Gendering and Queering Theological Anthropology: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges

David Mark Dunning, BA MSt (Oxon)

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School of Theology, Philosophy, and Music
Dublin City University

Supervisors
Dr Ethna Regan
Dr Joseph Rivera

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Declaration

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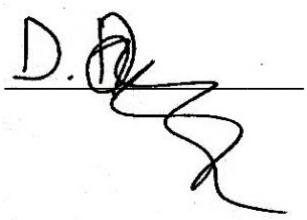
Signed:  ID No.: 17213161 Date: 23/06/2021

Table of Contents

Declaration ii
Acknowledgements vi
Abstract vii
Introduction 1
Chapter One: The Image of God 9
Opening Exegesis 13
Ontology and Dignity 16
Ontologising Creation 18
Holistic Dignity 21
Patristic Anthropologies 24
Irenaean Innovation 27
Openness and Freedom 33
A Finite Dynamism 35
Openness to the Other 39
Responsible Freedom 45
Authority and Dominion 52
Authority 53
Dominion 58
Conclusion 61
Chapter Two: Sin, Sex, and Gender 64
Overcoming Original Sin 65
Initial (Im)Perfection? 69
A Mental Hierarchy 71
Seminal Shame 78

Selfishness and Sinfulness 83
Self-Exposure and Estrangement 85
Conclusion 91
Chapter Three: On the Incarnation 93
A Pauline Christology of the Imago Dei 94
The Chalcedonian Definition 103
Absolute Mystery 105
The Analogy of Being 109
Unveiling the Mystery 116
(En)Gendering the Trinity 125
A Queerly Transcorporeal Christ 138
Universality and Particularity 149
Conclusion 153
Chapter Four: The Situation of Human Existence 155
Religion, Sexuality, and Culture 156
Revealing a Mystery 164
The Experience of Coming Out 175
Embracing Difference 184
Difference in Jesus 187
Conclusion 194
Chapter Five: The Church and the Sacraments 196
The Role of Grace 197
The Church and the Body of Christ 207
The Oneness of Humanity 219
The One Bread 227

Conclusion
..... 234
Conclusion
..... 237
Bibliography
..... 244

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Abstract

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Gendering and Queering Theological Anthropology: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges

This doctoral research project reimagines Christian theological anthropology, building on the work of both ancient and modern theologians regarding the question of gender and sexuality. The project seeks to deny binary labels in favour of understanding identity to be dynamic, relational, and always in a state of growth. The objective is to develop an inclusive theological vision of the human person that affirms the equality, dignity, and uniqueness of each embodied individual. There are two central concerns: (1) How can such notions be integrated with humanity's creation in the image of God and its eschatological perfection in the person of Jesus Christ? (2) How might sinful human nature be recast in light of modern understandings of gender and sexuality? Through exploring these concerns, this thesis demonstrates the relevance of core theological concepts to understanding personhood in our twenty-first century context, when ethical and political decisions are based on tacit value judgements, often made in relation to gender and sexual identity. To facilitate the argument, the project brings feminists, phenomenologists, and queer theorists into a fruitful dialogue with Jewish and Christian understandings of human nature. The project also re-examines the concept of sacramentality, and points toward practical implications for building a more ethical society.

Introduction

'Gendering and Queering Theological Anthropology: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges' emerges from profound convictions that all human beings are created in the image of God, and that all have the potential to realise themselves as likenesses of God in imitation of Christ, whatever their gender or sexuality. This thesis argues that the embodiment and uniqueness of each human person are inescapable, and truly significant, parts of what it means to be human. It aims to show that all human beings are of great value and dignity in the eyes of God and should be treated accordingly by other people. The thesis argues that human beings always exist in relationships with each other and with God, and so it holds that to break down the relationships that bind people together is to act in a way that is contrary to the purposes of God. It is also motivated by a dissatisfaction with the current state of play in theological anthropology. This thesis looks for a better way to explain the diversity of human beings than relying on theories such as social trinitarianism, which insufficiently respect the complexity of human difference, and underestimate the differences between God and humankind. This is not so radical a queer theology as to reinvent the entire wheel of Christian theology, but it does attempt to chart something of a *via media*.

This thesis seeks to engage constructively with some of the most pressing contemporary challenges to historical perspectives in Christian theological anthropology, such as issues of gender and sexuality. It seeks to do so in a way that is reconciliatory and constructive, by integrating the insights of recent work in gender and sexuality studies with the rich inheritance of the Christian theological tradition. It views the human being as a united whole, spiritual and material, and tries to understand the meaning of humanity according to a model that does not exclude certain parts of human existence or experience. Theologically, the primary interlocutor throughout the work is Karl Rahner, though much inspiration is also

taken from the Patristic theologian Irenaeus of Lyons, and the recent papal encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The philosophical framework of the thesis is influenced by several French phenomenologists, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Henry, Emmanuel Levinas, Emmanuel Falque, and Jean-Luc Marion. A number of queer and feminist theorists and theologians become dialogue partners during the discussion, including Judith Butler, Marcella Althaus-Reid, Susannah Cornwall, and Linn Marie Tonstad, to try and bring together some of their profound insights about the experience of nonheteronormative individuals and demonstrate their relevance to a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

Chapter One looks at the ontological determinants that affect human nature as seen in the Genesis creation narratives. This chapter looks at the role that humankind's creation in the image of God plays in historical perspectives on theological anthropology, as well as considering some contemporary challenges to those perspectives. The chapter stresses the importance of the wholeness of human beings, and the value and dignity of each embodied individual. It begins with some exegesis of the key texts that are found at the opening of the Book of Genesis. There is a focus on the theme of humankind being created out of clay in the image of God, and on some of the historical background to this notion in the ancient world. The chapter moves to a broader look at the process of creation itself, as described in the Hebrew scriptures. Here it focuses on how God creates the world as a whole out of nothing, and how the Hebrew terminology that surrounds the creation of humankind marks out a special place for human beings in the order of creation.

The chapter turns to look at how the sacred status that human persons are given within creation marks them out as dignified beings, who point towards their forthcoming realisation of Godlikeness. It examines the work of some key theologians from the Patristic Era and their approach to conceptualising the image of God and the dignity of humankind. The

dualistic approaches of Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo are criticised, and the work of Irenaeus of Lyons is built upon. Of influence is the way in which Irenaeus focuses on the unity of the spiritual and material in human existence, and the way in which he joins theological anthropology, as part of a broader theology of creation, with soteriology, through the outworking of God's purpose in salvation history. The argument is that the points which Irenaeus highlights are also helpful to a theological anthropology for the present day, which seeks to fully appreciate the value and dignity of people who express their gender or sexuality in nonheteronormative ways.

Chapter One proceeds to discuss the openness to the other and the freedom of human beings. The chapter reflects on the fact that humankind is given freedom by God, but that this freedom is finite and comes with an inescapable dependence on others and the Absolute Other. The discussion moves to how human beings are open to the other. The argument is that human personhood is open to otherness in a way that is analogous to the way in which Divine personhood is open to otherness, as persons always exist in relationships to others even though they are complete and dignified in themselves. Another factor is how human beings are inescapably responsible for the ways in which they exercise their God-given freedom. It is argued that a proper appreciation of human freedom requires the acknowledgment of God as the source of that freedom, and that this requires human beings to reflect on their actions, and to make choices that imitate God's selfless generosity of love. The chapter closes with a consideration of the authority and dominion within creation that humankind is afforded by God. It argues that humankind is not given authority to rule creation however it wishes, but that humankind is called to use its freedom to be a steward and shepherd of creation, in cooperation with God and the purposes of God for the world.

Chapter Two explains how sin has often proved to be something of a spanner in the works of theological anthropology. The chapter discusses the issue of sin, sex, and gender in

theological anthropology, and focuses particularly on the doctrine of original sin. The central contention in this chapter is that theological anthropology has been impeded in its attempts to deal with issues of gender and sexuality, due to the historical dominance of Augustinian understandings of sin. The chapter opens with a consideration of whether human beings were created perfect in the beginning, as is claimed by Augustine. It then moves to look at the mental hierarchy which Augustine imposes to divide the higher rational parts of the mind from the lower physical parts of the body, and how this is also translated into Augustine's binary view of gender, where a man is associated with the higher parts of human existence and a woman with the lower. The chapter argues that it is not possible to apportion sin to different parts of the *corpus Adae* in this uneven way, because human persons are holistic beings, who are a union of the spiritual and the physical in their created existence.

The chapter turns to look at the role of sexuality specifically in the transmission of sin, as it is understood in the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. Using the text of the Book of Genesis, and a key passage from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans, the chapter questions the theological foundations of Augustine's understanding of human sexuality and scrutinises the biblical precedent for the position that he takes. The chapter proceeds to offer a different interpretation of sin, which does not rely on the degradation, or sensationalisation, of sexuality to account for human wrongdoing. The approach taken leads to the suggestion that sin is not to do with the fact that humankind makes relationships, sexual or otherwise, with each other, but is rather to do with the nature and quality of these relationships; in some cases, human persons do not think of others, but do only what they see to be their own narrow self-interest.

Chapter Three explores the nature of human personhood, considering Christian theology's claim of its ultimate revelation in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, where anthropology and Christology mutually determine each other. This chapter begins by explicating a Pauline

Christology of the image of God. It uses this framework to argue that it is especially significant for a gendered and queered theological anthropology that the Word of God would have always become Incarnate for the salvation of humanity, even if humankind had not sinned. This means that the fulfilment of humankind will not be essentially divorced from the current state of its embodiment in uniqueness and particularity, but that, in the here and now, human persons exist in a state of tentative suspension between what they are and what they can and will be. The argument moves on to discuss the Chalcedonian Definition of the union of the two natures of Christ, with reference to its apophatic nuance, which says more about who the person of Jesus Christ is not than it does about who He is.

The chapter proceeds to conceive of God as Absolute Mystery, building primarily upon the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, Nicholas of Cusa, and Karl Rahner. The aim is to demonstrate that God is totally beyond all the divisions and particularities of the created world, even though God simultaneously inhabits them and sustains them. The chapter argues that what is key to this link between the mysteriousness of God and the sustainment of the created world is the doctrine of the analogy of being. It is shown how this doctrine explains the oscillation of human existence across an infinite diastema between creation and God, which renders any simple ontology of God or human beings impossible. The chapter also discusses how humankind moves horizontally, so to speak, as well as vertically, as it passes through salvation history towards its eschatological fulfilment, so that the combined direction of these movements means that human beings are never the same from one moment to the next. The chapter then moves to try to unveil some of the mystery of human existence, in light of the Incarnation of the person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God through whom all things were created. It talks about how, as the image of God, the absolute mystery of God is reflected in the mysteriousness of human persons, though it is argued that the revelation of the Divine and the human as mystery can be somewhat more clearly glimpsed through

Christ, the sacraments, and engaging with Scripture. This means that there always remains a relationship between the existence of human beings in creation and the existence of God, and that human beings are capable of freely choosing to orient themselves towards the Divine life.

Chapter Three highlights the drawbacks of attempting to root human differences, including those of gender and sexuality, in the intrapersonal difference of the Holy Trinity. The example given is the work of the contemporary Anglican theologian Graham Ward. The argument is that Ward insufficiently respects the differences between human persons and Trinitarian persons, and that this means that he reinscribes heteronormative power dynamics back into human relations via God. The chapter points to a different solution to understanding human difference, which is to understand our diversity according to the difference of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ. It is discussed, using the notion of transcorporeality, how the body of Jesus Christ is displaced across space and time to be inclusive of all difference. The chapter ends with some reflections on the unique combination of universality and particularity within human existence more generally, as well as how this dynamic is understood within queer theology. It examines the significance of the unique combination of universality and particularity in human existence for a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

Chapter Four considers how the human existential situation is at the heart of any theological anthropology. In this chapter, the thesis examines the situation of human existence, including expressions of gender and sexuality, within the culture and history of the Christian West. It begins by tracing the development that has occurred in attitudes towards issues of gender and sexuality since the Enlightenment. The argument is that significant shifts have emerged in Western societies since that time which have had a negative impact on the inclusion and equality of women and LGBTQI+ individuals within heteronormative power

structures. The chapter proceeds to investigate the mysterious nature of contemporary queer theory, which constantly tries to avoid being defined or pinned down. It discusses how queer theory can help theological anthropology to realise how human beings themselves are mysterious and inconsistent, as they constantly change and develop through time.

The chapter proceeds to discuss a real-life experience of nonheteronormative individuals: the process of coming out. It is shown how this experience, the loving self-communication of the truth of an individual person's embodied reality, can be considered quasi-sacramental and can reveal something of the nature of human and Divine existence. The chapter turns to how theological anthropology might better understand and embrace the diversity of humankind, and the multiple ways in which individuals can be different from each other and from God. The chapter ends with a reflection that looks back to the subsection of Chapter Three in which the Chalcedonian Definition is discussed. It shows how the Hypostatic Union, the union of the two absolutely different natures of humanity and Divinity in the one person of Jesus Christ, can serve as a model for the way in which theological anthropology approaches the differences between individual human persons.

Chapter Five examines how the work of the Holy Spirit through grace plays a crucial role in the living out of an ethical approach to human difference, and in understanding the importance of diversity in the Church. The chapter opens by considering the role of grace in human existence, as well as in the communal life of the Church. It looks at how the transcendental orientation of human personhood is intrinsically linked to the reception and acceptance of grace. It explains how the presence of Divine grace in the created world means that God is not distant from creation, even though there remains an infinite qualitative distinction between the created and the non-created Creator. It also speaks of how grace has an incarnational tendency and calls human beings to devote themselves to the imitation of Christ. The chapter contemplates the relationship between the Church and the body of

Christ. It maintains that the Church has an intrinsically sacramental structure, in which the Eucharist takes centre place as the fullest actualisation of the Church, because the Church is the place where the real presence of Christ is made fully manifest. It is also argued that participating in the body of Christ is what enables human beings to form proper relationships with each other and with God, and that this hospitality should therefore be open to more people.

The final chapter proceeds to consider the transcorporeal nature of the sacramental body of Christ, which allows its displacement, throughout time and space, to an unlimited number of participants, so that all humanity is united in Christ. It discusses the oneness of humanity, and how, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, God positively affirms the materiality of all creation, as God acts through the bread and wine spiritually and physically to nourish human beings. It also affirms that the salvation of humankind depends on our membership of the body of Christ, so that the body that is given to us, and in which we participate, is of infinite value. The chapter goes on to discuss the radical inclusivity of the body of Christ, which means that all human beings partake in the one bread, and that all are members of one body. The argument is that the universality and particularity of the body of Christ can open our eyes to the universality and particularity of all human bodies, and thus provide a space for their liberation, healing, and reconciliation in community with each other. Even though this is an eschatological reality, it breaks into the present world through the eternal transcorporeality of the body of Christ. But, for now, let us start this thesis with some exegesis of the creation narratives in the Book of Genesis and their consequence for a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

Chapter One: The Image of God

This chapter will look at the ontological determinants that affect human nature as can be seen in the Genesis creation narratives. In addition to analysing the biblical text the chapter will engage particularly with the theology of three primary interlocutors: (1) Irenaeus of Lyons; (2) Karl Rahner; and (3) *Laudato Si'*. The aim is to demonstrate how the ontic reality of what it is to be a human person is to be inescapably interconnected with others, and with the Absolute Other. This will be demonstrated through an examination of the holistic and non-static dynamism of Divine transcendence and the imaging of this in human personhood, with its fundamental openness and orientation towards the other in freedom. The chapter will also explore how particularity and individuality is crucial to the dignity of human personhood despite, and yet also because of, its self-transcendence.

It is important to note at the outset that this ontology of openness, freedom, dignity, authority, and dominion is not intended to be a complete, discrete nature of the human person. After all, human persons are created according to the image and likeness of a paradoxical God: an unknowable God who reveals Godself, an unconfinable God who confines Godself, an incomprehensible God who makes Godself comprehensible, and an indefinable God who defines Godself. Nonetheless, this ineffability does not mean that it is impossible to know the dignity, freedom, and dominion of the human person, even though we may be looking through a glass darkly at the incomplete and the enigmatic.[1] Even by knowing ourselves in part—we also know God in part—it is clear that, as Rahner writes: "The human person by its nature and dignity demands an unconditional respect which is independent of any freely exercised determination of an end and value – i.e. is absolute."[2]

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[1] See I Corinthians 13.12.

[2] Karl Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', in *Theological Investigations: Man in the Church*, by Karl Rahner, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), II, 235–64 (p. 245).

This chapter's discussion of how it is that human persons may *be* so, according to the image and likeness of God, shall commence with the text of the Genesis creation narratives after some additional, precursory remarks.

In 1966, William Albright wrote that the Old Testament had come to be regarded as primitive, irrelevant, and of no value to humankind in the modern age.[3] Considering the widespread preoccupation of the contemporary world with issues of gender, sexuality, and queerness, this is somewhat ironic. As an example of the continued relevance of the Hebrew scripture to understanding sexuality and gender, one could point to an ancient tradition in Judaism and Christianity concerning the creation of humanity in the image of God: that in the beginning God created a hermaphroditic human person, with the male and female sexes only subsequently being issued.[4] Yet, despite the antiquity of this notion, a rather ill-informed modern presumption, highlighted by Albright, concerning the supposed irrelevance of biblical and theological understandings of the human person (including their alleged dependence on gender binaries) remains prevalent.[5] This is pertinent because currently humankind—gendered or not, queer or not—is freshly becoming aware of its true diversity and, in so doing, is breaking down outmoded binaries and monolithic conceptions of its

[3] William Albright, *New Horizons in Biblical Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 17.
[4] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1–11* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011), p. 22. This tradition may have been influenced by the contribution of the jesting Aristophanes to the debate about love in Plato, *The Symposium*, ed. by M. C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, trans. by M. C. Howatson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 22–24 [189d–191d]. For the comments of Rabbis Yirmiyah ben Lazar and Shuel bar Nahman in *Genesis Rabbah* 8.1b–c, see *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*, ed. by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, trans. by H. Freedman (London: Soncino Press, 1961), p. 54 [VIII.1]. See, also, David H. Aaron, 'Polemics and Mythology: A Commentary on Chapters 1 and 8 of Bereshit Rabba' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Brandeis University, 1991), pp. 226–28. For other Jewish sources on whether the human being initially was created androgynous, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. by Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), I, p. 67 n. 42; Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. by Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 161–77. See, also, Martin A. Sweeney, 'Genesis in the Context of Jewish Thought', in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. by Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 657–82 (p. 665).
[5] Marianne Micks, *Our Search for Identity: Humanity in The Image of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 1.

history, often without awareness of the precedent for such conceptions in theological anthropology.[6]

As the work of empirical sciences, social sciences, and gender and queer studies continues to advance, it maintains pressure on theologians to address issues which have been ignored or side-lined for too long. The work of other academic disciplines encourages the questioning of theological standpoints which have been adopted without adequate interrogation. On the one hand, it seems that humankind has never had a broader understanding of itself than it does currently. On the other hand, having often divided itself into categorical diversities by quotidian identities, delineated physically or materially, humankind has seemingly lost grasp of its own unity and solidarity. Perhaps it is time to make a reassessment of who human beings are, both individually and collectively, as creatures made according to the image of the God who is the maker of all things visible and invisible.[7]

Whatever the sex or gender of the "first" human, maybe the theological framework of a God who creates humankind comprehensively in God's own image offers a simple, unifying beauty that is worthy of reconsideration. This is the departure point for a truly queer theological anthropology that includes and respects all genders and sexualities.[8] This first chapter is, in part, an investigation of what consequences might result from a theological realisation of the unity of humankind within a created world that is both ordered and limited in its materiality.[9] To that end, the chapter offers a reworking of the doctrine of creation and

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[6] Joy Ladin, 'In the Image of God, God Created Them: Toward Trans Theology', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 34.1 (2018), 53–58 (p. 57) <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.34.1.06>. Phyllis Trible makes an interesting case that the first human was "basically androgynous: one creature incorporating two sexes." See Phyllis Trible, 'Eve and Adam: Genesis 2–3 Reread', in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. by Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1979), pp. 74–83 (p. 74).
[7] Micks, p. 1. Cf. Colossians 1.16.
[8] Cf. Mikael Stenmark, 'Is There a Human Nature?', *Zygon*, 47.4 (2012), 890–902 (p. 898) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2012.01300.x>.
[9] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 63.

a reconsideration of what comprises that image of God, which can be applied to every human person equally, whilst respecting individual distinctiveness.[10] Now it is apt to introduce the main biblical text to come under study herein.

The opening chapters of Genesis are among the most scrutinised in Hebrew scripture, by Jewish theologians, Christian theologians, and secular text critics alike. This is because the narrative here offers a profound theological, philosophical, and psychological reflection on the human condition.[11] This primeval story of the lives of Adam and Eve speaks to the struggles that every human person has faced throughout history. The volume of interpretations across the (approximately) twenty-six centuries since the writing of the Book of Genesis means that almost all conceivable analytical methods—literal, allegorical, typological, tropological, anagogical, form critical, literary critical, and feminist, to name but a few—have been employed to decipher the narrative of humanity's creation in the image of God. This chapter will highlight the most salient themes for a gendered and queered theological anthropology which have emerged: ontology, dignity, freedom, openness, authority, and dominion. It will read with the grain of the text and highlight the importance of these concepts for constructing a better theological understanding of human nature in the contemporary age. For, since the Patristic Era, Christian theologians have been acutely aware of the profound implications that understanding the creation of humankind according to the image of God has for a wide range of theological fields.[12] The chapter will therefore begin with some exegesis of this key text from the Book of Genesis.[13]

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[10] See Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 77.
[11] Dianne Bergant, *Genesis: In the Beginning* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), p. 1.
[12] Frederick McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 3. One of the most pressing and plain is the religious foundations of ecology. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), p. 62.
[13] At the outset, it should be noted that this thesis follows the conclusion of Claus Westermann that there is no essential difference between the two accounts of the creation of human beings in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. See Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. by John J. Scullion, 3 vols (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), I, p. 157.

Opening Exegesis

The text of Genesis 1.26–27 is at the centre of Jewish and Christian reflection on theological anthropology. R. W. L. Moberly, a respected scholar of the Hebrew Bible, writes that the words that declare humankind to be made according to the image and likeness of God are some "of the weightiest and most influential in the whole Bible."[14] Since the Book of Genesis was written, much scholarship has gone into uncovering the pre-biblical history to the notion of "imaging" a god. The Hebrew term צֶלֶם (*tselem*), as used in Genesis 1.26–27, usually denotes an object which is visible and concrete, like a statue or picture.[15] In this sense, "imaging" can be understood to refer to a clear, concrete representation of the source, so that the image of God is a fundamental part of a human person but not essentially detached from Godself.[16]

There is another similarity between the broader use of the Hebrew term צֶלֶם (*tselem*) and the creation of human persons in the Book of Genesis. The statues that are so denoted would have almost been "concrete" in another sense: they were ceramic, made from clay. The idea of an image of a god being made out of *clay* also chimes with the Hebrew word עָפָר (*`aphar*) in Genesis 2.7, which describes God shaping the first human person out of clay.[17] Similar imagery has also been found elsewhere in the ancient world, such as in a bas-relief from Luxor in Egypt, where Khnum, who is a creator god, is depicted as forming Amenhotep,

[14] R. W. L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 46.
[15] See Genesis 9.6; Numbers 33.52; I Samuel 6.5, 11; II Kings 11.18; II Chronicles 23.17; Ezekiel 7.20; 16.17; 23.14; Daniel 3.1; Amos 5.26. Stanley Grenz points out that in Psalms 39.6 and 73.20 the term is used slightly unusually to emphasise the "fleeting nature of human existence." Psalms 39.6 uses the term to describes human lives as *shadows*, and Psalms 73.20 to describe the *remnants* of dreams that remain after the sleeper has awoken. Stephen Herring highlights similarity of the term with the Akkadian *ṣalmu*. See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 186; Stephen L. Herring, 'A "Transubstantiated" Humanity: The Relationship between the Divine Image and the Presence of God in Genesis i 26f', *Vetus Testamentum*, 58.4/5 (2008), 480–94 (p. 489) <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853308X348213>.
[16] Andreas Schüle, 'Made in the "Image of God": The Concepts of Divine Images in Gen 1–3', *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 117.1 (2005), 1–20 (p. 10) <https://doi.org/10.1515/zatw.2005.117.1.1>.
[17] The Hebrew word עָפָר (*`aphar*) can be translated as "dust," "clay," or "mud."

the son of a Pharoah, and his *ka* on the potter's wheel.[18] On the other side of this scene sits Hathor, a goddess who holds the *ankh*, which is a symbol of life. Her role is to animate the human formed by Khnum.[19] In this intriguing image, the royal authority and status of Amenhotep is being legitimated by the power of the creator god Khnum, because Amenhotep is fashioned by the god out of clay and is intimately connected with his life-force.[20]

The metaphorical description of God as a potter already had a long cultural history before its appearance in the Book of Genesis. In the Ancient Near East, the prevalence and great antiquity of the notion of humankind being fashioned out of clay can be seen in Sumerian compositions of the third millennium BC. This notion of imaging has also been included in the creation narrative at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible because it tells the reader something of note about God and humankind.[21] What appears to be slightly unusual in the Genesis account is that the image of God is attributed to the whole of humankind, and not just to a special figure such as a king, a Pharoah, or a cultic image. As a result of this democratisation of the image of God, human beings assume a kind of universal dignity in that they all represent God within creation.[22] Humankind as a whole can be understood as

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[18] See James Bennett Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 190, 318, no. 569; Westermann, I, p. 203. There are also intra-biblical parallels, *e.g.*, Job 10.8–9; Ps 119.73, and allusions, *e.g.*, Genesis 3.19, 23; 18.27; Job 4.9; Psalms 90.3; 103.14; 104.29; 146.4; Isaiah 29.16 etc. Additionally, Babylonian and Assyrian myths describe the creation of the first men from clay. See *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to The Old Testament*, ed. by James Bennett Pritchard, 3rd edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 99–100.

[19] Samuel George Frederick Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), p. 60.

[20] See Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty Nine Firsts in Recorded History*, 3rd edn (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 101–7; Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in The Third Millennium B.C.* (New York, NY: Harper, 1961), pp. 68–75; Thorkild Jacobsen, 'Mesopotamia', in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay of Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, ed. by Henri Frankfort and others (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 125–219 (p. 176). For other Near Eastern and classical parallels to this motif, see James George Frazer, *Folk-Lore in The Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1918), I, pp. 3–44.

[21] Bergant, p. xiv.

[22] Schüle, p. 6; cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present*, trans. by John Sturdy (London: SPCK, 1974), p. 110; Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Making of Man', in *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. by Henry Austin Wilson, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2.5 (Oxford: Parker and Company, 1893), pp. 397–427 (p. 390

representative, malleable theophanic mediations within creation of a sacred presence, dignity, and authority.[23]

The fact that God breathes the breath of life into humanity after it has been shaped from clay is another important element in the biblical creation narrative.[24] This action foregrounds the fragility and commonality of humankind. It means that human beings are fundamentally receptive to and dependent on God for their lifeforce—as is every creature, however noxious and seemingly insignificant. The activity and being of God are connected directly with the earth and its processes, and particularly with humanity.[25] Without the Divine breath of life humankind would perish and return to dust; Divine breath gives the human being the stability and consistence which preserves it from disintegration in its Divinely-given form.[26] A picture thus begins to emerge of human beings as a complex and unique unity of that which is material and that which is immaterial, but the distinctiveness of human persons cannot be established solely on the basis of their possession of the Divine breath of life.[27]

To conceive of humanity as a whole as being created according to the image of God is not only a statement of functionality, but also concerns the manifestation of the Divine

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[IV.1]). For further description of the pseudo-parallel of the *Ka* in Egypt, see Robert Thomas Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1959), p. 234.

[23] Samuel Dean McBride Jr, 'Divine Protocol: Genesis 1.1–2.3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch', in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner*, ed. by Kevin P. Brown and Samuel Dean McBride Jr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 3–41 (p. 16). Cf., Jeremiah 18.3–6. See Bruce Vawter, *A Path Through Genesis* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1957), p. 43.

[24] Genesis 2.7.

[25] Theodore Hiebert, 'Retranslating Genesis 1–2: Reconnecting Biblical Thought and Contemporary Experience', *The Bible Translator*, 70.3 (2019), 261–72 (p. 264) <https://doi.org/10.1177/2051677019877229>.

[26] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. by J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey, and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), III.1, p. 245. See Job 34.14–15; Psalms 104.29.

[27] Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 14. See, e.g., Genesis 7.22. A certain degree of caution must be exercised when attempting to interpret texts which have as long and complex history. Though it may seem banal to point this out, God is not literally a potter and nor does God physically blow air into human alveoli. From ancient times, the best Christian and Jewish scholars have recognised the multiple levels and subtle shades of meaning in these scriptural texts. The hermeneutical framework that shapes the exegetical approach in this chapter and beyond is one of reading with the grain of the text as much as possible, whilst not ignoring specific or critical questions that arise along the way.

presence.[28] Though it is something of a departure from the inherited norm of cultic images, in the Garden of Eden humankind represents God as vice-regent on earth and is given control over all creation in the Garden of Eden.[29] Such a reading of Genesis 1.26–27 aligns well with Psalms 8.5–8, which also speaks of the closeness of humankind to God, and employs the language of royalty to describe the rule of humankind over the rest of the created world.[30] What does an understanding of this earthy, sacred, and regal milieu contribute to the implications of the Genesis text for theological anthropology? To address this question, one must go back to examine the very beginning of creation. The primary interlocutor for the forthcoming subsection will be Irenaeus of Lyons, who places a strong emphasis on the unity of creation and salvation through the Word of God, which is key to the development of a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

Ontology and Dignity

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, God is an inscrutable, qualitatively-distinct, transcendent Creator.[31] There is no possibility of anything coming into existence that God did not create, nor any suggestion of a wavering in the Divine will to create.[32] Neither is there any doubt as to the existence of God Godself. Thus, the biblical scholar Claus Westermann writes:

> When the writer of Gen 1 speaks of God, he speaks of a God who acts; he is not concerned with the existence of God. […] The God of Gen 1 is a God who acts and a God who speaks; it is that which

[28] Herring, p. 480.
[29] Michael S. Northcott, *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (London: SPCK, 2014), p. 32. There is some precedent for a democratisation of the concept of the image of God, such as can be found in the third-millennium BC *Instruction for Merikare*. See Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), p. 106.
[30] John Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 14–15. See J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), pp. 52–53.
[31] Genesis 1.1.
[32] Irenaeus of Lyons, 'Against Heresies', in *The Apostolic Fathers.–Justin Martyr.–Irenæus*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, 1 (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp. 309–567 (p. 399 [II.28.1]).

> makes him God. There is no question of an abstract existence behind this speaking and acting. God is real because he acts; he is not a reality behind his action.[33]

Certainly, the opening of Genesis portrays a universal vision of the Creator, a God who is what God is through God's Word and action.[34] God needs nothing, so the foundation of creation is rooted solely in the free will of God to create it and to form it lovingly in a way pleasing unto Godself.[35]

The Book of Genesis does not offer a scientific or literal description of God's universal act of creation—it would be naïve to portray it as such.[36] The narrative in the opening chapters of Genesis works on a metaphorical level to express a theological truth that is not easily quantifiable or explicable in worldly terms. This is because God's unique, divine, universal creative action, expressed by the Hebrew verb בָּרָא (*bara'*), happens extra-temporally and comes out of no *thing*, but from God's own benevolent will. No *thing*, as opposed to *nothing*, here conveys an apophatic sense in reference to the origin of the act of creation that is summated in humankind. This apophaticism is important, because it helps to avoid ascribing a definite ontology (even be it one of utter negation or emptiness), to the no *thing* which extra-temporally or atemporally preceded the creation of heaven and earth. The text of Genesis 1 itself does not try to locate the Divine act of creation in a scientific or historical way, as that would most likely be an impossible task. The text simply highlights that the creative act comes from no *thing*, that is, from outside, or beyond, the scope of the created

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[33] Westermann, I, p. 100.
[34] Gerhard von Rad reminds us that the representation of God in Genesis can only be understood by looking at the accounts in light of the basic theme of (at least) the Hexateuch: God's tabernacling with God's people throughout salvation history. This Hexateuchal summary of salvation history prefigures an important theme picked up in theologians of the Patristic Era, who are discussed later in this chapter. See Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. by John Henry Marks, 3rd rev. edn (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 13–14.
[35] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 361 [II.2.4]. See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), p. 112; Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 69, 93; Georges Florovsky, *Collected Works of Church History: Creation and Redemption*, 14 vols (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), III, p. 71.
[36] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 3.

world.[37] This is what is emphasised by the Hebrew verb בָּרָא (*bara'*), which will now be discussed in more detail.

Ontologising Creation

In Genesis, the Hebrew verb בָּרָא (*bara'*) is used exclusively to refer to God's creative action.[38] Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in material that originates from other sources, the term is also used of the action of God in history. The sparing use of the verb in Genesis reinforces the uniqueness of the Divine creative act and how entirely different it is from anything that humans can do, but it could be misinterpreted to limit the creative act of God to the initial instance of creation alone, to imply that the Divine creative act is not sustained throughout time.[39] In terms of that which is created, the use of *bara'* indicates that creation is entirely novel and comes into being through its dependence on the will of God, and that this act of creation is therefore beyond the capacity of humankind. In addition, the use of *bara'* always refers to a created product, and never to pre-existent material or components.[40] The distinctiveness attributed to this creative action and the exclusive sovereignty of the Creator God diverges from ancient pagan cosmologies, which generally focused on the reformulation of matter that was pre-existent and, in some cases, eternal.[41] The clear

[37] The Hebrew verb בָּרָא (*bara'*) does not of itself denote a full-fledged doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, and that doctrine is not (yet) being spoken of here either. The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* seems to have its source in the late Second Temple work II Maccabees 7.28, rather than in the much earlier creation narratives of Genesis 1–3. See Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis =: Be-Reshit: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 5.
[38] Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), p. 48.
[39] Westermann, I, p. 99. This thesis concurs with the judgment of Joseph Blenkinsopp that Genesis 1–11 is a combination of the Priestly and Jahvistic sources but leaves space for a hermeneutic of suspicion. See Blenkinsopp, p. 7. The material roughly thought to comprise the "P" source was composed towards the later end of the Old Testament spectrum, perhaps some time from 586 to 539 BC, as is the scholarly consensus detailed, e.g., in Mark S. Smith, pp. 41–43. Appearances of בָּרָא (*bara'*), in the Old Testament, both within and without the "P" tradition,– encompass Genesis 1.1, 21, 27; 2.3–4; 5.12; 6.7; Exodus 34.10; Numbers 16.30; Deuteronomy 4.32; Joshua 17.15, 18; Psalms 51.10; 89.12, 47; 102.18; 104.30; 148.5; Ecclesiastes 12.1; Isaiah 4.5; 40.26, 28; 41.20; 42.5; 43.1, 7, 15; 45.7–8, 12, 18; 48.7; 54.16; 57.19; 65.17–18; Jeremiah 31.22; Ezekiel 21.19, 30; 23.47; 28.13, 15; Amos 4.13; Malachi 2.10.
[40] Sarna, *Genesis* =, p. 5.
[41] Bergant, p. xix. For example, according to Plato, the creator god forms the universe from four pre-existing constituents: fire, water, earth, and air. See, e.g., Plato, 'Timaeus', in *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1–99 (pp. 16–21 [28a–32d]).

statement that the verb *bara'* makes about the unique nature of God's creative action rules out the notion of pre-existent matter, and of any parallels with the reshaping or separating "creative" action of other deities, or of human persons.[42] The author of Genesis 1 thus establishes that in the beginning God acted unequivocally, unilaterally, and undisputedly.[43] There is a holism and unity to this Divine work of creation, which binds humankind and the rest of creation to God.

As it is used in the opening chapter of the Book of Genesis, the verb בָּרָא (*bara'*) does not refer to particular features or characteristics. It is a more fundamental notion that accepts, views, and refers to the created object (or person) as it is wholly in its created form, which is entirely a result of its gracious origin in the creative action of God. Here, an impression of creation out of nothing is given because, as Nahum Sarna points out, the ultimate distinction of God's creative act from all other creative acts would be the act of *creatio ex nihilo*.[44] This act has no human parallel and is beyond both our capacity and our comprehension. As a result, the verb *bara'* conveys a sense of the completely free and effortless character of the Divine act of creation, as well as a sense of *creatio ex nihilo*, for the reason that it is never connected with any statement about the origins or pre-existence of material.[45] The predominant Christian interpretation of this narrative from the Patristic Era onwards has thus been that there is no time and no *thing* that is not encompassed in, or given existence by, God's supreme creative action.[46] However, there is a further specific point to be made in

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[42] *Contra* the interpretations of Norman C. Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1–11* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), p. 39; Ellen van Wolde, 'Why the Verb BR' Does Not Mean "to Create" in Genesis 1.1–2.4a', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 34.1 (2009), 3–23 (pp. 21–22) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089209348155>.
[43] Luise Schottroff, 'The Creation Narrative: Genesis 1.1–2.4a', in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 24–38 (p. 24).
[44] Sarna, *Genesis* =, p. 5.
[45] Rad, p. 49.
[46] See Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. & trans. by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 456 [XI.6]; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.I, p. 99. For modern arguments to the contrary, see, e.g., Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 157–61; John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 55–83. Keller anthropomorphises the act of creation, using the metaphor of a

relation to human beings about the way in which the verb *bara'* is used in the first creation narrative of the Book of Genesis.

When Genesis 1.27 describes the creation of humankind, the verb בָּרָא (*bara'*) is used three times. This unparalleled threefold use of *bara'* at the creation of humankind marks humans out as uniquely important within creation.[47] By its very nature, the all-inclusive creative action of God encompasses and culminates in humankind in its wholeness, oneness, and indissoluble plurality as part of the larger Divinely-created world, but the repetition of this verb highlights humankind's exceptional and sacrosanct place within the world.[48] In this intensification of the Divine work of creation, human persons are set apart from the rest of the created world as they are endowed with the image and likeness of God.[49]

The unique circumstances that surround the creation of humankind in the Book of Genesis imply that there is something precious, even sacred, about human persons.[50] Jewish and Christian theologians have often drawn on this idea of the singular value and importance accorded to human persons to ground the notion of human dignity, because there is clearly something about human beings which commands respect of the kind that is commanded by Godself. The creation of human persons according to the image of God therefore helps to form a theological bulwark against their degradation and abuse. The sacred blessedness of all human persons in their entirety means that they are a unique sanctuary for God, which must not be desecrated as, in virtue of being a sacred image, every human person is

womb and reviving the ancient Babylonian goddess of the salt-waters *Tiamat*, who symbolises the chaos of primordial creation. Though there is an etymological connection between the goddess and the Hebrew word תְּהוֹם (*tehom*), which refers to the "deep," Westermann argues convincingly that it is too distant. It is too great a stretch of the biblical text to find a pre-existent (feminine) competitor to *Elohim*. See Westermann, I, p. 105.

[47] Mark S. Smith, p. 99.

[48] See Blenkinsopp, pp. 52–53; Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 254.

[49] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 155.

[50] Jeremy Waldron, 'The Image of God: Rights, Reason, and Order', in *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*, ed. by John Witte and Frank S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 216–35 (p. 222).

inviolable.[51] What is more, as this sacrality is God-given, no human attempt to violate it could ever extinguish it. What is given by God to humankind is given through the free will of Godself alone: it cannot be earned, given, or taken away by creatures.[52] It is to the theological and anthropological implications of this that the discussion will now turn.

Holistic Dignity

In Genesis, God is introduced as the Creator of the whole of creation, and God gives to humankind a special status in that we are to care for the rest of creation.[53] There is a relationship between the universal Divine creative act and the unique status that is given to humanity. The whole human person receives its distinctiveness through its freedom and its unique capacity for relation to the other and, moreover, to the Absolute Other, which is God. Ultimately, this is, or will become, a relationship of election and salvation.[54] The creation narratives in the Book of Genesis therefore serve as a retrospective undergird of faith in God's salvation-historical process. Such a relationship between God and humankind is only possible because human personhood is marked by an extraordinary status within creation to represent, or reflect, the glory of God. Hence Irenaeus of Lyons writes:

> Thou dost not make God, but God thee. If, then, thou art God's workmanship, await the hand of thy Maker which creates everything in due time; in due time as far as thou art concerned, whose creation is being carried out. Offer to Him thy heart in a soft and tractable state, and preserve the form in which the Creator has fashioned thee, having moisture in thyself, lest, by becoming hardened, thou lose the impressions of His fingers. But by preserving the framework thou shalt ascend to that which is perfect, for the moist clay which is in thee is hidden [there] by the workmanship of God.[55]

Humanity is thus marked-apart by the workmanship of God. The manner of its creation means that humankind is fashioned with a natural plasticity and capacity for relationship that

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[51] Doron Shultziner, 'A Jewish Conception of Human Dignity: Philosophy and Its Ethical Implications for Israeli Supreme Court Decisions', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 34.4 (2006), 663–83 (p. 667) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9795.2006.00289.x>. See Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, & Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 130. Cf. Genesis 9.6.
[52] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 242.
[53] Robert Gordon, *Genesis 1–11 in Its Ancient Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 3.
[54] Rad, p. 46.
[55] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 523 [IV.39.2]. See, also, Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.I, pp. 184–85.

encompasses the whole of the person. In consequence, less interest can be taken in specific characteristics or dimensions of created nature that distinguish *homo sapiens* from other creatures but may not even be common to all people.[56] Such a move towards recognising a fundamental relationality in human existence avoids the dangers—inherent in a structuralist approach—of prioritising particular qualities in created human persons that constitute, or reflect, the image of God. In this way, a gendered and queered theological anthropology may eschew attaching a special value or significance to objective characteristics that may not be common to all human beings and, in so doing, fail to recognise the depiction of God in some individuals. In contrast, there is no way to escape the relational nature of humankind. Humanity's creaturely being is formed by the hands of God in contact with the clay of the earth; there is no human identity that is an object unto itself.[57]

The relationships of human persons with each other and with God (incomplete and imperfect though they may be) point towards the common human destiny of eternal fellowship with God.[58] Each and every human being, fashioned from dust and moistened into clay, has a predetermined vocation, identity, and self-integrity within the manifold heterogeneity of being that will be saved and reconciled to Godlikeness at the end of salvation history. The human being realises this unique vocation and identity within creation in its relations to others, to God, and even within itself.[59] The eschatological τέλος of fellowship with God through the actualisation of the human potential for Godlikeness is thus part of the inviolable and inalienable dignity of each individual person. As sacrosanct

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[56] Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2. Likewise: Silviu Bunta, 'The Likeness of The Image: Adamic Motifs and ṢLM Anthropology in Rabbinic Traditions About Jacob's Image Enthroned in Heaven', *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*, 37.1 (2006), 55–84 (p. 76).

[57] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 541 [V.14.2]. See Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 71.

[58] Jacob Kohlhaas and Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, 'Loving the World We Are: Anthropology and Relationality in Laudato Si", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 47.3 (2019), 501–24 (p. 517) <https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12278>.

[59] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, pp. 235–36. See Ananda Geyser-Fouche and Bernice Serfontein, 'Creation Order in Sapiential Theology: An Ecological-Evolutionary Perspective on Cosmological Responsibility', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 75.3 (2019), 1–10 (p. 9) <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5157>.

creatures, all human persons are equally recognised by God as bearing the imprint of God, as they are called evermore deeply to participate without undue impediment in salvific fellowship with each other and with God.[60]

The status of human persons as creatures who are holistically marked-apart in creation is not just a static structure, a job, or even a function—it is a fundamental reality of our dynamic existential being.[61] This exceptional, fundamental, and universal ontic reality of human existence within creation is linked indissolubly with the human capacity to participate in the Divine, both materially and spiritually.[62] A human being always images and participates in God because it continues to receive life from God.[63] Were this not the case, humankind would be deficient in humanness, and its existence as a free creature which bears the image of God would be unsustainable. The Hebrew scripture values both human materiality and spirituality, as is shown by the diligent care taken during the fashioning of the body of the human person in Genesis 2.7. God's careful fashioning of the human body marks out a special role for people; our vocation engages all aspects of human persons in the working out of the purposes of God.[64] What is more, for a gendered and queered theological anthropology, being created according to the image of God in this holistic way indicates that all human life is of infinite value, and that the embodied existence of every individual is one of dignity, purpose, freedom and potential for Godlikeness.[65] What, therefore, constitutes

[60] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. by Geoffrey William Bromiley, 3 vols (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), II, p. 176.
[61] See Laura Schmidt Roberts, 'Toward a Theological Anthropology: A Study of Genesis 1–3', *Direction*, 45.2 (2016), 136–48 (p. 140).
[62] In his discussion of the *capax Dei*, Augustine of Hippo establishes this capacity as a faculty of the mind, and as a distorted and worn out *imago Dei*. See Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), p. 379 [XIV.8.11].
[63] Tanner, p. 10; Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Is God's Charity Broad Enough for Bears?', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 80.4 (2015), 283–93 (p. 285) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140015598583>.
[64] See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.I, p. 289. When speaking of the Crucifixion, Karl Barth further emphasises the wholeness of created human personhood. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. by Geoffrey William Bromiley, trans. by Harold Knight and others (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), III.II, p. 328.
[65] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, pp. 15–16.

this image of God in creation? The answer is twofold: the whole person, and every person. To make clear how and why this is the case, this discussion will now turn to the development of theological anthropology in the Patristic Era.[66]

Patristic Anthropologies

Identifying the locus of the image of God within human persons has preoccupied Christian theologians since the Patristic Era. However, some of these early theological anthropologies try to divorce dualistically the material body of the corporeal human person from incorporealities such as the soul, reason, or the mind, before proceeding to locate the special nature of humanity only in such specific attributes or characteristics. One problem with such an approach is that it can easily become complicit in legitimising hierarchies within human society that prioritise people who meet certain criteria above others. To locate the image of God within an intellectual capacity or other specific characteristic of human persons, which some may possess to a greater or lesser degree (or not at all), allows theological anthropology to become complicit in the exclusion and marginalisation of others. One might wonder what these kinds of approaches mean for the applicability of human dignity and the image of God to persons who are abused, disabled, traumatised, or otherwise physically or mentally impaired.[67] A gendered and queered theological anthropology must therefore embrace a unified understanding of body and soul which accepts that part of the uniqueness of human

[66] This universal yet individualistic physicalism is also reflected in the Rabbinic Jewish tradition. *Mishnah Sanhedrin* speaks of how every human being has been created to proclaim the greatness of God, and of how God stamps every individual with a seal but not one person is like another. See 'Sanhedrin (The Sanhedrin)', in *The Mishnah*, trans. by Herbert Danby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 382–400 (p. 388 [IV.5]). For a taste of the debate as to whether the main connotation of the image of God is a physical resemblance to God in Rabbinic Judaism, see Alon Goshen Gottstein, 'The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature', *Harvard Theological Review*, 87.2 (1994), 171–95 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000032776>; David H. Aaron, 'Shedding Light on God's Body in Rabbinic Midrashim: Reflections on the Theory of a Luminous Adam', *Harvard Theological Review*, 90.3 (1997), 299–314 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000006362>.
[67] See Ruth Page, 'The Human Genome and the Image of God', in *Brave New World? Theology, Ethics, and the Human Genome*, ed. by Celia Deane-Drummond (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), pp. 68–86 (p. 73).

persons is the product of entangled relations within themselves and with others.[68] It is, however, worth briefly exploring an example of a narrow assignment of the image of God to a single aspect within human personhood.

Ambrose of Milan, a theologian who influenced Augustine of Hippo, contends that it is the human soul that is made according to the image of God, and that the material body is related only to the beastly.[69] The claim that Ambrose makes is that the holy seal of the image of God is to be found only in the soul, whereas in human bodies only a base association with the crude material of creation can be found. The reason Ambrose gives for this is that he does not believe that the image of God could be so weak as to be subject to the passions of the flesh. Ambrose concludes that the flesh of the human body cannot be made according to the image of God, though this is true of the human soul.[70] It is not, therefore, simply that the human body is related by virtue of its materiality to the bestial creatures, but also that some special characteristic lies in the incorporeal attributes of the person, and these our attributes seem to dominate our earthy bodies. This position appears somewhat problematic, however, in light of its incongruity with the observation made above that, in the Book of Genesis, God puts noticeable care and effort into fashioning the material body of the human person, whose unique purpose is tied to their createdness.[71] If the embodiment of human persons is not part of the reason for which humankind is called into existence, then the care and effort that God takes in moulding those bodies is surely superfluous to requirement.

It is not only the case that the image of God is not constituted by the body in the vision of humanity laid out by Ambrose. The image of God also cannot be perceived by the body; it

[68] Kohlhaas and McLaughlin, p. 509.
[69] Ambrose of Milan, 'Hexameron', in *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. by John J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 42 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1961), pp. 3–284 (pp. 256–57 [VI.9.8.44–45]).
[70] Ambrose of Milan, 'Hexameron', pp. 256–57 [VI.9.8.44–45].
[71] Joel D. Biermann, 'A Theological Foundation for Stewardship', *Concordia Journal*, 46.2 (2020), 21–36 (p. 23). Cf. Genesis 2.7.

only constitutes the mind and is perceived by the mind.[72] Nevertheless, if the creative action of God encompasses the whole universe, as appears quite clear in Genesis 1–3, it seems rather odd that the material dimensions of creation would be so divorced from the spiritual ones. On this model, humanity is not fully unified in its imaging of God, for this image does not pertain to the whole of human persons but only to a single part or feature of them.[73] The narrowness of such a view seems to impede the full recognition of the wonderful extent and diversity of God's creation. As will be shown in Chapters Four and Five, a gendered and queered theological anthropology attempts to recognise the image of God in every feature of every person, as they are in their own totality, without discrimination. Ambrose may well conclude that God prefers to seek after the soul alone, in separation from the "slime of the body" and the "cupidity of the flesh."[74] Yet, in light of the crucial and inexorable role that the diversity of embodiment plays in the reality of human existence, to confine the image of God to the souls of human persons, or to regard the body as worthless and insatiable, is an unsatisfactory conclusion. It is an insufficient vision of human personhood for a theological anthropology that addresses seriously the contemporary challenges posed to it by issues of gender and sexuality.

Ambrose of Milan is not the only theologian of the Patristic Era to adopt an approach to theological anthropology that introduces binary divisions into human existence. More problematically, due to his greater subsequent influence, Augustine of Hippo builds on Ambrose's dualist tendencies when speculating on the origin of the soul:

> It was out of nothing that God made the soul which he gave to the first man, not out of some creature already made, like the body out of earth; and that is why when it goes back it has nowhere to go back to except the author who gave it, not to any creature it was made out of, like the body to earth.[75]

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[72] See Ambrose of Milan, 'Hexameron', p. 258 [VI.9.8.45].
[73] Blenkinsopp, p. 27; cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. by Matthew J. O'Connell (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), pp. 68–69.
[74] Ambrose of Milan, 'Hexameron', p. 259 [VI.9.8.46].
[75] Augustine of Hippo, 'The Literal Meaning of Genesis', in *On Genesis*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Edmund Hill (New York, NY: New City Press, 2005), pp. 168–506 (p. 407 [X.9.16]). Augustine seems to be following closely the words of Genesis 2.7, which suggest a creation from pre-existent material as regards the

Not only does Augustine clearly separate the soul from the body, here he goes on to construct a hierarchical model out of this example. He argues that God subjects everything else to Godself and that, accordingly, the material creation is subject to the spiritual. Likewise, the non-rational is subject to the rational, the feminine to the masculine, the weak to the strong, and the needy to the well-endowed.[76] For Augustine, what this means is that human persons are brought closer to God through their imaging of the Divine in the spiritual and rational parts of the human mind. Like Ambrose, Augustine holds that it is in these higher capacities of the male rational intellect that human beings rise above the lower material bodies which they have in common with other creatures.[77] Thus, in the work of both Ambrose and Augustine there appears to be a kind of neo-Platonic ascetic at work. There is a dualist bias that strongly associates the lower, bodily existence of humankind with the bestial and the profane. It seems as if God is not fully present in those parts of the human person which are more bodily, and that the image of God does not encompass in its wholeness the earthiness of humanity, even though our material bodies are formed at the instance of our initial creation. For Ambrose and Augustine, the lower, material realities of embodied personhood pull humanity away from God.

Irenaean Innovation

For a corrective to the anti-corporeal influence of Ambrose and Augustine, a gendered and queered theological anthropology can look further back to the universal nature of the creation of humankind in the image and likeness of God as expressed in the understanding of Irenaeus of Lyons:

> Man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a part of the man, but certainly not the man; for the perfect man consists in the

body, but he has overlaid the idea of a soul having no origin or pre-existence. For the influence of Ambrose on Augustine, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 69–78; Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 17, 25, 28, 32–33, 38, 70.

[76] Augustine of Hippo, 'Literal Meaning of Genesis', p. 372 [VIII.23.44].

[77] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, p. 450 [XI.2].

> commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God.[78]

Irenaeus considers the whole of the human person as made in the image of God. This position corresponds with the text of Genesis 1.26–27, which offers no provisos. Irenaeus also distinguishes between the image of God and the likeness of God: the former he understands as a static ontological entity; the latter, as a dynamic moral force that is yet to be fully realised. As will become clear in Chapter Three, this is a point of note for a gendered and queered theological anthropology, because it means that human persons are to be viewed both in light of what they currently are and in light of the potential which they retain to be likenesses of God. Understanding the creation of the person according to the image and likeness of God in this way encompasses both the ontic reality of the human being and the teleological realisation of its moral dynamism and potential for communion with the other and the Absolute Other at the culmination of salvation history.

The theological anthropology of Irenaeus is explicitly holistic, and it is viewed through the lens of salvation history. Irenaeus holds that individual humans will be saved as complete persons, in the totality of their created being.[79] Thus the goal of human existence is not somehow to escape the creation or the material world, as Gnosticism might have it.[80] In addition, Irenaeus realises that, in order to understand human persons, a comprehensive

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[78] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 531 [V.6.1]. In part, Irenaeus is so keen to stress this because of his own fight against Gnosticism. See John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 73–120; Roelof van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 126–29; David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 1–2; Terrance L. Tiessen, 'Gnosticism as Heresy: The Response of Irenaeus', *Didaskalia*, 18.1 (2007), 31–48; Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 8–20; Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. by Carol Harrison (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1991); Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. by Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1995); *Gnosticism: A Source Book of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period*, ed. by Robert M. Grant (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1978).
[79] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 532 [V.6.1]. A similar emphasis on the unity of human nature can be seen in Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans. by Olive Wyon (London: R.T.S., Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 94; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What Is Man?: Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. by Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 61–62.
[80] Biermann, p. 23.

theology of creation must be inextricably woven with a theology of salvation.[81] This Irenaean vision of theological anthropology, which sees all aspects of human persons as important to their unique identity in the eyes of God, and to their salvific reconciliation with Godself, also has a profoundly Christological character. It is of central significance that creation as a whole is created in and through the Word of God, and that it is this exact same Word of God that becomes flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.[82]

For Irenaeus, Christ is unified to the whole of that which was created, and that which was created is saved wholly. God recapitulates the pinnacle of creation (that is to say, humanity) in Godself, so that God might eradicate sin, deprive death of its power over creation, and revitalise the image and likeness of God in humankind. Irenaeus writes: "if the Lord became incarnate for any other order of things, and took flesh of any other substance, He has not then summed up human nature in His own person, nor in that case can He be termed flesh."[83] What Irenaeus is saying is that the salvific work of Christ would not be truly effective for humankind if God did not take on totally the flesh of a whole human person—that which was not assumed cannot be redeemed.[84] Similarly, the embodiment of human beings plays a crucial role in their salvation. The reason for which the Word of God assumes a body, which is then resurrected, would be uncertain if the only aspect of human existence that is meant to be saved, that is created according to the image and likeness of God, is the immaterial.[85]

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[81] Celia Deane-Drummond, 'Creation', in *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 69–89 (p. 78).
[82] Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), p. 6.
[83] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 541 [V.14.2].
[84] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 448 [III.18.7]. See, also, Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Letter 101: The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter', in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. by Frederick Williams and Lionel R. Wickham (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), pp. 155–67 (p. 158 [5]).
[85] Augustine and Ambrose appear quite inconsistent on this point. There is a puzzling disjunction in their writings between the dignity and significance they afford the resurrected body and the lack of dignity and significance they afford to the actual (sinful) human body created in the image of God. See, e.g., Augustine of

The importance of these insights is not limited to Irenaeus' own historical context. The more holistic method that Irenaeus employs in his theological anthropology, a method which takes seriously the many embodied realities of human existence within the broad context of salvation history, is especially critical in the contemporary age. Such an approach furnishes Christian theology with resources in order that it may engage effectively with the increasingly complex challenges presented to it by issues of gender and sexuality. Now, more than ever, human beings are aware of the complexity and diversity of their embodiment. The unsuitability to contemporary Christian theology of neo-Platonic ascetics that exclude or insufficiently account for the corporeality of human existence is therefore not a concern solely for the Patristic Era but is front and centre in the development of a gendered and queered theological anthropology in the present day. Here, such a dualistic approach is crucial to avoid, considering the interaction with gender and queer studies, which place significant emphasis on the embodied reality of human existence. How, then, might our understanding of theological anthropology be reconfigured to make the ontic reality of human embodiment more central?

