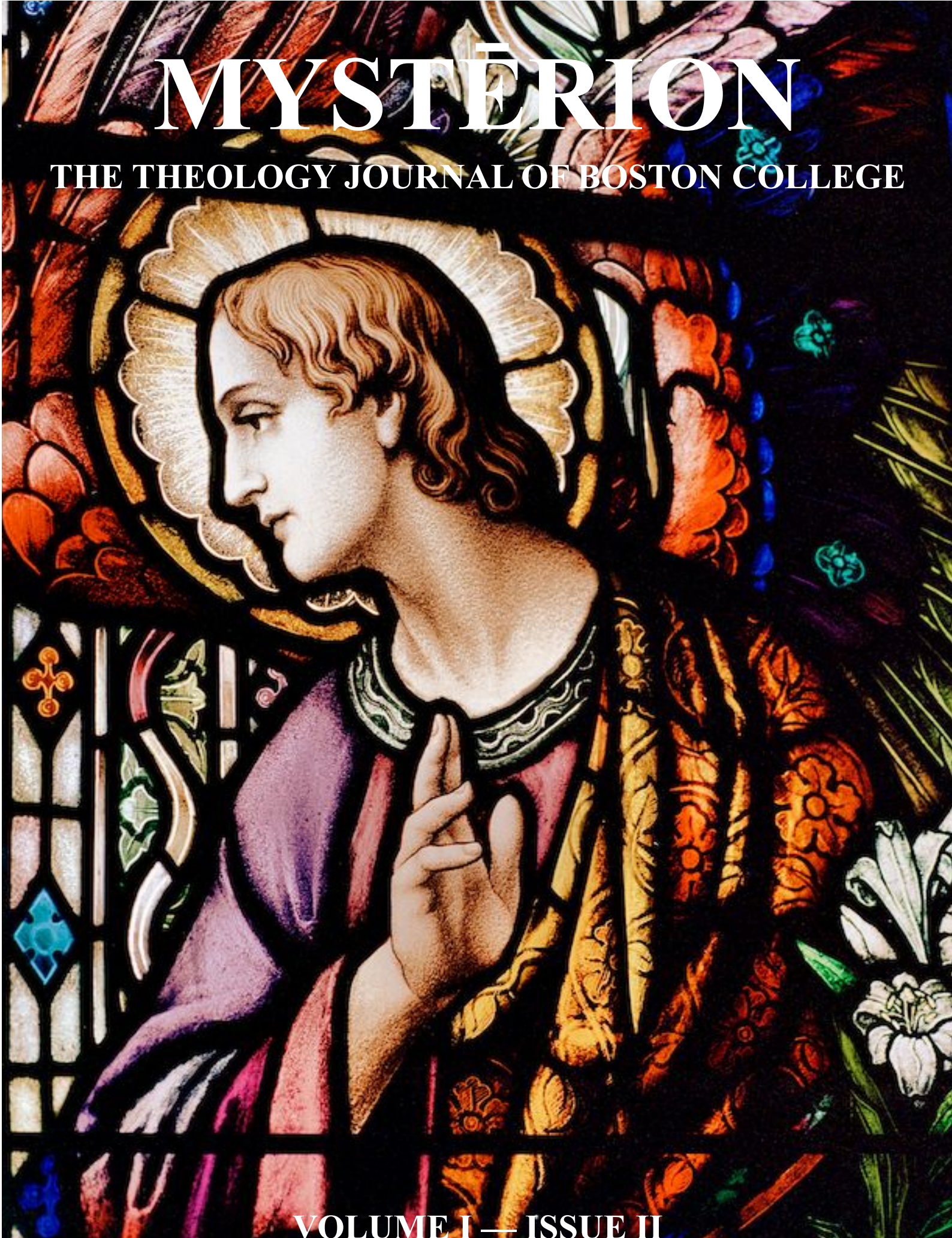# MYSTĒRION

THE THEOLOGY JOURNAL OF BOSTON COLLEGE

MYSTĒRION: THE THEOLOGY JOURNAL OF BOSTON COLLEGE

VOLUME I, ISSUE II

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reflections on the Inaugural Volume of *Mystērion*: Demonstrated Interest, Future Possibilities

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REFLECTIONS ON THE INAUGURAL VOLUME OF *MYSTĒRION*: DEMONSTRATED INTEREST, FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

DENNIS J. WIEBOLDT III [*]

In his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis emphasized the important role that theologians play in assisting the Church in "grow[ing] in her interpretation of the revealed word and in understanding of truth."[2] Promulgated over two decades after *Ex corde Ecclesiae*—Pope John Paul II's apostolic constitution on Catholic universities—*Evangelii gaudium* similarly emphasized the centrality of the Church's teachers, lay and religious, to the fulfillment of the Church's responsibility to proclaim the Gospel.[3] Understood in conversation with Francis's recent *motu proprio* instituting the Ministry of Catechist, the Holy Father is especially calling today's Catholic educators and students to focus intently on the intellectual and spiritual renewal made possible by engagement with Catholic theology.[4]

In the university, as in our homes and places of worship, Francis encourages believers to take seriously the responsibility to receive, transmit, and live the Tradition of the Church by reflecting sincerely on that which God has revealed to humanity and responding in light of the Gospel's commands. In one way, this three-fold task of reception, transmission, and lived discipleship begins with the intellectual inquiry made especially fruitful in the university setting, but it also can (and should) involve other forms of reflection—especially

[2] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World *Evangelii gaudium*, §40 (24 November 2013), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangeliigaudium.html#_ftn42.

[3] See John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, (15 August 1990), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html.

[4] See Francis, Apostolic Letter Issued "Motu Proprio" Instituting the Ministry of Catechist *Antiquum ministerium*, (10 May 2021), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20210510_antiquum-ministerium.html.

on our distinctly personal experiences and those of our neighbors. Indeed, if the Catholic Church is to be truly catholic (in the universal sense of the term), it must necessarily engage with those inside and outside of the Tradition. True to the archetype of Christ's ministry, the spirit of the Gospels, the example of the Apostle Paul, the theology of Saint Augustine, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and the exhortations of John Paul II and Francis, Catholic engagement in a multi-religious global context has perhaps never been more vital.[5]

In light of the ever-changing international religious landscape, it should come as no surprise that the theme of the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA)—the largest professional society of Catholic theologians in the world—is "Thinking Catholic Interreligiously." In his announcement of the 2022 theme, CTSA President-Elect, Harvard Divinity School Parkman Professor of Divinity, and Professor of Comparative Theology Francis X. Clooney, S.J., well-describes the task given to Catholics in considering the relationship between academic theology and the demands placed upon membership in the Universal Church: "We must find ways to ponder the mysteries of our faith *and* think interreligiously, but with a humility [that] purifies us of erring ways of theologizing that have done justice neither to our faith or the faiths of our sisters and brothers around the world."[6]

I raise the importance of robust, multi-faith dialogue in this second editor's note because *Mystērion* occupies a unique position at an American Catholic university amidst what must be acknowledged as one of the most challenging times in the Church's recent history.[7] In addition to the restrictions placed on physical participation in the liturgy due to COVID-19, long-standing national trends leading away from organized religion in the U.S. have certainly not facilitated great improvement in American Catholic religiosity, even if

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[5] See, e.g., Mt 8:5-13, Mt 10:5-23, Jn 4:1-42 (NRSV); Mt 28:19-20, Mk 16:15 (NRSV); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2019), I.9, I.24, V.19; Vatican Council II, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, §2 (21 November 1964), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.v a/arc hive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html; Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, §92 (7 December 1965), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_ gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

[6] Francis X. Clooney, S.J., "Thinking Catholic Interreligiously: CTSA Convention Theme, Atlanta, June 9-12, 2022," https://ctsa-online.org/resources/Convention%202022/CTSA%202022%20Theme.pdf (emphasis original).

