharistic action, is a "dizzying experience of being reoriented by our incorporation into the world as seen through God's love."[239] It is a dizzying effect because it forces the Church out of the reproduction-centric "male and female" binary that belongs to the world as it is now, while not giving the Church the comfort of full eschatological knowledge of resurrected embodiments of grace. Yet these performative acts, like the eucharist, reorient the Church and allow it to see the world through the lens of eternity. This reorientation is precisely what enables the Church to practice a solidarity that seeks the eradication of patriarchy and forms of sexual and gender oppression that undermine human dignity. This practice of solidarity in turn intensifies the grace communicated by these performative acts: as the Church dismantles these structures of patriarchy and oppression, it participates more and more fully in the eschatological Kingdom it will become – the very same Kingdom that these acts anticipate.

One might object that drawing an analogy between eucharist – the "source and summit" of Christian life – and queer performativity is illegitimate.[240] Moreover, many acts of queer performativity remain classified by the Catholic Church as "objectively disordered" or otherwise sinful and illicit. As such, it may seem jarring to compare such things with the holiness of the eucharist.[241] It is therefore easy to see how such an analogy between eucharist and holy queerness may disturb. Yet if one finds this analogy disturbing, it is precisely the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ, standing at the center of the Church's eucharistic anamnesis, that disturbs us. As Belcher reminds us, while the eucharistic liturgy is indeed holy and "set apart," "in being set apart [the eucharistic liturgy] reveals and becomes paradigmatic for our approach to

creation as a whole."[242] To claim eucharistic action as being the source and summit of Christian life requires approaching the rest of Christian life through a eucharistic lens. It is this view of eucharist as paradigmatic for all theological investigation that impels Copeland to connect eucharist with racism and that impels Belcher to hail the connection of eucharist with environmental sustainability as "rich progress in Eucharistic theology."[243]

If eucharist is to be paradigmatic for all theological investigation, must it not be paradigmatic for analysis of performative action? Rather than simply writing off queer performativity as "objectively disordered," might not a better approach be to discern individual acts using a hermeneutic of holy queerness to discover how these performative acts might be conveying grace to the Church and drawing us nearer our eschatological destiny?

A New Approach to Queer Performativity in Theology

The gift of the "male and female" binary operative in both theology of the body and nuptial ecclesiology is that core theological-anthropological concepts can be used to deepen one's understanding of the human person and the mystery of the Church in tandem. The shadow of this "male and female" binary is that being unable to account for the diverse array of embodied human acts, it also finds itself unable to account for the embodiment than can be said to constitute the eschatological Church. As such, a more expansive view of human embodiment is needed – for both a deeper understanding of the human person and the mystery of the Church. This chapter has shown that a hermeneutic of holy queerness is one such more expansive view of human embodiment, enabling reflection on both the human person and the mystery of the Church in tandem.

Conclusion: Breaking Through Theological Inertia

In this thesis, I have posited a hermeneutic of holy queerness as an intervention capable of breaking through the theological inertia that constitutes existing queer-Catholic discourse. As I have shown, Catholic moral teaching and queer theological interventions currently find themselves at loggerheads. Catholic moral theology emphasizes a teleological order and advocates a moral analysis grounded in the "nature" of the human person. Queer interventions view this "natural" teleological order through a hermeneutics of suspicion, contending that this theological framework reflects *human* understanding, conditioned by heteronormative assumptions, rather than the actual creative wisdom of God. As such, queer theology questions the very terms of moral theological debate, rendering moral theology unable to respond on its own terms. Yet queer theology, concerned as it is with fundamental issues of Christian doctrine, rarely develops its own robust moral theology. Theological inertia is thus born: traditional moral theology is unable to respond to queer interventions that question the basis of its methodology, while queer systematic interventions have yet to produce robust moral theology as a legitimate alternative to the traditional terms of debate. As a result of this inertia, well-meaning pastoral practices are hampered and LGBTQ+ people within the Catholic Church are left awaiting "more meaningful dialogue" and genuinely welcoming communities. I propose a hermeneutic of holy queerness as one way of breaking through this theological inertia.

Constructed at the intersection of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, John Paul II's theology of the body, and Ian McFarland's Thomistic view of *imago Dei*, a hermeneutic of holy queerness enables theological reflection on queer performativity in a more expansive way than any of those theories on their own. From Butler, it centers the social and performative aspect of gender, but reads it through the "world of meaning," thus reconciling a constructionist

view of gender with God's creation of human bodies in the "world of immediacy." Following

Butler, the theologian uses the hermeneutic to analyze how gendered acts subvert prevailing

constructions of gender. Yet, unlike Butler, the theologian analyzes how performative acts

subvert constructed gender with an eye towards their theological and religious meanings as

embodiments of grace. Finally, the theologian analyzes how a given performative act reflects the

imago Dei as a participation, in the temporal sphere, of the eschatological, glorified body. I have

shown that this hermeneutic of holy queerness can be applied to elements from Christianity's

historical tradition, namely the Ethiopian eunuch and the practice of female virginity within the

early Church. Applying this hermeneutic to these elements of tradition shifts our relationship to

the historical past and invites theological *ressourcement*, using the gender ambiguity of Christian

past to challenge the contemporary Magisterium's "gender ideology" rhetoric in favor of an

attitude of discernment. Such an attitude of discernment, modeled by Justin Tanis's transgender

theology, seeks God's grace within queer performative acts.

