

Spring 2018

After Vatican II: Renegotiating the Roles of Women, Sexual Ethics, and Homosexuality in the Roman Catholic Church

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AFTER VATICAN II: RENEGOTIATING THE ROLES OF WOMEN, SEXUAL ETHICS,
AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Philosophy & Religion Department
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Kenneth Brian Nauert, Jr.

May 2018

AFTER VATICAN II: RENEGOTIATING THE ROLES OF WOMEN, SEXUAL ETHICS,
AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Date Recommended April 6, 2018



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To God be the Glory

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been one of the most difficult and trying projects of my academic career, and without the constant aid and support of mentors, colleagues, friends, and family it would largely remain unfinished. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank my committee chair, Dr. Sophia Rose Arjana, for her superb guidance and direction as I neared the completion of my thesis. Without your constant support and enthusiasm (as well as your coffee and chocolate) I would not have made it this far.

I also want to thank Dr. Elizabeth Gish for her unfailing advice and insight during both my undergraduate and graduate careers. Your assistance during my WKU Mahurin Honors College Thesis development, writing, and defense as my committee chair helped me formulate, process, and write much of this work. Thank you for your unwavering dedication to my academic endeavors. I wish to thank Dr. Tamara Van Dyken, as well, for her direction, guidance, and professional advice in the formulation and creation of my thesis. Without her expert knowledge and perspective, my thesis would only be half as good as it could have been.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the entirety of the WKU Department of Philosophy and Religion for their instruction over the course of these last four years. You have made both my undergraduate and graduate careers interesting, inspirational, and truly enjoyable. In a special way I would like to thank Dr. Jeffrey Samuels for his mentorship, guidance, support, and friendship. Without his unwavering presence in my academic career I would not be the scholar or person I am today. He has helped me grow as both an individual and a scholar by providing unceasing mentoring and guidance

during the toughest and more interesting parts of my undergraduate and graduate careers here at WKU. At this point, I am glad to call him friend.

To TK Waters, thank you for introducing me to Paula Williams who hired me as an office student worker for the Philosophy and Religion Department. Without your initial push through the door, I would not have had the amazing experiences with this department as I have had. Thank you for your constant support and friendship. To Paula, thank you for making even scanning books so enjoyable. Every day I worked with you was made more enjoyable by your mentoring, your guidance, your offering of snacks, and your friendship. I appreciate everything you have done for me, from putting up with my complaining to editing the papers I wrote at the last minute. You are a friend that I deeply value and appreciate. Thank you. To Erika Brown, Maggie Mercer, Robert Allen, and Logan Taylor, thank you for your friendship, conversation, love, and support inside and out of the office. You all have been most appreciated.

I would also like to thank the WKU Catholic Campus Center and Fr. Mike Williams for the constant love and support over these last four years. Without their tutelage, guidance, support, and love I would not have made it this far, especially Fr. Mike. Padre, thank you for putting up with me, for loving me like a son, and for guiding me these last four years. I will never forget the love, care, and support you have given me. To all my friends at the Catholic Center, thank you for your love and support as well. Matt Millay, Millie Ronkainen, Chelsea Smith, Hunter Ricketts, and all the others who have loved and supported me as I wrote my thesis. Your friendship has never gone unnoticed.

Finally, I would like to thank my family – Mom, Dad, Tommy, Adam, Hope, and Mimi. You all are the rock that I have stood on as I traversed my undergraduate and graduate collegiate careers. You all have loved and supported me through everything, and for that I thank you. Mom and Dad, if it was not for your constant presence in my life, I would not have become the man I am today. Tommy, your love and support has always held me up as I have struggled with this thesis. Adam, your humor, wit, and love has always kept me optimistic and inspired. Hope, your unfailing love and sassiness has always made me smile and laugh. Mimi, thank you for your presence in my life, for your love, and unwavering support. I love you all.

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ETHICS, AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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May 2018

132 Pages

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Vatican II was one of the most seminal councils in Roman Catholic Church history, having far reaching effects on the universal institution.¹ One of the most important outcomes of Vatican II was not the reforming of orthopraxy, but the dialogue that developed regarding three specific issues – the transforming of women’s roles in Church life, Catholic sexual ethics, and the Church’s relationship with LGBTQ+ individuals.² The decades following Vatican II became a new era of religious dialogue among Catholic scholars and theologians, which established new discussions on women’s ordination, sexual ethics, and attitudes towards homosexuality in the contemporary world.

This thesis examines dialogue concerning women’s ordination, as well as the dialogue that developed from Pope John Paul II’s teachings in his *Theology of the Body* regarding sexual ethics and the agency of queer persons in the Church. It explores the dialogue among scholars and theologians on the changing role and opinion of women in ministerial positions, the shifting understanding of sexual morality, and the changing

¹ To maintain efficiency within the overall thesis, from this point the term “Roman Catholic Church” will be shortened to “the Church.” This in no way is meant to mean the Catholic Church is the only church but is a way to provide a shortened term for a longer name. It also is not meant to delineate the entirety of the Body of Christ within the religious tradition of Christianity to the Roman Catholic Church.

² Orthopraxy in this case refers to the correct performance and practice of certain rituals and rites predominantly found within the Roman Catholic Latin Rite Mass.

attitudes towards queer individuals that developed because of Vatican II's emphasis on discussion.

Vatican II decisively changed the way the Church practices and performs its numerous responsibilities in our modern world. However, the result also included a deeper understanding of the individual needs, ideas, and beliefs of the laity. In 2014, the Vatican's International Theological Commission referenced the importance of laity's role as members of the universal Church:

Putting faith into practice in the concrete reality of the existential situations in which he or she is placed by family, professional and cultural relations enriches the personal experience of the believer. It enables him or her to see more precisely the value and the limits of a given doctrine, and to propose ways of refining its formulation. That is why those who teach in the name of the Church should give full attention to the experience of believers, especially lay people, who strive to put the Church's teaching into practice in the areas of their own specific experience and competence.³

In doing so, greater concern for discussion of these issues developed, which is documented in this thesis.

³ International Theological Commission, "*Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church," (Vatican City, 2014).

Introduction⁴

“What a treasure there is, dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council...a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.”

- Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Inuente*, 2001

Perhaps one of the most decisive and influential councils regarding Church doctrine and reform of Church practices, the Second Vatican Council ushered in an era of scholarship, religious intrigue, controversy, and change to the contemporary Roman Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII, in 1962, called together bishops and other leaders of the universal Church to an extraordinary meeting to discuss changes and reform in the Catholic Church. Most notably, the Second Vatican Council was designed to bring the ancient Church into the new millennium. Out of this period emerged new ideas, thoughts, and social movements, designed to enhance the Church’s orthopraxy, or correct practice. These entailed changes to the numerous rites, rituals, and responsibilities within the larger Latin Rite. Also, Vatican II was designed to formulate responses to numerous concerns regarding orthodox teaching and translate the Church’s teachings into its wider global social context, mainly within its religious and diplomatic relationship to other nations and religious institutions. Most notably was the Council’s extremely important foundational address on the changing sociocultural, moral, and ethical norms of the 1960s and 70s.⁵

⁴ A significant portion of the research and writing within this work is a product of my own work, “Redefining the Roles of Women and Sexual Ethics in the Roman Catholic Church,” a capstone thesis written for requirements of my completion of my Bachelor of Arts degree and graduation from the Western Kentucky University Mahurin Honors College.

Nauert, Kenneth, "Redefining the Roles of Women and Sexual Ethics in the Roman Catholic Church" (2017). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 695.

http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/695.

⁵ William O’Brien ed., *Riding Time Like A River: The Catholic Moral Tradition Since Vatican II* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1993), ix-x.

However, many scholars and lay readers today would question the importance of such an event, especially one that has passed into modern memory. My thesis addresses how the important issues are not focused on the specific decrees or changes that Vatican II addressed, but the dialogue and ideas of reform surrounding Church doctrine and teaching that emerged during the Second Vatican Council. Dialogue regarding changing religious norms and values, teachings, and decrees that had not previously existed emerged and continued to gain importance in the ever-progressing state of ideas and culture in the world today.⁶ The social-scientific progression of the world has left its mark on the slow to change Roman Catholic Church, forcing its leaders to address certain issues that, since the Second Vatican Council, have blossomed in the public eye as key issues in need of attention. With the shifting of ideas concerning issues that have traditionally been gender-specific or ethical norms, and the advancement of medical science, the situation has become distinctly more complex. Therefore, these issues, which I will analyze, are without a doubt influential facets of religious life in the Church and in the secular life.

Of particular interest is how the Church has framed and responded to issues related to women in the Church and Catholic sexual ethics. Previous rulings of Church doctrine concerning the role of women placed women within a patriarchal stance, forever casting the woman in the light of the man, which does have religious implications. According to the Church, the role of the woman is complex, identifying that women have several different positions and responsibilities in the life of the Church. This may be determined by their vocational status, whether they have entered the Sacrament of

⁶ Ibid., 1-3.

Marriage, professed religious vows, or whether they are committed to the generous single life.⁷ However, changing trends in the modern global sphere has influenced a possible fourth or even fifth role to enter contention within the Church – priesthood and the permanent diaconate.

The idea of gender-inclusive pastoral ministry through women ministers, pastors, and deacons has influenced many of the mainstream Protestant denominations in both Europe and America, causing intrigue, controversy, and even anger among secular and religious men and women regarding the Church’s traditional stance of men-only presbyters and administrators of the sacraments.⁸ However, this controversy has created factions within both confessional and academic communities researching the traditional teachings of the Church, the history of the early Church, and the possibilities of reform and inclusivism in the pastoral ministries of the Catholic Church. In these instances, it is necessary to undergo a detailed approach to the scholarship and movements associated with both traditional and reformed roles of women in the Church by analyzing the doctrinal stance regarding women, addressing the impact of feminist movements and theology, examining post-Vatican II teachings from Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, and examining the possible future for reform in the Church’s stance on the role(s) of women.

Sexual ethics is a diverse and multifaceted area of scholarship. With the emergence of Vatican II, and the advancement of medical science, ethics was

⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition, (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 241, 400-403.

⁸ Please note that lay women and women religious (meaning nuns) can be Eucharistic ministers during the Mass, however, that does not mean that they are the “Ministers of the Sacraments.” In fact, they are more like “administrators” of the Eucharist. The Minister of the Sacrament is the priest, who through the Holy Spirit and his ordination, has the power to administer the Sacraments. Only the priest, and in some few cases the deacon, can be the administrator of the sacraments.

transformed during the 1960s and 70s, particularly in regard to such concepts as contraception, abortion, capital punishment, assisted suicide and euthanasia, and marriage.⁹ Sexual ethics is composed of discussions on human sexual morality and the dynamic of sexual intercourse in the development of Catholic pedagogy.¹⁰ The social and cultural impact of these different aspects of Catholic sexual ethics has influenced political activism and policy making, seen extensively in the Church of the United States. However, traditionally the Catholic Church's stance has been consistently conservative, but has progressed to encompass these specific ethical principles in Catholic moral teaching. The development of medical and scientific systems and practices regarding these issues has influenced Catholic theologians, activists, historians, church leaders, and feminist groups. Therefore, it is important to address the development of Catholic moral teaching regarding sexual ethics to come to a more cohesive understanding of the contemporary scholarship and its practical application. Thus, this understanding of scholarship and application then become examples of this larger framework, relating to this growing dialogue.

Since Vatican II's initial addressing of these issues, changing social norms and practices have expanded and influenced the teachings that are supported by the Church, especially when discussing sexual intercourse, cohabitation, and marriage. Due to this, Pope John Paul II focused many of his public addresses on what he called a "Theology of the Body," where he highlighted the scriptural and spiritual importance of conducting

⁹ John W. O'Malley, "Opening the Church to the World," in *The New York Times*, October 10, 2012, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/11/opinion/vatican-ii-opened-the-church-to-the-world.html>.

¹⁰ William E. May, "Catholic Sexual Ethics," *Veritas Series: Proclaiming the Faith in the Third Millennium* (New Haven: Knights of Columbus Supreme Council, 2001).

oneself in accordance with Catholic moral teaching regarding orthodox behavior concerning the sacrament of marriage and the subsequent consequences of the sexual union between man and woman and reproduction. Pope John Paul II's teachings on orthodox marriage, sexual-relations, contraception, abortion, and sex education established a precedent among Catholic educational institutions, families, and church organizations during the late 1970s, 80s, and 90s, which impact those continued today. Some of the more popular moral teachings have even crossed the religious spectrum, influencing components of mainline traditional Protestant ethics, as well, such as the "nuclear family."¹¹

Opponents of Catholic moral teaching often argue that the Catholic family life as etched out in John Paul II's theological principles create a crippling socioeconomic situation for the large Catholic families that adhere to them, sending them into debt and poverty.¹² Others decry the sociopolitical maneuverings of a papist and Roman plot to take over the central tenets of personal family life, describing the inappropriate role of Church in state governance.¹³ Also, the emergence of feminist movements blaming religion for its policies that inhibit personal choice concerning their own bodies established a precedent for secular policies that do not align with Church doctrine. Movements against the personal, social, and political influence of the Church impact the reception of Church teachings among Catholics. The Church struggles with how they can regain influence among the faithful and provide what they consider to be proper moral

¹¹ KET – PBS. *God in America: The Soul of a Nation*, <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>.

¹² "The Pill," (2001), accessed on December 14, 2016, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/peoplevents/e_church.html.

¹³ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2003), 22-25.

guidance. How it addresses these issues to maintain a closer dialogue with its adherents remains to be seen. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* has affected the larger Catholic and non-Catholic populace, especially in the United States, and identify how Catholic intellectuals and lay activists have responded to Catholic moral teachings.

The Church has also responded to issues affecting LGBTQ+ Catholics in ways that have opened more dialogue in recent years. This thesis addresses how the Church has framed and responded to issues related to homosexuality in the life of the Church and lay person. Among these issues are how LGBTQ+ Catholics should take part in the Church, how the Church should minister to them, and how their lifestyles and attractions should be dealt with in official Church doctrine. Ultimately, these issues have opened discussion among Church officials and have led to a wider dialogue that has also encompassed laity and secular activists. The social, political, and religious milieu of the 1960s and 70s fostered a larger concern for the wellbeing of many of the world's citizens. The emergence of gay and lesbian movements established the need to address certain characteristics and uphold or remove different aspects of the moral teachings on human sexuality, proper marriage, the institution of the family, and the human identity within the Roman Catholic Church. In this sense, the very nature of the "homosexual person" came into question during these years and led to many different discussions regarding the role of LGBTQ+ people in the life of the Church.¹⁴ The Second Vatican Council, the rise of

¹⁴ I understand that the accepted terminology amongst same-sex couples and individuals who are attracted to members of the same sex is gay or lesbian. However, I also understand that the community of individuals encompassed by the acronym "LGBTQ+" are not just identifying as gay or lesbian or male and female. Therefore, to provide for a more inclusive terminology that encompasses the broader community, I will from this point on use the term "queer."

Pope John Paul II, and the formation of the *Theology of the Body* series caused the Church's stance towards homosexuality to shift.

During the 1950s and 60s, the Catholic Church in the United States, for example, started to view homosexuality as an affliction of the mind, viewing it as a choice individuals made regarding sexual attraction. Psychologists in the U.S. and in Europe often associated homosexual behavior with mental deficiency and illness.¹⁵ As one example, homosexuality was placed on the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) until 1973.¹⁶ This attitude affected how people viewed queer individuals, often causing bias or even abuse, which also led to an uncomfortable relationship between the Church and the queer Catholics it ministered to. Traditionally, before Vatican II and the emergence of the social culture of the 60s and 70s, the topic of homosexuality was hardly discussed, and often harshly criticized in the heterosexual family home, regardless of religious affiliation. The concept of being queer challenged the hetero-normative way of life prevalent during this period of time, and was often met with anger, disgust, exclusion from the community, and in some cases, conversion therapy.¹⁷

The status of LGBTQ+ Catholics has changed over the years. The development of psychological and medical sciences, particularly in the psycho-social understanding of human behavior, has often been connected with the larger religious textual discourse – influencing people's perceptions of homosexuality (and queerness in general) for the

¹⁵ John C. Gonsiorek, "An Introduction to Mental Health Issues and Homosexuality," *The American Behavioral Scientist* 25, no. 4 (1982): 367-369.

¹⁶ Gregory M. Herek, "Facts About Homosexuality and Mental Health," (2012), accessed April 29, 2017, http://psc.dss.ucdavis.edu/faculty_sites//rainbow/html/facts_mental_health.html.

¹⁷ Erin E. Tozer and Jeffrey A. Hayes, "Why Do Individuals Seek Conversion Therapy? The Role of Religiosity, Internalized Homonegativity, and Identity Development," *The Counseling Psychologist* 32, no. 5 (September 2004): 717-720.

better.¹⁸ The interest of religious scholars in the biblical and other moral teachings regarding homosexuality (and queerness) has progressed since Vatican II with the emergence of social activist movements, the legalization of gay marriage, and the allowance of same-sex couples to adopt children. These movements began to emerge in the 1950s with the beginning of the Mattachine Organization in 1950, and One, Inc. founded in 1952.¹⁹ The Mattachine Society was founded in 1950 by Harry Hay, one of the first organizations formed to fight for gay rights.²⁰ Originally, it developed as a group of men desiring to express their experiences, but then it developed into a national movement based on discussion and activist groups.²¹

One, Inc. was founded in 1952 by Jim Kepner and other members of the Mattachine Organization as a magazine for gay men.²² It was designed as a way for gay men to express themselves and be part of a group that both supported and encouraged them. It grew into a popular magazine with personal stories, articles, and editorials.²³ It was later transformed into an educational organization that helped to educate the public on homophile attitudes.²⁴ However, it was not until the late 1960s and 70s that major steps towards supporting gay and lesbian rights were taken. With the catalyst event of the Stonewall riots in 1969, numerous organizations began to emerge and fight for these

¹⁸ Gerald C. Davison, "Politics, Ethics, and Therapy for Homosexuality," *The American Behavioral Scientist* 25, no. 4, (1982): 424-426.

¹⁹ Bonnie J. Morris, "History of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Social Movements," *American Psychological Association* (George Washington University, 2017), accessed April 9, 2017, <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/history.aspx>.

²⁰ Will Roscoe, "Mattachine: Radical Roots of the Gay Movement," *Found SF* (2017), accessed March 27, 2018, http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Mattachine:_Radical_Roots_of_the_Gay_Movement.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² One Archives Foundation, "History," (2018), accessed March 27, 2018, <http://www.onearchives.org/about/history/>.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

rights, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) who led the charge.²⁵ Even though there were some religious involvement in these earlier rights protests, major religious involvement in the movement did not occur until 1969 when Fr. Patrick Nidorf formed Dignity to help support LGBT Catholics, and later in 1972, when the first openly gay minister was ordained by the United Church of Christ.²⁶

Due in part to these social changes, Church teaching developed and changed in the discussions amongst leading Church officials towards attitudes pertaining to the queer individual, highlighting it is not a sin to be queer as that is a part of who they are as children of God.²⁷ Yet, the Church still teaches, and John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* was instrumental in this, how the sin instead lies with homosexual actions, as sexual union of same-sex couples is incompatible for reproduction.²⁸ According to orthodox moral teaching, sexual intercourse is a central part of the sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage where God has made man and woman one flesh, from which they are to reproduce and establish a family.²⁹

After Vatican II, however, many organizations developed believing they were capable of “rehabilitating” gay and lesbian individuals into “normal” heterosexual relationships. As noted earlier, the scientific community was, at this time, focused on the belief and idea that homosexuality was a psychological or physical illness that could be

²⁵ Bonnie J. Morris, “History of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Social Movements.” See also History.com Staff, “The Stonewall Riots,” (2017), accessed April 14, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/the-stonewall-riots>.

²⁶ Ibid. See Dignity, “Highlights of DignityUSA’s History,” (2017), accessed March 27, 2018, www.dignityusa.org/history.

²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition, (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 1997), 566-567.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

remedied through treatments.³⁰ This translated into what psychologists of the time called “conversion therapy” and was used extensively under the belief that homosexuality was an unnatural occurrence in the heterosexual brain, which was supported by both Protestant and Catholic groups.³¹ Today, this is largely dismissed, as scientific evidence has backed the identification of gay and lesbian as being born in the individual, and not a choice, nor is it an imbalance in the brain.³² Yet, organizations formed to combat homosexuality established a precedent of prejudice for the queer neighbor, son, brother, sister, and daughter. How then does this precedent change in the years following Vatican II?

This prejudice has inspired social movements, Pride festivals, and the formulation of new theologies concerning the status of the human in relation to a God of Love who does not see homosexual unions as wrong, among other things.³³ An example of this theological turn is found in the work of Angele Deguara who argues:

Especially for those who have a conflicting relationship with the Church, their relationship with God often provides feelings of reassurance and a sense of comfort. They come to believe that, unlike the Church, God does not judge them or label them as sinners because of their sexual desires. Consequently, as they construct a less stigmatized, less fragmented sense of identity, they also reach a certain plateau in how they relate to God. Along their journey, the individuals in my study shift from perceiving God as judge toward embracing a loving God who knows them intimately and who loves them regardless of their human frailties. Although there are varying degrees of acceptance, they also come to accept their sexuality as a gift from God and as part of God’s plan for them.³⁴

³⁰ Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Are We Born Gay?”, *Psychology Today*, (November 4, 2011), accessed on December 14, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sexing-the-body/201111/are-we-born-gay>.

³¹ Gregory M. Herek, “Facts About Homosexuality and Mental Health,” (2012), accessed April 29, 2017, http://psc.dss.ucdavis.edu/faculty_sites//rainbow/html/facts_mental_health.html.

³² Anne Fausto-Sterling, “Are We Born Gay?”

³³ 1 John 4:8 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). All Bible passages will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

³⁴ Angele Deguara, “Destroying False Images of God: The Experiences of LGBT Catholics,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 65, no. 3 (2018): 320.

Several religious organizations emerged that both support LGBTQ+ Catholics and pose a challenge to the stance of the Catholic Church on issues affecting this community. One example is Dignity, a Catholic organization formed in 1969, that developed originally to support traditional opinions regarding marriage.³⁵ However, in 1986 with the publication of the letter *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, the Church severed support of Dignity due to its changing stance and support of gay and lesbian relationships.³⁶ This resulted in several bishops denying the use of Church property to hold meetings, “The evictions are a direct result of the October, 1986 Vatican Letter which states that groups which do not agree with church teachings cannot meet on church property.”³⁷ Courage International is a Catholic organization founded in 1980 that upholds Catholic teachings while emphasizing the dignity of queer individuals as full human beings. The emergence of this group indicates the changing stance of the Church during this period, as well as how opinions of the queer person have shifted away from homophobia toward an increased perception of the dignity of gay and lesbian individuals, as well as others who identify as queer. Out of this process, key questions have arisen: What are the major dialogues developed during this period along both sides of the discussion? How does the Catholic Church today minister to queer individuals? What is the Church’s stance on issues that pertain to gay and lesbian couples considering the public prejudice that existed, and still exists today? How does the Church respond to efforts of reform and change?