[7] For the first of these editor's notes, see Dennis J. Wieboldt III, "Inaugural Editor's Note," *Mystērion: The Theology Journal of Boston College* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2021): 2-4.

the share of Catholics in the United States remains the same today as it was in 2014 (21%).[8] Compounded by the lingering effects of the sexual abuse crisis, which was first revealed twenty years ago this year, and concerns about the role of Christian (and, even more specifically, Catholic) leaders in the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, for example, little seems to suggest that the American Church is enjoying a time of particularly great blessing.[9]

Despite all the challenges facing the Church in the U.S. and abroad, Catholic colleges and universities have demonstrated the promise that intra- and inter-Tradition dialogue has for assisting the Church in the fulfillment of its pastoral mission. In fact, the Boston College Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life's 19th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecture featured Jonathan Lee Walton—Dean of the Wake Forest School of Divinity, Presidential Chair of Religion and Society, and Dean of Wait Chapel—who spoke to the campus community about the relationship between Protestant religiosity and the "American Gospel of Success." Similarly, the Boston College Center for Christian-Jewish Learning's 9th Annual John Paul II Lecture in Christian-Jewish Relations featured Boston University Aurelio Professor of Scripture *emerita* and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem Paula Fredriksen, who lectured on "The Crowded Cosmos of Ancient Jews and Christians." While neither of these endowed lectures were marketed as ways for the University to fulfill its obligation to help the Church "grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in understanding of truth," they, in conversation with other courses and programs on this campus alone, certainly reflect a holistic understanding of the Catholic university as a place for robust intellectual inquiry. Indeed, neither Walton nor Fredriksen made presentations on Catholic theology, and yet anyone in attendance could certainly attest to the way in which their diverse theological perspectives and interests benefited attendees from this Jesuit, Catholic university.

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[8] See Gregory A. Smith, "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated," *Pew Research Center*, December 14, 2021, https://www.pewforum.org/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/ (accessed January 14, 2022).

[9] See, respectively, Kathleen McChesney, "20 Years After Spotlight Investigation of the Catholic Sex Abuse Crisis, is the Church a Safer Place?," *America*, January 5, 2022, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/01/05/spotlight-clergy-sexual-abuse-20-year-anniversary-242153 (accessed January 14, 2022); Emma Green, "A Christian Insurrection: Many of Those who Mobbed the Capitol on Wednesday Claimed to be Enacting God's Will," *The Atlantic*, January 8, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2021/01/evangelicals-catholics-jericho-march-capitol/617591/ (accessed January 14, 2022); James Martin, S.J., "How Catholic Leaders Helped Give Rise to Violence at the U.S. Capitol," *America*, January 12, 2021, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/01/12/capitol-riot-congress-trump-catholic-bishops-james-martin-239697 (accessed January 14, 2022).

As I wrote in my inaugural editor's note, I hope that the establishment and continued success of *Mystērion* meaningfully contributes to Boston College's institutional mission as a twenty-first-century Catholic university guided by *Ex corde* Ecclesiae's call to pursue "without reserve …. the cause of truth."[10] With the support of countless faculty, staff, students, and administrators, this inaugural volume demonstrates that *Mystērion* has proudly accepted the challenge to serve as a thoughtful venue for undergraduates of all religious dispositions and intellectual commitments to engage with theological questions old and new.

If John Paul II was right in purporting that the defense of human dignity and the proclamation of the Gospel message should be at the forefront of the Church's earthly ministry, than it must also be true that "[t]here is today no more urgent preparation for the performance of these tasks than … to lead people to discover both their capacity to know the truth and their yearning for the ultimate and definitive meaning of life."[11] Like other courses and programs on campus, this inaugural volume certainly speaks to the many ways in which *Mystērion* can contribute to Boston College's fulfillment of this preparatory mission in Chestnut Hill and beyond.

Featuring six articles from undergraduate students at Boston College, Fordham University, and Princeton University, the first issue in this inaugural volume engaged with the relationship of feminist theology to American religion, the historiography of the now-infamous Salem Witch Trials, the role of prayer and language in the human experience, the Catholic Church's evolving position on questions of church and state, and how comparative theology can help us better understand human suffering and liberation.[12] According to computer-generated statistics generously compiled by the Boston College Libraries' digital publishing team, this inaugural issue was read online by users from 35 countries.[13] With

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[10] John Paul II, *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, §4.

[11] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Relationship Between Faith and Reason *Fides et ratio*, §102 (14 September 1998), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html#%243G [citing Vatican Council II, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, §1-3 (7 December 1965), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html].

[12] See Wieboldt, "Inaugural Editor's Note," 3.

[13] The gratitude of the journal's editorial team is particularly owed to Boston College Digital Publishing and Outreach Specialist Gabriel Feldstein, who has been incredibly supportive of *Mystērion*'s work since its inception.

nearly 500 article downloads in less than six months, the inaugural issue engaged a large, international audience on a diverse array of theological issues. Considering the positive reception to the inaugural issue's highlighting of young contributors' theological perspectives, I am confident that our inaugural issue's success set a strong precedent for the future potential of this journal.

Building on the inaugural issue, the second and final issue of this volume is comprised of eight original essays from undergraduates at Boston College, Marquette University, Santa Clara University, and Yale University. The articles focus on Saint Augustine's mysticism; ecological suffering; the liturgical status of Holy Saturday; the Parable of the Lost Sheep; the relationship between intersectionality, genocide, and Catholic Social Teaching; a Catholic response to college hookup culture; Latin American femicide; and Islamic-Christian reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In light of this journal's goal to highlight the diverse theological perspectives of undergraduate authors, I would like to briefly engage with each of this issue's contributors to pose further questions that might help enrich our readers' encounters with these authors.