First, it is important to recognise that the creation of humankind in the image of God, its special capacity in relation to God, is at the core of its bodily existence. This is the locus of our ontological foundation, existential orientation, and τέλος. Such is the case even though there is an insurmountable distance that separates God from creation.[86] The creation of

Hippo, *City of God*, p. 1112 [XXII.4]; Ambrose of Milan, 'On His Brother Satyrus: Second Oration: On Faith in the Resurrection', in *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*, trans. by John J. Sullivan and Martin R. P. McGuire, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 22 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), pp. 197–259 (p. 218 [52]).

[86] See Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. by Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 173. This recalls the hallmark of *analogia entis*, and its famous statement made in the Second Canon of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). The concept of "analogy" itself has a long history of usage in philosophy, though it is derived ultimately from mathematics. Plato uses the term to mean a proportionality in keeping with the mathematical origins but, like many who have followed him, he also uses it to delineate a middle ground, or in-between, between dialectical extremes such as those of earthy substantial realities versus the eternal, transcendent, or divine forms. In theology the concept of analogy has also been used extensively. It appears in the discussions of Thomas Aquinas concerning whether any creature can be like God and whether what is said of God and of creatures is univocally predicated of them. In the twentieth century the *analogia entis* was

humankind in the image of God is not supplementary to human existence itself; it is not to be pinpointed in a specific mental faculty and neither does it apply selectively. The image of God is identified with the way in which the whole human person functions in a unique way, by virtue of their unique relationship to God.[87] Every human person is created holistically with a free and dynamic capacity for relationality, to be God's creaturely counterpart in and through their own embodied existence. This means that the ontic reality of human persons is indissolubly united with the image of God, and that human persons are both an instrument and a manifestation of the author of the Divine image.[88]

The creaturely being of humankind is not only indissolubly united with God through the image of God. In the indissoluble relationship of humankind with God, the spiritual, mental, and intellectual attributes of a person are indistinguishable from more earthy, visible, or corporeal ones. This is so because each and every human person is created as a whole, fashioned from clay in the image of God.[89] Andreas Schüle comments acutely that the image of God "is not limited to 'religious' aspects of human existence […] but relates to every instance of mental, physical, social, and even sexual life."[90] There is nothing truthful that can be said about human beings without referring to their embodiment and to their creation in

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reasserted as a central doctrine in Roman Catholic theology, most notably by Erich Przywara. He deemed it to be the intersection of philosophy and theology and a truly fundamental principle, manifest in the structures of the consciousness of a creature because of the suspension of creaturely being in the middle of a dynamic tension and gracious self-imparting relation from above. Infamously, Karl Barth disagreed strongly with Przywara and referred to the *analogia entis* as "the invention of Antichrist." See Henry Denzinger, 'Lateran Council IV, 1215', in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. by Roy J. Deferrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 1955), pp. 168–74 (p. 171); Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. by Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 143 [757b–c]; Plato, 'Timaeus', pp. 23–24 [35b–36b]; Plato, *Statesman*, trans. by Christopher J. Rowe (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1995), pp. 98–105; Plato, *The Republic*, ed. by G. R. F. Ferrari, trans. by Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 213–19 [507b–511e]; Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica: Part I, QQ. I.–XXVI.*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn, 22 vols (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1920), I, pp. 49–51 [I, q. 4, a. 3], 158–62 [I, q. 8, a.5]; Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. by John Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), pp. 159–63, 174, 209, 214; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. by Geoffrey William Bromiley, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), I.I, p. xiii.

[87] David Fergusson, 'Humans Created According to The Imago Dei: An Alternative Proposal', *Zygon*, 48.2 (2013), 439–53 (p. 445) <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12014>. See Westermann, I, p. 158.

[88] Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 91.

[89] See Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, pp. 49–50.

[90] Schüle, p. 7.

the image of God. No part of human existence is left out of the relationship with God, and no person is not, in their entirety, an image of the Divine Creator. This means that every individual human has the distinctive dignity of being as created in the image of God, and of existing in a dynamic capacity for a relationship with God that permeates humanity uniquely and wholly.

To weave some of these threads together, a present-day Christian theology of human being could begin by stating unequivocally that all human persons are created entirely by God for God.[91] What this means for a gendered and queered theological anthropology that engages with the contemporary challenges of gender and sexuality is that the whole existence of humankind, including its embodied reality, can be understood through God alone, in the image of whom it has been dignified creation. Gregory of Nyssa, another theologian of the Patristic Era who shares some of the same concerns as Irenaeus, prompts humans to remember that "our whole nature, then, extending from the first to the last, is, so to say, one image of Him Who is."[92] So, to understand the way in which humanity has been created is to understand that every person, every bit of every person, is created by God, for God, in the image of God. Theological anthropology cannot thus neglect the embodied reality of human existence and the diversity of lived experience.

It should now be relatively clear the whole of human personhood is continuously and universally dignified by its capacity for relationship. When the Book of Genesis speaks of the image and likeness of God, it envisages the whole person, corporal and the spiritual.[93] The entire embodied human person is endowed with the sacred dignity of the image of God. The unique status of being made according to this image wholly encompasses humankind in relationships and, at the same time, marks human persons as wholly open to the other and

[91] Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, p. 243.
[92] Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Making of Man', p. 405 [XVI.18].
[93] Westermann, I, p. 150.

to the Absolute Other, which is God, the Creator. The holistic creation of humankind in the image of God is thus its ontological foundation: it is a relationship of contingency by which its universal dignity is established in relation to the one God.

Openness and Freedom

A second fundamental theme in the creation of humankind as seen in the Genesis narratives is its God-given openness and freedom.[94] The freedom of humankind to exercise its will comes as a gift from God, for God alone is capable of empowering humanity with such a capacity, one that defines its agency and its vocation.[95] In the narrative of Genesis 2–3 we see multiple examples of the ability of humankind to receive new information and make free choices. In order to do this, human persons are open both to the Absolute Other and to others within creation: another person, a tree, or even a serpent. This openness to that which is other is a peculiar characteristic of the human person, in that they possess the freedom to choose whether to engage in a relationship of communion that involves the reception of, and participation in, the other to which they are oriented. Why and how this occurs will become apparent most clearly in Chapter Five, but for now it is necessary simply to note a consequence of this existential orientation, freedom, and openness, which is the unique form of agency that humans are given by God.[96]

It is not insignificant to a free human agent that the origin of creation itself lies wholly in the Divinely-free will. The world exists only amid, and out of, no *thing*. As a result, the existence of any and every *thing* is dependent on the generosity of the God who freely shares the life

[94] Genesis 2.16, 25. Building on the discussion of Irenaeus of Lyons in the previous subsection, the primary interlocutor from here on will be Karl Rahner. He is one of the most profound modern Christian thinkers, who has a particular focus on the freedom and transcendental orientation of human existence, as well as a concern for its embodied reality.
[95] Friedrich Lohmann, 'God's Freedom: Free to Be Bound: God's Freedom', *Modern Theology*, 34.3 (2018), 368–85 (p. 371) <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12423>.
[96] In Genesis 2–3 it is this margin of independence that necessarily reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the human person. See Ephraim Avigdor Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), p. xxviii.

of Godself with the world.[97] Indeed, as Elizabeth Johnson notes, God's continuous action in creation shows "the natural world in its own integrity as pervaded, vivified, and encompassed by the Spirit of God."[98] So, the existence of human beings is sustained in all aspects by the continued creative work of God, and depends upon a constant relationship with the Divine Creator. What this means is that the freedom of humankind, as it is exercised within the created world, speaks to the glorification of God, because it is God who invites human persons to fulfil their freedom selflessly and lovingly in relationship with Godself, as images of God and *in imitatio Christi*.[99]

Personal freedom plays an essential role in the progression of humankind towards the fulfilment of its God-given purpose. If humans realised their potential for Godlikeness due to force or compulsion they would not be virtuous.[100] The human capability to exercise freedom thus reveals the openness and benevolent free will of God in alterity toward creation, which constantly renews and preserves the sacramentality of the created world in love, as well as the commitment of God to the free agency of humankind.[101] God Godself is present in every human act of freedom, for God is the supporting ground and ultimate orientation of our existence.[102] This includes the free acts in which human individuals choose to express their gender and sexuality according to the way God made them. Every free human act evidences the benevolent self-giving act of creation that makes manifest the true and absolute freedom of God in love. Several other aspects of human personhood that are relevant to the human capability to exercise freedom will now be examined.

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[97] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'God's Charity', p. 285.
[98] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'God's Charity', pp. 285, 287. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, ed. by John W. De Gruchy, trans. by Douglas Stephen Bax, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, 3 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 34; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.I, p. 19.
[99] Lohmann, p. 385.
[100] Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Making of Man', p. 404 [XVI.11].
[101] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 487 [IV.19.2].
[102] Karl Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', in *Theological Investigations: Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), VI, 178–96 (p. 180). See, also, Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 74–75.

A Finite Dynamism

One of the most distinctive features of our existence is that humankind has the capability to choose its actions freely, without coercion by the Divine. Irenaeus also accorded this capability a key role in theological anthropology:

> God made man a free [agent] from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul, to obey the behests (*ad utendum sentential*) of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God. For there is no coercion with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually.[103]

Human persons are created as free agents, so that they can willingly cooperate with God as partners in the realisation of their own potential and that of others. This freedom of will, this individual agency within creation, is constantly enabled and sustained through its relationship to the infinite freedom of God and the rest of the created world. Building on the observation of Irenaeus, one might remark that humankind is in suspense between the created world and God, because it has the God-given freedom to be open to, to participate in, and to apprehend the created other and the Absolute Other. Human persons inhabit the role of sentinels, who scan horizons of alterity both within the world and without the world, and thereby find the boundaries of their own free existence.[104] For that reason, the freedom of humankind is potent: it can help to tilt the world towards perdition or redemption, as room has been made by God for a co-determining power alongside Godself.[105]

Human beings are given their co-determining power because they have a responsible freedom. This responsible freedom, in which they are accountable to God, demarcates the vocation of human persons as co-determinants in shepherding creation through its teleological evolution, toward universal reconciliation in the ἔσχατόν. The dignity of

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[103] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 518 [IV.37.1]. See Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles*, ed. & trans. by John Behr, Oxford Early Christian Texts, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), I, p. 147 [II.1.2].
[104] See, e.g., II Samuel 18.24–27; II Kings 9.17–20; II Chronicles 20.24; Job 7.20; Psalms 97.20; 121.2, 5; 127.1; Song of Songs 5.7; Isaiah 21.6–8; 52.7–9; 56.10; 62.3, 6; Jeremiah 6.17; 31.28–28; 51.12; Ezekiel 3.7, 24–26; 24.25–7; 33.2, 6–7; Daniel 4.13, 23; Hosea 9.8; Matthew 13.16; Mark 8.18; 13.32–37; Luke 24.16, 31; Revelation 2.7.
[105] Henry Slonimsky, *Essays* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), p. 53.

humankind is thus intimately related to the claim that all human beings have the potential to make the right choices, as in doing so human persons can help to shepherd in the actualisation of their own Godlikeness and the fulfilment of the wider creation.[106] For the sake of themselves and wider creation, human persons can and ought to freely choose to open themselves: to acknowledge, to represent, and to participate in the Divine.[107] In this way, all of creation is summated and actualised in humanity, beyond causal metaphysical relationships.

The freedom of human persons means that they are open to more complex relationships than just direct causes and effects, occasioned by of individual decisions within the material world. Human freedom enables the possibility, through and beyond the finite, of orienting oneself towards God. The realisation of this possibility is taken on by each person, and every person is responsible for it.[108] This is not to say that people will always make the correct choices, or the choices that most productively use what has been given to them. Human persons can, and do, resist the will of God. Without the possibility to do so, human persons could not stand before God as responsible agents, nor engage in dialogue and partnership with God for the sake of themselves and for creation. Moreover, without the possibility of misdemeanour, human persons could not be the subject of guilt before God, nor be proffered and accept redemption and pardon.[109]

So, it is partly the freedom of humankind and its open relationship to alterity that distinguishes human persons from the rest of creation. The consciousness of their limits allows human beings to contemplate themselves, the world beyond them, and their manner

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[106] Robert A. Seiple, 'Christianity, Human Rights, and a Theology That Touches the Ground', in *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*, ed. by John Witte and Frank S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 320–34 (p. 328).
[107] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 238.
[108] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 246.
[109] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 247. See W. Gunther Plaut, Bernard Jacob Bamberger, and William W. Hallo, *[Torah] =: The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York, NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), p. 3.

of relation to others and to God.[110] Yet, in and through humanity, all of God's creation has the potential to work in cooperation and self-transcendence, so that it is not at odds with itself.[111] This is what, in the words of Rahner, gives the dignity of the human person an "even greater quality essentially and in the actual order, in respect of its absoluteness," as every individual is "called to be the direct partner of God, who is the simply Absolute and Infinite."[112] A human person is a channel through which the self-giving love, freedom, and grace of God may be made manifest in a voluntary agent who *is* according to the image of God. Thus, despite its centrality within creation, there must be a limit to the co-determining power of human free will in the light of its inescapable, gracious partnership with the Divine; human free will is not absolutely creative and free.[113]

The human capacity to shape and influence creation goes hand in hand with an inescapable dependence on, and responsibility to, the other and the Absolute Other.[114] Through the *imago Dei*, the empowered independence of the created human person as a whole reveals the limitations of each person, as well as their ability to make free choices. In the exercise of its freedom, a human person is graciously supported by "a conditional opening and extending of the horizon of this transcendence starting from itself, and of its goal, which we call God."[115] The combination of an openness to God and a limited freedom to act according to one's own will, which is bestowed by God and dependent on God's sustaining power, draws a person towards the realisation of the interconnected communion of creation-in-love that

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[110] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 6.
[111] See Terence E. Fretheim, 'Genesis and Ecology', in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. by Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 683–706 (pp. 694–95).
[112] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 246.
[113] Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 247.
[114] Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 16. See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. by William V. Dych (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1982), p. 79.
[115] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 180. See Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 86; Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. by John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird, trans. by A. M. Allchin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 139.

they share with others.[116] Thus, a human being is oriented towards the other and towards the Absolute Other, whilst also being endowed with free will, knowledge, and self-awareness. This means that, even though the appointment of human persons as stewards of creation in the image of God sets them apart from the rest of the material world, the scope that humankind has to exercise its freedom in this world is not infinite, and nor will it ever be.[117]

Even if humankind achieved complete control over the finite created world, it still would not possess infinite freedom. Infinite freedom is qualitatively distinct from human freedom and is God's alone, even if humankind had never sinned.[118] Infinite freedom is not worldly or creaturely, even though every creature that is created according to the image of God is created free.[119] In addition, the infinite freedom of God is never static or graspable, and so cannot be possessed or controlled—it is always dynamic and relational. This point is key for a gendered and queered theological anthropology as it means that the freedom which human persons have to express their individual identity can never be understood solely on its own terms, or in isolation from the other and the Absolute Other.[120] In consequence, the participation of individuals in dynamic freedom via relationship with God is a specifically human quality, whereby some space to manoeuvre within the multiplicity of creation is given to each person.[121] Yet, this freedom remains limited precisely because of the fact it is

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[116] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 65.
[117] This is a somewhat less radical interpretation of human freedom than can be found in the work of Jürgen Moltmann, who writes that human persons have infinite freedom over their own reality and the rest of creation. See Moltmann, *Man*, p. 109.
[118] For humankind, infinite freedom is ultimately only to be found in conforming to the will of God, whose service is perfect freedom. See Augustine of Hippo, 'On the Free Choice of the Will', in *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. & trans. by Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 3–126 (p. 59 [II.13.37.143]).
[119] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 61.
[120] See Kohlhaas and McLaughlin, pp. 511–13.
[121] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.1, p. 263. A similar take on the notion of human free will can be found in *Mishnah Aboth*, which holds that God foresees all things, but gives freedom of choice to human beings, and graciously judges them in accordance with their actions. See 'Aboth ('The Fathers')', in *The Mishnah*, trans. by Herbert Danby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 446–61 (p. 452 [3.16]).

creaturely; on a material level it is inevitably constrained as it is dependent upon natural characteristics and abilities.

The scope of human freedom means that our existence is expandable and developable, but all human abilities are ultimately finite. No individual person holds a monopoly on what it means to be human or what it means to be free. Human persons have a shared power and freedom to work in an interdependent way, which is not inferior to total autonomy.[122] As a result, every human person is simultaneously a member of the created world and is separated from it, as a unique being in their own right.[123] The reason for this is that only humankind can choose to unite the world with itself and with God, so that the world may be saved and fulfilled. The Divine οἰκονομία of universal reconciliation therefore encompasses the freedom and responsibility of human persons before God, and their responsibility for ethical stewardship of the created world.[124] In sum, there is both an openness and a limit to the exercise of freedom within human existence, and both characteristics are fundamental components of human persons as they are created according to the image of God. For now, it is apt to discuss the open character of the freedom of humankind in a little more detail.

Openness to the Other

As is beginning to become clear, the openness of human existence to alterity is inextricably linked with the freedom of human persons. Yet the openness and freedom that are at the heart of human existence are both also related to the creation of humankind according to the image of God. The reason why lies ultimately in the fact that God is both free from and

[122] Fretheim, p. 689.
[123] John D. Zizioulas, 'Proprietors or Priests of Creation?', in *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. by John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 163–71 (p. 167). See Margaret Barker, *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), p. 203.
[124] See John F. Haught, 'Science, Ecology, and Christian Theology', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. by John Hart (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 117–29 (p. 119).

free for creation.[125] God the Creator is not limited or summarised by creation but transcends it. Yet concurrently, and without contradiction, the omnipotent God is so radically free that God can present Godself to the world to create, to guide, and to care for it, even whilst remaining utterly free.[126] In his commentary on the Book of Genesis, Walter Brueggemann aptly summarised this mystery:

> God is known peculiarly through this creature who exists in the realm of free history, where power is received, decisions are made, and commitments are honored. God is not imaged in anything fixed but in the freedom of human persons to be faithful and gracious. The contrast between fixed images which are prohibited and human image which is affirmed represents a striking proclamation about God and about humanness.[127]

The key point to take away from Brueggemann is that the distinctiveness of human existence as the image of God in creation is dynamic, free, and open to the other. Human existence is so as it *is* in the image of a dynamic God who is nevertheless incomprehensible in Godself: the God Who *Is* is known through God's actions in creation and salvation history.[128] This means that humankind itself defies categorisation or definition, since it is created to be an unfathomable image of the radical freedom that is ultimately revealed only in the unity of Divine action and being.[129] The mutability of human persons evinces that they are ontologically unstable and to a large extent indefinable, as they still have to decide how to orient themselves in their constant oscillation between what they are and what they have the potential to become.[130] To attempt to tie human personhood to a set logic or predetermined criteria, as Ambrose and Augustine do, is thus to set theological anthropology on a path to failure, for it is an attempt to grasp that which slips through the fingers, or to try to divide that which cannot be divided. The physical reality of human embodiment cannot be separated from its spiritual and immaterial dimensions. Furthermore, though each human

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[125] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, p. 321. Earlier in the same work, Barth emphasises the independent reality of the Triune God, who is hidden from creation *and* revealed to it. See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, pp. 304–6.
[126] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 41.
[127] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 32.
[128] Westermann, I, p. 140.
[129] Jean-Luc Marion, *Negative Certainties*, trans. by Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 13.
[130] Marion, *Negative Certainties*, p. 47.

person is unique in many ways, it is important for a gendered and queered theological anthropology to note that this is especially the case with issues of gender and sexuality. These are expressions of our human identity that involve the freedom of the human heart to love, which means that they are a site for some of the most intimate and truthful experiences of humanity.

To inhibit human personhood to a closed set of gender or sexual norms is to downgrade the status of a person to that of an object, to reduce them to something which is definable and controllable. The dynamic freedom of every human person is justified solely and indisputably by virtue of their accordance with the image of the incomprehensible God—not with any external or arbitrarily imposed schematic.[131] As Rahner observes, the human person is "always the incomparable being who cannot be adequately classified into any system and cannot be adequately subsumed under any one concept."[132] This means that the gender or sexuality of an individual does not dominate their unique identity before God, or overwhelm their dignified status as the image of God. Yet neither is it insignificant. In fact, the uniqueness, incomparability, and dignity of all the facets of human persons is inextricably tied to their indefinability, and thus to the reality of their embodied existence.

The freedom of human persons to express their own identity is irrepressible because it is God-given. It cannot be confined by the imposition of preconceived criteria or value structures that are alien to the individuals concerned. Those who seek to understand the diverse reality of human existence must therefore be truly open to the alterity which meets us both in our experiences of other persons and in our experiences of God. To give an example of what this might mean in the context of a gendered and queered theological anthropology: human persons who choose to express their gender or sexuality lovingly but

131 Marion, *Negative Certainties*, pp. 26, 38–39.
132 Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 185. See Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 176.

in nonheteronormative ways are simply realising their profound freedom to be their own unique and relational selves. More broadly speaking, it is precisely in the freedom of human persons to be indefinable, to do the unexpected, and to be open to genuine relationships with a variety of others that the inviolable dignity of every unique person may be perceived. Yet there is one further point to be made concerning how human persons are created as free individuals open to the other.

As human persons are created as unique, indefinable, and free individuals who relate to others in their openness to alterity, everyone realises their identity in ways which are entirely natural to them.[133] There is, therefore, nothing unnatural about the many ways in which human persons are different from each other, except when difference arises out of a paucity of love and respect for those created in the image of God. Each person has the God-given freedom to be themselves, as they were created according to the image of God, and to coordinate the actualisation of their potential in collaboration with God. It is thus an inescapable feature of human existence that the other is present to the self, and that the other is known only as an *other*, in its own particular, created, and subjective determination. Moreover, it is exactly in the loving recognition of the unique determination of others that human persons can come to find themselves by the unprecedented grace of the Creator.[134]

The realisation that understanding human freedom as openness leads to is that nothing is more or less alien to human persons than the finding of themselves in the other. All facets of created alterity are of equal value to each individual person in virtue of their relationship to the Absolute Other who is God, though we may not yet apprehend this. In the perception of the self and its relation to the other and the Absolute Other there is, therefore, a unity of all selves, in which the dignity of individuals is grounded. Through the interconnectedness

[133] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 192. See Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, p. 62; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), pp. 312–83.
[134] See Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 181.

of human persons in the image of God, human persons come ever closer to their finality in freedom as subjects who are conscious of alterity, for an individual cannot objectify the result of their own freedom to judge either themselves or others in their total quality before God.[135] Even though humankind cannot assume a God's-eye point of view, the openness of human personhood means that individuals have the freedom to perceive and relate to the other in this way: without detaching part of themselves from themselves, without dividing themselves, without infringing their own personal integrity, without eroding their own uniqueness, and without compromising their own dignity.[136] This means that a human being should not try to curtail their God-given identity and freedom according to the expectations of another person, and nor should they attempt to restrict the self-expression of others.

The value placed upon the integrity of the human self in the encounter with alterity is also appropriate to apply to other persons. Recognising the other as another human, made according to the image of God, does not involve dividing, disassembling, eroding, or compromising them in any way. It is rather the wide-eyed openness to alterity of a loving human gaze at the other as an other that allows a person freely to examine themselves, their own alterity, and their being-in-relationship. The openness to the other that is characteristic of human freedom therefore enables individuals to come to a greater understanding of themselves and others, and to view themselves as beings who exist in a gracious communion of relationships with the other as part of a broader movement towards redemption.[137] This is crucial to theological anthropology because to be human is to be free. It is in giving us

[135] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 191. See, also, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theological Anthropology*, trans. by William Glen-Doepel (New York, NY: Sheed & Ward, 1968), p. 44. This cohesive understanding differs from the "outer" and the "inner" man and the "higher" and the "lower" mind in Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, pp. 322–24.
[136] Marcia Pally, *Commonwealth and Covenant: Economics, Politics, and Theologies of Relationality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), p. 133. So, also, Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 72..
[137] Kohlhaas and McLaughlin, p. 503.

space to be free that God gives us space to be human.[138] This latitude also encompasses the many ways in which human persons choose to express their own gender or sexuality. As with any other aspect of human existence, this God-given autonomy is part of the sacred integrity of a person, which should not be violated or subverted, but respected, cherished, and valued accordingly. The middle-term in the proper relationship of human persons to each other, which reveals both for what they truly are, is always the Absolute Other who is God, even though such relationships take many different forms.[139]

God is the middle-term of the free inter-relationality that is human openness to the other. The Divine is at once the Operator and the Operated Upon in interpersonal love, for the work worked in such moments is that of Jesus Christ, as will be discussed in greater in detail in Chapters Four and Five. For now, it is sufficient to say that, in the self-giving freedom and openness of one being for another, the complete freedom and openness of the Divine permeates all aspects of human existence. This openness of humans to their interpersonal differences includes the appreciation of another's God-given gender and sexuality, where these are expressed lovingly and genuinely. When a human person freely chooses to accept the other self as an image of God like its own self—when the neighbour is loved as God selflessly loves—God is met most closely, and humanity is found.[140] Nevertheless, even here, it is important to state that the difference between infinite Divine freedom and finite human freedom remains. Human freedom remains limited in three respects: (1) humankind is created, and therefore is restricted by its natural material constraints; (2) human persons are responsible to God for the exercise of the freedom which God graciously grants to them;

[138] Desmond Tutu, 'The First Word: To Be Human Is To Be Free', in *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*, ed. by John Witte and Frank S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1–7 (p. 4). See Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 75.
[139] See Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings, 16 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 58, 67. Cf. Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 74–75.
[140] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 181. See Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, p. 12.

and (3) human freedom lies tainted by sin and is constrained by its misalignment with the Divine will. The significance to theological anthropology of the first point has already been touched on, and now the importance of the second will be considered; the third point will be dealt with in Chapter Two.

Responsible Freedom

Humankind is restricted by the fact that it is responsible to God for the way in which it exercises its freedom toward others.[141] The way of life that results from the responsible use of our freedom in accordance with the purposes of God requires the reorientation of human institutions and attitudes in order to prefigure the eschatological consummation of all creation.[142] Crucially for a gendered and queered anthropology, this includes the reorienting of human attitudes towards the full diversity of genders and sexualities. A consequence of this is that the human exercise of freedom becomes more than just the outworking of a unique capacity, it is, rather, the maintenance of a relationship with God and a unique way of life within creation, which flows from that relationship.[143] It is only by viewing the diversity of created persons in light of their origin in the initial creative act, and each individual's unique relationship with God that the full significance of the differences between human persons can be appreciated. Human beings, precisely because of their uniqueness, individuality, and freedom, abide in their entirety as images of God, and this includes embodied characteristics such as gender and sexuality.

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[141] Jeremiah Vallery, 'Pope Benedict XVI's Cosmic Soteriology and the Advancement of Catechesis on the Environment', in *Environmental Justice and Climate Change: Assessing Pope Benedict XVI's Ecological Vision for the Catholic Church in the United States*, ed. by Jame Schaefer and Tobias Winright (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 190–210 (p. 197).

[142] Peter M. Scott, 'Humanity', in *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 108–23 (p. 119).

[143] James C. Peterson, 'Homo Sapiens as Homo Dei: Paleoanthropology, Human Uniqueness, and the Image of God', *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 27.1 (2011), 17–25 (p. 17) <https://doi.org/10.3138/tjt.27.1.17>; cf. Phyllis Ann Bird, '"Male and Female He Created Them": Gen. 1.27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation', *Harvard Theological Review*, 74.2 (1981), 129–59 (p. 144) <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000030558>.

The responsibility that human beings bear for their actions means that, in the exercise of their God-given freedom, they can begin to participate in a life of being-in-relationship which is the eternal reality of their Creator.[144] Thus, though individuals may tread divergent paths, in the end the responsibility that they hold for themselves binds them to each other and to God, to whom they are accountable for their lives and creaturely interactions.[145] This responsibility means that the freedom which humankind experiences is a *restricted* freedom, in contrast to the *infinite* freedom of God. Yet, this restricted freedom is still free, particularly in that it distinguishes humanity from the rest of creation.[146] This notion of the freedom of humankind as being restricted by a responsibility to use its agency for the facilitation of our being-in-communion according with the purposes of God will now be considered in more depth.

The responsibility that humankind bears to God in the exercise of its freedom necessitates the acknowledgement of God as Creator, and thus requires God's glorification instead of our own. Here, there is a community of the Divine and the human. Such a recognition of the Divine author of the image of God in human existence is only possible by truly acknowledging the kind of freedom that is exercised by humankind.[147] The responsibility that comes with God-given freedom holds human persons to God and to the rest of God's creation. God is the only source of freedom, even of the limited sort which humankind exercises. The human capacity for limited freedom and openness to the created world thus has an implicitly religious dimension because God is the whole to our fragmentary nature, the salvation-historical goal of our created existence, and the One to whom we are

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[144] David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, 2 vols (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), II, p. 1032. Kelsey talks of prayer as one means by which to bring about this gradual realisation. Partaking of the sacrament of the Eucharist is another, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.
[145] Genesis 3.14–19.
[146] Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. by Olive Wyon, 3 vols (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), II, p. 56.
[147] See Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, pp. 246–47.

responsible for the conduct of our lives.[148] The way in which human persons exercise their freedom to be themselves therefore reveals God to be the source of the unique being of humankind, and of the harmony and richness that characterises all creation. Correspondingly, Rahner writes:

> The transcendentality of man in knowledge and freedom, as it reaches up to absolute being, the absolute future, the inconceivable mystery, the ultimate basis enabling absolute love and responsibility to exist, and so genuine fellowship […] is at the same time the condition which makes it possible for the subject strictly as such to experience himself and to have achieved an 'objectification' of himself in *this* sense all along.[149]

What Rahner has perceived here is that human freedom in its subjectivity and in its restrictedness intrinsically points towards others, or towards community, as it involves the acknowledgement of a God who has created all humankind. The transcendental orientation of human existence to God means that genuine fellowship, a relationship with all forms of otherness through the Absolute Other, plays an indispensable role in the life of every human person. Human individuality is not erased but liberated from its potential for selfishness in the wholeness that is God. Moreover, out of the acknowledgement of the responsibility that human persons have to God another acknowledgement follows. This second acknowledgement is one through which human persons recognise the creaturely nature of themselves and their unique manner of relation to all else that God has created.

Humankind is uniquely enabled to apprehend the wonder and diversity of God's creation and is responsible for the cultivation of it.[150] Human persons are called to be stewards of creation because of their own existence in communion and freedom—this is better than autonomy and domination! The emergence of such communal flourishing within creation is

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[148] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, p. 72.
[149] Karl Rahner, 'Experience of Self and Experience of God', in *Theological Investigations: Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), XIII, 122–32 (p. 126). See, also, Balthasar, *Theological Anthropology*, p. 44; Brunner, *Dogmatics*, II, p. 66. Here, Rahner is in part responding to the notion of the transcendental in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant is concerned with the transcendental conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Rahner's concern is with the conditions for the possibility of the act of faith in, and relationship with, the self-communicating God. See, e.g., Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. & trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 193–97, 232, 365 [A51–57, A106, A239].
[150] Genesis 2.15; 3.23.

only possible because of traits that are peculiar to human existence: the unity of human persons, in all their attributes, as they are in themselves; and the freedom of human persons to be totally open to the other and relate themselves to the outside world.[151] These admittedly rather general characteristics of human existence, which are nonetheless peculiar to it, allow individual persons to perceive the wisdom of God spoken in the work of creation. As Irenaeus observes, in and through Godself, the Word of God makes created things "parts of one harmonious and consistent whole," so that through the image of God in human beings creation as a whole may "reflect the glory of the uncreated One, of that God who bestows what is good ungrudgingly."[152] Human beings are the ones who are intended to use their freedom to help God's creation flourish, and to shepherd it towards fulfilment and reconciliation with the Creator. Human persons are thus the creatures whose entire existence, including their freedom, can only be seen rightly from the point of view of their co-partnership with God, and this includes the responsibility for the stewardship of creation which flows from that relationship.[153]

The openness of human persons to the created world around them is analogous to the openness of God. There is no part of God's freely willed creation in which God does not reside, irrespective of whether humankind finds the whit to see God there. This is because God sustains all things in their contingent existence. In a sense, the foremost and fundamental freedom which God grants to creation is the freedom of being itself.[154] God shares Godself with the world and gives it life. This means that human persons, like all

[151] Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, p. 48.
[152] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 521 [IV.38.3].
[153] Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 65. See Westermann, I, p. 158. According to the succinct definition of Benigno Beltran, a steward is not the owner of the goods or property, but "one who has a responsibility to an owner to treat goods and property with care and respect." See Benigno P. Beltran, 'Earth Stewardship, Economic Justice, and World Mission: The Teachings of Laudato Si", *Missiology: An International Review*, 48.1 (2020), 39–56 (p. 40) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829619897432>.
[154] Karl Rahner, 'Guilt – Responsibility – Punishment within the View of Catholic Theology', in *Theological Investigations: Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), VI, 198–217 (p. 202).

creation, are always open to God and oriented toward a relationship with Godself. God encompasses creation, though God is not confined by, or equated with, the created world, and so humankind is always directly and indirectly related to God: we are called, and calling, sought, and seeking, for the sake of ourselves.

What has been said so far amounts to a claim that it is in the unique creation of human persons according to the image of God and the ensuing capacity to participate freely in interpersonal relationships that the distinctiveness of human existence is to be found. To be a human person is both to be a free individual and to be in interdependent relations to others.[155] Analogously, this is also what it is to *be* like God: to be able to enter into relationship with oneself, the other, and the Absolute Other.[156] It is thus in this openness, in the capacity for self-relation, both to God and the world, that there lies the possibility of human participation in the intersection between God and God's creation. Human persons can relate to each other and to the rest of creation in a responsible and loving manner, one which facilitates mutual flourishing and helps to fulfil the God-given potential of all concerned. This can be accomplished by the human person who chooses to care for the other, in the image of their Creator.

As human persons open themselves to realise their interconnected communion with the other, they are also driven to expand themselves and their knowledge of the world. Though this drive to expand the boundaries of human experience has classically been characterised in theological anthropology as our thirst for knowledge, here the notion is recast as a unique and instinctual openness of humankind to communion with the wider creation and with God.[157] As narrated in the Book of Genesis, humanity uses its free will and orientation

[155] Kohlhaas and McLaughlin, p. 508.
[156] Viktor Maag, 'Alttestamentliche Anthropologie in Ihrem Verhältnis Zur Orientalischen Mythologie', *Asiatische Studien*, 9 (1955), 15–44 (p. 34).
[157] Though the extent to which it is the case remains a matter of debate, modern science has demonstrated that it is possible for animals to possess what were previously regarded as exclusively human intellectual

towards the other to make a bad decision in the Garden of Eden, but that decision is nonetheless a free one. The knowledge and experience that Adam and Eve gain are not of the truth of human existence, but of their potential for corruption and ability to misuse the gifts that God has given them. The persons in question are held responsible for their actions by a just and merciful God, who does not cruelly or excessively punish the beloved creation. This episode informs a gendered and queered theological anthropology that the *possibility* of moral evil is always inherent in the freedom that empowers human persons to make decisions for themselves, but that God is always able to intervene in any affair when necessary.

Human freedom always comes with a moral responsibility to its author for the way in which it is used.[158] The inexorably moral dimensions of the exercise of human freedom means that every person, sinful and/or justified, is responsible for their actions before God. People have the power to choose between furthering their own selfish interests or pursuing the collective interest of the children of God, through their openness to the other. Indeed, the recognition of, and respect for, difference and otherness beyond the self is crucial to the ethical exercise of human freedom. The universal judgment of human persons that is yet to come ultimately requires that freedom is a permanent and all-pervading constituent of human nature, as all will be judged on account of their own choices.[159] However, it is also significant that, even after Adam and Eve have been sentenced for their freely-chosen misdemeanours, the solicitous God mercifully clothes them; magnanimously, their punishment is made

qualities and/or capacities, such as intellectual curiousness or compassion. See, *e.g.*, Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, p. 486 [XI.27]; Marc Bekoff, *Animal Passions and Beastly Virtues: Reflections on Redecorating Nature* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006), pp. 3–6; Johan De Smedt and Helen De Cruz, 'The Imago Dei as a Work in Progress: A Perspective from Paleoanthropology', *Zygon*, 49.1 (2014), 135–56 (p. 137) <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12066>.

[158] Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, trans. by Charles A. Kelbley, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1986), p. 133.

[159] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 184. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation: Human Nature*, 2 vols (London: Nisbet & Co., 1941), I, p. 126.

bearable.[160] One might therefore remark that, in discovering the limitations of freedom and responsibility, humankind discovers another type of freedom: salvific liberation from all constraint, by the mercy of God.

To draw this subsection to a close, it is only due to their responsibility before God that humans can, through their extraordinary openness to creation in the image of God, exercise their freedom properly and realise their uniqueness ethically.[161] Each individual is called to exercise their freedom responsibly, and to respect the dignity of others who have the freedom to be themselves according to the unique way in which their embodied existence images God. Once human persons accept this responsibility as free individuals in the image of God, it becomes clear that, as Rahner points out, our freedom "does not decrease, but increases in the same proportion as dependence on God."[162] The responsibility in relation to God for exercising human freedom is fixed and intensified by progression toward Godlikeness; nothing can alter the responsibility of human persons for their free choices before God, including those made in arrogance, abuse, or degradation of the gender or sexuality of another person.[163] Responsibility, openness, and freedom are part of the unchangeable reality of the existence of the whole human person, in relationship to themselves, to others, and to the Absolute Other.[164] The conversation must now move to the next theme from the opening chapters of Genesis to be discussed: the authority and dominion of humankind in creation.

[160] Blenkinsopp, p. 79. See Genesis 3.21.
[161] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 76.
[162] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 79.
[163] Rahner, 'Guilt – Responsibility – Punishment', VI, p. 204.
[164] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 190.

Authority and Dominion

The themes of authority and dominion in creation are key components of the formation of humankind in the image of God.[165] The distinctive vocation of human beings within creation is determined according to the image of God, so it is unsurprising that the *imago Dei* of Genesis 1.26–27 is often linked to the *dominium terrae* which follows in Genesis 1.28, where humankind is given authority over the earth and its creatures.[166] But what kind of authority is humankind being endowed with here, and how does it link to the image of God? The papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* encourages Christians to re-evaluate the place of human persons within the created world and the way in which they exercise authority over it. Such a process also helps to shed light on gendering and queering theological anthropology. It is not adequate to view the authority that humankind has over other creatures that God has made functionally, as though the only purpose of the rest of creation is to be the subject of human domination.[167] This is not least because the Hebrew Bible itself offers a view of theological anthropology in which care for the natural world of creation is integral to the purposes of God and the distinctive vocation of humankind on earth.[168] It is also because the rampant exploitation unleashed by human persons upon that which is other to them does not only impinge upon the nonhuman creation.

What is crucial to understanding the role that authority and dominion over creation plays in human existence is that individual persons have not been given licence to impose themselves on creation without regard for others. Authority and dominion are but a consequence of the

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[165] See Genesis 1.26–28.
[166] Schüle, p. 5.
[167] Pope Francis I, *Laudato Si'* (Vatican City: Vatican City Press, 2015), p. 60 [82]. For such an anthropocentric view, see Heinrich Gross, 'Die Gottesebenbildlichkeit Des Menschen', in *Lex Tua Veritas: Festschrift Für Hubert Junker Zur Vollendung Des Siebzigsten Lebensjahres Am 8. August 1961, Dargeboten von Kollegen, Freunden Und Schülern*, by Hubert Junker, Heinrich Gross, and Franz Mussner (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961), pp. 89–100 (p. 98).
[168] Hiebert, p. 267. See, e.g., Genesis 2.15; Leviticus 25.23–24; Numbers 35.33–34; Deuteronomy 22.6; Job 12.7–10; Psalms 104.27–28; Ezekiel 34.18.

creation of humankind in the image of God.[169] They flow from the creation of the person as an embodied individual in the image of a free God, who lovingly gives life to that which is other to Godself. Humans can only manifest power and influence over creation through their own freedom in so far as they are afforded the opportunity to do so by God. The embodied human creature is an agent who is licenced to rule creation provisionally, according to the plan of its benevolent and loving Creator.[170] Therefore, as *Laudato Si'* explains, the authority and dominion of humankind is "understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship."[171] This stewardship is the living out of the Christian life of responsibility before God and part of the distinctive vocation of humankind within creation to image the Creator.[172] Thus God does not give human persons unlimited licence to dominate the natural world for their own perceived economic or material benefit.[173] The freedom that humankind is given to be creative and to transform the material world is intended to be developed in line with the original selfless gift of the Creator of all that is.[174] How, then, may the vocation of humankind to stewardship within creation be discerned?

Authority

Unquestionably, Genesis 1.28 is a commission by God for the authority of humankind in creation. The strength of the verbs that are used in this verse is noticeable: רָדָה (*radah*) and כָּבַשׁ (*kabash*) have connotations of stamping and trampling the wine press, of subjugation or oppression, and of domination or bondage.[175] It is difficult to ignore the fact that, at times, the intensity of this command has been (mis)used to legitimise a tyrannical anthropocentrism

[169] Westermann, I, p. 155. In contrast, Luise Schottroff places the text in the unempowered, destitute, exilic context of the author. See Schottroff, p. 29.
[170] Rad, p. 59.
[171] Pope Francis I, p. 87 [116].
[172] Biermann, p. 21.
[173] Pope Francis I, p. 49 [67]. See Ecclesiastes 3.19–21.
[174] Pope Francis I, p. 6 [5].
[175] "To have dominion" and "to subdue," respectively. See Rad, p. 60.

which, particularly since the Industrial Revolution, has resulted in the degradation of biodiversity and the extinction of species.[176] Nonetheless, as will now be explained, there is potential for a more ecologically positive understanding of this troublesome verse.

The authority of humankind over the rest of creation is clear, but it is only ever dignified in its authority by its representation of God. The stewardship of creation is deputised by the Creator, to whom human beings are accountable as images of God. The way human authority is enacted should thus mirror the way its author treats creation with love and devotion. The human person is intended to serve creation according to the demand that it makes of human beings for a similar commitment.[177] Such an understanding of the vocation to the stewardship of creation is not therefore fundamentally at odds with an ecological or zoological consciousness.[178] In fact, such an approach would not be at odds with an anthropological consciousness either, for the harm that humans inflict upon the natural world impacts other humans and intensifies social injustices against disadvantaged and marginalised people.[179]

The misuse of creation, and the abuse of the authority that humankind has been granted in the image of God, means that the wellbeing of some individuals becomes prioritised over that of others. The damage that is being done to the natural environment by human mismanagement and short-sightedness is just one example of the ways in which human persons are, in the words of *Laudato Si'*, denying others "the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity."[180] The suppression of people of nonheteronormative genders or sexualities is another such example. In both cases, the basic needs and rights of human

[176] Deborah Guess, 'Eco-Theology and the Non-Competitive Relationship Between God and World', *Phronema*, 35.2 (2020), 43–59 (pp. 44–45); Blenkinsopp, p. 26.
[177] Hiebert, p. 271. Cf. Genesis 2.15.
[178] Cf. Proverbs 12.10.
[179] Rudy Flores and others, 'Claiming Creation as Our Neighbor', *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 47.2 (2020), 38–40 (p. 38).
[180] Bergoglio, pp. 24 [30], 50 [68].

persons, of precious images of God, are being denied by other people. They are denied due to the irresponsible and self-centred choices of more powerful people, in a world which does not belong solely to any single individual or group.[181]

The decision of human persons to act *responsibly* and *considerately* in their stewardship of other creatures, and to live lives of simplicity and generosity, which recognise the value inherent in the diversity of creation, exemplifies the dignity which is bestowed upon humankind through its creation in the image of God.[182] To act ecologically is thus to recognise the worth of creation for its own sake, and to perceive that all creatures are interconnected in virtue of their dependence upon the lifegiving Word of God, which gives them their being and purpose. This means that human individuals must encompass the weak, the marginalised, and the rejected other in their love, for God's world *in imitatio Christi*.[183] This is the way in which they are called to exercise their authority as stewards. Humankind is only the supreme representative in creation of the loving Creator insofar as it cares for the whole biodiversity of creation.

The fact that human beings are fashioned as a combination of created material and the Divine image is also not insignificant when considering the kind of authority that is given to humankind by God. The way in which the body of Adam is created as a mixture of the image of God and the clay of the earth is not a coincidence but, as abovementioned, reflects the ontology of the cultic statue of a deity, which itself is a mixture of earthliness and heavenliness.[184] Thus, the very manner in which humankind is created points to how the intertwined relationships of human beings with the earth and with God are intended to be

[181] Beltran, p. 40.
[182] Meghan Goodwin, 'The Work of the Church and Care for Creation: Implementing an Integral Ecology in Praxis', *Journal of Moral Theology*, 9 (2020), 39–47 (p. 47).
[183] Bergant, pp. xx, 7. See James Hanvey, 'Laudato Si' and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation', *The Heythrop Journal*, 59.6 (2018), 1022–35 (p. 1029) <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.13042>.
[184] Bunta, pp. 68–69.

fruitful.[185] The endowment of authority and stewardship upon humankind should therefore be viewed in light of the reality of human existence as an indissoluble mixture of the image of the eternally loving Creator and the material of the eternally loved creation. The Divine commission of Genesis 2.18 is not therefore a free pass to exploit nature banefully for our own selfish greed.[186] In fact, if humans exercise their authority in a destructive manner, they will ultimately end up endangering themselves and harming their relationship with God, as well as damaging the rest of creation.[187]

In addition, the rule of humankind over creation as expressed in the Book of Genesis should be considered within the context of how regal authority was understood in Ancient Israel. The democratisation of the image of God and the consequent authority of humankind over creation must be seen within the context of an Israelite model of kingship: carefully defined, restrained, wise, and responsible reign.[188] As images of God, all human persons who exercise their authority over other creatures are called to imitate this model. They are called to remember their responsibility to others and to God, and to honour the will of God to provide for the extensive diversity of human and non-human life within creation.[189] What this means is that human beings are not intended to exist in competition with each other or with the rest of creation. As they are endowed with intelligence and freedom in the image of

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[185] Beltran, p. 41.
[186] Pope Francis I, p. 89 [119]. See Leviticus 25.23–24; Psalms 24.1; Michael S. Northcott, 'Climate Change and Christian Ethics', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. by John Hart (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 286–300 (p. 293).
[187] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), p. 136.
[188] Sarna, *Genesis* =, pp. 12–13; cf. Brueggemann, p. 32. This can also be seen in a passage from the Midrashic text *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7.28: "When God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said, "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are! For your sake I created them. Do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it." Quoted in Eilon Schwartz, 'Mastery and Stewardship, Wonder and Connectedness: A Typology of Relations to Nature in Jewish Text and Tradition', in *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*, ed. by Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 93–106 (p. 99).
[189] Wilma Ann Bailey, 'The Way The World Is Meant To Be: An Interpretation of Genesis 1:26–29', *Vision*, 9.1 (2008), 46–52 (p. 52). For a concise list summarising the ways of understanding the human person in the Catholic tradition that are helpful for addressing ecological concerns, see Jame Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), p. 279.

God, human persons are not licenced to ill-use the other but to love the other. Human persons are intrinsically designed to live in harmony and mutual self-fulfilment with creation, as they help to shepherd the world to its ultimate reconciliation with its Creator.[190] Only by dealing with the created other with their vocation to responsible stewardship in mind can humankind faithfully fulfil the commission to exercise authority as the earthly representatives of a loving, lifegiving God.[191]

It is important to note here that to become too reductive of the unique authority of humankind for the sake of ecology holds its own perils. To downplay the status of human beings in the natural world too much would be not only to deny the unique responsibility that God has given to humankind, but also to feign that we have not been given sufficient means by which to affect the world in positive ways. *Laudato Si'* grasps that "human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued."[192] Thus, human beings do have the means and authority to change the world for the better, but this authority must be recognised and deployed in a way that accords to the purposes of God. There is also another reason for which it is important to maintain the unique authority and dignity of humankind within creation.

A vision of theological anthropology in which humankind occupies a distinctively authoritative existence within creation is particularly useful for establishing the inalienability of human rights. In the Book of Genesis, it is undeniably clear that humankind is a unique representation of God embodied in creation, and that this reserves for it a specific kind of dignity and significance.[193] Yet the inalienable dignity of humankind can come into question

[190] Pope Francis I, p. 61 [83]. See Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 142; Bergant, p. xx; Northcott, 'Climate Change', p. 294.
[191] Middleton, p. 289.
[192] Pope Francis I, p. 88 [118].
[193] See Genesis 9.6.

if theological anthropologies insufficiently respect the differences between human persons and the rest of creation. Recently, some scholars, albeit with good intentions, have taken a more radical ecological view that humans are subordinate to the earth and exist explicitly to serve it.[194] Such interpretations of the God-given authority of humankind within creation are problematic. They seem to imply that humankind is in some way subordinate to other creatures and thus undermine the foundations of human dignity and the distinctive rights that follow from being created in the image of God. Humankind is, undeniably, the apogee of creation by virtue of its unique manner of creation in the image of God. It is also clear throughout Genesis 1–3 that God creates a world which is intended to be one for human beings to inhabit.[195] How may one develop a more balanced notion of the dominion of humankind within the created world?

Dominion

To understand the dominion of humankind within creation it is helpful to note that the focus of the creation process as described in the Book of Genesis is both teleological and anthropocentric. This does not mean that one has to subscribe to an understanding of that dominion which envisages human beings at the apex of a pyramid, looking down on the rest of creation.[196] God never abandons humankind or creation, God never forsakes the universal οἰκονομία, and so humankind always has the ability to work together with the purposes of God for creation in the inexorable tide of salvation history.[197] This wave of reconciliation sweeps all things into the fullness of God; nothing is superfluous or left behind.[198] The

[194] See, e.g., Habel, pp. 49–50. For a better balance of human authority and environmental responsibility, see Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, 'Jewish Environmental Ethics: The Imperative of Responsibility', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. by John Hart (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 179–94 (p. 182).
[195] Westermann, I, p. 87.
[196] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 261.
[197] Pope Francis I, p. 12 [13].
[198] Pope Francis I, p. 61 [84].

privileges accorded to human beings as images of God are not, therefore, intended to encourage the alienation and domination of the natural world.[199] They are intended to encourage humankind to take on freely the responsibility which it is given for the well-being of the whole diversity of creation. Hence, a clear distinction between humankind and the rest of creation emerges. Humankind has the freedom to choose whether to exploit its dominion in a destructive way or to co-determine with God a constructive future for all creation.[200]

The dominion of humankind within creation is not a reason for personal pride or irresponsibility. This awesome responsibility is a gift from God. It is also a capacity for cooperation with God which entails a serious responsibility.[201] The distinctive vocation that God gives to human beings comes with its own set of ethical demands. These demands pertain not just to the way that human persons treat animals or the natural environment. They pertain also to the way in which we treat other persons, as the majority of human beings who live in poverty rely directly on the wellbeing and natural fruitfulness of the earth for their own survival.[202] All of this means that, although human existence is unique within the created world, it is not straightforward to disentangle the interests of humankind from those of the rest of creation. The dominion of humankind is only properly exercised in so far as the collective wellbeing of all is considered and acted upon.

It is undoubtedly the case that humans are set apart from the non-human by virtue of their embodiment of the image of God. However, this is not to say that God is completely absent from the rest of creation, for God is innermost to all things.[203] Human persons accurately

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[199] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 87–88.
[200] See Deane-Drummond, p. 82; John Chryssavgis, 'The Face of God in the World: Insights from the Orthodox Christian Tradition', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. by John Hart (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 273–85 (p. 283).
[201] Pope Francis I, p. 161 [220].
[202] Northcott, 'Climate Change', p. 294. Cf. Beltran, p. 40.
[203] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, p. 82 [I, q. 8, a. 1, resp.]. Cf. I Corinthians 15.28.

discern their vocation within the continuous creative action of God when they adopt a theocentric, rather than an anthropocentric, understanding of their relationship with the wider created world. In the words of *Laudato Si'*, such an understanding sees God as "intimately present to each being" and maintains that, in all its manifold relationships and interconnectedness, creation as a whole shows forth "the inexhaustible riches of God."[204] The call to a responsible ecological stewardship of creation therefore uncovers the fundamental relationship between the human and the earth.[205] This relationship is rooted in the continuous participation of the Divine in all creation and the salvation-historical movement of the world towards eschatological fulfilment.[206] Part of the purpose of human existence itself is thus our moral responsibility for the wellbeing of others. Human beings are given authority and dominion to protect the earth, to shepherd the world towards God, and to preserve the biodiversity of God's creation.[207] The commission of Genesis 2.18 is therefore one to rule in the style of a God who cares for all, and whose will and providence consciously guides, supports, and sustains creation throughout history.[208]

To review this discussion, it should now be clear that human persons are not supposed to dominate the created world. This is not the core meaning of their God-given authority over creation according to Hebrew scripture. The natural world is not separate from the human or devoid of the loving presence of the Divine Creator. In fact, as creaturely images of God, human beings are part of the world and live in constant interaction with it.[209] All of creation is also united in the Word of God through whom all things were made, and who commences

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[204] Bergoglio, pp. 59 [80], 63 [86]. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'God's Charity', p. 291; Hanvey, p. 1029.
[205] Beltran, p. 44.
[206] Jenkins, pp. 189–90. Earlier, for balance, and in the hope of finding a *via media*, Willis Jenkins criticises the radical anthropocentricity in Barth's doctrine of creation. See Jenkins, pp. 182–83; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, p. 12. In Hebrew, the union of *Adam* (man) and *Adamah* (earth) is etymological as well as essential.
[207] Pope Francis I, p. 49 [67].
[208] Bergant, p. 7. The creation of the world is concurrent with, and inclusive of, the creation of time. See Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, p. 456 [XI.6]; Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Maria Boulding, 2nd edn (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2015), p. 295 [XI.14.17].
[209] See Pope Francis I, p. 104 [139].

afresh the path to human salvation in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.[210] Indeed, it is significant that the *Incarnate* Christ is the furnisher of the salvation of the world by, in, and through the human bodily existence. Not only does this affirm the goodness and value of the individual and unique character of human bodies as images of God; it also reveals definitively how humanity joins heaven and earth.[211] In the end, it is always the presence of God in creation that unveils the nature of humanity to humankind. Human beings are thus called to be responsible and to conduct themselves properly in their relationships with other denizens of the world. God Godself is the one making this call to humankind: to take up its authority and dominion for the sake of all creation.[212]

Conclusion

This chapter has reassessed just some of the historical perspectives and contemporary challenges to understanding the dignity, freedom, and dominion of human persons, as ascribed to humankind by Hebrew scripture. An underlying premise running throughout is that the particularity of human persons is significant and constitutive of their identity and dignity, but that this individuality does not alter the universal reality that humanity is created in the image of God, and that every person should be treated accordingly.[213] The chapter opened with some exegesis of the key texts of Genesis 1–3. It was shown that the claylike material from which human beings are said to be made according to the image of God comes from a rich cultural history in antiquity and is still relevant to theological anthropology in the present day.