I then used a hermeneutic of holy queerness to foster an encounter between queer

performativity and sacramental action. Both gender performativity and sacramental action

exhibit *efficacious ritual performativity*, in that they produce the reality they signify by mapping

performative acts onto complex webs of meaning, thereby transforming individual and

communal identities. Both gender performativity and sacramental action may be seen as queer in

that they subvert earthly realities for the sake of eschatological embodiment. This analogous

relationship between queer performativity and sacramental action allows, in a more expansive

way than the relationship between theology of the body and nuptial ecclesiology, for core

theological concepts to deepen understanding of the human person and the mystery of the

Church in tandem. In bridging this gap between a theological understanding of the human person

and the mystery of the Church, a hermeneutic of holy queerness may help the Catholic Church out of the theological inertia that dominates contemporary queer-Catholic discourse.

I write this thesis as a queer Catholic, but its insights and gestures may have applications beyond the Catholic theological sphere. Gender and sexuality sow major divisions within the Christian Churches today. In the Methodist Church, over one quarter of U.S. congregations are leaving the United Methodist Church, owing primarily to divisions over LGBTQ+-related policies.[244] Debate among LGBTQ+-related policies remains strong even among those congregations who have opted to remain in the United Methodist Church. In an effort to diffuse this tension, the 2024 General Conference voted for a "regionalization" proposal that would give regional conferences a level of autonomy over the role of LGBTQ+ people within the Church.[245] Within the Anglican Communion, tensions over same-sex marriage at the 2022 Lambeth Conference rose to the point where the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches threatened to refuse communion to those bishops who support same-sex relationships.[246] Perhaps a hermeneutic of holy queerness can help these churches reconcile their own divisions.

This thesis gestures towards a way forward, a way to recognize the theological significance of queer people within the Church today. I do not claim that my theology is the only way of exploring queer performativity, nor that it represents a complete account of queer performativity's theological significance. Nor does this thesis do much to advance moral theology behind inviting a discernment-based approach as it pertains to particular individuals and their performative acts. I do, however, believe that this thesis offers a gesture towards a new way forward, a gesture towards the type of paradigm shift that will help reframe the dialogue between queer folk and the Church. Most of all, this thesis is my own way, in theological language, of praying "*Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!*

Notes

[1] Secretaria Generalis Synodi, "Enlarge the Space of your Tent: Working Document for the Continental Stage," October 24, 2022, https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/phases/continental-stage/dcs/20221025-ENG-DTC-FINAL-OK.pdf, n. 39.

[2] Queer Theory, like many critical theories, traces its origins to Michel Foucault's view of discursive power. For an excellent overview of Foucault's relationship to queer theory, see C. Heike Schotten, "Foucault and Queer Theory," in *Queer Terror: Life, Death, and Desire in the Settler Colony* (New York: Columbia University press, 2018), 66-92.

[3] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "queer, adj.¹, sense 1.a", July 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1082843456.

[4] See Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "queer, adj.¹, sense 2 and 3", July 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8881413027.

[5] Gareth Longstaff, "Queer Theory," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Critical Theory* Vol. 1, ed. Stuart Sim (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 217.

[6] Gareth Longstaff, "Queer Theory," 236

[7] Providing an overview, let alone an evaluation, of queer theory's history and directions is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a few points may be made here: first, some theorists aim to emphasize queer *methodology* over queer *theory*. For an example of this, see Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani, "Introduction: Queer Methods," in *Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3/4 pp. 14-27. In many respects, Craig A. Ford Jr.'s view of a 'queer natural law' discussed in the introduction is interested in what a queer methodology would entail. See Craig A. Ford, Jr., "Transgender Bodies, Catholic Schools, and a Queer Natural Law Theology of Exploration," *Journal of Moral Theology* 7, no. 1 (2018): 70-98. Second, with respect to queer theory, there is significant disagreement within the field over the significance of queerness in society; broadly speaking, two schools have tended to emerge: a "death drive" school, of which Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004) is emblematic; and a "futurist" school, of which José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009) is emblematic. Finally, "queer of color" critique, of which Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands / La Frontera* is a significant example, has emphasized the intersectionality of identity and the ways in which this intersectionality can usher in a new consciousness. These distinctions, while significant, do not overly concern us here, as all examples cited still operate primarily by seeing queerness as disrupting the heteronormative status quo.

[8] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[9] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 45.

[10] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993), 19.

[11] See Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, December 29, 1975, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html.

[12] Jean Porter, *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 100.

[13] Stephen J. Pope, "Natural Law in Catholic Social Teachings," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown, 2018), 47.

[14] Todd A. Salzman and Michael L. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown, 2008), 35.

[15] See, for example, William P. Roberts, "Toward a Post-Vatican II Spirituality of Marriage," in *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, ed. Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 125-140.

[16] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, June 29, 1995, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html, n. 7.

[17] See Todd A. Salzman and Michael L. Lawler, *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown, 2008); Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006); Lisa Fullam, "Sex in 3-D: A Telos for a Virtue Ethics of Sexuality," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2007): 151-170; Lisa Fullam, "Toward a Virtue Ethics of Marriage: Augustine and Aquinas on Friendship in Marriage," *Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (2012): 663-692; and Craig A. Ford, Jr., "Transgender Bodies, Catholic Schools, and a Queer Natural Law Theology of Exploration," *Journal of Moral Theology* 7, no. 1 (2018): 70-98.