³⁵ Dignity USA, “Highlights of DignityUSA’s History,” (2017), accessed April 9, 2017, <https://www.dignityusa.org/history>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Each of these issues are significant. However, they developed out of the same social and religious concerns during the 1960s and 1970s and are instrumental in the development and discussion of the other. Thus, this thesis brings together the dialogue, events, changes, and discussion regarding each individual issue considering its social, moral, and theological background and connection to modern day reform movements. I will discuss each issue as it pertains to the modern world and its relationship to the Catholic Church's traditional doctrinal stance. For the reader to understand the importance of the issues after Vatican II, I will briefly discuss the rulings regarding each issue, and relate their importance and relevance to the discussion. These issues will ultimately be separated into coinciding chapters titled, "Women's Role in the Life of the Church," "Catholic Sexual Ethics in Today's Modern World," and "Homosexuality in the Life of the Church."

Chapter 1: Women's Role in the Life of the Church

“The hour is coming, in fact has come, when the vocation of women is being acknowledged in its fullness, the hour in which women acquire in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing a deep transformation, women imbued with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid humanity in not falling.”

- *Gaudium et spes*, Second Vatican Council, 1965³⁸

“Invited to leave everything to follow Christ, you, consecrated men and women, no longer define your life by family, by profession, or by earthly interests, and you choose the Lord as your only identifying mark. Thus you acquire a new family identity.”

- *Homily of Pope Saint John Paul II, Jubilee of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2000*³⁹

As stated previously, the role of women in the life of the Catholic Church is a complex topic that is situated in hundreds of years of religious tradition and ecumenical dialogue. Traditionally, the roles of women in the Catholic Church have always been shaped by particular understandings of the teachings of the Bible and the early Church Fathers in accordance with the Magisterium, the official teaching body of the Church.⁴⁰ Popes and bishops, nuns and sisters, and other laypersons have discussed the situation of women and their involvement and influence in Church matters, especially regarding the Sacrament of Marriage, the family, and in consecrated life. However, just as traditional roles of women are championed in Catholic teachings, there has also been a move towards women having a more active role in the ministerial life of the Church, particularly in the Mass.⁴¹ This move has been led by men, women, and church activists who want to install women as either deacons, priests, or both.

³⁸ Fides Dossier, “The Role of Women in the Life of the Church,” *Fides News Service* (August 2008), 2.

³⁹ John Paul II, accessed December 14, 2016, <https://www.vocationnetwork.org/en/articles/show/460-consecrated-life-words-of-wisdom>.

⁴⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 27-29.

⁴¹ After Vatican II, women could participate in the Mass as altar servers, lectors, and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. However, their involvement in the Mass did not extend beyond positions such as these.

The question of women's involvement in the Mass often meets strong opposition from established Church leaders, theologians, and traditionalists. How then does the Church respond to these questions on women's involvement in the Church? Are women only allowed to be wives, mothers, and religious sisters? If not, then how do individuals go about challenging the Church's ideals of women?⁴² Is it possible to allow women into the permanent diaconate or the priesthood? These questions are the focus of the following section, where I analyze the traditional placement of women and outline some possibilities for women's involvement in the ministerial work of the Church.

Summary of Church Doctrine on the Sacrament of Marriage

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* describes the vocation of marriage as “written in the very nature of man and woman as they come from the hand of the Creator.”⁴³ According to the official teachings of the Catholic Church, marriage is a sacred covenantal bond that reflects the divine covenant between humanity and God. According to current Church teaching, the sacrament of marriage was established by Jesus Christ when he performed his first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana.⁴⁴ Church doctrine recognizes this event as Jesus' confirmation of marriage as sacred and conforming to the will of God.⁴⁵ Thus, within the context of official Catholic teachings, the marriage bond is a sacred vow that brings together two souls who are both striving for perfection and holiness in Jesus Christ and unites them to become one being that reflects

⁴² Please note that though there are both women and men interested and invested in this challenge, the focus, however, is primarily on women not men.

⁴³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 400.

⁴⁴ John 2: 1-12 NRSV.

⁴⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 403.

the inner sanctity and divine love of God the Father.⁴⁶ In this divine context, the Church teaches that Adam (man) was created alone, but that from Adam, God created Eve (woman), to be his companion, his confidant, and eternal love.⁴⁷ The Genesis creation account of man and woman recognizes and raises the position of women in the marriage bond.

Before Vatican II, Church doctrine made the case that the nature of the marriage bond placed women as the lower role, reflecting the belief that the wife should be truly submissive to her husband.⁴⁸ However, after Vatican II reforms of the marriage rite and the understanding of the relationship of husband and wife, the doctrine was adjusted so that the woman was equal with the man; equal in love, equal in faith, equal in partnership, and equal in all shared authority.⁴⁹ The dynamic of relationship within the marriage bond itself shifted to reflect a shared sense of the dignity and worth of the partner soul that has become one with the other. The official Church teachings understand this as a reflection of the relationship and love that Christ has for his Church. In this framework, Jesus is the Godhead, the husband of the Church, and guides his bride, the Church, in holiness. The Church, as the bride of Christ, upholds his teachings with authority and equal measure before God the Father as the purveyor of truth.⁵⁰

Official Church doctrine sees this dynamic of husband and wife as divinely reflected with Christ and his Church, establishing the nuptial bond as a perfect and holy

⁴⁶ Mark 10:8 NRSV. This reflects the biblical tradition of marriage, where Jesus himself describes marriage and the marriage bond as a sacred union, where “the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.”

⁴⁷ Genesis 2: 18-2 NRSV. In this creation account, woman is born from Adam.

⁴⁸ Margot Patterson, “Theology of Marriage Evolving Since Vatican II, Church Challenged By Richer Understanding of Sacrament,” *National Catholic Reporter* 38, no. 8 (Jan. 11, 2002): 6.

⁴⁹ Ephesians 5: 31-32 NRSV.

⁵⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 204, 218.

covenant. The role of a woman is to be a faithful wife and uphold her husband's holiness and perfection in God. Another goal of the sacrament of marriage is to help each partner achieve perfection in heaven – to be reunited with God their Creator. The role of women within marriage is to be the reflection of God to their husbands, to uphold them in truth and virtue, and to be their support in times of hardship. These things lead them towards a more fruitful relationship with God.

The role of women does not end with just being a faithful wife, but Church doctrine argues that with the marriage bond comes an expectation to have children and to rear those children in the faith of the Church.⁵¹ A woman's role does not end with marriage – it is rather just beginning. Marriage is a promise to both the husband and God, to be a mother and raise children in the love and guidance of the Church.⁵²

Summary of Church Doctrine on the Role of the Mother in Family Life

The doctrine of the Catholic Church argues that when a man and woman enter into the sacrament of marriage and profess their vows before God and his Church, they agree that they consent to and accept any and all children that God will grant them.⁵³ Thus, the central aspect of the family transcends as a Godly established unit that the Second Vatican Council describes as *Ecclesia domestica*, or the Domestic Church.⁵⁴ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes that the element of the Christian family is one of the most sacred and important aspects of Christian life, for it is the beginning of Christian worship, teaching, and adherence to Sacred Scripture.⁵⁵ In this model, the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 412-416.

⁵² Genesis 1:28 NRSV.

⁵³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 412.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Christian family is a reflection of the Holy Family and the central love found between Mary the Mother of God, Joseph her spouse, and the child Jesus.⁵⁶ The Church teaches that Mary's profound *fiat*, or "Yes," to God's call of motherhood, to rear his Son for the sake of salvation, is a model for all mothers, in the same way that Joseph's adherence and faith in God's divine plan caused him to bring Mary into his home and under his protection is a model for all fathers.⁵⁷ Official Church teachings place Mary as the epitome of Motherhood, and the supreme example the Church sets for all women called to be mothers. Mary's foundational answer to God's call reflects the call all mothers answer when they enter the bond of marriage.

However, the Church also teaches that if the married couple are having fertility issues and are not able to have a child on their own and have exhausted what the Church calls moral "legitimate medical procedures," then they should adopt.⁵⁸ The Church believes that all children should have the opportunity of a family. Thus, when married couples are unable to have children of their own, they should "unite themselves with the Lord's Cross [his suffering]" and adopt.⁵⁹ Therefore, this familial identity is fulfilled, regardless of blood relation.

For Catholic women who are mothers, official Catholic Church teachings call them to rear their children within the faith, a process of Christian education that begins with Baptism.⁶⁰ Baptism is an assertion by both parents to rear their child in the conduct

⁵⁶Synod of Bishops: XIV General Assembly, "The Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father, Pope Francis," in *The Vocation and Mission of the family in the Church and in the Contemporary World* (Vatican City: 24 October 2015).

⁵⁷ Luke 1:38 NRSV, Matthew 1:18-25 NRSV.

⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 572.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 319. Infant Baptism is a tradition within the Church that has foundations in the belief that all humans are born with the stain of original sin, because of the Fall of Adam and Eve from Grace. The belief

of the Church, teaching them and guiding them in the truth of the Gospel message, showing them the divinely revealed message of Christian filial love, mercy, and forgiveness.⁶¹ Baptism is only the beginning of the process of Christian teaching in the family, and must continue to grow in love and support through the guidance of the parents as they rear their children with right understanding.⁶² The mother, together with her husband, are the main providers for Christian teaching towards their child, thus a woman's role as mother is divinely significant in the life of the Church. Raising and teaching, healing and watching, guiding and protecting; these are the jobs of parents within the familial context of the Church. Without the mother or father, the Church cannot continue, for the family is the central body of teaching in Christian life. God is introduced into this loving relationship in the sacrament of marriage and continues to work through them as their family continues to grow. This cycle continues even further when their children are grown and begin families of their own. Thus, in the life of the Church, motherhood is sacred and vastly important. Yet, women are not solely called to marriage or family life. The Church teaches that it has a special place for those women who have decided to follow God in holiness through consecrated religious life.

Summary of Church Doctrine on Female Consecrated Life

Official Church doctrine describes consecrated life as “the state of life which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, while not entering into the hierarchical structure of the Church, belongs undeniably to her life and holiness.”⁶³ It is

is that Baptism washes away the stain of Original sin, making us pure in the light of Christ. We become adopted children of God, members of the divine family as brothers and sisters in Christ.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 319-320.

⁶³ Ibid., 241. Consecrated life in this sense is an outward expression to the Church and their community to uphold lives of astute holiness in accordance with the Church. Those who wish to consecrate themselves make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the so-called evangelical counsels. At this point, they make

presumed that women who enter the consecrated life do so with the faith that God has called them to a heightened state of holiness. The Church teaches that those who enter into consecrated life experience a more intimate connection to God and his call for Christian holiness, particularly through their vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity.⁶⁴ The profession of vows in consecrated life, particularly for women, is understood by many to be an outward expression by those who feel that they are moved by the Holy Spirit to a more intimate lifestyle designed around an inward expression of God for the outward profession of God's kingdom.⁶⁵ Those women who wish to profess the evangelical counsels usually choose to join a religious community that is designated around a specific Christian virtue as an outward expression of their Christian mission to love and serve others and proclaim the kingdom of God.

Such individuals are known to the outer world as nuns or religious sisters. The organization of consecrated peoples has a long history and originally rose out of Byzantium during the early centuries of the Church's foundations.⁶⁶ These early centuries saw the formation of communities dedicated to certain professions of the Gospel message, and were committed to lives of holiness, and the Church saw fit to enable many of these groups to form institutions guided by the Church's teachings.⁶⁷ Many of these institutions still exist today and many were added as the centuries wore on, including but not limited to, the Benedictine sisters, Order of St. Clare, Sisters of the Blessed

the conscious decision to give up their worldly possessions, titles, monies, and place themselves in the mercy of Christ and his Church. Their whole lives at this point on are solely designated for the propagation of faithful worship, prayer, and holiness.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 242-245.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 243.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 241-243.

Sacrament, Sisters of Mercy, and so on.⁶⁸ Each of these religious organizations profess to be centered and guided around specific Christian virtues. They are educated around these virtues and in professions that are designed to help proliferate their message of charity, mercy, and forgiveness. In fact, many of these virtues such as charity, mercy, and faith, become the driving forces behind religious involvement in the outer lives of lay followers.

Before Vatican II, the dynamic of female religious life was based around a life of seclusion and commitment to God. Women often cut ties to earthly and secular life and entered into secluded communities and convents focused on intimate relationship with Christ.⁶⁹ Women entering into convents and religious communities gave up all earthly possessions and wore habits that were designed to enhance personal modesty and sacrifice as an outward physical sign of their devotion to God and their profession of poverty.⁷⁰ Often these religious orders were designed around a particular profession that allowed them to emulate their call to live out the Gospel and proclaim God's kingdom.⁷¹ This led to the development of Catholic schools, universities, hospitals, nursing homes, and orphanages, which became more active in the communities in which the nuns lived. Despite these institutions, nuns still maintained strict observance of their professed vows and lifestyles. Women then upon entering the convent or order were trained in professions of caretakers, teachers, and nurses so that their order's mission of sharing Christ's saving love and mercy could be fulfilled.⁷²

⁶⁸ "Religious Orders," *Theology Library*, accessed Dec. 14, 2016, <<http://theolibrary.shc.edu/orders.htm>>.

⁶⁹ Institute on Religious Life, "What is Cloistered Life?" (2016), accessed Dec. 14, 2016, <http://www.cloisteredlife.com/>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Institute on Religious Life, "What is Cloistered Life?"

⁷² *Ibid.*

The Second Vatican Council determined that these efforts were not enough, given the changing lives of Catholics during the 1960s and 70s.⁷³ The Church felt that the roles of nuns and sisters were not enough, and should be expanded. They should establish a closer, more intimate connection to the people. Therefore, the council decided that religious orders, especially those who did not have an outward expression of ministry, such as teaching, should become more readily available to the public, as they were all called to Christian mission and discipleship.⁷⁴ The emergence of the Second Vatican Council saw an increase in public mission work by religious sisters and nuns as they entered the public communities. An even larger change was the Council's call for religious sisters to dress more like those on the streets, and become more approachable to the laity they ministered to, especially to those who were not necessarily Catholic.⁷⁵ This dynamic shift of religious life from a cloistered communal lifestyle of prayer to an outward expression of ministerial love and support through teaching, nursing, and care for the disenfranchised allows for a more personal connection to Christ in the lives of those these women help to guide and change.⁷⁶ This has become a role for women within the Church who do not feel they are called to be married, but still wish to have a

⁷³ Pope Paul VI, "Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life," in *Perfectae Caritatis* (Vatican City: October 28, 1965).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. The Council Fathers saw the changing of attitudes regarding religious activity within the world outside their cloistered and closed communities as a necessary component to ministerial outreach. The ability for nuns, religious sisters, and brothers to become more involved in the ministries within their own communities saw an increase in entrance into religious orders. Also, the changing of regulations regarding the wearing of habits allowed for the religious sisters to become more approachable to lay community members, as well as the poor and disenfranchised and non-Catholic individuals and families within their communities.

⁷⁶ This is not to say that all nuns and religious sisters became un-cloistered, but that some female religious orders designed their ministry and call to holiness around a newfound outward expression of service to the larger public community in which they lived.

profession that allows them to become connected to the outward community and share in the Gospel message of Christ's love and mercy.

What else is there?

Traditionally, the wife, mother, and nun (sometimes called “religious sister”) comprise the standard roles the Church offers to women, with the exception of the generous single life where women do not profess religious vows, but remain as members of the laity who feel that God is calling them to live lives of celibacy as single women within the life of the Church.⁷⁷ Since the closing of Vatican II, these traditional roles have expanded to allow women a more opportune capacity to participate in the Mass, such as being altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, sacristans, ushers, and so on. Yet, these are more focused on parish ministry. Outside of these traditional and parish ministerial positions, the Church does not have any other main roles for women in the hierarchy of the Church. However, this absence or limitation of roles has garnered a large response by many men and women faithful who feel that there should be an option for women to enter Catholic seminary as candidates for the priesthood and permanent diaconate.⁷⁸ Yet, there are none within the Church today. Why is this? In the modern memory of the Church, there have never been ordained women in the priesthood or the diaconate.⁷⁹ Primarily, the Church has taught that “only a baptized man validly receives sacred ordination,” meaning

⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981).

⁷⁸ Judy Roberts, “Clearing the Air on Women Deacons: What Is — and Isn’t — Possible,” *National Catholic Register* (June 2016), accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/clearing-the-air-on-women-deacons>.

⁷⁹Roman Catholic Women Priests, (2016), accessed January 17, 2017, <http://romancatholicwomenpriests.org/>. There are numerous women movements who argue that they are should be allowed into the priesthood. Some, such as the RCWP have argued that they have validly been ordained in the Roman Catholic Church. However, it should be noted that *officially* the Roman Catholic Church, under the rule of the Pope, does not accept, approve, or acknowledge women priests at this current time.

only men can be ordained as priests or deacons.⁸⁰ The reasoning is that because Jesus only chose men to be his apostles, and the apostles likewise only chose men to succeed them in their ministry, then only men, based on this sacred tradition and example, can be ordained.⁸¹ The Magisterium declared that they are bound by the sacred example of Christ, at least in this instance.⁸²

However, this reasoning has brought much controversy to the Church. Largely, many scholars and lay activists, particularly since the turn of the century, believe that this tradition is outdated and sexist, and a product of the misogynistic and patriarchal attitudes of the early and medieval Church. They argue that the modern Church should embrace equal representation in the ministerial offices of the Church. To support their arguments, some Catholics have used the example of some Protestant churches as Christian denominations who began ordaining large scores of women in the 1970s to promote both a theological and social cultural basis for ordaining women.⁸³ Yet, continuously, the official answer of the Church is no, that the Church cannot break tradition, as it was sacredly established by Christ. However, in June 2016, Pope Francis established a commission to study the issue and possible inclusion of women in the diaconate, appointing six men and six women, as well as charging several renowned biblical scholars to address the real-life issue.⁸⁴ Yet, this still leaves us with questions. What are the arguments for female clergy and deacons? Is there any biblical foundation for female

⁸⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 394.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Patricia M. Y. Chang, "Female Clergy in the Contemporary Protestant Church: A Current Assessment," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (1997): 565.

⁸⁴ Cindy Wooden, "Pope Francis Sets Up Commission on Women Deacons," *Catholic Herald*, August 2, 2016, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/08/02/pope-sets-up-commission-on-women-deacons/>.

deacons? What led to Pope Francis calling this commission? How do Church officials feel about it? Is it plausible to have women deacons? If so, does this open the cause for women priests?

Arguments for Women Clergy: Feminist Theology

The roles prescribed by the Church for women discussed in the previous sections focus on the Church's official stances on women's involvement. However, not all men and women adhere to the traditional ways of the Church. For many, the more stringent teachings of the Church are irrelevant. Some do not view marriage as particularly binding, resulting in separation, adultery, and divorce.⁸⁵ Other Catholics do not believe in the monogamous model of marriage, and contend that it inhibits their personal and social freedom. Thus. They may live with several different sexual partners without a feeling of commitment.⁸⁶ Other men and women believe that a life of virginity or personal chastity offered by the Church's prescribed single life does not allow them to have a close connection to God or grant them a viable relationship with the Church universal.⁸⁷

Many women who do not find marriage attractive, or believe that they are called to a closer connection with God, believe that the religious options open to women are limited, part of an old tradition that does not embrace the full potential of women.⁸⁸ Polling data of Catholic men and women suggests that the majority of Catholics believe that the Church is patriarchal and old-fashioned, and that their refusal to become more

⁸⁵ B. A. Robinson, "U.S. Divorce Rates for Various Faith Groups, Age Groups, & Geographic Areas," (July 2009), accessed January 17, 2017, http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_dira.htm.

⁸⁶ Anjani Chandra, William D. Mosher, and Casey Copen, "Sexual Behavior, Sexual Attraction, and Sexual Identity in the United States: Data From the 2006–2008 National Survey of Family Growth," *National Health Statistics Report* 36 (March 2011): 11-13, 17-21.

⁸⁷ Karl A. Schultz, "A Vibrant Vocation," *America* 214, no. 1 (January 2016): 1-2.

⁸⁸ Irene Linder, "Some Factors Influencing Women To Choose Church-Related Vocations: A Study In Occupational Sociology" (Ph. D. diss., University of Iowa, 1956), 1-12.

gender inclusive is problematic.⁸⁹ Therefore, many men and women who see the Church as living in the past believe that the Church must be more open to reform, particularly by allowing women the ability and capacity to become either priests and deacons. Due to this discontent, and the popular call for allowing women into the ordination rites of the Church, many theologians have attempted to address and understand the reasoning and possibilities around women ordination. Mary Jo Weaver, Simone St. Pierre, Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Arlene Swidler, and Karen Torieson are a few theologians who have attempted to address the possibilities around allowing women into the ordination process of the Catholic Church.

Mary Jo Weaver, a Catholic feminist theologian, discusses her arguments primarily in her book, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Church Authority*. She begins by addressing how the current Church exists in a state of sexism and provides unequal opportunity for women despite the fact that the Church has stated that men and women are granted the same opportunities due to their divine origins.⁹⁰ She discusses that the Second Vatican Council opened up an “age of renewal” within the authority structure of the Church, and argues that the Church should now incorporate women within the teaching and ministerial authority of the Church today.⁹¹ Weaver identifies that the movement towards allowing Catholic women into the priesthood began during the 1970s in reaction to the majority of Protestant churches allowing women to be ordained as ministers. It began with the Leadership Conference of

⁸⁹ Ari L. Goldman, “As Bishops Meet, Catholics Voice Differences With Church’s Doctrine; Poll Finds Backing of Female Priests,” *New York Times* (June 1992), accessed September 15, 2016, 1-4.

⁹⁰ Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 109-110.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 110-112.

Women Religious who actively pursued women's rights during the early 1970s and the International Year of Women in 1975.⁹²

Based upon the feminist ideology of equality between men and women that encompasses equal opportunity, Weaver upholds that the Church should reflect equality by allowing the ordination of women.⁹³ She argues that the practice of exclusive-male priests reflects a selective interpretation of Scripture and the tradition of Jesus' example of selecting only men to follow him, is a product of the patriarchal European feudal society that developed in the early centuries of the Church.⁹⁴ She states that the official standing on women's ordination is at best confused, and at worst inconclusive, identifying that the Biblical Commission states that Scripture leaves the option for female priests open, whereas the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith reportedly denies women ordination as scripturally impossible.⁹⁵ Her analysis indicates two areas of the Church's teaching authority on doctrine as incompatible, which she uses to advance her argument and support for allowing female membership into the priesthood. Weaver also discusses how the development of women's groups within parish churches establishes a disconnect between female laity and Church authority, as the leadership among these women's groups are primarily priests and other men, which further exacerbates the lack of shared responsibility between men and women within official Church capacities.⁹⁶ It is because of this lack of shared responsibility that many women's rights activists, in conjunction with the first wave of feminism, founded certain women

⁹² Ibid., 112.