Based on her careful reading of Augustine's *Confessions* and attentive treatment of Neoplatonic authors, Katie Painter—a junior at Yale University studying classics and religious studies—offers an insightful account of Augustine's mystical paradigm as articulated in the vision that he shares with his mother at Ostia. Demonstrating that Augustine's pattern of assent marks both a continuation of and break from the Neoplatonist tradition, she concludes that Augustine's paradigm is predicated on a belief that we can only make sense of divinity in terms of the material order. In doing so, she also suggests that Augustine offers a Christian optimism about one's potential union with the Divine, even despite our fallen nature. In a certain sense, she thus challenges traditional notions of 'Augustinian pessimism' and offers her readers an invitation to place her analysis of the *Confessions* in conversation with Augustine's other writings on accessing knowledge about God. In particular, I would suggest that additional support for her assertion about the centrality of the material order to human understanding of God can potentially be found in *The City of God*—perhaps Augustine's second most famous treatise. For example, Augustine often insists in *The City of God* that members of God's human creation learn

"through created things," a claim that undoubtedly points to the importance of the material order to Augustine's thinking about the omnipotent Creator.[14]

Ramon Duran—an undergraduate student in the Department of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University—engages the work of Elizabeth A. Johnson to integrate issues of environmental ethics with broader themes in Catholic moral theology. Explaining that experiences of pain can be a gift from God when understood as a defense against that which may threaten our physical (and, I would add, spiritual) lives, Duran argues that the pedagogical function of human experience (including suffering) should challenge us to focus on the ways in which knowledge about the human relationship to the environment is produced and transmitted. In doing so, Duran simultaneously emphasizes the importance of environmental education and raises the moral stakes of knowledge transmission. Moreover, in acknowledging that humans have the power to make choices of fundamental moral goodness and badness, he similarly raises the stakes of human engagement with the natural world. Considered alongside his analysis of Christ's suffering on the cross and its centrality to moral reasoning about environmental suffering, Duran offers an important reminder that Christians must carefully consider the multifaceted pedagogical function of suffering caused by human-initiated environmental degradation. Beyond the necessarily complex reasoning required to make sense of any form of suffering, Duran ought to prompt his readers to moreover integrate questions about individual agency in their thinking about the human person's place in the divinely ordained course of the universe, especially as these questions involve issues of (non)-human environmental suffering.

Drawing on the richness of her Methodist upbringing and her ecumenical concern for Christians' lack of proportionate liturgical attention to Holy Saturday, Nikita Deep—a 2021 psychology and theology graduate of Marquette University—builds upon existing scholarship in liturgical theology by using the trauma and memory of the Crucifixion as a starting-point for renewed attention to the 'tragic gap' of Holy Saturday. Instead of focusing merely on Christ's death and triumphant Resurrection, Deep contends that Christians of all denominations should pay keen attention to the memory of trauma commemorated by the

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[14] See, e.g., Augustine, *The City of God*, VII.10, XI.21. See also VII.6 (citing Rom 1:19): "Thus, God Himself revealed to them what may be known of Him, when His invisible things, and also His eternal power and Godhead, by which all visible and temporal things were made, were seen and understood by them through created things."

time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. By embracing this liturgical opportunity to engage with our own trauma in a constructive way, Deep suggests that Christians can enjoy an even greater hope of the eternal life made possible by the Paschal Mystery. Proposing an ecumenical Holy Saturday liturgy, Deep shows practically that a 'theology of pause' has, in fact, a clear pastoral relationship to Holy Saturday—one that we should attempt to apply to other facets of our lives.

Conor McCormick—a fourth-year student at Boston College studying philosophy and theology—provides a compelling survey of scholarship on the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15:4-7, as well as his own analysis of the Parable makes its learnings concrete for a modern reader. Like any other piece of rigorous biblical scholarship, McCormick's analysis remains faithful to the text and history of the Gospel of Luke, but nevertheless extends his insights immediately beyond the text by asking important questions about how Christ's ministry can help us understand the human person's movement towards an ever-closer relationship with God. For example, McCormick's positing of a queer interpretation of the Parable, while certainly defended with care, invites the reader to question how the queer and non-queer person should respond to the evident distance between many Christian communities and queer individuals if, indeed, the goal is to assist the human person—regardless of the person's sexuality or gender identity—in their development of an ever-closer relationship to God. While McCormick's article does not primarily focus on the potential theological challenges and implications of the invitation to this ever-deepening relationship, he provides an insightful, *caritas*-informed proposal for analyzing the conformity of existing models of engagement with queer and non-queer persons to the Gospel's commands. All things considered, by building his contemporary insights atop nuanced theological debates about the metaphorical symbolism in the Lukan narrative, McCormick's essay is both apt to foster the engagement of both scholars and generally interested Christians.

Leveraging his understanding of Catholic social teaching and his interest in political violence, Andrew Wilson—a 2021 political science graduate of Boston College—confronts the serious challenge of academic and political discourse about genocide. Wilson begins by tracing definitional controversies in rhetoric about genocides, but with, he argues, substantive implications because the "true perpetrators" of genocides are the "beneficiaries

of an outdated and limited definition of genocide." He then applies theological insights from Catholic social teaching to propose practical action tailored to a new generation of moral American leadership–one predicated on the shared value of human dignity. True to the core insights of Catholic social teaching, his proposal emphasizes international solidarity that is united by our fundamental humanity, but too diverse in culture and custom. While Wilson's reader might legitimately wonder about the efficacy of an eleven-part naming approach to genocidal action, his proposal should challenge us to consider Americans' moral and political obligation to confront the mass extermination of those made in God's image and likeness. In this way, Wilson too invites us to consider how forms of international economic, political, and military coercion with respect to human rights agreements meet or violate a truly Catholic understanding of achieving justice in a fallen world.

Providing an incisive indictment of college hookup culture, Emma Saart—a 2021 biochemistry graduate of Boston College with a minor in faith, peace, and justice—provides today's readers with a unique glimpse into the otherwise mysterious social practices of college students, paying particular attention to the harmful social expectations placed on young women and men to conform to expected visions of "femininity" and "masculinity" as portrayed in popular media. Drawing on Catholic social teaching, Saart proposes that college students and university administrators should not acquiesce in the status quo, instead responding to "college hookup culture" by undertaking individual and institutional actions that promote the *imago Dei* of every college student. In criticizing college hookup culture, Saart is careful not only to point out the serious flaws of defining personal freedom in terms of sexual promiscuity (as, she rightly points out, many leaders in the twentieth-century sexual freedom movement did), but also acknowledges that the opposite view (what she terms "purity culture") comes with its own set of potentially problematic (mis)-interpretations. Emphasizing in conclusion the importance of education to college students' ethical development, Saart offers the example of open dialogue about issues of social expectation and identity modeled by Professor Bridget Burke Ravizza at Saint Norbert College, thus challenging educators—particularly at Catholic institutions—to expand and refine the offerings available to students on their journeys. Wary of the extremes of forcing young students into strictly defined social binaries or mandating complete non-conformity

therewith, Saart offers a timely and thought-provoking contribution that reflects the need for sober consideration of the status of formative education in the twenty-first century U.S.