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[210] See Irenaeus of Lyons, pp. 446 [III.18.1], 548–49 [V.21.1].
[211] Pope Francis I, p. 172 [236].
[212] Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 198; Biermann, p. 23.
[213] See Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 242; Pope Francis I, p. 68 [92]; Williams, *On Christian Theology*, p. 78.

The chapter proceeded to discuss broader themes in the creation narratives of the Book of Genesis by reflecting on some of the Hebrew vocabulary. The point was made that the material body matters fundamentally to the meaning of human existence, and that God actively relates to each human person through their concrete imaging of Godself so that everyone is imbued with a profound dignity and worth.[214] Later, the chapter discussed the freedom of human persons and their openness to the other and to the Absolute Other, who is God. The central argument is that the creation of the human person in the image of God is rooted in a universal and freeing openness before the love of God, which is inexorably situated within a relational, embodied existence.[215] This means that the freedom of human persons is one of the most distinctive aspects of their existence, as it allows them to realise their own universal dignity and value both individually and collectively.[216] Yet it is also shown that this same human freedom always exists within the material limits of an embodied individual, and is anchored within a web of interpersonal relations to the other and to the Absolute Other.[217]

Finally, the chapter turned to the character of the authority and dominion over creation that is given to humankind by God. To understand better its value and meaning, it was demonstrated how humans must move from an anthropocentric view of the world to a theocentric view.[218] This means recognising that all creation is a free gift of God, and that the world as a whole is illuminated by a Divine love that calls creatures into communion with God.[219] It also means recognising that, in opening themselves to alterity, human persons can better inhabit their authority and dominion as responsible partners of God, and fulfil

[214] Pope Francis I, p. 30 [42]; Tutu, p. 3. See Kelsey, II, p. 1024.
[215] Irenaeus of Lyons, pp. 454, 529 [III.22.10, V.3.2].
[216] John Mahoney, *The Challenge of Human Rights: Origin, Development, and Significance* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), p. 45.
[217] Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 65, 183; Biermann, p. 23.
[218] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'God's Charity', p. 291.
[219] Pope Francis I, p. 56 [76].

their vocation to the stewardship of creation.[220] So, some of the groundwork for a gendered and queered theological anthropology has now been laid, but more work is yet required if we are truly to address some of the contemporary challenges to historical Christian perspectives on issues of gender and sexuality. All that has been said so far simply means this: the key point with which to start understanding human persons is their creation according to the image and likeness of God, for God has made them a little lower than Godself.[221]

[220] Pope Francis I, pp. 18–19 [23]. See Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, p. 238.
[221] Psalms 8.5.

Chapter Two: Sin, Sex, and Gender

Sin often proves to be something of a spanner in the works of theological anthropology. It has been a crucial factor in the development of the Christian understandings of human personhood, and in particular issues of gender and sexuality. Yet the issue of sin is one of the most vexed when it comes to gendering and queering theological anthropology. The notion of original sin, largely developed through the work of Augustine of Hippo, is particularly troublesome. This concept (and many of the theological traditions that stem from it) has effectively ontologised the binary difference of human sexes. Such a rigid insistence on a heterosexist gender binary leaves little room for nonheteronormative expressions of gender or sexuality within the scope of what it is and what it means to be human.

This chapter looks to how a contemporary theological anthropology, informed by historical Christian perspectives on the doctrine of sin, might overcome the doctrinal constructs around the notion of sin that have served to hamper theology from fully appreciating the challenging diversity of human gender and sexuality. It also offers a vision of humankind which denies that human beings were initially created in a perfect form to which they will salvifically return, and discusses how the emphasis on the division between the rational and irrational elements of human life reinforce a sexist gender hierarchy. Finally, the chapter offers an alternative proposal as to the nature of the estrangement of humankind from God that is described in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. First, to the difficulties posed for a gendered and queered theological anthropology in the concept of original sin.

Overcoming Original Sin

The full apprehension of how persons function in their relationship to otherness has been impeded in Christian theology by historically-dominant Augustinian notions of sin. In such theological systems, the concept of original sin in particular plays an excessively powerful and determinative role in the ontology of humankind and fractures our fundamental relationality to others. To give a rough outline, an Augustinian approach to hamartiology generally argues that sin originally entered the world through human freedom, that the hold of sin upon human beings is not episodic but constantly distorts the conditions of our existence, that sin affects humans even before they become autonomous individuals, and that sin is universally extensive within humanity.[1]

Augustinian doctrines of original sin express a view both on the origin of sin and on the way in which it is passed on. As a result of the allegedly total and universal moral collapse of humankind, individual persons are reckoned to be accountable for the sin which they inherit, and for the sin which they themselves commit, even though they have no freedom to avoid sin.[2] This is due to the seminal presence of all humanity in Adam. The pervasiveness of sin in the expression of gender and sexuality, especially, has preoccupied moral theology in the aftermath of Augustine, whose work is often considered to represent the maturation of early Christian moral thought.[3] A gendered and queered theological anthropology seeks to move beyond this sticking point.

To begin to overcome the notion of original sin, we might start by looking at that which is originally transgressed, and in what way the transgression occurs. In the Book of Genesis,

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[1] See Alistair I. McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust, and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine, 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 16–18.
[2] McFadyen, pp. 21–22, 27.
[3] John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 68; Francis X. Murphy, 'Moral Theology, History of (To 700)', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn, 15 vols (Detroit, MI: Thomson/Gale, 2003), IX, 858–61 (p. 860).

God commands the man whom God has created that he may eat freely of any tree in the Garden of Eden except one. This is the background to what will be portrayed in the biblical text as the first sin of humankind. God proceeds to warn the man that if he eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then he will surely die.[4] Unlike the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil appears unique to the biblical tradition. In the Christian tradition, broadly speaking, there are three main ways in which the nature of this knowledge has been conceived: (1) the ethical; (2) the intellectual; (3) the sexual.[5] These will now be briefly surveyed.

The first understanding of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil focuses on the potential of humankind for moral discrimination.[6] According to this interpretation, a person who ate the fruit of the tree would be provided with the ability to make ethical and moral judgments for themselves. Such an ability would make it possible for that person to commit sin, either intentionally, through their power of free will, or accidentally, through mistaken judgment. The intellectual understanding, that is the second kind of interpretation, focuses on how eating the fruit of the tree would provide human beings with knowledge beyond that which they are supposed to have. This is based on the observation that, in the Bible, the phrase טוֹב וָרָע "good and evil" sometimes means "everything."[7] When interpreted along these lines, the transgression of eating from the tree might be described as hubris, or self-exaltation.[8] However, the dominant kind of interpretation in Christian theology has been

[4] Genesis 2.16–17. In the Ancient Near-East trees widely were considered symbolic of the life-giving fertility goddess *Asherah*. Cf. I Kings 16.33; II Kings 13.6; 21.2–7; Jeremiah 17.2, 7–8; Deuteronomy 16.21. See John Day, 'Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 105.3 (1986), 385–408 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3260509>.
[5] See Plaut, Bamberger, and Hallo, pp. 38–39. For a similar outline of such categories, see Bergant, p. 10.
[6] Plaut, Bamberger, and Hallo, p. 38.
[7] This is a merism, a linguistic phenomenon characteristic of Biblical Hebrew, where a pair of antonyms are used to refer to a whole. See, e.g., Genesis 24.50; Deuteronomy 1.39; II Samuel 19.35; Proverbs 15.3; Zephaniah 1.12; cf. Ghil'ad Zuckermann, *Revivalistics: From the Genesis of Israeli to Language Reclamation in Australia and Beyond* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 10.
[8] Plaut, Bamberger, and Hallo, pp. 38–39. Augustine calls this *superbia*, or 'pride'. See Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, p. 263 [X.30.41]; Augustine of Hippo, 'On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees', in *On Genesis*,

the third abovementioned: to see the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as human sexuality.

The knowledge of sexuality is the most common interpretation of what kind of knowledge it is that humankind is forbidden from possessing. This third kind of reading of the knowledge of good and evil is predominant in the work of Augustine and has retained its influence on Christian theology ever since. The basis for this kind of reading is to be found in that the Hebrew word יָדַע "to know" often has the meaning of "experience," and especially sexual experience.[9] The case for this sexual interpretation is usually reinforced by the "shame" humankind experiences when it recognises its nakedness.[10] Due to the overwhelming dominance of this third interpretation of the knowledge of good and evil in the history of Christian theology, it is this kind of Augustinian reading that shall now receive further scrutiny, particularly as it pertains to the development of a gendered and queered theological anthropology for the contemporary age.[11]

A fundamental assertion of the first creation narrative in the Book of Genesis is that God creates all humankind in the image and likeness of God.[12] As was argued in Chapter One, this means that each and every human person bears the seal of God, the dignity of the image,

ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Edmund Hill (New York, NY: New City Press, 2005), pp. 25–104 (p. 79 [II.9.12]).

[9] For יָדַע as used elsewhere in the Book of Genesis, see Genesis 3.5, 7, 22; 4.1, 9, 17, 25; 8.11; 9.24; 12.11; 15.8, 13; 18.19, 21; 19.5, 8, 33, 35; 20.6–7; 21.26; 22.12; 24.14, 16, 21; 25.27; 27.2; 28.16; 29.5; 30.26, 29; 31.6, 32; 33.13; 38.9, 16, 26; 39.6, 8; 41.21, 31, 39; 42.23, 33–34; 43.7, 22; 44.15, 27; 45.1; 47.6; 48.19. See, also, Plaut, Bamberger, and Hallo, p. 39. Three categories of interpretation are also distinguished by *Genesis 1–11: Tales of the Earliest World*, ed. by Edwin M. Good (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 24–25. Two of Good's categories match up with the above-mentioned ethical and intellectual, but the third is an ill-defined and unconvincing physical one, instead of the rather more evident sexual categorisation that Plaut & Bamberger delineate. Elsewhere, with tongue-in-cheek, Joseph Blenkinsopp speaks of the "Tree of Ambiguous Wisdom." See Blenkinsopp, p. 57.

[10] Upon hearing the voice of God in the Garden of Eden, the humans are afraid because they realise that they are naked, so they try to hide from God. See Genesis 3.10.

[11] Similarly, Tatha Wiley has opined that the very purpose of feminist theology is to identify evil rightly. See Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2002), p. 157.

[12] Genesis 2.16–17.

and the inviolability of the Divine.[13] The destiny of humankind to be like God, and the potential for that likeness which individuals carry in the here and now, is an indispensable foundation of a theological anthropology that respects the God-given uniqueness of persons in all areas, including gender and sexuality.[14] The biblical text offers no caveat, exception, or distinction here: sinner or saint, disabled, poor, intersex, transgender, gay, black, female, or cisgendered, white, straight, and male, all bear the image and likeness of God.[15] This means that, deep in its being, every human is the same: created by God, in the image of God, for God. Being-for-God is thus the ultimate end, the τέλος, of every human person. As a result, human beings remain related to the other and to the Absolute Other despite sin, even without the intervention of Jesus Christ in human existence.[16]

In his writings on human freedom, Augustine argues that even small acts of goodness cannot come from human beings but may only come about due to God. He also argues that, without the grace of God, human beings inevitably fall into damnation.[17] This sombre pessimism about the human condition, especially with regard to issues of sexuality and gender, has not only become a characteristic feature of much theological anthropology, but has had a devastating impact on the way in which sexuality and gender is regarded in wider Western society.[18] As is noted by the biblical scholar John Day, it is incorrect to read such a full-blown Augustinian concept of original sin into the Book of Genesis itself.[19] Such a doctrinal

[13] This is later reinforced in Genesis 9.6.
[14] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, II, pp. 176–77.
[15] Blenkinsopp, p. 27.
[16] This is not to deny that the Incarnation was necessary for the salvation of humankind.
[17] See, e.g., Augustine of Hippo, 'On the Free Choice of the Will', p. 69 [II.19.50.191]; Augustine of Hippo, 'On Grace and Free Choice', in *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. & trans. by Peter King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 141–84 (p. 152 [VI.13]); Augustine of Hippo, 'The Grace of Christ and Original Sin', in *Answer to the Pelagians, I: The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones, The Spirit and the Letter, Nature and Grace, The Perfection of Human Righteousness, The Deeds of Pelagius, The Grace of Christ and Original Sin, The Nature and Origin of the Soul*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Roland J. Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, 23, 4 vols (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), I, 384–465 (p. 413 [I.19.20]).
[18] See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, pp. 43–45.
[19] See Day, *From Creation to Babel*, p. 45.

concept of inherited guilt does not feature as centrally in the Hebrew Bible as it does in later Christian thought, and Nahum Sarna points out that human beings bear the consequences of their actions only because they are free moral agents.[20] This is not to say that the emergence of forces which are antithetical to the purpose of God for creation is not a recurring theme in Hebrew scripture, but rather that such occurrences of evil are episodic and not necessarily attributable to a flowering of human sexuality in the Garden of Eden.[21] How might one begin to reconsider the concept of sin and its place in a gendered and queered theological anthropology? To begin to answer this question it is necessary to examine the text of Genesis a little more closely, and to lay out some of the main weaknesses of an Augustinian perspective on sin.

Initial (Im)Perfection?

The first problem to highlight with Augustine's sexualisation of sin concerns the fact that he determines humankind initially to have been created perfect in its *imago Dei*.[22] For Augustine, humankind lost its initial perfection as it ate of the fruit of which it had been commanded not to eat. Humankind was "condemned to the mortality of life" as a result, and so "lost that perfection which he had when made to God's image."[23] This link between a loss of perfection and death implies that human persons would not have died before the advent of sin in the Garden of Eden. To this day, some Christian theologians and philosophers still

[20] Sarna, *Genesis* =, p. 24.
[21] Blenkinsopp, p. 18. See, e.g., Genesis 6.9–9.17; 11.1–9.
[22] In the pre-Augustinian Fathers the notion of a perfect Primitive State of man was almost unheard of. Even Augustine's influencer, Ambrose of Milan, states that pre-lapsarian humankind's virtue will advance and increase. However, some precursor to Augustine's doctrine may be able to be found in the work of Athanasius of Alexandria. See, e.g., Justin Martyr, 'Dialogue with Trypho', in *The First Apology; The Second Apology; Dialogue with Trypho; Exhortation to the Greeks; Discourse to the Greeks; The Monarchy, or the Rule of God*, trans. by Thomas B. Falls, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 6 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), pp. 139–366 (p. 282 [88.4]); Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum*, trans. by Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 64–73 [II.24–28]; Irenaeus of Lyons, pp. 521–22 [IV.38]; Ambrose of Milan, 'Paradise', in *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. by John J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 42 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), pp. 357–438 (p. 301 [IV.24]); Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, ed. & trans. by Robert W. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 58 [II.18.29].
[23] Augustine of Hippo, 'On Genesis', p. 58 [II.18.29].

operate on this assumption, so that those in the Augustinian fold, such as Emmanuel Falque, argue that death is either the direct result of sin or the symbol of it.[24] Yet, what is problematic about this assumption is that biological death is not unique to humankind, for it occurs elsewhere in nature, and it also precedes the point in the history of the world when human beings evolved. Moreover, the eschatological fulfilment of creatures that God wills through the continuous act of creation and re-creation is to be fully realised in a state of communion with God, who is beyond the constraints of worldly time or space.[25] A more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between sin, death, and worldly time is required.

Since the discovery of evolution, the failure to extract the "Fall" from the temporalised Augustinian milieu of original sin has resulted in the endeavours of theological anthropology becoming increasingly incredible in the face of modern-day science.[26] This is because the way in which the Augustinian account of the "Fall" asserts that humankind has lost an initial perfection in the *imago Dei* "presupposes a state prior to the loss, and then the question cannot be avoided of whether or not such a state ever existed."[27] Such an account restricts the "Fall" to occurring within a temporal plane that is in line with the current day-to-day history of the world. It also potentially comes into conflict with the theory of evolution, as it requires a historical incident to have occurred in which the two original ancestors of all humankind participated in the genetic corruption of the entire race. Such a single decisive occurrence from within the everyday history of this world seems rather implausible, even though the power of God includes the capacity to create human beings with their own individual causal efficacy.[28] In human experience, the evil of sin does not seem to erupt mysteriously once and for all in the worldly history of the otherwise scientifically-ordered

[24] See, e.g., Emmanuel Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, and Death*, trans. by George Hughes (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2019), p. 24 [§15].
[25] McFarland, *From Nothing*, p. 135.
[26] See Charles Darwin, *Evolutionary Writings*, ed. by James A. Secord (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[27] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, p. 57.
[28] McFarland, *From Nothing*, p. 139.

fabric of creation, but rather seems to be broken up and based in discontinuous acts of human free will that tend towards the dissolution of our relationships with others.[29]

So, there is an underlying notion of temporality that is problematic in doctrines of sin which conceive of an initial state of human perfection that was lost, to the effect that death entered human existence. It seems possible to retain the idea of a perfect original state of union with God that was lost by sin only if the supposed state of perfection was the initial state of humankind at the beginning of its history, which is unlikely to be the point at which death also first entered creation.[30] It is too problematic to view the events of the "Fall" as being part of a quasi-linear pre-history distinct from, but closely related to, the day-to-day temporality of creation.[31] In fact, such a temptation to explain away the evil of our sin in such a way is the first step to empowering it.[32] The evil of sin is in reality that nothingness which God is always in the process of disallowing, by the very act of holding the human person in its contingent existence. God helps us to resist evil from within creation by sustaining, empowering, and harmonising the various forms of created being.[33]

A Mental Hierarchy

The second problem to highlight with sexualised readings of original sin concerns the binary eisegetical gender hierarchy that the work of Augustine fosters.[34] Contrary to conventional

[29] McFarland, *From Nothing*, p. 125.
[30] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, p. 57.
[31] Bergant, p. xiv.
[32] McFarland, *From Nothing*, p. 132.
[33] McFarland, *From Nothing*, p. 134.
[34] For a summary of Augustine's troubled personal relationships with women, which feed into his theology of gender and sin, see Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Augustine: Sexuality, Gender, and Women', in *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine*, ed. by Judith Chelius Stark (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), pp. 47–68 (pp. 47–49). This hierarchical construct is not the only problematic binary view of gender in Christian theology, as some theologians emphasise a fundamental complementarity of the male and female. It is outside the scope of this thesis to explore the shortcomings of this alternate kind of heterosexist approach but, for some influential examples of theological anthropologies that feature gender complementarity, see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. by A. T. MacKay and others (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), III.IV, p. 163; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. by Graham Harrison, 5 vols (San

wisdom, the word עֵזֶר (*'ezer*, translated "helper", "supporter", "succourer", or "deliverer from death"), which refers to the woman in Genesis 2.18, does not imply a gender hierarchy because it does not suggest superiority *or* inferiority. Power dynamics can only be read exegetically from the wider context in which *'ezer* is used.[35] Instead, it could be maintained that "a woman steps in the direction intended by God, whenever and wherever she tries to shake off the unjust, oppressive rule of the man."[36] Nonetheless, Augustine castigates Eve, asserting her greater fallibility and vulnerability to pass the blame for sin (in an act similar to Adam's): "I am convinced that in no way at all could [Adam] have been led astray by that serpentine trickery which took in the woman."[37] Here, it seems that for some reason Eve is in the beginning less capable of following the commandment of God and is more susceptible to sin, even though Augustine also avers that humankind was initially created to be perfect.

Augustine makes the claim that, even in the Garden of Eden, men are more perfect than women. The justification that Augustine gives for his claim is not that the minds of women cannot receive the image of God, but rather that they must receive it gradually as they can come to recognise God only under the guidance and management of men.[38] Though all human beings are made in the image of God, have an intellect, and possess a redeemable

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Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), II, p. 365; Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books, 1997), p. 312.

[35] Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), p. 11; Lyn Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2.4b–3.24', in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. by Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible, 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 77–117 (p. 113); Grenz, pp. 274–75; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 175–76; cf. Phyllis Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 41.1 (1973), 30–48 (p. 36) <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/XLI.1.30>. This contradicts David Clines, whose error is demonstrated in that often the term refers to the role of God or a superior (but friendly) military force in relation to Israel. Perceptively, Victor Hamilton notes that the creation of the woman in Genesis 2 is what saves the human person from its solitude in creation. See Exodus 18.4; Deuteronomy 33.7, 26, 29; Psalms 33.20; 70.5; 115.9–11; 121.1–2; 124.8; 146.5; Isaiah 30.5; Ezekiel 12.14; David J. A. Clines, 'What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Irredeemably Androcentric Orientations in Genesis 1–3', in *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, ed. by David J. A. Clines (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 25–48 (pp. 27–37); Hamilton, p. 176.

[36] Helen Schüngel-Straumann, 'On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered', in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. by Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible, 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 53–76 (p. 71).

[37] Augustine of Hippo, 'Literal Meaning of Genesis', p. 463 [XI.42.60].

[38] Augustine of Hippo, 'Literal Meaning of Genesis', p. 462 [XI.42.58].

soul, according to Augustine the rational intellect somehow remains latent in women. He writes that rationality belongs to them in a way which means that they cannot use their intellect as an autonomous human agent, separate from the man who takes responsibility for them.[39]

What is more, Augustine even asserts that the gender binary may be demonstrated within a single person. His contention is that the "manly" intellectual faculty of reason should have the desirous soul as its subject, as men ought to rule the women who are dependent upon them.[40] The activity of the actual mind of a man is a kind of rational life that finds its nourishment in the Word of God. As a result of the sin that was brought into human existence through Eve, the rational intellect of men is now bound by chains of mortality, so that it struggles to understand the God that it cannot see or comprehend through the world around it.[41] Yet men are still held to be more capable than women in this regard. Augustine declares that the mind is now divided between its contemplation of eternal truths and worldly affairs, and that this division is reflective of the binary divide between male and female.

In the gendered hierarchy that Augustine makes between the upper and lower functions of the human mind, it is the part of the rational intellect which contemplates eternity that is said to be rightly the image of God.[42] This is the "male" area of the human mind which alone clings to unchangeable truth. Augustine contends that this rational intellect is what exalts

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[39] See Ruether, 'Augustine', p. 55.

[40] Augustine of Hippo, 'On Genesis', p. 82 [II.11.16]. In assigning a predominance to the male sex, Augustine is hardly alone in the early Jewish and Christian tradition, see, *e.g.*, Genesis 16.1–6; Numbers 27.1–11; 36.1–12; Deuteronomy 21.15–17; 24.1–4; II Samuel 13.1–22; Psalms 127.3–5; 128.1–6; Sirach 9.1–9; 25.13–26; 26.1–18, 36.23–27; Ephesians 5.22.

[41] Augustine of Hippo, 'On the Free Choice of the Will', p. 95 [III.10.30.109]. See Romans 1.20; Hebrews 11.1.

[42] Augustine of Hippo, 'Literal Meaning of Genesis', p. 237 [III.22.34]. See I Corinthians 11.3; Genesis 3.16; Proverbs 5.18–19. Other theologians of the Patristic Era do not agree with the Augustinian position. The Cappadocian Gregory of Nyssa states that the rational and intelligent element of the mind does not admit the distinction of male and female but is to be found in all human life. See Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Making of Man', p. 404 [XVI.9].

humankind above other creatures, even though he says that it belongs fully only to men.[43] The uniquely "male" function of contemplating eternal truth in the here and now therefore directs the "female" function of managing worldly affairs, to conform it to the superior workings of the rational intellect. Augustine thus divides the functions of the mind according to a hierarchy in which the desired situation appears to be a superior masculine aspect enforcing the submission and conformity of a feminine aspect.

Elsewhere in the corpus of his writings, Augustine goes a step further. In his work *On the Trinity*, Augustine appears to deny that women were created in the image of God at all:

> The woman with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of that substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole.[44]

What this means is that, according to Augustine, the woman is of no intrinsic value to God in creation, for she does not add anything to the man. Women are but derived from men, and they do not image God in themselves, but only through their absorption into the masculine. This hierarchical gendering of spiritual and social relationships evinces a deeply rooted androcentrism, one that is especially awkward considering the contemporary challenges put to theology by gender and sexuality studies.[45]

A significant problem for Christian theology and ethics is that androcentrism has resulted in a persistent misunderstanding of the universality of sin and its effects upon human existence.

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[43] Augustine of Hippo, 'On Christian Doctrine', in *St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, ed. by Philip Schaff, trans. by James F. Shaw, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1.2 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), pp. 513–97 (p. 527 [I.22.20]). Augustine may also have Romans 12.2 in mind here.

[44] Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, pp. 329–30 [XII.7.10]. In footnote 28 the translator Edmund Hill attempts to defend Augustine by claiming that he is speaking symbolically, and not literally, but the repeated insistence and widespread dominance of this misogynistic motif in Augustine's understanding of creation makes it look like Hill is clutching at straws. *Numquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate*, one might retort: if Augustine looks like a misogynist, writes like a misogynist, and sounds like a misogynist, then he probably is a misogynist. Cf. Guillelmi de Ockham, *Scriptum in Librum Primum Sententiarum Ordinatio: Distinctiones XIX–XLVIII*, ed. by Girard J. Etzkorn and Franciscus E. Kelley, Opera Theologica, 4 (St. Bonaventure, NY: St. Bonaventure University Press, 2000), p. 205 [I, dist. 27, q. 2].

[45] Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 106. See, also, Ruether, 'Augustine', p. 56.

For example, it is erroneous to claim, as Augustine does, that any blame for the sin of the world lies disproportionately on the shoulders of women because they have a greater weakness to temptation, sensuousness, and evil. Such a claim is too easily used to countenance the heinous behaviour of patriarchal oppression and sex-based violence. Yet an apparent justification for this could be seen in the claim of Augustine that a gender hierarchy exists in the Garden of Eden before sin, when humankind is supposedly in a perfect state.[46] Any salvific return to this Augustinian vision of human "perfection" could therefore mean the subjugation of women, and the restriction of their freedom to express themselves as images of God.

The assertion of Augustine that it is the male part of the mind alone that has access to unchangeable Divine truth runs into a further theological complication related to the "Fall" itself.[47] As stated earlier, according to an Augustinian model, the weakness of the second sex not only results in the fall of humankind from its initial state of perfection. It also restricts the higher, rational, orders of the mind to a specifically *masculine* nature of the human person itself as created in the image of God. It divides them dualistically away from the lower, feminine, sensuousness of sin. Yet, although Eve was the first to be deceived by the serpent, the fall of humankind could not have happened without the free decision and consent of Adam.[48] This must be the case since Adam represents both the rational intellect and the dominant part of the soul of human beings.[49] In the prelapsarian state of human perfection as conceived by Augustine, any desire would have to be carried into action by the free consent of the rational intellect in Adam. So, Adam and Eve must *both* be culpable for the

[46] See Jerome Gellman, 'Gender and Sexuality in the Garden of Eden', *Theology & Sexuality*, 12.3 (2006), 319–35 (p. 319) <https://doi.org/10.1177/1355835806065391>; Ruether, 'Augustine', p. 53. For a thought-provoking non-hierarchical proposal regarding the relationship between Adam and Eve, see Bergant, p. 12.
[47] See Augustine of Hippo, 'Literal Meaning of Genesis', p. 237 [III.22.34].
[48] Cf. Genesis 3.1–6.
[49] Ruether, 'Augustine', p. 54. For the notion of the intellect as the director of the soul, see, also, Philo of Alexandria, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses*, trans. by David T. Runia, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 64 [§§69–71].

fall of humankind into sin. Likewise, sin must affect the nobler "masculine" parts of the human mind embodied in Adam if it is to apply to humankind universally. This insight challenges the exceptional status given to masculinity in the theological anthropology of Augustine.

As a consequence of the Augustinian model of sin, gender, and sexuality it becomes inconceivable to think of God as being in any way feminine.[50] Augustine's model associates only what is determined as the "masculine" aspects of humankind with the image of God, and so God appears to be wholly associated with masculinity from the human perspective. This attempt to limit the scope of God, and of the human creation in the image of God, to one particular sex denies proper dignity to non-male human persons, portrays women as seductresses, and distorts the theological understanding of what it is to be human.[51] It also sits uncomfortably with the repeated allusions in the Old and New Testaments to God behaving like a woman.[52] In the contemporary age, with the challenges that are being put to theological anthropology by issues of gender and sexuality, this Augustinian model of sin, gender, and sexuality is simply unsustainable. By propagating an unnecessarily hierarchical, psycho-sexual, and gendered mental power dynamic, it denies proper equality and dignity to the full diversity of human embodiment.[53] To offer an alternative, gendered and queered theological anthropology requires a return to the text of Genesis 3.

In the biblical description of the sin of Adam and Eve, it is important to notice that each and every person in the narrative is a free moral agent. This freedom magnifies the

[50] Ruether, 'Augustine', p. 63.
[51] Women are seen as little more than sex objects with uncontrollable appetites for worldly forms of pleasure. See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, p. 66.
[52] See, e.g., Genesis 1.27; Deuteronomy 32.11–12, 18; Isaiah 42.14; 49.15; 66.13; Psalms 123.2–3; 131.2; Matthew 23.37; Luke 13.34; 15.8–10.
[53] Contrast Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Making of Man', p. 402 [XV.3].

responsibility of each individual for their actions.[54] It is evinced in that each sinful agent in the narrative is individually punished for actions that put their own potential advantage over the wellbeing of others.[55] Though individuality itself is not sin, it becomes the means for sin when it tries to claim the other for itself. The responsibility for sin is therefore sourced in each human individually, although the effects of sin manifest themselves structurally in the relationships of a person to God, to other people, and to the wider created world.[56] It is only in the degree to which a person recognises the extent to which they live in denial of this alterity that they begin to understand who they are and who others really are.[57] The actions of an individual are sinful when a person clings to their own selfish interests, instead of opening themselves to a higher unity of life by engaging in proper relationships to others around them.[58]

Sin cannot be understood as something that is merely private, for it always has a public effect, even if that effect is known only unto God. The image of God can be similarly conceived, as rooted in the freedom of a completely open person in actual relationship to the otherness both within and beyond creation. Even sinful human beings retain the ground of their being and continued existence in the Word of God, through which they were created according to the Divine image and likeness. So postlapsarian human persons are still primarily recognised as unique creatures that have a special relationship to others and to the Absolute Other.[59] Understanding the image of God and the role of sin in this context places a focus upon human relationality rather than on human rationality. It also dispenses with any potentially sexist notions of the *animal rationale*, which, in part, is what holds back the

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[54] Genesis 3.14–19. For a novel and in-depth reading of the punishment of the woman, see Carol Meyers, 'Gender Roles and Genesis 3.16', in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. by Athalya Brenner, The Feminist Companion to the Bible, 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 130–32.
[55] See Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p. 27.
[56] Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 102.
[57] James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1998), p. 63.
[58] Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, p. 65.
[59] See Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, pp. 72–73.

theological anthropology and hamartiology of Augustine.[60] In the end, Augustine attempts to deflect the blame for the sin of certain individuals, just like Adam and Eve do in the Garden. Yet all human persons, as creatures moulded in the image of God, bear individual responsibility for their own actions before the eyes of God; the potential for sin lies equally in all humankind.

Seminal Shame

The third Augustinian misconception to highlight concerning sin regards its near-inescapable connection with human sexual relations. To begin, it is necessary to move outside Genesis 3, because misinterpretations of another well-known biblical passage creep in to affect the Genesis text eisegetically. This passage is Romans 5.12–14:

> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

Despite its considerable influence upon the development of hamartiology, the association of Romans 5 with the creation narrative in Genesis is not much more than an unfortunate coincidence of misinterpretation. This text has often been used to prove an Augustinian doctrine of original sin, but it is not clear that the passage actually supports this interpretation.[61] That is because the point of this passage is not to blame Adam, or to suggest that sin is passed on biologically through sexual intercourse, so much as it is to affirm the universality of sin.[62] Perhaps the most likely reason that Augustine misinterpreted this passage to mean that all humankind participated in the sin of Adam because they were

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[60] Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 96. For the *animal rationale*, see, e.g., Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. by Christopher John Shields (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2016), p. 70 [434a6–10]; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. & trans. by Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 12, 22 [1098a14, 1102b13–1103a4]; Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, trans. by James G. Lennox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 97 [686a26–29]; Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. by C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998), p. 4 [1253a15–18].
[61] Blenkinsopp, p. 184.
[62] Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 366.

present in him seminally (an error that has inspired many subsequent theologians), is that he mistranslated the somewhat ambiguous phrase ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον in Romans 5.12 as *in quo omnes peccaverunt*.[63] Augustine took the *in quo* to mean *in lumbis Adami*, whereas, although ἐφ' ᾧ literally means "on which", or "on whom", it is more commonly used to mean "because", or perhaps "in that".[64] In addition, the Hebrew Bible itself clearly states that a child shall not die for the sin of its parents, but that the righteousness or sinfulness of a person is their own.[65]

There are some other linguistic problems with interpreting Romans 5.12–14 to mean that all humankind sinned through its presence in the loins of Adam. First, the expression ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον is found nowhere else in the Pauline corpus. Second, there are grammatical problems to deal with. If the interpretation of Augustine is the correct meaning, the antecedent in the sentence is placed an unusually long way from the relative.[66] Linguistically, it makes greater sense to abandon the Augustinian construction of this phrase which does violence to the normal course of the sentence, and to accept a less ontological reading of the

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[63] "In whom all have sinned." The NRSV translates Romans 5.12: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned." See, *e.g.*, David Weaver, 'From Paul to Augustine: Romans 5:12 in Early Christian Exegesis', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 27.3 (1983), 187–206 (pp. 187, 202); John D. Godsey, 'The Interpretation of Romans in the History of The Christian Faith', *Interpretation*, 34.1 (1980), 3–16 (p. 8) <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002096438003400101>. For theologians who follow this misleading path, see, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica: Part II: First Part: QQ. XLIX.–LXXXIX.*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn, 22 vols (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1927), VII, pp. 418–19 [I-II, q. 82, a. 3, resp.]; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. by James T. Dennison, trans. by George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), I, p. 616; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), I, p. 250 [II.1.7]; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. by John Pringle, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), II, p. 53; Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology: The Doctrine of Man*, 3 vols (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), II, p. 593; Piet J. A. M. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, trans. by Joseph Donceel (London: Sheed & Ward, 1965), pp. 63–80. More recently, however, even Joseph Ratzinger has questioned whether the concept of "Original Sin" is misleading and imprecise in this context. See Joseph Ratzinger, *'In the Beginning…': A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 72.

[64] The meaning of *in lumbis Adami* is "in the loins of Adam." For the phrase to mean "in Adam," one would expect the Greek preposition ἐν (rather than ἐπὶ).

[65] See Ezekiel 18.20.

[66] André-Marie Dubarle, *The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin*, trans. by E. M. Stewart (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964), p. 150.

passage in question. Reading with the grain of the text, it seems that Paul is not saying in this passage that Adam is the cause of all the sins which have plagued human history, and nor is he saying that it is the case that sin is introduced into the human gene pool and passed on as a kind of hereditary illness.[67]

Whatever the reason behind his misapprehension of Romans 5, Augustine reads a corresponding connection between sin and sexuality as being implicit in Adam and Eve's emergent consciousness of their nakedness, which is what evokes their discomfiture.[68] According to him, human sexuality is shameful from this moment on, though this was not the case before the sin of Adam and Eve. The virtue of modesty now helps to discourage the sinful lustfulness that disobeys the rational will of the intellect and further entrenches human guilt before God. As such, human genitalia are henceforth best covered up by clothing.[69] Augustine writes:

> It was, after all, not right that the creature should be ashamed of the work of its creator, but when the first human beings were disobedient, they received as a just punishment the disobedience of their members, and they were ashamed over this disobedience when they covered with fig leaves those shameful members which were previously nothing to be ashamed of.[70]

Ultimately, and rather explicitly, for Augustine what is truly shameful and problematic is the loss of the control that men had over their genitals before the Fall. The experiences of impotence, sexual pleasure, and ill-timed erections evince the sinful, unruly body.[71] As Sarah Coakley has observed, what Augustine seems to be worried about is the male loss of control in sex: the way in which the members of the body individually revolt against the cooperative

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[67] Blenkinsopp, p. 185.
[68] Genesis 3.7, 10.
[69] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, pp. 615–17 [XIV.17]. Cf. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, p. 629 [XIV.26]; Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, p. 46.
[70] Augustine of Hippo, 'Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians', in *Answer to the Pelagians, II: Marriage and Desire, Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians, Answer to Julian*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Roland J. Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, 24, 4 vols (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), II, p. 131 [I.15.31].
[71] Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Once out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 39.

work of the mind in memory, understanding, and will.[72] The dysfunctionality of human genitalia is a prominent concern elsewhere in the writings of Augustine on sin and human sexuality.

Augustine questions why it is that members which were created for the function of conceiving children do not obey the will of the human person. As he sees it, our sexual organs move as if they were independent: sometimes genitalia are aroused when the mind does not will them to be and, at other times, genitalia are not arousable when the mind wills them to be.[73] Since human beings possess rational intellects which give them free will, Augustine believes that we should blush with shame over the fact that, by showing our contempt for the commandment of God in the Garden of Eden, we have lost command over their own bodies. For Augustine, lust and impotence are thus defects in fallen human nature, which are created by the sin of Adam and passed on to the rest of humankind through the loins of Adam.[74] There are, however, a few problems with this close identification of sexuality with sin.

There is little to no evidence in the actual text of Genesis 3.7 that shame is the direct result of sin. Likewise, there is little or no suggestion that a hitherto unknown secret of human sexuality was discovered through a sense of shame.[75] Additionally, Romans 5.12–14—once its mistranslation is corrected—may be said to express the solidarity of all humankind in sin, though it says nothing about the way in which the unity of humankind in sin through Adam came into existence.[76] What Paul does state is that the descendants of Adam are subject to

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[72] Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 290.
[73] Augustine of Hippo, 'Marriage and Desire', in *Answer to the Pelagians, II: Marriage and Desire, Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians, Answer to Julian*, ed. by John E. Rotelle, trans. by Roland J. Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, 24, 4 vols (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), II, 12–97 (p. 32 [I.6.7]).
[74] Wiley, p. 63.
[75] See Westermann, I, p. 235. *Contra* Rad, p. 85.
[76] Brunner, *Dogmatics*, II, p. 104.

death because they themselves commit sin. The foundational connection established in the work of Augustine between *sexuality* and sinfulness (rather than arrogance, consciousness, or embarrassment) begins to crumble, because the way in which these passages are brought together does not hold up to scrutiny. Furthermore, in diminishing the individual responsibility of human persons, the Augustinian doctrine of original sin is unable to explain both the voluntary character of sin on the part of individual human persons and the source of sin in the natural conditions of human existence.[77] The weakness of Augustine's grasp of the nuances in the original Greek text of Romans 5.12–14 undermines the way in which he interprets this passage and Genesis 3.

There is little compelling reason not to argue that the universality of the fate of Adam in humankind comes from the fact that all *individually* sin. The reason why Augustine advocated a doctrine of original sin, probably based on a misreading of the biblical texts and his own personal battle with uncontrollable lust, is understandable. The inhuman consequences that result from this misunderstanding of sin have not yet been sufficiently recognised or appreciated systematically.[78] The writings of Augustine herein discussed offer grounds for discrimination against women, who purportedly are less rational, less perfect, and more susceptible to sin than men. This has often resulted in the creation of unequal dimorphic spheres in Christianity for men and women.[79] Due to Augustine's low view of human sexuality, especially when not for procreative purposes, his understanding of sin can also be used as implicit support for the demonisation of people who are infertile or express nonheteronormative gender or sexuality. Some of those who image God are thus viewed as

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[77] Pannenberg, *Anthropology*, p. 108. For nudity as shame and humiliation, see Genesis 9.22–23; Isaiah 20.4; Amos 2.16. For clothes as a sign of dignity, see Exodus 28.2, 40–41. Contrariwise, Jeremiah 3.25, Micah 7.10, and Psalms 35.26 and 109.29 speak of being "covered with shame."

[78] John Mahoney, commenting on the faults of Augustine's understanding of issues of gender and sexuality, expresses sadness at the note of "melancholy, disgust, and even brutality" towards sinful human beings. One might perhaps contend that what is really saddening is the way in which the works of Augustine have been used to lend credence to the abuse and degrading treatment of women and LGBTQIA+ persons for over fifteen centuries. See Mahoney, *Making of Moral Theology*, p. 46.

[79] Wiley, p. 171.

separate and unequal according to their gender or sexuality. The unfortunate consequence of Augustine's flawed but highly influential association of sin, sexuality, and self-consciousness has been that theological anthropology has found itself to be continually impeded in its attempt to understand the dignity and value of human persons of all genders and sexualities. There are, however, alternatives to this historical perspective on hamartiology.

Selfishness and Sinfulness

One alternative is to understand that, despite the damage which sin does to humankind, human actions do not fundamentally erase the dignity of that which God created in the image of God.[80] Though human beings are still open and oriented to the other sin means that the image of God in them is blurred. People remain relational to the core of their existence, but these relationships have become distorted because of sin and the social structures that are built up around it.[81] In sin, humankind has tried to turn away from God and marred its own beauty as a reflection of the Divine. Nevertheless, we have not expunged the *imago Dei* from our being, for this is beyond our capability, as to do so requires a fundamental alteration of God's creation.[82] This means that human persons always retain the potential to actualise the likeness of God that resides within themselves, and to act positively in relation to the world and other human beings.

Human existence should be viewed in light of what it ought to be and what it always has the potential to be, rather than looking back to the Garden of Eden to understand human

[80] See Genesis 1.26–27.
[81] Roberts, p. 143. The Eastern Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky is clear that the image of God in human beings is inerasable. See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, p. 124. Even Augustine conceded that the image of God was always there in human beings, though he claimed that it was worn away to almost nothing. See Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, p. 374 [XIV.2.6].
[82] See Philo of Alexandria, *Creation of the Cosmos*, p. 85 [§145].

existence as godless and definitively ruined by sin.[83] This is because the image of God in humankind is both an absolute given, endowed by God at the instance of creation, and something that comes to its fullest actualisation through the potential that human beings carry for Godlikeness.[84] It also depends upon the inescapable relationality to alterity that characterises human existence, as human beings can choose whether or not to utilise their relationships to others to facilitate works of love and the growth of creation towards God. In this context, sin can be viewed as a refusal to commit oneself to the boundlessness and nothingness that is the ultimate reality of human existence as images of God in the world.[85] To a certain extent, theological anthropology and Christian ethics are therefore eschatological, in that there is to be a final healing and reconciliation of all individual persons with God, and that the plasticity of human existence is remoulded according to a process of sanctification that works from within salvation history.[86] This potential for Godlikeness means that there is an inescapable tension between the value and dignity of the human person as created in the image of God and their final state of existence, which will be the fullest expression of the unique existence of that person in the *eschaton*, beyond the realm of worldly time.

So, the place of sin in theological anthropology may be recast by focusing on the potential of humankind for self-transcendence and transformation into the likeness of God. What is here understood by "sin" is the refusal of humankind to accept the invitation offered by God to self-transcendence through the process of salvation history.[87] It is a refusal to transcend the limits of oneself in the interests of others and, even, to transcend oneself in

[83] Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 80.
[84] See Fergusson, pp. 443–44.
[85] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 188.
[86] Christopher Southgate, 'Re-Reading Genesis, John, and Job: A Christian Response to Darwinism', *Zygon*, 46.2 (2011), 370–95 (pp. 390–91) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2011.01186.x>.
[87] John Mahoney, *Christianity in Evolution: An Exploration* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), p. 43.

the ultimate interest of oneself. This is the case even though the capacity for relation—to others and to God—which is at the core of human existence remains, for what God establishes in God's own dignity, no human person can undo. The belief that human actions could negate this capacity might itself be viewed as sin and arrogance, as it presumes that an individual creature can override the continuously loving and gracious Divine act of creation. Sin may well mean that those created in the image of God do not reflect God in the way that God intended, but all human persons retain the image of God in which they were created, whether those individuals choose to reject sin or not.[88]

Self-Exposure and Estrangement

To continue to reassess the natural conditions of human existence and the role that sin plays in theological anthropology, it is important to return to the Book of Genesis once again. What is too often overlooked at the point in the narrative when Adam and Eve become aware of their nakedness is that they also experience something positive.[89] Adam and Eve's awareness of their nakedness encompasses something much more profound and broader than what we have so far been thinking of as sin or guilt. This is a fear of the inner, most intimate parts of the human self being exposed to another and unmasked.[90] It is a realisation of how totally and utterly they are related to God in all aspects of their being. To view the shame of Adam and Eve in this way lessens the sexual suggestiveness of their nakedness in Genesis 3. It also shows that to make the unnecessary Augustinian inference that Adam injected a hereditary ailment into humankind involves quite a bit of reading into the text.[91]

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[88] See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 124–25; Roberts, p. 143; Westermann, I, p. 235.
[89] Westermann, I, p. 251.
[90] Westermann, I, p. 253. There is a certain irony here in that, of course, Adam and Eve are already naked, open, and transparent to the omniscient God, as are all human persons.
[91] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 3rd edn (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 32. Eastern Orthodox theology has never really accepted the notion of Original Sin in the sense that the sin of Adam is passed down as an inheritance through all the generations of humankind. See Paul Ladouceur, 'Evolution and Genesis 2–3: The Decline and Fall of Adam and Eve', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 57.2 (2013), 135–76 (pp. 136–37).

To view the shame of Adam and Eve as the fear of self-exposure before God breaks down the case for an underlying link between nakedness, shame, and human sexuality to be the means for the transmission of the original sin of humankind.

The effect of the original sins of Adam and Eve within theological anthropology can be softened, and the debasement of human sexuality avoided, by resisting the temptation to make tenuous connections between sex and sinfulness. In everyday concrete reality, the gender and sexual expressions of human beings demonstrate some of the most profound forms of human love.[92] Certainly in Hebrew culture the acceptance of the role of sexuality in human existence is unremarkable. It is in Christian theology that gender and sexuality have developed such a vexed relationship with sin.[93] At the outset, it is important to recognise that the statement of God in Genesis 3.16 that the man will rule over the woman is not meant to be a description of the ideal state of male supremacy but is in fact a very condemnation of that state. Due to the disobedience of Eve her freedom has been restricted, and this power dynamic corrupts Adam also, for he is now an oppressor of a being who is his God-given equal.[94]

In contrast to the work of Augustine, a gendered and queered theological anthropology calls for a view of intimate human relations that is sex-positive. It affirms the goodness of the love given and received between different human beings in respectful sexual interactions and regards such interactions as a lived embodiment of the grace of God through the beauty of creation. No doubt, the transgression of the commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil brought about a different, more distant, and complex

[92] See Ruether, 'Augustine', p. 61. For other more positive readings on the nature of human sexuality, see Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T. & T. Clark International, 2010), pp. 63–65; Grenz, pp. 274–88; Gonzalez, p. 65.
[93] James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 67.
[94] Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing', p. 41. See Good, p. 84 n. 4; Henricus Renckens, *Israel's Concept of the Beginning: The Theology of Genesis 1–3* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1964), pp. 217–18.

relationship between humankind and God. Yet it did not bring about a complete breakdown of that relationship, just as it did not bring about a total debasement of human sexuality.[95] So, what does constitute a sinful expression of human sexuality? One might contend that, as humans are beings-in-relationship, sex only becomes sinful when it takes the form of "boundless obsessive desire" or "a *passionate hatred* of any limit."[96] That is to say, sexuality is identifiable with sin when there is a lack of respect for the other and a disregard for their wellbeing. This means that sex between humans is sinful when one person seeks to destroy the dignity of another, or to deny them that freedom for self-determination which is God-given. Such behaviour evinces a hatred of the grace that God has benevolently bestowed upon human persons to be free within the limits of their embodied existence, and to relate to others in a manner of their own choosing.[97]

Lastly, on a point of a more general nature regarding the Augustinian connection between sin and sexuality, it just seems nonsensical to hold a person responsible for sin that they did not commit. To hold every human person accountable for the sin of Adam means that "the first man is singled out in a fantastic way from the series of all the human beings who follow him, and—what is far worse—the human beings who follow him in the course of history are in a fantastic way de-humanized."[98] As a corrective, it must therefore be emphasised that each human person enters into sin *individually*, an almost inevitable entrance for which they themselves are nevertheless responsible. If a human person acts in a situation where they are

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[95] Blenkinsopp, p. 76.
[96] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 123.
[97] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 123. With terminology such as "destruction" and "hatred," Bonhoeffer picks up the language of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche argues that the only worthy definition of love is one that understands its method to be warfare and its foundation to be a deadly hatred between the sexes. See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, 'Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are', in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 69–151 (pp. 106, 145).
[98] Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, pp. 143–44. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. & trans. by Reidar Thomte, Kierkegaard's Writings, 8 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 25–36. For how Kierkegaard agrees with Friedrich Schleiermacher on the place of sin with Christian doctrine, see Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 20.

subject to irresistible force or impulse then that action cannot be said to be free, and they cannot be viewed as fully responsible for it.[99]

To a gendered and queered theological anthropology, the lexicon of "traditional" Augustinian doctrines of original sin (*e.g.*, "the sinful human *nature*" or "*inherited* sin") is abstruse. To people of nonheteronormative genders and sexualities such terms are substantially problematic, for they tend to ontologise a static structure of congenital sinfulness as constitutive of humanity, to the detriment of individual subjectivity, freedom, and personal responsibility. A human person cannot reasonably be said to be responsible for a state which they are born into, rather than one which comes about via their own choices and actions.[100] An individual is only culpable for their own mental or physical actions. This approach to hamartiology does not deny that people may give in to a disposition to sin, but that is not the same as a supposedly inherited state of original sin. It does not fundamentally alter the nature of human existence, judge human persons to be responsible for the sins of others, or make the avoidance of sin impossible.

Denying an Augustinian doctrine of original sin does not mean that sin must be conceived of in an entirely individualistic manner. Though sin is undeniably a subjective and free human act, the broader effects of sin are almost never confined to an individual human person. Human actions of any kind, sinful or not, are always located within the context of relationships with others and with God that are prior to any act of individual choice.[101] The limitations of humankind are revealed in the irony that humans exercise freedom by inhibiting their potential for loving relationships with others and estranging themselves from the God who is the constant source of their freedom. This self-reinforcement of the

[99] McFadyen, p. 20.
[100] Oliver D. Crisp, 'On Original Sin', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 17.3 (2015), 252–66 (p. 261) <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12107>.
[101] Ian A. McFarland, *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 6.

restriction of human freedom, and the anxiety that ensues from malfunctional relationships with others, constitutes a disorienting downward spiral of actual sin within human existence.[102] It is therefore a failure of human persons to find the reality of their existential core that is being-in-relationship, and a failure to open themselves to the grace which enables the reconciliation of sinners with each other and with God.[103] In this way, the state of sinfulness is simply the need of individual persons for the salvation offered through Christ, which repairs the broken relationships of human existence.[104] The awareness human beings have of this need and the means of their own salvation can be a powerful motive toward compassion and the forgiveness of others.[105]

As they are living images of the God of love, the truth about human beings is not to be found in sin but in love, by love, and through love. Without the sense that human beings are all loved infinitely, even despite their capacity for evil, it is difficult to forgive and to repair the damage that has been done by personal and structural sin to individuals and communities.[106] The scope of human freedom is what enables individuals to love authentically, as they are able to choose to enter into fruitful and genuine relationships of forgiveness with others and with God.[107] To be a human person is to choose whether or not to love others, and to choose whether or not to accept the love that is offered to humankind by God.[108] This is the foundation upon which all human relationships and morality rests.

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[102] See Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 61.
[103] See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Existence and the Christ*, 3 vols (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, p. 57.
[104] Daryl P. Domning and Monika Hellwig, *Original Selfishness: Original Sin and Evil in the Light of Evolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 140.
[105] Peter B. Ely, *Adam and Eve in Scripture, Theology, and Literature: Sin, Compassion, and Forgiveness* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), p. 2.
[106] Ely, p. 3.
[107] Nonna Verna Harrison, 'The Human Person as Image and Likeness of God', in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. by Mary Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 78–92 (p. 82).
[108] Tutu, p. 3. Nevertheless, if the whole of the human person is created through the Word of God to be free in a capacity for loving relationships, then sin is the estranging act of a whole person.

In the Genesis narrative, God stopped the initial act of creation after the creation of humankind, for God was satisfied with what God had created. God had found both the object of the love of God and the vessel to spread this love throughout creation.[109] Yet, rather even than an "object" of love, one might say that the culmination of Divine love gifted in creation is each dynamic, subjective, instantiation of free human personhood and that, as such, human persons cannot be tarnished essentially by sin. As humanity is made for love, the love given by God to individual persons can only be properly responded to with reciprocal love.[110] Divine love gives humanity the whole of its eternal being through the grounding of its subjective nature.[111] This means that humans love not only out of the differentiating point of their own personhood, but also out of the utterly transcendent identity of God, as they are a bearer of the image of God within creation.[112]

In the end, sin was and is always the act of an individual. It is a failure to respond adequately to the call of God to live in right and proper relationship to the otherness that is always present in human existence. Sin never becomes a quality or a substance, though individual acts of sin relate to others and form structures that add up to more than the sum of their parts so that humans are born into a vulnerable and contingent state.[113] Sin is also an act that can be counteracted, as it is by nature a human act (though humankind apostatises itself continually). Even those individuals who appear to be irredeemable or lost to the power of temptation remain in the image of God.[114] They continue, through the person of Jesus Christ,

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[109] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.1, p. 217. Cf. Genesis 1.28–31. Similarly, the *Mishnah Aboth* declares: "Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of God]; still greater was the love in that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God, as it is written, *For in the image of God made he man.*" See Danby, 'Mishnah Aboth', p. 452 [3.15].
[110] H. Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, trans. by Sierd Woudstra, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 188.
[111] Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, p. 99; Balthasar, *Theological Anthropology*, p. 47.
[112] Balthasar, *Theological Anthropology*, p. 54.
[113] Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 148.
[114] Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 204.

to be free to accept or reject love, which constitutes the fulfilment of their capacity for relationship with others and with the Absolute Other.

To summarise these hamartiological reflections, a gendered and queered theological anthropology can claim with reasonable biblical precedent that, whatever sinful deformity they may accrue, human persons remain mutable as creatures fashioned according to the image of God. This is the basis of our hope for transformation in the salvific power of our potential for participation in the Divine life of unending love in imitation of Christ. Even despite the havoc that has been wrought in the world by evil sins, the reality of humans as bearing the image of God is still fundamental to us, to the way that we should be treated, and to our theological understanding of ourselves.[115] Human persons remain the unshakeable covenant partner of God as the economy of salvation history moves towards a final redemption and reconciliation, when Godlikeness will be lovingly realised in individuals of every kind.[116] Thus, as it is wholly a human act, sin does not transgress, but remains subject to, the limitations of its author. Sin cannot wipe out the God-given capacity of humankind to relate to its loving Creator.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the actual "nature" of sin gives human beings a distorted view of the world around them, of their relationship to that world, and of who God is.[117] Though it does not destroy humankind's creation according to the image of God, sin warps the place of humankind in the world because it estranges people from the eternal life of benevolent being-in-the-love of God to which they are called.[118] The separation from Eden is thus a

[115] Iain W. Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), p. 81.
[116] Cortez, p. 136.
[117] Roberts, p. 145.
[118] Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, p. 218.

proper punishment for the transgression of the command of God and the breakdown in human relationships that follows, in the sense that both touch human existence as a whole.[119] Yet only that creature which is created in the image of God has the power of separating itself from God.[120] In this, human weakness and human greatness are identical, and there is no need for a gender hierarchy or the shaming of God-given sexuality. It is for this reason that the Augustinian approach to hamartiology, which links sin so inextricably with human sexuality, has been strongly criticised in this chapter.