⁹³ Ibid., 113.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 113-114.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 114-115.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 118-119.

led groups to challenge the traditionally held views of women in the churches, especially the stance on women's ordination, such as the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) and the Grail Movement.⁹⁷

The NCCW was founded by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 1920 as a way to allow women a broader role within their local church communities, and to focus more energy on supporting the national, and larger global Church.⁹⁸ The early years of the NCCW saw an expanding focus on upholding Catholic teaching, while at the same time fighting for such avenues as female suffrage and equal rights for women.⁹⁹ They maintained their striving for equal rights and eventually succeeded with ratification of the 19th amendment to the Constitution.¹⁰⁰

Their advocacy also includes other avenues for equal rights for women, but also for poor and marginalized communities, such as African Americans and the poor, which enabled them to be purveyors of social justice during the 1950s and 60s.¹⁰¹ Though the NCCW largely focused on expanding the social and political rights of women and others, they still maintained a strict adherence to Catholic doctrine and teaching, especially in regard to ordained ministry.¹⁰² Other groups, such as the above mentioned Grail Movement changed focus and shifted their energies creating more inclusive opportunities for women in Church life.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 119.

⁹⁸ Jeanne Petit, "Organized Catholic Womanhood: Suffrage, Citizenship and the National Council of Catholic Women," *US Catholic Historian* 26, no. 1 (Washington D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008): 83-84.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 84-86.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 87, 90-95.

¹⁰² Ibid., 98-100.

The Grail Movement emerged in Holland in 1921 during the lay activist period of the pre-Vatican II era which focused on social collective action, especially in regard to helping the poor and disenfranchised, while also battling for the security of women's political and religious rights in a male dominated society.¹⁰³ It grew in numerous countries in Europe and settled in areas of Canada and the US.¹⁰⁴ The Grail Movement believed that the Western world was in a state of crises, both spiritually and culturally, and needed a new influx of religious revival to bring it back to a more Godly path.¹⁰⁵ Particularly, especially in the late 1920s and 30s, the group developed the ideology that lay women were the best tools and activists to inspire new trends in Catholic spirituality that did not focus on the male dominated ethos of Western Europe and the Americas, but instead embraced a new feminine spirituality.¹⁰⁶ In the post-war period, an emerging ideology developed among lay women of the movement who insisted that women should take a more advanced role within the hierarchy of the Church, including priestly ministerial positions. Eventually they began to break away from dominant mainstream Catholic ideology, especially in regard to the priesthood and women's roles, and focused instead on a larger concern for allowing women the right to pastoral ministries.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, as the Grail Movement entered the new era created by the Second Vatican Council, focused concern on women's ordination and women's role in liturgical ministries became the dominant factor among such groups.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Alden V. Brown, "The Grail Movement to 1962: Laywomen and a New Christendom," *US Catholic Historian* 3, no. 3 (1983): 149.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 149-151.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 151-154.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 162-165.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

However, Weaver acknowledges that the NCCW, which began as a women's rights group that supported women's involvement in the Church, transformed into an organization that supported traditional Church teaching on female subordination and deference to men.¹⁰⁹ Yet, the Grail Movement transformed into a Catholic women's rights group that was focused on advocating for a more inclusive way for women to become involved in Church rites and ceremonies, which consequentially developed into a campaign in support of women ordination.¹¹⁰ The dominant ideology among women's groups such as the Grail Movement, beginning in the 1960s, is the belief that today's world should promote and support the inclusivity of women within the pastoral and ministerial care of the parish church.¹¹¹ The involvement of women in church life, Weaver notes, is the primary goal of groups such as the Grail Movement, although they are opposed by other women's groups, like the NCCW.¹¹² Even within the universal Church, there are numerous individuals and groups who are split regarding the Church's traditional doctrine on ordination. However, despite this opposition, Weaver highlights that the inclusivity of feminist theology should be the contemporary framework of a post-Vatican II Church, because it demonstrates a Catholic Church that incorporates the personalities and dignities of God's human creation.¹¹³ She argues that this allows for a universal Church that recognizes the Holy Spirit can call both men and women into pastoral ministry.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Mary Jo Weaver, 119-120.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 125-127.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 150-155.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 155-157.

Simone St. Pierre similarly identifies the struggle for women to serve the Church in an official authoritative capacity. In her seminal work, *The Struggle to Serve*, St. Pierre agrees with Weaver's sentiments on allowing women the same opportunities as men within the priesthood, stating that women should be recognized and included into Church ministry because of their God-given gifts and talents, regardless of Church doctrine and their status as women.¹¹⁵ St. Pierre recognizes that Vatican II created a universal reorganization of how Catholics viewed the Church as an institution.¹¹⁶ Vatican II restructured popular thought of the Church away from the official organization of priests and bishops towards a recognition of the Church as structured around the Body of Christ, the members of the Church who are predominantly lay people.¹¹⁷

St. Pierre establishes that this restructured understanding provided a greater focus on involvement in Church life, which during the 1960s and 70s, was primarily focused on men.¹¹⁸ In turn, this focus allowed both men and women to come together and campaign for women's involvement in the pastoral ministry of the Church, namely the priesthood.¹¹⁹ St. Pierre describes that the main focus of many of these activists was how the priesthood was not receiving as many male candidates as it had in the past, and that it was this decline in priests that should open up the opportunity for female priests.¹²⁰

However, St. Pierre identifies that the Church officially states women cannot become priests, and she argues against this, citing her home country of Canada to explain

¹¹⁵ Simone St. Pierre, *The Struggle to Serve: The Ordination of Women in the Roman Catholic Church* (North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 1994), 93.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

her reasoning.¹²¹ She evaluates that there are fewer and fewer candidates entering the priesthood each year, and as a result, particularly in the rural communities of Canada, where there is a distinct lack of priests, which forces women in nursing and administrative roles in parishes to become the dominant voices of ministry to the poor, sick, and dying.¹²² She establishes that because of the lack of priests graduating from seminary, women should be allowed to enter seminary and make up for the lack of men.¹²³ Besides this, though, St. Pierre argues that women within the universal Church are denied active roles within the Church and that women are regularly passed over or ignored for leadership positions within parishes, which reflects her argument of there being a dominant theme of sexism within the larger Church.¹²⁴ St. Pierre describes that the situation of women in the Church reflects a larger theme of women being treated as secondary to men, or not having a particular opinion that counts or matters, citing the poor treatment of women by priests in family homes and in the larger community.¹²⁵

Through the analysis of other feminist theologians, St. Pierre has concluded that the current understanding of Catholic priesthood reflects a larger Roman identity than that of a cohesive Christian identity, reflecting the roles men assumed within the Christianized roman Empire.¹²⁶ She explains that the structure of the lifestyle of the male celibate priesthood reflects the patriarchal denotation of men as the leaders and heads of household, which places women as subordinate and beneath the social and religious

¹²¹ Ibid., 96-97. The official Church document, *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*, describes this.

¹²² Ibid., 97-98.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 101.

standing of men.¹²⁷ Thus, St. Pierre believes that in this post-Vatican II era that is supposed to reflect a period of spiritual renewal within the universal Church, the Vatican authorities should seriously consider the advancement of the Church in the new millennia by allowing women to make up for the lack of men entering seminary, to move away from what she considers its problematic past.¹²⁸

To further this discussion on patriarchy in the Church, Mary Daly's unique experience of the Catholic Church and its teachings further expounds the development of discussion along this pivotal issue. Renowned for her personal history as a nun-turned-scholar-turned-feminist, Daly presents a different look into what she considers as the Church's patriarchal viewpoint of ministerial priesthood. In her book, *Beyond God the Father*, Daly renegotiates the concept of God, ultimate reality, and spirituality in the context of women's roles in the Church.¹²⁹ She urges the connection of God and of spirituality, one that she believes to have been designed by and is characteristic of a suppressive and oppressive male-dominated society, to be more beneficial towards the larger female community.¹³⁰ In this instance, she delineates that the common conception of God, and therefore that of priesthood, has been engendered to be consistent with a male dominion that is ignorant and oppressive of the female population.¹³¹ In doing so, she argues that *God*, as we know the term, should not be looked at as a noun, but as a

¹²⁷ Ibid., 101-102.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), xvii. Please note that Daly's *Beyond God the Father* is one of her early works and represents her thoughts and views at a particular time in her life. She later regretted much of what she wrote in this book. However, this book is a foundational academic source from this period on this issue. It is used and mentioned in this thesis because it was influential in this particular history.

¹³⁰ Ibid., xvi-xix.

¹³¹ Ibid.

verb, which constitutes *God* as a state of “Be-ing.”¹³² Daly’s re-translation of the term presents her conception that God is not a deified male, or a deified female, but is in fact spiritual recognition of ultimate reality, and can thus be called both God and Goddess, which she uses to help assimilate what she considers to be a more female inclusive religious experience.¹³³

Daly argues that the Church, and women in particular need to form a cohesive “sisterhood for liberation” so that the bond of female liberation will uphold women against the male elitism that is prevalent in the world.¹³⁴ In this way, she argues that feminism, especially a post-Christian feminism that decries the general male leadership and organization of the Christian Church, is how the liberation of women should be achieved.¹³⁵ To support this claim, she states that the Judeo-Christian mindset has historically been anti-feminist.¹³⁶ Under this construct, she identifies several religious figures, such as Pope Pius XII (r. 1939-1958) and Pope Paul VI (r. 1963-1978), who were instrumental in proposing this concept of what she calls “sexual oppression.”¹³⁷ Daly insists that the Catholic Church has established a systematic consciousness of patriarchy that is cohesive with tyrannical notions of oppression, which is exemplified in the continued use of male-centric pronouns for God (i.e. God the Father) and other male-centric vocabulary.¹³⁸ However, she believes that the best way to combat this oppressive nature is to support an organizational sisterhood that supports female liberation that will

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 1-2.

¹³⁵ Ibid., xiii, 1-3.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 3-4, 5-7.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 7-14.

lead to a new realization of consciousness of self and God.¹³⁹ She also notes that the patriarchy in the Church is also present in the world, and the liberational work is connected to larger problems of oppression.

Her argument characterizes that the male-centered authority described in the Bible reflects a patriarchal culture that affects the larger world. The proliferation of male-centered leadership and authority both inside and outside the Church identifies a Christological problem that does not provide for the multitude of women in the world who long to be both part and parcel to the sacrifice of the Mass.¹⁴⁰ She discusses that the male-centric conception of God that places Jesus as the sole gendered incarnation of the all-powerful being is a proliferation of the identity of God as male, which Daly confesses is a limitation on the nature of the divine being of God/Goddess.¹⁴¹ She argues that society is subjective and is an oppressive environment for women that can only be breached by overturning authority from the male-dominated elite.¹⁴² This is a call for women to form a social and political revolution by coming together as a cohesive “sisterhood” that is exemplary of Daly’s post-Christian radical feminism. Therefore, her delineation of the situation of women in the Church does not discuss a return to the systematic Church structure that we know of today but is a revolutionary call to overhaul the understanding of Church hierarchy that places women within the current patriarchal framework. Her radical feministic approach impacts and influences current scholarship on this issue of women’s roles and has led to a broader detailed discussion among scholars. However, her stance on the Church and patriarchy is controversial, which is

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 77-80.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

evident in the plethora of scholarship currently available, but that does not undermine her academic worth in the study of this issue.

Rosemary Radford Reuther contributes to this discussion by highlighting several examples of women's ordination within the Catholic context. According to Reuther, the dynamics of Catholic congregations illustrates how valid ordination is subjective and can be interpreted differently according to one's perspective. Reuther argues that the reasoning behind allowing women into the ordination process of the Church can be found through careful analysis of Scripture, and is exemplified by the fact that most Protestants now ordain women in official ministerial capacities.¹⁴³ She argues that Protestants see women's ordination to be not only based on Scripture, but also one of the only ways for Christians to maintain full faithfulness to the Gospels is by having a gender-inclusive ministry.¹⁴⁴ To support this, Reuther states that the crises resulting from fewer men entering seminary means that more Catholic bishops will have to appoint theologically trained lay people, often women, to chaplaincies and parish ministries that will cause ordinary Catholics to be confronted with the idea of women in leadership and ministerial positions.¹⁴⁵ Reuther discusses that the crises then becomes even more controversial as the question of who can perform sacraments enters the public thought.¹⁴⁶ Her argument places a contradiction within the Church's leadership, particularly over who is best suited to lead the faithful in ministry and the sacraments. It creates a chasm within theological

¹⁴³ Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Pope's Letter Ups Ante on Ordaining Women," *National Catholic Reporter* 30, no. 33 (1994): 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

principles that must be addressed, particularly with her research regarding the situation of Roman Catholic Womenpriests.

To support her view of gender-inclusiveness of public ministry, Reuther identifies a group of individuals who argue that women's ordination is both valid within the Church and within the confines of Apostolic succession. In an article written in 2010, she identifies a movement among the Catholic faithful called "Roman Catholic Womenpriests," that is built upon women who believe that their ordination within the Roman Catholic Church is valid.¹⁴⁷ She reminds us that in 2002, several male bishops of the Roman Catholic Church ordained seven women on a boat in the Danube River, and then ordained some of them as bishops, who in turn ordained other women and some men.¹⁴⁸ Reuther reports that their official statement reads:

The ordination of Roman Catholic Womenpriests are valid because of our unbroken line of apostolic succession within the Roman Catholic church. The principle consecrating Roman Catholic male bishop who ordained our first women bishops with a line of unbroken apostolic succession within the Roman Catholic church in full communion with the pope.¹⁴⁹

However, in 2008 Pope Benedict XVI excommunicated the bishops and womenpriests who participated in the consecration on the Danube River *latae sententiae*, and thus were no longer in communion with the Catholic Church and the pope in Rome.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, how can the Roman Catholic Womenpriests believe that their congregation and movement exist within the confines of the Church's teaching? Reuther concurs with this point and undergoes an investigation of the viability of Apostolic

¹⁴⁷ Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Two views of valid women's ordination emerge," *National Catholic Reporter* (Sept. 2010): 16.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 368.

succession. She states that not only does the Catholic Church hold this teaching, but also the Orthodox, most Anglican, and some Lutheran churches hold fast to this ideal.¹⁵¹ How then, Reuther argues, does this theological stipulation hold true?¹⁵² She identifies that Apostolic Succession was claimed by the early Church in the 2nd century to affirm that the Church's teaching descended from Jesus, to the apostles, and to the churches they established as they worked their public ministries, and was not originally attached to bishops and their successors.¹⁵³ However, according to Reuther, the identity of bishop-to-priest succession was not codified into canon law until the 12th century.¹⁵⁴ Yet, Reuther identifies this is a major problem, due to the fact that many modern historians do not believe in Apostolic Succession as a true avenue of Christianity's spread and argue against this teaching.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, she identifies another "valid" ordination attempt that some communities have taken up.

Reuther insists that this other valid attempt is found in the writings of Hippolytus of Rome in the third century where the community elected a priest and laid hands on him, which is opposite of today's understanding of the bishop ordaining the priest.¹⁵⁶ Reuther describes how the Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community (MMACC) of San Diego ordained such a woman in this way in 2010. Using the pastoral guidance of a Roman Catholic Womenpriest bishop, the MMACC ordained a woman by having their

¹⁵¹ The idea of Apostolic Succession is held by these institutions because of their shared liturgical and theological past, coming from the same strain of Church authority that existed before the separation of the East and West Christian Churches.

¹⁵² Ibid., 16, 18.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

entire community lay hands on her.¹⁵⁷ In the eyes of this community, and to Reuther, both are valid forms of ordination. Reuther argues that the Roman Catholic Womenpriests movement and the MMACC are equally clear that ordaining women is “an expression of the true nature of Christianity as a faith community that vindicates the full and equal humanity of women and men.”¹⁵⁸ She argues that refusing to ordain women to the priesthood because they cannot represent Christ is wrong, and that their ordinations are both apostolic in their roots by upholding early Christianity and are vibrant ways to express the Church today.¹⁵⁹ Reuther believes that the example of these two organizational movements illustrates how the men and women faithful express their discontent with official Church teachings and the socially gendered patriarchy, a dialogue that can trace itself back to the Second Vatican Council.¹⁶⁰

However, other theologians cannot reconcile the Church’s teachings and traditions with the calls for women entering the priesthood. Even though many Protestant churches have incorporated women into leading ministerial positions, theologians such as Haye Van der Meer, SJ, cannot see the same for the Catholic Church. Van der Meer wrote his book, *Women Priests in the Catholic Church?*, in reaction to the popular movements that called for an inclusion of women in the priesthood.¹⁶¹ Van der Meer describes several reasons for why he believes women cannot be priests, highlighting some of his reasoning based on Scripture. Primarily, according to Van der Meer, women

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. See alternative source. The San Diego Union Tribune, “Congregation Ordains Catholic Female Pastor,” *The San Diego Union Tribune* (August 1, 2010), accessed March 21, 2018, <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-congregation-ordains-catholic-female-pastor-2010aug01-htmlstory.html>.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Haye Van der Meer is a religious priest, a member of the Society of Jesus (SJ), more commonly known as the Jesuits.

cannot be priests because in the Gospels, Jesus did not choose women as his apostles, and thus did not grant them power to confer sacraments.¹⁶² Van der Meer describes that, though Jesus instrumentally challenged the societal norms of his era, and associated himself closely with several women followers, he did not specifically appoint them in his inner circle and did not give them the same spiritual authority as the apostles.¹⁶³ Though Jesus had women disciples, such as the notable Mary Magdalene, Mary, Martha, and countless others, they were only disciples and followers. No woman was named in the Gospels as one of the twelve apostles. Nor does it explicitly say in the Acts of the Apostles that women were granted the same authority as the apostles in the early Church hierarchy.

He also highlights the writing of the early Church fathers, such as Jerome and Ambrose, who describe that women are unable to become priests because their status as women inhibits their capacity to reflect the nature of Christ to their congregation, which theologian Thomas Aquinas describes is due to their gender and appearance.¹⁶⁴ Jerome and Ambrose, according to Van der Meer, detail that women are equal among God's creatures, but that they do not have the capabilities of purveying Christ to their respective congregations.¹⁶⁵ Thomas Aquinas explains that because Christ himself was male, then only men can accurately portray Christ at the altar. Women are unable to be *in persona Christi capitis* because they do not have the correct anatomy to accurately represent

¹⁶² Haye Van der Meer, *Women Priests in the Catholic Church?* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 10-11.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-79. Van der Meer describes that Thomas Aquinas discusses the sexuality of women in his work, *Origins*, and postulates that women cannot be priests because they cannot reflect the maleness of Christ, who the priest is supposed to represent.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass.¹⁶⁶ In support of this, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (1994), upholds that “priestly ordination...has in the Catholic Church from the beginning always been reserved to men alone,” and prescribes that the Church cannot and does not have the authority to change the men-only doctrine of priesthood.¹⁶⁷ He refers to his 1988 Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* and states:

In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised the same freedom with which, in all his behavior, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time.¹⁶⁸

By upholding the male presbyter, John Paul II codifies the concept of male priests into canon law and upholds the traditionally described roles of women through the implementation of their individual Church described vocations, using Mary as the ultimate example.¹⁶⁹ He further emphasizes this belief saying:

By defending the dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has shown honor and gratitude for those women who – faithful to the Gospel – have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole People of God. They are the holy martyrs, virgins and mothers of families, who bravely bore witness to their faith and passed on the Church's faith and tradition by bringing up their children in the spirit of the Gospel.¹⁷⁰

Uchechukwa Obisike further delineates the Church's official stance on this issue by dissecting the impact of John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Pastoris Dabo Vobis* (1992),

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. The phrase, “in persona Christi capitis” is Latin for “in the person of Christ the head,” meaning that the priest at the altar during Mass becomes the spiritual representation of Christ during the sacrificial offering. Literally, he acts as Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass.

¹⁶⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (May 22, 1994), accessed October 10, 2017, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. See *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. See *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

which preceded the 1994 Apostolic Letter. According to Obisike, John Paul II's perspective is that the Church must not stress its lack of priests, but should instead entrust the care of its priesthood to the Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹ In doing so, John Paul II does not stress that there should be any noticeable change to the priesthood, but reiterates that the "priest of tomorrow, no less than of today, must resemble Christ."¹⁷² He identifies that the priest must always be a man, because Christ chose men to be his apostles, therefore establishing a tradition.¹⁷³ In this sacred tradition, the priest must be a "sacramental representation" of Christ and the Trinity at the altar.¹⁷⁴ Obisike analyzes this confession by identifying the correlations between the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council on the ministerial priesthood.¹⁷⁵

Obisike underscores that the findings of both councils, which influenced John Paul II's apostolic letters, are based upon a revealed religious truth that can be found in the writings of early saints, Church fathers, and in the Bible.¹⁷⁶ What he emphasizes, however, is the construct of the ministerial priesthood being understood within the constructs of Jesus' priesthood as the Christ.¹⁷⁷ By analyzing the teachings of the councils, the Bible (particularly the letter to the Hebrews), and the traditions established by Christ in the Gospels, Obisike correlates Pope John Paul II's findings to be wholly accurate within this theological framework.¹⁷⁸ By having priests "act specifically in the

¹⁷¹ Pope John Paul II, *Pastoris Dabo Vobis* (1992), accessed October 10, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Uchechukwa Obisike, *The Catholic Priesthood: Pope John Paul II's Vision and Transformational Leadership* (dissertation, Boston: Gonzaga University, 2014), 4-17.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 69.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 70-95.

place of Christ,” the Church is ordaining a belief that only male priests can accurately represent the humanity of Christ, through whom Jesus asserts his divinity in the sacraments.¹⁷⁹ This identity that is showcased by Obisike and upheld by Catholic theologians such as Van der Meer and John Paul II, reflects the Catholic Church’s firm foundation on the ministerial priesthood. However, despite their arguments against female priesthood in the Church, they do not touch upon the concept of female deacons, which many scholars have taken advantage of. Thus, many theologians have turned to dialogue concerning admittance for women into the permanent diaconate.

Arguments for Women in the Diaconate

Arlene Swidler and Karen Torieson are two theologians who believe that there is another option left open for women that does not inspire the ire of traditional, Catholic theologians. This other option is the permanent diaconate, a role in Church life that has also traditionally been filled by men. However, they argue that the role can be open to the inclusion of women based on several key reasons. Swidler states in her co-edited work with Virginia Ratigan, *A New Phoebe: Perspectives on Roman Catholic Women and the Permanent Diaconate*, that women held the position of deacon during the early years of the Church and that it was only after three or four centuries that the tradition of all male deacons was made official.¹⁸⁰ Part of her evidence is found in Romans 16:1 where Paul refers to a deacon, Phoebe, in the church at Cenchreae in Corinth.¹⁸¹ She establishes that the word used in the original Greek, *diakonos*, was used in the early Church to denote

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 98-116.

¹⁸⁰ Arlene Swidler, “Women Deacons: Historical Highlights,” in *A New Phoebe: Perspectives on Roman Catholic Women and the Permanent Diaconate*, ed. Virginia Ratigan and Arlene Swidler (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 81. Romans 16:1 reads, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.”