[18] Committee on Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Doctrinal Note on the Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body*, March 20, 2023, https://www.usccb.org/resources/Doctrinal%20Note%202023-03-20.pdf, n. 6.

[19] USCCB Committee on Doctrine, *Doctrinal Note*, n. 3.

[20] USCCB Committee on Doctrine, *Doctrinal Note*, n. 9.

[21] While the *Doctrinal Note* contains a logical argument grounded in the Magisterium's theology of creation, its falls short on multiple counts. Theologically, it fails to adequately consider Catholic teaching on human dignity and conscience, while scientifically it fails to adequately consider the relationship between mental health outcomes and physiological function. The document's only mention of conscience, that law which "man … does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience" (Second Vatican Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*," Vatican website, December 7, 1965, accessed May 1, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, n. 16), refers to the right of a patient, in conscience, to refuse lifesaving medical care that does not "provide a reasonable hope of benefit without imposing excessive risks and burdens on the patient or excessive expense to family or community" (*Doctrinal Note*, n. 9n20). Nowhere does the document consider the conscience rights of a patient seeking gender-affirming care. Despite Vatican II's assertion that no human being is to be "restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience" (Second Vatican Council, "Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious," December 7, 1965, accessed May 1, 2024, Vatican website, n. 3), the document makes no provision for how those seeking gender-affirming care *in good conscience* might procure this care. In an American landscape where Catholic hospitals fill critical gaps in a patchy healthcare system many patients may have no possibility of procuring gender-affirming care *except* in Catholic hospitals. How are Catholic hospitals to balance their own conscience protections with that of patients seeking gender-affirming care? The document does not say, leaving the USCCB open to the accusation of being self-interested, as Jacqui Oesterblad comments, "only concerned with the kinds of restrictions that bear on Catholic consciences per Catholic theology." See Jacqui Oesterblad, "Care and Conscience Rights," Commonweal 150, no. 6 (June 2023), 16.

Moreover, the document fails to recognize that its own teleological reasoning leaves an opening *for* justifying gender-affirming care. Recent scientific research suggests that gender-affirming care is associated with improved immediate and long-term mental health outcomes, including decreased substance abuse and suicidality rates, both of which affect healthy physiological function. If, as the document states, respect for one's body entails pursuing every

"ordinary means" to preserve health, then it stands to reason that *suicide prevention* is a noble aim for a medical procedure. As such, one could argue that gender-affirming healthcare is morally justified under the USCCB's reasoning. Using the principle of double effect, one could argue that the documented link between gender-affirming care and suicide prevention outweighs the cost of disrupting the body's "natural" order. While the USCCB does not address such arguments, it heads them off by claiming that gender-affirming care does address a disorder in the body since "the bodily organs are normal and healthy" (*Doctrinal Note*, n. 15). Ironically, this claim reduces a person's health to physiological function, ignoring the deep connection between mental, physical, and spiritual health. Indeed, in making this claim, the USCCB itself divorces body from soul, defining disorder as an exclusively *physical and material* phenomenon rather than taking seriously the implications of a medical disorder for the whole human person. The USCCB document is thus revealed to be inadequate, both theologically and scientifically.

For research on the association between gender affirming care and positive health outcomes, see Anthony N. Almazan, B.A. and Alex S. Keuroghlian, M.D., M.P.H., "Association Between Gender-Affirming Surgeries and Mental Health Outcomes," *JAMA Surgery* 156, no. 7 (April 2021), 611-618; Rachel H. Park, M.D., et al, "Long-term Outcomes After Gender-Affirming Surgery: 40-Year Follow-up Study," *Annals of Plastic Surgery* 89, no. 4 (October 2022), 431-436; and Diana M. Tordoff, M.P.H., Jonathon W. Wanta, M.D., Arin Collin, B.A., et al, "Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care," *JAMA Network Open* 5, no. 2 (February 2022), doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978. For a more general introduction on the relationship between trauma and physiological intervention, see Bessel A. van der Kolk, M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2015).

[22] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration *Dignitas Infinita* on Human Dignity," April 2, 2024, accessed May 1, 2024, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20240402_dignitas-infinita_en.html, n. 58.

[23] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dignitas Infinita," n. 60.

[24] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dignitas Infinita," n. 7.

[25] Second Vatican Council, "Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious," December 7, 1965, accessed May 1, 2024, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.

[26] See Patrick Cheng, *Radical Love: an Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury, 2011).

[27] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[28] Linn Marie Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

[29] Miguel H. Díaz, *Queer God de Amor* (New York: Fordham, 2022), xxv.

[30] Miguel H. Díaz, *Queer God de Amor* (New York: Fordham, 2022), xxv.

[31] Ish Ruiz, "Synodality in the Catholic Church: Toward a Conciliar Ecclesiology of Inclusion for LGBTQ+ Persons," *Journal of Moral Theology* 12, no. 2 (2023), 71.

[32] Ish Ruiz, "Synodality in the Catholic Church," 71.

[33] Some of these early organizations still in existence today include Dignity (currently DignityUSA), founded by Fr. Pat Nidorf, O.S.A. in 1969; New Ways Ministry, founded in 1977 by Fr. Robert Nugent, SDS, and Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SSND; and Fortunate Families, founded in 1992 as Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry, by Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata.