Beginning with a personal anecdote about her participation in a 2018 march against femicide in Argentina, Alejandra Wright—a 2021 international studies and philosophy graduate of Boston College—discusses how misinterpretations of Catholic symbols have facilitated (if not encouraged and excused) the epidemic of femicide in Latin America. Enriched by the emerging subfield of *mujerista* theology and recent developments in academic theology that have emphasized attention to the lived experience of the faithful, especially in the Global South, Wright offers a constructive proposal for how traditional Catholic symbols can be authentically reclaimed in line with the spirit of the Gospels. Delicately distinguishing between the misinterpretation of classic symbols of sacrificial Catholic women (e.g., the Virgin Mary) and the women themselves, Wright expertly demonstrates that Catholics can indeed value the example of these women without excusing violence against women. In this way, she challenges professional theologians and laypersons alike to work diligently to create a new feminist theological framework centered around the symbol of the Virgin Mary as portrayed at the Crucifixion in John's Gospel.

In the final article of this issue, Jack Engelmann—a fourth-year undergraduate in Boston College's Theology Department—offers the example of post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina to elucidate the contours of effective and ineffective methods of Islamic-Christian dialogue. Contrasting the horrors of the twentieth-century Bosnian genocide, in which Serbian nationalist fighters systematically killed over 80,000 Bosnian Muslims, with Christian and Muslim doctrines that have facilitated productive dialogue in a religiously plural environment, his article is particularly well-suited to this moment of religious pluralism in the U.S. and abroad. Indeed, Engelmann's employment of theological concepts from multiple traditions to analyze the multi-faceted process and implications of post-conflict peacebuilding should prompt his readers to think more intently about how individuals of all religious dispositions should respond to issues of ongoing religious intolerance across the globe.

If Paul Ramsey was right in saying that "[t]he highest tribute one can pay any thinker, or any body of writing, is to wrestle with it," then I hope my wrestling with this issue's authors indicates praise on behalf of *Mystērion*'s entire editorial team and readership for the thoughtful pieces published herein.[15] By virtue of the volume of submissions to *Mystērion*'s first two issues, as well as the impressive scope of the journal's readership, it is clear that there is demonstrated interest in the perspectives authored by the next generation of theologians, just fourteen of whom have had their ideas made public here.

As this journal embarks on its second volume, I have little doubt that future opportunities for engagement with this next generation of scholars await this journal's readers, just as the opportunities for *Mystērion* to contribute to the Catholic and Jesuit mission of the University are similarly unbounded. Under the leadership of a soon-to-be announced successor to this editor in-chief, I am optimistic that more young people inside and outside of the Christian Tradition will have an opportunity to assist in the Universal Church's ever-growing interpretation of the revealed word and understanding of truth, even when that assistance challenges conventional wisdom or comes from those outside of the Tradition. Faithful to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, then, this journal—as the university of which it is a part—must embark on its future by confronting the "unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts [of people]" by providing a forum for all to dialogue, "carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life," so that we might "recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral" that contribute to our ever-more-full cooperation with God's plan for human creation.[16]

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[15] Paul Ramsey, *Nine Modern Moralists* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 1.
[16] Vatican Council II, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra aetate*, §1-2 (28 October 1965), at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

From Ostia to Avila: On the "Incarnational" Mysticism of Saint Augustine

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FROM OSTIA TO AVILA:

ON THE "INCARNATIONAL" MYSTICISM OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

KATIE PAINTER [*]

Abstract: Saint Augustine's account of his mystical vision at Ostia left a profound influence on later Christian mystics. This article examines the mystical paradigm set forth by Augustine and evaluates its impact on the tradition of Christian mysticism in both the Greek East and Latin West. The Augustinian paradigm begins from vestiges of Neoplatonist philosophy, outlining a formal pattern of ascent to the purely intelligible realm of divine wisdom. Augustine's persistent use of corporeal language and imagery diverges from the Greco-Roman past, however, to incorporate elements of the created order into his experience of the purely intelligible realm, thereby rejecting Plotinus's notion of an unfallen self that can be fully divorced from the material world. Instead, Augustine retains a sacramental regard for the created order, developing a mystical paradigm which acknowledges that the human soul can only access and make sense of divinity in terms of the material world. The Augustinian pattern of ascent ultimately reflects the doctrine of the Incarnation by suggesting that divine Truth is revealed in corporeal form. This pattern exerted a special influence on Saint Teresa of Avila, who adopted elements of Augustinian mysticism in her own reflections on achieving union with God in spite of sin. Through the ages, Augustine's mystical paradigm can be seen as foundational in the line of Christian mystics, carrying with it a distinctly Christian optimism which suggests that holiness and intimate union with the divine are still attainable in a fallen and finite universe.

The vision that Saint Augustine shares with his mother at Ostia represents one of the most vivid and influential scenes in the *Confessions*. It supplies important insight into the mysticism of Augustine, exemplifying the mystical paradigm that he sets forth in the Christian tradition. This essay, consisting of three parts, aims to unravel the complex intertwinement of mysticism and materiality in the Augustinian mode of ascent. I begin by identifying what it is that makes Augustine a "mystic" and what defines his experience at Ostia as "mystical." I then argue that Augustine's mysticism operates within a central

paradox: he discusses each stage of his ascent to the higher world through a lens of intensely corporeal language, diverging from Neoplatonist patterns of ascent and ultimately, adapting his Neoplatonist background to reflect Christian doctrines of sin and salvation. Finally, I trace Augustine's influence on later mystics, examining in particular the influence that Augustine's mysticism and Christian anthropology left on Saint Teresa of Avila.

Whether Augustine can indeed be classified as a "mystic" remains a debated question; however, several key features of his writings indicate that he must be considered so. In the words of Jean Gerson, the *Catholic New Encyclopedia* defines mysticism as "knowledge of God by experience, arrived at through the embrace of unifying love," or the "the direct union of the human soul with the Divinity."[2] Taking these elements into account, Cuthbert Butler ventures to call Augustine "the Prince of the Mystics," citing the saint's "intellectual vision into things divine" and "love of God that was a consuming passion."[3] Both of these traits come forward in Augustine's account of his vision at Ostia, where he describes an experience of transcendental union with divine wisdom. Here he and his mother inquire together after the eternal life of the saints, which, he claims, "neither eye has seen nor ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man." Such an experience, he further contends, can only be attainable "if… the tumult of the flesh has fallen silent, if the images of earth, water, and air are quiescent."[4] This passage seems to suggest that Augustine's' mysticism consists entirely of leaving "flesh" and "images" behind, of *exchanging* these things for an unearthly and immaterial reality. In fact, however, close examination of the account as a whole reveals that the material world is never fully absent from Augustine's mystical ascent to God.

First, Augustine draws heavily on the language of nature and the created world to describe his spiritual journey beyond the material order. Rather than dismissing his physical location as extraneous to the mystical experience, he takes time to situate the reader in a very particular setting: at Ostia, on the Tiber. He then narrows his gaze to the window where he and his mother take their place, overlooking the household garden as they enter into their

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[2] Jean Gerson, *De Mystica Theologia* 1.6.6., quoted in the Catholic University of America, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2003).