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

both men and women, and only later was the female version of the term, *diakonissa*, developed to distinguish between liturgical roles among men and women to better fit the established gender norms.¹⁸²

Another Bible passage that Swidler uses to support her argument is 1 Timothy 3:8-12.¹⁸³ The passage describes how deacons must conduct themselves, and specifically mentions women in the denoted deacons' description.¹⁸⁴ Using these passages, Swidler compares them to early writings of Origen and John Chrysostom, and uses their interpretations of the two passages to support her arguments for the installation of women in the diaconate. Origen, writing in the early third century, wrote that the Phoebe passage meant that women had been ordained into the early Church hierarchy, and were thus part of the tradition of the Church.¹⁸⁵ John Chrysostom concurred with Origen's account of Phoebe, but took it a step further. He stated that Paul's personal recognition of Phoebe, along with his description of deacons, places female deacons as an institution in the early Church and meant to remain within its hierarchy as they were installed by an apostle.¹⁸⁶

Based on this evidence, Swidler argues that women in the diaconate have existed since the early Church, and remained as part of it for several centuries, before they were denied access to the Church office as male officials gained prominence through the

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 82. 1 Timothy 3:8-12 reads, "Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 82-83.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 83-84.

legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, she argues that women should be allowed to be ordained as permanent deacons because the Bible provides evidence and the early Church Fathers knew of and supported the institution of women as deacons.¹⁸⁸ Karen Torieson likewise establishes the connection of women deacons in the early Church, and the establishment of separate offices to better institutionalize gender roles during the later years of the Roman Empire.¹⁸⁹

Torieson corroborates Swidler's argument regarding the gendered term of *diakonos*, stating that since the early Church, women had held local and regional religious offices, including that of the deacon.¹⁹⁰ She asserts that during the first and early second century women had a strong authoritative place in the early Church, but by the late third century, that dynamic shifted as the Roman Empire rose in prominent power, and the persecution of Christians increased.¹⁹¹ Due to the shift, women became less empowered, and took on more household roles while men stepped in to take over the local and regional churches.¹⁹² Torieson proposes that the presupposition of public offices as masculine roles and the focused submission of women in public society changed the perception of religious officials, which fundamentally shaped how women and men were perceived in the diaconate as leaders of the Church.¹⁹³ Her argument states that because Jesus' ministry created equal opportunity for men and women in the early Church, and that this dynamic only changed because of the shift of gender norms of the expanding

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 84-86. Christianity was legalized within the Roman Empire under the Emperor Constantine with the Edict of Milan in 313 CE.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 86-89.

¹⁸⁹ Karen Torieson, *When Women Were Priests* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 4-5.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹² Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Roman Empire, then the contemporary Church should include the reception of women into the permanent diaconate.¹⁹⁴ Based on these arguments, how has the modern Church responded to calls to the women in the diaconate?

Conclusions

As discussed, the Church has traditionally held three roles for women within Church life: marriage and motherhood, consecrated life, and single life. The Church has stated that each of these are a woman's individual vocation and callings that God designed for them to get them into Heaven.¹⁹⁵ However, since the emergence of the reform movements, there is a greater chance for lay women to participate in the Mass as lectors, altar servers, Eucharistic ministers, sacristans, and cantors since the closing of the Second Vatican Council, many theologians have championed for an even larger opportunity for women to participate in the life of the Church. This includes allowing women to become ordained ministers. Feminist theologians Weaver, St. Pierre, Daly, and Reuther argue that many modern women believe that the Church should fully enter the modern world and allow women into ministerial positions. They ask that the Church leave behind its patriarchal past and become a more opportunistic, gender-inclusive institution by allowing women into the priesthood, thus becoming more "equal." Specifically, they emphasize that they believe that this is not only compatible with the Gospels, but a full embodiment of them.

However, intellectuals and religious leaders, like Van der Meer, John Paul II, and Obisike, insist that the Church cannot allow women into the priesthood because it goes against Christ's example established in the Gospels. Since Jesus only chose men, and the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁵ James Socias, *Vocations and the Universal Call to Holiness* (Midwest Theological Forum, 2015), 21-22.

disciples themselves only chose men, then because of that example, Van der Meer argues, only men are to be allowed into the priesthood. Officially, the Church has supported this reasoning by issuing a document called *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*, which forbids women from entering the priesthood.¹⁹⁶ Pope Francis upholds the Church's stance on this issue. In an interview given in 2016, when asked about the possibility of ordaining women, Pope Francis responds, "On the ordination of women in the Catholic church, the last word is clear," mentioning John Paul II's letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*.¹⁹⁷ "It was given by St. John Paul II and this remains."¹⁹⁸ When asked if this is forever, Francis responded, "If we read carefully the declaration made by St. John Paul II, it goes in that direction."¹⁹⁹

In reaction to this, other theologians including Swidler and Torieson, have discussed the possibility of allowing women into the diaconate. Their arguments are based around both biblical evidence and writings by the early Church Fathers where female deacons were both known and accepted. Origen was reported to have said:

This text (Romans 16:1-2) teaches with the authority of the Apostle that even women are instituted deacons in the Church. This was the function which was exercised in the Church of Cenchreae by Phoebe, who was the object of high praise and recommendation by Paul.²⁰⁰

St. John Chrysostom also once wrote in his Homily XXX on the same passage:

See how many ways he takes to give her dignity. For he has both mentioned her before all the rest, and called her sister. And it is no slight thing to be called the

¹⁹⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (Vatican City: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1976).

¹⁹⁷ Joshua J. McElwee, "Pope Francis Confirms Finality of Ban on Ordaining Women Priests," *National Catholic Register* (November 1, 2016), accessed October 10, 2017, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/pope-francis-confirms-finality-ban-ordaining-women>.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Arlene Swidler, *A New Phoebe*, 82-83.

sister of Paul. Moreover he has added to her rank, by mentioning her being a 'deacon.'²⁰¹

These scholars argue that historical events in the expanding Roman Empire after Christianity's legalization proscribed standard gender norms for presbyters and deacons. Therefore, it is evident that this discussion, which emerged from the Second Vatican Council, has influenced the modern Church's response.

Through careful analysis of Church teachings and the studying of arguments by both lay and Church theologians, an understanding of the situation regarding women's ordination can be made. Currently, the Church will not allow women to become priests, and probably will not in the near decades, for many reasons, despite the broadening of dialogue in the wake of Vatican II. Predominantly, the Roman Curia can be described as very conservative, and attempts to uphold traditional values and ways of thinking. Much of the Church's teachings are steeped in what it calls "Sacred Tradition" and will not deviate away from it in any circumstance. To deviate from these traditions would mean that the Magisterium would have to go against hundreds of years' worth of teaching, undermining the work of Church scholars before. This sensitivity to the history and tradition of the Church, which impacts its authority, is a major setback to efforts of reform.

As one example, the document banning women from the priesthood is evidence of this concern for tradition and authority.²⁰² Despite these concerns, it is possible that allowing women into the diaconate may soon be a reality for the Church. Based on the evidence found, women deacons have existed since the Church's very inception and were

²⁰¹ Ibid., 83.

²⁰² This refers to *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*.

addressed by such key members as Paul of Tarsus and John Chrysostom. The case for women deacons advanced in the modern Church by Pope Francis in June 2016, when he established a commission to study the possible inclusion of women in the diaconate.²⁰³ He appointed six men and six women, as well as several biblical scholars, to formulate a response to the question.²⁰⁴ Thus, in this understanding of the conversation, it is found that the current Church is more open to the inclusion of women in the Mass as deacons, and may possibly allow them to enter the seminary for formation within the next few decades. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that Vatican II has indeed opened and expanded the possibility for dialogue among issues related to women within the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁰³ Cindy Wooden, "Pope Francis sets up commission on women deacons," *Catholic Herald* (August 2, 2016), online article, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/08/02/pope-sets-up-commission-on-women-deacons/>.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2: Catholic Sexual Ethics in Today's Modern World

“The most basic principle of the Christian moral life is the awareness that every person bears the dignity of being made in the image of God. He has given us an immortal soul and through the gifts of intelligence and reason enables us to understand the order of things established in his creation. God has also given us a free will to seek and love what is true, good, and beautiful. Sadly, because of the Fall, we also suffer the impact of Original Sin, which darkens our minds, weakens our wills, and inclines us to sin. Baptism delivers us from Original Sin but not from its effects—especially the inclination to sin, concupiscence. Within us, then, is both the powerful surge toward the good because we are made in the image of God, and the darker impulses toward evil because of the effects of Original Sin.

“But we should always remember that Christ's dying and rising offers us new life in the Spirit, whose saving grace delivers us from sin and heals sin's damage within us. Thus we speak of the value, dignity, and goal of human life, even with its imperfections and struggles. Human life, as a profound unity of physical and spiritual dimensions, is sacred. It is distinct from all other forms of life, since it alone is imprinted with the very image of its Creator.”

- *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2016)*²⁰⁵

Just as Vatican II opened dialogue to encompass women's ordination, it also generated discussion on sexual ethics within the universal Church. Before Vatican II, Christian morality and ethics focused on the guidance and correct understanding of moral actions by individuals through broad explanations.²⁰⁶ The Church depended on its priests to dispense Catholic moral teaching within their congregations through their sermons, as well as in the theology courses taught in Catholic schools.²⁰⁷ However, these teachings, by both priests and nuns, focused primarily on laying out the dogma and doctrine, stating in clear terms what was Godly and what was sinful.²⁰⁸ It was not until after Vatican II, with the succession of the then Bishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, to the papacy, that the Church truly entered an era of what it considered as focused concern on human

²⁰⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (2016), accessed December 30, 2016, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/morality/>. This quote is references the Catholic Church's moral understanding of the dignity of the human person.

²⁰⁶ Gerard Mannion, “After the Council: Transformations in the Shape of Moral Theology and ‘the Church to Come’,” *New Blackfriars* 90, no. 1026 (March 2009): 232-237.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 237-240.

morality.²⁰⁹ During the papacy of Pope John Paul II (r. 1978-2005), the Catholic Church established a more detailed and focused dialogue on Christian moral teaching that outlined the Church's position regarding multiple areas of doctrine, including Christian marriage, sexual purity, contraception, and abortion, among others. Ultimately, these new teachings were standardized in Catholic schools and sexual education programs across the globe, as well as in church catechetical classes, and other parish formation courses. The result then, of these changing conceptions regarding sexual morality influenced a rise in discussion and dialogue on these issues and how they should be lived, acknowledged, and addressed in the ordinary Catholic Christian life. In this chapter, I will discuss how Vatican II opened dialogue on sexual ethics by analyzing Pope John Paul II's teachings and their impact on the modern Catholic Church. I will also discuss several different scholars and theologians' discussions, arguments, and concerns regarding the major issues within Christian morality and ethics, and how they have developed since the closing of the Second Vatican Council.

What is *Theology of the Body*?

Pope John Paul II, on September 5, 1979, less than a year after his election, became the first pope to use his Wednesday General Audiences in St. Peter's Square as systematic sessions of catechesis from which he expressed a message of Christian morality.²¹⁰ This series of catechetical instruction ended over five years later after only a few interruptions, on November 28, 1984, and became a central component of the

²⁰⁹ Jane Barnes and Helen Whitney, "John Paul II: His Life and Papacy," *PBS: KET Frontline* (2014), accessed December 30, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/etc/bio.html>.

²¹⁰ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's 'Man and Woman He Created Them'* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2007), 7.

Bishop's papal legacy.²¹¹ Originally, Pope John Paul II had been working on his compilation as a book to be titled *Man and Woman He Created Them*, but his ascension to the papacy interrupted this process.²¹² Instead, his foundational work became a series of 129 lectures on human dignity and sexuality in God's plan for humanity. His weekly sermons became largely influential amongst Catholic theologians, teachers, and schools as they taught a return to the basic principles of Christian ethics, human dignity, and sexuality.²¹³ His teaching became so influential in the wider Catholic Church that it was incorporated into Catholic education in the different Catholic school systems in the United States and across the world.²¹⁴

Pope John Paul II's moral teachings became the foundation for post-Vatican II moral theology. His moral reasoning and descriptive analogies were highly praised by Vatican officials in the Roman Curia, and were welcomed enthusiastically by the different Catholic bishops across the world, especially in the United States and in parts of central and northern Africa.²¹⁵ The context of the Pope's sexual morality greatly impacted the Church's stance and relationship towards teaching and preaching to the multitude of adherents across the globe, especially when discussing the dignity of the human person, concepts on sexual purity, marriage, contraception, and abortion. Pope

²¹¹ Ibid., 7-9.

²¹² Ibid. Bishop Karol Wojtyla, as he was known then, had been working on his book *Man and Woman He Created Them* as a response to the rising concerns of humanity on what he considered to be sexual immorality during the late 1960s and early 70s. However, by the time of his election to the papacy in October 1978, his work had not been completed, and thus became part and parcel to his larger ministry as Bishop of Rome and Shepherd of the Universal Church. It was later collected and published after his death under the title, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, translated by Michael Waldstein (2006).

²¹³ Ibid., 12-15.

²¹⁴ Silvio J. Fonseca-Martinez, "Pope John Paul II's Understanding of Education in Moral Values and Its Application to Catholic Secondary Education in Present-Day Nicaragua" (Ph. D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2011), i-iii.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

John Paul II's moral teachings established a structure of Catholic theology that he believed fought against the culture of the 1970s and 80s, which he thought promoted attitudes of sexual impurity that led Catholics astray from Church teaching. His *Theology of the Body* was his attempt to reconnect Catholics across the globe to the mother Church by, in his opinion, providing a moral instruction based in what he considered to be "religious truth."

Theology of the Body on Marriage in the Church

Pope John Paul II began his catechetical teachings by explaining his views of how humans are a spiritual reflection of the invisible God.²¹⁶ This spiritual reflection of the divinity of the soul of humanity includes the physical reflection of human sexuality – the purpose for "male and female he created them."²¹⁷ John Paul II establishes a connection between humanity and the body and the physical forms that God created for men and women to procreate. According to this theology, the joining of man and woman in sexual union is expressed in the Catholic sentiment as a biblical and sacramental union that reflects the glory of God and the relationship which God established between Himself and humanity.²¹⁸ Marriage then becomes a sacred union, a covenantal bond that reflects not only the sacred bond between a man and a woman, but also the relationship that God has with his Church. Thus marriage, in this view, is a sacred bond between man and woman, and is expressed as the true practice of moral sexual conduct in the orthodox doctrine of the Church.

²¹⁶ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 109-110.

²¹⁷ Genesis 1: 27 NRSV. This references the Christian creation account in Genesis that depicts man and woman as partners for each other, to bear children and be fruitful to populate God's earth.

²¹⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 400-403. The second edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was fully formed in 1997 after Pope John Paul II's series on the *Theology of the Body* was complete. Its current form is heavily influenced by Pope John Paul II and reflects his moral teachings and guidance as the head of the Church's Magisterium.

However, Pope John Paul II reiterates the traditional message of the Catholic Church that the sexual union of man and woman can only be allowed through the Sacrament of Marriage.²¹⁹ Before a man and a woman can enter into the marriage bond, they must maintain a lifestyle of sexual purity, living a chaste moral life.²²⁰ John Paul II argues that living a pure life constitutes living a life that respects the dignity of your body as created by God and deserving of respect. Purity “is the glory of the human body before God.”²²¹ The Pope makes the case that in order for one to maintain moral purity, sexual purity must become first and foremost in a good Christian’s life, where the denial of lust and sexual impulses seen as inappropriate, such as masturbation and pornography, are resisted, and sexual intercourse is preserved for a loving relationship between husband and wife.²²² Christian celibacy, a term meaning to refrain from sexual intercourse of any kind, becomes reinforced as a Church practiced institutional force of remaining pure for the redemption of Christ, and paired with abstinence, the chaste living of a man or woman before marriage, become attuned to the living example of the Christian life.²²³ Even though the Pope has given instruction on how to live a proper moral Christian life before marriage, there are still stipulations that are established within the sanctity of marriage that are designed to further establish proper moral teaching.

Pope John Paul II’s teachings regarding moral marriage extend from Pope Paul VI’s encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Pope Paul VI (r. 1963-1978) wrote, “The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law,

²¹⁹ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 302.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 253-256.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*, 337-339. According to Christopher West’s commentary on Church doctrine, celibacy is the refraining by Christian men to never enter an immoral, or impure, relationship with a woman before marriage. Abstinence is another term denoted for both sexes to refrain from non-marital sexual action.

which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marriage act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.”²²⁴ John Paul II expounded upon this central teaching and enforced that because the nuptial union of husband and wife in the conjugal bond makes them one flesh, then the marriage is open to the possibility of new life, welcoming God’s gift of procreation and call to populate the earth.²²⁵ In this openness and willingness for children resides the moral teaching against contraception. Contraception, according to the Catholic Church, prohibits the true joining of man and woman in the marriage bond, establishing a false connection. It also is understood to inhibit and go against God’s plan for man and woman to procreate and bring life into the world.²²⁶ Thus official Catholic moral teaching places contraception as an invalidation of the marriage sacrament and an immoral practice.²²⁷

Connecting Purity of Soul with Purity of Body

Individual purity becomes the sole objective for Catholic catechesis among both children and adults, and focuses on establishing a wholesome connection of purity of soul with purity of body.²²⁸ Catholic teaching regarding humanity being made in the image of God was one of the larger tenets in John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*, particularly in how it was portrayed in the public context and media outlets of news channels, especially in countries where news stations were given more specific freedoms to report, such as in

²²⁴ Pope Paul VI, “Observing the Natural Law,” *Humane Vitae*, 11. By this, marriage must, at each sexual union of husband and wife, be open to the possibility of having children. This means that there should never be any form of male or female contraception used during sexual intercourse.

²²⁵ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 524-526.

²²⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 570-571.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Katharine Hennessey, “Education as Formation: Virtue Ethics and Catholic Education,” (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Berkley, 2013), i.

the United States.²²⁹ A majority of Catholic action towards purity of the body, though being part of the Catholic moral tradition historically, has been a reaction towards the secular public's concepts regarding human sexuality, such as pre-marital sex, contraception, masturbation, and the proliferation of pornography, as being "okay" within the larger context of the global populace.²³⁰ However, such proliferations were taught against within the context of Catholicism.²³¹

For example, Catholic school systems and catechetical formation classes began teaching programs that established a firm connection of moral sexuality as being within the confines of Holy Matrimony. Catholic education teaches that pre-marital sex violates the relationship between humans and God by creating a rift in the true purpose of the sexual union, that of creating life through the marriage bond.²³² It is also taught that pre-marital sex is a satisfaction of sinful lust and pleasure, thus a mortal sin that removed a faithful Catholic from a pure relationship with God.²³³ Masturbation is presented in newly constructed terms. However, unlike pre-marital sex, the Church teaches that masturbation itself did not violate the friendship that is expressed and developed with marriage.²³⁴ It is, however, viewed by the Church as sexually immoral. Masturbation is taught as a violation of the recognition of the human dignity of the human person.²³⁵ It

²²⁹ Genesis 1: 27 NRSV. The delegation of the human spirit as reflecting the divinity of God created a connection between spirit and body. A person's body came to be recognized as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a home for Christ who lived in us (Galatians 2: 20). A person's body must then remain pure of sin and defilement, which was caused by a reoccurrence of sexual impurity perpetrated by non-marital sexual acts such as masturbation, pornography, and pre-marital sexual intercourse.

²³⁰ William E. May, "Catholic Sexual Ethics," 20-28.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 22-23.

²³³ Ibid. Pre-marital sex was denoted as a sin long within the history of the Catholic Church. However, during the 1980s and 90s, the stigma for non-married sexual relationships within the confines of young American youth began to deteriorate. Thus, the American bishops sought that a tougher, stricter, Church teaching should be laid out for the youth that perturbed them from going against these moral teachings.

²³⁴ Ibid., 23.

²³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 564-566.

“uses” oneself for an escape to satisfy personal lust, and in conjunction with the pornographic business that is highly prevalent and available to minors, is described as a major mortal sin that violates one’s personal relationship with God.²³⁶ Viewing pornographic material became inscribed in moral teaching as “adultery of the heart,” also a mortal sin within the Church in recent decades.²³⁷ This refers to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:27-28, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman [or a man] lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”²³⁸ In fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.²³⁹

Same-Sex Attraction in John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*

It is evident in Catholic moral teaching that during this time-period before the new millennia, there was a conscious effort by Catholic bishops and diocesan authorities to educate both Catholic children and adults on the Church’s teaching that sodomy is a mortal sin. Largely, this emerged in both American and European politics and religious scrutiny of what the Church called liberal, or progressive, relationships that developed between same-sex couples. Sodomy, as taught by the *Veritas Series*, are any anal or oral

²³⁶ William E. May, “Catholic Sexual Ethics,” 23-24.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Matthew 5:27-28 NRSV.

²³⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 565.

sexual acts that are not expressly conducive to the creation of human life.²⁴⁰ The Church describes that these acts are similar to those of masturbation, where the physical use of one's own and another's body is for the express release of physical pleasure.²⁴¹ However, if the act of oral sex was a premeditator of sexual intercourse, denoted as foreplay, according to Pope John Paul II, the act is not immoral as long as it ends in intercourse.²⁴² If it did not, it violates the marriage, as the sexual release is for pleasure instead of the propagation of human life.²⁴³ Therefore, due to the denotation of sodomy as inherently contrary to God's plan for marriage and procreation, the sexual union of same-sex couples violated what John Paul II describes as "the indissolubility of God's natural plan for humanity."²⁴⁴

According to the Catholic Church, the sexual union of same-sex couples is not allowed because they are unable to reproduce.²⁴⁵ Yet, because the Church believes that children can only be achieved through unity in marriage, this also meant that it is immoral for two men or two women to become married, because no fruitful progeny would be created through their sexual copulation. Catholic schools, to approach this sensitive subject and identity of homosexuality in their growing charges with careful consideration for the dignity of the human person, established that though men and women who are born with same-sex attractions are not inherently sinful, their attractions are systematically "disordered."²⁴⁶ Thus for these individuals, the concepts of chastity

²⁴⁰ William E. May, "Catholic Sexual Ethics," 25.

²⁴¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 565.

²⁴² In this instance, Pope John Paul II is denoting foreplay as a premeditator to penile-vaginal sexual intercourse.

²⁴³ William E. May, "Catholic Sexual Ethics," 25.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²⁴⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 566.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

were expressly established as the only “moral” path for those with same-sex attraction.²⁴⁷ However, this discussion regarding same-sex attraction and gay and lesbian relationships will be discussed in much more depth within the next chapter.

Catholic Teachings Against Contraception

In the context of moral engagement during sexual intercourse for married couples, Catholic catechesis began teaching the sin of contraception in their lessons. Ultimately, the emergence of doctrine within the universal Church began as a call against the rising use of oral birth control and use of condoms, among other forms of contraception, that proliferated during the “era of free love and sex” during the 1970s, and was widely discussed by the Council Fathers of Vatican II.²⁴⁸ Largely, these concerns were directed towards the United States in response to the perception that American youth on the East coast and the Midwest were living extravagant lifestyles.²⁴⁹ However, it was not just American youth who were involved in the use of contraception, but also married Catholics in Central and Southern America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The institutional Catholic Church do not believe it is possible to condone any type of contraception within the confines of marriage. Married individuals had vowed to the Church that they would be open to the responsibilities and opportunities of children, thus the prohibition of children within the sacrament of marriage was framed by the official Church teachings as highly immoral.²⁵⁰ Due to this, the bishops decided upon a program that would be taught

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Pope Paul VI, in *Humanae Vitae*.

²⁴⁹ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), 282-285.