Taken as a whole, the Genesis creation narratives seek to account for the present state of humankind, which is limited in its freedom both by materiality and by sin. In detailing the breakdown of the relationships between human beings and God, the state of human existence is described as one which is sustained by its relationship to God and at the same time estranged from its proper manner. This is all deeply ironic, for the freedom to estrange oneself from God and from other creatures is implicit in the structure of freedom itself. It has only become explicit because humankind has attempted to actualise itself in contradiction to God, to isolate the image from its author, and to claim possession of Divine being from entirely within its own createdness, without realising its natural capacity for relationship with the Absolute Other. Such a sinful failure to choose loving relationships is also evidenced by the social exclusion and marginalisation of persons who are seen as different or undesirable, including those individuals who may express their gender or sexuality in nonheteronormative ways. A gendered and queered theological anthropology must therefore advocate the dignity of all human beings as they are in their own embodied totality and speak out against the Augustinian debasement of human sexuality and non-male genders.

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[119] Westermann, I, p. 270.
[120] Tillich, II, p. 33.

Chapter Three: On the Incarnation

This chapter explores the nature of human personhood considering Christian theology's claim that its ultimate revelation is in Jesus Christ, because anthropology and Christology mutually determine each other.[1] In particular, this chapter focuses on how to understand the universality and particularity of human identity, without compromising either. The thesis is that the phenomenon of a human person is a manifestation of the unity of the transcendent and the immanent. The chapter begins by considering Pauline Christology and the *imago Dei*, building on the Old Testament. It examines linguistic and theological dimensions of Pauline Christology, including an Adam/Christ typology, and picks up on the eschatological tension present in human existence. This leads to a consideration of the radical unknowability of God, even despite the self-revelation that is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

In Rahnerian terms, it is maintained that God is to be understood as the Absolute Mystery which is beyond conceptualisation. The oneness of God in the absoluteness of Godself is emphasised. An argument therefore develops that the immanent Trinity is the same as the economic Trinity, and so, even in the self-revelation of Christ, God is Absolute Mystery. Building on this apophatic theology and Christology, the tendency in postmodern theological anthropology to root human difference (especially sexual difference) in the intra-Trinitarian relations is critiqued. Here, the focus is on the work of Graham Ward. The point is that it is impossible to find a created image which adequately portrays the Trinity in Itself.[2]

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[1] Karl Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', in *Theological Investigations: Writings of 1965–67*, trans. by Graham Harrison, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), IX, 25–45 (p. 28); Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 202.

[2] As is also argued in John of Damascus, 'The Orthodox Faith', in *Writings*, trans. by Frederic H. Chase (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), pp. 165–406 (p. 183 [I.8]).

Finally, the chapter offers a phenomenology of the queer transcorporeality of the person of Jesus Christ as the prototype of human personhood.

A Pauline Christology of the Imago Dei

According to the author of the Epistle to the Romans, human persons are called to imitate the image of God that is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.[3] Initially, this would appear to complicate the picture of the Genesis creation narratives in which human beings are said to be created according to the image and likeness of God.[4] Yet, Jesus the Christ is also the perfection of human personhood. Human beings are called to imitate Jesus in love, and this is how individuals are to actualise fully their creation according to the image and likeness of God in love.[5] We are to conform to the Son of God. What is central to this process is the participation of believers in Christ.[6] In Pauline theological anthropology this is the τέλος of human personhood.[7] And, what is more, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is also of a cosmic significance: the baptised believer is a new person in a *new creation*.[8] Across the immensity of time and space, and the multitude of individuals, a single economy is thus at work in creation: a salvific incorporation of the believer into the body of Christ through the redemptive work of Jesus.[9] Indeed, the completeness of the Divine self-revelation in Christ means that the whole of God's interaction with creation is exemplified by the Incarnation.[10] But what does the realisation of the fullness of the Divine image in a human person look like?

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[3] Romans 8.29. Cf. Colossians 1.15.
[4] Genesis 1.26.
[5] Ephesians 5.1–2.
[6] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), p. 502.
[7] Romans 8.18–30. See the commentary of Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 534.
[8] Davies, pp. 120–21.
[9] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin: An Essay on the Interior Life* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 143.
[10] Cf. Colossians 1.19. See James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 101.

To understand the significance of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* for Pauline Christology it is necessary to consider the Greek vocabulary and its context. The key term used by Paul is εἰκών, which is translated into English as "likeness" or "image" and occurs ten times in the Pauline corpus.[11] In general, for Paul, the image of the invisible God in Christ is the genuine presence of God in Jesus, through which human persons are to be reinstated to glory.[12] This image is not alien to our reality. It is the very reality of humanity. According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, as it is applied to Christ, εἰκών "does not imply a weakening or a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of its inner core and essence."[13] The image of God in the Incarnate Christ illuminates the inner core and essence of the created world. This image of God is the ultimate realisation in history of the createdness of creation and of the nature of the Triune Creator, who thereby reveals the truth of Divinity and of humanity. The image of God in humanity that has been damaged by sin is therefore restored, by virtue of its connection with the perfect image in Jesus Christ.[14]

For a gendered and queered theological anthropology, a key aspect to the Christological dimension to the *imago Dei* in the Pauline corpus is the contrast that is developed between the old (Adamic) humanity and the new (Christic) humanity.[15] Paul speaks of the Incarnation in terms of a new creation, to be contrasted with the old, through a complex Adam–Christ typology.[16] Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, yet Adam is the first man and Christ is the second Adam. The First Adam sundered humanity from God through

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[11] Romans 1.23; 8.29; I Corinthians 11.7; 15.49; II Corinthians 3.18; 4.4; Colossians 1.15; 3.10; and Hebrews 10.1. The term occurs elsewhere in the New Testament. See Matthew 22.20; Mark 12.16; Luke 20.24; and Revelation 13.14–15; 14.9, 11; 15.2; 16.2; 19.20; 20.4.

[12] Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul's Theology of Glory in Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), p. 112.

[13] Hermann Kleinknecht, 'The Greek Use of Εἰκών', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey William Bromiley, 10 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 388–90 (p. 389).

[14] Gerhard Kittel, 'The Metaphorical Use of Image in the NT', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey William Bromiley, 10 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 395–97 (p. 123).

[15] Romans 6.6; Ephesians 2.15; 4.22–24; and Colossians 3.9–11.

[16] See I Corinthians 15.21–28, 45–49; Philippians 2.6–11; and Romans 5.12–21.

sin, though humankind remained in the image of God.[17] So it is only due to the Son of God's unique relationship with the Father that the person of Jesus Christ is able to redeem, restore, and resurrect creation as a second Adam.[18] Christ as the εἰκών τοῦ θεοῦ is "both the Son of God who perfectly reveals God and 'the Last Adam', the new Man, who perfectly embodies God's original intent in creating man which was frustrated in the first Adam."[19] Jesus Christ is the active mediator of the true, perfect humanity, in and through whom God creates a new humankind. However, the Son of God does not lose the united similarity of the Divine nature.[20] The Pauline term υἱοθεσία therefore refers to our adoption as children of God through the Sonship of the Incarnate Word.[21] Human persons are adopted into the eternity of Divine life through the body of Christ, by virtue of our participation in His perfect filial imaging of the glory of the Father.[22] A question that may (at first) seem peripheral is in the background here: Would God have become Incarnate if humankind had not sinned?

Many theologians have been ambivalent as to whether God would have become Incarnate if humankind had not sinned. The question has often been dismissed and/or deemed too presumptuous to consider. Nevertheless, some theologians have considered it. In one of his sermons, Augustine of Hippo declares that, if humankind had not been lost to sin, the Incarnation would not have happened.[23] In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas states that God still *could* have become Incarnate if humankind had not sinned, but he remains irresolute as to whether God *would* have.[24] To the question of whether God always intended to become

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[17] I Corinthians 11.7.
[18] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 329; Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, 2nd edn (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984), p. 329.
[19] Kim, p. 266.
[20] See Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, trans. by Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), p. 266 [7.37].
[21] Romans 8.15, 23; 9.4; Galatians 4.5; and Ephesians 1.5. See James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of [Huiothesia] in the Pauline Corpus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992).
[22] Kittel, 'Metaphorical Use of Image', II, p. 396.
[23] Augustine of Hippo, 'Sermon CXXIV [CLXXIV BEN.]: On the Words of the Apostle', in *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, 2 vols (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845), II, 890–97 (pp. 890–91 [2]).
[24] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica: Part III, QQ. I.–XVI.*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn, 22 vols (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1935), XV, p. 12 [III, q. 1, a.3, resp.].

human, even without the advent of sin, this thesis answers with an unequivocal "yes." What is more, it judges that an affirmative answer to this question is key to constructing Christology in the contemporary age. Like the work of Karl Rahner, this gendered and queered theological anthropology maintains that God's capacity to create is grounded in God's free will to give Godself to what is not God.[25] This means that the Incarnation is presupposed by the very existence of creation. The economy of salvation history would have followed the path of Incarnation, whatever else did or did not intervene, according to God's eternal plan. In this, one might uncover another root of the irrevocable and utterly fundamental dignity of humanity.

Negative answers to the question about whether God always intended to become flesh often betray an underlying (predominantly Western) assumption. This assumption is that salvation in Jesus Christ is primarily about healing the harm caused by sin. Yet this functions to restrict the concept of salvation: it does not view the cleansing of sin as being part of a greater economy, which also encompasses atonement, reconciliation, and deification. In insisting that God always intended and willed to become flesh, the import of the redemption worked by Christ is revealed to be more extensive and radical than the expurgation of sin. John Calvin has a similar insight when he, albeit reluctantly, admitted that, even without sin, the state of humankind would have been too low to participate in the Divine life without a mediator.[26] Accordingly, this thesis argues that all human persons exist in lack because their creaturely existence is continuously moving towards an (yet unactualised) ἐντελέχεια through salvation and deification—this is the Divine plan at work. So, the very possibility of human existence itself is grounded in the more comprehensive and radical possibility of God to express Godself in the Word of God, which becomes the fulfilment of humanity.[27]

[25] Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 222–23.
[26] Calvin, *Institutes*, I, p. 468 [II.XII.5].
[27] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 223.

Humankind always has the potential to become more receptive to the imprint of the Divine through the Incarnation of the Word of God.

The creative work of God through the Divine οἰκονομία is perpetual, and the Incarnation is an indispensable element of it. Humankind was fashioned in light of God's preordained plan to become flesh.[28] In the beginning, God made a world that, though other than God, was capable of being and becoming more than it was. Creation was created to grow and develop towards a τέλος, even when it was without sins. The created world has always been destined to be filled gradually with eternal life and the glory of the Lord.[29] Nonetheless, the participation of human beings in God through Christ does not blur the ever-present distinction between God in Christ and believers in Christ.[30] The glory of the Lord originates in God alone and is only received as a gift by creatures in union with Christ.[31] Furthermore, believers who are glorified in the Christ are called to live out their glorification.[32] They are called to actualise the imitation of Christ, because participation is imitation, and imitation is participation. To be Christ-like thus means to walk in the way of God.

Another important point to make is that the perfect *imago Dei* in the person of Christ, though fully actualised, does not hinge on a complete departure from the existence of sinful humanity.[33] The nature of human existence as an image of the Divine has not been totally erased or taken over by sin. Yet this does not mean that there is a bridge from sinfulness to

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[28] Tertullian of Carthage, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection*, ed. by Ernest Evans (London: SPCK, 1960), p. 19 [6].
[29] See Habakkuk 2.14; and N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), II, p. 1093.
[30] Goranson Jacob, pp. 134–35.
[31] See Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. by Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 262–70. To receive the glory that naturally radiates as Divine ἐνέργεια through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit means to transform givenness into manifestation. See Ephesians 1.19; 3.7; 4.16; Philippians 3.21; Colossians 1.29; 2.12.
[32] Goranson Jacob, p. 123. See John 13.12–15, 34; 14.6; 15.9–11; I Corinthians 11.1; II Corinthians 3.18; Ephesians 4.32; Philippians 2.3–8; Colossians 3.13; I Peter 2.21; I John 2.6.
[33] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. by Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, p. 269.

Divinity—any "bridge" in the Incarnation comes from the Divine to the human.[34] The unchangeability of the Divine essence means that there is essential similarity in the express image of the Father in the Son, which cannot be added to.[35] As a result, in the phenomenon of Christ, Adamic humankind perceives its proximity to God and its distance from God simultaneously.[36] In perceiving Jesus as the Christ, humankind understands reality through its similarity and dissimilarity with Him. This realisation gives humankind a conception and knowledge of its own eternal life in the image and likeness of God.[37] If there was a complete departure from the existence of sinful humanity in the perfect *imago Dei* of Jesus Christ, what has been assumed in the Incarnation would bear no salvific relevance for humankind and would be utterly unintelligible to us.[38] The Godlikeness of Adamic humanity is drained to the low-water mark, but there remains some similarity between Adamic humanity and the person of Jesus Christ. This minimal correspondence lies in the fact that human personhood is a free being-with-others.[39] The positive aspect of an *analogia entis* thus appears, which makes of the finite a shadow or trace of the Infinite.[40] It follows that postlapsarian human persons have remained in the image of the free God to a certain extent. Humankind is not utterly debased, though it may not yet fully reflect its true constitution in Christ.[41]

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[34] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, trans. by James W. Leitch (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 105 [3.11].
[35] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, ed. by Joel C. Elowsky, trans. by David R. Maxwell, 2 vols (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), I, p. 19 [I.3].
[36] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: Seeing the Form*, ed. by Joseph Fessio and John Kenneth Riches, trans. by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, 7 vols (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), I, p. 185.
[37] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p. 7 [2].
[38] Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Oration 38: On the Theophany', in *Gregory of Nazianzus*, by Brian E. Daley, trans. by Brian E. Daley (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 117–26 (p. 123 [38.13]).
[39] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, p. 274.
[40] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, ed. by John Kenneth Riches and Joseph Fessio, trans. by Brian McNeil, 7 vols (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), V, p. 627.
[41] John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1993), p. 83.

Human persons currently subsist in a tentative suspension, midway between corruptibility and incorruptibility.[42] This is not to say that salvation has not been fully accomplished in the redemptive work of Jesus. Salvation has been accomplished, but it has not yet been fully actualised across the whole of creation. It is the duty of the Christian to *actualise* in this world the presence of absolute love in preparation for the second coming of Christ.[43] Human personhood exists in both the Adamic past and the Christic future but is only realised in the present.[44] This is because, in the Incarnation, Christ assumes the Adamic existence in sin in His own total openness to the will of God the Father. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, this kenotic assumption of the Adamic existence therefore "penetrates deeper than every created state and is the foundation of the whole existence of Jesus."[45] What this means is that the existence of humankind between the Incarnation and the ἔσχατόν is one of a life-in-transition, it inhabits a (metaphorical) no-man's-land. But what is not yet good does not have to be bad.[46] Admittedly, our present existence does not belong to eternal life, but neither does it belong to the nothingness of death. In the instability of the present human existence, life and death cohere.[47] Sin and grace are held together in a dialectical unity, as humankind awaits the second coming of Christ.[48]

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[42] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica: Part I, QQ. LXXV.–CII.*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 22 vols (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1922), IV, p. 345 [I, q. 98, a.1, resp.].
[43] See Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, V, p. 649.
[44] See Elaine L. Graham, *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood and Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 224.
[45] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: The New Covenant*, ed. by John Kenneth Riches, trans. by Brian McNeil, 7 vols (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), VII, p. 218.
[46] Plato, *The Symposium*, p. 38 [202b]. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates: Together with Notes of Schelling's Berlin Lectures*, ed. & trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings, 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 121.
[47] Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, trans. by Edwin C. Hoskyns, 6th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 286; Karl Rahner, 'The Eucharist and Our Daily Lives', in *Theological Investigations: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), VII, 211–26 (p. 215).
[48] Karl Rahner, 'The Sin of Adam', in *Theological Investigations: Confrontations 1*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), XI, 247–62 (p. 259).

Though human existence now anticipates the ἔσχατόν, the Incarnation remains a crucial turning point in salvation history. This is because the Word becoming flesh enabled human persons to access salvation. It was a precondition of the ultimate escape from the indeterminate state of postlapsarian existence. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, each human person may now grow more or less Christ-like over the course of their earthly existence. Additionally, to progress in a life of Christ, one must act. Standing still only perpetuates the status quo of sinfulness.[49] This progression in holiness is required because our tentative subsistence is not eternally sustainable—it is provisional. In the end, human persons will either be consigned to eternal life or to everlasting damnation. The salvific actualisation of Christian lives in the Holy Spirit and their final judgement must therefore be anticipated on earth.[50] Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son, was and is the definitive image of the Father revealed in a human person and, as such, is, and must be, universally relatable for creation. This relationship is accomplished in human lives by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God came down in the Word's very own personhood; the Anointed One, by whom and in whom and through whom all things were created, inaugurated the renewal of humankind, by the Incarnation of a true image of God the Father, in a mortal human body.[51] As Rahner has it, in their own non-divine reality creatures are therefore "the *grammar of God's possible self-expression.*"[52] Human persons exist as they are in history with the potential for union with God and the actualisation of Godlikeness.

The Incarnation of the Word of God in a human person means that a particular *hypostasis* had to be assumed. There is no other way for a human person to exist than as a person. Yet,

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[49] Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. by Bruno Scott James (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 141 [94.3].
[50] See, e.g., Hebrews 9.27 and Revelation 20.11–13.
[51] See Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, pp. 166–67 [13.29–35]; Athanasius of Alexandria, 'Four Discourses Against the Arians', in *Athanasius: Select Writings and Letters*, ed. by Archibald Robinson, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2.4 (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), pp. 303–447 (p. 386 [2.70]).
[52] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 223.

as the definitive revelation of the Triune God in creation, the Incarnate Second Person is the ultimate template for both Divine and human personhood.[53] As He is fully incorporeal and fully corporeal, Jesus Christ claims the whole human person for salvation. It is only through the Incarnation that the supreme realisation of the relationship between creature and Creator is finally revealed.[54] Yet this does not mean that the salvific realisation of true human personhood is limited only to the specific particularity of Jesus's body. God is not limited to a single gender, or even to Palestinian Jews of the first century AD.[55] Nor does God overrule or replace the identity of the unique creatures which God redeems.[56]

The claim made on humanity by God in the person of Jesus Christ incorporates all aspects of each human person in their uniqueness and idiosyncrasy. Paradoxically, it is only by coinciding with all other human persons in Christ that we find the centre of ourselves in our particularity.[57] This particularity might encompass gender or sexuality, amongst a myriad of other ways in which one's *hypostatic* (non-essential) identity might be different from another's. Yet the unity of humanity in Christ is antecedent to the differentiation of human persons.[58] What is more, the particularity of individual existence can only be properly understood and fully respected once it is seen as integral to, but not utterly constitutive of, the unity of humanity. Though humankind's conformation to the prototype Jesus Christ must take place in order that salvation may be affected, the individuality of a specific human person cannot

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[53] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, p. 295. As will be discussed later, the single Incarnate template for intra-Trinitarian personhood and human personhood does not necessitate the conclusion that there is a direct alignment between these modes of personhood.
[54] See, for example, Grant Macaskill, *Living in Union with Christ: Paul's Gospel and Christian Moral Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), p. 100; Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios*, trans. by Maximos Constas, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 136 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), p. 109 [6.2]; Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, ed. by Peter Crafts Hodgson, trans. by Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 200; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 175; Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, p. 72; Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 111; Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin: An Essay on the Interior Life*, p. 124.
[55] Jann Aldredge Clanton, *In Whose Image?: God and Gender* (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 108–9.
[56] Rowan Williams, *Christ: The Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), p. 165.
[57] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, trans. by John Michael Cohen (London: Collins, 1969), p. 65.
[58] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 182.

be dispensed with.[59] One way in which to illustrate this is to highlight an analogy between the Chalcedonian Definition of the two natures in the one person of Christ and the many persons in the one "nature" of humanity.

The Chalcedonian Definition

The whole of who God is, with, and for is to be found in the Word of God, who became human so that humanity might be deified.[60] This was accomplished through a unique revelation of the hiddenness of God in human flesh, in a body where δύο φύσεις are united in μία ὑπόστασις.[61] In Christ, humanity does not therefore become less human, or Divinity less Divine.[62] The Christological Definition agreed to at the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) affirms ἕνα καὶ τὸν Χριστόν, υἱον, κύριον, μονογενῆ, ἐκ δύο φύσεων, ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως (one and the same Christ only begotten Son, our Lord, acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, undividedly). Yet this definition is also of use to a gendered and queered theological anthropology more broadly.

The Chalcedonian Definition can be used as an analogy for the way in which individual persons constitute one universal humanness. As the two natures in Christ exist in union in one person without mingling, so also do the various elements that make up a particular individual human exist in one humanity, which is unified in the transcorporeal body of Jesus

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[59] See Tanner, p. 25.
[60] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p. 269 [54]. See Tanner, p. viii.
[61] See Henry Denzinger, 'Council of Chalcedon 451: Definition of the Two Natures of Christ', in *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. by Roy J. Deferrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 1955), pp. 60–61 (p. 61). As in the work of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, this thesis does not assert a difference between the revealed and the hidden God/between the economic and the immanent Trinity. See, e.g., Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, p. 321; Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. by Joseph Donceel (London: Continuum, 1970), pp. 35–36. This is contrary to, amongst others, the position of Martin Luther. See Martin Luther, 'On the Bondage of the Will', in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. & trans. by E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. 99–334 (pp. 200–201).
[62] If anything, the human becomes more human. See John of Damascus, pp. 279–80 [III.6]; Cyril of Alexandria, 'First Letter to Succensus', in *Select Letters*, ed. & trans. by Lionel R. Wickham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 70–83 (p. 75 [45.5]); Gregory of Nazianzus, 'First Letter to Cledonius', pp. 156–58 [5].

Christ.[63] The ontological and epistemological ground of Jesus the Christ is the comprehensive context of all creatureliness, through which true creaturely reality is realised in the unity of being, knowing, and acting.[64] Yet particularity remains integral to the personal mode of the existence of humanity, both pre- and post-resurrection.[65] If individual identities were dispensed with the subject of salvation would be lost. Human "persons" would be relegated to the status of objects, conceptually deprived of the gracious capacity to image God in their freedom. This thesis argues that the need for a balance between the overriding unity of the Divine nature and the inescapable particularity of human existence is manifest in the four negative qualifications of the Chalcedonian Definition of the two natures in Christ.

The Definition agreed at the Council of Chalcedon says more about what Christ *is not* than it says about what Christ *is*. By extending this Chalcedonian approach to all human persons, this thesis aims to construct an apophatic theological anthropology that fully recognises, and is inclusive of, individuality, particularity, and difference, but is not exclusively restricted to those characteristics. To do so, this chapter will engage with one of the most significant modern interpretations of God as Absolute Mystery, found in the work of Rahner. Like Paul, and the Chalcedonian Definition itself, Rahner holds on to the sense of mystery in God, who we can know only through a glass darkly.[66] Yet, if human persons image a mysterious God, it follows that they are also partly mysterious by nature. Human nature is not complete or fully known because God is not fully known. As with the Divine, perhaps we can only know human nature by what it is not. To supply some insight into this apophatic theological anthropology, the mystery of the Divine shall now be discussed in more detail.

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[63] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philippians*, trans. by Pauline Allen (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), p. 151 [8].
[64] John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), p. 116.
[65] John 20.27.
[66] I Corinthians 13.12.

Absolute Mystery

According to the New Testament, Jesus warns us that no one has seen God the Father.[67] Martin Luther once commented that the extent to which God hides Godself, and wills to be unknown to us, is no business of ours.[68] To say the least, a considerable amount of humility about one's ability to know God is prudent for any human person attempting to do theology. Yet this subsection will lay the groundwork for an argument that the radical unknowability of God also has implications for those creatures who are made in the image of God, and that that mystery is worth exploring in more detail. One rationale behind this argument is that the radical freedom of God is manifest in the relationship of the Creator to the creature. Another is that the radical freedom and the radical unknowability of God are interlinked—they are One.[69] This means that any creature created in the image of a free God will be, to a certain extent, unknowable in itself. Based on these basic principles, this chapter asserts that the unknowability of the Divine provides an apophatic basis for a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

Our starting point is this: the human person cannot know God in Godself. From the human point of view, there is an epistemological διάστημα between us and the Divine. This is not just because, post-Adam, every human concept of God reaches a limit at the wall of Paradise.[70] The Divine would be unknowable to humankind even without sin, for Divine unknowability is inextricably linked with the radical nature of Divine freedom. As such, this theological exploration of the radical unknowability of the Absolute Mystery that is God in Godself builds on the comment of Paul of Tarsus concerning the invisibility of the eternal.[71] This eternal is Godself, and God in Godself is unknowable. One might say, therefore, that

[67] John 6.46.
[68] Luther, 'On the Bondage of the Will', pp. 200–201. Cf. Isaiah 45.15.
[69] This has consequences for theological anthropology, some of which will be explored in the next chapter.
[70] Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Vision of God', in *The Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. by Jasper Hopkins, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: A. J. Banning Press, 2001), II, 679–743 (p. 704 [13]).
[71] See II Corinthians 4.18.

even if a human person looked everywhere, they would not see God in Godself.[72] In a similar vein, Rahner wrote that "the basis of man's existence is the abyss: that God is essentially the inconceivable."[73] Indeed, when discerning a gendered and queered theological anthropology, one cannot avoid the issue of the hiddenness of God, because human beings never come to a halt in their desire for God.[74] The Absolute Mystery of the Divine is inextricable from human existence.

The collected writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite are a significant resource for the development of an apophatic doctrine of God and theological anthropology. In the late-fifth or early-sixth century AD, Pseudo-Dionysius clearly argued that God in Godself is so far above the nature and being of creatures as to be unknowable.[75] Though God is the source of all creation, God in Godself is an excess of transcendence.[76] Thus, God is independent of all creation, and this is the exercise of God's radical freedom.[77] The unknowability of the Divine is also a *radical* unknowability. The nature of God in Godself is invisible to us and infinitely beyond our comprehension.[78] The Areopagite writes: "Nothing that is or is known can proclaim that hiddenness beyond every mind and reason of the transcendent Godhead which transcends every being. There is no name for it nor expression."[79] What this means is that language of any kind fails when it tries to describe the ineffable God. Often the best that can be done is to say what God is not, rather than what God is. As many theologians

[72] Anselm of Canterbury, 'Proslogion', in *The Major Works*, trans. by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 82–104 (p. 97 [17]).
[73] Karl Rahner, 'Christian Living Formerly and Today', in *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), VII, 3–24 (p. 15).
[74] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, trans. by Richard A. Norris, Writings from the Greco-Roman World, 13 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), p. 339 [11].
[75] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', in *The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 47–133 (p. 125 [11.6]).
[76] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 127 [12.4].
[77] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, ed. by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. by T. H. L. Parker and others (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), II.I, pp. 308–9.
[78] Blaise Pascal, 'Pensées', in *Pensées and Other Writings*, ed. by Anthony Levi, trans. by Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1–181 (p. 153 [680]).
[79] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 129 [13.3].

and philosophers have pointed out, someone who thinks that they have beheld God, and thinks that they understand that which they have beheld, has not seen God but their own self-projection.[80] The absence of knowledge is perhaps the only way to come to "know" a God who transcends all that is known. Yet God is not unknowable due to any kind of complexity: God is knowable due to God's infinite simplicity.

A key point in the discernment of a gendered and queered theological anthropology is that God is absolutely simple, and not composite.[81] What this means is that every form of God is the essence of God.[82] There is no multiplicity to the Divine essence, although its unbroken Oneness is eternally an act of Trinitarian intracourse.[83] God is One God with or without Godself, and God is One God with or without creation. The majesty and unobservable unity of Divine Oneness is Wholly Other from any unity, diversity, or multiplicity in creation.[84] Yet, God is also One in that God is "uniquely all things through the transcendence of one unity." There is "nothing at all lacking a share in that One which in its utterly comprehensive unity uniquely contains all and every thing beforehand, even opposites."[85] There is nothing that has totally fallen away from the unknowably transcendent simplicity of God.[86] However, this is not to say that God blends the Divine nature with creation. Nor does God add any *thing* to Godself. The reality of God in Godself always remains absolute simplicity at an infinite distance from creation, without finite degrees of difference.[87] This is an absolute

[80] See, e.g., Pseudo-Dionysius, 'Letter One: To the Monk Gaius', in *The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 263; Augustine of Hippo, 'Sermon 52', in *God*, ed. by Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, trans. by Mark DelCogliano, The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 311–27 (p. 321 [52.16]). For a highly critical view of religious self-projection, see Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by George Elliot (New York, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989), p. 12 [§2]; Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, *The Essence of Religion*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (London: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 187.
[81] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 119 [9.10]. See, also, Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. by Armand Maurer, Mediaeval Sources in Translation, 1, 2nd edn (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), p. 54 [4.4].
[82] See Chrysostom, p. 125 [7].
[83] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.1, p. 275.
[84] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 452.
[85] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 128 [13.2].
[86] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 123 [11.5].
[87] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.1, p. 311.

qualitative difference not subject to quantitative difference. The *multiplicity* of creation therefore rests within the utterly comprehensive transcendent *unity* of the One God.

The One God discloses the Divine simplicity that embraces the immanent presence of the Holy Trinity in the form of Jesus Christ.[88] For God in Christ is the revelation, in superabundant immanent presence, of the Ever Transcendent. In and through the Incarnate Son, God is thus the stabiliser of every existent *thing*, though God in Godself transcends creation.[89] God is the Absolute Form, through which all otherness is oneness with otherness, and all diversity is identity with diversity.[90] In this sense, God is the Essence of essences.[91] This analogical grounding of all that is in the absolute simplicity of the Divine is the ontological basis for creation. It is the enaction of God's freedom from, and freedom for, relationship with a creation that cannot ontically contain the nature of God in Godself.[92]

The point of this discussion of the radical unknowability of God is to make it clear that the truth of the Divine Nature is incommunicable to creation. God Godself is invisible to every mode of creaturely seeing.[93] The logical consequence is that, in order to communicate Divine Truth to creation, God chooses to involve it in the communication of God to Godself.[94] God in Godself is not simply the ultimate opposite of the creaturely but *is*, in an ineffable manner, the Absolute Form of all the qualities bestowed upon creation.[95] In this analogical relation, the multiplicity of creation is sublimated, but not erased, in the unknowable

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[88] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.I, p. 319.
[89] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 118 [9.8].
[90] Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Vision of God', II, p. 684 [3].
[91] Nicholas of Cusa, 'On God as Not-Other', in *The Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. by Jasper Hopkins, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: A. J. Banning Press, 2001), II, 1106–78 (p. 1126 [10]).
[92] See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, pp. 305–06, 20.
[93] See Nicholas of Cusa, 'On God as Not-Other', II, p. 1156 [22]; Nicholas of Cusa, 'On the Hidden God', in *The Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. by Jasper Hopkins, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN: A. J. Banning Press, 2001), I, 300–311 (p. 302).
[94] John 1.17. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. by Harold Knight and G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), I.II, p. 131.
[95] Rahner, 'Christian Living', VII, p. 15.

Oneness of God. The Divine and the creaturely are not therefore confused. God is not *this* rather than *that*, as both this *and* that are from God, for "God is so high above all created things that he is just as much the 'non-Other'."[96] This means that, in the silence of the absolute Divine simplicity, Godself lovingly enfolds all.[97] Thus, God can only be known truly through God, by the manifest communication of God begetting Godself in self-revelation.[98] We have now come to require an explication of that which has so far been implicit: the doctrine of the analogy of being.

The Analogy of Being

The *analogia entis* is a critical component of a doctrine of Divine self-revelation, as it pertains to an apophatic and transcorporeal Chalcedonian Christology. Fundamentally, the analogy of being operates on a principle of non-contradiction, which distinguishes it from both pure logic and dialectic because it is a negative reductive formality.[99] This analogy articulates similarity-in-difference. It is a medium without compromise that always stands beyond the twin poles of identity and negation.[100] An analogical understanding of being does not therefore compromise the distinctness of the Divine or the creaturely, nor does it assert that they are irreconcilable opposites. For, on the one hand, if a human "I am" and the Divine "I am" are univocal, the διάστημα between the Creator and the creation is breached. On the other hand, if there is total equivocity of being between the creaturely and the Divine, God

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[96] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 428; see Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Hidden God', I, p. 303.
[97] See Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Vision of God', II, pp. 683, 705–6 [3, 13].
[98] Emil Brunner, *Reason and Revelation: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge*, trans. by Olive Wyon (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1947), p. 24.
[99] Przywara, p. 238; David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 408. The *locus classicus* for principles of noncontradiction is Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1552–1728 (pp. 1587–97 [1005a19–1011b22]). For the notion of the analogical as a foundational middle ground, see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 86–87 [1131b]. For a philosophically-minded analysis of the use of analogy in religious discourse, see James F. Ross, *Portraying Analogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 158–78.
[100] David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 243.

would be extraneous and opaque, and the contingency of creation would be substantially undermined.[101] This is a brief summary of why the likeness of creatures to their God can be affirmed solely according to analogy.[102] There is a likeness between the Uncreate and created existence, but it is always accompanied by an ever-greater unlikeness.[103]

Once the created world is posited, a relationship between it and God is necessary because if anything is to exist at all the Divine Being must be present to it to sustain it.[104] The analogical understanding of being is a *via media* which allows the proper interrelation of the Divine and human existence without the two becoming confused. It describes a primordial dynamic within human being, and defines the oscillation of the intra-creaturely, the in-between-God-and-the-creaturely, and the intra-divine itself.[105] When it comes to theological anthropology this means that there is a constant oscillation of potentiality between the actuality, or *proportio*, of an embodied person and its outstretching *in excessus* toward God.[106] According to Rahner, this outstretching *in excessus* is "ordered by God himself toward the immediate and unmediated encounter with the incomprehensibility of God."[107] The free acceptance of this oscillation *in excessus* is thus the most proper mode for human self-realisation, as persons reach out towards their ultimate fulfilment in God.[108] The acceptance of this vision of human existence requires a recognition that every human person outstretches toward the transcendental abyss of the inconceivability of God.

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[101] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, p. 160 [I, q. 13, a. 5, resp.].
[102] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, p. 51 [I, q. 4, a. 3, ad. 3].
[103] Denzinger, 'Lateran Council IV, 1215', p. 171.
[104] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, p. 82 [I, q. 8, a. 1, resp.]; William J. Hill, *Knowing the Unknown God* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1971), p. 177.
[105] Przywara, p. 314. Created natures themselves are a medium in that they are composite of matter and form and oscillate between the two. Nature has a multiple being corresponding to the diversity of individuals, but none of those individuals is the absolute essence. A simple essence, e.g., the Divine, is form alone and has its ontic and noetic truth within itself. See Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, pp. 35, 47, 54 [2.3, 3.4, 4.4]; Karl Rahner, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God', *The Journal of Religion*, 58 (1978), 107–25 (p. 125) <https://doi.org/10.1086/jr.58.41575984>; Rahner, 'The Dignity and Freedom of Man', II, pp. 240–41; cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, p. 305.
[106] Przywara, p. 310.
[107] Rahner, 'Thomas Aquinas', p. 116.
[108] Hart, p. 245.

The infinite διάστημα of the *analogia entis* also renders any simplistic essentialisation of human persons impossible.[109] David Bentley Hart describes this as our "emancipation from the tragedy of identity."[110] The existential "ascent" of being, above and beyond the *proportio*, precludes the total enclosedness of any human person within a temporal or material confinement. The "descent" from transcendent *in excessus* to the embodied individual preserves the particular agency of the human, because it means that a person is never dissolved into the Divine Being.[111] This principle of noncontradiction between human existence and the Divine Being is "the foundation of analogy understood as an *immanent dynamic middle directed to an end*."[112] That end is the full realisation of the perpetual act of creation in each human person as the image of God. The unceasing movement of analogy, the oscillation between participation in the Divine Being and earthly existence, means that human beings have come to be from nothingness to fulfil a deific potential of freedom, through the grace of God.[113] We do not stand in fundamental existential contradiction of each other or of God. Our ontic reality is analogy through and through, as the existential rhythm of the analogy of being moves in time with the teleological development of the human being, towards the repose of its ἐντελέχεια.[114]

The key to the very subsistence of human being is its participation in the essential being of the Divine.[115] Human beings can only *be* by participation in the Divine Being. We become both the fulness of our bodily self and more than that, on account of our participation in the transcendental.[116] As Erich Przywara explained in his magisterial study, analogy is "*a*

[109] Hart, p. 242.
[110] Hart, p. 245.
[111] Przywara, p. 295.
[112] Przywara, p. 209. See Aristotle, *Physics: Book VIII*, trans. by Daniel W. Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 15 [257b6–8].
[113] Hart, pp. 248–49.
[114] Przywara, p. 306; Tracy, p. 412; see Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, p. 39 [I.1.1].
[115] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, p. 51 [I, q. 4, a. 3, ad. 3].
[116] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, p. 171 [5].

participatory being-related-above-and-beyond."[117] This means that human being has a unique, inherent, and free capacity to recognise the Divine, and to be received into It. It is also important to remember that, as well as rhythmically outstretching to the Divine Infinity in the dynamism of the ontological analogy, human being is also always journeying towards God through salvation history. This means that a human being is never entirely the same from one moment to the next as they grow in holiness.

Whatever stage of their journey toward God that an individual inhabits, the distance to go is always infinitely greater than that which has been traversed. This is because human persons who freely accept their participation in the incomprehensible mystery of the Divine extend ever more their capacity for the realisation of Godlikeness. The spiritual growth of a human being's capacity for the Divine stands in contrast to the way human desires for worldly pleasures are satisfied because this growth in appetite retains and builds upon all previous satiations.[118] To illustrate how their spiritual extension operates in harmony with the *analogia entis*, it is worth taking a moment to discuss Gregory of Nyssa's concept of ἐπέκτασις.

The link between the rhythmic dynamism of human being according to the *analogia entis* and the notion of ἐπέκτασις is a significant one.[119] Gregory of Nyssa uses this notion to describe

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[117] Przywara, p. 213.

[118] The fulfilment of these more transient appetites is subject to earthly limitations, and the fullness that results from their satisfaction is lost soon after it is appears. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, pp. 33, 259–61, 381, 85 [1, 8, 12]; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. by Abraham Johannes Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 68 [II.60]; Gregory of Nyssa, 'Homilies on the Beatitudes', in *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Beatitudes: An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies: Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998*, ed. by Hubertus R. Drobner and Alberto Viciano, trans. by Stuart George Hall, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 21–90 (p. 54 [IV.6]). Cf. Song of Songs 5.3, 7.

[119] The theme of ἐπέκτασις is a significant leitmotif in the work of Gregory, but only incidental references to ἐπέκτασις can be found in the work of earlier theologians. See, e.g., Philo of Alexandria, 'On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile', in *Philo: On the Cherubim, the Flaming Sword, and Cain; on Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and Cain; That the Worse Is Wont to Attack the Better; On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile; On the Giants*, trans. by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library, 227, 12 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), II, 321–439 (pp. 334–41 [V.14–VI.21]); Irenaeus of Lyons, pp. 474, 489–90 [IV.11.2, IV.20.7]; Clement of Alexandria, 'The Stromata, or Miscellanies', in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), pp. 299–568 (pp. 462–64, 525 [V.12, VII.2]); Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Numbers*, ed. by Christopher A. Hall,

the human capability for extension or lengthening. Human being is always being extended towards the Divine Infinity—it strains forward to what lies ahead.[120] In contrast to the immutability of God's Being, human being is defined by mutability, so that it may be evermore extended into the Divine abyss.[121] This was purposed by the Creator, who transfused the Logos throughout the nothingness of human being in order that it might come ever closer to Godlikeness.[122] What is more, as it is in concert with this perpetual extension of the human being into the Divine, the ever greater unlikeness of the ontological analogy means that the likeness of human persons to God does not consist in them being a defective facsimile, but rather in their synthesis of transcendental eternity and particular event.[123] Each person, in their difference from other persons, and in their difference from one moment to the next, shows forth God's actuality through their individual potential for deification.

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trans. by Thomas P. Scheck (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), p. 105 [17.4.2]; Origen of Alexandria, 'On Prayer', in *Origen, An Exhortation to Martyrdom: Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, trans. by Rowan A. Greer (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 81–170 (pp. 132–33 [XXV.2]); Gregory of Nazianzus, 'On the Theophany', pp. 120–21 [38.7–8]. For the philosophical uses of the term, see Aristotle, 'On the Heavens', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, trans. by J. L. Stocks, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), I, 447–511 (p. 499 [305b18]); Aristotle, 'On Indivisible Lines', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, trans. by H. H. Joachim, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1526–36 (p. 1534 [971b1]); Aristotle, 'Poetics', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, trans. by I. Bywater, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 2316–40 (pp. 2333–34 [1458a–b]). For more on ἐπέκτασις, see Morwenna Ludlow, *Gregory of Nyssa: Ancient and (Post)Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 127–34, 231, 271. For a broader overview of the main themes of Gregory of Nyssa's thought, see Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 199–221.

[120] Philippians 3.13.

[121] Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Making of Man', p. 405 [XVI.12]; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, p. 60 [II.25]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, p. 265 [8].

[122] Gregory of Nyssa, 'An Address on Religious Instruction', in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. by Edward Rochie Hardy (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. 268–325 (p. 302 [25]). For an analysis of Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of deification its relation to those of his contemporaries, see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 78–94; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 225–34.

[123] Hart, p. 246.

The constant self-realisation of human being is both a standing still within oneself and a moving beyond the constraints of one's earthly and temporal situation.[124] Human existence is not entirely fluid or intangible. In its movement outside of the *proportio*, the quiddity of the individual is always retained, as human being can only be expressed in the particularity of personhood. Although, as the human person becomes more like what it is to become, the variety of ways in which it analogically discloses the Divine will increase, and it will gradually lose the distinguishing characteristics of sinfulness.[125] As Morwenna Ludlow has observed, "time and materiality go together as markers of the human condition."[126] For Gregory, every individual fulfilment that humankind attains through participation in the Divine is the starting point of a desire for that which is yet more exalted. This is not to say that God in Godself ever changes or increases, but that the presence of God can subject to change within a mutable creature as God inexhaustibly and unceasingly pours forth Godself.[127] Throughout the continual human process of self-realisation via its ever-greater participation in the Divine, God-in-Godself therefore remains simple and immutable beyond an ever-receding horizon.[128]

The harmonious interoperation of ἐπέκτασις and *analogia entis* shows that the dynamism of human life compromises multiple forms of movement to realise its ἐντελέχεια. Human being is subject both to the existential rhythm of the ontological analogy and to the sweeping wave of salvation history. Time is redeemed but not removed from human existence.[129] Thus it

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[124] Gregory describes being rooted in a rock whilst also ascending to heaven. This immovable rock is the person of Jesus Christ. See Exodus 33.21–23; Colossians 2.3; Ephesians 1.3; Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, pp. 112, 117, 118 [II.220, 243, 248].
[125] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, p. 193 [6]. See Brian E. Daley, 'Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa's Anti–Apollinarian Christology', *Modern Theology*, 18.4 (2002), 497–506 (p. 499) <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0025.00200>.
[126] Ludlow, p. 181.
[127] Karl Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', in *Theological Investigations: More Recent Writings*, trans. by Kevin Smyth, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), IV, 105–20 (p. 113); Hart, p. 248.
[128] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, p. 171 [5]. See Thomas Aquinas, *On Spiritual Creatures (De Spiritualibus Creaturis)*, trans. by Mary C. FitzPatrick, Mediaeval Philosophical Texts in Translation, 5 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1949), p. 97 [a. 8, ad. 17].
[129] Ludlow, p. 143.

can be said that humankind has no security apart from its changeability: people are restless, dynamic, and unquantifiable in their diversity, because they are oriented towards representing the irrepressible glory of a Creator who encompasses all things in history and yet is immeasurably removed from them.[130] To oscillate between the self and God and to ride the wave of salvation history that sweeps us forwards—this is the fundamental reality of human being.[131]

It is important to note the significance of the Divine act of *creatio ex nihilo* for the foregoing conception of the *analogia entis*. It is only because of the *creatio ex nihilo* that the movement of analogisation emerges as "the event of our existence as endless becoming."[132] The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* reinforces the claim that human being does not arise out of an ontological foundation but is an event that emerges from nothingness. Our identity is always one without essence. The way of human becoming begins from no ground; it has no ontological baggage, but it hastens to its τέλος in God.[133] The ontological analogy shows creation to be the formative grammar of alterity through which God graciously expresses the fullness of God's own being, knowledge, and love. God wills the creature to become what it is to be for its own sake and for God's sake, and the two are not contradictory.[134] Nowhere is all of this more evident than in the unveiling of the primary analogue: Jesus Christ.[135]

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[130] Gregory of Nyssa, 'Against Eunomius', in *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa*, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. by Henry Austin Wilson, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2.5 (Oxford: Parker and Company, 1893), pp. 33–248 (p. 205 [VIII.5]).
[131] Przywara, pp. 235–36.
[132] Hart, p. 243.
[133] Hart, p. 244. In the seventh book of his *Ambigua to John*, Maximos the Confessor makes a similar point about how the λόγους of creatures flow in an upward movement toward the Divine goal, through their presence in ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, into becoming ever greater θείας κοινωνοί φύσεως. See Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, ed. & trans. by Nicholas Constas, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 28, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), I, pp. 94–101 [1077c–1081b].
[134] Thomas Aquinas, *The Power of God*, trans. by Richard J. Regan (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 142 [q. 5, a. 4, resp.]; Przywara, p. 224.
[135] Tracy, p. 408. See Matthew 27.51; Mark 15.38; Luke 23.45.

Unveiling the Mystery

In the Incarnation, God makes transparent the absolute barrier between us and the Divine. Here, the walls of Paradise are demolished. By this act of self-revelation, God is revealed as God *is*, so that God is revealed as Absolute Mystery, for the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa.[136] Even in God's self-revelation, God does not therefore cease to be mysterious, to be seen as through a glass darkly.[137] God makes Godself known precisely as the God who is unknowable and unfathomable. The love of God, epitomised in the devotion of Jesus Christ to humanity, is a love that is unknowable to the created world. In this way, Christology deals with this unique revelation of God as *Mystery*.[138] Indeed, this "mystery" of God is extensively reflected upon in the writings of the primary interlocutor for this chapter: Karl Rahner.[139]

In the theological sense, a mystery is not just something that has not yet been discovered. A mystery is a horizon that cannot be mastered: it is not provisional, and nor could it ever be unmysterious. For Rahner, mystery is therefore "the characteristic which always and necessarily characterizes God."[140] The very possibility of human knowledge itself requires this transcendental horizon that delimits createdness. The transcendental horizon is the subjective possibility for an individual creature to show itself.[141] Moreover, without this primordial distinction between Absolute Being and beings, there could be no distinctions

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136 See Karl Rahner, 'The Hiddenness of God', in *Theological Investigations: Experience of the Spirit, Source of Theology*, trans. by David Morland, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), XVI, 227–43 (p. 240); Brunner, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 45.
137 Brunner, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 47. Cf. I Corinthians 13.12.
138 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.II, p. 131.
139 See, e.g., Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 44–89; Karl Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology', in *Theological Investigations: More Recent Writings*, trans. by Kevin Smyth, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), IV, 36–73; Karl Rahner, 'Unity–Love–Mystery', in *Theological Investigations: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life 2*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), VIII, 229–47; Karl Rahner, 'The Human Question of Meaning in the Face of the Absolute Mystery of God', in *Theological Investigations: God and Revelation*, trans. by Edward Quinn, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), XVIII, 89–104.
140 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 217.
141 Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', in *Theological Investigations: Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), VI, 231–49 (p. 237).

between creatures. This is the case even though that Absolute Being appears as undefinable, for Godself is beyond an ever-receding horizon.[142]

Rahner's use of the terminology of "being" (*sein*) and "transcendentality" (*transzendentalität*) is shaped by his dialogue with the philosophers Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger. Part of the reason for Rahner's use of their vocabulary is, although he acknowledges that human persons are epistemically turned towards the world, to establish the possibility for an act of faith in a God who is beyond the transcendental horizon.[143] For him, Absolute Being is the

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[142] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 51.

[143] Rather than logic and deduction, Rahner's emphasis is on faith and mystery, because he accepted and engaged with the criticisms of theology and epistemology made by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), logic is deprived of its pre-eminence in Christian metaphysics. Rahner interprets this as a positive development, which creates epistemological room for the act of faith. This reading of Kant is influenced by those of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Joseph Maréchal (1878–1944). Maréchal had exposed what he saw to be the weaknesses of traditional Thomism in his *The Starting Point of Metaphysics* (1922–26) and, by means of a critical engagement with the works of Kant, proposed a modernised transcendental form. Similarly, the early Heidegger had engaged extensively with the philosophical legacy of Kant. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), Heidegger had attempted to correct what he saw as a prevalent misinterpretation of Kant, which was that Kant's thought was devoid of metaphysics. Heidegger's interpretation is that Kant was attempting to lay a more secure ontological foundation for metaphysics. Rahner sees potential advantages for theology in such an interpretation. Rahner's reading of Thomas Aquinas through the lens of Kant can be seen in *Spirit in the World* (1939), his first major published work. In it, Rahner interprets a single article (I, q. 84, a. 7) of the *Summa Theologica* concerning the metaphysics of knowledge. However, Rahner would later become somewhat critical of *Spirit in the World* and of *Hearers of the Word* (1941), his second major work to address the theology of Aquinas. The main philosopher with whom Rahner dialogues in *Hearers* is Martin Heidegger. It is here that Heidegger's influence upon Rahner can be felt most keenly, but Heidegger's influence on Rahner would endure throughout Rahner's career. Rahner had attended Heidegger's seminars between 1934–36 whilst he unsuccessfully studied for a doctorate in philosophy at Freiburg-im-Breisgau, and kept notes on Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, Aristotle, and Kant. He subsequently referred to Heidegger as his only true *teacher*: one who had taught him how to look with fresh eyes at timeworn conundrums. Rahner's theology dialogues mainly with the early period of Heidegger's philosophy, from which the magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927) emanated. The influence of Heidegger's *Being and Time* can be seen clearly in Rahner's explorations of time, being, and death. Its enduring influence can also be seen in Rahner's reworking of the concept of *Vorgriff* ("fore-conception" or "pre-apprehension")—something one grasps in advance. This important concept is present in *Spirit* and in *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1976)—Rahner's final chef-d'œuvre. See, *e.g.*, Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. by William V. Dych (New York, NY: Continuum, 1994), pp. lii, 54, 142–48, 179, 181, 185–86, 196, 209, 225, 236–37, 241, 297–98, 398–408; Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, trans. by Michael Richards (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 13, 20, 24, 32, 59–66, 73, 85–89, 92, 112–16, 130–34, 140–49, 157–63, 171–80; Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death*, trans. by Charles H. Henkey, Quaestiones Disputatae, 2 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1961); Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 20, 33–34, 62, 64–65, 69, 78; Karl Rahner, 'Preface: "On Martin Heidegger"', in *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations*, by Thomas Sheehan (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987), pp. xi–xii; Karl Rahner, *I Remember: An Autobiographical Interview with Meinold Krauss*, trans. by Harvey D. Egan (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 45; Karl Rahner, *Faith in a Wintry Season: Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of His Life*, ed. by Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, trans. by Harvey D. Egan (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 21–22; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 419, 554, 575, 584–85 [A355, A573, A615–16, A632–34]; Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. by Richard Taft, 5th edn (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 1–2, 71, 151, 153, 171, 186–87, 190, 192, 200, 202, 207, 209; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2013), pp. 19, 25, 36–40, 48–49, 54, 62–63, 71,

coordinator of all knowledge and freedom, and it reveals Godself as a pure and simple mystery. This pure and simple mystery is unlimitedly, incontestably, and ineffably beyond our capacities.[144]

Certainly, the absolute existence of God in Godself is so transcendentally Other that it appears only as a mystery to creatures. This is not the absence of an ontic reality, but rather the intensification of reality to its Absolute realisation—to perpetual, essential mystery.[145] The name of God is itself a nameless infinity.[146] No matter how far a creature advances towards the transcendental horizon, the horizon always slips away, frustrating any attempt to traverse it. The Divine cannot be objectively represented, conceptualised, or named.[147] Yet the mystery of God is not aloof from us, but constitutes the enabling condition for human knowledge and freedom.[148] The transcendental horizon itself is given only by its encounter with the object of a concretely historical experience.[149] Thus, the most mysterious thing about the Absolute Mystery of God is the absolute proximity of Its self-communication.[150] This self-communication is the Incarnation of the Word of God in the

94, 120, 125, 131, 133, 150–51, 153, 157, 209–11, 219, 232, 238, 245, 252, 265, 274, 277–78, 293–311, 316, 327, 336, 339–40, 362, 368, 382–83, 387, 389, 397, 400, 407, 411–12, 414, 416–18, 420–21, 423, 427–29, 434, 439–40, 442, 445, 448, 454, 457, 459–61, 464–65, 467, 471–76, 478–80, 486–88; Ethna Regan, *Theology and the Boundary Discourse of Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010), pp. 71–75; Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 90–91; Karen Kilby, 'Karl Rahner', in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. by David Ford and Rachel Muers, 3rd edn (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 92–105 (pp. 97–101); Karen Kilby, *Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 13–69; Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987), pp. 200, 204; Herbert Vorgrimler, *Karl Rahner: His Life, Thought and Work*, trans. by Edward Quinn (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), pp. 20–25; Nicholas Adams, 'The Present Made Future: Karl Rahner's Eschatological Debt to Heidegger', *Faith and Philosophy*, 17.2 (2000), 191–211 <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil200017211>.

[144] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 53.

[145] Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', IV, pp. 109–10. This is similar to Jean-Luc Marion's concept of a *saturated phenomenon*. See, e.g., Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 199–215.

[146] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 60.

[147] Rahner, 'The Love of Neighbour and the Love of God', VI, p. 237.

[148] Rahner, 'Experience of Self', XIII, p. 123.

[149] See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, pp. 270–71.

[150] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 61; Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', IX, p. 32.

person of Jesus Christ. It is the unique summit and the ultimate basis of God's relationship with creation.[151]

Only in the event of God becoming human is the Absolute Mystery of the Trinity accessible to humankind. In that self-revelation, the mysterious participation of humankind in the Divine is promised and enabled through the person of Jesus Christ.[152] This means that the Incarnate Son of God is "the initial beginning and the definitive triumph of the movement of the world's self-transcendence into absolute closeness to the mystery of God."[153] Every truth of God revealed through Godself is an opening into the illimitable for creation.[154] By the Incarnation, the Absolute Mystery of God reveals itself as absolute proximity to creatureliness, and as the τέλος of creation as a whole.[155] God reveals Godself as hiddenness which, by the miracle of God's freedom, can be apprehended in the historical life of Jesus, or indirectly via the sacraments and engaging with Holy Scripture.[156] The human person is the creature who is always confronted by this Absolute Mystery.[157] Indeed, the finality of Christian truth lies on the inexorability of humankind's deliverance into that Mystery. But it is important to remember that it is only on this side of the abyss between the inconceivable God and creation that the event of the Incarnation takes place. God always remains what God is in Godself without change. In the person of Jesus, humankind receives the very God of very God into its innermost life in such a way that Christ becomes our own renaissance.

Jesus Christ is eternally significant for the relationship of humankind to God. Before and behind every human person there is already presupposed the Absolute Mystery, but it is

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151 Karl Rahner, 'The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God', in *Theological Investigations: The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), III, 35–46 (p. 43).
152 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 213.
153 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 181.
154 Karl Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology', in *Theological Investigations: God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. by Cornelius Ernst, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), I, 149–200 (p. 149).
155 Rahner, 'Current Problems in Christology', I, p. 165.
156 Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 369.
157 Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, pp. 53–54.

through Jesus that human existence has been fully opened to the all-encompassing incomprehensibility of God.[158] It is thus important to stress that God became the reality of *nothingness* in the Incarnation.[159] The unfathomable descent of Christ into mortality means that humankind is no longer left to languish in lives of sin and broken relationships but is reset on the way to Godlikeness.[160] In the words of Rahner, Jesus Christ is "*now* and for all eternity the *permanent openness* of our finite being to the living God."[161] Through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ the self-communication and acceptance of God attain an irrevocable character in history, though only a creature who accepts God as Godself can make this irreversible step.[162] Nonetheless, this irrevocability does not mean that God's self-communication to humankind is at an end.[163] The spatio-temporal plurality of God's mysterious self-communication (its displacement) continues to extend beyond the earthly life of Jesus, as more members are gradually incorporated into the body of Christ's openness to God. The presence of God in Christ therefore remains a dynamic force in creation, as its effects are actualised within the inexorable tide of salvation history.