[34] James Martin, S.J., *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity* (New York: HarperOne, 2017).

[35] James Martin, S.J., *Building a Bridge,* 2.

[36] James Martin, S.J., *Building a Bridge,* 61.

[37] Arguably the most pastoral of these documents was the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family, *Always Our Children: a Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*, September 10, 1997, accessed May 1, 2024, USCCB website, https://www.usccb.org/resources/always-our-children.

[38] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings," December 18, 2023, accessed May 1, 2024, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.

[39] Peter Pinedo, "African Bishops: 'No Blessing for Homosexual Couples in African Churches," *National Catholic Register,* January 11, 2024, accessed May 1, 2024, https://www.ncregister.com/cna/african-bishops-no-blessing-for-homosexual-couples-in-the-african-churches.

[40] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Press release concerning the reception of *Fiducia supplicans,*" January 4, 2024, accessed May 1, 2024Vatican website, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/ en/info/2024/01/04/240104a.html, no. 2.

[41] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Press release," no. 5.

[42] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Press release," no. 5.

[43] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Press release," no. 2.

[44] John W. O'Malley S.J., *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 42.

[45] Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church*: *Expanded Edition* (New York: Image, 2002)*,* 61.

[46] The former Congregation for Catholic Education describes the relationship between sex and gender in this way: "Sex is seen as defining which of the two biological categories (deriving from the original feminine-masculine dyad) one belonged to. Gender, on the other hand, would be the way in which the differences between the sexes are lived in each culture. The problem here does not lie in the distinction between the two terms, which can be interpreted correctly, but in the *separation of sex from gender*." See Congregation for Catholic Education, "Male and Female He Created Them," n. 11.

[47] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 23.

[48] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 18.

[49] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 19.

[50] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 23.

[51] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 30.

[52] Left undeveloped here – aside from a passing reference to Martin Buber's *I and Thou* – are the ways in which this fundamental relationality of gender may be connected with personalistic thought that has been so significant in Catholic theology during the last century. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 100th Anniversary Edition, translated by

Walter Kaufmann (New York: Free Press, 2023).

[53] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 30.

[54] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 31.

[55] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 145.

[56] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 148.

[57] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 149.

[58] Indeed, as Margaret A. Farley notes, Western culture has *not* always utilized cultural constructions to push these 'unusual cases' into a binary construct; in speaking of the phenomenon of intersex people, she writes: "Aristotle thought they were a kind of twin; Galen believed they represented an intermediate sex. Physicians in the middle ages thought they were in the middle of a sexual continuum. By the nineteenth century science and medicine took over, determining that intersexuality is pathological and requires a medical remedy … with this remedy, intersexuals largely disappeared from the public eye, for they were medically and surgically melded into the standard binary sexual model." See Margaret A. Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 150.

[59] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 30-32 and Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519-31.

[60] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 147.

[61] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 34.

[62] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 45

[63] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 526.

[64] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 46.

[65] Kadji Amin, "Haunted by the 1990s: Queer Theory's Affective Histories," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2016), 177.

[66] Sarah Hansen, "Queer Performativity," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology,* ed. Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 285-6.

[67] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993), 19.

[68] Kadji Amin, "Haunted by the 1990s," 175.

[69] See Genesis 1:1-31, NRSV.

[70] John 1:14, NRSV.

[71] See Revelation 21:1-22:21, NRSV.

[72] Denis Edwards, *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019), 95.

[73] Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Questions on Easter," *Theological Investigations*, 4:121-33, quoted in Denis Edwards, *Deep Incarnation*, 96.

[74] Karl Rahner, "The Festival of the Future of the World," *Theological Investigations,* 7:181-185, quoted in Denis Edwards, *Deep Incarnation*, 98.

[75] Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 92.

[76] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 84.

[77] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 85.

[78] Matthew 19:4-5, NRSV.

[79] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body,* trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006).

[80] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 185-186.

[81] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 136.

[82] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 136.

[83] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 137-138.

[84] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, n. 7.

[85] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, n. 7.

[86] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, n. 7.

[87] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, n. 7.

[88] John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, n. 7.

[89] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 166.

[90] Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 137.

[91] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 210.

[92] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 211.

[93] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 211n33, 212.

[94] Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 85.

[95] Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 85.

[96] Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 87.

[97] Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 88.

[98] Salzman and Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 88.

[99] Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 138.

[100] Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*," November 18, 1965, accessed May 1, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html, n. 12.

[101] Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, n. 12

[102] While I am concerned primarily with John Paul II's interpretation of Genesis, there are other issues with the late pope's Biblical interpretation. As Luke Timothy Johnson points out, "John Paul II does not deal with some of the difficulties presented by the texts he does select. For instance, he manages to use Matthew 19:3-9, on the question of marriage's indissolubility, without ever adverting to the clause allowing divorce on the grounds of *porneia* (sexual morality) in both Matthew 5:32 and 19:9." Moreover, John Paul II neglects 1 Timothy 6:17, thereby missing an opportunity to reflect upon the significance of sexual pleasure. See Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body': John Paul II on Love, Sex, and Pleasure" in *Commonweal* 128, no. 2 (January 2001): 11-17.

[103] Daniel P. Horan, OFM, *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Contemporary Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019), 90.

[104] J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 88.

[105] Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 13.

[106] Craig A. Ford. Jr., "Transgender Bodies," 93.

[107] Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body," 14.