²⁵⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 571-572.

to couples undergoing pre-marriage counseling and those already married, called Natural Family Planning.

Natural Family Planning and Abortion

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the Catholic response to morally abstaining from having children within a Catholic family.²⁵¹ The concept of NFP is the conscious acknowledgment by both the husband and wife to design their sex life around the woman's ovulation cycle. The belief is that by having sex outside of a woman's opportune period of fertilization, the married couple could enjoy their sexual union without the stain of sin, and the chance of having children.²⁵² The Church teaches that the correct implementation of NFP, without the use of any contraception, is a completely moral and ethical choice between consenting married couples.²⁵³ It allows for God's design of sexual union to remain within the confines of sacramental marriage, but also allows for the married couple to retain their moral standing by abstaining from the use of physical implements of contraception.²⁵⁴ However, even the NFP programs cannot prevent every pregnancy. Therefore, since the conjugal act in Catholic teaching is established with an agreement upon remaining open to the possibility of children, even those children who are unexpected within a family setting are to be cherished, loved, and brought up in the faith. Yet, that is not always the case.

The ridding one's body of an unborn child is known as abortion.²⁵⁵ According to Catholic teaching, life begins at conception, thus abortion, in the strictest Catholic sense,

²⁵¹ James Trussell et al., "Natural Family Planning," *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 307, no. 6910 (1993): 1003.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 1003-1004.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1004-1005.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1005.

²⁵⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 547.

is denoted as murder, for it is argued that this goes against the direct commandments of God.²⁵⁶ Often, women who have become pregnant through the improper use of the NFP program, failed attempts of using what the Church calls immoral methods of contraception, become pregnant by choosing to not use contraception, or through rape or incest, find themselves unable to care for their new child or do not want the burden of a child, and consciously choose to rid themselves of the unborn baby through the only way they know how – abortion.²⁵⁷ Abortion, however, is entirely contrary to official Catholic moral teachings. The Church declares that it cannot condone the harming of innocent life for any reason, and always preaches for the conservation, protection, and sanctification of human life from conception to natural death.²⁵⁸ This singular moral doctrine within the Church is perhaps the most influential of all Catholic precepts in the Church's involvement in the public sphere. Despite what the Church teaches, however, a large majority of Catholics do not adhere to the moral teachings that developed from Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*.

Discussions Surrounding Catholic Moral Teaching

In the aftermath of Vatican II and the onset of Pope John Paul II's moral teachings, multiple theologians and faithful Catholics have taken up the call to address individual issues that they perceive to either go against what they view as natural science

²⁵⁶ Exodus 20: 13 NRSV, Deuteronomy 5:17 NRSV. This references the ten commandments where God explicitly stated to not kill. The Church finds that any action that destroys the life of an individual, born or unborn, is morally reprehensible.

²⁵⁷ Olivia Gans and Mary Spaulding Balch, "Rape, Incest, Fetal Abnormality," *Catholic News Agency* (July 1998), accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resources/abortion/defending-life/rape-incest-fetal-abnormality/>. The Catholic Church teaches that though many women, through absolutely no fault of their own become pregnant due to rape, the new mother is urged to respect the innocence and dignity of the child she now has growing inside of her. Though the action of rape against her was horrible, the Church teaches that the child created in the act is innocent of all guilt and blame and should be granted the same right to life as all other people.

²⁵⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 548-549.

or to go against their own understanding of Scripture and interpretations of moral theology. In this spirit of opening dialogue, some of the discussions and arguments regarding these issues are stemming from an understanding of Catholic teachings as being unfaithful to the message of the New Testament, or inaccurate understandings of or unwillingness to listen to modern science. These perceptions also garner interest in how individuals view the context and teachings of the New Testament. Some view the New Testament as being able to legitimately be interpreted in a range of ways, while others view the New Testament in a contextualized approach, viewing it as a product of its time, and needing to be specifically applied to our modern understandings in certain ways. Thus, theologians have argued their own reasoning behind both rejecting and supporting Catholic moral teaching, largely based upon their own interpretations of Scripture and personal experience. In this way, theologians Mark Jordan, Margaret Farley, Lisa Cahill, Paul Lauritzen, and Sidney Callahan lend their own expertise in discussing these matters, expanding the depth of dialogue that has formed since the closing of Vatican II.

Ethical Marriage and Family

Mark Jordan is a theologian who specializes in the morality behind the Church's theology on marriage and moral sexual behavior. Jordan's background in researching the origins of sexual morality and marriage in the early Christian tradition, which the modern Catholic Church states it descends from, enables him to look at the moral prescriptions of sex and marriage in the context of its first believers. In doing so, he analyzes the early Church and focuses on how the early Church stressed the New Testament's teaching of virginity and celibacy and its connection to the Christian family. In his book, *The Ethics of Sex*, Jordan describes that the New Testament contains several passages from both the

Gospels and Paul's epistles where often Jesus does not maintain or uphold to conceptions surrounding family unity, and often breaks down the connections between individuals and their families.²⁵⁹ He cites such passages as Matthew 10:21, 34-37 and Luke 9:60-62, showcasing the importance of having no family obligation for the sake of the kingdom.²⁶⁰ Jordan states that Jesus even prescribes that true disciples of his should "be like angels in heaven," neither married nor given in marriage.²⁶¹ In Paul's epistles, Jordan similarly highlights that the concept of marriage or having a family was to protect against sinful desires of the flesh by placing sexual pleasure within the context of a sacred bond.²⁶² Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman,"²⁶³ thus, according to Jordan, Paul will uphold marriage as long as it prevents sinful lust, but he still prefers lives of celibacy for faithful Christians.²⁶⁴

By analyzing the writings of the early Church Fathers, such as Gregory, Augustine, and Jerome, Jordan denotes quickly that the most prominent ideological factor that most early Church scholarship shares is the concept of Christ-like celibacy and the maintaining of one's virginity.²⁶⁵ Jordan describes that the concerns of Church regulation of sexual morality continued in this vein for centuries, and was not until arguments over

²⁵⁹ Mark D. Jordan, *The Ethics of Sex* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2002), 47-49.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 49. Matthew 10: 21-22, 34-37 NRSV reads, "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved ... Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Luke 9:60-62 NRSV reads, "But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

²⁶² Ibid., 49-51.

²⁶³ 1 Corinthians 7:1 NRSV.

²⁶⁴ Jordan, *Ethics of Sex*, 49-51.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 52-57.

Church authority which emerged during the Reformation with figures Martin Luther and John Calvin that the people began to take a more concerned interest in the government of their lives, particularly their sex lives.²⁶⁶ Jordan identifies that Luther heavily wrote and preached against the concept of regulated celibacy in the lives of the faithful, and in compliance, Calvin heavily stressed marriage as the truest form of Christian worship because it prescribes to God's command in Genesis to be fruitful and multiply.²⁶⁷ Due to this heavily concentrated focus in the 16th century on the morality of marriage, marriage and not monastic life, became the norm. However, the Church took this into a new light, and began to focus teaching on the moralities of sex in marriage instead of focusing on the celibacy of Christendom.²⁶⁸

According to Jordan, the Church focused on providing proper moral guidelines based on the concept that marriage did not prevent lust, and thus sex in marriage should remain as chaste as possible, and done in moderation.²⁶⁹ The later centuries of Christian living focused on this concept of moral sexual exchange between husband and wife, and carried on up to what some scholars have called the "Sexual Revolution" in the 1960s and 70s.²⁷⁰ Jordan explains, however, that the so-called "Sexual Revolution" was a social and political maneuvering that cannot be measured to a specific period of time, but exists in a more flexible swath of decades that became synonymous with a perceived change in understandings regarding the permissibility of "free" sexual actions outside of a

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 58-59.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 60-65. Genesis 1:28 NRSV reads, "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 108-110.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 119.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 131-132.

prescribed sexuality and gender norm.²⁷¹ The result still identified a relationship where the Church decried the supposed period's immorality, but that the Church's authority in the matter has disappeared.²⁷² Jordan discusses that despite the Church's attempts to respond and regulate the sexual life of Christians, outer social and political culture in North America and Western Europe inhibited Church authority in these specific matters, and instead cast issues regarding moral sexuality into the public sphere.²⁷³

Jordan describes that in this period, sexuality and ethics regulation was placed largely outside of the proverbial familial curtain, and away from Church control.²⁷⁴ He identifies that, historically, the Church's relationship with the bureaucratic state has been one of necessity. The Church and the state, through mutual benefits, supported one another for the good of the society. However, around the turn of the 17th century, the dominance the Church played in social control began to shift, granting more power and authority to the secular state, including the regulation of morality and sexuality.²⁷⁵ The past two centuries have only served to increase this dichotomous relationship, forcing the Church to be what some would call a secondary voice in the regulation of sexual activity and ethical issues among Catholics and the broader populace. This new role the secular state has succeeded to control, Jordan discusses, includes the regulation of populations and reproduction, becoming the model for secular institutions today.²⁷⁶

Jordan discusses that today the Church has especially lost, to an extent, some of its regulatory power when it comes to maintaining traditional teachings on celibacy,

²⁷¹ Ibid., 132-133.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 133-135.

virginity, and chaste marriage.²⁷⁷ Thus, today, the regulation of sexuality and marriage, and all those things attributed to them, Jordan notes, has been given to the secular bureaucracy.²⁷⁸ He believes that this is evidenced by how much the laity have been following the state's ordinances regarding marriage and sexuality over the Church's teachings. He argues that the Church, especially the lay faithful, must now shift and change its focus away from adherence to these rules and regulations of the nation-state authority, the "bio-power," and recognize that the Church's moral guidance is not as strong as it has been in centuries past.²⁷⁹ He asserts that the laity must be wary of this increased power the secular state has gained, and should always place a modicum of caution when dealing with concepts of moral sexuality as issued by the state because one could run the risk of becoming "docile subjects of the secular bureaucracies for sexual reproduction."²⁸⁰

In response to this, Jordan identifies that Christian theologians, such as James Fletcher and those involved in the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), have attempted to readdress the seemingly denigration of Church authority in the public sphere. Particularly, Jordan describes that these individuals and organizations have attempted to reinvigorate the Church's position in guiding moral sexuality and ethics.²⁸¹ Particularly, the CTSA for example, issued a large volume titled *Human Sexuality* and supported traditional Church teaching in a new progressive voice to establish a closer connection to Catholics and other Christians to provide the Church a more assured

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 133-138.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 145-149.

authority.²⁸² However, bishops and other Church officials condemned the volume for its progressive tone.²⁸³ Jordan states that this example identifies the current situation within the Church, particularly how the officials of the Church and the Church itself are confused in their stances regarding their particular authority and their traditional teachings. The Church is trying to uphold its traditional teaching and maintain its authority, but at the same time it is trying to accommodate and rectify its position within the post-Christian world.²⁸⁴

For Jordan, this identifies that the Church is trying to accurately represent the Body of Christ (the people) in this progressive era but are having difficulties doing so because of the influence of the modern state. He also believes that the bureaucratic state should not be involved in the regulatory process of human sexuality and sexual action, because the state developed out of the realm of Christendom, with the Church, and still uses language and laws that are representative of the Christian ethos.²⁸⁵ The identification of the Church as a secondary source of moral guidance for Catholics is wrong, and that the primary responsibility granted to the secular state administration of proper moral teaching on sexual behavior and social norms is abhorrent.²⁸⁶ He identifies that the bureaucratic state should not be given the authority by modern Christians to govern proper sexual morality. Yet, neither should the Church be worried about preaching what is moral or immoral.²⁸⁷ Instead, the Church should be more concerned about the people of the Church turning away from the governing authority of the state, otherwise they

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 143-149.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 144-145.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 144-149.

would become subject to their teachings.²⁸⁸ He argues that the Church should not relinquish its control over governing sexual morality, nor should they stop teaching it, but should transform its teaching to include the modern day focus so that the historical and traditional roles of the Church as moral guiders can be recognized again. Jordan asserts that the modern Church must increase its efforts to be recognized as the moral authority in the lives of Christians, and that in doing so, they need to become more inclusive of the attitudes and issues of the modern laity.²⁸⁹ Therefore, with Jordan's concepts in mind, it is easier to understand the direction that many of the modern activists and scholars are taking in these issues. However, Jordan's voice in this is only part of the discussion that has resulted from the close of Vatican II. There are other voices in this discourse who attempt to delineate these issues even further.

Moral Reasoning and Tension Around Concepts of Human Dignity

Margaret Farley, a prominent Catholic feminist theologian, focuses on the ideas surrounding respect for persons within the context of the Catholic moral tradition. Her writings appear in the context of the post-Vatican II discussion of the importance of self-autonomy and the rights of women inherent in their personal dignity.²⁹⁰ Farley identifies that there is a tension in the dialogue found among intellectuals and lay activists regarding individual choice and the ideals of socially constructed identities found within society. This tension, she argues, has appeared in the wake of a global social movement that has been evolving since the 1950s towards an empowerment of women and an active

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Margaret Farley, "A Feminist Version of Respect for Persons," in *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, ed. Charles Curran et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 164-165.

involvement in the sociocultural and religious attitudes of the contemporary Church.²⁹¹

Along with this rising tension, Farley identifies that there is a rising concern for the ethics surrounding how others care for individuals and the institution of moral norms within the familial context.²⁹²

She discusses that the two arise from a directed concern towards the respect for persons, highlighting the importance of human dignity that exists within the Catholic moral tradition.²⁹³ Farley identifies that some individuals believe that the dignity of the human person should be based upon their freedom of choice because the human person has a regulated sense of personal autonomy, which primarily rises from the belief that people can make their own effective decisions. Farley states that this camp believes that God's gift of free choice enables them to make their own moral choices regarding their own persons and filial relationships.²⁹⁴ The other camp, however, Farley identifies, is primarily concerned with the upholding of sociocultural and religious norms, mainly those norms that establish a "correct" behavior for both partners within marriage.²⁹⁵ This camp focuses on creating and identifying moral precedencies for normative-gendered behavior within social and political arenas, while maintaining a modicum of concern for individual human dignity.²⁹⁶ Her evaluation of these two camps establishes a complex tension between the ideologies of moral care and human dignity.

Farley discusses that these two tensions, between personal choice and socially determined roles, stems from dialogue on the pervasive attitude of the value and role of

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid., 166-167.

²⁹³ Ibid., 167-168.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 168-170.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 170-172.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

human life.²⁹⁷ She argues that feminist discourses concerning these specific attitudes come from “the conviction that persons are of unconditional value.”²⁹⁸ The tension lies in the socially instituted belief of women as caregivers, and the amount of focus placed on this ethical role highlights the importance and stance held by individual men and women.²⁹⁹ Farley identifies that neither feminist nor non-feminist persons disagree with the fundamental dignity of the human individual. The concern occurs when discussing issues related to the appropriated role of women established by society within this social and religious tension. She establishes that for many men and women, the socially stigmatized role of woman as caregiver creates an environment that reduces the autonomous ability of women to embrace their true potential and nature.³⁰⁰ It places them in a role that greatly reduces their God-given free will.³⁰¹ Other individuals, proponents of women embracing their socially prescribed roles as wives and mothers, establish that it is naturally freeing to be embrative of their so-called “womanly” identity.³⁰² Farley asserts that these individuals believe that by accepting their socially established roles within the contexts of marriage and family, they are able to be accepting of life and love, while also maintaining a trueness to their indelible self. Meaning, that by coinciding with the social deterministic lifestyle, they are embodying their true potential.³⁰³

Farley’s description of these distinctions surrounding human dignity have been expressed, and can be seen, in the broader global socio-political arena. These two sides have appeared in both the religious and secular contexts of life, predominantly in

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 174-175.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 175.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 175-176.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 176-178.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 177-178.

understandings related to the sanctity of human life regarding both contraception and abortion. Though Farley outlines the intrinsic nature of humanity's concern for human life and the dignity of the human person, she also identifies that this concern is separated into two distinct ideologies. One upholds the dignity of life to the unborn and the role of women in the dual partnership of care in parenthood. The other establishes capabilities of women to choose and direct their lives, as a product of God's grace, to make their own ethical decisions based on their own consciences. Moral theologians and scholars have taken this emerging dialogue in stride and have compared it to their own research. They have acknowledged the increasing interest regarding these moral issues and have begun to investigate and lead discussions surrounding the morality of contraception and abortion.

Discussions Surrounding Contraception, Reproductive Technology, and Abortion

Lisa Cahill is one such theologian and specializes in the ethical norms and reasons behind contemporary Church teachings, and reactions thereof. Cahill carries on this discussion by establishing that much of the reasoning behind what people call ethical principles is the realization of the standards of truth are found to reach not only ourselves, but others as well.³⁰⁴ It is this realization, Cahill explains, that enables religious institutions and individuals the capacity to make ethical claims.³⁰⁵ Cahill focuses then on the capabilities of morality and ethics to be conducive to the development of dialogue and action for a better understanding of the well-being of others. In this vein, she also asserts that ethical norms and behavior must be reexamined based on the development of

³⁰⁴ Lisa Cahill, "Feminist Ethics: Differences and Common Ground, A Catholic Perspective," in *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, ed. Charles Curran et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 190.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

scholarship, medicine, and psychological understanding in the academic field, which must then combine to inform theological and spiritual discourse.³⁰⁶ Cahill describes that many theologians and scholars have taken to this approach, detailing the value of scholarship on third world issues and those related to the promotion of quality human life.³⁰⁷ She evaluates several different scholars' research, describing her understanding of the sociocultural appropriation of ethical normality, focusing on the issues that she considers to be truly important in the conversation of Christian ethics, namely contraception and abortion.³⁰⁸

Cahill discusses that many theologians and scholars involved in the conversation surrounding ethical practices, especially when concerned with contraception and abortion, are debating the ethical reality of concern for common humanity.³⁰⁹ Particularly, these concerns have developed around third world and impoverished countries, as well as other situations, where having children inhibits the physical well-being of the woman involved and possibly the financial stability of the preexisting family unit.³¹⁰ Cahill is just one of many scholars who have addressed the ethics of contraceptives and abortion in the wake of the rise of the AIDS pandemic in Africa, the rise of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in the Americas and Europe, as well as the focused concern for population control that the United Nations and the World Health Organization have invested interests in.³¹¹ These common concerns that Cahill and others have studied address key concerns that affect the social and personal wellbeing of

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 191-193.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid. 191-193, 194.

³¹¹ Giuseppe Benagiano et al., "Condoms, HIV and the Roman Catholic Church," *Reproductive Biomedicine Online* 22 (2011): 706-708.

individuals and groups of people. Cahill has addressed that these larger concerns, mainly those she attributes as necessary to be addressed for the common good of all, should be evaluated in the light of ethical and moral principles.³¹² Overpopulation, the protection against STIs and AIDS, protection against increased poverty, rape, incest; these are all attributes of the human condition that Cahill analyzes as taking an ethical precedence.³¹³ She continuously asserts that the dignity of human life is precious, and should be protected at all costs, but that those living on earth now are the most precious.³¹⁴ Her philosophy, shared by numerous other scholars, believes in the wellbeing and protection of the living, and establishes a focused concern for the poor and marginalized whether that concern comes in the form of money, modern medicine, or contraceptives.³¹⁵

There are many who share this focused concern on the welfare and common good of all over what the Catholic Church identifies as a collective adherence to the sanctity of all stages of human life. Many scholars, considered to be more liberal and progressive when compared to the Catholic Church, identify that a more pressing concern for the modern world is the allowance and use of artificial contraception techniques, such as condoms, as well as using medical practices to increase the chances of pregnancy, such as in vitro fertilization. They believe that both are moral choices that can be used to uphold the dignity of human life, and act as moral goods in the broader context. However, both suggested methods are taught within the Catholic Church as strongly immoral and contrary to God's plan for humanity.

³¹² Lisa Cahill, "Feminist Ethics," 195-199.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid. For Cahill, those "living on earth now" would include fetuses.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

Both lay men and women and Church scholars have argued over the efficacy of Cahill's argument, however, a leading research team out of Belgium did a study on the Catholic Church's response to many organization's attempts to protect against STIs and HIV/AIDS in the rural regions of northern and sub-Saharan Africa by implementing both male and female condoms to the populace there, which the Catholic Church officially condemned.³¹⁶ They reported that Church officials condemned the use of condoms as they were not completely effective in the prevention of AIDS.³¹⁷ However, the researchers argued that the benefits of condom use were more significant than the efficacy of it as a contraceptive tool. The statistics showed that condoms helped to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS among closely connected groups, while also maintaining a manageable population size that did not change the levels of poverty within the rural community.³¹⁸ Even among Church officials, there are differing opinions, between those officials who believe that condoms are a lesser evil and a moral option for the protection of one's partner in the spread of HIV/AIDS, as opposed to those who continue the fight for unscientifically founded propaganda on condoms as being the purveyors of the disease.³¹⁹

Despite this controversy in the Church hierarchy, the Belgian research team notes in their article, "Condoms, HIV and the Roman Catholic Church," that in 2010 the then Pope Benedict XVI had changed his original stance on condoms, citing an interview the pope had with a German journalist.³²⁰ They report that Pope Benedict XVI believed that

³¹⁶ Giuseppe Benagiano et al. "Condoms, HIV and the Roman Catholic Church," 701-702.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 702-703.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid., 703.

though contraceptive use, such as condoms, was still considered a moral evil, that their use in the protection against HIV and AIDS, especially among prostitutes, could be considered a lesser evil so that those using them may take the first step towards morality by protecting and caring for the wellbeing of others by protecting against the spread of diseases and infections among one another.³²¹ Both progressive and liberal activists in the Catholic Church and other organizations viewed this admission as a step towards a greater discussion on the more ethical reasons behind certain issues and an even greater step towards ethical dialogue, even though many conservative Catholics, lay and otherwise, were not happy with the decision.³²² This is just one example of how the conversation on the applied ethical principles of Christian morality still continues.

In a similar way, just as issues regarding contraception were addressed, so have Catholic theologians and scholars deigned to address the issues regarding artificial fertilization and the ethical principles surrounding it. Officially, the Catholic Church has decried the use of artificial fertilization as having an equal in the sin of contraception.³²³ Paul Lauritzen, a Catholic theologian specializing in the ethics surrounding ethical reproduction, examines the relationship surrounding the discussion of moral and ethical reproduction. Lauritzen describes that the Church views artificial fertilization as an immoral action that defies the natural laws God prescribed for reproduction because it takes the conjugal act of intercourse away from the creation of life, just as contraception removes the procreation of life from intercourse.³²⁴ Catholicism's stance on this issue

³²¹ Ibid., 703-704.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Paul Lauritzen, "Whose Bodies? Which Selves? Appeals to Embodiment in Assessments of Reproductive Technology," in *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, ed. Charles Curran et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 402-403.