Despite all that has been said so far, it is important to stress that God in Godself still remains a mystery. Through Christ, the world is delivered simply into the abyss of inconceivability that is God as love.[164] Indeed, unknowability, freedom, and love are inextricably bound together in the unity of the One God.[165] This is precisely how God is "the ground of

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158 Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', IV, p. 106; Karl Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World', in *Theological Investigations: Later Writings*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), V, 157–92 (p. 173).
159 Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', IV, p. 117.
160 Karl Rahner, '"He Descended into Hell"', in *Theological Investigations: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), VII, p. 150.
161 Rahner, 'Significance of the Humanity of Jesus', III, p. 44.
162 Karl Rahner, 'Jesus Christ – The Meaning of Life', in *Theological Investigations: Science and Christian Faith*, trans. by Hugh M. Riley, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), XXI, 208–19 (p. 217).
163 Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View', V, p. 175.
164 Karl Rahner, 'The Man of Today and Religion', in *Theological Investigations: Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), VI, 3–20 (p. 19); cf. Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 181.
165 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 66.

possibility and enduring guarantor of […] the very humanity of human beings."[166] Incomprehensibility remains the content of the beatific vision and the bliss of love.[167] God, as the inexpressible Absolute Mystery, is thus also the reality of the fulfilment of humankind.[168] Truly understanding God as the incomprehensible whole means understanding humankind as being open to that mystery through its own creation in the image of God, and its perfection in the person of Jesus Christ.[169] To revise the abovementioned statement of Karl Barth: Christology deals with the revelation of God *and* humanity as mystery.[170]

To draw together what this exploration of the unknowability of the Divine has brought to the broader Christological focus of this chapter, it is sufficient to begin with a clear statement that Christ is the ultimate manifestation of Divine freedom in creation. The Incarnation is the transfiguration of the meaning of human life and the inauguration of its new reality.[171] God not only makes possible the true humanity in Jesus Christ but also the encounter of humanity with God in Godself. This presence of God is always the free choice of God, as God alone can choose to be present with that which is not God.[172] In the Incarnation, the mystery of God envelops all aspects of the human person. This all-encompassing Divine envelopment sublimates created plurality into a transcendent unity, where the diversity of creation remains present in the Divine humanity of Jesus Christ. The *transcendental* Christology of Rahner offers a model for how this works.

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166 Roman A. Siebenrock, 'Christology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 112–27 (p. 117).
167 Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 55.
168 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 192.
169 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 214.
170 See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.II, p. 131.
171 Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 286.
172 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, p. 321; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.I, p. 313.

A transcendental Christology presupposes a relationship of *mutual* conditioning and mediation in human existence.[173] This reciprocity is at the core of the transcendentality of human persons. For Rahner, although neither of the two elements can be reduced to the other, God's self-communication is always present in every human person, and it establishes the prior condition of possibility for its own acceptance.[174] This supernatural existential is an element of the human *qua* human that is prior to the exercise of freedom, and the one which orients the human person both "towards the holy mystery and towards God's absolute self-communication as an offer to man's freedom."[175] Every human person is perpetually capable of freely accepting the communication of Godself, but that acceptance must be borne by God Godself. It is God who makes the acceptance of God's self-communication possible because it is God who facilitates that freedom which allows humans to choose whether to accept Godself. This existential dilemma is a profound one for every individual, as it resonates to the core of each human person—to their unthematic determination towards no-thingness.[176]

In freely orienting their existence towards the Absolute Mystery of God's self-communication, a person realises their own ineffability as an image of the inconceivable Divine abyss. Transcendence discloses the no-thingness of God and the no-thingness of humanity. The self-communication of God to humankind is thus at once the real essence of grace and of the process of a universal revelation.[177] That is how the human being *is* the event of God's self-revelation, and why the event of God's self-revelation expresses the existential reality of every person.[178] This can be clearly seen in Rahner's comment that

[173] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 208.
[174] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 128.
[175] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 141. For Rahner, Christian persons must actualise the germ that is the supernatural existential throughout their whole existence. See Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 306–7.
[176] See Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 146, 149, 151.
[177] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 210.
[178] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 127.

"God's offer of himself belongs to all men and is a characteristic of man's transcendence and his transcendentality."[179] A human person is the existent of transcendental necessity who, in the exercise of knowledge and freedom, always transcends themselves towards the Absolute Mystery of the Divine.[180]

The person of Jesus Christ is the ultimate realisation of the transcendental orientation of every human being. It is impossible for the human person to satisfy their own determination towards absoluteness, or to absolute fulfilment and salvation, solely in the world around them and without Christ. The process of discerning one's own truth as a human person is one of becoming ever-more open to an incomprehensible mystery.[181] The loss of human uniqueness and a distinctive sense of self is also therefore a loss of the experience of the mystery of God.[182] The person of Jesus Christ is the offer of Godself immediately as human, that we may grasp that the incomprehensible abyss of God really has the infinite freedom to offer Godself to us in history.[183] Accordingly, it is only here that the enigma of human participation in the mysterious nature of the Divine is promised in an historically tangible way.

At all times, the self-revelation of God remains one of concealment and unknowability. Each human actualisation of freedom in the image of God remains a mystery for other actualisers of that freedom because no observable reason for that freedom can be found. All that can be seen is the way that infinite freedom surrenders itself in the historically tangible person of Jesus Christ, who offers humanity a glimpse of its most profound and inconceivable abyss.

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[179] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 129.
[180] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 209.
[181] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 214. As will be discussed later, queer theory is also concerned with the mysteriousness of the human person, and the ungraspability of human nature in any particular moment or context. The work of Rahner thus prefigures some of these concerns, and perhaps speaks the provision of answers to such questions in looking to the transcendental orientation of human persons to God, who is ever present in human life.
[182] Rahner, 'Experience of Self', XIII, p. 132.
[183] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 215.

The dynamic is such that "the more [the infinite freedom of God] reveals itself as freedom, the more evident its mysterious nature becomes."[184] Human beings are thus ever-more drawn into the Absolute Mystery of God. It is also significant that the form, the action, and the essence of God are one and the same. As a result of this, the absoluteness of God means that God may be simultaneously in the ultimate revealedness of absolute proximity and at the infinite distance of hidden aseity.[185]

As this subsection ends, it is important to say explicitly that what Christ reveals is not only the hiddenness of God—the *Deus Absconditus* is also the source of the truth of humanity.[186] The Divine and human person of Jesus Christ reveals that humankind always self-transcends towards the incomprehensible mystery of the God made Flesh.[187] All humans are moving and changing according to their own way to Godlikeness. Moreover, God chose to become Incarnate as a human person precisely because humanity was essentially adoptable, ready to receive the Divine in its unique orientation towards transcendence.[188] So, due to its freedom in the image of God, human persons alone can analogically dispossess their identity without losing that selfness in relationship to otherness, and therein come to a fulfilment of their incomprehensible worth. Thus, the Absolute Mystery of the unknowable God is not incidental to theological anthropology. Humankind can only find itself when it gives itself up into this free incomprehensibility of God through Christ, for the destiny of the Word of God is comprehensible, but God in Godself is not.[189] This is a key insight as we move into

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184 Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 259.
185 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.I, pp. 349–50.
186 Rahner, 'The Hiddenness of God', XVI, p. 238.
187 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 209.
188 Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', IV, p. 110. This remained the case even after the advent of sin.
189 Karl Rahner, 'The Theological Dimension of the Question about Man', in *Theological Investigations: Jesus, Man, and the Church*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), XVII, 53–70 (pp. 55–56); Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 214.

critiquing an attempt to reconcile human differences of gender and sex in the revelation of God as Trinity.

(En)Gendering the Trinity

In the first half of the twentieth century, the doctrine of the Trinity re-emerged at the front and centre of Christian theological reflection.[190] The most influential theologians of that century saw the Trinity as the core of Divine self-revelation.[191] The unique event in which the Trinity is fully revealed to humankind was held to be the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. For those theologians, the revealed nature of the Son of God therefore meant that it is almost impossible to theologise about the Incarnation without referring to a doctrine of the Trinity.[192] However, as aforementioned, the Incarnate Son of God is not only revelatory of God but also reveals humanity to humankind.[193] The person of Jesus Christ thus became to be seen as the lynchpin for a theological relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity, Christology, *and* theological anthropology.

Since the ground-breaking work of the mid-twentieth century, other theologians have continued to seek to decipher the relationship between these central tenets of Christian theology and their significance for us.[194] One of the main difficulties is how to account for

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[190] In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleiermacher placed the doctrine of the Trinity only at the very end of his systematic theology. He referred to it somewhat dismissively as the "coping-stone of Christian doctrine." Barth reacted against this in the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics* and claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity has no constitutive significance in the tradition of Liberal Protestantism which Schleiermacher fathered. For Schleiermacher's discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 3rd edn (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), pp. 738–51. The "coping-stone" metaphor can be found on p. 739. See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, p. 303.

[191] See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, pp. 295–304; Rahner, *The Trinity*, p. 30; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: The Action*, trans. by Graham Harrison, 5 vols (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), IV, p. 323; cf. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 258.

[192] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, p. 299; Rahner, *The Trinity*, pp. 101–3; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: The Truth of God*, trans. by Adrian J. Walker, 3 vols (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), II, p. 127.

[193] See, e.g., Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, p. 132; Karl Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', in *Theological Investigations: Jesus, Man, and the Church*, trans. by Margaret Kohl, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), XVII, 71–89 (p. 80); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ*, trans. by Graham Harrison, 5 vols (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988), III, p. 172.

[194] See, e.g., Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1981); Catherine Mowry La Cugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York,

human persons' nonidentical paths to holiness.[195] To reify the individual human person has become a common step when contemplating the relation between Divine and human personhood, through an aligning of their particularity with intra-Trinitarian particularity.[196] This is seen to be one way of resisting systematic, monolithic constructions in theological anthropology, and it is perhaps most sophisticatedly exemplified by Graham Ward's anchoring of human sexual difference in the intra-Trinitarian relations. To do this, Ward attempts to build upon the theological anthropology of Karl Barth whilst offering a substantial corrective to it. The account of human individuality and its wider participation in Christian salvation that Ward provides is worth exploring now, even though it has definite limitations when gendering and queering theological anthropology.

To begin with, as Ward wisely reminds us, God is not a creature.[197] There is a διάστημα between the uncreated God and creation. God is not the same as us, ontologically or theologically, no matter how close a similarity one might draw between the ideal human society and Divine Tri-unity.[198] This διάστημα thus appears to be an inescapable roadblock to theological anthropologies which seek to base their conception of human sexual difference univocally on the Trinity. To get around it, Ward tries to move beyond sexual difference by placing human sexuality within a wider doctrine of creation, theological anthropology, and Christology.[199] However, his attempt to craft a delicate balance of

NY: Harper San Francisco, 2006); John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004); Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Eugene F. Rogers, *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. by Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000); Patricia Fox, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2002); Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. by Paul Burns (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

[195] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 156.

[196] For a programmatic expression of this, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 415.

[197] Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 184.

[198] See Tanner, p. 221.

[199] Graham Ward, 'Theology and Masculinity', *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 7.2 (1999), 281–86 (p. 285) <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.0702.281>.

similarity and dissimilarity, to maintain an analogy between the human and the Divine, is ultimately unsuccessful. In the end, he fails to respect that self-same ontological and theological διάστημα. Nonetheless, important lessons can be learnt from Ward's attempt.

According to Ward, the intra-Trinitarian difference is the definitive basis—through analogous correlation—of human sexual difference.[200] He insists that there can only be salvation in Christ if there is sexual difference in creation, because human sexuality is the manifestation of the hypostatic difference of persons, which participates analogically in the hypostatic differences of the Triune God. However, this attempt to move theology beyond androcentrism is insufficiently radical in its execution. One problem is that the maleness of Jesus is still prioritised. Ward cannot account for why he continues to hold onto its significance. Even though he argues that this maleness is continually displaced, maleness still comes first in a way that could be analogised so that masculinity (God) atemporally precedes any other contingent gender or sexuality (creation).[201] According to the criticism of Linn Marie Tonstad, this gendered ordering "appears everywhere in heteropatriarchy."[202] Ward does not seem to have sufficiently shaken up the ideological structures that prioritise masculinity over other forms of gender expression. This sense of the priority of masculinity in Ward's theological anthropology makes it ripe for misunderstanding and misuse.

For Ward, the *analogical* participation of created persons in Divine difference is what maintains the ontological difference between the Creator God and creation. It enables the suspension of the created world within the transcendent perfection of God in Godself.[203]

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[200] Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 150. Linn Marie Tonstad wryly remarks that Ward solves every difficulty through the Trinity. See Linn Marie Tonstad, '"Everything Queer, Nothing Radical?"', *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, 92.3–4 (2016), 118–29 (p. 120).
[201] Ward, *Cities*, pp. 97–116; see Linn Marie Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), p. 75.
[202] Linn Marie Tonstad, 'The Limits of Inclusion: Queer Theology and Its Others', *Theology & Sexuality*, 21.1 (2015), 1–19 (p. 6) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13558358.2015.1115599>.
[203] Ward, *Cities*, p. 202.

However, the sort of analogy that Ward envisages relies upon a loosely defined link between human difference and Divine intra-Trinitarian difference. What this means for his account of theological anthropology is that sexual difference becomes fundamental to human personhood—it cannot be transcended.[204] Now, undeniably, to be embodied means to be sexed but, according to Ward, it is sexual difference itself that constitutes human persons as the image of God in its endorsement of separation and relation.[205] Our attractions to each other in difference reflect the differences in the intra-Trinitarian relations. Human erotic desire is to be understood as reflecting the divine intra-Trinitarian appetite for κένωσις.[206] This means that the transformation of humankind into the image of God may be understood as an uneven economy of desire, where one partner in the relationship overpowers the other.[207] Sexual difference consequently becomes a theological trope: it expresses God's omnipotence over creation, even though Ward acknowledges that sexuality is a penultimate form of difference.[208]

Another problem with Ward's theological anthropology is that it still relies on an underlying binary sexual relation between two sexes. The interpenetrating economies of Divine and human desire are built and operate theologically upon this dynamic, in a manner like that of

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[204] Ward, *Cities*, p. 187. This is the case even though Ward denies that a binary understanding of sexual difference is foundational to his theological anthropology in the same way as it is for Barth or von Balthasar. See Ward, 'Theology and Masculinity', p. 282. Some examples of the centrality of a binary sexual difference to the theological anthropology of Barth and von Balthasar: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, pp. 166, 171, 180–81, 288; Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, III, pp. 283, 290, 355, 364–65.

[205] Ward, *Cities*, p. 188. Ward's explanation of the *imago Dei* lacks clarity. At various points, he implies that humankind is created in the *imago Dei*, is becoming the *imago Dei*, and is yet to be the *imago Dei*. One might contend that this is due to an insufficient distinction between the image of God (in which humankind is created) and the likeness of God (to which humankind is called in redemption). See Andy Buechel, *That We Might Become God: The Queerness of Creedal Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), p. 21.

[206] See, e.g., Daphne Hampson, 'On Power and Gender', *Modern Theology*, 4.3 (1988), 234–50 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.1988.tb00168.x>; Catherine Keller, 'Scoop up the Water and the Moon Is in Your Hands: On Feminist Theology and Dynamic Self-Emptying', in *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, ed. by John B. Cobb and Christopher Ives (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), pp. 102–15.

[207] Ward, *Cities*, p. 172.

[208] Ward, *Cities*, p. 194.

Trinitarian perichoresis.[209] Yet Ward's emphasis on the relationship between the being-in-relation of the Triune God and the ideal sexual relation of humankind is too strong, considering the ever-greater dissimilarity of the *analogia entis*. Ward brings an unstable power dynamic down into theological anthropology from the Trinity, even though the δύναμις (power) of God expressed in the self-abandonment of the intra-Trinitarian relationships is so utterly different from the existential reality of any creature. So, what about the upwards direction of travel? As Mark D. Jordan warns, concretising any dynamic of sexual difference and lifting it up as a reflection of the Divine life runs the risk of that dynamic becoming "not only a universal moral regulation but [also] a cosmic fact and a key to the inner life of the Trinity."[210] This means that lifting up one particular dynamic of sexual difference into the Trinity may also reflexively impose this dynamic as the default one in creation, because the Trinitarian life of God is all-pervasive through the continuous Divine act that gives the created world life. Such a move thus introduces contingency and creatureliness into God and creates a standard configuration of one particular model for human sexuality. It establishes an implicit norm which must thenceforth be conformed to by all creatures of God's creation if they are to not diverge from their Creator.

What lies behind the problems highlighted so far is that Ward's concept of analogy is ill-defined and eschews the catholic theological tradition.[211] The ever-greater unlikeness that is key to the more traditional theological form of ontological analogy is insufficiently

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[209] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 82–83. For his exposition of the multiple economies of desire, see Ward, *Cities*, pp. 190–92. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.II, pp. 296–301; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III.IV, pp. 219–23.
[210] Mark D. Jordan, 'The Return of Religion during the Reign of Sexuality', in *Feminism, Sexuality, and the Return of Religion*, ed. by Linda Martín Alcoff and John D. Caputo (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 39–54 (p. 51).
[211] Ward prefers to engage with post-structuralist philosophical theories of analogy. See Graham Ward, 'Speaking Otherwise: Postmodern Analogy', in *Rethinking Philosophy of Religion: Approaches from Continental Philosophy*, ed. by Philip Goodchild, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, 29 (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 187–211. Ward is also interested in the *analogia fidei* of Barth, which he brings into conversation with the work of Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, and Emmanuel Levinas. See Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

recognised in Ward's account. In consequence, it is not clear in what sense he envisions a *via media* between univocity and equivocity. Ward seems to verge more towards univocity because, in his ascription of human sexual difference into the intra-Trinitarian difference, he employs a determinate direct relation rather than the more traditional theological relation of proportions. What might help is a recognition of the determination of a composite individual.[212] That is, any one creaturely form of existence is precluded from being a definitive singular representation of the Divine reality, because the qualities that are unified in the Divine must be multiple in creatures in order to reflect the infinite Divine perfection. There is a determination in which the representation of the Divine in each human being is manifested that is particular to them, and it may even be multiform within individual persons. This means that it would compromise the unique identity of any human person if the particularity of their embodied sex or gender could be substituted for another's or made to conform to another's. In their own way, each human person is indispensable to God's gracious expression of the fullness of God's own being in, and through, the finite composition of their embodied existence.

A further weakness of Ward's theological anthropology emerges in light of our preceding discussion of how the ontic reality of human existence is in a state of constant flux. The contingency of its createdness, the dynamism of the *analogia entis*, and the constant work of the Divine οἰκονομία all combine to give rise to great diversity and multiplicity in mutable human ὑποστάσεις. This does not mean that any particular human being is unnatural, or outside of the Divine plan for creation, but rather that the working out of the Divine plan happens in many diverse ways throughout the no-thingness at the heart of the human

[212] See, e.g., Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, pp. 47, 48–49, 54, 65 [3.4, 3.7, 4.5, 5.10]; Aquinas, *On Spiritual Creatures*, p. 97 [a. 8, ad. 17]; Aquinas, *Power of God*, p. 87 [q. 3, a. 16, resp.]; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, pp. 158, 159–60 [I, q. 13, a. 4, ad. 3, q. 13, a. 5, resp.]. For more on the difference between these two types of relation and the significance of proportionality, see Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Andrew Tallon, trans. by E. M. Macierowski, Marquette Studies in Philosophy, 25 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2004), pp. 63–91.

creature. Each individual person can inhabit all the aspects of their embodiment whilst peripatetically journeying to a τέλος of ἀποθέωσις.[213] The God-given radical freedom for self-realisation in humankind is not therefore compatible with the culturally-ingrained heterosexist dynamics which continue to permeate most human societies. The truth of being human is not reducible to such a narrow and totalising view of a single aspect of our embodied identity.[214] The oppressive nature of Ward's heterosexist approach to sexual difference restricts the freedom of human persons to express the uniqueness of their own personhood as an image of God as it traps gender and sexuality within a pre-set mould. This not only has problematic consequences for theological anthropology. It is also problematic in light of the relationship between theology and culture, which Ward is always keen to emphasise.

In stressing the importance of Jesus's maleness, Ward's theological anthropology fails to consider how human cultures are already predominantly androcentric. Theologically aligning, even analogously, one sex with power over against others has clear and troubling implications—as if one can compare the power of God and humankind in relative terms. As posttranssexual theorists have recognised, this means that all too often only one body per gendered subject is considered truly "right."[215] Through Ward's ill-defined use of analogy, a partial representation of creaturely sexual difference becomes reflexively rooted in the ultimate reality of God in Godself, who is beyond all restriction. This can be interpreted as

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[213] This intentionally echoes the Biblical term περιπατέω ('I walk about'). That is not to say that all paths towards deification follow the same route, or that all those paths are meant to be straight and direct. See Genesis 4.12, 14; 20.13; 21.14; 37.15; Numbers 32.13; II Kings 21.8; Job 12.24; Jeremiah 50.8; Matthew 4.18; 9.5; 11.5; 14.25–26, 29; 15.31; Mark 2.9; 5.42; 6.48–49; 7.5; 8.24; 11.27; 16.12; Luke 5.23; 7.22; 11.44; 24.17; John 1.36; 5.8–9, 5.11–12; 6.19, 66; 7.1; 8.12; 10.23; 11.9–10, 54; 12.35; 21.18; Acts 3.6, 8–9, 12; 14.8, 10; 21.21; Romans 6.4; 8.4; 13.13; 14.15; I Corinthians 3.3; 7.17; II Corinthians 5.7; 10.2–3; Galatians 5.16; Ephesians 2.2, 10; 4.1, 17; 5.2, 8, 15; Philippians 3.17–18; Colossians 1.10; 2.6; 3.7; I Thessalonians 2.12; 4.1; II Thessalonians 3.6, 11; I John 1.6–7; 2.6, 11; II John 1.4, 6; III John 1.3–4; Revelation 2.1; 3.4; 9.20; 21.24.

[214] Hart, pp. 245–46.

[215] Sandy Stone, 'The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto', in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. by Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), pp. 280–304 (p. 297).

licencing heterosexist power and reinforcing the dominance of masculinity. There is also an inconsistency to Ward's metaphorical gendering of humankind in theological anthropology that exacerbates this problem. The way in which Ward ascribes gender changes suggestively depending on the theological context. When humanity is weak (i.e., when it is contrasted with God) it seems to be female for Ward, but when humanity is strong (i.e., in the person of Jesus Christ) it is primarily male.[216] Extrapolating from this schema, one could legitimately ask: is it the presence of God in Jesus Christ that makes him male? The troubling alignment of masculinity with Divinity perpetuates the uneven power dynamic that is often present in heterosexual relations. Analogy should rather be seen as the metaphysical expression that the very difference of human being from God, and the difference of human persons from each other, manifests in manifold ways the simple perfection of Godself.[217] A model for human being-in-relationship that simply flips from one side of a flawed gender binary to another does not contribute to the development of an inclusive theological anthropology.

In the end, Ward contradicts himself on the significance of gender and sexuality in human interpersonal difference. On the one hand, he denies that it is possible to make an analogy between differences of sex and gender and the intra-Trinitarian difference. He says that there is an analogy of difference, but that it is not based in sex or gender.[218] On the other hand, by arguing for the analogousness of any (supposed) sexual difference of humankind to intra-Trinitarian personal relations, Ward's theological anthropology must rely on the ontology of mutual exclusion that characterises heterosexism. This is because Ward does not sufficiently recognise that Trinitarian persons are different from each other in a different manner to the way in that human persons are different from each other.[219] They do not relate and interpenetrate in the same way that human relationality functions. When the Trinitarian

[216] See Ward, *Cities*, pp. 93, 97; Ward, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 149–50, 255.
[217] Hart, p. 243.
[218] Ward, 'Theology and Masculinity', p. 282.
[219] See Buechel, pp. 44–45.

Persons relate to and interpenetrate each other there is a definite and complete participation of each Person in the other Persons, so that One cannot be without the other Two in their own essential fullness. This simply cannot be the case with the day-to-day relations of corporeal human persons.[220]

Ward's understanding of gender and sexuality falls down because embodied human persons are bound by material limits, which Divine Persons are not.[221] Though it is possible for God *to be* without inhabiting a body, it is not possible for a human being *to be* without embodiment. Understanding the interpenetration of the human self by another in the intra-Trinitarian manner advocated by Ward would require the destruction or subsuming of the boundaries of one embodied identity to overcome their mutually exclusive material particularity. This runs the risk of erasing the dignity and uniqueness of some human persons, who are thereby subjected to an infringement by that which is other to them. The underlying ontological reason for this is that essence and existence are distinct in finite being, but they are not so in the Divine. The essence of what it is to be human would be unchanged whether any one person existed or not, because essence is prior to existence in human beings. This is not the case with God.

A single human person is not the totality of human being, but a Trinitarian Person is always the enaction of the Divine totality. One consequence of the absolute Divinity of the Trinitarian Persons is that they can interpenetrate in relation to each other without any need to change themselves. This is because, as Aquinas put it, "in creatures relations are accidental, whereas in God they are the divine essence itself."[222] However, the distinctiveness of a

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[220] Ian A. McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), p. 51; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.I, p. 370.
[221] Therefore, Augustine of Hippo uses the psychological dimension, and Thomas Aquinas the intellectual dimension, of human existence to be the best creaturely analogy for the Trinitarian relations. See Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, pp. 276–77 [IX.5.8]; Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica: Part I, QQ. XXVII.–XLIX*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn, 22 vols (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1921), II, pp. 4–5 [I, q. 27, a. 1, resp.].
[222] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, p. 127 [I, q. 39, a. 1, resp.].

human person would be constantly erased by that of others if pseudo-Trinitarian interpenetration occurred in the relationships between individual beings.

In Ward's theological anthropology, the incorporation of human persons into the displaced body of Christ always flows in one direction. Unsurprisingly, this means that the other flows into the male, the weak into the powerful, the passive into the active, and the human into the Divine. The underlying cause of this dynamic seems to be Christological, as the real implications of the full communion of the Divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ are not fully recognised. As is not uncommon, there is too much emphasis on the transmission of the δύναμις of the Divine Nature into humankind through Christ, and not enough focus on what the human nature of Jesus brings to the table. Even the earliest proponents of the Chalcedonian Definition seem to have somewhat neglected the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ.[223] Yet Ward transposes this imbalance between the two natures of Christ into human gender and sexuality. Whether intentional or not, making such a move enables the narrative that weaker forms of human personhood can be controlled or erased by the more dominant. As a result, it threatens to divest people of their individuality, and applies a binary power dynamic to human relationships that is insufficiently reflective of their complexity.

It seems clear that Ward relies on underlying binary understandings of gender and sexuality. His theological anthropology requires the incorporation of other, different human beings into the prototypical Jesus, whose maleness retains an inexplicable significance. The salvific dynamic that is here present depends on symbolism that is gendered in ways reducible to

[223] In a letter to his brother, Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople, Pope Leo I wrote that the Divine nature in Jesus Christ is "ablaze with the miraculous" but that his human nature is "overpowered by injuries." See Leo the Great, 'Letter 28: To Bishop Flavian', in *Letters*, trans. by Edmund Hunt, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 34 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. 92–116 (pp. 97–98). For a brief overview of an historical tendency in Christian theology to neglect the full presence of both the Divine and the *human* natures in Christ, see McFarland, *The Word Made Flesh*, pp. 1–15.

biological essentialism and, in the long run, Aristotelian philosophy.[224] Yet, combined with the widespread lived experience of sinful sex-based violence, this dynamic has the potential once again to become a toxic one. This problem is further entrenched by the fact that for Ward difference becomes the *object* of love in the economy of desire.[225] All the myriad of difference in gender and sexuality are reduced to a monolithic concept of difference. Using the desirability of this particular kind of difference as a one-size-fits-all solution hampers the recognition of the different kinds of difference that pertain to Divine and human personhood.[226] Such a model of difference is also preliminary and so will weaken as the process of our incorporation into Christ progresses. Ward's economy of desire thus has the potential to become authoritarian in its heterosexism because not everyone fits in that one mould of gender and sexuality that appears to be Divinely endorsed as *the* desirable, and therefore truly valuable, form of difference.

A final problem with Ward's attempt to give a comprehensive account of sexual difference within theological anthropology is that he does not sufficiently address the complexity of human biological sex itself. If theological anthropology is dependent on a biological binary, human persons must belong to one sex or to the other. Assuming this complementarity in sexuality considerably simplifies the task of drawing an analogy between human interpersonal difference and intra-Trinitarian difference. The issue is that genetic biologists and medical scientists have identified at least five sexes in human persons.[227] It is increasingly apparent that biological sex is not constricted to a rigid binary—it is fluid and multipolar. There is a certain amount of irony in the fact that theologians and other theorists strive

[224] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, p. 77. See Ward, *Christ and Culture*, p. 158; Tonstad, *God and Difference*, p. 93 n. 90. This is perhaps rooted in Aristotle, *Politics*, p. 8 [1254b13–15]; Aristotle, 'History of Animals', in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, trans. by d'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), I, 774–993 (p. 948 [608b1–14]).
[225] Ward, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 201–2.
[226] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, p. 59.
[227] See, e.g., Iain Morland, 'Why Five Sexes Are Not Enough', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. by Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 33–48.

constantly to pin sex down with labels, even though we are more aware than ever before that it is not binary or stable.[228] A further complicating factor in understanding the nature of biological sex is that, with the advance of modern medicine, the sex of a person does not have to be the same throughout the course of their life. Moreover, room for intersex persons also seems to be lacking in a binary model. Neither does Ward's approach account for human persons who are asexual or those who do not have any erotic appetite. Ward's view of biological sex is simply unrepresentative of the plurality of our bodies, for it relies on binary distinctions where a continuum of difference lies.

So, Ward does not offer a multipolar schematic for the integration of human sexuality into theological anthropology. He defaults to a binary understanding of difference despite, to a certain extent, acknowledging the complexity of the multiple factors which combine to affect human gender and sexuality. Whatever analogies may be drawn between Trinitarian persons and human persons, a gendered and queered theological anthropology must maintain that there remains an ever-greater dissimilarity between the Creator and the creature that cannot be comprised.[229] At the very least, there is a fundamental, essential difference here, in that the Trinitarian persons are unified in being and in act and in essence and existence. Human persons are not unified in their being and their acting and are not unified in their essence and existence. This means that even deified human beings remain composite, contingent creatures. We do not adopt Divine simplicity as this would, in the end, mean humankind being dissolved into the very being of Godself. By constructing a theological anthropology of gender and sexuality in this way, one could enter into pantheism—a doctrinal misstep that both Ward and traditional proponents of the *analogia entis* seek to prevent.

[228] Jeffrey Weeks, 'Questions of Identity', in *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality*, ed. by Patricia Caplan (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 31–51 (p. 31).
[229] Denzinger, 'Lateran Council IV, 1215', p. 171 [4].

As a final comment on engendering the Trinity in human relationships, discerning the role of gender and sexuality in relation to theological anthropology and Christology is made even more complicated by the fact that there is not a direct relationship between sex and gender—they are not the same thing.[230] Nor is the relationship of sex to gender a straightforward one. As Tricia Sheffield notes, "disruptive performative acts of gender destabilize the gender binary by their lived bodily experiences."[231] Heteronormative expressions of gender and sexuality are not an absolute given for humankind. The embodied reality of human existence is not so easily divisible into dimorphic spheres. The existence of intersex physiologies and multiple transgender identities makes this clear.[232] To partly illustrate the difference between gender and sex, one could therefore say that gender is performative or cultural, whereas sex is anatomical.[233] Biological sex is one component of gender, but gender also encompasses a person's sense of their own identity and the socio-cultural context in which they live and express themselves.[234] In consequence, what is problematic about an approach to theological anthropology which depends on a gender or sex binary correlated to intra-Trinitarian hypostatic difference is that it compares apples with oranges. The analogy between the Divine and the human is too weak because it is not even clear *what* is being compared with *what*, due to the complexity of sexuality and gender and the radical unknowability of God in Godself. Any such approach thus becomes insufficiently reflective both of the lived experience of human persons and of the life of the Triune God.

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[230] Virginia Prince, 'Sex vs. Gender', *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 8.4 (2005), 29–32 (pp. 29–30) <https://doi.org/10.1300/J485v08n04_05>.
[231] Tricia Sheffield, 'Performing Jesus: A Queer Counternarrative of Embodied Transgression', *Theology & Sexuality*, 14.3 (2008), 233–58 (p. 238) <https://doi.org/10.1177/1355835808091421>.
[232] Susannah Cornwall, 'Intersex and Transgender People', in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. by Adrian Thatcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 657–75 (p. 657).
[233] Graham, pp. 219–20.
[234] See, e.g., Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 9, 12, 24, 30–31, 33–34, 96, 175–77, 185–86, 190–93; cf. Deana F. Morrow, 'Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression', in *Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression in Social Work Practice: Working with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People*, ed. by Deana F. Morrow and Lori Messinger (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 3–17 (p. 8).

In sum, the many forms that human sexuality and gender take cannot be charted onto a pre-existent Trinitarian map, as this too easily serves as an excuse to reinforce heterosexist structures of oppression. Such a methodology may be well-intentioned, but it is misguided. Where some potential is to be found in the theology of Graham Ward for the gendering and queering of theological anthropology is not in his attempt to fit human beings in the Trinity through an analogy of difference. It is in his notion of a transcorporeal body of Christ. This is because the relationship of human beings to each other is more like the relationship of humanity and Divinity in Christ than it is like the intra-Trinitarian relations. Human beings are brought together in Christ by something that is different from each of them, but in which they all share.[235] To argue for the radical and unstable union between an apophatic theological anthropology and a transcorporeal Christology, Ward's notion of the transcorporeal body of Christ will now be developed in conversation with queer theology, using some philosophical illustrations from phenomenology.

A Queerly Transcorporeal Christ

Undoubtedly, Christian theology is difficult to extract from its historical, social, economic, and political contexts. A Creator God who became Incarnate within that creation speaks to the embodied reality of all human persons. For, as Rahner puts it, "the flesh which is man is the self-utterance of God himself."[236] Each individual is thus a unique image of one and the same God, expressed in flesh and living in social community. This means that a gendered and queered theological anthropology seeks not to argue for the gayness of Jesus but to determine what Christ-ness says to the marginalised, to the nonheteronormative, and to the

[235] See Tanner, pp. 241–42.
[236] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, p. 75.

othered.[237] To begin to conceive of the meaning and purpose of humanity, theological leeway must be given to the dissonant and to the multiple lived realities of our existence.[238]

The focus in this thesis is particularly on those persons at the boundary or periphery of the mainstream, who have been excluded from mainstream discourse in theological anthropology and Christology. However, minority theologies of this kind have often also compartmentalised discourse, restricting its applicability and validity to a certain minority group, and thereby limiting the potential for universal human discourses.[239] Absolute relativism or nihilism is to be avoided just as much as the erasure of the diversity of personal identity and embodied subjectivity by heteronormative theological discourses. If "God-talk" cannot transcend the boundaries of an individual person or group context it is only talking of the human. The challenge, therefore, is to use a gendered and queered theological anthropology and Christology as a medium to unpick the interwoven tapestries of the truly Divine and the truly human, and the universal and the particular. To begin this process, let us remodel the Christology of Graham Ward.

The Christology advocated by Graham Ward is one of gradual displacement. "Displacement" is the process by which the historical Jesus begins to withdraw from direct representation into transcorporeality.[240] This queer transformation of the body of Jesus Christ reflects the unstable categories that constitute the God Man, as expressed in the Chalcedonian Definition of the two natures.[241] The displacement of Jesus's transcorporeal body opens up a "spiritual topos within the physical, historical and geographical orders."[242] This means that our definitions of all human beings are provisional vis-à-vis Christ, and that

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[237] Thomas Bohache, *Christology from the Margins* (London: SCM Press, 2008), p. 213.
[238] Althaus-Reid, p. 48.
[239] See, e.g., Richard Cleaver, *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p. vii.
[240] Ward, *Cities*, p. 102.
[241] See Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, 'Thinking Theology and Queer Theory', *Feminist Theology*, 15.3 (2007), 302–14 (p. 310) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0966735006076168>.
[242] Ward, *Cities*, p. 108.

no one person possesses of themselves the full truth. A queer Christology is thus a call to go beyond the shadow of what is known and established by relinquishing power and control to God Godself.[243] Through the displacement of the body of Jesus, creation is imbued with a new significance that reveals the irreducible and incommunicable truth of all bodies in their multiplicity and diversity.[244] The displaced body of Christ unceasingly permeates all other bodies, objects, and identities.[245]

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[243] Colby Dickinson and Meghan Toomey, 'The Continuing Relevance of "Queer" Theology for the Rest of the Field', *Theology & Sexuality*, 23.1–2 (2017), 1–16 (p. 13) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13558358.2017.1341210>.

[244] Buechel, p. 33. The emphasis on the *dis*placement of the body of Christ contrasts with the significance assigned to place in the constitution of embodied identity by some contemporary theorists. See, e.g., Daniela Stehlik, 'Rurality, Disability and Place Identity', in *Disability and Rurality: Identity, Gender and Belonging*, ed. by Karen Soldatic and Kelley Johnson (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 69–80.

[245] Brannon Hancock, *The Scandal of Sacramentality: The Eucharist in Literary and Theological Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), p. 83. The preoccupation with identity is widespread in the late-modern world. In the last two decades, the politics of identity has manifested itself ever more forcefully in pushes for social, economic, and ethical reforms, and in reactionary backlashes. See, *e.g.*, *Religious Truth and Identity in an Age of Plurality*, ed. by Peter Jonkers and Oliver J. Wiertz (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020); Andrew Spira, *The Invention of the Self: Personal Identity in the Age of Art* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020); Andrew Spira, *Simulated Selves: The Undoing of Personal Identity in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020); Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Rory McVeigh and Kevin Estep, *The Politics of Losing: Trump, the Klan, and the Mainstreaming of Resentment* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2019); Anthony Reddie, *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019); Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Authoritarian-Populism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018); *Disability and Rurality: Identity, Gender and Belonging*, ed. by Karen Soldatic and Kelley Johnson (London: Routledge, 2017); Alison Healicon, *The Politics of Sexual Violence: Rape, Identity and Feminism* (Houndmills: Palgrave Pivot, 2016); Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York, NY: New Press, 2016); Fiona Barker, *Nationalism, Identity and the Governance of Diversity: Old Politics, New Arrivals* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Richard Ned Lebow, *The Politics and Ethics of Identity: In Search of Ourselves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); *Towards a Postsecular International Politics: New Forms of Community, Identity, and Power*, ed. by Luca Mavelli and Fabio Petito (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Julie L. Nagoshi, Craig T. Nagoshi, and Stephanie Brzuzy, *Gender and Sexual Identity: Transcending Feminist and Queer Theory* (New York, NY: Springer, 2014); Howard J. Wiarda, *Political Culture, Political Science, and Identity Politics: An Uneasy Alliance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Cillian McGrattan, *Memory, Politics and Identity: Haunted by History* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity: The Literary Agenda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, ed. by Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011); *Time and Identity*, ed. by Joseph Keim Campbell, Michael O'Rourke, and Harry Silverstein (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices*, ed. by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf (London: Routledge, 2010); *A Leftist Ontology: Beyond Relativism and Identity Politics*, ed. by Carsten Strathausen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Linda J. Nicholson, *Identity before Identity Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

The dialogues of difference between diversity within creation and between the multiplicity of creatures and the transcendental unity of God are harbingers of truth and love.[246] Particularity is no monologue-in-disguise; creaturely non-normativity is a bona fide aspect of God's οἰκονομία. Human being is a corporeal existence in a created world where freedom is always actualised through a multiplicity of concrete activities and involvements in history and society.[247] To be truly inclusive, concepts of human identity and dignity must thus be untethered from heteronormative social constructions of gender and sexuality and account for how even a fluid gender identity is both embodied and constructed.[248] Nonetheless, as Kent Brintnall has observed, gender and sexuality "can never meaningfully be separated from other facets of identity and the cultural discourses that give them meaning."[249] So, even to begin to address the manifold diversity of human beings, an approach to theological anthropology which combines embodied existence, relationality, and transcendentality is required. Such an approach must both embrace and go beyond essentialism and social constructivism, but also recognise the social environments and embodied experiences that rigidise identity and otherness in positive and negative ways. Properly executed, such an approach to theological anthropology does not erase the displaced body of Christ or the bodies of those so permeated—it expands them both.[250]

As was made clear earlier, Ward's theological anthropology is problematic because it does not overcome a prioritisation of the maleness of the body of Christ. It also relies on a Pauline gendering of Christ and the Church, acknowledging that the Church (as the displaced body of Christ) is both sexed and not sexed, as well as making use of an underlying heterosexist

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[246] Dirk-Martin Grube, 'Respecting Religious Otherness as Otherness versus Exclusivism and Religious Pluralism: Towards a Robust Interreligious Dialogue', in *Religious Truth and Identity in an Age of Plurality*, ed. by Peter Jonkers and Oliver J. Wiertz (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), pp. 182–99 (pp. 182–83).
[247] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 38.
[248] Nagoshi, Nagoshi, and Brzuzy, pp. 177, 85–86.
[249] Kent L. Brintnall, 'Queer Studies and Religion', *Critical Research on Religion*, 1.1 (2013), 51–61 (p. 54) <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050303213476111>.
[250] Buechel, p. 38.

power dynamic that can be seen in Ward's description of Mary.[251] As Tonstad has observed, the addition of the female into the male, both on the level of the Church and Christ and the individual and Christ, does not undo the maleness of the body of Christ in Ward's theological anthropology unless the logic of transposition is one of replacement.[252] Clearly this cannot be the case because, if it was, Christ would no longer be Christ. How might we understand the transcorporeality of the person of Jesus Christ in a way that is more in keeping with a gendered and queered theological anthropology? What, perhaps, is needed is a way to accomplish what Sarah Coakley seeks: a way to give mortal flesh "final significance, a horizon in which the restless, fluid post-modern 'body' can find some sense of completion without losing its mystery, without succumbing again to 'appropriate' or restrictive gender roles."[253] The move towards such an understanding of the body begins here, with a phenomenological re-examination of the theological concept of participation, for this is the fundamental category of existence in the contingent character of createdness.

The French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty refocused philosophy on the body as the site of sight.[254] He rightly understood the body to be the regulative centre of human knowledge. The body sustains both thought and empirical sense data and, in the phenomenon of perception, regulates, systematises, and unifies these epistemic components. This epistemology represents a move away from the sharp division of mind and matter in the Cartesian philosophical tradition and emphasises the reciprocal shaping of the inner and the outer worlds of human existence.[255] Unlike the Cartesian *cogito*, which is divorced from the world, Merleau-Ponty emphasises that the perceiving body as a whole belongs to the

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[251] Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (London: SCM Press, 2009), p. 253. See Graham Ward, 'There Is No Sexual Difference', in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*, ed. by Gerard Loughlin (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 76–85 (p. 79).
[252] Tonstad, *God and Difference*, p. 76.
[253] Sarah Coakley, 'The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation, and God', *Modern Theology*, 16.1 (2000), 61–73 (p. 70) <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0025.00115>.
[254] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 209.
[255] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 334–35, 348–49.

world as a whole.[256] Detachment, in the form of neutrality or objectivity, is only ever a chimera.

Mind and matter exist in a *dialectical unity*, which constitutes each discrete mode of existence and in which each discrete mode of existence participates. This is a fundamental phenomenological substratum in which all human persons invisibly participate, and by which humanity's existence is constituted. Thus a human person has a sense that it does not constitute itself in and of itself, because it is intersubjective.[257] The dialectical unity of subject and object, or of the *a priori* and *a posteriori*, is what enables the human body to perceive its intertwined flesh.[258] The subject and the world beyond it are therefore "two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth."[259] This epistemic union is key to the reality of lived human experience. God is a God of absolute transcendence and absolute closeness, who envelops the spiritual depths of our existence and the concreteness of our corporeal history.[260] The gendered and queered model of the relationship between theological anthropology and Christology that follows has a similar understanding of the unity between the visibility of the transcendent universal and the invisibility of the immanent particular.

The particularity of embodiment is integral to and inseparable from a created human person.[261] The world of the non-physical is relocated *into* the physical through the body as a *perceptive* entity. The physical world *extends* the non-physical through the interpenetrating, dialectical unity. Bodily existence is not something which is added to human rationality or spirituality but is an inseparable part of its extension outwards into a cosmic self-

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256 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 265.
257 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 474.
258 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, ed. by Claude Lefort, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 138. See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 431.
259 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 155.
260 Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 137.
261 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 213. Contrast this with René Descartes, 'Meditations on First Philosophy', in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), II, 1–62.

consciousness.[262] When it comes to theological anthropology, therefore, one does not have to separate the participation of a single human person in the wider world or in universal humanness one from another. The opposition between the universal transcendental plane and the particularity of immanence is transgressed in the ultimate human perception, which is the Incarnate Son of God.[263] In fact, this unity between the experience of God and the experience of oneself is what ultimately allows for the unity of the love of God and the love of neighbour, as will be laid out in Chapter Five.[264]

No perception does more to unveil humanity than perceiving with eyes of faith the Word of God as Lord and Saviour. This is because one therein perceives the immanent–transcendent incommunicability-of-truth that is Jesus Christ. The immanent presence of the One who ultimately defines every human self, and who conditions every external presence to human selves, simultaneously throws all selves outside of themselves.[265] Consequently, a Christian theological anthropology should acknowledge that a human body is not closed in upon itself but is open to the other not-other. It is permeable to other particularities and to the universal as incarnate through the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, an objective body is not the true version of the body, it is only an impoverished image of one.[266] To find its true meaning one must find the phenomenal body amid this constant dynamic: the synchronicity that is the establishment of one's limits and the outstretching out of the self beyond them. It is only in

[262] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, p. 84; Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 189–90. These insights of Rahner bear some similarity with the work of feminist and queer theorists. It seems that the way in which Rahner affirms the importance of the bodily existence of human persons and their experience in the world means that he would be sympathetic to concerns as to the importance of appreciating and reflecting on the variety and diversity of human lives, as well as everyone's uniqueness.
[263] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 347.
[264] Rahner, 'Experience of Self', XIII, p. 126.
[265] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 381. Italics original. Merleau-Ponty here reuses the terminology of Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1984), p. 185.
[266] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 456.

this way, through the *imago Dei* and without the negation of particularity, that true Godlikeness may be actualised in all human persons.

The dynamic and synchronous character of dialectical unity, by which the knowledge of the self in Christ operates, forms a sense of what a human person can become. The immanent transcendent truth of incommunicability-in-revelation alone allows humankind to recognise their own truth and to access the truth of others. This is because the human state of being has a certain intrinsic fluidity.[267] In this fluidic unity of the embodied and the immanent transcendent, objects and events are linked up with each other in the medium of subjectivity to form a new world for the individual. Moreover, it is through the quest for truth in Jesus Christ that a person's intentionality is directed toward the sensation of another subject: the one who is immediately present to them through the body of Christ. The perception of Christ is also mediated unthematically through the other. Yet it is only in and through this intentionality that the transcendent is immanent becomes for us, and the world around us also comes to make sense.[268] The reason for this is that we participate in the truth of other subjects analogically through Christ. An *analogia relationis* binds human persons, with Christ as the medium.[269] Through faith in the unseen, unthematic Christ-likeness of the perceived other, the universal truth of participation in Jesus Christ becomes lodged in meaning and value. All people are ultimately one in the Word of God.

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[267] Karl Rahner, 'Being Open to God as Ever Greater', in *Theological Investigations: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), VII, 25–46 (p. 36). It certainly seems that Rahner would have some sympathies with the vision of human existence in queer theory that sees it as unstable, inconsistent, and in a constant process of change. Though it is perhaps more debatable as to whether he would have been comfortable with other aspects such as the particularly strong aversion to ontology itself.

[268] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 338, 48.

[269] This theme is particularly prominent in the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. See, e.g., Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of The Sociology of The Church*, ed. by Clifford J. Green, trans. by Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, 1 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), pp. 34, 48–56, 79–80, 84, 101, 105, 108, 115–18, 125–27, 143–47, 166, 169, 182, 204–8, 225–26, 264; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act And Being*, ed. by Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., trans. by H. Martin Rumscheidt, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), p. 146; Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, pp. 32–34, 47, 55, 63, 65–66, 79, 109, 133–34.

What has been said so far in terms of Christology is that the transcendent both is, and is not, the immanent, in a dialectical unity which overcomes epistemological or ontological division. The unity in Christ of a human person's concurrent universality and immanent particularity could therefore be loosely characterised as the difference between the human *essence* and a human *hypostasis*, because each human being *is* in the universal sense and *is* in the particular sense, through stretching out into Christ, and on through Christ to all others. Yet any οὐσία of humanity would have to be understood in the abovementioned open, apophatic, non-concrete sense. This means that the world outside of the self can be a subjective source of meaning for the human person as well as an objective given.[270] This is only possible since the human person is a body-subject engaged in the perception of alterity through the presence of the Word of God made flesh and Eucharistised. If this was not the case, a human person would have no means to retain the integrity of their own unique identity whilst throwing themselves out beyond the limit of their self to let in true alterity, and to realise the ultimate state of human community.

So, to participate in the intersubjectivity of the current world, a human person must be the concrete bearer of a double unknowability.[271] That is also the case for the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the complete Word of God is united with a complete human person.[272] The double unknowability of a human person is both unknowability in the sense of an absolute individuality and unknowability in the sense of an unthematic absolute generality. In each person these unknowables are inconfusable but inseparable, as they are the source of our consciousness of our own no-thingness.[273] This makes them all unique, apophatic, socio-

[270] See Sonia Kruks, 'The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty', *Radical Philosophy*, 11 (1975), 17–24 (p. 19).
[271] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 373, 474.
[272] See Cyril of Alexandria, 'On Orthodoxy to Theodosius', in *Three Christological Treatises*, trans. by Daniel King, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 129 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), pp. 35–82 (p. 56 [21]).
[273] See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 102–9, 200–209, 637–38.

anthropological phenomena. To make that sound more explicitly theological: for humankind, meaning is formed through the determination in which every unique *hypostasis* exists. All no-things are consecrated as images of God by their separation from all else that is created and their separation from God.[274] This not only demarcates the uniqueness of the individual but also the infinite analogical διάστημα between the individual and God, who can thus be known in all things as distinct from all things.[275] The intentional movement of the self toward the world, when one throws oneself beyond oneself, supplies meaning and sense, as it necessitates the perception of every person in view as a *being-for-us*, a *being-in-itself*, and a *being-of-God*.[276]

The phenomenon of a human person is a manifestation of the unity of the transcendent and the immanent.[277] This means that they are a unity of the universal and the individual, of the subject and the object, and of the mind and the body.[278] Moreover, Jesus Christ is a manifestation of the primordial revelation of humanity that embraces, and precedes, all creation, without owing anything to any *thing*. That is to say, the human phenomenon is itself a recognition of the Incarnation of the Divine in the human, and of humanity's own incommunicable existence.[279] This common "nature" (the pre-conscious, bodily knowing of oneself as mysterious) and its *intentionality* (the orientation towards the other) opens humankind to the ineffable connectedness of its intersubjectivity in and through the body of Christ. Jesus Christ reveals the underlying unity of creation, because in him there is an absolute "incarnational, historical and corporeal continuity."[280] Indeed, the pre-condition for the saving mediatorship of Christ is the intercommunication of all human persons, right

[274] Przywara, p. 306.
[275] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', pp. 108–09 [8.3].
[276] Sartre, pp. 19–22, 328–29.
[277] Sartre emphasises the "empty distance" of transcendence in human being, which supplies consciousness. See Sartre, pp. 102, 113, 203, 350–51, 368, 374–75.
[278] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxxxii, 450.
[279] John 14.6.
[280] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 354.

down to the ultimate depths of their existence.[281] The individual creature is called to pursue this unity in Christ, but each person also remains defined in their particularity through their relationship with that unity.[282] The whole concrete, corporeal existence of a person is permeated by their orientation to Christ.[283] This interconnected relation-in-separation of created persons, occasioned by the union of the two nature in Christ, is vital for gendering and queering theological anthropology.

It is clear that gendering and queering theological anthropology is key to unlocking the potential of a transcorporeal Christology in the late-modern period. Yet the etymological origin of *queer* itself is uncertain. It might be the German *quer* (oblique, perverse, odd), which does not necessarily have a fixed, monolithic sense.[284] Certainly, the queer is at odds with the normal, the exclusive, or the dominant, as it is permeable and malleable.[285] A critical engagement with queer theory, and its integration into theological anthropology, will take place in the following chapter, but for now it is sufficient to state the term "queer" refers to any number of pluralist provisionalities that resist the dominant monolithic discourses concerning sexuality and gender. In queer theory, an emphasis is placed upon conceptualising a diversity of identities without essences. There is not necessarily a systematic methodology at work.[286] This lack of systematisation is what makes queer theory so useful to a contemporary theological anthropology.

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[281] Karl Rahner, 'One Mediator and Many Mediations', in *Theological Investigations: Writings of 1965–67*, trans. by Graham Harrison, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), IX, 169–84 (p. 174).
[282] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 305.
[283] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 442.
[284] See 'Queer | Definition of Queer by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.Com Also Meaning of Queer', *Lexico Dictionaries | English* <https://www.lexico.com/definition/queer> [accessed 24 September 2020].
[285] David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 62. It is by no means insignificant that this definition of "queerness" requires there to be a norm.
[286] See, e.g., Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7; Susannah Cornwall, *Controversies in Queer Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2011), pp. 13–14.

One of the most significant features of queer theologies is that they challenge totality. They expose the provisional reality of all theologies and seek to subvert binary logics.[287] As can be seen in Chapter Two, theologies have often been structured according to such logics historically, in authoritative exercises of the metanarratives of heterosexism.[288] The recognition of this implicit power play in the communications of theological truths is key. As queer, disabled, and other disadvantaged minorities regularly testify, heterosexist authority is exclusionary and divisive, rather than inclusionary and reconciliatory.[289] Nevertheless, human being is a unity of material and immaterial, which means that even the smallest difference between individuals is not irrelevant to the realisation of God's οἰκονομία. Gendering and queering theological anthropology is thus about envisioning what it is to be human in a way that gives birth to a socio-political transformation and redresses the harmful practices of intellectual and practical discrimination against minority groups. Such a theological anthropology therefore fosters an understanding of redemption in the broadest sense.[290] This foundation now needs to be built upon.

Universality and Particularity

The transcendentally universal and immanently particular intersubjectivity of a human person transgresses binary categorisations. In every individual, the transcendent both is, and is not, the immanent, in a dialectical unity that overcomes epistemological or ontological division. This is the dialectical unity in which humankind participates through the

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[287] Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, 'Thinking Theology and Queer Theory', pp. 311–12. See Jean-François Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge and Nigel Wood, trans. by Régis Durand, 3rd edn (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), pp. 410–20 (p. 420). There are problematic ethical and legal issues with the dynamic pluralist provisionalities that queerness facilitates. For the Aristotelian concept of non-contradiction, which lies at the root of many binary logics, see Aristotle, 'Metaphysics', II, pp. 1587–97 [1005a19–1011b22].

[288] See Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, 'Thinking Theology and Queer Theory', p. 307; Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2010), pp. 189–96.

[289] See, e.g., Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), p. 21.