[108] Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body," 14.

[109] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 91.

[110] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 88.

[111] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 88.

[112] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 416.

[113] Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 138.

[114] Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body," 14.

[115] Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body," 14.

[116] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, vol. 14, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 246.

[117] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 50.

[118] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 246.

[119] Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler, *The Sexual Person*, 50.

[120] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993), 19.

[121] Ian A. McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence: Aquinas and the *Imago Dei*," *New Blackfriars* 82, no. 963 (May 2001), 208.

[122] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 208.

[123] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I q93a1.

[124] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 209.

[125] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 218.

[126] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 213.

[127] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 213.

[128] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 216.

[129] Ian McFarland, "When Time Is of the Essence," 216.

[130] John W. O'Malley, S.J., *What Happened at Vatican II*, 42.

[131] Francis, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia*, March 19, 2016, accessed May 1, 2024, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf, n. 56.

[132] Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 56.

[133] Craig A. Ford. Jr., "Transgender Bodies," 77.

[134] As Ray Dever, a Permanent Deacon in the Catholic Church and the father of a transgender child notes, "Anyone with any significant first-hand experience with transgender individuals would be baffled by the suggestion that trans people are somehow the result of an ideology. It is a historical fact that long before there were gender studies programs in any university or the phrase *gender ideology* was ever spoken, trans people were present, recognized, and even valued in some cultures around the world." See Ray Dever, "Trans and Catholic: a parent's perspective," *U.S. Catholic*, May 23, 2018, accessed May 1, 2024, https://uscatholic.org/articles/201805/transgender-and-catholic-a-parents-perspective/.

[135] James Martin, S.J., "Listen to the L.G.B.T. person: a response to the Vatican's gender theory document," *America*, June 11, 2019, accessed May 1, 2024, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/06/11/listen-lgbt-person-response-vaticans-gender-theory-document.

[136] Craig A. Ford. Jr., "Transgender Bodies," 78/

[137] Pontifical Council for the Family, *Marriage, Family, and "De Facto" Unions*, July 26, 2000, accessed May 1 Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_20001109_de-facto-unions_en.html, n. 8.

[138] Pontifical Council for the Family, *Marriage, Family, and "De Facto" Unions*, no. 8n7.

[139] Pontifical Council for the Family, *Marriage, Family, and "De Facto" Unions*, no. 8n7.

[140] Craig A. Ford. Jr., "Transgender Bodies," 78.

[141] Craig A. Ford. Jr., "Transgender Bodies," 79.

[142] The Second Vatican Council describes the authority of the Magisterium in this way: "the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which is presents for belief as divinely revealed." See *Dei Verbum*, n. 10. It stands to reason that if the Church attempts to teach something that departs from Scripture and Tradition, such a teaching would be an abuse of the Magisterium's teaching authority and would not be legitimate and authoritative teaching.

[143] Patrick Cheng, "Domine, Non Sum Dignus: Theological Bullying and the Roman Catholic Church," in *More than a Monologue: Sexual Diversity and the Catholic Church*, ed. J. Patrick Hornbeck and Michael A. Norko (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 165-167.

[144] Mark D. Jordan, "In Search of Queer Theology Lost," in *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies,* edited by Kent L. Brinthall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 297.

[145] Mark D. Jordan, "In Search of Queer Theology Lost," 297.

[146] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*, 8, and Mark D. Jordan, "In Search of Queer Theology Lost," 300. Left undeveloped here is a striking similarity between the Magisterium and queer theorists: both reject the idea that the fullness of the human person can be reduced to language or terminology. The former Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has this to say about referring to individuals as 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual': "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 solely 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." See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, October 1, 1986, accessed May 1, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html, n. 16.

[147] Mark D. Jordan, "In Search of Queer Theology Lost," 302.

[148] See Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

[149] The example Burke cites is from Dio Cassius who "reports with distress the castration of one hundred Roman citizens, including married men, which produced persons (ἀνθρόπους) who were both eunuchs and men (εὐνοῦχους τε καὶ ἄνδρας). The juxtaposition of the two terms in Dio Cassius's text functions rhetorically to evoke shock and horror in a Roman audience, especially among those socially recognized as men." See Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 128-129.

[150] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 128.

[151] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 129.

[152] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 129.

[153] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 130. This suspicion continued well into the days of the early Church. Basil of Ancyra, for example, believed eunuchs to be a 'constant danger' to the sexual purity of young women, suggesting that they were "quite exceptionally dissolute, there being no fear of pregnancy associated with their love-making." See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 268.

[154] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 130.

[155] Deuteronomy 23:1, NRSV.

[156] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 131.

[157] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 132.

[158] As a writer, I directly experienced the act of choosing the eunuch's identity in electing to use he/him pronouns in describing the eunuch. Are these the most accurate pronouns to describe the eunuch's identity? I have no way of knowing, yet in writing about the eunuch I am forced to make a decision about his identity.

[159] See, e.g. Christopher R. Matthews, "Acts and the History of the Earliest Jerusalem Church," in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 28 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2004) and several chapters in the fantastic volume *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 20 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

[160] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 147.

[161] In this encounter, Peter falls into a trance during which God sets before him animals considered by Jewish law to be unclean and commands Peter to 'kill and eat' these animals (Acts 10:13); when Peter refuses, the voice responds, "what God has cleansed, you must not call common" (Acts 10:16). This prepares Peter to proclaim that the salvation of Christ is to be extended to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:34-48) and results in a change to Church discipline regarding circumcision and dietary laws (Acts 15:1-35).