³²⁴ Ibid., 403.

largely developed after Vatican II during the 1980s when such technologies as in vitro fertilization, and others, were just beginning to take shape.³²⁵ Lauritzen describes that the Church draws its beliefs from the concept of natural reproduction being founded in the thesis of creation, in natural law, and that the use of technology excludes the humanity of reproduction, demoting the procreation of life as a dull facet of human existence and not worthy of dignity or respect.³²⁶ This stance then places the Church argument against any and all forms of artificial fertilization and gestation based on what it considers to be the “unnatural” way in which the life is created, regardless of the fact that life *was* created.³²⁷

Along this same line, Lauritzen identifies proponents of reproductive technology who argue that this is a viable and ethical choice for procreation, especially among those couples who are infertile and unable to have children the “natural” way.³²⁸ For the most part, couples such as this view artificial fertilization, and all that it entails, as a viable ethical choice to establish a family. Lauritzen discusses that many scientists and contemporary theologians view that the Church should embrace technology and scientific advancement such as this as it would identify a Church that is willing to advance and progress away from what some would consider to be archaic principles that have forced many away from the Church, particularly where scientific evidence and methodology are concerned.³²⁹ There is also a similar stance in regard to personal autonomy that Cahill discussed, that artificial reproduction enables women to have a greater control and command over their bodies and livelihoods, especially in this case in regard to having

³²⁵ Ibid., 404-405.

³²⁶ Ibid., 408.

³²⁷ Ibid., 408-409. Emphasis placed on the italicized “was” is my own.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid., 416-418.

children.³³⁰ By and large, though, there is a strong connection between mainstream Catholicism and feminism that Lauritzen denotes as having a general consensus of reproductive technology as taking away the connection and identity of women from the procreation of another human being.³³¹

This discussion on procreation and the dignity of human life carries over into the larger discussion on the Church's stance towards abortion. As stated previously, the Catholic Church is vehemently against what it sees as the killing of innocent human life in the act of abortion. Sidney Callahan explores the discussion and dialogue that has enveloped religious, social, and political discourse since the 1970s. Callahan discusses that most prochoice Catholics and non-Catholics view abortion as their morally indelible right to control their bodies.³³² Many prochoice women view abortion as morally acceptable when the pregnancy is forced upon them, especially in cases of rape and incest, and when they are unable to physically, financially, or medically care for the child before and after the birth.³³³ Other prochoice proponents explain, as Callahan describes, that abortion enables women to morally uphold their status as equal persons of autonomous value and equality, by being able to have the option to terminate a pregnancy if it inhibits their rights and privileges as free agents in the socially democratic world.³³⁴ Also, just as prochoice individuals argue for the ability to terminate pregnancy if it goes against their financial or medical capabilities, Callahan asserts that they also argue for pregnancy termination if the child born will have a birth defect or low chance of quality

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Sidney Callahan, "Abortion and the Sexual Agenda: A Case for Pro-life Feminism," in *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, ed. Charles Curran et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 422-423.

³³³ Ibid., 423.

³³⁴ Ibid., 424-425.

life.³³⁵ She discusses that arguments such as these are answered by prolife individuals in similar, yet contrasting ways. Callahan establishes that these prolife proponents argue that life, no matter how the fetus was conceived, how it affects the life of the mother, or how it affects the possible future of the child, that the child is precious and should be granted the opportunity to live because it is innocent, regardless of how the mother became pregnant.³³⁶

Callahan reveals that prolife arguments continuously assert that the moral role of the mother in her pregnancy, regardless of station or faculties in life, is to care and provide for her future child, and if she cannot, then she is to carry to term and give the child up for adoption.³³⁷ Callahan establishes that it is a moral responsibility among prolife activists for the woman to use her full capabilities as an equal citizen to create a more equal opportunity for the child by being a source of justice and equitable teaching for the new individual.³³⁸ Prolife views also establish that it is immoral and unethical to remove the child from the father by way of abortion, because the Church identifies that the child must have a connection to both the father and mother for proper guidance and upbringing.³³⁹ Similarly, the rights of the fetus are challenged by prolife supporters because of the belief that life begins at conception, that each new life contains an individual soul that reflects the indelible divine nature of God, which Callahan describes acts as a moral protector in the eyes of prolife men and women.³⁴⁰

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., 427.

³³⁷ Ibid., 427-429.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 536.

³⁴⁰ Callahan, "Abortion and the Sexual Agenda," 430-432.

Based on these arguments discussed by Callahan, it is easy to establish a connection amongst Catholic moral tradition and the dialogue that has developed surrounding these particular ideologies. Each idea and component deals with understandings of human dignity and worth and creates a network that enables these issues to be discussed regarding the other, because they are all related in some aspect. Therefore, it is reasonably and increasingly beneficial to view the connection that circumvents the moral arguments and discussions surrounding such ideas as marriage and family, innate human dignity, contraception, reproductive technology and artificial fertilization, and abortion. The connections surrounding this ethical dialogue identifies the transforming nature of morality in the context of the ever-changing nature of the sociopolitical and medical world. The world has truly entered a new era that embraces different ideas and viewpoints, to which the modern Catholic Church, as a product of this post-Vatican II era, must make itself known in the discussions surrounding such incidences.

Conclusions

Roman Catholic teaching after Vatican II was largely influenced by the moral theology of Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. Where pre-Vatican II Catholic moral teaching was promulgated by priests and nuns, post-Vatican II moral teaching made itself known in the purity of soul and body teachings that condemned sexual actions the Church viewed as deviant, and argued against the use of contraception, prohibited abortion. Within the family context, these teachings were established as reactionary measures towards what the Church hierarchy, with John Paul II in the lead, described as an era of moral ambiguity that began in the 1950s and has continued today. However,

what is notable in this is the realization that the post-Vatican II era also establishes a period of increased dialogue, discussion, and determination to address key issues within the Catholic Church and how they relate to the broader world at large.

The identification of family values and sexual morality surrounding family relationships has been historically intrinsic to the authority of the Church. However, after centuries of dependence upon the secular state to support the moral claims of authority, the dynamic shifted so that the state became the powerful authority in moral issues. Jordan argues that the Church still maintains its religious and moral authority, and that Christians should be wary of becoming docile subjects to the secular bureaucracy. He makes the argument that the Church should better conform to central tenets of the Gospels or recognize that Scripture is not monolithic in teachings and recognize that there are a range of ways to be faithful to Scripture. Otherwise, the Church's authority is moot in the modern context. Farley continues the discussion by analyzing the relationship between the dignity of the human person and the later influences of discourse regarding feminist theologians, scholars, and lay activists in response to concepts of contraception, reproductive technology, and abortion that scholars Cahill, Lauritzen, and Callahan address.

Attitudes regarding contraception, reproductive technology, and abortion are multifaceted and exist within their own theological and moral realms of human reason. Cahill, Lauritzen, and Callahan identify a common trend of thought shared by many of the theological discussants. Mostly, these individuals share a common belief that humans should be free to choose their own moral code based on an examination of their consciences. However, they also believe that humanity contains an indelible dignity and

should not be harmed. Therefore, for all intents and purposes, these individuals and scholars are largely supportive of orthodox Catholic teaching. However, just as with marriage, the concepts surrounding moral choices are multifaceted, and can be interpreted in numerous ways. Thus, the discourse found supporting and refuting these myriad claims are evidence of this larger discourse that is readily available since the closing of Vatican II.

The context of dialogue opening between the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and the larger world establishes a connection between the opening of dialogue since Vatican II and the results that the discussions had on relevant global issues. One instance is the leniency granted by Pope Benedict XVI towards the use of condoms to protect one another against the spread of STIs and HIV/AIDS. The result of this was not a large change or reform in doctrine, but a willingness of the Catholic Church to open dialogue concerning the myriad issues that theologians, scholars, and lay individuals deem important. Though the Church may not change its stance towards issues, such as abortion, the relative change in the promulgation of academic and theological discussion has increased the Church's availability to connect to and maintain strong relationships to lay and secular leaders and institutions. It has enabled the Church to more fully enter this period of focused change and discussion for the better.

Chapter 3: Homosexuality in the Contemporary Church

“The relationship between LGBT Catholics and the Catholic Church has been at times contentious and combative and at times warm and welcoming. Much of the tension characterizing this complicated relationship results, I believe, from a lack of communication and a good deal of mistrust between LGBT Catholics and the hierarchy. What is needed is a bridge between that community and the church.”

- James Martin, SJ, *Building a Bridge* (2017)³⁴¹

With the emergence of Vatican II, the issues concerning women and queer Catholics have broadened to include a cohesive dialogue that has addressed myriad issues and concerns related to how Catholics as individuals respond and react to changing perceptions of human existence and agency in the global world. This chapter examines the dialogue on the individual, specifically on how the “homosexual person” should be involved in the life of the Church. This discussion deals with more than just the LGBTQ+ individual, but with how the Catholic Church and the broader world should react to and interact with the humanity of the individual. To develop this concept, within this last chapter I will summarize the basic tenets and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church on homosexuality and the sin involved, while also addressing the questions of how, where, and why these beliefs developed in this scriptural tradition. Included in this discussion are examples of the numerous voices and scholars involved in this socio-religious debate, as well as the modern responses of the Catholic Church on this relevant issue.

Summary of Catholic Church Teaching on Homosexuality

The predominant teaching regarding homosexuality and queer individuals was articulated after Vatican II with the rise of John Paul II to the papacy in 1978. As one of the most influential pontiffs in recent memory, John Paul II influenced the development

³⁴¹ James Martin, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter Into A Relationship OF Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity* (New York: Harper One Publishers, 2017), 17.

and understanding of morality, especially regarding sexuality and marriage. During this time-period, particularly the mid-to-late 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Church officials believed that individuals, and Catholics especially, were becoming sexually and morally lax regarding the Church's teachings on proper sexual relations. Thus, the leading officials, especially the then newly-elected Pope John Paul II, wrote letters warning Catholics on the moral obligations they held as Catholics. Primarily, John Paul II's 129-part lecture series, colloquially called *Theology of the Body*, became the primary teaching authority regarding how Catholics should act and behave before, after, and during marriage.

Pope John Paul II began his catechetical teachings by defining humans as spiritual reflections of the invisible God.³⁴² However, within this view is the physical reflection of human sexuality and the idea of gendered norms, expressed through the belief of "male and female he [God] created them."³⁴³ John Paul II makes a connection between humanity and the physical body, which is used to procreate. The joining of man and woman in sexual union is expressed in the Catholic sentiment as a biblical and sacramental union that reflects the glory of God, the relationship to which God established between Himself and humanity and is a physical representation of the relationship that God has with his Church.³⁴⁴

Pope John Paul II's teachings regarding moral marriage extend from Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Pope Paul VI wrote, "The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it

³⁴² Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained* (New York: Pauline Books, 2008), 109-110.

³⁴³ Genesis 1: 27 NRSV. This references the Christian creation account in Genesis that depicts man and woman as partners for each other, to bear children and be fruitful to populate God's earth.

³⁴⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 400-403. The second edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was fully formed in 1997 after Pope John Paul II's series on the *Theology of the Body* was complete. Its current form is heavily influenced by Pope John Paul II and is reflection of his moral teachings and guidance as the head of the Church's Magisterium.

interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marriage act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.”³⁴⁵ John Paul II expounded upon this central teaching because the nuptial union of husband and wife makes them one flesh. Then the marriage must be open to the possibility of new life, welcoming God’s gift of procreation and call to populate the earth.³⁴⁶ However, since marriage is viewed as a way to propagate human life, it intrinsically delineates the openness of marriage within the Church to exclude same-sex partnerships and couples. Yet, for many individuals, marriage is not rigidly defined between men and women, and some do not believe that there should be institutions that govern their personal lives; if they live good lives, then that should be enough.³⁴⁷ However, the Catholic Church does not see it that way.

The Church’s stance on these issues echoes the broader sociopolitical rhetoric of American and European social life, especially what it considers to be the norms and values of family life. Between the 1950s and 80s, the broader social context had stipulated family values that included an organized household consisting of a father as the head of the household, the mother as the caretaker of the home, and two or more children. Pre-marital sex was taboo, and all discussions of sexual acts and other things were behind closed doors. These uniform “family values,” influenced by the predominately Protestant Christian ethos of American and European family life, ultimately effected how the Catholic Church, not to mention other Christian denominations, viewed the attitudes and

³⁴⁵ Pope Paul VI, “Observing the Natural Law,” *Humane Vitae*, 11. By this, marriage must, at each sexual union of husband and wife, be open to the possibility of having children. This means that there should never be any form of male or female contraception used during sexual intercourse.

³⁴⁶ Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained*, 524-526.

³⁴⁷ Jacob M. Held, “Gay Marriage, Liberalism, and Recognition: The Case for Equal Treatment,” *Public Affairs Quarterly* 21, no. 3, (July 2007): 227-230.

concepts related to homosexuality, which Christianity as a larger whole viewed to be contrary to the supposed natural order of sex and sexual relations.

Therefore, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the official teaching authority of the Church, describes that proper moral sexuality as “man’s belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in complete and lifelong mutual gift of man and a woman.”³⁴⁸ Similarly, the *Catechism* also describes that ““God created man in his own image...male and female he created them;’ He blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’...”³⁴⁹ The Church argues that since God created man and woman in his own image, and that he designated man and woman to come together in sexual union to procreate, that the only moral sexuality of humanity is that which allows life to be made. Any other sexual union, according to the Church, goes against the natural law of God. Therefore, in this instance, homosexuality in its practiced form, the Church states, cannot be morally acceptable.

The Church describes in its *Catechism* that:

Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 561.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 560.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 566.

According to this teaching, being queer or having “homosexual inclinations” is not a sin but acting on them is. Under this view, same-sex relationships are not considered to be morally right. However, despite this seemingly harsh outlook on the Church’s queer members, the Church maintains an official outlook of empathy regarding these individuals. The Church states that:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.³⁵¹

The Church’s call to compassion and understanding, despite its abject teaching on the wrongness of “homosexual tendencies,” expresses an ethic that is compassionate and loving towards all its flock, regardless of their individual preferences. It maintains a necessary connection of support and love towards LGBTQ+ peoples, while still upholding what it believes is moral guidance and religious truth. This dichotomy between compassion and upholding the conceived sinfulness of homosexual actions reflects this broader notion of changing psychological attitudes. The current *Catechism*, written under the guide of Pope John Paul II and published in 1997, identifies and correlates with the changing identification of homosexuality as no longer being a conduced mental disorder or as homosexuality itself being inherently sinful, just the sexual actions between two of the same sex. However, despite this “loving compassion” angle the Church is espousing, its attitude towards marriage and procreation do not lend to the allowance of same-sex

³⁵¹ Ibid.

partnership. To further this claim, the Church argues that all homosexual persons are called to chastity:

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.³⁵²

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.”³⁵³ Thus, for all Christians, chastity is the upholding of one’s physical and spiritual virtue to become one with Christ. The Church teaches that as Christ is the ultimate model for a good, moral Christian life, then they should become like Christ who they teach was chaste his entire life.³⁵⁴ Yet, the imperative in this situation is that queer individuals are only called to this life of chastity, and nothing more. They cannot enter any relationship or sexual union without the Church telling them that their actions are inherently sinful.

Traditionally, there have been six Bible passages that the Church has traditionally used to examine the sinfulness of homosexuality. Three come from the Old Testament, while the other three come from the New Testament. These passages are: Genesis 19:1-11, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:8-10. The Church has traditionally used these to uphold its teachings on homosexuality. However, what do these passages say? What was the context? What did the original language mean? How have others used these passages?

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid., 561.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

Unveiling the Passages on Homosexuality

Before Vatican II, biblical scholarship was done under the guide of Church officials, and according to Church tradition and teaching.³⁵⁵ Meaning, if the Church had already ruled one thing as wrong, then it was thought to have been divinely inspired within the doctrine of the Church, such as homosexuality. Largely, this traditional stance was based upon the translations of monks in the eighth and ninth centuries, whose translations became the product and official teaching stance of the Church at those specific periods. Due to the Church's heavy influence and use of tradition as a spiritual guide in deciding all matters of faith, biblical scholarship within the Catholic Church before Vatican II did not include any outside reasoning that would have "jeopardized" the Church's teaching authority.

In the same way, Academia and social culture in the West, in large part although not exclusively, has supported this predominantly Christian viewpoint through political and social discourse, which ultimately impacted biblical scholarship. Therefore, biblical scholarship has only developed in the last forty years, primarily because of Vatican II's causal ability to open the discussion on the nature of homosexuality. As a result, both scholars and theologians have attempted to tackle the historical and contextual basis of the Church's reasoning for their stance on the sinfulness of homosexual actions. In doing so, they have examined both the Old Testament and New Testament mentions of

³⁵⁵ Before Vatican II, biblical scholarship within the Roman Catholic Church was done under the watchful gaze of Catholic hierarchical officials. This does not mean that biblical scholarship had not been done or had not been progressing before Vatican II. I am arguing that this kind of scholarship on this issue within the Catholic context was able to develop and progress because of Vatican II, not biblical scholarship as a whole.

homosexual activity. What has changed in this new academic focus? What are these biblical scholars saying about these passages in this post-Vatican II era?

Some of the Old Testament passages that have become part of the traditional mantra against homosexuality are Genesis 19:1-11, Leviticus 18:22, and Leviticus 20:13.

The passage from Genesis is the tale of Sodom:

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old . . . surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.” Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” But they replied, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.”³⁵⁶

When first reading this passage, it is easy to see how the modern Church would understand it, assuming that God detested the lustful and malicious thoughts of the men of Sodom, which would have included the sexual interactions between men. However, Kenneth Locke would assert something quite different. In his article, “The Bible on Homosexuality,” he discusses the historical and contextual basis for these passages. He discusses that homosexuality as we know it today, is different than to how it would have appeared or been conceived in the time of the Jewish people and the early Christians.³⁵⁷ He describes that the sin of the men of Sodom is not the perceived rape, but the transgression of the laws of hospitality.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Genesis 19:4-9 NRSV. The full passage is Gen 19:1-11.

³⁵⁷ Kenneth A. Locke, “The Bible and Homosexuality,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 48, no. 2 (April 2010): 127-128.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

According to Locke, the society in which Lot lived was dangerous towards travelers, particularly at night when a traveler had a greater chance of dying. Therefore, in Lot's society, it was a normative rule to shelter strangers and travelers for the night if they visited.³⁵⁹ To corroborate this, Locke looks at writings from Isaiah and Ezekiel, who describe that the sin of Sodom was their "pride, xenophobia, and judicial offenses," and Isaiah admonishes Sodom "to learn to do good and seek justice."³⁶⁰ Therefore, according to Robert Gnuse, the sins of Sodom are not necessarily men-on-men sexual actions, but the attempt and desire to break the rules and conditions of hospitality.³⁶¹ Locke also investigates the writings of early Christian writers, such as St. Ambrose, Origin, and John Cassian, among others, who did not perceive the sin of Sodom to be homoerotic in nature, but was a continuation of the breach of hospitality.³⁶² Up until the late fourteenth century, this view of Sodom has been the mainstay of scholars, and only recently has the interpretation of Sodom been homosexual in nature, especially among some of the more conservative and evangelical Christian groups.³⁶³

However, in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, it appears that there is a distinct prohibition against male-male partnerships: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination," and "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them."³⁶⁴ The word "abomination" in this sense is the modern English translation of the

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 130.

³⁶¹ Robert K. Gnuse, "Seven Gay Texts: Biblical Passages Used to Condemn Homosexuality," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (2015): 74.

³⁶² Kenneth A. Locke, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 131-132.

³⁶³ Robert K. Gnuse, "Seven Gay Texts," 74-75. See also Kenneth A. Locke, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 131-133.

³⁶⁴ Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 NRSV.

Hebrew word *toevath*, which literally means “uncleanness, impurity, or ritual/religious taboo.”³⁶⁵ This taboo, Locke asserts, refers to actions that would have broken the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-26, which mandates a separation of actions and the Jewish people from the actions and people already living in the land of Canaan.³⁶⁶ The Holiness Code enabled the Jewish people to ethnically set themselves apart from the rest of the peoples of Canaan, which presupposes that male homoerotic relations was an action commonly done among the non-Jewish peoples in Canaan.³⁶⁷ Another anecdote to this situation is that the term *toevath* is the same term used to denote the wrongness of cursing one’s father and mother, incest and adultery, sex with animals, consulting mediums, and sleeping with a woman during her menstruation cycle.³⁶⁸ Gnuse indicates that these infringements were commonly seen among the other people surrounding the Israelites, and therefore were to set them apart ethnically from the others.³⁶⁹

Not only were these considered taboo in order to safeguard Jewish purity and identity, there was also a deeper concern to protect the Jewish understanding of gender at the time.³⁷⁰ According to Jewish gender distinctions of the time, same-sex sexual relations were a transgression of the societal construct of the male-female dynamic of sexual intercourse. For two men to be sexually active, one man would have had to take on the passive, “female” role in the relationship by allowing himself to be anally penetrated.³⁷¹ However, this action would have caused the receiving man to lose his

³⁶⁵ Kenneth A. Locke, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 133.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Robert K. Gnuse, “Seven Gay Texts,” 75-76.

³⁶⁸ Ibid. See also Kenneth Locke, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 133.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 76-77.

³⁷⁰ Kenneth A. Locke, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 133-134.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 134.

manly honor, and transgress the boundaries of gender as denoted by society.³⁷² Though the Bible lacks a clear-cut discussion of female homoeroticism, it is assumed to be the same for female-female relationships. Their copulation would denigrate the assumed gender roles, forcing one woman to assume the active position of a man, which would have been considered blasphemous and dishonorable of the position of women in God's gender designation.³⁷³ Thus, these ancient Jewish passages that describe homoerotic behavior are deconstructed to portray the transgression of what is believed to be the natural progression of socially established gender roles.³⁷⁴ This view is reflected in the Church's stance regarding sexual intercourse and marriage, which is believed to be a reflection of God's divine natural law.³⁷⁵

As in the Old Testament, the New Testament also contains three passages that are traditionally used to decry what we call today as homosexual behavior. These passages from Paul's epistles are Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:10. Like their Old Testament counterparts, the New Testament passages have only recently been subjected to thorough academic scholarship. Due to the lack of thorough scholarship historically, many Christians view these passages as undeniable proof for the sinfulness or wrongness of same-sex physical relationships. The modern translations of these passages use words that are synonymous to behavior that are inherently used to denote harmful, inappropriate, or unnatural behavior, which is often misconstrued to mean homosexuality, or same-sex relationships, as we know it today.³⁷⁶

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ruth Mazzo Karras, "Active/Passive, Acts/Passions: Greek and Roman Sexualities," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (October 2000): 1255-1256.

³⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 566.

³⁷⁶ Kenneth A. Locke, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 135.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul observes a list of behaviors that he considers to be immoral:

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.³⁷⁷

Paul states a similar list in 1 Timothy 1:9-11:

This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.³⁷⁸

For most scholars who study the Greek and English translations of these passages the list is not the issue, but the translation of the specific behaviors that relate to homoerotic behavior is.³⁷⁹ The term used to denote “male prostitutes” in Paul used in 1 Corinthians is *malakoi*, which, according to the *A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, offers two meanings: (1) “pertaining to being yielding to touch, soft,” and (2) “pertaining to being passive in a same-sex relationship.”³⁸⁰ The term “sodomites” used in both passages is the Greek word *arsenokoitai*, which means “a male who engages in sexual activity with a person of his own sex.”³⁸¹ However, the translations and meanings are still up for debate among scholars.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NRSV.