[290] See Tonstad, *Queer Theology*, p. 3.

intentionality of its existence. The intentionality of our existence is driven by the orientation toward the other as not-other, by the underlying desire to perceive Christ and the incommunicable truth of one's salvation as part of the redeemed human community.[291] What can now be added to this framework is that the transcendent self-awareness of an always-unique human person—personal openness to God—is concentrated through the image of God in its transcendence towards the Absolute Mystery, which is the ground of all reality. This means that the Incarnation of God is "the unique and *highest* instance of the actualization of the essence of human reality."[292] The self and the other, the subject and the object, are reconciled in the not-other. It is in this reconciliatory union of unknowables that the essence of human reality in Christ consists. Here, a link emerges between the mystery of the human person and the Absolute Mystery of the Divine.

The link between the human person and the Absolute Mystery of the Divine can be perceived in the Incarnate presence of the Word made flesh, in the sacraments, in spiritual experiences, or by engaging with Scripture. This is because it is in the Incarnation that "the absolute ground itself becomes immediately interior to what is grounded by it."[293] As mystery enfleshed, the presence of Jesus Christ comes into all human persons as they also come into him, even though He precedes them as the primordial gift of life.[294] Wherever it is encountered, the Divine presence is always a gift of God. The Incarnate One is not less overflowing with transcendence than God in Godself, but is ever-transcendent, and superabundantly so.[295] Yet it was in virtue of the pre-existing solidarity of the Word of God

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[291] See Luke 2.29–32.
[292] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 218.
[293] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 181.
[294] See Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 63; Jean-Luc Marion, 'The "End of Metaphysics" as a Possibility', in *Religion After Metaphysics*, ed. by Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 166–89 (pp. 181–82); Jean-Luc Marion, 'The End of the End of Metaphysics', *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2.2 (1994), 1–22 (p. 18) <https://doi.org/10.5840/epoche1994224>; Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 8, 12.
[295] Pseudo-Dionysius, 'Letter Three: To the Same Gaius', in *The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 264.

with human persons that He became Incarnate, and it was His choice to abolish those barriers which impede the full participation of humankind in the Divine economy.[296]

What the dialectical unity of particularity and universality in human existence tells a gendered and queered theological anthropology is that the Incarnate Christ, who is the unique mediator of Divinity and humanity, perfects our intercommunication in salvific solidarity. This is because "the latter is both the necessary precondition for Christ's mediatorship, and also its effect."[297] As such, human solidarity not only pertains to society and history; it is also present in the free determination of our ultimate relationship to God as mystery, which extends beyond all immanent reality.[298] It is by the process of His displacement throughout creation that the transcorporeal Son of God has slipped through the permeable barrier enclosing every human identity. The gift of infinite love and relationship with God that Christ brings is addressed to every person as they are in themselves and throughout time. In consequence, any human person who fails to appreciate and love another as a neighbour has not yet achieved the full realisation of their own self and their relationship with God.[299] There is now one further point to be made concerning the significance of the relationship of temporality, Christology, and queer theory.

Queer theory has always shown a reluctance to historicise itself.[300] That is to say, it does not consider itself to have emerged out of any particular philosophical or theoretical development. Thus, queer theory is not temporally fixed or static in the sense of an ideological movement, though it does require some form of a norm against which it is to be defined. Antinormativity, transgression, and denaturalisation shape queer theory because

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[296] Marion, *Negative Certainties*, p. 91.
[297] Rahner, 'One Mediator', IX, p. 174.
[298] Karl Rahner, 'Reconciliation and Vicarious Representation', in *Theological Investigations: Science and Christian Faith*, trans. by Hugh M. Riley, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), XXI, 255–69 (p. 267).
[299] Rahner, 'Experience of Self', XIII, p. 127.
[300] James Penney, *After Queer Theory: The Limits of Sexual Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 2014), p. 72. Nonetheless, it can be helpful to think of four steps in the evolution of queer theology. See Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2011), pp. 27–38.

queerness itself is an event of disruption.[301] This is similar to how Christ accomplishes reconciliation for the sake of each of us in the anonymity of a double unknowability. The Son of God does not erase or overpower the identity of any human person but retains their definition. In fact, as Marcella Althaus-Reid argues, "if Queer holiness has a characteristic, it may be its un-representability. It is […] always the holiness of the Other."[302] This anonymous process of reconciliation operates without restriction of time or place. It is the unconfinable hidden identity of Divine humanity that permeates our existence through the unique Hypostatic Union. The grammar of God expressed in human flesh makes this possible.[303]

To conclude, humankind is enabled to approach God as Absolute Mystery throughout time, by realising its *imago Dei* through Christ into Godlikeness. The single change made by Christ in, and for, creation is the beginning of the divinisation of the world as a whole.[304] This is how one may speak of the transcorporeality of the person of Jesus, as He encompasses all time and creation in Himself. It can only be through God's self-revelation in human flesh that each individual person is brought to participate in the God who is always invisibly immanent. For all human beings have one and the same final destiny, which is to attain the fullness of God's self-communication in itself.[305] Through the perception of Christ and a voluntary filial self-identification with Christ, by means of the *imago Dei*, true Godlikeness may thus be realised in all humanity without the negation of particularity. The potential for salvation, which is opened to humanity in Christ, is a truly fundamental form of unity that

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[301] See Linn Marie Tonstad, 'Ambivalent Loves: Christian Theologies, Queer Theologies', *Literature & Theology*, 31.4 (2017), 472–89 (pp. 474–75) <https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/frw043>.
[302] Althaus-Reid, p. 154.
[303] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 223. The sameness of Jesus with other human beings is often emphasised but, in this context, it makes sense to stress the absolute uniqueness, because every human being (according to my understanding of theological anthropology) is also unique. Christlikeness does not have to mean homogeneity.
[304] For the parable of the mustard seed, which refers to the Kingdom of God, see Matthew 13.31–32; Mark 4.30–32; and Luke 13.18–19.
[305] Karl Rahner, 'Unity of Church – Unity of Mankind', in *Theological Investigations: Concern for the Church*, trans. by Edward Quinn, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981), XX, 154–72 (p. 160).

includes the unique identity of every individual person but also transgresses every boundary of creation.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to draw together several different types of resources to construct a Christology that can help to gender and queer theological anthropology. It has also touched on wider aspects of apophatic theology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and queer theory. The chapter began with a consideration of the tentative suspension of human existence in a Pauline Christology. It spoke particularly of the Adam/Christ typology that informs Paul's understanding of the *imago Dei*, and the importance of this connection between the first and the last Adam for theological anthropology. The Chalcedonian Definition of the two natures of the person of Jesus Christ was subsequently discussed. Here, it was noted how important it is to recognise that the Definition has an apophatic flavour, in that it says more about what Jesus Christ is not than it does about what Jesus Christ is. There is thus a certain amount of suspension as to the limited worldly understanding of the ultimate human self as realised in Christ. The chapter also argues that God is utterly unknowable, even in self-revelation, because God is free. This link between Divine freedom and Absolute Mystery was explored considering the analogy of being, which is what holds all creatures in their contingent existence and allows humankind its own limited freedom.

Later, it was shown that the analogy of being holds God and humankind in a relationship with each other, even though Godself is always beyond the horizon of human experience. It was explored how the ultimate manifestation of Divine freedom and mystery, and therefore of human freedom and mystery, in creation is the Incarnation. However, this unknowability of the Divine was shown to cause problems when integrated with models of theological anthropology which engender human sexual difference in the intra-Trinitarian relationships.

The example given was the theologically profound work of Graham Ward, which nonetheless struggles when it tries to fit the variety and diversity of human life onto a Trinitarian model. The chapter redeployed Ward's notion of transcorporeality using some inspiration from the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It argues that the ultimate site for the queer transgression of physical and non-physical binaries must be the transcorporeal person of Jesus Christ, in whom the Divine and human co-inhere unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably, in dialectic unity. Finally, some remarks were made on the link between universality and particularity, both in queer theory and in theological anthropology.

An underlying thread which has run throughout this exploration of Christology is that, even despite the self-revelation of the Divine as Absolute Mystery in the Incarnation, it can be asserted that God alone is the one through whom all persons exist and are maintained eternally.[306] God is unknowable, but so also is humankind unknowable as to its fullest actualisation in the here and now of the present world. Nevertheless, it has been important to specify that a uniquely human unity through the experience of the self, the experience of the other, and the experience of the Absolute Other is significant for the soteriological connection between Jesus and the rest of humanity.[307] In fact, as the connection between universality and particularity in the person of Jesus shows, if just one person can access salvation through the queerness of the displaced body of Christ, then people of all genders and sexualities must be able to access salvation in Him.

[306] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.I, p. 301.
[307] Karl Rahner, 'The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation', in *Theological Investigations: Experience of the Spirit, Source of Theology*, trans. by David Morland, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), XVI, 199–224 (p. 210).

Chapter Four: The Situation of Human Existence

The human existential situation is at the heart of any theological anthropology. Christian theology cannot be divorced from the everyday lived experiences of people in a world in which God became flesh. All parts of God's creation are illuminated by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which includes human gender and sexuality.[1] This chapter will begin by considering how developments in cultural attitudes towards gender and sexuality since the Enlightenment contributed to the increasing dominance of heteronormative ideologies in Western societies. After that, the chapter will discuss the benefits of a queer and apophatic theological anthropology which balances the individuality and dignity of the human person with a recognition of its incompleteness, for no closed or complete definition of human nature is possible before its teleological fulfilment. There will be a sustained engagement with queer and feminist theorists, to propose that every human person is in fact nonnormative by virtue of their instability and constant transformation throughout time.

This chapter will reflect theologically on the lived experience of coming out as an LGBTQIA+ individual. It will use my own experience to explore the idea of self-revelation within the context of human personhood, and the quasi-sacramental character of moments in human existence where profound truths are communicated. The chapter will also emphasise the fundamentally relational nature of human personhood as being predisposed to alterity, for we are always rooted in our connections to the other and to the Absolute Other. Finally, there is an exploration of how human difference is rooted in the Hypostatic Union of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ, and the communication between the

[1] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p. 271 [55].

Divine and the human that is occasioned therein. Now, to a brief survey of the changes in Western cultural attitudes to gender and sexuality since the Enlightenment.

Religion, Sexuality, and Culture

Western attitudes to gender and sexuality are complex. Some issues of human sexuality and gender have been vexed, though not always forensically dissected, since before Christian worldviews assumed their dominant position in Western culture.[2] Within the confines of this thesis it is not feasible to attempt a comprehensive history of Western attitudes to human sexuality and gender, but there has been a noticeable trend towards more repressive cultural attitudes since the Industrial Revolution. A change seems to have occurred. Thomas Laqueur, the noted historian of sexuality, remarks that, "sometime in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented."[3] It will be helpful to this thesis to note some of the key factors in the modern development of social attitudes towards human sexuality and gender.

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[2] For a selection of the almost innumerable literary explorations of sex and gender in Greco-Roman classical antiquity, see Dio, *Roman History: Books 61–70*, trans. by Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library, 176, 9 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1925), VIII, pp. 57, 59 [LXI.10.3–4]; Martial, *Epigrams*, ed. & trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library, 94, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), I, p. 109 [I.90]; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Alan D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 60–61, 220–24; Plato, 'Charmides', in *Meno and Other Dialogues: Charmides, Laches, Lysis, Meno*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 1–34 (p. 4 [154c]); Titus Maccius Plautus, 'Truculentus', in *Plautus: Stichus, Three Bob Day, Truculentus, the Tale of a Travelling Bag, Fragments*, trans. by Paul Nixon, Loeb Classical Library, 328, 5 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1952), V, 223–332 (p. 251); Plutarch, 'Lycurgus', in *Plutarch's Lives: Theseus and Romulus; Lycurgus and Numa; Solon and Phulicola*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, 46, 11 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1959), I, 203–304 (p. 265 [XVIII.4]); Plutarch, 'Solon', in *Plutarch's Lives: Theseus and Romulus; Lycurgus and Numa; Solon and Publicola*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, 46, 11 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1959), I, 403–500 (pp. 405, 407 [I]); Plutarch, 'Pelopidas', in *Plutarch's Lives: Agesilaus and Pompey; Pelopidas and Marcellus*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, 87, 11 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1955), V, 339–434 (p. 385 [XVIII.2–5]); Propertius, *Elegies*, trans. by H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, 18 (London: William Heinemann, 1929), p. 75 [II.4]; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, trans. by Catharine Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 239–40 [7.22]; Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals: The Reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero*, trans. by John Yardley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 334 [14.60]; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, trans. by Amy L. Bonnette (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 20 [1.3.8].

[3] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 149. Laqueur is referring to the thesis that around the turn of the eighteenth century there was a shift from one-sex understanding of human sexuality, where females were considered not as the opposite of males but lower on a scale of masculinity, to a two-sex understanding, where male and female were seen to be mutually-exclusive binary opposites. Laqueur's work on the history of gender and sexuality is widely respected as authoritative, though it has not been entirely uncontroversial. His thesis has received serious attention from historians and classicists but its implications for Christian theology and ethics have not received as much consideration. For the most substantive theological attention so far paid to this theory, see Adrian Thatcher, *Redeeming Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 11–83.

Cultural anxieties, in particular, have intensified in response to the unprecedented changes that have occurred in Western societies since the Enlightenment.[4]

Firstly, in the economic and imperial powerhouses of Europe, a scientific, mechanistic, and rationalistic view of the world gradually took hold from the Enlightenment onwards.[5] The

[4] Véronique Mottier, *Sexuality: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 26. It is not an insignificant sign of how more repressive attitudes towards gender and sexuality have developed since the Enlightenment in the West that the most commonly-used English translations of classical works (made predominantly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) often either sanitise explicit same-sex passages by removing any details deemed to be unsuitable for modern sentiments, or switch into a different modern language in order to conceal the graphic contents from the eyes of the average reader. One example of moralistic whitewashing involves the obfuscation of allusions to the "lioness on a cheese grater," which refer to an ancient sexual position in which anal intercourse was often performed. Such allusions were also scandalous in antiquity. This is because the "lioness on a cheese grater" is a particularly demeaning semi-standing position associated with the cheapest of prostitutes, where the penetratee would be entered from behind. The image originates from depictions in ivory of squatting lionesses, which were used to decorate the handles of knives. As shown in ceramic artworks, even when the penetratee is a woman, it is often the anus that is penetrated in this position. Such loss of control over the integrity of one's own body was deemed to be incompatible with occupying a social position of control over others in the Greco-Roman world. If it was public knowledge that a male citizen had yielded to such an indignity, then the individual concerned would be regarded as a subject of infamy. See, e.g., Aristophanes, 'The Wasps', in *Aristophanes: The Acharnians; The Clouds; The Knights; The Wasps*, trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers, Loeb Classical Library, 178, 3 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1930), I, 404–549 (pp. 498–99, 500–01 [938–939, 963–965]); Aristophanes, 'The Lysistrata', in *Aristophanes: The Lysistrata; The Thesmophokiazusae; The Ecclesiazusae; The Plutus*, trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers, Loeb Classical Library, 180, 3 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1946), III, 2–123 (pp. 24–25 [209–38]); Aristophanes, 'The Peace', in *Aristophanes: The Peace; The Birds; The Frogs*, trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers, Loeb Classical Library, 179, 3 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1927), II, 1–123 (pp. 80–81 [885–98]); Aristophanes, 'The Birds', in *Aristophanes: The Peace; The Birds; The Frogs*, trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers, Loeb Classical Library, 179, 3 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1927), II, 127–289 (pp. 274–275 [1579]); Plutarch, 'Dion', in *Plutarch's Lives: Dion and Brutus; Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, 98, 11 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1954), VI, 1–124 (pp. 122–123 [LVIII.2–3]); Suetonius, p. 24 [I.49]; Petronius, 'Satyricon', in *Petronius; Seneca: Apocolocyntosis*, trans. by Michael Heseltine, Loeb Classical Library, 15 (London: William Heinemann, 1925), pp. 1–324 (pp. 168–173 [85–87]); Juvenal, 'Satire II', in *Juvenal and Persius: The Satires of Juvenal; The Satires of Persius*, trans. by G. G. Ramsay, Loeb Classical Library, 91 (London: William Heinemann, 1928), pp. 16–29 (p. 21); Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae*, ed. by Alan H. Sommerstein, The Comedies of Aristophanes, 8 (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2001), p. 187; Cicero, 'De Inventione', in *De Inventione; De Optimo Genere Oratorum; Topica*, trans. by H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library, 386 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. vii–346 (p. 333 [II.166]); Jeffrey Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 179–80; Jane F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 149–52; Jonathan Walters, 'Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought', in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 29–43 (pp. 37–39); Catharine Edwards, 'Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome', in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 66–95 (pp. 67–68); Rex D. Glensy, 'The Right to Dignity', *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 43.1 (2011), 65–142 (pp. 73–75); Miriam T. Griffin, 'Dignity in Roman and Stoic Thought', in *Dignity: A History*, ed. by Remy Debes (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 47–66 (p. 50); Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 11–19; Suzy Killmister, *Contours of Dignity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 9–11.

[5] See Karl Rahner, 'The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World', in *Theological Investigations: Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, The Church in the World*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), XIV, 295–313 (pp. 298–300).

advent of modern capitalism and industrialised means of production resulted in the ordering and regulating of the natural world for the sake of greater economic productivity, which had many consequences for society, culture, and human relationships. Its influence also extended to ethics, due in part to a philosophical inclination to stress universal norms of reason and morality.[6] To some, it appeared as though science and logic might hold all the answers needed to questions of human life and the proper ordering of society.[7] This meant that any

[6] See, e.g., Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. & trans. by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 31; Marquis de Condorcet, *Outlines of An Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (London: J. Johnson, 1795), p. 316; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by R. S. Woolhouse (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 570; David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Other Writings*, ed. by Stephen Buckle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 75–77; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 276; Mary Wollstonecraft, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; Hints*, ed. by Janet Todd, Marilyn Butler, and Emma Rees-Mogg, The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, 5 (London: William Pickering, 1989), pp. 61–266 (pp. 67–68, 145–46, 163, 171, 264–66). Amongst feminist scholars there has been great debate over the effect of the Enlightenment on the cause of women's equality. Some see the emphasis upon universal norms and ethical standards that emerged in this period to have highlighted the unequal status of women and to have undermined exploitative perspectives on, and practices towards, human beings. Others reckon that an increasingly binary view of gender, and the general emphasis on logic, reason, and respectability, marginalised women further from public, political, and intellectual life. For a sense of these views, see, e.g., Mary E. Hawkesworth and Lisa Jane Disch, 'Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World', in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1–15; Ann E. Towns, 'The Status of Women as a Standard of "Civilization"', *European Journal of International Relations*, 15.4 (2009), 681–706 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109345053>; Marilyn French, *From Eve to Dawn: A History of Women: The Masculine Mystique: From Feudalism to the French Revolution*, 4 vols (New York, NY: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2008), II, pp. 97–136; Margaret C. Jacob, 'The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28.1 (1994), 95 (pp. 106–7) <https://doi.org/10.2307/2739226>; Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Phyllis Mack, 'The History of Women in Early Modern Britain. A Review Article', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 28.4 (1986), 715–22; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. & trans. by H. M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), p. 133; Jenny Mander, 'No Woman Is an Island: The Female Figure in French Enlightenment Anthropology', in *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 97–116; Siep Stuurman, 'The Deconstruction of Gender: Seventeenth-Century Feminism and Modern Equality', in *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 371–88; Karen Offen, 'Reclaiming the European Enlightenment for Feminism; Or Prolegomena to Any Future History of Eighteenth-Century Europe', in *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. by Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 85–103; John Robertson, 'Women and Enlightenment: A Historiographical Conclusion', in *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 692–704; Kate Soper, 'Feminism and Enlightenment Legacies', in *Women, Gender, and Enlightenment*, ed. by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 705–15; Susanne Lettow, 'Feminism and the Enlightenment', in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. by Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, and Alison Stone (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), pp. 94–106.

[7] Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, ed. by Thomas Schröder, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 163.

aspect of human existence that seemed to be mysterious, illogical, or ambiguous could and should be rationally deciphered from within the world of human experience.[8]

The scope of women's equality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was undeniably mixed but tended toward greater social restriction. Women were now seen as essentially different from men in a way that they had not been previously.[9] They were conceived to be by nature irrational, emotional, inert, unscientific, uncreative, and old-fashioned—the exact opposite of physically and intellectually virile men.[10] In an age of colonial expansion and rapid philosophical, political, and economic changes, women were often perceived to embody the kind of characteristics that were in direct opposition to the good health, strength, and development of the nation state. People who did not appear to fit the sharp distinction of the human person from other creatures as a supreme and powerful being of reason were inconvenient to the heteronormative metanarrative of the Enlightenment.[11] Any transgression of the gendered order of society that might involve the elevation of supposedly irrational woman threatened the advancement of Western civilisation.[12] Women thus became more excluded from politics and public life, as procedural legitimacy and law as a product of reason were understood to be key to the proper functioning of the state and of society at large.[13]

Social class was also a significant factor in determining the fortunes of women during these revolutionary times. Middle-class women enjoyed some newfound prosperity, albeit largely through their fathers or husbands, so long as they did not transgress rigid bourgeois norms

[8] See Rahner, 'The Church's Commission', XIV, pp. 301–3.
[9] Towns, 'The Status of Women', p. 690.
[10] Ann E. Towns, *Women and States: Norms and Hierarchies in International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 66; Towns, 'The Status of Women', p. 696; Beauvoir, p. 139.
[11] Guess, p. 52.
[12] Hawkesworth and Disch, p. 5.
[13] Towns, 'The Status of Women', p. 700. Ann Towns also highlights an irony that women were seen to be most in need of civilisation as well as a considerable challenge to it. See Towns, *Women and States*, p. 72.

of behaviour and decency.[14] Working-class women who entered industrialised spaces were more often exploited and underpaid, as they had less ability to protest than their male counterparts.[15] Yet many women, at various levels of society, were deprived of the opportunity to work and to achieve a measure of economic independence that had previously been available to them, due to a renewed societal expectation that they should support their male counterpart domestically, not least by bearing children.[16] These, and many other, factors contributed to an entrenchment of the disadvantage of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the rational ordering and masculinisation of society were considered to be increasingly important for the progress of Western civilisation.

Secondly, around the turn of the nineteenth century, public tolerance of deviant or abnormal sexual behaviours declined as the importance of social order, respectability, and cohesion increased in the West. This was in part a response to the terror and chaos of the French Revolution.[17] A gendered view of the male as breadwinner provided the norm for societies that were increasingly centred around the burgeoning bourgeois.[18] The definitions of masculinity and femininity were sharpened, and the boundaries of women's action and their social and political roles were subject to greater restriction.[19] Additionally, a more rigid set

[14] See Beauvoir, pp. 128, 132.
[15] Beauvoir, p. 149. Interestingly, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels noted that the degree of emancipation that women enjoyed in a society was the natural measure of general emancipation. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. by R. Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing, 1956), p. 259.
[16] See, e.g., Alice Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked: A Concise History*, 2nd edn (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018), pp. 12–16; Deborah Valenze, 'Gender in the Formation of European Power, 1750–1914', in *A Companion to Gender History*, ed. by Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 459–76.
[17] See Noah Shusterman, *The French Revolution: Faith, Desire, and Politics*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp. 206–35; Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015); David Andress, *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007); R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[18] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York, NY: Fertig, 1997), p. 10.
[19] Jane Rendall, 'Women and the Enlightenment in Britain c.1690–1800', in *Women's History: Britain, 1700–1850: An Introduction*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 9–32 (pp. 26–27).

of expectations with regard to male sexual propriety went hand in hand with the emergence of European Nationalism and the increasingly militaristic competition for colonies. Ideologies of nationhood consequently brought gender, sexual practice, and human reproduction to the forefront of social and political theories.[20] Disreputable male sexual behaviour, such as onanism or sodomy, was thought to lead to impotence and depopulation, and thus considered to weaken the fabric of the nation state and its potential for growth.[21]

Conflicts with the seemingly anarchic new French Republic also helped to strengthen the perceived importance of moral propriety to European empires.[22] Deviant behaviour was thought to undermine national unity, to lead to treachery and sedition, and to weaken the logical and proper ordering of society. A clear link was drawn between the health of a nation and the health of its citizens' sexual morality, so that the "family ideal and public symbol reinforced one another."[23] This development had severe consequences for anyone who expressed their gender or sexuality in nonheteronormative ways.[24] Furthermore, the

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[20] Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Gender, and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century', in *Gender and Empire*, ed. by Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 14–45 (p. 17). As Wilson later points out, this also included the forced (re)production of enslaved human beings to work in colonial plantations. See Wilson, pp. 29–35. See, also, Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 41–78.

[21] Onanism, which refers to solitary sex or *coitus interruptus*, takes its name from the figure Onan, who appears fleetingly in the Hebrew Bible. Onan was commanded by God to fulfil his seminal duty as brother-in-law to Er's widow Tamar, but he spilled his seed on the ground rather than father children that would not be his. This is usually understood to be the reason why his life was taken away. See Genesis 38.1–10; Deuteronomy 25.5–10; Mosse, p. 29; Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2003), pp. 15, 187–89, 247–66.

[22] There is considerable debate among historians as to the reason why the global influence of France declined so precipitously during the eighteenth century, but France's geopolitical rivals at the time saw it as legitimate, and politically convenient, to blame the social, economic, and political unrest of the Revolution. See Howard G. Brown, 'The Politics of Public Order, 1795–1802', in *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution*, ed. by David Andress (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 538–55; Jean-Pierre Jessenne, 'The Social and Economic Crisis in France at the End of the Ancien Régime', in *A Companion to the French Revolution*, ed. by Peter McPhee (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), pp. 24–41; Thomas E. Kaiser, 'A Tale of Two Narratives: The French Revolution in International Context, 1787–93', in *A Companion to the French Revolution*, ed. by Peter McPhee (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), pp. 161–78.

[23] Mosse, p. 18.

[24] Not least in the repressive laws against homosexuality that have lingered on the statue books of many former European colonies. See Enze Han and Joseph P. A. O'Mahoney, *British Colonialism and the Criminalization of Homosexuality: Queens, Crime and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 58–81; Corinne Lennox and Matthew Waites, 'Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Commonwealth: From History and Law to Developing Activism and Transnational Dialogues', in *Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Commonwealth: Struggles for Decriminalisation and Change*, ed. by Corinne Lennox and Matthew Waites (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013), pp. 1–59;

emergence of evolutionary science drew attention to the critical role that heterosexuality, reproduction, and genetic inheritance could play in a world where only the fittest succeeded.[25] The pressure to be socially responsible and to prioritise procreation over other forms of sexual activity thus became more acute.

Thirdly, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was a growth of interest in Greco-Roman culture. The first modern Olympic games took place in Greece in 1896. A key feature of this fascination was the idolisation ideal of virile physical masculinity, though this vision of beauty was stripped, at least outwardly, of its sensuous homoeroticism to purify it. Moral stature was equated with physical stature, which of course included fertility. Such appeals to classical aesthetics also served another purpose. After the move away from predominantly rural lives towards a more urbanised existence, people were less in touch with the previously reassuring rhythms and cycles of the natural world. A greater dichotomy began to emerge between what was thought of as the natural and the unnatural in cultural consciousnesses, as residents of industrialised towns and cities had very different life experiences to people in rural areas. Appealing to preindustrial symbols and ancient cultures was useful in reassuring the uprooted and easing the anxieties of life in a new urban age.[26] In a similar fashion, it can be argued that the birth of Romanticism in art and culture during this period contributed to an increased emphasis on the importance of chivalry and sexual

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Michael Kirby, 'The Sodomy Offence: England's Least Lovely Criminal Law Export?', in *Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Commonwealth: Struggles for Decriminalisation and Change*, ed. by Corinne Lennox and Matthew Waites (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013), pp. 61–82; Human Rights Watch, 'This Alien Legacy: The Origins of "Sodomy" Laws in British Colonialism', in *Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Commonwealth: Struggles for Decriminalisation and Change*, ed. by Corinne Lennox and Matthew Waites (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013), pp. 83–123.

[25] See, e.g., Charles Darwin, 'On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (1859)', in *Evolutionary Writings*, ed. by James A. Secord (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 107–211 (pp. 141–42); Charles Darwin, 'The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871)', in *Evolutionary Writings*, ed. by James A. Secord (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 233–333 (p. 259); Charles Darwin, 'Recollections of the Development of My Mind and Character (1876–1881)', in *Evolutionary Writings*, ed. by James A. Secord (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 355–425 (p. 393). Darwin also explicitly stated that men had greater facility than women in all areas of intellectual life, owing to their historical development of greater skill in observation, reason, invention, and imagination. See Darwin, 'Descent of Man', p. 304.

[26] Mosse, p. 52.

morality, through its rejuvenation of purified mediaeval ideals.[27] In reality, however, before the oppression of nonheteronormative expressions of gender and sexuality increased in the modern era, some less prudish Christian theologians had recognised homoerotic and non-monogamous relationships in a more positive light, particularly in monastic settings.[28] Homoerotic relationships between monks or nuns could even be interpreted as a way in which to manifest the love of Christ in the community, although long-term domestic arrangements were usually discouraged.

The point of this all too brief survey of some of the shifts in Western attitudes towards gender and sexuality since the Enlightenment has been to show that heteronormative binary constructs of gender and sexuality have never been as absolute or as stable as they are often presumed to have been. There have always been human persons who confound societal

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[27] Mosse, p. 7. See, e.g., Johann Gottfried Herder, 'This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity (1774)', in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. & trans. by Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 272–358 (p. 301); Gilbert Stuart, *A View of Society in Europe, in Its Progress from Rudeness to Refinement*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: J. Robertson, 1792), p. 66; Ann Ward Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 316; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Christabel (1798, 1800)', in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 68–86; John Keats, *Poems* (London: David Campbell Publishers, 1994), pp. 47–49, 153–73; Walt Whitman, 'Song of the Broad-Axe', in *The Portable Walt Whitman*, ed. by Michael Warner (New York, NY: Penguin, 2004), pp. 114–25; Alfred Tennyson, 'Sir Galahad', in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 165–68 (p. 166); Alfred Tennyson, 'Geraint and Enid', in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 761–87 (p. 782); Alfred Tennyson, 'Guinevere', in *Tennyson: A Selected Edition*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 941–59 (p. 954); Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance with the Third Elizabethan Dialogue*, ed. by Edith J. Morley (London: Henry Frowde, 1911); Letitia Elizabeth Landon, *Poetical Works: The Troubadour*, 4 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839), II; Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. by Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Louisa Stuart Costello, *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France from the Time of the Troubadours and Trouvères to the Reign of Henri Quatre* (London: William Pickering, 1835); Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Marjorie Stone and Beverly Taylor (Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2009), pp. 118–37, 173–78. Medievalism can also be found in musical compositions of the Romantic Era, for example in Giuseppe Verdi's *Il trovatore* (premiered 1853), Richard Wagner's *Rienzi* (premiered 1842) and *Parsifal* (premiered 1882), or Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (premiered 1911). As well as in artworks such as Caspar David Friedrich, *Abtei im Eichwald*, 1809–10, oil on canvas, 110 cm × 171 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Jean-Baptiste Goyet, *Héloïse et Abailard*, 1829, 24 × 19 cm, oil on copper, private collection; or John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1888, oil on canvas, 183 × 230 cm, Tate Britain, London.

[28] See, e.g., John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. Matthew: Hom. LIX.—XC.*, 3 vols (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1851), III, p. 977 [LXXIII.3]; Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Mirror of Charity*, trans. by Elizabeth Connor, Cistercian Fathers Series, 17 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), pp. 264–65; Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, ed. by Marsha L. Dutton, trans. by Lawrence C. Braceland, Cistercian Fathers Series, 5 (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2010), p. 126 [3.134].

norms and are oppressed because of them, and issues of gender and sexuality have always been shaped by wider social and cultural discourses. As Oscar Wilde, himself imprisoned for his sexuality, put it: "the truth is rarely pure and never simple."[29] This is certainly the case with the history of gender and sexuality. Even if LGBTQIA+ individuals are a small minority of the human population, they cannot be ignored by theological anthropology, as the Jewish and Christian scriptures affirm that all human beings are made to embody a sacred image and likeness of God.[30] To account for the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals in particular, a Christian understanding of the nature of human personhood needs to reflect the boundary-crossing reality of human lives, which transcend categorisations and defy expectations. Some aspects of queer theory may be able to aid this process but, first, it is important to determine what the usefulness of queer theory to theological anthropology is.

Revealing a Mystery

To ascertain whether queer theory can aid theological anthropology, it is necessary to explore what *queer theory* means in a little more detail. This is a difficult task since so much effort has been expended by queer theorists and theologians to avoid being conclusively pinned down. In fact, the whole point of queer theory is that it cannot be neatly defined. This means that theologies which describe themselves as queer can often seem vague or descriptive, rather than analytic. This kind of approach is often intentional, but such methods can frustrate and exclude those who seek a better understanding. To assert that no person other than oneself can understand an experience or theological reflection is itself an exclusionary practice of the kind that a truly queer theological anthropology should counter. It should also be mentioned that some such theologies do not engage with the critical analysis of queer theory

[29] Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*, ed. by Russell Jackson (London: A. & C. Black, 2001), p. 54.
[30] Genesis 1.26–27.

in a technically rigorous way.[31] What is certain is that a comprehensive theological anthropology cannot ignore or dismiss the erotic and embodied dimensions of human existence, which are such common features of our everyday life.[32]

A starting point for a theological understanding of the queerness of human life is the recognition of the inculturation of every human person, balanced with a desire to unravel the mystery of the role of the Divine in human existence. This is recognised in the insight of Martín Hugo Córdova Quero that there is no such thing as an innocent theology.[33] Theology is, in the end, a human search for language with which to talk about God. As with the rest of human life, theology both permeates culture and is permeated by it. This means that theology can be shaped by the oppressive social structures in which it is conceived and is, to a certain extent, compromised as God-talk by worldliness and contextuality. Christian theology is therefore a limited human endeavour to unravel the incomprehensible self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Any genuine insight or enlightenment can only come from such talk if it is inspired from within us by the work of the Holy Spirit. The embodied particularity of human persons matters in theology and in doing theology. Accordingly, this thesis treats human personhood holistically, for one aspect of a person cannot be separated easily from another. As was discussed in Chapter Three, a human person is both everything and no-thing at the same time. So, it is now important to clarify what the introduction of queer theory into theological anthropology can bring to a Christian understanding of the human situation.

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[31] Chris Greenough, *Queer Theologies: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2020), p. 36.
[32] Martín Hugo Córdova Quero, 'Friendship with Benefits: A Queer Reading of Aelred of Rievaulx and His Theology of Friendship', in *The Sexual Theologian: Essays on Sex, God and Politics*, ed. by Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), pp. 26–46 (p. 33).
[33] Martín Hugo Córdova Quero, 'The Prostitutes Also Go into the Kingdom of God: A Queer Reading of Mary of Magdala', in *Liberation Theology and Sexuality*, ed. by Marcella Althaus-Reid (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 81–110 (p. 82).

Queerness is an act of protest against the rigidity of categories imposed by heteronormative power structures which serve to erase, and are alien to, the experience of people who subsist at the margins of society.[34] As Annamarie Jagose argues, the queer has "neither a fundamental logic, nor a consistent set of characteristics."[35] It is not easy to grasp what queerness is or to systematise it, but this does not mean that queerness cannot be a valuable aid to a theological understanding of what it is to be human. In language which has echoes of a transcendental orientation, the queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz writes that "we may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality."[36] Queerness is not graspable, but it does expose the potential of the volatile, contingent, and changeable human situation. Moving queerness from the margins to the centre of human experience creates a space for reflection, and action, on the exclusionary systems of theological thought which jeopardise broader understandings of humanity.[37] Recognising the queerness of human persons thus unlocks an ability to recognise the potential fulfilment for which every single individual is called. Not unlike a transcendental theological understanding, a queer understanding of the human person looks forward to a horizon which is the potential goal of our becoming. But there are also more earthy implications for the human situation to be found in the refusal of queer theory to manufacture identities for the sake of logical consistency.

Queer theory helps theological anthropology to see that, like the God in whose image they are made, human beings are mysterious. Absolute knowledge of any human person is therefore possible only for God.[38] The emphasis of queer theory on the social construction

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[34] Heather Love, 'Queer', *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1.1–2 (2014), 172–76 (p. 172) <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399938>.
[35] Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996), p. 96.
[36] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1.
[37] Patrick Dilley, 'Queer Theory: Under Construction', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 12.5 (1999), 457–72 (p. 458).
[38] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 62.

of sexuality shows that an element of plurality needs to be present in any reflection on the human condition, and that sexual identities are ambivalent or fluid.[39] Our identity is always one without essence and therefore is ungraspable. So much of our existence is socially constructed through relationships with others. Theologically speaking, what contributes to the diversity of human persons is the flux of their existence, as they oscillate within the analogy of being and move through salvation history, as was discussed in Chapter Three. This is what it means to say that human beings are not the same from one moment to the next.

Where the characteristics of queer theory also intersect helpfully with theological anthropology is in the claim that each human person is unique, mutable, and indecipherable in themselves. This is theologically rooted in the creation of humanity as the image of God and in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. As humankind images the Divine, every human person is an expression of "the mystery of God which participates for all eternity in the mystery of its ground."[40] To think less of the mystery that is a human person is therefore to think less of the Absolute Mystery who is God. Embodied particularity is inevitably characteristic of creatures, whose very existence is political because of their material constitution. Yet this does not mean that some human beings matter more than others, even if the contours of our separation from one another have become more clearly demarcated by sin.

The tentative definition of humanity as an enigmatic image of the Absolute Mystery parallels the elusive character of queerness in queer theory, which is also difficult to nail down.[41] The process of reconciling queer theory with Christian theology makes it even clearer that there

[39] Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, 'Queering Theology', in *The Sexual Theologian: Essays on Sex, God and Politics*, ed. by Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), pp. 1–15 (p. 5).
[40] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 225.
[41] Dilley, p. 457.

are few binary choices when it comes to solving the human question. As Rita Brock has observed, the notions of rightness, naturalness, or goodness that emerge from binary systems are brittle, as they rely on a simplistic purity to create meaning by means of exclusion.[42] When it comes to reflecting on human existence, concepts based in mutually exclusive oppositions (such as natural and unnatural) can be reassuring due to their apparent clarity. In real life, separating right from wrong, white from black, masculine from feminine, or heterosexual from homosexual is much more difficult. What is clear is that ontologising such binary distinctions into human nature via theological anthropology reinforces a nonrelational and exclusivist vision of identity, which erases the equally valuable lives of persons who do not fit straightforwardly into society's predetermined moulds but remain images of God in their own right.

Queer theory can also help to unveil the subtler ways in which heteronormativity underpins mainstream culture. As the political analyst Stuart Hall observes, powerful ideologies, including heteronormativity, seek to naturalise themselves out of history and into nature, so that they can operate invisibly and unconsciously.[43] According to this yardstick, the repressive structures of heteronormative control that have emerged in modern Western societies have been wildly successful. Many people are largely unaware of how heteronormative culture commands and shapes their vision of the world.[44] This is why a gendered and queered theological anthropology must challenge what one queer theorist has called the "invisible heteronormativity of modern societies."[45] By doing this, the true diversity of humankind may come further into the centre of our theological reflections.

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[42] Rita Nakashima Brock, 'The Feminist Redemption of Christ', in *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*, ed. by Judith L. Weidman (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 55–74 (p. 58).
[43] Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 8.
[44] This is a repurposing of some of the concepts to be found in Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 136, 143, 151.
[45] Michael Warner, 'Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet', *Social Text*, 29, 1991, 3–17 (p. 3).

Queer theory exposes how even seemingly innocuous surface impressions are actually the presentable face of the deep roots of our heteronormative inculturation. Something as small as a momentary glance or a lazy stereotype can sustain and proliferate epistemological and societal models that depend upon mutually exclusive oppositions to operate. By elucidating the way in which the mechanisms of heteronormative oppression operate, queer theory exposes the sinful power relations in society and religion that are exclusive in nature but often invisible or unnoticed. A gendered and queered theological anthropology can therefore serve as a catalyst for much needed change in both Christian theology and wider society.[46] It reconnects the binary oppositions with which heteronormativity has divided and separated human persons from each other. Restructuring the conceptual framework of heteronormativity is necessary to enable theology to address the full spectrum of human diversity and reflect more realistically on human existence. After all, God has created every inch of every human body; the material person, in all their actuality, pleasure, and pain, must be coped with.[47]

Another important aspect of humanity is highlighted by the emphasis that queer theory places on the imbalanced relationship of culture and nature in heteronormative understandings of human personhood. In this late-modern age, the significant differences between cultural expectations around human identity and the plurality of lived experiences need to be more comprehensively reconciled. Bringing cultural and theological reflection on the human condition closer to the experiences of a greater variety of people enables theological anthropology to discern how human persons can become more fully the co-creators of the pluralistic world that God intends them to be. This is because, in recognising the diverse wonders of God's creation, human persons bind themselves more tightly to the

[46] Greenough, p. 28.
[47] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, pp. 71–72.

mystery of the sacred in themselves.[48] Viewing the world that human persons share with each other through this lens gives theology a more realistic picture of the diversity and changeability of created existence.

So, a gendered and queered theological anthropology asserts that the changeability, or plasticity, of human persons is fundamental to their existence.[49] It is not a mask or a surface reality which hides a solid essence. The flux of human existence comes from our deepest core, from our very nothingness—that is, from our oscillation in the *analogia entis*. This flux means that human existence is constantly metamorphosing, so that there are almost no tangible norms to identify. Human persons incessantly change throughout the inexorable process of realising what God calls them to by name.[50] This ontic variation of human existence is not a movement away from God. It is bound up with the continuous creative action of God's salvific will. To make the theological claim that all human persons are queer in the sense that they are changeable, indecipherable, and unique is not therefore to reduce the term "queer" to a meaningless ubiquity.[51] Rather, it is to say that the term can unravel a unique and profound theological truth about human existence. To assert that all persons are queer is to assert their irrepressible diversity, and that their embodied identity as images of God cannot be contained by sin-filled structures of power and exclusion.[52] Queerness is an antinormative analytic, and so it defies categorisation as humans do.[53] Individual identities are coherent enough to be recognised by others but fluid enough to require endless

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[48] Brock, p. 59.
[49] Tanner, p. 70.
[50] Isaiah 43.1.
[51] The issue of whether everything/everyone can be queer has been hotly debated among queer theorists and theologians. See, e.g., Jenna Wortham, 'When Everyone Can Be "Queer," Is Anyone?', *The New York Times*, 11 July 2016, section Magazine <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/uri/embeddedinteractive/988127cf-a6f8-5f2c-ad0e-1289c5fb3c33?> [accessed 1 March 2021]; Leila J. Rupp, 'Everyone's Queer', *OAH Magazine of History*, 20.2 (2006), 8–11 <https://doi.org/10.1093/maghis/20.2.8>; David M. Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45.2–4 (2003), 339–43 <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17>.
[52] Tonstad, 'Everything Queer, Nothing Radical?'
[53] Marquis Bey, 'Trouble Genders: "LGBT" Collapse and Trans Fundamentality', *Hypatia*, 36.1 (2021), 191–206 (p. 196).

interrogation.[54] The queerness of our existence is its very unremitting dynamism and transformation.

Human beings are transcendentally oriented to an absolute truth through their freedom, but people are also flesh and blood, made up of material substance and real bodies. As with other biological, physiological, and cultural processes, sensuous connections with people, expressed erotically, are foundational to human well-being and to the human situation of being-in-relation with others.[55] This includes all loving expressions of human gender and sexuality. Yet, as was stated earlier, in modern capitalist societies the more private aspects of human life have often resembled more of an economic matter, through the emphasis on the importance of reproduction for general productivity.[56] To a certain extent this shift has focused attention on the facilitation of greater living standards and securing more stable environments in which to bring up children. However, it has also fed the human impulse to control the world through quantification, categorisation, and schematisation. Families have become increasingly organised and judged according to heteronormative assumptions about what makes for economically and socially useful expressions of sexuality and gender.[57]

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[54] Kenn Gardner Honeychurch, 'Researching Dissident Subjectivities: Queering the Grounds of Theory and Practice', *Harvard Educational Review*, 66.2 (1996), 339–55 (p. 345) <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.66.2.322km3320m402551>.

[55] Beverly Wildung Harrison, 'Human Sexuality and Mutuality', in *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity*, ed. by Judith L. Weidman (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986), pp. 141–57 (p. 148). Jesus is not exempt from this. If he was truly human, he must have had a sexual dimension to his personhood, though there has been insufficient discussion of this in the Christian theological tradition. For some of the recent debate, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 179–256; William R. G. Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 231–52; J. David Hester, 'Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus: Matthew 19.12 and Transgressive Sexualities', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 28.1 (2005), 13–40 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X05057772>; Theodore W. Jennings, *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003), pp. 233–36; Antti Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 216–25.

[56] That is to say, "successful" heterosexual sex produces more workers, who can become economically productive members of society. See John D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. by Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 100–113.

[57] In some societies, this situation has slowly begun to turn towards greater inclusion.

If a person defies the arbitrarily defined heteronormative expectations of a capitalist society, the temptation is still to diagnose what is wrong with that person or type of relationship, rather than to re-examine the false preconceptions which lie behind those expectations. Queer theory helps to disrupt this heterosexist dynamic by showing that the labelling and commodification of human persons and their relationships disguises what is fundamentally an exercise of power over the less-advantaged. The very ability to label otherness indicates the social privilege of the person or people doing the labelling. This is true no matter where the boundaries of identity are drawn in an effort to control the constant variability of human identity, because the underlying aim is always to create a hierarchy in which the lives of some people have more legitimacy than the lives of others.[58] In contrast, as a result of its principled refusal to be fully pinned down, the field of queer theory remains conceptually slippery and so does not categorise or label people in such a regimented way.[59] Bringing queer theory into conversation with theological anthropology thus helps to rebalance traditional theological sources and personal narratives in Christian reflections on human existence, and to appreciate the alterity of nonnormative people more fully.

Queer theory does not undermine a Christian understanding of human personhood but enriches and strengthens it, by moving theological anthropology into dialogue with overly simplistic constructs of sexuality and gender. A gendered and queered theological anthropology recognises that neat binary divisions do not adequately represent the messiness of the world in which human beings live. In fact, a binary gender construct is unhelpful to a Christian theological anthropology, because of the damage and hurt it causes in the lives of many people who are created in the image of God.[60] Queer theory aids theological anthropology to realise how human persons are inhibited by the ill-fitting bonds of socially-

[58] Riki Anne Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books, 2004), p. 152.
[59] William B. Turner, *A Genealogy of Queer Theory* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2000), p. 3.
[60] Virginia R. Mollenkott, *Omnigender: A Trans-Religious Approach* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001), p. 7.

constructed categories that ostensibly contain their identity, and it opens up heteronormative worldviews to the complexity of God's creation.[61] Queer theory helps theological anthropology in this way because it privileges the historical variability of human identity.[62] It perceives that a human person is not quite, and not just, how they present themselves to the world in any particular moment.[63]

As it is made in the image of God, human personhood is neither absolutely one nor absolutely plural; we are ambiguous, with a commingling of sense and non-sense.[64] In this way, one might say that God and human are paradigms of each other.[65] The queerness of human identity both connotes a certain uniqueness and a commonality in that uniqueness, because an utterly unique person would be unrecognisable to another.[66] What a gendered and queered theological anthropology thus asserts is that an element of security can be found in the constant changeability of human existence.[67] There is a transcendental anchor for this constant changeability, through the analogy of being and the orientation of all human persons towards the Divine through Christ. In a more mundane and less metaphysical sense, the unpredictability of human existence also means that people can be simultaneously good, bad, irrational, hypocritical, contradictory, and creative—this is in no way unnatural. The almost mindboggling complexity of the various experiences of human life is part of the manifestation of the freedom that is graciously given to us by God.

There is another significant connection for theological anthropology between human freedom and the queerness of human existence. This is because acts of freedom, theologically speaking, are the apex of created no-thingness, as they are entirely a gift of the

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[61] See Turner, p. 8.
[62] Turner, p. 29.
[63] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 41–42.
[64] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981), p. 615.
[65] See Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, I, p. 165 [10.3].
[66] Turner, p. 32.
[67] See Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1991), p. 72.

Divine.[68] In a similar fashion, one of the most crucial points to appreciate about queer theory is that, in the words of David Halperin, "*there is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.* It is an identity without an essence."[69] Theologically conceived, both queerness and acts of freedom therefore refer to no-thingness, and a lack of a substantial essence or coherence.[70] It is precisely in this no-thingness, in this mystery, that true meaning is found. There is, however, a deeper significance to be found for theological anthropology in Halperin's remark, because the queer is nothing, and human beings are no-things.

When the Word of God became flesh, Jesus Christ revealed the truth to humanity of the unfathomable depth of our own mystery and the queerness of our existence.[71] An identity without an essence is precisely what the worldly existence of human beings is understood to be according to a gendered and queered theological anthropology that sees the reality of human fulfilment in Christ. A lack of *self-supporting* ontological substance is the very reality of human existence, as its root and its goal are beyond the ontic plane of this world.[72] Thus, a person who is to recognise themselves for what they really are must accept the mystery of their own existence, as they are confronted by the Incarnation of the Absolute Mystery of Godself.[73] To begin to understand humanity, an acknowledgement is therefore required of the ungraspable instability of our free plasticity, and of our hiddenness and distance from

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[68] See Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. by Thomas A. Carlson, 2nd edn (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 176–78; Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, pp. 1–17; Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 71–118.

[69] Halperin, *Saint Foucault*, p. 62.

[70] In fact, the inclusion of the word "theory" started as something of a joke, intended by Teresa de Lauretis to confuse square academics who struggled to accept that queer ideas could function outside of traditional binary systems. See Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', pp. 339–40; *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*, ed. by Teresa De Lauretis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[71] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, I, p. 64 [I.9]. See Romans 16.25; I Corinthians 2.7; Ephesians 3.3–7; Colossians 1.27; 2.2; 4.3; I Timothy 3.16.

[72] This is not to place a queer theological anthropology entirely at odds with any kind of ontology or discussion of human nature, but to reassert the fundamental contingency, relationality, and transcendental orientation at the heart of human existence, which means that human persons cannot be discretely categorised or identified in separation from their relationships with others and with God.

[73] Karl Rahner, 'Thoughts on the Possibility of Belief Today', in *Theological Investigations: Later Writings*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), V, 3–22 (p. 7).

our ultimate teleological ground.[74] This is how a fruitful connection can be established between the notion of queer theory as an identity without essence and a transcendental approach to a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

There is a final warning to sound regarding the process of revealing the mysteries of human existence. Considering the absolute mystery of God and the analogous mysteriousness of human beings, theological anthropologies that seek to draw correlations between human experience and knowledge of God must tread very carefully to not subject the Divine to anthropomorphosis. An absolute definition of the human is always impossible, except perhaps to say, as Karl Rahner does, that to be human is to be conscious of one's own indefinability.[75] The enigmatic reality of human existence can be particularly problematic for contextual theologies to address. In such theologies, the lines of similarity between lived human experience and the Divine are usually drawn more directly, to focus on themes such as the liberation of human persons from oppression and the overturning of the status quo. However, there is one particularly interesting aspect of the lived experience of queer persons which can be interpreted as being theologically significant. This is the act of coming out: disclosing one's nonheteronormative gender or sexuality to the wider world.[76]

The Experience of Coming Out

The term "coming out" refers to the process nonheteronormative persons undergo when disclosing their gender or sexual identity to others. This process of self-revelation is necessary because there is still an often-unquestioned assumption in mainstream Western society that young adults will develop along the predetermined lines of cisgendered

[74] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 188.
[75] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 216. Rahner does also articulate some fundamental characteristics of the human person, as was touched upon in Chapter One.
[76] 'Coming Out | Definition of Coming Out by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.Com Also Meaning of Coming Out', *Lexico Dictionaries | English* <https://www.lexico.com/definition/coming_out> [accessed 25 February 2021].

heterosexuality. Even before the onset of puberty, parents often joke about their child's "first boyfriend" or "first girlfriend," young boys are surrounded by blue and young girls by pink, and expectations around which toys children should play with are gender-based.[77] These early stages of heteronormative inculturation are not insignificant because, as Megan Fulcher and Amy Roberson Hayes put it, "the toys with which children play reinforce their visions of their future selves."[78] The result of this early heteronormative inculturation is that young people are pressured into behaving according to cisgendered heterosexual norms and societal expectations, even before they have had a chance to discover for themselves how they wish to express their gender or sexuality.

When young adults become aware that they do not quite fit in with the norms and expectations of their social group around expressions of gender and sexuality, they go through a process of self-realisation.[79] This process usually involves experimenting with

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[77] Gender related preferences increase with age. Toys intended to be played with by boys tend to be more complex, exciting, and competitive. They often improve spatial skills or technological prowess as well as emphasising action and agency. In contrast, girls' toys are generally less interactive and emphasise passivity and nurturance. Toys also often perpetuate gendered body stereotypes: action figurines are hypermasculine with overdeveloped musculature, and dolls have slender waists with disproportionately curvaceous breasts and hips. See Jac T. M. Davis and Melissa Hines, 'How Large Are Gender Differences in Toy Preferences? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Toy Preference Research', *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 49.2 (2020), 373–94 (pp. 373–74) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-019-01624-7>; Megan Fulcher and Amy Roberson Hayes, 'Building a Pink Dinosaur: The Effects of Gendered Construction Toys on Girls' and Boys' Play', *Sex Roles*, 79.5–6 (2018), 273–84 (p. 275) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0806-3>; Josh L. Boe and Rebecca J. Woods, 'Parents' Influence on Infants' Gender-Typed Toy Preferences', *Sex Roles*, 79.5–6 (2018), 358–73 (pp. 360–61, 369–70) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0858-4>; Cordelia Fine and Emma Rush, '"Why Does All the Girls Have to Buy Pink Stuff?" The Ethics and Science of the Gendered Toy Marketing Debate', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149.4 (2018), 769–84 (pp. 774–77) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3080-3>; Patricia R. Owen and Monica Padron, 'The Language of Toys: Gendered Language in Toy Advertisements', *Journal of Research on Women and Gender*, 6.1 (2015), 67–80 (pp. 67–68); Becky Francis, 'Gender, Toys and Learning', *Oxford Review of Education*, 36.3 (2010), 325–44 (pp. 326, 330–32) <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054981003732278>.

[78] Fulcher and Hayes, p. 276. See, also, Francis, p. 340.