[162] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch*, 147.

[163] Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*," November 21, 1964, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, n. 7.

[164] Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15, Romans 6:34, Colossians 2:12; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 15.

[165] Sean D. Burke, *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch* 137.

[166] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 239.

[167] The tradition of virginity, especially in contemporary practice, is often also called "chastity,' "celibacy," or "celibate chastity." I use the term "virginity" in my prose, primarily because this was the term favored by the early Church.

[168] Paul held a dismal view of this practice, arguing that "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled" is "disgraceful" (1 Corinthians 11:6, NRSV).

[169] Megan DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*, 76.

[170] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, 80.

[171] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society,* 80-81.

[172] Jerome, *Against Helvidius*, 22, quoted in DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology,* 90. Jerome would renounce this view following the condemnation of Origen.

[173] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, quoted in John W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk, eds., *Readings in World Christian History Vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003).

[174] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina*, quoted in John W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk, *Readings in World Christian History*, 151.

[175] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 526.

[176] As Megan K. DeFranza points out, Tertullian's legacy on sexual difference is mixed: on the one hand, Tertullian claims that, upon entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, one becomes sexless in the way of an angel. Tertullian also extols Jesus as a "voluntary eunuch" while simultaneously ridiculing his opponents as being "no better than a eunuch." See Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology,* 86.

[177] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society,* 169.

[178] Sarah Coakley, "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation, and God," *Modern Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2000), 68.

[179] Sarah Coakley, "The Eschatological Body," 67.

[180] Augustine, *De Virginitate* 12.

[181] Augustine, *De Virginitate* 24.

[182] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* II-II q152a4.

[183] For a recent example of the power of celibate witness in an American context, see Shannen Dee Williams, *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic nuns in the long African American freedom struggle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022).

[184] Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 36.

[185] 2 Corinthians 3:18, NRSV.

[186] John W. O'Malley, S.J., *What Happened at Vatican II*, 42.

[187] Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gender: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003), 170.

[188] Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gender*, 166.

[189] Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gender*, 147.

[190] Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gender*, 147.

[191] Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gender*, 166.

[192] Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gender*, 168.

[193] See Colossians 1:15-20, NRSV.

[194] Tina Beattie, "Theological (De)Formations? The Sex Abuse Crisis in the Context of Nuptial Ecclesiology and the Theology of Priesthood," *Journal of Moral Theology* 3 (2023), 192.

[195] Holy See Press Office, "The Pope speaks with journalists on the return flight from Sweden," November 2, 2016, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/11/02/161102a.html. This division of the Church into the "Petrine" Church and the "Marian" Church in contemporary ecclesiology is generally attributed to Hans Urs von Balthasar. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, trans. Andrée Emery (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987).

[196] Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church Expanded Edition* (New York: Image, 2002), 10.

[197] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 20.

[198] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 21.

[199] See, for example, Patrick Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury, 2011) and Andy Buechel, *That We Might Become God: The Queerness of Creedal Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015).

[200] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 13-14.

[201] Linn Marie Tonstad, "Everything Queer, Nothing Radical?" in *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* vol. 92, no. 3-4 (2016), 120.

[202] Tonstad, "Everything Queer, Nothing Radical?," 120.

[203] I use the Latin *societas perfecta* here to avoid confusion with the common English translation of "society." As Massimo Faggioli points out, the meaning of *societas* "is much closer to 'institution' than 'society.'" Moreover, the phrase *societas perfecta* in Latin connotes not just the "perfection," but also the *completeness* of the Church as a society. See Massimo Faggioli, *A Council for the Global Church: Receiving Vatican II in History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 189.

[204] Patrick Granfield, "The Church as Societas Perfecta in the Schemata of Vatican I," *Church History* 48, no. 4 (December 1979): 438.

[205] Patrick Granfield, "The Church as Societas Perfecta," 438-440.

[206] Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*," November 21, 1964, accessed May 1, 2024, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, n. 1.

[207] See *Lumen Gentium*, n. 9-17.

[208] Massimo Faggioli, *A Council for the Global Church*, 189.

[209] John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 186.

[210] John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 186.

[211] Massimo Faggioli, *A Council for the Global Church*, 189.

[212] Massimo Faggioli, *A Council for the Global Church*, 189.

[213] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 59.

[214] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 59.

[215] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 60.

[216] Hebrews 5:8, NRSV.

[217] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church,* 62.

[218] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church,* 61.

[219] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church,* 61.

[220] Kimberly Hope Belcher, *Efficacious Engagement: Sacramental Participation in the Trinitarian Mystery* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 4.

[221] Kimberly Belcher, *Efficacious Engagement*, 3.

[222] Kimberly Belcher, *Efficacious Engagement*, 52.

[223] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 30.

[224] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 63.

[225] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 63.

[226] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 106.

[227] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 107.

[228] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 107.

[229] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 127.

[230] See M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 110. Most famously, the connection between the cross and the lynching tree in the African American experience is developed by James H. Cone in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY; Orbis, 2011).

[231] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 125

[232] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 125

[233] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 128.

[234] M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 126.

[235] Copeland, following Angela Davis, means by this that the "cognitive and affective dimensions" of pity must be "strengthened, extended, and enriched through personal encounter, responsible intellectual preparation, and healing

and creative action for change in society." See M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 126.