³⁷⁸ 1 Timothy 1:9-11

³⁷⁹ Robert Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 101-103.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 105-109.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

Dale Martin establishes that these two terms, *arsenokoites* and *malakoi*, have historically been translated in numerous ways, and are assumed to have an inherent sexual meaning as the *-arsen-* and *-koites-* in both refers to the bed, or marriage bed.³⁸² However, what is interesting, Martin denotes, is that the belief of this term to denote sexual action does not have a linguistic or historical basis in any ancient writings from the same period.³⁸³ The term has been used in multiple writings for numerous different situations and cannot be translated effectively. Thus, scholarship states that no one truly knows what *arsenokoites* actually means.³⁸⁴ *Malakoi* has also been historically hard to define, and the term *malakos*, referring to the word “soft” or “passive” refers to an effeminate nature, meaning having a womanly or feminine disposition, at least in ancient Jewish and early Christian writings during the second temple period.³⁸⁵ However, the term *malakos* has never been used in Christian writings to refer to homoerotic behavior, but actually refers to individuals who are submitting to baser instincts. Meaning, these are people behaving like women who were considered to have a more “wanton” or unabashed “sexual desire,” thus not referring to homoerotic behavior, but to unrestrained sexual activity.³⁸⁶ Martin corroborates this view and states that *malakos* was often used to denote men who were more expressive of feminine social traits, but did not always denote men who had sex with other men.³⁸⁷

³⁸² Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 39.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 42-43.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 46-47.

³⁸⁶ Kenneth A. Locke, “The Bible and Homosexuality,” 136-137.

³⁸⁷ Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 46-47.

Unlike the previous passages, Paul's letter to the Romans contains arguably the clearest reference to what Locke referred to as homoerotic behavior.³⁸⁸ In Romans 1:18-27, Paul provides another list of wrongful or shameful acts that provides a basis for the homoerotic actions and references. The beginning of this list introduces how the glory of God has been made visible through creation, that humanity has no excuse when they abandon worship of God for idols, and thus God's wrath is justified when he punishes humanity:

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.³⁸⁹

As with 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, this list in Romans identifies for many Christians that homoerotic behavior is inherently sinful, and cannot be changed, which categorically for Catholicism has been the case. However, scholars have continued to re-contextualize the Greek used in these passages to conclude on the meaning and context of the words used.

Roy Bowen Ward argues that the sections mentioning homoeroticism are part of a larger polemic against idolatry, which has enabled the followers of Christ to replace the glory of God in Jesus with the temptations and sinfulness of man.³⁹⁰ Even scholar Mark

³⁸⁸ Kenneth A. Locke, "The Bible and Homosexuality," 137.

³⁸⁹ Romans 1:24-27 NRSV.

³⁹⁰ Roy Bowen Ward, "Why Unnatural? Tradition Behind Romans 1:26-27." *Harvard Theological Review* 90, no. 3 (1997): 277-279.

Smith, in “Ancient Bisexuality,” states that, according to Paul in this case, homoerotic behavior is considered to be a punishment by God for entering into idolatrous relationships with other things that are not God. According to Paul, homoerotic behavior and the idolatry of the Gentiles were systematically linked.³⁹¹ Locke even chimes in on this development, and points out that for many scholars in this case, such as James B. Nelson and Richard B. Hays, the sin for Paul was not homoeroticism or same-sex relationships, but idolatry.³⁹² However, other scholars state that when Paul mentions “error” in verse 27, the error is homoerotic actions, and that the “penalty” is some form of disease or malady.³⁹³ Yet, according to L. William Countryman, the designation, description, and translation of these passages still provide an unsatisfactory interpretation.³⁹⁴

For Paul, homoeroticism may have violated Jewish laws, especially regarding purity, but the action so far has not been described as inherently sinful. Though designated as impure to Jewish customs, it is well-known that though Paul honored Jewish laws and customs after his conversion, he never saw them as necessary to salvation in Christ.³⁹⁵ Therefore, to truly look at this, Smith and Ward dissect the phrase: “Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another” (Romans 1:26-27).³⁹⁶

The issue for scholars in this case is what Paul meant by natural, Greek *physis*, and unnatural, Greek *para physin*. Locke delineates the two, explaining that these two

³⁹¹ Mark D. Smith, “Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26-27,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no 2 (1996): 223-226.

³⁹² Kenneth A. Locke, “The Bible and Homosexuality,” 139.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ Mark D. Smith, “Ancient Bisexuality,” 123-126.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 126-127. See also Roy Bowen Ward, “Why Unnatural?”, 283-287.

terms represented what was good or acceptable by the laws of nature; however, the connotation for “acceptable by the laws of nature” was different 2,000 years ago than what we know of today.³⁹⁷ *Physis*, in ancient Greek discourse, probably meant more along the lines of a “conventional, proper, or inborn character or appearance” or the true nature of something.³⁹⁸ *Para physin*, on the other hand, was denoted by the philosopher Seneca, to be “unconventional” or “against nature,” which could have been anything ranging from hot baths to potted plants.³⁹⁹ Therefore, for Paul, the use of these terms are different than what we would acknowledge them to be. This phrase has often been attributed to examples of female homoeroticism, but Locke uses James Miller’s description in “The Practice of Romans 1:26: Homosexual or Heterosexual?” to provide another conclusion.

Locke explains that female homoeroticism did not garner the same level of concern as male homoeroticism did. It was instead considered to be in a different category, which made it not necessarily sinful or wrong, although it was seen as impure.⁴⁰⁰ Locke describes that the sexual action portrayed in verses 26-27 was not female homoeroticism, but the non-coital actions of oral or anal sex.⁴⁰¹ He discusses that since the delegation of homoerotic behavior between women is separate from the male homoerotic behavior, that it would not make sense for female homoeroticism to be part of a list of immoral behavior, especially if it was only considered to be an impure action.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁷ Roy Bowen Ward, “Why Unnatural?” 285-288.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Locke also uses this example; Smith as well. This example of “against nature” (Greek: *contra naturam*) comes from M. Nissinen’s *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 105.

⁴⁰⁰ Kenneth A. Locke, “The Bible and Homosexuality,” 141. See James Miller, “The Practice of Romans 1:26: Homosexual or Heterosexual?”, *Novum Testamentum* 37, no 1 (1995): 1-11.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

Therefore, the action Paul decries is not female homoeroticism, but the wrongful actions of oral and anal sexual intercourse between men and women because it goes against the normal, or “natural,” sexual action of penis-vaginal intercourse among heterosexual relationships.⁴⁰³

However, this did not mean that Paul did not approve of what we call today as homosexual behavior. The sexual relationship between two men and two women was still considered to be impure, against the norm, and defiling of the societal gender-specific relationships of Paul’s Jewish upbringing because it forced one man to assume the feminine, passive role and forced one woman to assume the active, male-centered role, which Jewish custom could not recognize as natural being as they did not have the correct anatomical appendages to perform the male sexual action.⁴⁰⁴ For Paul, though, same-sex relations were not the mainstay of his teaching. It did not reach the same level of concern or importance as maintaining circumcision or kosher laws did when converting Gentiles to the new faith in Jesus Christ did.⁴⁰⁵ It is only recently, within the last two-hundred years that the concepts of homosexuality and homoeroticism became a major concern for Christian groups, especially the Catholic Church. Paul’s purpose for writing Romans was not to assert or focus on the moral ambiguity of homoeroticism, but to describe that everyone was under the influence of sin, and the only way to be released from sin was to follow Jesus Christ.⁴⁰⁶ This has become the broader cultural norm among practicing Catholics and Protestants and, as such, it reflects the Christian consensus of sin and sexuality.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 142-143.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

The resulting analysis by Locke, Gnuse, Martin, Ward, Smith, and the others mentioned, indicates how the wealth of knowledge concerning biblical scholarship has grown within the Catholic context since Vatican II. The dominate opinion amongst these scholars is that the cultural understandings of these passages do not fit the face value reading that we normally ascribe to in our modern English translations. The context and historical appropriation is different for us than it was for the early Christians reading these texts and even for those Jews and the authors that wrote them. For example, the common used term “homosexual” did not exist during those early years and is only a recent conglomeration of Greek and Latin verbs used to describe the differences noted in same-sex attracted individuals at the turn of the 20th century.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, because of this expanded scholarship, we are faced with even more questions. As a product of this post-Vatican II era, how has this new contextual application of the traditional biblical passages condemning homosexuality effected the Catholic scholars, groups, and activists whose voices have developed in this larger narrative? In what ways have they taken this information and expanded it into this larger and more developed discussion within the Catholic Church?

Arguments Surrounding Homosexuality in the Catholic Church

With the emergence of these changing conceptions around the historical and contextual biblical texts, scholars of this period and today have developed discourse and arguments surrounding the implications of these new attitudes towards homosexuality

⁴⁰⁷ Mark Smith, “Ancient Bisexuality,” 224-225. The terms “homosexual” and “homosexuality” were first used in German by Karl Maria Kertbeny in a letter to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in May 6, 1868. In 1880, Gustav Jager's book *Die Entdeckung der Seele* used the terms homosexual and heterosexual as well, borrowing from Kertbeny, after which in the succeeding decades other authors began to use the generalized terms, as well. It was not until the 1930s that the terms entered the main vernacular framework.

and how it fits into the broader discussion within the Catholic Church. There have been both positive and negative approaches to understanding the place of homosexuality within Catholic Church teaching since Vatican II, and it is necessary to investigate and analyze the responses of traditional Catholic scholars and leaders regarding the nature of the homosexual person, and their reactions to popular movements and attitudes concerning the equalization of homosexuality within the universal Church and the secular sociopolitical sphere. In doing so, the writings and voices of scholars and activists will be analyzed and showcased to provide both a more inclusive and broader image to this ongoing dialogue on homosexuality. Included in this discussion will be scholars Bernadette Brooten, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Mark D. Jordan, and James Martin, as well as organizations such as *Courage and Dignity*.

In her book, *Love Between Women*, Bernadette Brooten analyzes how pre-Christian, ancient Egyptian, Roman, and early Christian concepts regarding homoerotic relationships between women were viewed within the contextual culture of their periods. She applies these understandings to modern attitudes toward lesbians, bisexuals, and women. She analyzes that the evidence of female homoeroticism in ancient Greek and Egyptian texts, citing the use of Egyptian spells and early Greek and Latin writings to denote the presence of homoerotic relationships, allows scholars to view ancient peoples as being relatively aware of homoerotic relationships and accepting of them, for the most part.⁴⁰⁸ She identifies resources on same-sex relationships within ancient societies that showcase the normality of the relationships, including how the use of erotic spells and ancient astrological practices allowed for a greater understanding and reasoning behind

⁴⁰⁸ Bernadette Brooten, *Love Between Women*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 41-49.

what she considers to be the “natural-ness of same-sex partnerships.”⁴⁰⁹ She analyzes that the use of erotic spells by both ancient Egyptian and Greek peoples showcased a sense of normality within the societal structure, and primarily identifies this normality with the understandings of ancient conceptions surrounding astrology.⁴¹⁰ However, she also identifies other Greek thinkers who believed that homoerotic behavior between both men and women was wrong. For example, according to the writings of Dorotheos of Sidon, homoerotic behavior was attributed to a constellational evil, and often was compared to immoral actions like prostitution.⁴¹¹

However, on the other side of the spectrum, Brooten delineates that astrologers such as Manetho and Ptolemy viewed homoerotic behavior as being a product of the individual’s birth, attributing specific constellations and signs in the night sky to establishing the passive and active sexual roles of individuals.⁴¹² These individuals believed that regardless of the viewed gender of the individual, the timing and place of one’s birth could affect how one was viewed in a sexual sense; meaning if they took on characteristics of the masculine “active role” versus the feminine “passive role.”⁴¹³ Brooten states that the reactions of early writers and scholars such as Ptolemy and Manetho indicate a general awareness and acceptance of same-sex relationships and partnerships within Greco-Roman and Egyptian societies.⁴¹⁴

According to Brooten, the identification of same-sex relationships was not as accepted within the Jewish tradition, supporting Locke and Karras’ analysis of Jewish

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 74-80.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 115-119.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 119-123.

⁴¹² Ibid., 123-128.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 139-141.

gender conceptions and the intricacies involved in Jewish society and culture.⁴¹⁵ In doing so, she investigates the relationship of Paul's writings in Romans to his sociocultural upbringing as a Jew. Predominately, she has concluded that the wrongness of homoerotic activity expressed by Paul in his letters is the renegotiation of gender roles within the Judeo-Christian paradigm.⁴¹⁶ For Paul, homoerotic behavior was "unnatural" and "wrong" because it enabled a woman to gain sociocultural status and forced a man to lose sociocultural status.⁴¹⁷ This highly gendered construct was part and parcel to the Jewish understanding of society, and was given a theological basis in Paul's writings.⁴¹⁸ Based on this, Brooten argues that the development of gender relationships and understandings of sexuality today should not be influenced by the understandings of ancient cultures.⁴¹⁹ She identifies that ancient authorities found homoerotic relationships to be largely unnatural, but largely due to their understanding of gender and how same-sex couplings transgressed the socially accepted norm.⁴²⁰ To sustain this "gender-stratified-order," Brooten argues, is an insult to queers, though she stresses women in particular, and debases their lives.⁴²¹ She believes that by understanding the past, the world is able to make the necessary changes to progress towards a future where "we acknowledge the sacredness and holiness of a woman expressing her love for another woman."⁴²²

Scholar Rosemary Radford Reuther discusses the historical and theological viewpoints of four well-known scholars of feminism and sexuality in her work –

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 189-194.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 265-266.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 359-362.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid., 362.

Bernadette Brooten, Mary Hunt, Carter Heyward, and Virginia Mollenkott. Reuther states that currently in today's modern society, the socialization of women, especially within the United States, establishes a supposed heterosexual identity and awareness of women within the modern context of cultural norms.⁴²³ She suggests that the supposed socialization of women as inherently heterosexual creates an automatic negative response to feelings between both male and female coupled relationships, regardless of whether or not those feelings are platonic or sexual in nature.⁴²⁴ Reuther argues that the inherent antagonism against female relationship, regardless of its sexual nature, creates a system in which society, dominated by a male sense of authority, continuously pushes down the female authority, which eventually establishes an anti-feminist and anti-women bloc.⁴²⁵

She identifies that the educational value found in Brooten and Hunt's discussion of the female-female relationship from both historical-religious standards and psychological social behaviors identifies a connection between social norms and prescribed scientific and academic work.⁴²⁶ Reuther investigates the stances of Heyward and Mollenkott, and indicates that their identification of love as a mutually binding entity between persons enables individuals and groups to come together as a community and share in a common understanding of self and community with God.⁴²⁷ Her analysis includes the idea that the normative values of today's secular and religious authorities cannot base their identifications of female-female (or male-male) relationships purely on the appearance of upholding social norms.⁴²⁸

⁴²³ Rosemary Radford Reuther, "Love Between Women: A Context for Theology," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 37 (2007): 154.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 155-157.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 158-159.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

Reuther indicates that renewed investigation into the loving relationship between men and women, both platonic and sexual, can identify ways in which social groups, such as the Catholic Church and other religiously polarized groups, can become more accepting of the individuals and the love shared between individuals in those relationships.⁴²⁹ It is Reuther's hope that this analysis will indicate an acceptance of the loving relationships shown between same-sex couples, as well.⁴³⁰ Despite this view, however, the Catholic Church still argues and considers homosexual acts and sexual activity between same-sex couples to be morally wrong because they oppose the Church's conception of "natural law" by closing "the sexual act to the gift of life."⁴³¹

Like these previous scholars, Mark Jordan attempts to address the relationship the Church has with its homosexual members. In his book, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism*, he contends that the Catholic Church needs to change its stance regarding same-sex relationships.⁴³² Jordan argues that the modern Church has within it some latent or unexpressed homosexual or homoerotic nature to it that has caused the modern Church to be so restrictive. This belief is supported by the collection of clergy, of hidden actions between priests and other consecrated individuals, and the attitudes in which religious officials have towards the outward expression of homoerotic action.⁴³³ He indicates especially, though, that the teachings of the Church, especially the outward expressions of leading officials, establishes a blatantly homophobic rhetoric that denies the humanity of queer persons.⁴³⁴ Consequently, this

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 566.

⁴³² Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 4-6.

⁴³³ Ibid., 10-14.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 42-47.

rhetoric has caused queer Catholics to feel that they are no longer welcomed, that their sexual reality is unwelcome, and might possibly be wrong, despite the seemingly loving and accepting language used.⁴³⁵ However, the tone of these letters, documents, and official programs condemning the homosexual actions between same-sex couples, has alienated these individuals even further from the Church, which is contrary to the church's conception and belief of community and communal activity as the Body of Christ.

Jordan identifies that the reason for this homophobic nature of the Church can be found in the relationships between Catholic clergy, especially those who are themselves closeted gays.⁴³⁶ The closeted or "compartmentalization" of gay clergy within the Church has increased its current homophobic and anti-gay rhetoric.⁴³⁷ The irony, though, that Jordan is quick to identify is that according to several surveys of Catholic priests in the U.S., there are numerous priests who have anonymously stated they are not-heterosexual, which increases Jordan's conception of the homoerotic nature of the Church.⁴³⁸ He indicates in this analysis that the culture of Catholic clergy, both in formation and in practice, exhibits an air of significant homoeroticism that informs the modern Church of a constant anti-gay and anti-disclosure policy among clerics that implements the continued understanding of moral sexuality in Catholic teaching.⁴³⁹

Based on this, Jordan's analysis undergoes a central change in how his investigation of clerical homoeroticism compares to the official teachings of the Church

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 89-90.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 100-105.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 136-140, 180-183.

on homosexuality. He postulates that the Church's closeted homoerotic nature has informed its homophobic reality.⁴⁴⁰ He believes that, to correct this dichotomy within the reality of the Church, Catholicism needs to come to terms to that reality.⁴⁴¹ He understands that the current attitude of the Church is very much anti-homosexual behavior, but insists that the Church needs to reorganize the relationship it has to queer Catholics, and become more pastoral to those individuals who live active homosexual relationships while still taking part in parish life. He believes that there is a difference between loving, same-sex relationships and the appropriately sinful actions of one-night stands and other non-loving sexual relationships.⁴⁴² Ultimately, Jordan indicates that the current Church needs to reconcile its homoerotic culture with its anti-gay reactions, and become more open and inclusive to the beliefs and attitudes of queer Catholics throughout the Church.⁴⁴³ Otherwise, the Church will continue to alienate its own community, and fail in its duty.

This dialogue dating from Vatican II onwards encourages the formation of different discussions involved with homosexuality in the Catholic Church. The result can be seen in these scholars' work, ranging from the development of new interpretations of biblical passages towards a renewed pastoral look at same-sex relationships among faithful Catholics in the wider universal Church. In this expanding dialogue, there are evident examples of how this discussion has bled into the larger culture, especially in the United States. The development of Gay Pride festivals in the secular arena, gay districts in major cities, and the development of awareness and support groups for Catholics

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 237-243.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 243-244.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 244-247.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

indicates how this issue is evolving outside of just religious identity, but is also engaging in the broader culture, affecting both the private and secular institutions. Perhaps evidencing this changing shift was the Catholic institution known as Dignity, which had originally developed as a support group to help bring gay Catholics into communion with the Church and with Church teaching.⁴⁴⁴ Though beginning as a lay organization in the 1970s, it quickly evolved into an organization that promoted communion with sexually active gay couples. The result of this development was the Catholic Church removing all support from Dignity after 1986.⁴⁴⁵ The evidence provided here, through scholars, movements, organizations, and events identifies how despite the rigidity of the Catholic Church's official voice in the matter, there are individuals and groups who believe that there is another way that the Church can maintain and minister its religious teachings and include a more well-rounded and diversified congregation.

Due to this increased discussion among scholars, theologians, and activists, as well as the impact and lack of action regarding significant events, individuals within the Catholic Church itself have attempted to partake in this discussion more personally. In June 2017, James Martin, SJ, editor of *America Magazine* published an essay entitled, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter Into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*. It is a response to the Church's current challenge in ministering to queer Catholics. Despite the Church's doctrinal stance of reacting to LGBT Catholics with respect, compassion, and sensitivity, Martin identifies that the practical application of this teaching is sorely lacking, especially when

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 250.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 250-251.

it comes down to being open and welcoming to their particular community.⁴⁴⁶ He argues that the Church's current relationship with the queer community, particularly to LGBT Catholics, is almost non-existent, which is primarily due to a lack of communication and willingness to recognize the worth of all individuals, including those in the LGBT community.⁴⁴⁷ Martin stresses that the first step to engage and fix relationships between the two groups is to actually begin communication, and to act like Christ who interacted with the marginalized instead of ignoring them and hoping they would go away.⁴⁴⁸ Martin argues that when this Christ-like approach to dialogue begins, then the two communities will be able to create a bridge that is built on respect and compassion, recognizing that everyone involved are prized children of God.⁴⁴⁹ However, Martin also realizes that this discussion is multifaceted on both sides and will not be resolved overnight.

Citing homophobic dialogue, Martin discusses that events such as the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting and the increased suicide rates among LGBT individuals indicates how our current situation has risen to a non-compulsory form of discrimination that is almost second nature.⁴⁵⁰ He argues our society is strongly homophobic and that we must change our attitudes. This includes the Church's stance towards our "LGBT brothers and sisters."⁴⁵¹ He encourages that we must become more compassionate and sensitive to their situation in our culture by allowing ourselves to step into their shoes and

⁴⁴⁶ James Martin, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter Into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2017), 18.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-21,

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33-35.

share in their experiences.⁴⁵² To highlight this assertion, Martin brings in many experiences he has had with LGBT Catholics. He delineates that over the years of his ministry, more and more LGBT Catholics are feeling excluded from the Church, particularly because of how they are treated by the hetero-normative population, and the way they are discussed in Church teaching.⁴⁵³ According to Martin, this exclusion and treatment is against the Gospel message, detailing that Jesus in the Gospels preached an inclusive ministry that included not only pious Jews, but more importantly abject sinners who were considered to be “outsiders.”⁴⁵⁴ Today, many LGBT people are seen as “other,” but Martin insists that Jesus did not see people as “other,” only as the people he had come to call, citing the stories of the healing of the centurion’s servant (Luke 7:1-10) and of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).⁴⁵⁵

Martin suggests that the majority of LGBT persons’ perceptions of exclusion extend from the Church’s definition of homosexual inclinations as “objectively disordered,” a stance that only succeeds in alienating individuals even more.⁴⁵⁶ He points out that the use of such cruel language to describe individuals who are supposed to be beloved children of God does not encourage a relationship of love, respect, and dignity between persons and the Church, and this must change.⁴⁵⁷ He cites a lecture given by Australian bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen in 2016 who stated that:

We cannot talk about integrity of creation, the universal and inclusive love of God, while at the same time colluding with the forces of oppression in the ill-treatment of racial minorities, women, and homosexual persons...It won’t wash

⁴⁵² Ibid., 38-41.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 40-43.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 43-44.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 43-44.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 46-47.

with young people, especially when we purport to treat gay people with love and compassion and yet define their sexuality as “intrinsically disordered.”⁴⁵⁸

According to Martin, this is a problem on both sides.⁴⁵⁹ Both the LGBTQ+ community and the Church hierarchy must earn respect, model compassion, and practice sensitivity in order for the “cycle of hatred” to end.⁴⁶⁰ Queer Catholics must respect the authority of the bishops and the Church’s teaching, and the Church must be focused on the value and worth of its queer community.⁴⁶¹ Martin insists that progress away from the historically cultured view of anger and disgust experienced on both sides of the bridge can be achieved, but that it will only happen if we all “lead as Jesus did, first with welcome, not condemnation.”⁴⁶²

Conclusions

The situation of LGBTQ+ individuals within the larger institution of the Roman Catholic Church is complicated. Largely, the problem within the modern Church is due to a division among Church scholars and secular activists that has pervaded theological and religious discourse since the 1970s and 80s. This is due in part to the expanding ability of scholars and activists to discuss issues in an open manner following Vatican II. Therefore, throughout the succeeding years, the Church has continuously published letters and documents supporting its traditional stance on homosexuality and homosexual acts. The development of the 1975 document, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith situated the Church’s stance on homosexual acts as immoral, in light of the recent emergence of a

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 49, 54.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 51-54.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 144.

more visible sexual culture during the early 1970s, especially in the United States and Europe.⁴⁶³ However, what truly pushed the Church's pastoral relationship with queer persons was with the publication of the *Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* in 1986.⁴⁶⁴

This letter, though seemingly kind and compassionate to queer individuals, provides terminology that is often seen as ambiguous and offensive to many queer peoples. Described in the document, the terms "objective disorder" and "intrinsic moral evil" are used to denote that though same-sex desires are not necessarily sinful, the actions attributed to them are morally reprehensible and evil.⁴⁶⁵ This, though, has caused quite a stir in the international community, especially among Catholics who identify as queer, which has been evidenced by the expanding dialogue on these issues since Vatican II.