[3] Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teachings of Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life* (New York: Dutton, 1923), 19.

[4] Augustine, *Confessions,* 9.10.25.

shared mystical experience.[5] Significantly, it is from this very posture that their ascent takes root, as they look out into the garden together and fill their eyes with a scene of creation. In a similar way, Augustine goes on to weave very physical images into his ascent to the divine reality. He tells of being fortified by "a **spring** on high" (*superna fluenta fontis tui*), imagining a spiritual font in parallel to the Tiber river that flows in his midst. Quoting from Scripture, he also speaks of divine wisdom as the "**firstfruits** of the spirit" and exalts in the "**dew**" from the spring that fosters their contemplation (*fontis vitae; inde pro captu nostro aspersi...*). Taken together, these words and phrases come together to place vestiges of the material world at various stages along Augustine's ascent to a spiritual and immaterial reality. His ascent begins as he looks out upon the physical world, and, even as he begins to experience higher truths, he continues to make sense of this experience in terms of the created order.

To a similar effect, this same passage consistently describes his intellectual progress through the language of bodily actions. "Step by step we **climbed**," (*perambulavimus gradatim*) he says as the moment of their shared understanding approaches. He then adds: "with the mouth of the heart wide open, we **drank** the waters" (*inhiabamus ore cordis*). Finally, as the two begin to reach some higher plane of understanding, Augustine reports: "We **entered** into our own minds … and **moved up** beyond them" (*venimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas*). This language of bodily movement likens the vision at Ostia to a kind of physical migration, once again expressing Augustine's mystical ascent through the lens of the created order. Meanwhile, as he rejoices to strive for the realm "where you [God] **feed** Israel eternally with truth for food" (*unde pascis Israel in aeternum veritate pabulo*), he even applies the language of bodily activity to the ultimate end of the mystical experience. In this way, Augustine describes in material terms both the goal that the mystic is seeking (spiritual "food"), and also the ways in which that goal must be reached—we attain the nourishment God has prepared, he suggests, by imitating the movements of the body in our minds, embracing the same zeal, hunger and exertion with which our physical selves achieve great feats on Earth.

The particular "bridge" that brings Augustine to his experience of divine Wisdom, meanwhile, also belongs to the created world: conversation with his mother Monica. Indeed,

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[5] Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.10.23.

Augustine reaches his great moment of understanding not by closing his mind and heart to all the material bodies in his midst, but by drawing ever closer to Monica, with whom he shares a deeply human bond of both familial and spiritual communion. "We talked very intimately," Augustine writes, as he recalls "searching together" with her for Truth (*conloquebamur ergo soli valde dulcite*). He adds that "the conversation led us" (*ad eum finem sermo perduceretur*) to an important conclusion, namely, that bodily pleasures are nothing compared to the life of eternity. Here he emphasizes that this conclusion came about *through* engaging in certain activities with his earthly mother and fellow pilgrim, namely, "dialogue and reflection and wonder" (*cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua*). In her analysis of this passage, theologian Janet Martin Soskice writes: "The vision at Ostia is social, not solitary, for that is how we hear the Word — through Scripture, preaching, the witness of others. These are the ligatures of love which bind us to one another and to God."[6] Thus, Augustine suggests that experiencing intimacy and intellectual companionship in mortal life prompts us to yearn ever more deeply for intimacy and intellectual union with God.

In sum, Augustine incorporates into his mystical ascent three major components of the material order, including i) the natural world, ii) bodily actions, and, most importantly, iii) conversation with another person. He thereby suggests that engaging with the created world is not at all contrary to mystical experience; rather, it helps bring about the moment of revelation. Corporeal phenomena therefore come forward in his account as "rungs" on a ladder that leads us to experience divine truth and understanding for ourselves. At the same time, his intensely physical language also serves an important communicative purpose, preserving the memory of an otherwise inarticulable experience that can then be contemplated over again by the mystic himself and further disseminated in writing for readers to understand. Thus emerges the central paradox of Augustine's mystical vision at Ostia: even as he seeks to leave the world behind, he weaves the material order into each stage of his spiritual journey, maintaining a "sacramental" regard for creation that recognizes its inherent goodness and ability to lead us into a deeper relationship with its divine author.

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[6] Janet Martin Soskice, "Monica's Tears: Augustine on Words and Speech," *New Blackfriars* 83 No. 980 (2007): 457, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2002.tb01829.

As he proceeds with his account, Augustine continues to use intensely corporeal language even up to his climactic moment of union with the divine, affirming that, to the end, materiality never fully dissipates from his mystical experience. In this moment, Augustine and Monica experience a "flash" of the eternal wisdom that flows forth from their conversation with one another.[7] Here Augustine speaks of the ultimate and eternal wisdom like a tangible object, explaining that he and Monica "panted after" it (*inhiamus illi)*, desiring it with the force of a bodily need, and even "touched" it (*attingimus eam modice tot ictu cordis*) for one fleeting instant. This image of "touch" conjures the striking image of the two mystics not only mentally, but even *physically* joining themselves to God, offering up their whole selves, body and soul, to this moment of encounter. As the experience quickly fades, Augustine then laments the fleetingness of it all, expressing a fervent desire for that same wisdom to "ravish and absorb and enfold" (*et haec una rapiat et absorbeat et recondat in interiora gaudia spectatorem suum*) the mystic in interior joy forever, couching his prayer in language of physical conquest and totalizing materiality. And so, even in his highest raptures of spiritual ecstasy, he does not fully divorce his mindset from the material order. Turning now to the legacy of Augustinian mysticism, this point carries important consequences for Augustine's Christian anthropology and his influence on later Christian mystics.

The pattern of ascent that Augustine sets forth here resembles that of the Neoplatonists; however, his emphasis on materiality also adapts the old way to fit into a new Christian context. Many scholars have identified the vision at Ostia as possessing key elements in common with the formal pattern of ascent set forth in Plotinus.[8] In one sense, Augustine imitates this pattern by proceeding in ordered succession from dialectical reasoning to a domain of pure intellect. Neoplatonism, however, holds that we have a natural capacity to dwell in the transcendental world, to discover there a purely "intelligible" and "undescended" self. As Kenney points out, "Augustine countenances no such idea of an unfallen self… the contemplative soul cannot discover its real self in eternal wisdom, for there is no eternal self there to be recovered."[9] The fleetingness of the vision at Ostia

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[7] Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.10.24.
[8] Similarities have been noted especially between the Ostia account and Plotinus 5.1.2.14 ff.
[9] John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of St. Augustine: Re-Reading the Confessions* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 82, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.yale.idm.oclc.org/lib/yale-ebooks/detail.action?docID=243331.

indicates that, for Augustine, eternal wisdom is something ultimately unattainable in this life, "an aperture opened by the grace of Christ emergent within the soul, but not naturally found there."[10] This very idea comes through as well in Augustine's persistent use of corporeal language, which suggests that the material world remains fundamentally inseparable from who we really are as finite, fallen creatures. Thus, his Christian anthropology stresses that the material order, with all its stains and imperfections, is something that we neither can or should leave behind in this life. And yet, as he dares to venture into higher realms with Monica by his side, Augustine exemplifies the possibility of catching glimpses of eternal beatitude in mortal life, instilling in his reader the hope of attaining much more than a glimpse of such beatitude forever after in Heaven.