[79] Tee R. Tyler and Jenna S. Abetz, 'Relational Turning Points in the Parent and LGBTQ Child Coming out Process', *Journal of Family Studies*, 2020, 1–21 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2020.1761863>; Daniel J. Alonzo and Deborah J. Buttitta, 'Is "Coming Out" Still Relevant? Social Justice Implications for LGB-Membered Families', *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 2019, 354–66 <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12333>; Kristopher M. Goodrich and Misty M. Ginicola, 'Identity Development, Coming Out, and Family Adjustment', in *Affirmative Counseling with LGBTQI+ People*, ed. by Misty M. Ginicola, Cheri Smith, and Joel M. Filmore (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 2017), pp. 61–74. For a contemporary philosophical reflection on the importance of the process of self-realisation to human existence, see Giovanna Caruso, 'The Meaning of Life between the Self and the Normative Process of Self-Realisation', *Human Affairs*, 29.4 (2019), 489–96 (p. 495) <https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2019-0044>.

expressions of gender and sexuality, and eventually results in an individual disclosing their preferences to others. This kind of self-disclosure can be difficult, and it often causes significant emotional and psychological distress.[80] The act of publicly acknowledging their sexuality or gender identity makes a young person feel in danger of disappointing the people to whom they are closest, because an LGBTQIA+ individual does not behave in ways that a heteronormative society expects and accepts. This was certainly the case in my own lived experience, when I felt deeply torn as to whether I should tell my family about my own sexuality, even though I had no reason to think that they would be anything other than supportive and loving. Nonetheless, the calling for an individual to "come out" can also result in a renewed human life.[81] For, as an LGBTQIA+ person reveals their identity to others because they love them and want to share with them the wonder that is their own true self, so also God reveals Godself because God loves God's people and wants to share Godself with them.[82] In this way, the transcendental orientation of human personhood intrudes upon the lived experience of coming out in love.[83]

On the other hand, if a person's loved ones respond to their coming out with rejection, the experience can be more traumatic. Issues of gender and sexuality cause splits in families and social groups. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the breakdown of such relationships lies not with the rejected person because, as Chris Glaser explains, "those who do not welcome another's coming out receive it unworthily, without discerning either the sacred gift or their sacred kinship with the person offering her- or himself."[84] This means that, by rejecting an

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[80] Lisa K. Waldner and Brian Magrader, 'Coming Out to Parents: Perceptions of Family Relations, Perceived Resources, and Identity Expression as Predictors of Identity Disclosure for Gay and Lesbian Adolescents', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 37.2 (1999), 83–100 (p. 84) <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v37n02_05>; Jasmine Woolley, 'The Social Construct of Gender', in *This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians*, ed. by Christina Beardsley and Michelle O'Brien (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2016), pp. 33–44 (p. 38).
[81] See John 11.43–44.
[82] Cheng, *Radical Love*, p. 45.
[83] Phillip Blond, 'The Primacy of Theology and the Question of Perception', in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, ed. by Paul Heelas, Paul Morris, and David Martin (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 285–313 (p. 287).
[84] Chris Glaser, *Coming out as Sacrament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p. 10.

intentional feature of God's good creation, those who reject people who express their gender or sexuality in nonheteronormative ways are, in fact, rejecting something of Godself. In such cases those who reject another person have failed to realise their own sacred capacity for right relationship with others, the potential for which lies within their God-given freedom.

To deny the fundamental dignity of the embodied reality of another human person is an especially egregious mistake, because a person can offer to another nothing more precious than that which is their true living self. Indeed, the experience of another person's true self can be a source of strength, hope, and nourishment for the existentially anxious and the socially marginalised.[85] Yet, before this discussion proceeds any further, it is important to point out that the act of coming out does not only occur at the start of adulthood. Many people only come out about their LGBTQIA+ identity later in their life, if ever. Tellingly, the decreasing level of social stigma in the West around non-heteronormativity in recent years has resulted in an increasing number of elderly people coming out, who have only lately felt comfortable with disclosing the lifelong truth about themselves.[86]

So, however and whenever it happens, coming out is a revelatory moment for an LGBTQIA+ person. It marks a key stage in the development of one's own sense of self, to such an extent that it has even taken up a quasi-sacramental significance in the lives of LGBTQIA+ persons.[87] Every coming out is different, but it is a crucial step (though not a

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[85] Greenough, p. 148.

[86] See Jeremiah J. Garretson, *The Path to Gay Rights: How Activism and Coming out Changed Public Opinion* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2018), pp. 229–45; H. Leyerzapf and others, 'Gay-Friendly Elderly Care: Creating Space for Sexual Diversity in Residential Care by Challenging the Hetero Norm', *Ageing and Society*, 38.2 (2018), 352–77 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X16001045>; Rita A. Jablonski, David E. Vance, and Elizabeth Beattie, 'The Invisible Elderly: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Older Adults', *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 39.11 (2013), 46–52 <https://doi.org/10.3928/00989134-20130916-02>; Raymond M. Berger, *Gay and Gray: The Older Homosexual Man*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Haworth Press, 1996); Richard A. Friend, 'Older Lesbian and Gay People: A Theory of Successful Aging', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 20.3–4 (1991), 99–118 <https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v20n03_07>.

[87] See, e.g., Michael Boucai, 'Topology of the Closet', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 2021, 1–25 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2020.1851957>; Walt Odets, *Out of the Shadows: Reimagining Gay Men's Lives* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), pp. 4, 299–302; Jimmie Manning, 'Positive and Negative Communicative Behaviors in Coming-Out Conversations', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62.1 (2015), 67–97 (pp. 69–94) <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.957127>; Waldner and Magrader, pp. 84–85;

guaranteed route) to self-acceptance.[88] The process courageously breaks through untruth and the fear of otherness, and it is therefore a communal phenomenon of truth. To come out is to risk intimate disclosure by sharing the inner workings of oneself.[89] This is the case even though a human person cannot give a full account of themselves.[90] Coming out is a moment of personal truth shared between embodied individuals, and a radical act of freedom in defiance of worldly pressures to conform to the oppressive structures of heteronormativity. Moreover, it is of crucial importance that in this act truth and freedom do not come "at the expense of, or in opposition to, the material, embodied aspects of human existence."[91] Rather, the truth and freedom of each individual comes in and through their gender and sexuality. This momentary revelation of the true nature of the diversity of humanity comes just as readily in the experience of LGBTQIA+ people as it does elsewhere in the created world.

In the most intimate moments of their lives, human persons can grasp themselves and the world around them in a relational act of encounter with otherness. An element of truth can be communicated by exercising the human capacity for relationality.[92] Such encounters reorient an individual to experience the mystery of creaturely alterity that can only be accepted in love and faith, for true relationships between people always transcend their immediate encounters in time and space.[93] What the act of coming out acutely reveals in this context is the bitter reality that humans are often unwilling to accept otherness, as our

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Glaser, p. 9; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

[88] Kate Klein and others, 'Complicating the Coming Out Narrative: Becoming Oneself in a Heterosexist and Cissexist World', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62.3 (2015), 297–326 (pp. 320–21) <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.970829>; Eli Coleman, 'Developmental Stages of the Coming-Out Process', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 25.4 (1982), 469–82 (pp. 480–81) <https://doi.org/10.1177/000276482025004009>; Patrick S. Cheng, *From Sin to Amazing Grace: Discovering the Queer Christ* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2012), p. 86.

[89] Glaser, p. 11.

[90] See Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, p. 121.

[91] Turner, p. 41.

[92] Cf. Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, p. 63.

[93] Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 309–10. See Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 183.

capacity for love is tainted by sin and oppressive social structures. Coming out also discloses a harsh truth about the vulnerability and contingency of humanity. The human capacity for relationship in heteronormative society at large *and* the LGBTQIA+ individual, who is in a state of disjunction with their own self due to internalised shame, are revealed to be broken. This is because closeted LGBTQIA+ persons are forced to suppress a key part of what God made them to be: a source of loving relationship.

The act of coming out as an LGBTQIA+ person also speaks to the relationship between visible and invisible presences of reality in human existence.[94] In this sense it is analogous to the sacraments of the Church, but the act of coming out is not a sacrament in the way that the seven sacraments of the Church, properly administered, are. Through the authority invested in the Church by Christ through the Holy Spirit, the sacraments of the Church are encounters with the real presence of the Son of God, manifest in certain intentionality, for the sake of the sanctification of the willing recipient. It is nonetheless possible to view the experience of coming out within the context of a broader sacramental theology, where grace is brought about and made manifest in the concrete conditions of history and of human life.[95] Here, the sacramental grace of God in the world can be reflected through a profound and radical experience of humanness and otherness that expresses something of the innermost depths and mystery of human life.[96] An unthematic abyssal presence of God is present in human moments of truthful self-disclosure, which unite human beings to each other in love and community through the universal structure of their openness to the mystery of their being. The truth of God is, after all, one of Absolute Mystery. Opening up to the

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[94] Gregory of Nazianzus, 'On the Theophany', p. 122 [38.11]; Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Oration XLV: The Second Oration on Easter', in *S. Cyril of Jerusalem: Catechetical Lectures; S. Gregory of Nazianzum: Select Orations, and Letters*, by Cyril of Jerusalem and Gregory of Nazianzus, ed. by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, trans. by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2.7 (Oxford: James Parker & Co., 1894), pp. 422–34 (p. 425 [45.7]). Cf. Colossians 1.16.

[95] Karl Rahner, 'Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event', in *Theological Investigations: Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, The Church in the World*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), XIV, 161–84 (p. 166).

[96] See Rahner, 'The Person in the Sacramental Event', XIV, pp. 167–68.

mysterious truth that is the uniqueness of each human person, to the way they were created, is thus a reflection of the truth of God's creation but it is a sign without content, as it is an identity without essence.

The experience of coming out points to a gradual unravelling of the layers of the human mystery in individual lives, for God speaks the Word of truth through the grammar of human flesh.[97] The act of coming out therefore parallels the gradual unravelling of the mystery of God's relationship with Godself, which humankind has been given access to in history by the Incarnate Second Person of the Trinity. The fear that often precedes coming out as LGBTQIA+ is more than a mere trepidation as to what sort of reception the self-disclosure will receive. In fact, it represents "a major psychological decision" that could be described as a moment of existential crisis.[98] The decision to come out can be characterised in this way because to come out is to make oneself vulnerable, and to reveal the passibility of oneself. In such moments, it is revealed that to be human is to be subject to change, to be different, and to be other. The act of coming out shows that revelation is more than just a matter of interpreting Scripture or waiting for Divine inspiration. Revelation can also be the matter of lived experience.

The revelatory character of coming out dissolves boundaries and builds bridges between people, just as the Incarnation does between the human and the Divine.[99] It is an experience unique to LGBTQIA+ people which challenges the heteronormative conventions of sexuality and gender expression. The process erases a false divide between a person's public and private life. In so doing, coming out also lays bare the deeply-rooted feeling of shame that is at the heart of much of the suffering that LGBTQIA+ people unfortunately undergo,

[97] Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, p. 94; Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 224. See Romans 1.20.
[98] Laurie Heatherington and Justin A. Lavner, 'Coming to Terms with Coming Out: Review and Recommendations for Family Systems-Focused Research', *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22.3 (2008), 329–43 (p. 329) <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.3.329>.
[99] See Cheng, *Radical Love*, pp. 45, 48; Glaser, p. 85.

so that those individuals can begin to be healed.[100] This process shows that often-fragmented human identities can be weaved together through unvarnished truthfulness, even though the process of doing so is not often painless. God is present here, in the concreteness of our corporeal anguish as well as in the spiritual depths of our existence. This incarnational, historical, and corporeal continuity of the human relationship to the Divine therein reveals afresh the interdependence of human persons.[101] Moreover, by making right our relations with others, human persons can work to overcome the divisiveness of both individual and structural sin.[102] Yet, there is also another group of people to consider who have a different type of experience of the impulse to come out.

For some people, an unwillingness to accept their gender or sexuality never leaves them, and so they do not see coming out as a viable option. Unfortunately, this kind of situation can lead to people resorting to drastic solutions with tragic outcomes.[103] Almost always, coming out within a heteronormative society is an imposing prospect. Even if coming out does elicit a positive and supportive response, the memory of feeling dreadful remains with an

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[100] Cheng, *From Sin*, p. 115.
[101] Cheng, *From Sin*, p. 128. See I Corinthians 12.21; Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 354.
[102] Beverly Wildung Harrison, p. 155.
[103] The issue of mental health in LGBTQIA+ community is an extremely serious one. LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, to self-harm, or to commit suicide than cisgendered heterosexual people. Tragically, such self-destructive behaviour can also be reinforced by the LGBTQIA+ community itself, which has its own stereotypes, issues with body image, and expectations for the way in which people should express themselves. See Lillianne Villarreal and others, 'The Relationship between Sexual Orientation Outness, Heterosexism, Emotion Dysregulation, and Alcohol Use among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Emerging Adults', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 25.1 (2021), 94–115 (pp. 94–99, 109) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2020.1809588>; Alvin Tran and others, '"It's All Outward Appearance-Based Attractions": A Qualitative Study of Body Image among a Sample of Young Gay and Bisexual Men', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 24.3 (2020), 281–307 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2019.1706683>; Natalie Kalb, J. Roy Gillis, and Abby L. Goldstein, 'Drinking to Cope with Sexual Minority Stressors: Understanding Alcohol Use and Consequences among LGBQ Emerging Adults', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 22.4 (2018), 310–26 (pp. 310–14, 319–23) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2018.1476277>; Lisa F. Platt and Christopher P. Scheitle, 'Sexual Orientation and Psychological Distress: Differences by Race and Gender', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 22.3 (2018), 204–25 (pp. 205–8, 221–22) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2018.1437583>; Amir Ahuja and others, 'Bullying and Suicide: The Mental Health Crisis of LGBTQ Youth and How You Can Help', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 19.2 (2015), 125–44 (pp. 128–30, 132–36) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2015.1007417>; Marina Tolou-Shams and others, 'Depressive Symptoms, Illicit Drug Use and HIV/STI Risk Among Sexual Minority Young Adults', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 17.1 (2013), 96–102 (pp. 100–101) <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2013.740210>.

LGBTQIA+ person for years afterwards. The process is traumatic, and few people who embark upon this voyage forget it. It is, therefore, possible to conceive of the act of coming out as a sign in the life of an LGBTQIA+ person of the vulnerability of Jesus crucified. At such moments in their lives, these individuals are also completely vulnerable to the loving mercy of an other. Moreover, any act of self-surrender is of course a reflection of the primary act of the Creator in making human beings free.[104] This is why the act of coming out is a particularly acute disclosure of the potential of human existence, of the no-thingness of all human persons, and of how human life is continually remoulded according to a path of ever greater self-revelation.

The act of coming out helps to wash away some of the heteronormative inculturation that LGBTQIA+ persons accumulate over a lifetime in a world that marginalises and excludes them on their basis of their gender or sexuality.[105] As a moment of radical openness, the act of coming out throws off the artificial constraints that a sinful heteronormative society imposes upon the natural diversity of God's creation. It reveals something of the truth about human existence, and initiates the persons involved into a new assembly of people who are dedicated to realising what God has called them to be.[106] The act of coming out can also provide a platform for the formation of more loving relationships, through a deeper

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[104] See Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', IV, p. 109 fn. 1.

[105] Glaser, p. 12. It is therefore no surprise that people who are stuck in the closet tend to be some of the most vociferous homophobes. See Richard M. Ryan and William S. Ryan, 'Opinion | Homophobic? Maybe You're Gay', *The New York Times*, 27 April 2012, section Opinion <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/opinion/sunday/homophobic-maybe-youre-gay.html> [accessed 12 March 2021]; David C. Plummer, 'The Quest for Modern Manhood: Masculine Stereotypes, Peer Culture and the Social Significance of Homophobia', *Journal of Adolescence*, 24.1 (2001), 15–23 <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2000.0370>; I. R. Williamson, 'Internalized Homophobia and Health Issues Affecting Lesbians and Gay Men', *Health Education Research*, 15.1 (2000), 97–107 <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/15.1.97>; Karen Franklin, 'Unassuming Motivations: Contextualizing the Narratives of Antigay Assailants', in *Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice against Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals*, Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Issues, 4 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998), pp. 1–23; Henry E. Adams, Lester W. Wright, and Bethany A. Lohr, 'Is Homophobia Associated with Homosexual Arousal?', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 105.3 (1996), 440–45 <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.105.3.440>.

[106] For the importance of being immeasurably open to the free mystery of human existence, see Rahner, 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', IV, p. 110.

engagement with the truth of who human persons are meant to be. This is just one example from LGBTQIA+ experience where theological parallels and insights as to human existence can be found. What it reminds theological anthropology of is the need to look for God in unexpected places because, where human beings are, there also is God. The lived experience of coming out also informs a gendered and queered theological anthropology that human persons can and do change over the course of their lives, as they realise their true selves. There is, however, a more universal lived experience of queerness, which occurs not only in the lives of LGBTQIA+ persons.

Embracing Difference

Creatures are queer to God and queer to each other. Indeed, one could go so far as to say that, in light of the Incarnation, even God is queer to Godself. As is hopefully now clear from the preceding exploration of one aspect of the lived experience of LGBTQIA+ persons, human beings can be extremely different from one another. Nevertheless, every human being also relies on relationships to an other. This is true of those who are marginalised or oppressed, but it is also true of the more privileged members of societies who are often conflated as homogenous blocks.[107] It would not be possible to come out if there were not another person to come out to—God already knows us better than we know ourselves. The calling to embrace difference within creation is in fact a calling to embrace the queerness of otherness in the manner of Christ. For, as the Word of God embraced creatureliness to become man, so also are human persons called to embrace that same creation. This means making a greater effort for reconciliation between God, ourselves, and our neighbours, both in personal relationships and in theologies.

[107] That is to say, at least in a Western context, white cisgendered heterosexual men.

Human attitudes towards interpersonal difference operate within a wider social structure. The functionality of human difference in the social context depends upon economic, political, philosophical, and ideological orders.[108] This is to say that the public expression of human identity is never fixed, even though the culturally dominant force of heteronormativity instructs persons that there are set forms of difference, some of which are ruled to be more acceptable than others.[109] Indeed, as Judith Butler argues, even if social norms and rules are fixed, each person must negotiate these in a living and reflective way.[110] On the other end of the anthropological spectrum, to adopt an absolute view of human difference that atomises, admittedly, a wider range of identities also leads ultimately to the issue of who has the authority to draw the demarcation lines.[111] Theological anthropology must be opened up to more than scientific physicalism. A more pragmatic approach to conceptualising human difference is apposite. Interpersonal differences are properly appreciated in a gendered and queered theological anthropology but do not simultaneously preclude the possibility of a greater sense of human solidarity. In this way, theological anthropology does not have to accept a naturalised ontology of language according to which human persons may be neatly divided.[112] Through a gendered and queered theological anthropology it is possible to recognise genuinely the equality-in-difference of human persons and assert a deeply mutual, reciprocal, and relational solidarity of all individuals.[113]

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[108] Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 2; Barbara L. Marshall, *Engendering Modernity: Feminism, Social Theory and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 112. For example, as Laqueur points out, that there are two sexes is not a necessary, natural consequence of corporeal or biological difference. See Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 243.
[109] Wittig, pp. 4–5.
[110] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, p. 10.
[111] Jeffrey Weeks, 'Rediscovering Values', in *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*, ed. by Judith Squires (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), pp. 189–211 (pp. 201–2). In fact, an overemphasis on gender or sexual difference can disguise the wider plurality of difference in human existence. See Linda Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory', *Signs*, 13.3 (1988), 405–36 (p. 407) <https://doi.org/10.1086/494426>.
[112] Turner, p. 32; Wilchins, p. 40.
[113] Beverly Wildung Harrison, p. 157.

The existential reality of human personhood is fundamentally predisposed towards relationality and difference. What this means is that no human "I" could stand apart from the social conditions and relationships necessary for its emergence.[114] Firstly, as contingent beings, humans are all held in an inescapable relation to the Creator God.[115] If God withdrew from creation, creation would fall back into nonexistence. But human persons are also held in a relationship to the world in its totality.[116] God set human beings in this relation to be genuine dialogue partners with Godself.[117] Secondly, the embodied nature of human existence itself implies relationship to others. The finitude nature of the natural elements out of which our bodies are composed means that if one human being is composed of certain atoms, cells, and other compounds, then another cannot be composed of exactly the same material. This being-in-relationship with alterity is the heart of the political nature of our creation, and it is the root of our freedom to be what we are apart from each other.

Each person is made up in their own unique way, but everyone is an image of the Divine.[118] This takes us to a fundamental tension at the core of many contextual theologies. They claim to destabilise and deconstruct categories and rigid binaries, but they can also reimpose this kind of exclusiveness in reverse, by inverting power dynamics that remain sinful. Suddenly, in an allegedly liberative turning of the conceptual tables, the heterosexual and/or the cisgender male is the undesirable or the dehumanised. Yet, the reality is that all human individuals are equal before God. God has not created an unlimited number of discrete realities within creation that can be juxtaposed, but a rich harmony of differences. Though the diversity of creation is part of the intention of the Creator, the infinite unity of God

[114] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, p. 7.
[115] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 58.
[116] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 76.
[117] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, p. 73.
[118] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 54–55.

precedes all difference by virtue of the infinite qualitative distinction between God and creation.[119] This leads us to one further theological claim about interpersonal difference.

Every human person is unique on both the physical and the spiritual level. The soul of each person is as unique as their embodiment is, and this uniqueness is crucial to the self-transcendence manifest in the orientation of the human being toward Absolute Mystery.[120] This means that a human person is created to be unique, but it also means that every individual is saved in all their dimensions, for all their dimensions are unique to them. The bodily existence of human persons is not added to a spiritual existence—the two are inseparable.[121] For that reason, as Rahner has argued, every individual is "redeemed in the concrete reality of their existence and this includes what we call their bodily nature and their history."[122] Human persons are not redeemed from their individual spiritual and physical realities, but come to the perfection of these realities themselves through a process of transformation within the unfolding of salvation history. There is therefore an ambiguity to the human body and each person, but these concrete realities are indispensable to the salvific process.[123] A demonstrative model for this process of sanctification and perfection can be found in Jesus Christ.

Difference in Jesus

Jesus Christ, God and man, is made present in the history of the world as a whole subject and as the whole self-communication of God.[124] It is in this context that Jesus' identity must be understood as a model for the perfection of humanity, since the Incarnation is the

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[119] Karl Rahner, 'The Order of Redemption within the Order of Creation', in *The Christian Commitment: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, trans. by Cecily Hastings (New York, NY: Sheed & Ward, 1961), pp. 38–74 (p. 52).
[120] Karl Rahner, *Hominisation: The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem*, trans. by W. T. O'Hara, Quaestiones Disputatae, 13 (London: Burns & Oates, 1965), p. 100.
[121] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, p. 84.
[122] Karl Rahner, 'The Christian Understanding of Redemption', in *Theological Investigations: Science and Christian Faith*, trans. by Hugh M. Riley, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988), XXI, 239–54 (p. 242).
[123] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, p. 77.
[124] Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 286–88.

beginning of the divinisation of the whole world.[125] The identity of Jesus Christ also shows how God embraces difference without its elimination or erasure. For, as Rahner has explained, "the transcendental anticipation of all the possible objects of freedom is the very basis for freedom."[126] What this means in the context of human creation is that, for persons to exist in all the ways that they differ from each other, God knowingly prepared in the creative act the conditions of possibility for the different lived experiences of individuals. God knows what human beings are and what they will be.

To gender and queer theological anthropology involves the recognition that purging interpersonal difference would not be a perfection but a destruction of the intentions of God for human persons.[127] Difference and uniqueness are an indispensable part of what it means to be created human. Human beings utter and constitute themselves truthfully in their unique concrete existence, when they are open to each other and open to God.[128] This self-consummation is ambiguous, but takes place in a created sphere of existence where humans are in constant self-communication with alterity.[129] What this means is that the bodily and organic reality of human life cannot be denied, but it also cannot be denied that human life is informed on multiple levels by social and cultural relations within the created world.[130] The key to gendering and queering theological anthropology is thus to construct a vision of humanity where the complex reality that is human difference is not stigmatised, and where a balance between nature and culture is maintained.[131] Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge

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[125] Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View', V, pp. 161, 175.
[126] Karl Rahner, 'Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ', in *Theological Investigations: Later Writings*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), V, 193–215 (p. 214).
[127] David A. Pailin, *A Gentle Touch: From a Theology of Handicap to a Theology of Human Being* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 164–65.
[128] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, pp. 86–87.
[129] Rahner, 'The Body in the Order of Salvation', XVII, p. 88.
[130] Ward, 'Theology and Masculinity', p. 283.
[131] Susannah Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ: Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 234.

the vital role that relationality plays in the human situation. It is worth exploring this a little further.

The metaphysical claim about the human situation that has, so far, been only partly elaborated is that the most fundamental category for being-in-the-world is being-in-relation.[132] This means that being part of God's creation is to live comfortably in a world which God intentionally filled with the potential for harmonious difference. As God created them, change and fluidity mark out human persons more than uniformity and fixedness do.[133] This instability and variation in human existence is something that is especially familiar to LGBTQIA+ individuals due to the regularity of their political, social, and economic disenfranchisement. Yet human difference in all its forms is key to the realisation of the teleological hope for the fulfilment of humanity.[134] Every individual has an inbuilt potential to be transformed by the personal address of God.[135] So, the unity between the created and redemptive orders is hidden in the world, but that unity is crucial to understanding the way in which humankind reaches its fulfilment.[136] The sometimes-disquieting proximity of otherness in personal experiences is what also holds open the human possibility for embrace, and for building connections across social divides. Difference does not have to be what separates human persons but what unites them.[137] The act of faith therefore plays an

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[132] Graham Ward, 'Queer Theory, Hermeneutics and Limits of Libertinism', in *Dancing Theology in Fetish Boots: Essays in Honour of Marcella Althaus-Reid*, ed. by Lisa Isherwood and Mark D. Jordan (London: SCM Press, 2010), p. 170.
[133] Marvin Mahan Ellison, 'Reimagining Good Sex: The Eroticizing of Mutual Respect and Pleasure', in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, ed. by Marvin Mahan Ellison and Kelly Brown Douglas, 2nd edn (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), pp. 245–61 (p. 255).
[134] Jay Emerson Johnson, *Peculiar Faith: Queer Theology for Christian Witness* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2014), p. 172.
[135] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 414.
[136] Rahner, 'The Order of Redemption', p. 60.
[137] Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), pp. x–xi. See Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991).

important role in such an embrace of difference, for the possibility for our relationship to otherness is inextricably bound up with the analogy of being.

Within the *analogia entis*, there is an *analogia relationis* between the relationships of human beings to other human beings and the relationship of human beings to God.[138] In the interaction of any one of these with another, something is given and shared which is fundamental to human dignity. Personal identities are not dropped into creation from heaven but belong to individual people. They are shaped, developed, and negotiated in their exchanges with social, historical, and physical others.[139] This is the crucible in which human identity is shaped and formed, and it is a collective task to form a more perfect web of relationships in which the diversity of our differences can be embraced, recognised, and celebrated in light of our Divine origin. When viewed in this light, the queerness and instability of human existence itself troubles the stability of heteronormative social constructs of gender or sexuality, as queerness and difference are fundamental to the ontic reality of humanity.[140]

A gendered and queered theological anthropology may bring humanity closer to the realisation of an equilibrium of relationality between persons. Such an approach does not supress, demean, or dehumanise individuals, but it recognises their unique embodiment of the image of God and the collective τέλος of humankind. This means that truly embracing difference requires a sincere commitment to the dignity and integrity of all people, rather than a fixation with their sexuality or gender expression. A model for this more open and inclusive type of relationality may be found in the *communicatio idiomatum*, the communication

[138] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, pp. 65–66.
[139] Alison, p. 42.
[140] Ward, 'Queer Theory, Hermeneutics', p. 169.

of idioms across the Hypostatic Union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. This is because such a union excludes division but does not impair distinction.[141]

In the person of Jesus Christ, the idiomata of both the Divine and the human natures work in perfect unity without either being confused or conflated with the other.[142] There is perfect cooperation between them but the absolute distinctness of δύο ὑποστάσεις remains. Both Divinity and humanity are equally necessary for the person of Jesus Christ to be who He is. In fact, the Hypostatic Union constitutes the crux of the self-communication of God as mystery to the creature.[143] It is an ontological presence of the Logos to a human soul in the most radical form of self-transcendence. As a result of this deification of that which is not Divine, the Hypostatic Union leads to what Rahner has referred to as "the inner divinization of the human nature of Christ in grace and glory."[144] Ontologically speaking, this is the highest manner of being that there is, apart from God's own.[145] Jesus Christ is the highest actualisation of the reality of creatureliness. Thus, it is precisely because of the communication of idioms within the Hypostatic Union that one can say that Jesus Christ enables a supernatural response in humanity to the Absolute Other, which is the self-communication of God and means of human salvation.[146]

The Hypostatic Union and the communication of idioms within it is an appropriate model for human relationality in a gendered and queered theological anthropology. By means of the Hypostatic Union, the absolute alterity of God is communicated to humanity and, though the Divine ever retains its absolute qualitative difference from creation, the two prove to not be irreconcilable. In fact, the union of the two ever-distinct hypostases in Jesus

[141] Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, I, p. 51.
[142] See Denzinger, 'Council of Chalcedon', pp. 60–61.
[143] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 68.
[144] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 69.
[145] Rahner, 'Dogmatic Reflections', V, p. 205.
[146] Rahner, 'The One Christ', XVI, pp. 205–6.

is the maximal union of the Divine and the human Incarnate in the created world.[147] It is significant that this union in difference requires not only the recognition of one but also the recognition of an other. And, though the Hypostatic Union is in its proper sense unique (being only present in the person of Jesus Christ), the communication of idioms is the conduit for a bestowal of grace upon humankind in general.[148] This is a telling point for dealing with interpersonal human differences. What it means is that a full realisation of the profundity of human difference can occur only in the light of a faithful confession of the union of ultimate difference in Jesus Christ.

The confession of the Hypostatic Union of the two natures that are present in Jesus means that all persons have a relation to God in Christ. This is the transcendental anchor of our existence. For a gendered and queered theological anthropology, the Incarnation means that there is a direct relation to God within the inescapable features that define the structures of the human condition, and that this cannot be nullified.[149] This is because, through Christ, God is the ultimate origin and goal of the reality of humankind in its totality. God's eternal action as the abyssal ground of creation means that the Absolute Mystery that is the Divine is mediated in every existential situation that human beings meet or inhabit.[150] Furthermore, due to the ongoing progression of salvation history, humanity is always in a state of becoming more than it is. This state of becoming means a constant advance on and change from what might have been before, so that more and more difference will be revealed as humankind progresses towards its ultimate fulfilment. This all means that there is a fluid tension between the irreducible unity and difference of humankind.[151] So, as well as the real

[147] Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Vision of God', II, p. 721 [20].
[148] Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View', V, p. 181.
[149] Rahner, *Hominisation*, p. 40.
[150] Rahner, *Hominisation*, p. 65.
[151] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 17.

differences that exist between human persons, there is also a unity in their relationship to each other via the Absolute Other.

The realisation of the true extent of the diversity of human existence within creation is brought to the fore by a gendered and queered theological anthropology. The declaration of faith in a truly omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God means recognising that God loves everything that God has made, and that no human person is supplementary to the realisation of God's purposes. God has also already embraced the most absolute of differences by becoming flesh in Jesus Christ. As a result, no creature is left outside of the infinite embrace of God.[152] This means that God does not need defending against perceived aliens within creation, as though the very existence of non-normativity, otherness, and difference is an affront to God in Godself. Every human life comes from God, and God comes to all people in Christ.[153] The process of gendering and queering theological anthropology thus seeks to make a conceptual space in which God may speak through the glorious variety of human persons which are created in the image of God. This lack of room for otherness and difference in some historical perspectives on theological anthropology is part of the reason why trans* and intersex persons in particular are considered to be disturbing, as they blatantly break the rules that heteronormativity tries to impose on human bodies.[154] It is a far greater intellectual and theological challenge to recognise that every human person is a vehicle for the love of God at work in the created world, but this is a fundamental principle for the gendering and queering of Christian theology. The unpredictability and near limitless diversity of human existence means that a theological anthropology which is responsive to contemporary challenges must constantly be aware of and re-examine its expectations as to from where and in whom God might speak.

[152] Nicholas of Cusa, 'The Vision of God', II, pp. 705–6 [13].
[153] Cyril of Alexandria, 'On Orthodoxy to Theodosius', p. 63 [28].
[154] Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty*, p. 169.

Conclusion

This chapter has made it clear that significant shifts and developments in cultural attitudes towards differences of sexuality and gender have occurred since the Enlightenment in the Western world. It argues that these societal changes happened in concert with, and because of, major changes in the medical, philosophical, and economic sciences. The increased dominance of more repressive ideologies of heteronormativity following the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution led to greater intolerance of LGBTQIA+ people and disempowered others such as women and ethnic minorities. This has had significant implications for Christian theology, particularly for understanding how human beings recognise and account for the many differences of other persons and the broader diversity of creation.

This chapter also argues that, despite the marginalisation of the lived experience of LGBTQIA+ individuals from mainstream Christian discourse, developments in queer theory can serve as an aid to theological anthropology. It was shown that the tentative definition of humanity as an enigmatic image of the Absolute Mystery parallels the elusive character of queerness in queer theory, which is also difficult to nail down.[155] Indeed, the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ persons are often ones of the instabilities and inconsistencies of the human situation. This chapter maintained that bringing queer theory into conversation with theological anthropology helps to rebalance traditional theological sources and personal narratives in Christian reflections on the nature of humanity. Such a conversation will better allow theologians to appreciate the alterity of nonnormative people and to recognise the potential for Godlikeness that lies in every person.

[155] Dilley, p. 457.

After that, the chapter explored how the need to come out as LGBTQIA+ person demonstrates the way in which heteronormative societies generate expectations for human persons. It demonstrated how heteronormative society requires people to conform to particular categories and to impose identities and stigmatise individuals for being different. The act of coming out was also indicated as pointing to the revelatory relationship between the visible and the invisible in human existence and as having a quasi-sacramental character. The chapter argues that there is in fact a gradual revelation of truth within the messiness of human existence. There is no neat once-for-all model of difference which can be imposed on all human persons.

Finally, this chapter claimed that, by rejecting an intentional feature of God's good creation, those individuals who reject people who express their gender or sexuality in nonheteronormative ways are rejecting something of Godself. It argues that those who reject another person have failed to realise their own sacred capacity for right relationship with others, the potential for which lies within the scope of human freedom. This being-in-relationship was shown to be summated in the Hypostatic Union of Jesus Christ, where the Divine and the human natures, which are absolutely other to each other, work in perfect harmony without losing any of their distinctiveness. It is the case that the collective endeavour of realising the humanness of all people can be brought about by our own behaviour, choices, and relationships to others, aided through the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit, grace, and the sacraments. A gendered and queered theological anthropology sees human life to be about the embrace of difference and diversity, as individual persons are constantly held in a network of relationships. To be human is to be always in an assembly of others with the Absolute Other.

Chapter Five: The Church and the Sacraments

The work of the Holy Spirit and the Christian sacraments plays a crucial role in the living out of an ethical approach to human difference and understanding its role in the Church. By partaking of the sacraments in faith through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, human persons may begin to reshape the reality of their lives and the societies in which they live. This is because it is through the sacramental life of the Church that the self-utterance of God, the Word of God, as the forgiveness and divinisation of humanity comes to the irrevocable fullness of its historical manifestation.[1] This chapter will look at how the nature of grace, the Church, and the sacrament of the Eucharist may all inform a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

The sacrament of the Eucharist is of a particular focus in this chapter, as the Church proclaims it to be the fount and apex of the whole Christian life.[2] Indeed, the continuing self-communication of the Son of God in creation is truly present in the sacraments of the Church only because it belongs to the unity of transcendality and historicity in human existence through the body of Christ. The real sacramental presence of Jesus Christ comes fully to humankind here and now only in the actualisation of time and space that is the liturgy of the Eucharist.[3] It is also important to highlight that the human body is the site of sacramental encounter.[4] This link between the sacramental life of God in Jesus Christ and concrete action in time and space is a crucial fulcrum of the operation of the economy of

[1] Karl Rahner, 'What Is a Sacrament?', in *Theological Investigations: Ecclesiology, Questions in the Church, The Church in the World*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), XIV, 135–48 (p. 142).
[2] 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium: 21 November, 1964', in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; the Basic Sixteen Documents*, ed. by Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), pp. 1–95 (p. 15 [11]).
[3] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 210.
[4] Hancock, p. 65.

salvation history. The material body is not external to the plan that God has for the salvific reconciliation and divinisation of creation. Rather the sacramental life, empowered in and through grace, points the way towards a true human community that loves all forms and varieties of interpersonal difference, including gender and sexuality.[5] It is with the topic of grace itself that this chapter now begins.

The Role of Grace

So far, in this gendering and queering of theological anthropology, the word "grace" has often been used but not directly discussed. Though it may seem to be a somewhat slippery concept, grace plays a vital role in the realisation of salvation and the teleological fulfilment of human persons. Grace is what enables human beings to realise the love of God and the presence of Christ in their lives, even though they may be separated from the historical life of Jesus by time and space. Human beings can thereby come to know a visible representative of the grace of God in their lives, for Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to come after Him in the work of the Church, and human beings are enabled to assent to the calling to a Christian life as the people of God.[6] Grace hence points beyond all creaturely possibilities to the Divine possibility of humanity.[7]

It is vital to speak of grace from within the context of a gendered and queered theological anthropology.[8] This is because it is in the mystery and fullness of grace that "God communicates himself to man in his own proper reality."[9] Grace is what enables human persons to receive the self-communication of the Divine in their lives, and to absorb the real presence of God into the very core of their being. Since this grace comes only from God, it

[5] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 16.
[6] John 15.26; cf. Acts 2.1–12.
[7] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 242.
[8] Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', IX, p. 36.
[9] Karl Rahner, 'Nature and Grace', in *Theological Investigations: More Recent Writings*, trans. by Kevin Smyth, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), IV, 165–88 (p. 175).

does not depend upon the particularity of the individual human person to be efficacious. This is so even though grace works in and through that individual as a whole to open them to a free acceptance of the self-communication of the Divine, in an actualisation of the unthematic transcendental orientation of the human person to the Absolute Mystery.

Grace is what enables human persons in all their queerness and alterity to glimpse the eternal life that is to be theirs beyond the veil of death in the Kingdom of God. We pre-eschatologically anticipate this through the grace that is the gift of the Holy Spirit because human salvation and the life everlasting is mediated exclusively in and through the grace of God.[10] The free acceptance of the nearness of God to the freedom of human persons, in all their particularity, diversity, and otherness, is thus the work of grace.[11] This attitude of truthfulness, towards the self and others, about the sacred relationship of all human persons to God liberates human beings, and allows them to accept themselves and others as they actually are.[12] Grace therefore sits at the core of the process that realises the eternal existence of a sanctified humanity in all its individual distinctiveness, and so is a core concept in a gendered and queered theological anthropology.

Grace is also important to us because no person could individually overcome the systematic divisions that have become engendered in heteronormative human societies. Nor is it possible to disassemble by oneself all the binary structures that plague traditional understandings of theological anthropology. Any true reconciliation of humankind to God in all its diversity through grace requires a collective of broken and contrite hearts which long for this reconciliation to the proper way and calling of humanity.[13] Such penitent souls must not only participate in grace through the sacramental body and blood of Jesus Christ,

[10] Rahner, 'Theology and Anthropology', IX, p. 36.
[11] Rahner, 'Theology of Freedom', VI, p. 195.
[12] Karl Rahner, 'On Truthfulness', in *Theological Investigations: Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), VII, 229–59 (p. 239).
[13] Werner G. Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope* (New York, NY: T. & T. Clark, 2020), p. 55.

they are also empowered to act upon the call found therein to *do* works of love. This is how the communion of human beings with God in grace can grow in everyday life, through the good works of people in and outside of the institutional Church.[14] It is in this form of witness to the real presence of Christ in the life of the Church more broadly conceived that human beings may transcend the limitedness of their own existence and gracefully reach up to touch the Absolute Mystery that is God.[15] In this manner of living, the relationships that shape human existence are continually determined by the graciousness of the salvation offered in Christ.[16]

Grace itself emanates from the majesty of the triune God.[17] It is omnipresent in creation, but it is also dynamic, and it flows continuously throughout the created world as the radiance of God's benevolence.[18] God alone gives and initiates this grace, which permeates creation and constantly transforms it. As Kathryn Tanner argues, grace is necessary for the perfection of humanity because humankind "needs something—God—that by definition its own nature cannot provide."[19] Thus, God freely gives this grace to satisfy the need of humankind, though it comes at great expense to them, and is never a static possession or quality ascribable to human nature.[20] This is because, though grace is not a thing, and neither may it be contrasted with concrete things, it has an extraordinary character where it meets with human life, as grace is the real presence of God at work in the creation.[21] Human persons, like prisms, can work to focus the flow of the grace of God where and when they meet it

[14] Rahner, 'Our Daily Lives', VII, p. 225.
[15] Karl Rahner, 'Theological Observations on the Concept of "Witness"', in *Theological Investigations: Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), XIII, 152–68 (p. 155).
[16] Rahner, 'Nature and Grace', IV, p. 183.
[17] Cheng, *From Sin*, p. 27.
[18] Cheng, *From Sin*, p. 26.
[19] Tanner, p. 61.
[20] Karl Rahner, 'Justified and Sinner at the Same Time', in *Theological Investigations: Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), VI, 218–30 (p. 228).
[21] See Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 221.

with openness and freedom in their lives. Through their concrete historical actions, this grace can shine in the world evermore bedazzlingly.[22] Though the grace of God may be encountered anywhere God wills such an encounter to happen, the efficaciousness of grace reaches its zenith when humans approach the altar table of God with an open heart and an open mind. This is the place where humans may acquiesce in the whole of their being to the call of the Divine and receive in grace the substance of the body of Christ.

It is important to note that the grace of God encountered within the sacramental liturgy does not cease to be effectual at the door of the Church. The people of God take this presence of Christ with them, out of the building or institution, and into the rest of their earthly lives and their encounters with others. God abides in those who love one another as God has loved them.[23] The acceptance of the Absolute Other, and the call to act for the sake of the other in human life, is therefore fundamental to the sacramental operation of grace, for the encounter with otherness is its very reality. It is the role of grace to enable human persons through their own freedom to accept the immediate presence of God that is offered to them and for them in God's self-communication.[24] The outpouring of this selfless love which God offers can be as truly found in the hands of the communicant on a Sunday as it can be in the hands of the hungry pleading for nourishment, or in the voices of the socially-marginalised supplicating respect.

In the Christian sacramental life, nearness to God does not mean remoteness from the world.[25] Where charity and love are, there the body of Christ is also. To be the body of Christ is to be the body of Christ in the world. Underneath the mortality of human persons and the

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[22] Glaser, p. 116. See Karl Rahner, 'Forgotten Truths Concerning the Sacrament of Penance', in *Theological Investigations: Man in the Church*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), II, 135–74 (pp. 159–60); Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 268.
[23] See I John 4.7–21.
[24] Karl Rahner, 'Christian Dying', in *Theological Investigations: God and Revelation*, trans. by Edward Quinn, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), XVIII, 226–56 (p. 254).
[25] Karl Rahner, 'The Resurrection of the Body', in *Theological Investigations: Man in the Church*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), II, 203–16 (p. 211).

failure of our endeavours, the true ground of our existence in love is submerged and hidden, waiting to be uncovered through the life and work of the body of Christ.[26] By the means of grace, humans become luminous beings, who can bring to fruition in their existence a part of the reconciling work of the God of love, stemming from their participation in the sacrament which is the fount of Christian life.[27] The grace of God, given to humanity most fully in the person of Jesus Christ, thus enables human beings to begin the work of the new creation in the here and now.

The nature of grace is such that humanity is only really known in the mystery of its indefinability when it is understood in light of its potential for the Divine life.[28] This is because the grace of the Holy Spirit is always present in human persons, even if it is not perpetually in operation. Likewise, the potential of a human person for sanctification is always there, even if it is latent.[29] The incarnate Word of God at work in human persons through grace and the Holy Spirit is the expressive presence both of who God is and of who God wishes humankind to be in a final and unsurpassable way.[30] In the sacraments, the grace of God constitutes itself actively present by expressing itself as historically tangible in space and time.[31] This sacramental presence of God is the reality of God as it is constituted by that which is symbolised, and it reveals and proclaims that which is symbolised through its concrete form of existence.[32] Here, human beings can experience a foretaste of their eternal life in the community of love that is God, through the concrete materiality of a symbol that both points to the reality of the Divine life and *is* the reality of that life. The gracious

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[26] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 79.
[27] *Lumen Gentium*, p. 15 [11].
[28] Rahner, 'Nature and Grace', IV, p. 186.
[29] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. by David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), p. 61 [XXVI.61].
[30] Karl Rahner, 'The Theology of the Symbol', in *Theological Investigations: More Recent Writings*, trans. by Kevin Smyth, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), IV, 221–52 (p. 237).
[31] Rahner, 'Theology of the Symbol', IV, p. 242.
[32] Rahner, 'Theology of the Symbol', IV, p. 251.

disclosure of the reality of God and its appearance in flesh are forever one, unconfused and inseparable, mediate and immediate.[33]

So, in the operation of grace, the physical and the spiritual work in concert. One cannot be without the other to represent God effectively to the creaturely existence of humanity. This means that grace pervades all dimensions of personhood and extends throughout the whole of human history. It has its roots in "the essence of man which has been divinized by God's self-communication."[34] In the unity of symbol and symbolised, constituted by the presence of a human soul and body, grace accordingly bears something of the Incarnate Son of God, who has introduced to the world in a definite manner the love that saves human flesh.[35] Grace incarnates unthematically the presence of God at work in the world. Hence, truly loving relationships of the kind called for by Christ occur between people when the grace of God is similarly made incarnate through the Holy Spirit in our lives. Grace is the very work of freeing people to be themselves, of conforming human lives to the image of the life of Christ.[36]

Grace surrounds human lives more deeply and profoundly than persons may see or think. It surfaces in many unique and miraculous situations, as it is subject to no arbitrary manmade limits. It is always the love of God at work in the world, which can be realised in human communities only through the loving faith of human beings in an other—one who is both human being and God.[37] It is through faith in the Word made flesh that the believer can realise the full profundity and endless significance of this incarnate grace for the

[33] Rahner, 'Theology of the Symbol', IV, p. 252.
[34] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 411.
[35] See Rahner, 'Theology of the Symbol', IV, p. 247; Karl Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', in *Theological Investigations: Man in the Church*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), II, 109–34 (p. 119).
[36] See Tanner, p. 25; Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, 'Thinking Theology and Queer Theory', p. 303.
[37] Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, trans. by W. J. O'Hara, Quaestiones Disputatae, 9 (London: Burns & Oates, 1974), p. 34.

sanctification of human life.[38] Yet it is the Church that gives to the individual the body of Christ as the pledge of redemption and the presence of God which consequently fills the recipient.[39] The sanctifying effect of this grace is conferred to humankind in the here and now, and is embodied most fully in concrete form in the manifestation of the sacraments.[40]

The incarnational tendency of grace reveals how God accepts, and allows other humans to accept, a whole person as they are in themselves. If human beings are to do as God does, they must value not just the parts of a person that are most visible, acceptable, or respectable, but the human person in their entirety. For, through the workings of grace, the sacramental event and the personal event penetrate and mutually presuppose each other in the sanctification of the whole individual.[41] The Church only exercises the grace of God in the world insofar as it possesses and transmits through its members the power given to them by the presence of the Incarnate Christ through the Holy Spirit.[42] As the visible presence in the world of the ascended Christ, the Church is therefore an inexhaustible wellspring of Divine grace which penetrates all aspects of human life in the name of Christ.[43] This means that the sanctifying grace of God is gradually increased through the whole Christian life by means of our participation in the assembly of God's people.[44] The presence of Christ in the life-giving sacraments of the Church is rhythmical, ever constituting the Church anew as the people of God, and embracing the whole of human existence with sanctifying grace.

Grace is the transformation of human persons unto new and unending life, under the impact of God's loving self-gift in Christ through community with otherness.[45] It is only possible

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[38] Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, trans. by W. J. O'Hara, Quaestiones Disputatae, 12 (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), p. 64.
[39] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 89.
[40] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 40.
[41] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 74.
[42] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 97–98.
[43] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, p. 48.
[44] Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', II, p. 110.
[45] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), p. 231.

for an individual human being to assent to the invitation to participate in the fulness of the Divine community through faith, by means of the love of a God made wholly human in Jesus Christ and present in the here and now through the sacraments by grace. The inner word of grace in the heart of the person, the light of faith and inward connaturality with the Absolute Mystery of God, makes it possible for human beings to encounter, and recognise, in the sacramental life of the Church the Word of God, incarnate and risen.[46] For all grace partakes of the character of the glorified and eschatologically triumphant Word of God, though the sanctification of an individual human member of the body of Christ is gradual and may not yet be fully actualised.[47]

In grace, God does not subject human beings to God's own monologue but facilitates an open dialogue with people of all genders and sexualities.[48] The body of Christ is filled by the endlessly diverse gifts of the Spirit, which reflect the glory of God Godself.[49] This is because God seeks to enter a dialogue with real partners, with creaturely collaborators. The language of this dialogue is grace, and its grammar is the self-expression of God Incarnate, made present in the Church by the Holy Spirit through the sacraments. This is the site of genuine cooperation and dialogue between God and humanity, even though the partners are absolutely different.[50] Christ both acts on humankind in grace through the Church and, at the same time, renders this grace inwardly and outwardly efficacious.[51] This grace gives human beings the means and the courage to engage themselves with the Divine life, through their own unique life of discipleship and in loving relation to other people and the world.[52] By letting go of self-preoccupation, individuals can begin to live out for themselves a new

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[46] Karl Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', in *Theological Investigations: More Recent Writings*, trans. by Kevin Smyth, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), IV, 253–86 (p. 259).
[47] Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', IV, pp. 272–73.
[48] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 412.
[49] Cf. Isaiah 11.1–2; I Corinthians 12.4–11.
[50] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 428.
[51] Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', II, p. 124; Rahner, 'On Truthfulness', VII, p. 245.
[52] Rahner, 'The Concept of Mystery', IV, p. 56; Werner G. Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), p. 259.

world of the grace of God that anticipates their own eschatological fulfilment.[53] In this case, the sanctification of that human person increases with every good work done in the state of grace and with every fruitful reception of a sacrament, as they themselves become the Church: God's heavenly kingdom breaking into the world.[54]

So, grace calls human beings to devote their lives to the way and work of Christ. It calls human beings away from the life of sin, and it gifts them the only true life.[55] The life lived by means of this grace is a life reserved within the sanctuary of God. This means that grace can mean nothing to human beings without the presence of Jesus Christ, the crucified and ascended One. In Jesus, God has become the elect creature, so that God is now not only the giver of grace but also its recipient. That stranger, that other, which is the human, is now existent in God.[56] God has decided the free consent of man in Christ in regard to the communal life of faith and love, but it is significant that an act of assent did take place, facilitated by grace through the Holy Spirit.[57] It means that the manner of the adoption of humankind into Divine sonship by grace is twofold: the first is the spiritual potential of adoption into Christ, and the second is that which ushers this grace into present actuality, transforming voluntarily the free choice of the human person to conform to the Kingdom of God.[58] This second actualisation of grace goes beyond faith to actualise epistemologically and materially the Divine likeness. This likeness may thus be known through the life of a

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[53] Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', in *Theological Investigations: The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), III, 86–90 (pp. 88–89).
[54] Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on the Problem of the Gradual Ascent to Christian Perfection', in *Theological Investigations: The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), III, 3–23 (p. 11).
[55] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. by R. H. Fuller, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 47–48.
[56] See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. by G. W Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. by G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), IV.I, p. 170.
[57] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 16.
[58] Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture*, p. 108 [6.2]. See Romans 8.15; Ephesians 1.5–6; I John 3.5–9.

child of God as an imitator of Christ, in thought or word or deed. So, what is the role of grace in the assembly that is the Church?

The assembly of the people of God is the collective, historically manifest source of redemptive grace that an individual human person must enter into a positive relationship with.[59] It is impossible to separate the light of grace from the presence of Christ in the life of the Church.[60] This means that the sacraments are not only the highest degree of the actualisation of the Church, they are also the very essence of the Church itself as visible signs in the world of the eschatological triumph of grace, which reconciles all creation into the life of the one God.[61] Hence, the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the fount and apex of the Church's life, both "expresses and transcends the contradiction between 'multiplicity' and 'unity'" that is present in the mission of the Church in the world.[62] Here, at the point in which the life of the Incarnate Christ sacramentally breaks into the world, all persons are one and one person becomes all. In this Divine self-embodiment of grace, grace itself occurs.[63] This means that being a member of the body of Christ does not depend just on oneself, or even on Christ, but on the presence of the whole body, which the members participate in through grace. The gracious link of human persons to the innumerable members of the body of Christ, in all their differentness and dispersedness, cannot be denied—this is the work of the Holy Spirit.[64]

[59] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, pp. 21–22.
[60] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, p. 97 [XXVI.64].
[61] See Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 185.
[62] John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, ed. by Luke Ben Tallon (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011), p. 20. See *Lumen Gentium*, p. 15 [11].
[63] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 39.
[64] Zizioulas, *Communion and the World*, p. 21.

The Church and the Body of Christ

Key to building a gendered and queered theological anthropology is a re-evaluation of the role of the Church and its relationship with every day human life. This is because the Church is the abiding presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is the primal sacramental Word of God uttered in the history of humankind, where the love of God for humankind achieves its historical manifestation.[65] The Church is the sign of the grace of God definitively triumphant in the world which extends out beyond the narthex and into the world, through the lives of its members in the body of Christ, the people of God. The Church is thus the "primal sacramental word of definitive grace" and "the enduring presence of Christ in the world," so that "from Christ the Church has an intrinsically sacramental structure."[66] The Church is the merciful heart of the grace of God, which pumps the wonder of life-giving Divine love out through many arteries, to all members of the body. For the immanent presence of the Divine, incarnate through grace in the sacramental life of the Church, does not only mean the overcoming of the spatial and temporal difference of transcendence, but also the radical love of an embodied God that empowers the whole diversity of creation and the people of God.[67] The mode of transmission is the giving and receiving of the sacraments, which infuses and informs all activity of the Church—sacramental or not—because the sacraments are an essential function of the body of Christ.[68]

The Eucharist is the point at which the Church reaches its fullest actualisation because it is the real presence of Christ made wholly and unambiguously manifest. It is the highest stage

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[65] Karl Rahner, 'Marriage as a Sacrament', in *Theological Investigations: Writings of 1965–67 II*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), X, 199–221 (p. 210).
[66] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 18.
[67] Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1993), pp. 162, 192. This is how the world is charged with the grandeur of God. Cf. Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur', in *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, 4th edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 66.
[68] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 24.

of the word of grace in the Church in its character as exhibition, symbol, and event.[69] Thus the life of the Church is about nothing more than bringing all human persons to the embodiment of the Divine.[70] The sacrament also participates in the reality to which it points.[71] This is why the eucharistic life of the Church is a *communal* life of salvation.[72] It is a sacrament of the constant growth and maturing of the life of grace, which ensures that human members of the body become ever more Christ-like.[73] This is because the Eucharist manifests the real presence of God among God's people in earthly time and space, as well as manifesting the infinite transcendence of the Absolute Mystery that is the Triune God in Godself.[74]

The Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation. Through it, the Church becomes the real presence of the body of Christ in the world. In other words, the sacrament of the Eucharist has its ultimate end not just in itself, but also in the mysterious Divine reality that transcends it.[75] If this was not so, then participating in the Eucharist would not have objective certainty of affect.[76] Hence, like all sacraments, the Eucharist cannot be understood outside of the context of the Incarnation.[77] As Irenaeus of Lyons explains, the sacramental blood can only come from the blood of Christ, and the sacramental body can only come from the body of Christ, such as the Word of God was actually made human.[78] Through this sacramental ministry, the Church is therefore the abiding promulgation of the grace-giving presence of

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[69] Rahner, 'What Is a Sacrament?', XIV, p. 144.
[70] McFague, p. 163.
[71] Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), pp. 111–12.
[72] Otto Semmelroth, *Church and Sacrament*, trans. by Emily Schossberger (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1965), p. 10.
[73] Karl Rahner, 'The Eucharist and Suffering', in *Theological Investigations: The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. by Karl-Heinz Krüger and Boniface Krüger, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), III, 161–70 (p. 167).
[74] Boersma, p. 187.
[75] Boersma, p. 30.
[76] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 66.
[77] Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p. 34.
[78] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 528 [V.2.2].

Jesus Christ.[79] The eschatological mercy of God may be known most fully through its Christian praxis of love as, in the most holy of sacraments, God salvifically pours forth into the people of God the mysterious dynamic of love which God is in Godself.[80]

What is more, through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, God enables the capacity of every human person to receive efficaciously God's self-communication in the sacraments. For sacraments are not simply an instrument for manipulating spiritual reality, they also affect the physical embodied reality of human lives. They are, as Susan Ross observes, "the very ways in which God has chosen to reveal who God is to humanity and how humanity, in return, expresses its relationship to God."[81] This is because the self-communication of God through the language of the sacraments of the Church is a dynamic force which also stirs the inner, transcendent reference of the embodied human soul to God.[82] By partaking in the sacramental life of the Church, human persons are empowered in all parts and levels of their being to love one another through the mercy of God.