[236] Kimberly Hope Belcher, *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism: From Thanksgiving to Communion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 203

[237] Kimberly Belcher, *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism*, 203.

[238] Kimberly Belcher, *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism*, 203.

[239] Kimberly Belcher, *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism*, 203.

[240] For the Eucharist as the "font and apex" of Christian life, see *Lumen Gentium*, n. 11. This phrase has often been translated as "source and summit," including in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1324.

[241] For "homosexual acts" as objectively disordered, see Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "*Persona Humana*: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics," Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html, n. 8.

[242] Kimberly Belcher, *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism*, 204.

[243] Kimberly Belcher, *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism*, 204n9.

[244] Peter Smith, "One fourth of United Methodist churches in US have left in schism over LGBTQ ban. What happens now?," *Associated Press*, December 15, 2023, accessed May 1, 2024, https://apnews.com/article/congregations-leaving-united-methodist-church-lgbtq-bans-70b8c89ea49174597f4548c249bab24f.

[245] Peter Smith, "United Methodists endorse change that could give regions more say on LGBTQ and other issues," *Associated Press*, April 26, 2024, accessed May 1, 2024, https://apnews.com/article/united-methodist-disaffiliation-lgbtq-regionalization-samesex-marriage-d429bb838c31f1899dbc48fbddb03197.

[246] Catherine Pepinster, "Communion row over same-sex marriage overshadows Lambeth Conference opening," *Religion News Service,* July 29, 2022, accessed May 1, 2024, https://religionnews.com/2022/07/29/lambeth-update/.

Bibliography

Almazan B.A., Anthony N. and Alex S. Keuroghlian, M.D., M.P.H., "Association Between Gender-Affirming Surgeries and Mental Health Outcomes." *JAMA Surgery* 156, no. 7 (April 2021): 611-618.

Althaus-Reid, Marcella. *The Queer God*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Amin, Kadji. "Haunted by the 1990s: Queer Theory's Affective Histories." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3/4 (2016): 173–89.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 5th ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Aumann, O.P., Jordan. *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition.* New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2001.

von Balthasar, Hans Urs. *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*. Translated by Andrée Emery. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987.

Beattie, Tina. "Theological (De)Formations? The Sex Abuse Crisis in the Context of Nuptial Ecclesiology and the Theology of Priesthood." *Journal of Moral Theology* 3 (2023): 195-212.

Belcher, Kimberly Hope. *Efficacious Engagement : Sacramental Participation in the Trinitarian Mystery*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011.

Belcher, Kimberly Hope. *Eucharist and Receptive Ecumenism: From Thanksgiving to Communion*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Brim, Matt , and Amin Ghaziani. "Introduction: Queer Methods." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3/4 (2016): 14–27.

Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou: 100th Anniversary Edition*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Free Press, 2023.

Buechel, Andy. *That We Might Become God: The Queerness of Creedal Christianity*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015.

Burke, Sean D. *Queering the Ethiopian Eunuch: Strategies of Ambiguity in Acts*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.

Burr, Vivien. *Social Constructionism*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1993): 17–32. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-1-1-17.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31.

Carpenter, Anne M. *Nothing Gained Is Eternal: A Theology of Tradition*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2022.

Carson, Marion L. S. *Setting the Captives Free: The Bible and Human Trafficking*. Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, 2017.

Cheng, Patrick. "Domine, Non Sum Dignus: Theological Bullying and the Roman Catholic Church." In *More than a Monologue: Sexual Diversity and the Catholic Church*, edited by J. Patrick Hornbeck and Michael A. Norko,164-173. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Cheng, Patrick S. *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology*. New York: Seabury, 2011.

Coakley, John W. and Andrea Sterk, eds. *Readings in World Christian History Volume 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003.

Coakley, Sarah. "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation, and God." *Modern Theology* 16, no. 1 (January 2000): 61–73.

Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

Congregation for Catholic Education. *'Male and Female He Created Them': Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education.* Vatican City: Vatican, 2019.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*. October 1, 1986. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "*Persona Humana*: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics." December 29, 1975. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html.

Copeland, M. Shawn. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009.

Cornwall, Susannah. *Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ : Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology*. London: Equinox, 2010.

DeFranza, Megan K. *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.

Díaz, Miguel H. *Queer God de Amor*. New York: Fordham Univ Press, 2022.

Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Declaration *Dignitas Infinita* on Human Dignity." April 2, 2024. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/ congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20240402_dignitas-infinita_en.html.

Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Declaration *Fiducia Supplicans* on the Pastoral Meaning Of Blessings." December 18, 2023. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_202312 18_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.

Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. "Press release concerning the reception of *Fiducia supplicans.*" January 4, 2024. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/info/2024/01/04/240104a.html.

Dulles S.J., Avery. *Models of the Church: Expanded Edition*. New York: Image, 2002.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Edwards, Denis. *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019.

Faggioli, Massimo. *A Council for the Global Church: Receiving Vatican II in History*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015.

Farley, Margaret A. *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*. New York: Continuum, 2008.

Ford, Jr., Craig A. "Transgender Bodies, Catholic Schools, and a Queer Natural Law Theology of Exploration." *Journal of Moral Theology* 7, no. 1 (2018): 70–98.

Francis. *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia*. March 19, 2016. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/ pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf.