Augustine's model of mysticism went on to exert a significant influence on other Christian mystics, surfacing in foundational texts from both the Greek East and Latin West. Alexy Fokin shows that, through the ages, Christian thinkers both imitated and developed Augustine's paradigm of "gradual intellectual ascent" to divine union. One notable example includes *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum* by St. Bonaventure, which offers a "road map" *(itinerarium)* to mystical union that guides the reader from contemplation of external realities *(extra nos)* to internal realities such as memory, intellect, and will *(intra nos)* to the transcendent realm of the divine *(super nos)*.[11] So too does Augustine proceed through these three principal stages at Ostia: he moves from conversation at his window overlooking the garden to internal reflection to total divine union—even though, as I have argued, these stages are in fact more intertwined than it might appear at first glance. Similar trajectories can also be seen in the works of Greek Byzantines and Church Fathers such as the Great Cappadocians, St. Maximus the Confessor, and Dionysius the Argeopagyte, all of which, much like Augustine, drew on Neoplatonist ideas to re-frame Plotinus' theory of intellectual cognition to match their understanding of a new Christian God.[12] Preserved in these and other texts, the Augustinian model clearly influenced Christians across the ages who strove

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[10] Kenney, *The Mysticism of St. Augustine*, 82.

[11] St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium* V-VII, quoted in Alexey Fokin, "St. Augustine's Paradigm: *ab Exterioribus ad Interioribus, ab Inferioribus ad Superiora* in Western and Eastern Christian Mysticism," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7 No. 2: 91, https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.v7i2.121.

[12] Cf. 2 Dionysius of Areopagita, *De mystica theologia* I.1*, De divinis nominibus* 1.4*, Epistula 5;* Maximus Confessor, *Ambigua;* Gregorius Nyssenus*, De vita Moysis,* I.162.7–163.8 et al., quoted in Fokin, "St. Augustine's Paradigm," 99-105.

for a similar experience of divine union that Augustine himself professes to have received at Ostia.

St. Teresa of Avila offers a particularly salient case study with which to evaluate Augustine's impact on later Christian mystics. In her autobiography, she reflects on the profundity of her experience reading the *Confessions,* saying, "When I got as far as his [Augustine's] conversion and read how he heard that voice in the garden, it seemed exactly as if the Lord were speaking in that way to me, or so my heart felt."[13] Significantly, Teresa describes herself hearing the voice of God after being immersed in Augustine's written word, that is, after *connecting with another person* through the human construct of language. Her experience recalls Augustine's conversation with Monica, picking up on the idea that intellectual engagement with other people can lead us to an encounter with the divine. Teresa later goes on to describe her own mystical encounter in strikingly Augustinian terms. She writes, for example, "A feeling of the presence of God would come over me… so that I could in no wise doubt either that he was within me, or that I was wholly absorbed in him."[14] Much like Augustine, Teresa draws here on intensely physical language to describe an immaterial phenomenon, speaking of divine union as a merger of two material bodies. In particular, this passage echoes Augustine's wish that eternal wisdom might "ravish and enfold and absorb" the person experiencing it for all eternity. Thus we see the two mystics joined across time, looking to the material world as a way of both accessing and representing their own mystical experiences.

Augustine's discussion of sin and salvation also left a significant impact on St. Teresa of Avila, with these themes further connecting the concepts of mysticism that emerge from each. As Teresa writes in her autobiography, "I have a great affection for Saint Augustine, because he had been a sinner. I used to find a great deal of comfort in reading the lives of saints who had been sinners before the Lord brought them back to Himself."[15] Here she acknowledges the subtle optimism that underlies Augustine's own mystical paradigm: we are fallen, and yet an intimate relationship with God is still possible, even to the point of mystical union with the divine. In the *Confessions,* Teresa observes Augustine's

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[13] St. Teresa of Avila, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of Teresa of Avila,* ed. and trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), 67.
[14] Avila, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, 68.
[15] Avila, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, 67.

"helplessness, his habituation to sins, his tears of self-betrayal,"[16] and yet, paradoxically, these very traits soon convince her of his holiness. For even as he fails to attain the ideal for which he strives, he presses on in his spiritual journey, exemplifying a radically Christian hope for salvation in spite of his sin. This phenomenon relates back to both saints' emphasis on materiality in their own mystical accounts, as each dares to suggest that is in fact possible, with God's grace, to seek glimpses of Heaven on Earth without losing sight of who we are as finite, broken, fallen creatures *who can never in mortal life fully extricate ourselves from the imperfections of the created order.*

Thus, Augustine's emphasis on materiality in his own mystical paradigm bears important implications. His distinctive pattern of ascent represents both a continuation and a break from the Neoplatonist tradition, carrying with it the recognition that we do not yet belong to the immaterial world. Instead, Augustine holds that the physical world is inseparable from our human nature. Accordingly, so long as we dwell in earthly life, we can only access and make sense of divinity *in terms of* the material order. This line of argument goes back to the idea of the Incarnation itself; the very language of "Word made flesh" affirms that the material world, duly reverenced, holds the power to reveal divine truth. Preserving his insights in the memory of the *Confessions*, Augustine thereby helped lead generations of Christians to seek their own union with the divine. His account of the vision at Ostia exemplifies his method of proceeding in incremental steps to God, beginning with what lies right before your eyes—perhaps even the person by your side. In vivid Latin prose, the work communicates his slow, determined faith that one day, in spite of our fallen nature, the glimpses of divine union that we can experience in this life might one day be eternal.

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[16] Kenney, *The Mysticism of St. Augustine,* 82.

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Natural Selection: A Distinction Between Two Forms of Ecological Suffering

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NATURAL SELECTION:

A DISTINCTION BETWEEN TWO FORMS OF ECOLOGICAL SUFFERING

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Abstract: Provided that theology and biology agree evolution is good for God's creation, this article argues that humanity must acknowledge that ecological suffering ought to be viewed in two distinct forms. The first form of suffering allows human and non-human creation to experience suffering that promotes biological, spiritual, and intellectual progress. In contrast, the second form of suffering not only manifests itself through human sin, but also perverts the progression of nature that would exist in the absence of immoral action. This paper examines humans' and non-human animals' relationship with suffering in an effort to reconcile environmentalist attempts to mitigate environmental degradation caused by humans with the apparent necessity of suffering for natural progress. Elizabeth A. Johnson's interpretation of the crucifixion of Jesus in *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* serves as the primary basis for the method proposed to determine the necessity and ethicality of human intervention in ecological suffering.