So, the capacity of human persons for meaningful relationships to others is actualised on all levels of their being by the Eucharist. This corresponds with the claim that humans are by nature relational beings that seek the other in love, as was argued for in Chapter One.[83] Yet, humankind is also given participation in the vicarious self-offering of Christ for the world.[84] Our existence is therein opened to and by a love beyond all categorisation, a love so radical that it would otherwise be beyond the horizons of human vision. Truly recognising the

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[79] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 19.
[80] Karl Rahner, 'Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace', in *Theological Investigations: God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. by Cornelius Ernst, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), I, 297–317 (p. 310); Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 71.
[81] Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2001), p. 140.
[82] Karl Rahner, 'Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace', in *Theological Investigations: Experience of the Spirit, Source of Theology*, trans. by David Morland, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), XVI, 35–51 (p. 40).
[83] Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 1. See Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, pp. 2–3.
[84] Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), p. 111.

importance of the differences between human persons is only possible by affirming this relational analogy of being-in-love, where interpersonal relations emerge as analogies of the sacred relationship that every human person has to Jesus Christ, through their participation in His body.[85] This relationship of love is what is summated in the sacrament of the Eucharist, as love by its very nature seeks and desires otherness, so that no true experience of human or Divine love is without an experience of difference.[86]

In the Church, the Eucharist is not only a communion between the recipient and Christ, but also a communion of the faithful people of God.[87] It is in this manner that, through an assembly of human beings, the merciful love of God pours forth free and unexacted. For, as the one to whom God's grace-bestowed will to save is addressed, an individual person is always marked out as a member of the community of humankind.[88] It is the identity of the Christian to inhabit the community which is the body of Christ, from where individual participants can see the boundless reality that encompasses all people in the eternal life of the Kingdom of God.[89] Each person can choose to realise their fundamental orientation to God and the created alterity that is the world freely, whether to act on the calling to love or yield to selfishness, and whether to make the memorial of Christ or forget that to be loved is also to love.[90]

What the connection between the Church and the body of Christ says of significance for a gendered and queered theological anthropology is that the transcendental orientation of the human person is most fully actualised in the acceptance in our own embodied existence of a different body that is other to ourselves. As Karl Rahner argues, the acceptance of the

[85] Ward, *Cities*, pp. 153–54; Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 182.
[86] Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 12; Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, p. 254.
[87] Zizioulas, *Communion and the World*, p. 128.
[88] Karl Rahner, 'The Function of the Church as a Critic of Society', in *Theological Investigations: Confrontations 2*, trans. by David Bourke, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), XII, 229–49 (p. 238).
[89] Rowan Williams, *Candles in the Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic* (London: SPCK, 2020), p. 33.
[90] Rahner, 'Relationship Between Nature and Grace', I, pp. 310–11.

grace of the Holy Spirit in the reception of the sacraments involves "the *whole* person in the *concrete* history of his life and his freedom."[91] From the top of the head to the tip of the toe, human beings must thus long for the body of Christ and make present, so far as they are able, the life of the Kingdom of God. Every opportunity for Divine love in human existence has both a communal and a personal dimension.[92] The sacramental life of the Church that stems from this encompasses all that it is to be human, for the free acceptance of the sacrament that is Christ, through the grace imparted by the Holy Spirit, affirms what is most inmost to humanity: to be addressed and claimed as a whole by the love of God. The human capacity to respond freely to this invitation to the community of reconciling love is the central and abiding reason for our existence.[93]

So, through the oneness of the body of Christ, the Eucharist can offer us a taste of the Divine life of going out beyond oneself. This is a participation in the worship of the heavenly sanctuary that the ascended Christ renders to God the Father, by which human beings are taken up into the eternal communal life of God.[94] Through the gracious love of God, this communion of eternal life takes place in and through Christ for us, appearing and realising itself with the utmost intensity in His real presence at the sacrament of the Eucharist.[95] Thus, in this sacrament, the grace of God no longer comes only down from on high, but makes Godself permanently available in the world in a tangible historical form open to the greatest possible intimacy.[96] The distinctive form of this embodiment of the Divine is its inclusion of the outcast, the other, and the oppressed.[97]

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[91] Karl Rahner, 'Experience of the Holy Spirit', in *Theological Investigations: God and Revelation*, trans. by Edward Quinn, 23 vols (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), XVIII, 189–210 (p. 206).
[92] Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 123.
[93] Rahner, 'Relationship Between Nature and Grace', I, p. 312.
[94] Torrance, p. 110.
[95] Rahner, 'Personal and Sacramental Piety', II, p. 133.
[96] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 15.
[97] McFague, p. 170.

The hospitality of the Kingdom of God is open to everyone, regardless of gender or sexuality, or any other kind of difference. There is "a genuine pluralism in reality" that is not "merely an empty appearance."[98] The eucharistic sacrament draws human beings closer to the one self-emptying God as they are in themselves, to partake in the Divine nature in such a way that each individual person is transformed by the personal address of the Divine.[99] Every person who willingly participates in the sacrament of the Eucharist is drawn, changed, and formed at the deepest level of their being in relation to the one God, and none are turned away.[100]

It is also important for a gendered and queered theological anthropology not to neglect the physical dimension of the eucharistic sacrament. The life of the body of Christ is extended into the body of the recipient through the consumption of the eucharistic meal. The reception of the body and the blood of Jesus exemplify the extended habitation of the bodily life of Christ in the world. Participation in this most holy of sacraments therefore becomes a focal point for the transformation of everyday human existence, despite the challenges of material life.[101] The Eucharist is transformative not only for eternal life but also for life now, in the current world, in preparation for its passing away.[102] Through partaking of the body of Christ, the people of God may begin to embody in themselves the totality of their creation.[103] This life is fed and nourished by the body of Christ, the Word through whom all things are made and are to be remade. Moreover, what is true regarding Christ is also true about the sacrament of His body and His blood. Both the Divine and the human natures are present in their entirety.[104] Hence the liturgy of the eucharistic sacrament opens a space for

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[98] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 406.
[99] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, II, p. 414. Cf. II Peter 1.4.
[100] Timothy F. Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics: Paschal Identity and the Christian Life* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 15.
[101] David Grumett, *Material Eucharist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 102.
[102] Revelation 21.4.
[103] Zizioulas, *Communion and the World*, p. 174.
[104] Martin Luther, 'The Babylonian Captivity of the Church—Part I (1520)', in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. by Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 267–313 (p. 291).

the genuine encounter of the human with God.[105] It is the point where the body of Christ can be dispersed across time and space to meet human beings wherever and whenever they are.

The extraordinary concentration of efficacious grace in the sacrament of the Eucharist is ascribable to the real presence of the Incarnate Jesus Christ in the consecrated bread and the wine. Truly present in these consecrated elements, the sacred body of Christ is not altered or changed; the power that is the life-giving grace of the sacrament inheres in the elements constantly.[106] As a result, the fragmented sacrament of unity opens and expands the Divine envelope in the here and now; the unchangingly broken body of Christ envelops any temporal or material horizon, and it encompasses all human need. In this form, Christ unites every worshipper with His own self-consecration, and so offers humanity to the Father in the identity of Godself.[107] This is only because, in the eucharistic host, the Divine presence truly *is*, in the aporia of the present. The sacrament causes what it signifies because it is the Divine bestowal of grace itself realised in visible form, as the self-communication of God in the body of Christ is made manifest.[108] Yet this sacramental manifestation is communicated to a human person, whose own receptive and cognitive abilities are finite.

In everyday life, the information that human persons absorb through their senses reaches them through their bodies. So does spiritual nourishment and the material foodstuff of bread and wine.[109] This is because the eternal life gifted to humanity through the life and work of Jesus Christ is really present in the eucharistic sacrament. Therein lies the way to approach the Trinitarian life of God: on the basis of what is substantially manifest to humankind in

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[105] Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. by Mark Raftery-Skehan, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, 40 (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2004), p. 28.
[106] Cyril of Alexandria, 'Letter to Calosirius', in *Select Letters*, ed. & trans. by Lionel R. Wickham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 214–21 (p. 219).
[107] Torrance, p. 111.
[108] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963), p. 17.
[109] See William A. Dembski, *Being as Communion: A Metaphysics of Information* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 98.

the Divine *kenosis*. Through the emptying of this cup, human persons feel their way back into the mystery of the Absolute by the feast that has been placed before them.[110] The very possibility of hearing, feeling, and receiving the Word of Life is a consequence of the human condition as a son of God, in the image and body of Christ, by, in, and through whom humanity is created. So, by partaking of the body and blood of Christ, human beings become of one body and blood with Christ.[111] One is transfused into another without either losing their distinctiveness. A human is engendered through the self-engendering of the Word as Sacrament, and human persons are given and received within the loving embrace in which Absolute Life comes forth, in and through its material self, to embrace itself. This sensuous embrace of human alterity is thus the accomplishment of the infinite love of the Trinity within creation.[112]

What all of this means is that the properly human mode of the encounter with God in the here and now is the sacraments of the Church.[113] It also means that the liturgical activity is creative: it opens new spatial possibilities and complexities for the participants, where materiality is integral and constitutive, but also transcended and sublimated. Along these lines, Graham Ward argues that in the Eucharist "space, while not separating itself from and dualistically opposing place, is no longer co-extensive with it; it is excessive to location."[114] In the sacramental liturgy, the body of Christ expands itself, extending beyond the sanctuary rail to encompass every time and every place in the life of its recipient so that, in the Eucharist, the material of the world is consumed in two senses: the person consumes and is the person is consumed. This unificatory effect of the sacrament of the body of Christ works

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[110] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, IV, p. 324.
[111] Cyril of Jerusalem, 'Mystagogical Lectures', in *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, trans. by Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 64, 2 vols (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), II, 143–203 (pp. 181-182 [IV.3]).
[112] See Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 55–57, 226–27; Michel Henry, 'Souffrance et Vie', in *Phénoménologie de La Vie: De La Phénoménologie*, 5 vols (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), I, 143–56 (p. 150).
[113] Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 6.
[114] Ward, *Cities*, p. 177.

in and through the discrete embodiment of human persons and out into a wider web of personal relationships, overflowing the boundaries of the life of the individual recipient without erasure, obstruction, or negation.

In short, the significance of an individual and unique body to the sacramental process of sanctification cannot be overstated. The materiality of a body—whether it be Christ's or our own—matters. Human existence cannot be without it. As Judith Butler argues: "to be material means to materialize, […] 'to matter' means at once 'to materialize' and 'to mean.'"[115] Embodied materiality is consequently inseparable from what it means to be human, and from what it means to be a member of the body of Christ. Human persons are both material signs and their significatory efficacy, so that the pure existence of the materiality of human persons cannot be referred to except via that materiality. Likewise, every sacramental symbol of the materiality of the body of Christ takes place through a signifying process which, in its phenomenality, is always already material.[116] This conceptual framework helps to draw attention to the importance of the sacramental *body*, to the fact that material matters in the sanctifying sacramental process of human salvation. Materiality is thus an unavoidable part of human existence, though no single body alone can definitively express what it is to be a body.[117] In addition, redemption turns its face towards humanity only in and through the ontic reality of Christ's glorified bodiliness.[118] This is the body of Christ that human beings encounter in the sacrament of the Eucharist, where the broken are made whole and the whole is made broken.

[115] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 7.
[116] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, pp. 37–38.
[117] Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty*, p. 92.
[118] Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 42.

As denizens of a material, created world, human persons must be embodied in order that they be given life.[119] So also must the person of Christ be substantially present in the sacrament of the Eucharist if His body is to be of salvific effect. This means that the materiality of Jesus as the Christ must not be forgotten or discarded when considering the importance of the sacraments of the Church to a gendered and queered theological anthropology. To take seriously the embodied reality and alterity of human existence, the material of the body of Christ must be taken seriously.[120] The material reality of the Incarnation is crucial and indispensable to its efficacy, both in the historical life of Jesus and in the sacramental life of Christ. The Eucharist is a liturgical act of remembrance and repetition that is grounded by the materiality of an historical person in time and space. Humans eat the very flesh of Jesus Christ and drink the very blood so that they evermore dwell in Christ, and so that Christ dwells evermore in them. The key to how this repeated materiality is universally relatable to the instance of the Incarnation, and so salvifically effective for humanity, is the phenomenological transcorporeality of the body of Christ.

The transcorporeality of the body of Christ enables its displacement to an unlimited number of members as its mystical body in the world. This mystery is symbolised in the brokenness of the eucharistic host, which nevertheless remains one consecrated element. The participation of humankind must follow a certain brokenness because it is only because of this brokenness that the distribution of the eucharistic body can be affected.[121] This brokenness is thus to be understood positively. The sacramental body of Christ is displaced into an unlimited number of liturgies and an unlimited number of people, as each fragment received by each communicant is no less and no more than the whole body of Christ.[122]

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[119] Augustine of Hippo, *Tractates on the Gospel of John: 11–27*, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 79, 5 vols (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), II, p. 271 [XXVI.13.3].
[120] Ward, *Cities*, p. 144.
[121] Ward, *Cities*, p. 152.
[122] See Martin Luther, 'The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics (1526)', in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. by Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), pp.

However, it is not only the sacramental body of Christ that exists as broken and fractured. The logic of fragmentation before participation applies to the human members, the broken limbs of the body of the Church, who come to receive spiritual and material nourishment. These people are divided from others due to their sin and self-imposed separation, but they are not completely isolated from one another in their existence, as no human can exist as if they were an island.[123]

The absolute value that is placed on every fragment of human existence shows that the human being is intrinsically valuable in the eyes of God, and not instrumentally so. Every person is an end in themselves and a unique phenomenon. This embodied phenomenality of individual persons is brought with them to the salvific process of the realisation of Divine life in human existence, through the sacramental life of the Church. As the body of Christ, the Church exists to embody a new state of being where artificial and/or arbitrary structures of race, class, and gender are broken down but embodied particularity remains.[124] No part of the body, whether it be that of a human person or that of the ecclesial community is extrinsic to the purpose of sanctification, for human beings cannot love truly unless it is with every fibre of their being.[125] All the members are therefore perfected in their own time and according to their own uniqueness.[126] The individual is in this way present and constitutive of the body of Christ, sacramentally realised through the communicant. Throughout this sacramental process of sanctification, even unto its teleological accomplishment, every

314–40 (p. 319); Jeremy Taylor, *John Wesley's Extract of the Rule and Exercises of Living Holy and Dying* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2018), p. 12.

[123] Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 182; Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death & Sensuality*, trans. by Mary Dalwood (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 15. See John Donne, 'From Devotions upon Emergent Occasions', in *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. by Charles M. Coffin (New York, NY: Modern Library, 2001), pp. 421–60 (p. 441).

[124] Adrian Thatcher, *Gender and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 112.

[125] Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, p. 10.

[126] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, p. 1146 [XXII.18].

human person remains entirely themselves, as they are in their individual God-given existence.

In the sacramental union of the flesh of the recipient with the flesh of Christ, the differences of the respective bodies are reinforced and affirmed.[127] As a result, though each person still walks their own path towards their ultimate fulfilment, the reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist recalls and affirms their unity with all others in Christ, beyond any concept of subject and object.[128] In fact, for the effective consecration of the eucharistic sacrament itself to be properly understood, the transcendence of the binary division of individuality and community is necessary. The many are one body in Christ, and individually they are members one of another: the body and the bread, the blood and the wine, and the God and the human.[129] It is only if all members are at one, in and with this body as Christ is, that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ sanctifies all.[130]

As we have now seen, crucial to the efficacy of the sacrament of the Eucharist is love. A profound empathy and concern for the other is continually shown in the historical and sacramental life of Jesus through His reconciliation of all forms of alterity.[131] This is the τέλος of the sacramental way: the deification of the human person, which is enabled perichoretically by the Hypostatic Union of Divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus.[132] Human individuals come to know themselves in their most definitive personal being in and

[127] See Emmanuel Falque, 'This Is My Body: Contributions to a Philosophy of the Eucharist', in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. by Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor, trans. by Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2015), pp. 279–94 (pp. 284, 290).
[128] Jean-Yves Lacoste, 'Liturgy and Coaffection', in *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response*, ed. by Kevin Hart and Barbara Eileen Wall, trans. by Jeffrey L. Kosky, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, 48 (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 93–103 (p. 98).
[129] Romans 12.5.
[130] Michel Henry, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, trans. by Karl Hefty (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), p. 237.
[131] See, e.g., John 11.33–35; Romans 12.15; 1 Corinthians 12.25–26; Ephesians 4.32; 1 Peter 3.8; 1 John 3.17.
[132] Paul M. Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), p. 180.

through the relation to the personal God, which is made manifest in the body of Christ.[133] We are thereby are drawn into the reality of the eternal life of God evermore closely, as the love of God encompasses human life transcorporeally.[134] Thus, it is here, in the eucharistic embrace, that the Divine and the human are revealed as paradigms of each other, so that the human being may be divinised by the grace of God, and to the extent that God is humanised in the person of Christ by God's love for humankind.[135] Ultimately, there is no insider or outsider as this Divine love accomplishes its sacramental work in humanity, though alterity absolutely remains.[136] Indeed according to Rahner, only one thing gives the Church its unity on the human level: "the love which allows another to be different, even when it does not understand him."[137] This love of the mysterious other is precisely that which is symbolised most fully in the sharing of the body of Christ at the table of the Lord.

The Oneness of Humanity

In the liturgy of the Eucharist, the actions of the celebrant and the responsive congregation relive in the present the greatest expression of the love of God, which is the condescension of God into the reality of a human body, with all its material needs and desires. As human beings need to consume food and drink to sustain themselves physically, it is also the need for spiritual nourishment of sanctifying grace that pushes humans to partake of the sacramental elements of consecrated bread and wine. In the Eucharist, God operates spiritually and materially through the most basic aspects of creation as Godself and thereby sates all human need. This means that the sacraments work to forge and strengthen the bond

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[133] George Pattison, *A Short Course in Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 2005), p. 40.
[134] Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), p. 252.
[135] Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, ed. & trans. by Nicholas Constas, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 29, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), II, p. 165 [1113BC].
[136] Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*, p. 260.
[137] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, p. 74.

of God with the spiritual and physical life of humankind down the centuries and into the present day.[138]

Through the material elements, God affirms positively the embodied experience of the Eucharist in the here and now of human existence. The Divine affirmation of created personhood includes both the materiality into which Christ is incarnated and the materiality of those bodies who receive the sacrament of the Word made flesh, for a person is already what is closest to Divine perfection in all nature.[139] This means that the image of Christ sacramentally consumed and absorbed into the body of the believer also expresses the form of the Son of God, as this is the one presence of God which is the self-communication of Godself to that which is not divine.[140] Participation in the real presence of the body of Christ through the Eucharist is thus an essential life-giving means of salvation, at the heart of which is the active movement of the Son of God into the world to draw humankind to God through giving of Godself.[141] This is the principal means by which human beings are opened up to the meaning and goal of their lives, and toward the liberation, healing, and fulfilment of all bodies.[142] Through participation in the real sacramental presence of the body of Christ, human persons are therefore changed for the better, in the Spirit and due to the work of the Spirit. The image of God that resides in all people is brought gradually to its eschatological perfection in Christ-likeness.[143]

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[138] Andrew Davison, *Why Sacraments?* (London: SPCK, 2013), p. 5.
[139] Karen O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies: The Eucharist, Mary and the Body in Trauma Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2019), p. 152. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, p. 32 [I, q. 29, a. 3, resp.].
[140] Hilary of Poitiers, p. 313 [VIII.48]; Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, trans. by Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 25.
[141] See Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), p. 89.
[142] McFague, p. 160; Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 29.
[143] Davison, p. 39. See Gregory of Nyssa, 'On Perfection', in *Ascetical Works*, trans. by Virginia Woods Callahan, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 58 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), pp. 91–122 (p. 122).

Looking to the future of humankind, the Eucharist opens the way, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to salvation and eschatological fulfilment for the people of God. This, after all, is the focal point of God's project of reconciliation and sanctification, and this future affects humankind here and now by soliciting our participation in the dynamic movement of salvation history to its end.[144] Through the body of Christ, the human recipient of the sacrament may see and participate in the reality of the Kingdom of God as it breaks into the world.[145] Our earthly banquet bridges the gap between what is now and what is to come at the heavenly banquet, in the Kingdom of God.[146] Those individuals who participate in the process of reconciliation and sanctification that flows from the altar table thus receive increase and growth in holiness, as the body of Christ unites what humankind is with what humanity is to be.[147] Time is thereby ruptured, as the future reality of the union of humankind with God is brought into the present day, and the way to the age which has no end is opened.[148]

As they open people to a radical transformation of their understanding of themselves and others, individual acts of participation in the sacramental body and blood of Jesus Christ are inserted into the eschatological order.[149] This means that humankind does not have to conceptualise gender in the way that heteronormative narratives encourage us to conceive of it. Through their participation in the Eucharist, human persons can be transformed to see gender otherwise, not as a binary structure but as one component among many of human nature that Jesus assumed and healed in all its diversity. Yet this sacramental rupture in time is a particularly disruptive concept in the increasingly secular age of late-modernity, as such

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144 Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 185.
145 Brock and Parker, p. 252.
146 O'Donnell, p. 125.
147 See Athanasius of Alexandria, 'Four Discourses', p. 386 [II.70]; Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, p. 259 [8].
148 Zizioulas, *Communion and the World*, p. 79; O'Donnell, p. 171.
149 Yves Marie-Joseph Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: The Biblical, Historical, and Theological Evidence for Catholic Teaching on Tradition*, trans. by Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (London: Burns & Oates, 1966), p. 261; Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, p. 247.

a theological understanding conceives of time as not univocal or uniform.[150] Time, sacramentally understood, is a dimension of the world that is not easy to subject to human control and regulation but works according to the free will of God for the salvific reconciliation of all creation to Godself.[151]

In participating in the eschatological order of the Kingdom of God, every willing human recipient of the sacrament of the Eucharist is made equal to Christ. Their Christ-likeness grows through absorbing, and being absorbed into, the body of Christ. This is so in the present time through the reception of the sacrament, even though the identification of humankind with Christ has yet to be fulfilled eschatologically.[152] More immediately, the real presence of Christ in the sacrament also means that faithful recipients of the Eucharist go out from the sanctuary into their communities not only as representatives of the body of Christ, but as the body of Christ itself.[153] The embodied Jesus Christ present in the eucharistic sacrament includes all the material dimensions of human existence and the way in which we manifest ourselves in our relations to others.[154] What this means is that the body of Christ unconditionally loves and accommodates all those who come with hands outstretched in hunger and thirst, wherever they are encountered and whatever their gender or sexuality. If a self-proclaimed Christian is unloving of the least of the members of the body of Christ, they are also unloving of Christ himself.[155]

To continue to explore how sacramental theology informs a gendered and queered theological anthropology, it is important to return to the point that partaking of the Eucharist encompasses the whole of every person. God includes within Godself what they are, what

[150] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), p. 59.
[151] See Yves Marie-Joseph Congar, *La Foi et La Théologie* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), pp. 43, 99, 105–6.
[152] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 180.
[153] O'Donnell, p. 196.
[154] Susan A. Ross, p. 227.
[155] Matthew 25.40.

they have been, and what they will be. Not even the tiniest human crumb from the body of Christ is forsaken. This means that, as Linn Tonstad states, "Christ's body moves past even sexual difference and joins itself to the materiality of the whole world."[156] Jesus, in whom the Divine and the human are joined in the Hypostatic Union, is really present as the living and exalted one to all those who believe in Him and orient their lives to Him regardless of their gender or sexuality, but also because of and through their gender and sexuality.[157] The love of God incarnate in Christ thus anticipates all need in the full array of persons who come to the altar rail.[158] All members of humankind are invited to join the heavenly banquet in the Kingdom of God, as all parts of the material world are to be reconciled and fulfilled in the body of Christ.[159] Once again, this is not to imply that the uniqueness or distinctiveness of these persons is erased in a process of conformation to Christ, but rather that the whole individual is brought to the actualisation of their potential for Christ-likeness. Interpersonal difference co-abides in tension, in the very in-between-ness of the body of Christ that is, and is not, the person as they are in themselves.[160] God works with human beings according to their own situation, freedom, and particularity.[161] In this sacramental offering of thanksgiving, which takes place in the liturgy and is consecrated by the incarnate presence of Christ, the diverse goodness of creation is re-affirmed and sanctified.[162]

To draw some of these threads together, the destiny of all human persons depends on their participation in the one assembly of humanity that is the body of Christ.[163] A human person also does not participate in Christ without Christ participating in them.[164] Human bodies thus experience a manifold increase in the glory of Godlikeness only through this mutual

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156 Tonstad, *God and Difference*, p. 248.
157 Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 24.
158 Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 89.
159 Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, p. 185 [20].
160 O'Donnell, p. 166.
161 Davison, pp. 149–50.
162 O'Donnell, p. 149.
163 Boersma, p. 51.
164 Ward, *Christ and Culture*, p. 105.

participation of real bodies in each other.[165] Partaking of the one bread and the one cup is an efficacious symbol of the human participation in the body of Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In this way, the Eucharist represents the most individual, historical and salvific result for a person in their own unique history of salvation.[166] To partake of the sacrament of the Eucharist is to participate in the supreme actualisation of oneself and of the Church, the community of human salvation.[167]

In addition, the sacramental body of Christ is one and the same as the historical body of Christ in the Incarnation.[168] There is "an identity between the eucharistic food of the Church and the body and blood of Jesus" so that by eating it "an individual is incorporated into the community of the one pneumatic body of Jesus Christ."[169] This eternal continuity of the Word made flesh is what makes possible the union of the Divine and the human, as all bodies are brought into one.[170] This interpretation of the Eucharist as a participation in the Incarnation therefore opens up a radical anthropology: the body as such is what Christ

[165] Irenaeus of Lyons, p. 528 [V.2.3].
[166] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 428.
[167] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 83; Rahner, 'The Word and the Eucharist', IV, p. 281.
[168] Unlike in the heresy of Docetism, the body of the God-man Jesus Christ is entirely real and present both in his life in first-century Judea and his sacramental life in the Eucharist. In neither case is the assumption of human flesh illusory. Nor is there any rupture between the human and the Divine in this body, for this would preclude the possibility of a genuine engagement with the flesh in the Incarnation, as is the case with Gnosticism. God abides truly in human beings and human beings abide truly in God through the body and blood of Christ. See, e.g., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. by James McConkey Robinson, 3rd edn (New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1990), pp. 43–44, 55, 192, 194; Ignatius of Antioch, 'The Letter of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans', in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), pp. 248–61 (p. 255 [6.2]); Irenaeus of Lyons, pp. 448, 529 [III.18.7, V.3.2]; Tertullian of Carthage, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Incarnation*, ed. & trans. by Ernest Evans (London: SPCK, 1956), pp. 5–7 [1]; John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), pp. 119–20; Rudolf Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 193; H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 33–34; Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God & the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), p. 42; Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 17, 173; Mark J. Edwards, *Origen Against Plato* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 22–23.
[169] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 425.
[170] O'Donnell, p. 180.

assumed. There are no distinctions made as to what kinds of body are included, or any disclaimer as to bodies which are excluded.[171]

What Christ assumed He also healed and, though this includes all people, a gendered and queered theological anthropology holds that disadvantaged individuals are particularly attended to in the Incarnation.[172] These are the socially-marginalised bodies, the nonmale and the nonheteronormative, the queer and the transgender, which need inclusion, recognition, and empowerment as children of God. The assumption of these bodies by the body of Christ is an essential sign of the Christian hope for a new creation, which is already at work in the present but is yet to come.[173] The ongoing presence of Jesus Christ, as the fruit of salvation which cannot perish, is therefore the tangible means by which God offers salvation through the concrete historical and social life of each individual person, no matter how different they are from anyone else.[174] The one bread in this manner gives, to those who participate in the sacrament, unity with, and within, Christ himself.[175] The salvation of humankind that is found in the body of Christ thus requires that people love each other as God loves them.[176]

What the radical inclusiveness of the Eucharist means for a gendered and queered theological anthropology is that learning to love the material body of Christ also involves learning to love difference, as explicated in Chapter Four.[177] We are all embodied human beings and Christ inhabited the body fully, even if bodiliness is expressed in each of us differently, as

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[171] An unfortunate reality is that many of the people of God are today excluded by ministers of the Church from the reception of the Eucharist. The sacramental food and drink are not only rewards for the righteous but nourishment for the needy. The Church, as it is centred in the Eucharist as the real presence of the body of Christ, should be more inclusive of the marginalised groups who are nevertheless full members of that body, including the divorced, the non-ordained, and LGBTQIA+ persons, amongst others.
[172] Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, 'First Letter to Cledonius', p. 158 [5].
[173] McFague, p. 207.
[174] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 412.
[175] O'Donnell, p. 23.
[176] Brock and Parker, p. 250.
[177] O'Donnell, p. 196.

male or female, as hetero- or homosexual, as gender normative or nonnormative, or as cisgender or transgender. Though all human bodies are unique, Christ inhabits them all through His body. To love the other as oneself, to love as we are loved, is thus the primary Christian approach to alterity and reconciliation. In so doing, the entire being of the communicant is transmuted into the immortal body of Christ.[178]

As one humanity partaking of one sacramental bread, human beings are instructed as to how they ought to cherish unity.[179] To begin to understand humanity and its relationship to God requires the disassembly of the artificial barriers between neighbours that they themselves arbitrarily erect, and to appreciate the mysterious glory of the other in profound love. For, in an act of mutual, interdependent, self-giving love, the bread that has been broken is fragmented so that the oneness of humanity does not have to be.[180] This ultimate expression of the love of God transforms the inner reaches of the persons it encounters, as it makes present the most intimate bond of Divinity and humanity, though this unity of love does not confuse the different agencies at work.[181]

The sacramental oneness of humanity is a vision of salvation as a wholeness that is not characterised by the overcoming of differences of gender or sexuality. It corresponds with a gendered or queered theological anthropology in that it is characterised by the acceptance and inclusion of such differences.[182] Using the eucharistic body of Christ as an informative model for a gendered and queered theological anthropology foregrounds the incontrovertible reality of embodied existence that every human person is intrinsically valuable in the eyes of God as they are in their uniqueness, distinctiveness, and difference

[178] Gregory of Nyssa, 'On Religious Instruction', p. 318 [37]; Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, p. 67. Cf. Leviticus 19.18; Deuteronomy 10.19; Matthew 22.39; Mark 12.31; Luke 10.27; Romans 13.9; Galatians 5.14.
[179] Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, trans. by Mary Sarah Muldowney, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 38 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), p. 196 [227].
[180] See O'Donnell, p. 123.
[181] Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, p. 242. See, also, Schleiermacher, p. 640 [§139.2].
[182] See McFague, p. 169.

from others.[183] Human beings are thereby drawn more deeply into a network of loving relations, as the one bread is the oneness of humanity, and the oneness of humanity is the one bread.[184] Accordingly, it is in the sacramental participation of human beings in God's being that the inherent relationship of all individual persons to each other and to God is revealed most profoundly.[185] It is in, and through, the body of Christ that humankind may realise its true humanity.

The One Bread

There is no limit to the sanctuary of Christ, even though the salvific work begins with a single body, made Incarnate in history. The Church is the continued presence of the grace of Christ in the communal history of the one human race.[186] All human beings can therefore be members of Christ, as they are all capable of being incorporated into that body of the assembled people of God, which evermore extends in a worldly anticipation of transformation into the eternal Kingdom of God.[187] Indeed, the extension of the sacramental body of Christ even reaches out beyond the bodies of the believers to illumine the wider created world.[188] The particularity of Christ is not merely compatible with all who participate salvifically in His body, this particularity is also what preserves in the new creation the diversity of the many children of God.[189]

The sanctuary offered to the world in the one bread is a sanctuary with no foreordained limits.[190] The entire creation in which humankind tabernacles is the scope for God's

[183] McFague, p. 211.
[184] Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, p. 242.
[185] Boersma, p. 83.
[186] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 19.
[187] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 112.
[188] Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 283. See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans. by Gerald Vann (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 43.
[189] Fiddes, p. 290.
[190] Williams, *On Christian Theology*, pp. 231–32.

community of the redeemed. The whole Church is a "community of those who are on pilgrimage to the Lord in faith and love, and she only exists in individual human beings."[191] As such, no human person can be regarded as having totally fallen away from the God-given potential for incorporation into the salvific unity of the body of Christ, but all are capable of walking the way of their own unique journey and receiving the spiritual nourishment that it offers.[192] The human potential for salvation does not depend only on the religious piety or will of any of the individuals involved, but also and most expressly on the incessant grace of the Holy Spirit.[193] The shape of the body of Christ is thus being constantly reincarnated to include all in the life of God.[194]

The radical inclusivity of the body of Christ is of crucial significance for the human situation in the contemporary world. Our societies are becoming ever more divided into discrete identities that function as political units and encourage social division. As Joan Tronto perceptively observes, to conceive of a morality that can extend sympathy further than our own social group is perhaps the most fundamental question for postmodern life.[195] Yet, in acknowledging the centrality of our participation in Christ by means of the sacrament of the Eucharist, human beings can come to a real empathy for the other that transcends the limitations of identity politics. This is the kind of real empathy that can overcome the illusion of semblance that abolishes the Real other elsewhere in human experience, even within close-knit social groups.[196] The particularity of Jesus Christ thus awakens human beings to

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[191] Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, p. 113.
[192] See Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Divine Names', p. 123 [11.5].
[193] Semmelroth, p. 16. This is not to say that human readiness has no role to play in the effective reception of the sacrament, but that the willingness of an individual person to accept salvation is not the cause of the effective power of the sacrament. The willingness of the individual is rather the *condition*, brought about by the Holy Spirit, for the effective application of the grace of God that is offered. See Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 87.
[194] McFague, p. 164.
[195] Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), p. 59.
[196] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2008), p. 202.

the particularity of all bodies.[197] There is an integral relationship between a Christian way of life and the experience of forgiveness and grace in the sacrament of the Eucharist: the grace that is found in the Eucharist must be expressed and deepened in the interpersonal relations of everyday life.[198] This is how human beings may begin to relate to another person wholly as they are in themselves—children of God and bearers of the likeness of Christ.

The inescapably relational character of the embodiedness of individual persons is key to a gendered and queered theological anthropology, and to sacramental grace. There is a synergy to grace, as human beings live in relation to themselves, to others, to the created world itself, and to God.[199] In fact, as Margaret Farley perceives, relationality is "equiprimordial with autonomy" in human existence as a feature of personhood.[200] Nowhere is this clearer than in the body of Christ, where the human relationship to otherness, even Absolute Otherness, is characterised by a perfect harmony and mutual cooperation, rather than by competition or the exercise of power.[201] In consequence, living out this fundamental relationality in a life of grace, through the sacrament that is the body of Christ, involves worshipping alongside those with whom one disagrees and interacting with those with whom one would not usually associate.[202]

The co-enveloping of bodies in love that takes place through the Eucharist is the life of the Trinity, analogously embodied in such a way that it is inexplicably yet salvifically bound up with the materiality of human existence.[203] It is here that human persons are given the most intimate closeness with Jesus and are assured in ever new ways of God's self-communication,

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[197] Fiddes, p. 292.
[198] Timothy F. Sedgwick, p. 61.
[199] Brock and Parker, p. 248.
[200] Margaret A. Farley, 'Theology and Bioethics', in *Theology and Bioethics: Exploring the Foundations and Frontiers*, ed. by Earl E. Shelp, Philosophy and Medicine, 20 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 2010), pp. 163–86 (p. 167).
[201] Farley, p. 176.
[202] Susan A. Ross, p. 229.
[203] Eugene F. Rogers, 'Sanctification, Homosexuality, and God's Triune Life', in *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. by Eugene F. Rogers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 217–46 (p. 233).

as God relates to them and as they relate to others.[204] As Sallie McFague points out, the Church is thus the assembly of the people of God precisely where the liberating, healing, inclusive love of the embodied God occurs.[205] The sacrament of the Eucharist both helps and challenges human beings to keep the great commandments to love God and to love their neighbour.[206] It is a call to live out the new creation in the body of Christ. Yet, it is significant that, rather than erasing the difference of others, to love the fellow members of the body of Christ in the way that human beings are commanded to requires the acknowledgement of a certain amount of tension among the constitutive elements of the body.[207] To love as we are loved requires the recognition and appreciation of the ambiguity, even incoherence, of human life and the multitude of differences that contribute to our embodied reality.[208]

Receiving the body of Christ sensitises human persons to love one another in a way that opens one to the plight of the other. This other is to us a real other in possession of their own plight, as a co-member of the body of Christ, longing for the sanctifying grace of God. In fact, the sacraments are efficacious for the individual "only to the extent that they encounter man's openness and freedom."[209] The empathetic love that is inspired through freely opening oneself to the other when partaking of the body of Christ opens the eyes of human beings to our own ontic reality. It enables us to realise that the whole of salvation history, including the historical and sacramental presence of Jesus in the world, is one vast

[204] Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, pp. 193–94.
[205] McFague, p. 206.
[206] Flannery O'Connor, 'To Dr. T. R. Spivey: 19 August 59', in *The Habit of Being: Letters*, ed. by Sally Fitzgerald (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 345–47 (p. 346). See Matthew 22.35–40; Mark 12.28–34; and Luke 10.27.
[207] See Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, pp. 43–44.
[208] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics, 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 97.
[209] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 414.

liturgy that is an earthly and temporal image of the eternal life of God.[210] Through the apex of the sacramental liturgy, in the reception of the consecrated body and the blood of Jesus Christ, the invisible and eternal Kingdom of God is made visible through the blessed spectacle of an unspeakable mystery. This mystery is the Christlikeness of other material bodies, including those who are so often marginalised because of their gender or sexuality.[211]

What is more, the sacramental vision of the Kingdom of God is not a lifeless one. This is a living image of Christ that always preserves the indistinguishability of the human and the Divine presence in its very substance, as these are inseparably apprehended through the Hypostatic Union in Jesus Christ.[212] So, by means of their participation in Christ's heavenly worship of the Father through the Holy Spirit, human beings can partake in both the temporal and eternal liturgies of salvation history through the sacrament of the Eucharist, which goes beyond the sanctuary to sensitise people to God's love, and extends the body of Christ to all who are in need of it. This is because all human beings are called into existence by the one and the same Word of God, and all persons have as their ultimate destiny the attainment of eternal life with God.[213]

So, in the body of Christ, the past, present, and future are not mutually exclusive.[214] The Eucharist transcends time for human beings because it presents itself before the eternal transcendence of the risen Christ.[215] This temporal plenitude is integral to its universal

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[210] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages: Historical Survey*, ed. by Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons, trans. by Gemma Simmonds, Richard Price, and Christopher Stevens, 2nd edn (London: SCM Press, 2006), p. 194.
[211] Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, p. 44 [IX.23].
[212] Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, trans. by Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 122 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), p. 118 [I.18]; Basil of Caesarea, *Letters: 1–185*, trans. by Agnes Clare Way, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, 13, 2 vols (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), I, p. 88 [XXXVIII.7].
[213] Rahner, 'Unity of Church', XX, p. 160.
[214] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica: Part III, QQ. LX.–LXXXIII*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edn, 22 vols (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1923), XVII, p. 269 [III, q. 73, a. 4, resp.]. See, also, Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, XVII, p. 6 [III, q. 60, a. 3, resp.]; Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, pp. 258–62.
[215] Sokolowski, p. 33.

efficacy and inclusiveness within creation.[216] The Eucharist thus lives in the present, the past, and the future; it and its recipients cannot exist outside of this historical and eschatological framework.[217] The incarnate flesh of Christ is the norm and the standard that reaches backwards to the beginning of time and forwards to its end, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.[218] In this body, the whole mystery of human salvation is sacramentally present and united as one bread.[219] This means that the continuity of the sacramental body stretches backwards in time and God, by becoming flesh and dwelling among humanity, once more dwells within all flesh by the assumption of one sacramental flesh.[220] It is in this way that the body of Christ encompasses the whole of the human condition and the whole of the human race. Partaking of the sacrament is to celebrate the memory of Jesus Christ, who shared one last meal with his disciples before his death and resurrection. All subsequent eucharistic meals recollect the fragments of this sacramental history and the episodic yet continuous intervention of the Divine into human life through the liturgy of the Church. These individual liturgies are actualising fulfilments of the fundamental sacrament that is the broken body of the Divine-human Jesus Christ.[221]

Remembering the life and death of Jesus Christ is an indispensable part of the sacramental liturgy that unifies in mind and body all those who partake in the one bread. As Karen O'Donnell argues, in the liturgical act, done in remembrance of Him, bodies and memories come together.[222] This temporal plenitude, encompassing the whole sacramental history of the Church, has allowed human persons throughout time to share physically in an event which is historically unique: the giving of the body and the blood of Christ once for all upon

[216] Ward, *Cities*, p. 171.
[217] Zizioulas, *Communion and the World*, p. 74.
[218] Boersma, p. 188.
[219] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, XVII, p. 448 [III, q. 83, a. 4, resp.].
[220] Hilary of Poitiers, p. 55 [II.25]. See, also, Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II.I, pp. 53–54.
[221] Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 28.
[222] O'Donnell, p. 16. Cf. Mark 14.22–25; Luke 22.18–20; I Corinthians 23–25.

the Cross.[223] The Eucharist draws human beings into the collective memorialisation of the self-giving sacrifice of the Son of God, which was preordained before the creation of the world to be part of the sacramental economy of salvation through the very conditions of our own material existence. The liturgical act of remembrance is consequently *anamnesis* not only of the self-sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ upon the Cross at Calvary, but it is also a participation of embodied human individuals, through the Holy Spirit, in the whole history of creation, as well as in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.[224] At all levels and in all its forms, the community of believers is transformed into the body of Jesus Christ itself, in concert with all those who, throughout time, have partaken of the one bread.[225] Yet there is a further significance to the temporal dimension of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

At the moment of consecration, the liturgy of the sacrament imitates the life-giving Incarnation of the historical person of Jesus Christ in an act of nonidentical repetition across space and time.[226] The act of repetition that constitutes the eucharistic liturgy is recollected forward, and directed toward the eschatological realisation of the fulness of the body of Christ.[227] This means that the sacramental presence of Christ actively persists through all its variations of temporal or spatial location, as the sharing of the bread and the wine is achieved in the multiplicity of the presence of Christ as the life-giving Triune action of the mystery of salvation itself.[228] As a result, the liturgy of the sacrament enfolds within itself the past, the present, and the future, as it is sustained by the nonidentical repetition of the displaced body of Christ.

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[223] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 260.
[224] Hancock, p. 64; Torrance, p. 109.
[225] Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 193.
[226] O'Donnell, p. 122; Pickstock, p. 19.
[227] Søren Kierkegaard, 'Repetition', in *Fear and Trembling; Repetition*, ed. & trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings, 6 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 125–232 (p. 131).
[228] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 260; Pickstock, p. 31; Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 412.

As it is one bread, the infinite nonidentical repetition of the displaced body of Christ secures the eternal significance of embodied personal identity in the Trinitarian life of God, through the Incarnate flesh of Godself.[229] The historical actuality of the body of Christ comes into existence over and over again in the sacrament of the Eucharist—it is an unanalysable compound of similarity and difference that was, and is, and is to come.[230] In the eucharistic celebration of the Church, the body and blood of Jesus Christ therefore continue to be efficacious *in* history by the liturgical act, so that these two realities "cannot be completely separated in theological reflection."[231] The corporeal existence of Jesus Christ is extended and multiplied in the sacrament of the Eucharist in order to remain integrally within all parts of its body.[232] This sameness, the continuity of the body of Christ, is only obtainable through difference in time and space.[233] The entire history and purpose of the whole world, summated in the Word through whom all things were made, is made sacramentally present in the here and now of salvation history as the one bread—the bread of life.[234]

Conclusion

This chapter has covered the role of grace, the Church, and the sacrament of the Eucharist in building a gendered and queered theological anthropology. The central point has been that grace enables the love of God to be more fully realised in human lives, particularly when they grow in holiness through participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist and through building healthy relationships with others, based on the recognition and appreciation of their alterity. This is how the inexhaustible wellspring of Divine grace works through the Holy Spirit: to transform the whole of human existence into a state that is more reflective of its

[229] Kierkegaard, 'Repetition', p. 133; Pickstock, p. 139.
[230] Kierkegaard, 'Repetition', p. 149; Pickstock, p. 51. Cf. Revelation 1.8.
[231] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 426.
[232] Pickstock, pp. 43–44.
[233] Pickstock, p. 53.
[234] Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, p. 90. Cf. John 6.35.

teleological fulfilment in the new creation. It has also been shown how humankind is most open to this fulfilment when it gratefully receives the other who is Christ, and that God communicates Godself by being present to human beings in and through the most fundamental aspects of their material existence. Finally, the chapter argues that the sacrament of the Eucharist is not only the highest degree of the actualisation of the Church, but also the very essence of the Church itself. The Church is thus most truly the body of Christ when it welcomes all bodies and reconciles them with eternal life.

The transcendental orientation of every person carries its own Divine authentication within their unique self and can have no basis outside this self, other than its contingency upon the graciousness of God Godself. As a result, an existence of limitless grace is the Divine possibility of humankind.[235] This means that every individual, of any sexuality or gender, is imprinted as a whole person with the sanctifying seal of Divine love and brought to the full image and likeness of God through the body of Christ. As Rahner wisely wrote: "The really ultimate thing [about a Christian] is that he accepts himself just as he is."[236] No aspect of a person or feature of their embodied existence may therefore be separated from the whole. Nothing is removed from that which is graciously saved by the love of God, as is expressed most fully in creation through the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Here, the salvific communion of all humanity in Godlikeness is revealed through grace, in their sanctification by God the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, key to building a gendered and queered theological anthropology is a re-evaluation of the role of the Church and its relationship with every day human life. The grace of God, at work in the world through the Holy Spirit and the sacraments, is the ultimate affirmation of the queerness of human beings and their alterity. Through the sacrament of

[235] Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 242.
[236] Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 402.

the Eucharist, God continually offers Godself in gracious love to sanctify humankind in all its diversity and otherness. Indeed, human salvation is mediated exclusively through Divine grace, though this grace is always a gift from God that reunites human persons with God.[237] Human persons can only accept the grace that God offers to them in the sacramental presence of Godself through the free disposition of their entire self, for God already sustains and has engraced their contingent, embodied existence through the Holy Spirit.[238]

[237] Cheng, *From Sin*, p. 26.
[238] Rahner, 'The Concept of "Witness"', XIII, p. 167.

Conclusion

Love him, and let him love you. Do you think anything else under heaven really matters?[1]

'Gendering and Queering Theological Anthropology: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges' has attempted to reimagine Christian theological anthropology, building on the work of both ancient and modern theologians regarding the questions of gender and sexuality. It has sought to deconstruct binary labels in favour of understanding human identity to be dynamic, relational, and always in a state of growth. The primary interlocutor of the thesis has been Karl Rahner. Chapter One discussed the creation of humankind as narrated in the Book of Genesis, and key issues of ontology, openness and freedom, and authority and dominion. In Chapter Two, the relationship between sin, sex, and gender in Christian theology was examined, with a particular critique of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. In Chapter Three, the Incarnation was considered in light of the Chalcedonian Definition, the analogy of being, and the mysteriousness of human and Divine persons. In Chapter Four, the cultural history of Western attitudes to human sexuality was reviewed, the LGBTQIA+ experience of coming out assessed theologically, and the Hypostatic Union in the person of Jesus Christ proposed as a model for understanding the difference of human persons from each other. In Chapter Five, the roles of grace, the Church, and the sacrament of the Eucharist were explicated considering their emphasis on the collective unity of human persons, which simultaneously reinforces our embodiedness, individuality, and uniqueness.

The main objective of this thesis was to develop an inclusive theological vision of the human person that affirms the equality, dignity, and uniqueness of each embodied individual. The thesis has emerged from the profound convictions that all human beings are created in the

[1] James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Great Loves, 17 (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 50.

image of God, and that all human beings have the potential to realise themselves as likenesses of God in imitation of Christ, whatever their gender or sexuality. There has been an attempt made to facilitate a fruitful dialogue between the contemporary challenges posed by the insights of queer theory and gender and sexuality studies and historical Christian perspectives in theological anthropology. This thesis has also looked for a way to explain the diversity of human beings that does not reduce the significance of the differences between them but recognises their unity in God through Christ. The approach that is taken appreciates the value and dignity that interpersonal difference contributes to the purposes of God for the diversity and fulfilment of creation.

One of the main themes explored in this thesis is that of freedom. It is fundamental to the creation of human beings in the image of God that they are given the freedom to act according to their own will, and this includes the way in which people express their God-given gender or sexuality. Moreover, it is shown in this thesis that human freedom speaks to the glorification of God, because it is a limited analogy of the absolute freedom that God exercises most distinctively in the act of *creatio ex nihilo*. It is in the exercise of their freedom that human beings can actualise their transcendental orientation towards God. Accordingly, this thesis underlines how this freedom is only given to humankind by God, and so is subject to limits and responsibilities commensurate with the vocation of each human person within creation. This freedom, to choose the way in which they act individually and collectively in the world is the basis of the status of humankind as co-creators with God. We have the authority and dominion to choose whether to shepherd creation in line with the Divine economy of salvation history.

A second theme in this gendered and queered theological anthropology is the notion that human beings are open to otherness. The idea is that, by the fundamental character of their created existence, human beings are always open to the Absolute Other, who is God, and to

others around them in creation. The relationality that humans experience is constantly central to their existence, as they are all contingent beings who rely on the will of God to sustain them. Their openness to that which is other to them also means that human beings are in constant relationship to other people, to other creatures, and to the wider natural world. This openness to alterity allows humans to see that all the diverse aspects of creation have been created by God for God's own purposes, and that others should therefore be treated with the respect due to them. It also allows individuals to find their own unique identity within the near-limitless multiplicity of creation. As such, the openness to alterity of human beings enables them to realise their vocation to be co-partners in the work of God, and to exercise responsible stewardship of care and love for the world that God has made.

A third theme that is key to this theological anthropology is the idea of the dignity of human personhood. The thesis argues that human beings are dignified because they, as a material and spiritual whole, are created by God, who carefully fashions them by God's own hand in God's own image. It is shown that the way in which human beings are created, and the purpose for which they are intended, accords them a sacred status within creation, which means that they are holders of an inviolable dignity. This thesis thus affirms an essential egalitarianism in dignity between all human persons who are made in the image of God and offers a critique of discrimination or exploitation of people due to their sexuality, gender, or body.

A fourth theme of the thesis is the interrelation of sin and human sexuality. It explains how the issue of sin has been something of a spanner in the works of theological anthropology, especially when it comes to understanding fully the value of the embodied characteristics of human existence such as gender and sexuality. This gendered and queered theological anthropology argues that the mainstream historical development of hamartiology, which strongly associates the transmission of sin with the process of heterosexual reproduction,

fails to take properly into account the lives of human persons with nonheteronormative sexualities. It critiques the Augustinian doctrine of original sin for reinforcing gender stereotypes and devaluing human bodies, and reveals how it is based on questionable interpretations of key biblical texts from the Book of Genesis and the Letter of St Paul to the Romans. It also argues against such hamartiologies on the basis that they discriminate against women, by envisioning them as weaker and more susceptible to sin, and by labelling them as more sensuous and earthy than men who, by contrast, are depicted as rational and more proper images of God. The thesis further highlighted that the exceptional status given to men is in fact illogical and without sufficient foundation. In this way, it argues that Augustinian doctrines of original sin should be dispensed with in contemporary theological anthropology, as they often reinforce an uneven gender binary which places the Divine sacrality of humanity only in the rational minds of men.

A fifth theme of a gendered and queered theological anthropology as explicated in this thesis is that of the dynamism of human existence. Human beings are never the same from one moment to the next, as their very being is constantly changing through the oscillation of the analogy of being and through the developments of salvation history. It is therefore shown how this dynamism is fundamental to the freedom of human persons and their relationship to alterity, so that all individuals make progress in holiness according to their own way, from their creation in the image of God towards the full actualisation of their Godlikeness. Accordingly, the thesis argues that it is extremely difficult to provide a closed definition of what any human being is in terms of their individual personhood, let alone what humanity is as a whole. Yet it is also the case that this dynamism, which shares some parallels with the indefinability of queerness in queer theory, is precisely what affords human beings their dignity and freedom in the image of God, because God Godself is incapable of being pinned down or fully defined.

A sixth theme within this gendered and queered theological anthropology is that of mystery. Building primarily on the writings of Karl Rahner, this thesis argues that an apophatic approach is key to understanding theological anthropology as much as it is key to understanding a Chalcedonian Christology. This builds upon the theme of dynamism, to show that that which is mysterious is less easy to define, or to confine, within heteronormative categories and power structures. The thesis also established that there is an analogous connection between the mystery of human beings and the Absolute Mystery of God, through the Hypostatic Union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. In the case of human beings, where value judgments are often made based on attributes such as gender or sexuality, the point of this emphasis upon their mysteriousness is to push human persons beyond definability, so that individuals cannot be marginalised or discriminated against based on any worldly labels or classifications. If humans are constantly moving and changing, being moulded according to the image of God and actualising their potential for Godlikeness, it becomes much more difficult to categorise them in a definitive way. Human persons are constantly free to defy the expectations of others as beings with unique identities but without essences. Hence, through the exercise of their God-given freedom, which is summated in the choice to participate in the body of Christ, this thesis argues that human persons retain an element of mystery which is analogous to that of the Absolute Mystery.

A seventh theme which is important to this thesis is queerness itself. Queer theory and queer theology are engaged on several levels. The intention is to provide a critical appropriation of queer theory and assess the contribution that it can make to theological discourse—especially to a Christian understanding of human personhood. The historical background to queer theory is also explored, to see how the development of this field can contribute positively to a theological anthropology. The work of key thinkers such as Judith Butler, Marcella Althaus-

Reid, Susannah Cornwall, and Linn Marie Tonstad is engaged to deconstruct some of the binary heteronormative power structures which affect the conduct of theological anthropology. Of particular focus are those which function to bar certain human beings from proper inclusion and respect within Christian theology more broadly conceived.

An eighth main theme of the gendered and queered theological anthropology presented in this thesis concerns the embodiment of human persons and their participation in the body of Christ. The thesis argues that all persons, by the very fact of being created human, are particular and unique in their embodied individuality. The importance of viewing the value and dignity of human beings holistically, as a unity of their material and spiritual attributes, in the image of God, is stressed. This is not least summed up by the person of Jesus Christ, who is only the saviour of all humankind precisely because of the embodiment of the Word of God as a particular human individual. The Incarnation is held to provide the definitive model through which to understand the vital importance of the human body in a gendered and queered theological anthropology. No human body can be fully considered to be part of the body of Christ in all its glory until every person is recognised, valued, and included. Each human individual has the potential for this salvific participation in God, in all their embodied distinctiveness and uniqueness. The thesis therefore maintains that the participation of human beings in the body of Christ, through the Church, and by means of grace, has sincere and profound ethical implications for the way in which individual Christians should treat other people and the world around them.

The overall conclusion of this thesis is that a gendered and queered theological anthropology makes an ethical demand upon Christians to love as they are loved by God. This means fully recognising and respecting the value and dignity of persons of nonheteronormative sexualities or non-male genders. Queer theory, through its recognition of the instability of human identity and the diverse variability of lived experiences in the created world, has much

to contribute to a theological anthropology that seeks to understand the full scope, diversity, and profundity of humanity. The fundamental approach taken in this thesis has been a reconciliatory one. It has combined the insightful historical perspectives of the Christian theological tradition with the latest work in gender, sexuality, and queer studies to challenge them both. In particular, the thesis argues that to break down the relationships that bind people together is to act in a way that is contrary to the purposes of God. The relationality of human existence, its openness to alterity, and the freedom of individuals to make choices for themselves are fundamental to the ontic reality of human life and its eschatological fulfilment. In particular, a gendered and queered theological anthropology asserts unashamedly that the experiences of minorities and marginalised persons can contribute to a richer and more profound understanding of Divine and human existence in general.

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