Fullam, Lisa. "Sex in 3-D: A Telos for a Virtue Ethics of Sexuality." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27, no. 2 (2007): 151–70.

Fullam, Lisa. "Toward a Virtue Ethics of Marriage: Augustine and Aquinas on Friendship in Marriage." *Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (2012): 663–92.

Granfield, Patrick. "The Church as Societas Perfecta in the Schemata of Vatican I." *Church History* 48, no. 4 (December 1979): 431–46.

Hansen, Sarah. "Queer Performativity." In *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, edited by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020.

Hereford, C.S.J., Amy. *Religious Life at the Crossroads: A School of Mystics and Prophets*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for the Modern Man*. 1951. Reprint, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus And Giroux, 2005.

Horan O.F.M., Daniel P. *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Contemporary Theological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019.

International Theological Commission. *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.ca.roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/ cti_documents/ rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. "A Disembodied 'Theology of the Body': John Paul II on Love, Sex, and Pleasure." *Commonweal* 128, no. 2 (January 2001): 11-17.

John Paul II. *Letter to Women*. June 29, 1995. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html.

John Paul II. *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body.* Translated by Michael W. Waldstein. Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*. New York: Continuum, 2006.

Jordan, Mark D. "In Search of Queer Theology Lost." In *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brinthall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 296-308. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

van der Kolk M.D., Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Penguin, 2015.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. Vol. 14, *Method in Theology.* Edited by Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017.

Longstaff, Gareth. "Queer Theory." In *The Edinburgh Companion to Critical Theory*, edited by Stuart Sim, 235–50. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Martin, James. *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*. New York, NY: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2017.

McFarland, Ian A. "When Time Is of the Essence: Aquinas and the *Imago Dei*." *New Blackfriars* 82, no. 963 (May 2001): 208-223.

Metz, Johann Baptist. *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*. Edited by J. Matthew Ashley. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.

Middleton, J. Richard. *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Neutel, Karin B. *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul's Declaration "Neither Jew nor Greek, Neither Slave nor Free, nor Male and Female" in the Context of First-Century Thought*. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015.

Oesterblad, Jacqui. "Care and Conscience Rights: Catholic hospitals can strike a better balance – and still be Catholic," *Commonweal* 150, no. 6 (June 2023): 14-16.

O'Malley, John W. *What Happened at Vatican II*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.

Park M.D., Rachel H et al. "Long-term Outcomes After Gender-Affirming Surgery: 40-Year Follow-up Study." *Annals of Plastic Surgery* 89, no. 4 (October 2022): 431-436.

Pontifical Council for the Family. *Marriage, Family, and "De Facto" Unions*. July 26, 2000.Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_20001109_de-facto-unions_en.html, n. 8. Accessed May 1, 2024.

Pope, Stephen J. "Natural Law in Catholic Social Teaching." In *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, edited by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M, 43-

74. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018.

Porter, Jean. *Natural and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999.

Pui-Lan, Kwok. *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Roberts, William P. "Toward a Post-Vatican II Spirituality of Marriage." In *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, edited by Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996.

Ruiz, Ish. "Synodality in the Catholic Church: Toward a Conciliar Ecclesiology of Inclusion for LGBTQ+ Persons." *Journal of Moral Theology* 7, no. 1 (2023): 55–77.

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*. December 29, 1975. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html.

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

Schotten, C. Heike. *Queer Terror: Life, Death, and Desire in the Settler Colony*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Second Vatican Council. "Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious." December 7, 1965. Accessed May 1, 2024.Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/ archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html.

Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*," November 21, 1964. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

Second Vatican Council. "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*." November 18, 1965. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

Second Vatican Council. "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*." December 7, 1965. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

Second Vatican Council. "Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*." October 28, 1965. Accessed May 1, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/ vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html.

Secretaria Generalis Synodi. *'Enlarge the space of your tent' (Is 54:2): Working Document for the Continental Stage.* October 24, 2022. Accessed April 30, 2024. Vatican website. https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/phases/continental-stage/des/20221025-ENG-DTC-FINAL-OK.pdf.

Soskice, Janet Martin. *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Tanis, Justin. *Trans-Gender: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003.

Taylor, S.M., Justin. *A Marist Reset and Other Reflections*. Rome: Society of Mary, 2020.

Tonstad, Linn Marie. "'Everything Queer, Nothing Radical?'" *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 92, no. 3-4 (2016): 118-129.

Tonstad, Linn Marie. *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Tordoff M.P.H., Diana M., Jonathan W. Wanta, M.D., Arin Collin, B.A., et al. "Mental Health Outcomes in Transgender and Nonbinary Youths Receiving Gender-Affirming Care." *JAMA Network Open* 5, no. 2 (February 2022). Accessed May 1, 2024. http://dx.doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978.

Traina, Cristina L.H. "Ecclesiology and Trans* Inclusion." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 42, no. 2 (2022): 363–81.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine. *Doctrinal Note on the Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body*. March 20, 2023. Accessed May 1, 2024. USCCB website. https://www.usccb.org/resources/Doctrinal%20Note%202023-03-20.pdf.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family. *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers.* September 10, 1997. Accessed May 1, 2024. USCCB website. https://www.usccb.org/resources/always-our-children.

Williams, Shannen Dee. *Subversive Habits: Black Catholic nuns in the long African American freedom struggle*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022.