The Bible offers many examples of how those faced with challenges gain, as a result of attempts to ameliorate their plight, a greater sense of self-awareness and an improved understanding of their social, ecological, and even cosmological position. One of the most notable examples occurs when Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden of Eden: without the comforts of the garden, Adam and Eve must contend with the forces of nature for their survival. Much like Adam and Eve, non-human creation fights against predation, disaster, and limited resources for survival by means of competition, adaptation, and evolution. Holy Scripture makes it clear that God intends for nature to challenge creation through suffering as a means of spurring spiritual, intellectual, physical, and biological progress. This challenge poses a problem for humans as we must evaluate the suffering experienced by humans and members of non-human creation to determine whether (and/or how) suffering should be ameliorated by human action. This paper will argue that while suffering affords an understanding of the non-human natural world and of our relationship with God, the

inevitability and universality of natural suffering are not sufficient reasons to render human-made suffering permissible.

Comparing Charles Darwin's theory of evolution with the Christian concept of creation by an omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipotent God has often led to the conclusion that the two are entirely incompatible. The processes of evolution, after all, entails an incredible amount of pain and suffering for both humans and non-human animals. While humans are moral agents who may be held responsible for their wrongdoings against non-human animals, other humans, or the environment, non-human animals are not subject to this same scrutiny as they lack moral agency. Though predatory actions by animals do cause the target to experience pain and ultimately death, this is only the result of a natural process, rather than of a malign sentiment on the part of the predator.[2] It would seem that the predator is the only one that benefits from predation; the prey is merely the recipient of a painful death. If these interactions between predators and prey occur at virtually every moment throughout the animal kingdom, a concern arises regarding the congruity between such predation and the belief that nature is the creation of a loving God.

Catholic theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson notes that the pain and suffering undergone by prey is an inherent part of the natural processes that are essential to the Darwinian theory of evolution.[3] Without death and reproduction, there would be no mechanism for replacing existing creatures with those that have adapted and evolved more appropriately and effectively than their ancestors. Natural selection, one of the main tenets of Darwin's theory, is the chief mechanism through which the evolutionary process takes place.

A component of this theory is that predators typically prey on more vulnerable targets such as those that suffer from physical defects or other disadvantages. Johnson gives the specific example of a lioness on the hunt for wildebeests.[4] In almost every instance, the lioness will bite onto the throat of the slowest wildebeest in the herd. The faster wildebeests, including the second slowest wildebeest, escape the jaws of the lioness. Natural selection, in that case, showcases nature's predisposition to not only create suffering in general terms but also to ensure that suffering is most likely faced by the most vulnerable member of any given

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[2] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love.* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 185.
[3] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 184.
[4] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 185.

group. That is, the ultimate form of suffering—a gruesome death and removal from the reproductive gene pool—is faced by the members already suffering from a preexisting disadvantaged state.

Darwin posits that hunting benefits the wildebeests and other species by removing the weakest members from the reproductive gene pool. Whatever merit this assertion might hold, Darwin's theory does not address the question of how bloody and painful predation can exist within the creation of an omnibenevolent God. The question might be answered by exploring how God can both love His creation and desire it to undergo a transformation that allows each species to achieve its maximum potential. Eco-theologian Denis Edwards writes that the evolutionary processes taking place on Earth are "grounded in the dynamic fruitfulness of the Trinity, the divine fountain, endlessly pouring forth the river of living water, from which all creation drinks in the Spirit."[5] Considering the incredible number of natural changes that animal and plant species have undergone over billions of years of evolution makes Edwards' position clear. The development of adaptations necessitated countless minute changes in the biological make-up of these creatures. As can be seen in the case of the wildebeest and the lioness, this evolutionary process continues today. To fully understand evolution as one of the ultimate consequences of God's generative love, it is also necessary to identify the sensory mechanisms through which the evolutionary process takes place.

Johnson reaches the conclusion that this relationship between God's desire for nature to achieve its potential and the suffering this progress entails makes pain necessary to encourage further exploration of possible improvements to life.[6] For this same reason, she notes that developing the ability to determine if an external stimulus is harmful, neutral, or helpful makes animals and plants better prepared to adapt and ultimately survive.[7] Even the most elementary theological or biological perspective suggests that the ability to feel pain is directly linked to the capacity to avoid whatever causes that pain. God, then, provides to animals the sensation of pain as a defense against extinction. Take for example the predator-prey relationship between cats and mice. If a mouse did not feel pain when it was swatted

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[5] Denis Edwards, "The Attractor and the Energy of Love: Trinity in Evolutionary and Ecological Context," *The Ecumenical Review* 65, no. 1 (March 2013): 129-144.
[6] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 185.
[7] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 182

by the claw of a cat, then the mouse would not suspect that the cat poses a danger. Similarly, it would not be beneficial to the mouse if it only began to feel pain when already ensnared in the cat's jaws. For both humans and animals, immediate recognition of pain and suffering deters one from danger. The main difference between humans and non-human animals pertaining to this discussion is that humans are capable of relaying detailed information regarding first- and second-hand experiences with pain and suffering in a more reliable way. First-hand pain experiences, in this case, are those in which an individual physically feels pain through the body's sensory nervous system or as a result of psychological trauma. This contrasts with second-hand pain experiences that evoke feelings of empathy for another who retells the details of their first-hand pain experiences. The Bible, for example, is a medium used to relay experiences of pain and suffering that teach morals and acceptable social behaviors. Though rarely considered an example of a divine blessing, framing the knowledge and sensation of pain as the best defense against life-threatening interactions might justify describing it as a gift from God to His creation.

For humans, the role of evolution in this relationship lies within knowledge that is developed rather than within mere survivability that results as a function of physical adaptations. Allowing predation or disease to remove the weakest genes while the strongest persist advances any given species through a variety of possible adaptations. This way of species progress seems to be associated with physical defects already existing at birth or hatch. Knowledge, conversely, is collectively developed by the many members of a species over the lifetime of an individual within a species. An example of collectively developed knowledge can be seen in the case of humanity.

While this paper focuses on ecological and environmental suffering, I will include here the role of human knowledge so that it may be better understood how knowledge relates to the domain of humanity's influence over the various trajectories of environmental change. Humans, like any other animal, physically evolve and adapt to their environment over time. However, humans are unique in that adaptation is only one means through which the human experience is improved or changed. The transmission of objective knowledge and morals via formal education and child-rearing is the other means through which the human experience and, by extension, human survivability are changed. Given that developed knowledge has at least some bearing on humanity's domain of influence over certain parts

of the environment, it is worth investigating one way in which our knowledge might fall short of a complete representation of the environment and of the delicate interdependencies that constitute its present state.

Human knowledge employs language to record our understanding of humanity and of non-human nature. Language is significant because it is a primary tool used to understand and articulate humans' experiences of the world. However, language can be problematic because it often fails to wholly encapsulate the meaning and substance of the tangible objects and intangible ideas that are described by it. This becomes especially apparent in natural sciences such as ecology. Our theoretical knowledge about nature was created inside the bounds of our language and has acquired anthropocentric elements (e.g., human culture) that are difficult, if not impossible, to remove. This observation shows that insofar as our language exhibits anthropocentric semantics, the ability and inclination to reach beyond pure anthropocentrism is more complex. The main difficulty here is identifying the balance between a pure anthropocentrism that outsizes and overwhelms the capacity of the environment to support all human life and a version of environmentalism that enthrones non-human creation so much that it borders on misanthropy.