The current situation in the United States and throughout the world more broadly has identified a movement within and outside the Church that has urged for a more current interpretation of Scripture that allows for the historical and contextual attitudes of the authors to be realized and accounted for. The scholarship of individuals such as Locke, Gnuse, Smith, Martin, and Ward indicates a changing understanding of biblical scholarship that challenges the official stance and teaching of the Church. In a similar way, there are activists and scholars throughout the world who are arguing for a Church that is more inclusive and open to the ministering of queer Catholics. For many of these scholars, exemplified by the voices of Brooten, Reuther, Jordan, and Martin, the

⁴⁶³ Andrew K. T. Yip, "Dare to Differ: Gay and Lesbian Catholics' Assessment of Official Catholic Positions on Sexuality," *Sociology of Religion* 58, no. 2 (2003): 168.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid. See paragraph three of *Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*.

Church's focus on homosexual pastoral care should emphasize a relationship of love and understanding that takes the human dignity and worth of individuals into account.⁴⁶⁶

However, the reality of this situation, despite this largely circular discussion, is much more complex than what is currently seen.

For the Church to change its stance on homosexuality it would take more than a miraculous conversion of attitude and thought. It is much more difficult than just recanting documents and reorganizing teaching. It is a complete changing of tradition, of 2,000 years of teaching authority promulgated by saints, scholars, and religious officials alike. The situation is diverse and multifaceted, much like this dialogue. However, I believe that there is a very evident shift in how the modern Church, especially under Pope Francis, has looked at these issues. Pope Francis' revolutionary response to reporters concerning gay Catholics, "Who am I to judge?", identified how the current pope is analyzing, acknowledging, and considering the breadth of this discussion.⁴⁶⁷ Despite this response, change in the Church is slow and thoughtful.

As a Catholic and a scholar, I have a unique vantage point into this discussion and the reality that homosexuality has within the modern Church. Currently, the Roman Curia and the composition of the Magisterium are too traditionalist and conservative to make any major headway into tackling this issue, even if it is just an opening of discussion with queer Catholics on pastoral ministry. The Church leadership is too rigid in tradition and scholarship and relies heavily on that tradition to uphold its religious autonomy. Yet, that does not mean that the Church is not capable of change or reform. The induction of

⁴⁶⁶ See Reuther, "Love Between Women," 153-160.

⁴⁶⁷ BBC, "Pope Francis: Who Am I To Judge Gay People?" *BBC News* (July 29, 2013), accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23489702>.

Francis into the office of the papacy indicates how the Church is slowly changing, and how discussion has impacted the relativity of the Church's authority and power. In the end, I believe that for the Church to fully address this issue, and others like it, the modern Church needs to acknowledge the breadth of this discussion officially. Vatican II has enabled this issue to be addressed more broadly, engaging the wealth of knowledge of activists, scholars, and other queer Catholic groups. It is important that this broadening discussion be addressed in the current climate, and that concern for queer individuals within the Catholic Church be more meaningfully engaged by the official Church. Otherwise, I fear a reduction in the Church's ecclesiastical authority among queer Catholics and the reaction that further non-cooperative dialogue will cause among Church members and the larger world.

Conclusion: The Future of the Church

“Before Vatican II, in theology, as in other areas, the discipline was fixed. After the council there has been a revolution - a chaotic revolution - with free discussion on everything. There is now no common theology or philosophy as there was before.”
- Godfried Danneels⁴⁶⁸

Vatican II was one of the most seminal councils in the Catholic Church because it established some of the most important discussions in Church history. It revolutionized the Catholic Church into the modern world. Vatican II created internal and external change in Church practices, dialogue, and attitudes regarding certain issues within the universal Church. Vatican II's most well-known revolutionary change in Church practice was the Church's concern for correct practice, which steamrolled the Church into the new millennium, allowing for the Church to be more embracing, open, and inclusive to the younger generations and to the on-looking world. However, I argued that one of the most important consequences for the Church from Vatican II was the evolution and expansion of dialogue concerning multiple issues and important ideas among practicing Catholics and the wider public. Three of these issues are the changing role of women in Church life, the importance of sexual ethics in Catholic moral teaching, and the changing conceptions surrounding homosexuality in Catholic teaching and the lived experience of the Church.

The Church's traditional roles for women have primarily been described as their vocation – mainly as devoted wives, mothers, religious sisters, or single individuals. However, many lay individuals and groups viewed these as restrictive of women's potential in Church life. Thus, the years after Vatican II opened discussion among both

⁴⁶⁸ Doris Donnelly, “An Interview With Godfried Danneels,” *America: The Jesuit Review* (July 30, 2001), accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/325/article/interview-godfried-danneels>.

scholars and activists regarding a more active role for women in the Church. Many scholars and activists, such as Mary Jo Weaver, Simone St. Pierre, and Mary Daly, believe that the modern Church in the post-Vatican II era still exhibits characteristics of a world where patriarchy and male dominated class systems are the generalized norm. They argue that this system influences the lack of women in active ministerial positions. They believe that since the Church exists within the context of the twenty-first century, the Church needs to step out of its past and advance along with its people, becoming more gender inclusive in official offices and pastoral positions. These scholars and activists have joined this discussion by supporting and advocating for a change in Church structure due to what they view as a necessity to exude a more well-rounded and inclusive clerical class that is more representative of the global Church, as well as reflective of the changing times, attitudes, and social behaviors of the lay Church

Other voices in this conversation, such as Rosemary Radford Reuther, argue that women have a legitimate ability to become ordained. Reuther argues that there exist historical and biblical references to women's ordination within the early Church, and that one does not need to be connected to the Vatican to be Catholic or have a valid ordination. She cites such groups as the Roman Catholic Womenpriests and the Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community in San Diego as examples of Catholics who believe that they are living the true Catholic tradition by maintaining a clergy comprised of ordained women. However, traditionalists within the Church, such as Hays Van der Meer, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope John Paul II, and scholar Uchechukwa Obisike, oppose these arguments. They argue that priests are supposed to represent and portray Christ to their congregations, and since Jesus was a man, then women cannot be priests because

they do not have the correct anatomical features to accurately portray Christ at the altar. The magisterium of the Church has even gone so far as to write documents prohibiting the ordination of women to the priesthood. However, for many individuals, this conversation does not end there, even if it has for the *official* Church. At least for the time being.

Scholars and concerned lay people believe that opening the Church to ordain women deacons should be within the realm of possibility for the modern Church. Arlene Swidler and Karen Torieson are two such voices in this discussion, arguing that the Church has a very early history and scriptural basis for women deacons. Swidler and Torieson have cited numerous saints and early Church fathers who referred to and addressed the existence of women deacons, including Origen and John Chrysostom, citing Romans 16:1 which says, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae” (NRSV). They argue that the patriarchal leanings of the Roman Empire after the legalization of Christianity caused the appointment of Church offices and positions to be given only to men, instead of both men and women, which had predominantly been the case. Thus, they argue that women in the diaconate have existed in the past, and the only reason for them not to be included is a patriarchal and traditional leaning toward gender distinctions in pastoral ministry. Therefore, they stress the importance of the modern Church embracing this opportunity for women’s involvement in Church life. This discussion, though, does not end with scholars debating back and forth on the efficacy of such a move, but is showcased by recent events involving decisions made by Pope Francis.

In 2016, Pope Francis decided to invoke a committee comprised of scholars, Church officials, laity, and others to determine the historical, traditional, and religious basis for women deacons in the Church. This is without a doubt a product of the ongoing discussion caused by Vatican II. Without the Council's ability to open the Church to a more inclusive atmosphere of discussion with both religious and secular voices, the Commission established by Francis would not be possible. The climate of the Church under Francis exhibits an atmosphere of greater concern for the Church's position in the broader world and identifies the Church's precedential relationship with Catholics across the globe, showcasing how the Church today understands the discussion and attempts to implement some form of concern or thought into its mission to care for the needs and desires of its flock. I believe that this is a positive reaction for the Church and is evidence that the Church is trying to respond to this broader discussion.

Fifty years ago, the concept of allowing women to become deacons would have been considered absurd, and the individual who had brought it up would have been severely reprimanded. However, the fact that this is happening today indicates this attitudinal shift. If this Commission does find evidence for women deacons to be favorable, this opens the door for a more inclusive and well-rounded Church community. Though it may not come about soon, I believe that allowing women to become part of this ministerial process will be beneficial for the Church overall. Women make up over half of the Church, and I believe that their inclusion will provide a renewed sense of joy to the ministry of the Gospel. However, even if women can be ordained as deacons, I do not believe that women will be accepted into the priesthood. At the present time, much of the Magisterium and Roman Curia, the Church's decision-making bodies, are made up of

conservative traditionalists. Thus, at present, the Church is slow to change. However, the current administration will pass away with time, and new appointees and fresh ideas will make their way in. Perhaps in the next hundred years it will be different, but at this current point, women ordination to the priesthood will not be possible within the official Catholic Church, that being the Church affiliated with the Bishop of Rome. Even if women are allowed into the diaconate, it will probably not take place for at least another twenty to thirty years. The current Church is just not ready for such a dynamic shift in pastoral leadership. Perhaps, though, as time goes on, it might be.

Similar to this discussion of women's ordination, though, is the advancing concern perpetuated by Catholics across the world for a renewed interpretation of sexual ethics. This fundamental aspect of the Church's administrative theology has, like women's ordination, developed as an important issue for many lay Catholics. Therefore, scholars and activists have also brought this into discussion, joining it with the dialogue that has been broadening since the cessation of Vatican II.

Pope John Paul II's theological discourse, colloquially called *Theology of the Body*, has been accepted today as a canonical teaching authority for Catholic moral theology, influencing the thoughts and processes of Catholic catechesis and norms regarding marriage, reproduction, contraception, abortion, and other issues the Church has deemed important enough to be viewed as morally subjective. However, Catholic sexual ethics as taught by the Church under John Paul II, and still taught today, has been taken up by both scholars and activists, further cementing the post-Vatican II era as the era of religious discussion and intrigue inside and outside the Catholic Church.

In his *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II addressed several different issues regarding the sanctity of marriage and childbirth, human dignity, contraception, and abortion. Largely, John Paul II upheld traditional Church teaching, reacting to what he perceived as the outer world falling away from the Church's message of morality. His teaching, though, can be identified as just one voice in this ongoing discussion. Despite his authority and significance within the Church, his voice is joined by multiple others who believe that the Church should uphold or move away from certain attitudes within moral theology. Scholars and lay activists, such as Mark Jordan and Margaret Farley, acknowledge the importance of marriage and the upholding of human dignity within Catholic theology. However, they believe that the morality of a marriage should be determined by the couple as they are private actions and should not be governed by any sole institution or bureaucracy. In this case they are referring to specific sexual actions, such as oral or anal sex, the use of contraception, and abortion, among other things. In this way, they argue that the human dignity of each individual, which the Church expresses, will be better respected.

Some scholars, such as Lisa Cahill and Paul Lauritzen, have urged the modern Church to view such entities as contraception and reproductive technology in light of what Cahill called personal autonomy within the scope of human dignity. These scholars identify that in instances such as the AIDS epidemic that the use of condoms can be viewed as a moral good to protect the dignity and wellbeing of others, and for cases where women are infertile, the use of artificial insemination can be a viable, moral option to build a family and support the propagation of human life. However, these issues are hotly contested and argued among the conservative and progressive Church scholars,

which is evidence for the period's focus on dialogue and discussion. Even then, other scholars, when discussing issues of abortion, view it in this similar vein. As one of the most discussed issues in the secular world, the Catholic Church has long held unyielding views regarding what it considers to be the murder of children. There have been instances where scholars have discussed when it is moral to have an abortion, giving for example cases of rape and incest. However, other scholars and activists, such as Sidney Callahan, have argued that the dignity of human life extends even towards such individuals as the unborn because they are innocent, regardless of the action or method in which they were conceived. Abortion, like issues related to contraception and what the Church calls the dignity of marriage, has been discussed and developed over decades' worth of dialogue since the closing of Vatican II.

In the same way, I believe that this discussion on sexual ethics has allowed the Church to become more embracive and less reactive to the rising concerns over matters related to sexuality and sexual ethics. However, unlike women's ordination, the Church's response on sexual ethics is more complex. The modern Church has come a long way since Vatican II and is still changing under Francis. However, the reigns of previous pontiffs, mainly John Paul II and Benedict XVI, have affected how lay Catholics and onlookers view the Church's relationship with sexuality and other issues. There are several items that I believe the Church will not change, such as its beliefs on human dignity, abortion, and marriage. Primarily because if the Church is going to state that all people are made in the image and likeness of God, then that denotes a special sense of worth to every human individual. In the same way, if the Church is going to teach that life begins at conception and that the forceful ending of human life is wrong, then

abortion is also wrong. Similarly, if the Church believes that marriage is a theological and spiritual union between one man and one woman that is established for the propagation of human life, then within that theological paradigm marriage can only be that and nothing else within that particular theological understanding. The theological language that the Church uses supports these beliefs as their truth, which in the confessional sense cannot be changed and should not be changed based on these reasons.

Issues such as contraception or reproductive technology become less complex and more subjective because they are issues that deal primarily with an advanced understanding of science and modernity. I am not saying that there is no concept of theological questioning or discourse regarding issues such as these, but that because their theological value is based on the advancement of medical knowledge, then their theological value can change within the context of advancing medical practice and changing perceptions of moral imperatives. For example, when Benedict XVI allowed the use of condoms to protect against HIV, AIDS, and other STI's in 2010, the moral prerogative was that it would hopefully be a force of moral good to give prostitutes and other "sinful" people the chance to recognize their sins and come back to the Church. Benedict saw it as the only "moral good" in the situation at hand. Similarly, some view the use of reproductive technology as a moral good that allows infertile men and women to have children. Yet that is currently not the case. I argue that the Church must actively look at these discussions and come up with definitive answers. The Church cannot ignore medical concepts and continue to call them immoral. Medicine and science are going to continue to develop. Therefore, the Church must discuss these issues as they are currently discussing women deacons. As a faithful Catholic, I argue that the Church must uphold

its duty to care for its flock. In doing so, it may have to make choices, like Benedict's, that are designed around a higher moral purpose. There is no sense of "lesser of two evils" in these cases, only correct responses to what could be considered as moral imperatives. Thus, I believe that the modern Church must take a stand, and regardless of its decisions, address these issues cohesively and succinctly.

Vatican II has also opened this discussion to address issues that impact the human family and the individual person, mainly homosexuality. As psychological and behavioral sciences are advancing, and the understanding of the human psyche is developing, our knowledge of homosexuality and the queer person is changing. The Church's normative teaching on this issue is that being gay, or queer, is not a sin but that acting upon the desire for same-sex sexual relations is. However, this understanding has not sat well with numerous groups and individuals. Despite the Church's constant expression of love and compassion to all people, the historic translation of human prejudice within society and broader Christianity has affected how we as human beings have treated and reacted to LGBTQ+ individuals, especially queer members of the Catholic Church itself.

As part of Vatican II's causal ability to open discussion, one of the most important advances in this dialogue has been the expansion of biblical research within the Catholic Church hierarchy regarding the traditionally used Scripture passages against same-sex relations. The research of scholars, such as Kenneth Locke and Robert Gnuse, have shown how the ancient Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament passages are not the same as our modern interpretations. The religious and social meanings of the original Hebrew do not translate well into our modern English. There is a distinct socio-religious

context lost in translation which can only be understood through a careful study of the original setting and meaning of those passages.

Robert Gnuse put it this way:

We theologize off of the texts, not the cultural assumptions of the age or something the biblical authors may have thought but did not write down. In the First Testament there are laws that seek to obtain rights for slaves and women, but the cultural assumptions of the age would denigrate the value of slaves and women. We see where the texts lead us, not where the cultural assumptions of the authors stood. Biblical texts often lead us beyond the values of the age in which they were written. That is obvious with passages concerning women and slaves. The homosexual texts are few in number; so it is not so obvious that we should ignore the greater cultural assumptions of the age. The homosexual texts, and the laws in particular, do not lead us anywhere; they simply prohibit certain forms of activity. But the bottom line is that we theologize off the texts, not our scholarly reconstruction of the cultural values of the authors.⁴⁶⁹

Scholars, such as Dale Martin, L. William Countryman, Mark Smith, and Roy Bowen Ward, have all made similar claims about Paul's letters and the language he uses. Their research has indicated that specific words and phrases within Paul's letters fit a drastically different theme and meaning that cannot accurately be described in our modern language, such as *arsenokoites*. Returning to the New Testament's original Greek and understanding Paul's Jewish background on traditional gender roles in sexual relationships is necessary to begin understanding how to address issues of homosexuality within the Bible. Pamela Eisenbaum, though not discussing homosexuality and Paul specifically, argues that Paul's Jewishness, motives, background, and essential themes influenced the comprehension of the essential language used and culture referenced by Paul in his letters. She states:

I think it was Wittgenstein who said, "The limits of my language are the limits of my world." I take this comment to mean that concepts do not exist apart from the language by which they are expressed, and I take it as a challenge to any

⁴⁶⁹ Robert K. Gnuse, "Seven Gay Texts," 78.

essentialist understanding of the world. Since Paul does not use the label “Christian” of any person or group, I submit that he does not possess the concept of Christianity as a working category of religious identity, especially one with discernable boundaries, and neither do his congregants.⁴⁷⁰

Meaning that Paul only knew Judaism, and not our modern Christianity.

The universal Church’s relationship with its individual adherents has also been questioned by other scholars and activists. Scholars, such as Bernadette Brooten, Rosemary Radford Ruther, and Mark Jordan, have addressed how the modern Church’s understanding of the biblical texts and its message of love and fidelity do not really argue for a cohesive welcoming of LGBTQ+ individuals. Some have postulated that this may be part of the ongoing prejudice and homophobia among certain scholars, theologians, and leading officials, resulting in a Church that is not only unwelcoming but hateful towards other members of the human family. Still, others argue that the Church’s stance is outdated and does not fit the scholarship that has progressed in the last few decades. Based on this, there is evidence that something needs to change if the Church wishes to continue to be a steady influence among both Catholics and non-Catholics in the world today.

James Martin, SJ, addresses this issue in his essay *Building A Bridge*. Discussing the Church’s use of unwelcoming language, its internal prejudice, and the misconceptions surrounding LGBTQ+ individuals, Martin has attempted to bring to light the Church’s need to return to the Gospel message. If there is going to be a change in attitude towards homosexuality and queer Catholics, then the Church must return to acting and loving like Jesus. There are numerous stories in the Bible where Jesus interacts with notorious

⁴⁷⁰ Pamela Eisenbaum, “Paul, Polemics, and the Problem of Essentialism,” *Biblical Interpretation* 13, no. 3 (2005): 237.

sinners and has shown love to all people regardless of who they are. Such examples can be seen where Jesus dines with tax collectors and sinners, when he meets Zacchaeus, or even the parable of the good Samaritan.⁴⁷¹ Therefore, if the broader Church wishes to remain as an influential and respected institution among the world's populace then it needs to become more compassionate to its individual members, which is the Body of Christ. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free [straight or queer] – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."⁴⁷²

Though this thesis does not argue for the acceptance of same-sex relations or marriage, it does argue and show that these conversations are ongoing in the modern Roman Catholic Church. The positions of the Church on women and queer Catholics is part of a larger conversation in theological discourse about the human worth of every individual, and as such, they are a central part of Christian moral theology. Therefore, what is seen is that the prejudice regarding queer Catholics, and LGBTQ+ individuals generally, cannot be acceptable. The phrase, "Don't hate the sinner, hate the sin," has been overused in these situations, and can no longer be applied. Hating the sin has always turned into hating the individual, and this cannot be allowed in the twenty-first century Roman Catholic Church. For the Church to retain its ecclesiastical authority among the 1.4 billion Catholics around the world, as well as its influence in diplomatic society, something must give. The Church must take a renewed stance on its address of

⁴⁷¹ Mark 2:13-17, Luke 19:1-10, and Luke 10:25-37 NRSV, respectively.

⁴⁷² 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 NRSV. The full passage can be found at 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 NRSV. See also Psalm 139:1-18 and Luke 24:13-35 NRSV for more examples of passages on the love and compassion of God or where the Body of Christ is remembered as one.

homosexuality and the queer individual – and hopefully one that leads to a greater love and respect for the dignity of the human person.

The voices for change discussed in this thesis are part of a larger discussion involving the changing conception of the role of women in Church life, the developing concern regarding Catholic sexual ethics, and the changing conceptions surrounding homosexuality in the life of the Church. Before Vatican II, the discussion of these issues within the Church itself was largely stagnant, due to the overwhelming influence the Church hierarchy had over their congregations and the discussions held amongst them. However, after Vatican II, the opening of the Church to a more embrative relationship with the outer world expanded the discussion of these issues. The succeeding decades has seen a transformation in how individuals, scholars, and lay activists engaged in discussion and discourse regarding a myriad of issues, though three of the most hotly-contested among them were the roles of women, sexual ethics, and homosexuality. Yet, what is evidenced here is how influential Vatican II was in this burgeoning dialogue. Without it, the Church would still exist; with it, the Church has become more embrative of the outer world, opening its doors to a more inclusive connection with its lay followers and secular neighbors. The expanding dialogue is a reaction to this openness, and regardless of what direction the official Church takes, the fact that this dialogue exists is enough to see how the Church has changed and continues to change in new and exciting ways. This openness to discussion illustrates the Church's love for humanity and continues to illuminate how the Church responds to Jesus' call to serve others through mercy and love.

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