The evidence thus far, in light of human-caused global warming and the overuse of natural resources, is that a pure anthropocentrism has historically been preferred by politically and economically dominant human societies. If it is the case that anthropocentric semantics lend themselves to human-caused environmental degradation, then a concern arises in that our very language can obstruct or obscure environmentalist efforts. Our attempts to continue to improve as a species locates the human race in a circular loop of knowledge that is driven by the natural biological drive to gain knowledge; that is, at least some portion of human knowledge is endogenous as it relies on a foundation of semantics formed prior to the discovery of new information or knowledge. To extend this idea further, language itself is likely endogenous to some degree as it relies on a basic set of physical and biological adaptations. As Paul Schutz writes, humanity "… is always and already bound up with the mysteries we observe."[8] Even amidst the rigorous empirical analyses of natural science, humanity might ultimately be one collection of stardust observing another.[9] This

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[8] Schutz, "Cultivating a 'Cosmic Perspective'," 809.
[9] Schutz, "Cultivating a 'Cosmic Perspective'," 809.

alternate perspective does not intend to undercut the advancements and discoveries of natural science, but it does raise the possibility that there exists a horizon of our knowledge at which we may never arrive. The socio-ecological implication of our knowledge is that our knowledge is also a component of our power to make changes to the evolutionary trajectory of other species. Combining this power with the theoretical limits of our knowledge raises the possibility that we could do more harm than good when selecting one course of action over another.[10]

While our knowledge is limited, humans can understand more deeply the interconnectedness of humanity and non-human creation than can our non-human counterparts. The third chapter of the Book of Genesis demonstrates the direct effect of the ecological development of the Earth on humans' ability to farm. After God curses the ground, "thorns and thistles" begin to grow on the plants along with weeds and roots. While this interaction between divine and natural seems at first entirely negative, the ecological implication of this new vegetation is actually that the natural environment is given a self-sustaining foundation. One additional consequence of this reality is that Adam can cultivate crops because the soil is now fertilizable. As a result, Adam is motivated to reconcile his banishment from the Garden with the newfound impetus to undertake good agricultural practices—a component of human life that has proven necessary to sustain civilization as we know it.

Global warming serves as a contemporary example of an instance where a reconciliation may be made between purely anthropocentric engagement with the environment and the physical constraints of the Earth's atmosphere. Extreme weather-related disasters have gained increased national attention in the United States, forcing the public to notice humanity's disproportionate dependence on non-human creation. As our understanding of the interconnectedness between humans and non-human creation advances, so can our ethical reflection on the socio-ecological networks in which we coexist with other species.[11] The increase in extreme weather conditions has triggered the pain-knowledge-survival tool discussed earlier. The pain that we experience from droughts is not unlike the

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[10] Carolyn Albert, "Made for Self-Giving Love of Creation: Implications of Kenosis and Imago Dei for Natural Theodicy and Christian Ecological Ethics," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39, no. 2 (2012): 131-138.
[11] Schutz, "Cultivating a 'Cosmic Perspective'," 805-806.

initial pain that Adam felt when he first learned to farm. Harnessing our knowledge to improve our planet's ecological future is an essential step in recognizing the suffering that humans induce by causing climate change. Poor treatment of the environment has brought the foci of our imaginations to our biological dependency on other-than-human creation.[12]

Coming to terms with the state of humanity's relationship with the natural world is a reckoning welcomed by God. Just as Adam's and Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil led to the pair's consciousness of their disobedience of God, the human abuse and exploitation of the environment must lead to a realization of the need to take better care of the planet. In this vein, William P. Brown writes that "[c]onscience, and thus human identity itself, is homegrown, a product of evolutionary and narrative development."[13] Our evident need to learn by taking risks and ultimately by disobeying ourselves or God seems to be unique to the human experience. This form of *akrasia* is demonstrated by the fact that only through extremely negative circumstances such as climate change do we become fully cognizant of the consequences of our actions. This need, however, provides a logical basis for the existence of another need. This other need is for suffering itself; that is, insofar as suffering is ultimately inevitable and forces the sufferer to progress physically and psychologically. As Johnson explains, "…the pathway to consciousness runs through flesh that can 'feel' its way through the world. In that regard, suffering is irreplaceable…"[14] In other words, the acquisition of genuine understanding is facilitated by a practical experience of facing difficult choices and ultimately learning how to transform oneself in conjunction with God.

The way in which God allows humans to change themselves is comparable to a loving parent permitting a young child to learn from his or her mistakes by giving that child the mental tools and opportunities to think through the issues at stake. If the young child was disciplined immediately or was merely given a basic explanation of why they were wrong to do what they did, the child would focus either on the form of the discipline itself or on the end of the parent's reprimand. In either of these situations, the child undertakes no authentic learning. Instead of resorting to punishment or scolding, the best option for the parent would

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[12] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts,* 195.

[13] Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 111.

[14] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 195.

be to allow the child to come to her understanding of the wrongdoing or misjudgment. This method gives the child time to reflect and earnestly consider how her actions impacted another or herself. God uses this latter method to teach humanity so that we may gain integrity through autonomous self-reflection upon our actions.[15] With this integrity, we may learn and thrive.

Now that we have a better understanding of how God uses the relationship between pain, knowledge, and survival to encourage humans and non-human creation to promote evolutionary progress for both their own species and for all creation, we may now return to one of the concerns noted at the outset of this paper. Reconciling the existence of a *loving* God with a world abounding with suffering requires a distinction between predator-like human behavior and the non-human animal predation of natural selection. Here I begin to clarify this distinction by discussing one of the key ways in which God has demonstrated His love for all creation.

Primo Levi was a prisoner at the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz during World War II. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, he wrote the following:

> Such an opinion seemed monstrous to me. It painted me as when one touches an exposed nerve, and kindled the doubt I spoke of before: I might be alive in the place of another, at the expense of another; I might have usurped, that is, in fact, killed. The 'saved' of the Lager were not the best, those predestined to do good, the bearers of a message: what I had seen and lived through proved the exact contrary. Preferably the worst survived, the selfish, the violent, the insensitive, the collaborators of the 'gray zone,' the spies. It was not a certain rule (there were none, nor are there certain rules in human matters), but it was nevertheless a rule. I felt innocent, yes, but enrolled among the saved and therefore in permanent search of a justification in my own eyes and those of others. The worst survived, that is, the fittest; the best all died.[16]

Levi's comparison between the struggle to survive in the camp and Darwin's concept of the survival of the fittest highlights how the Nazi's horribly dehumanizing treatment of the prisoners reveals something about the negative potential of human survival. As a result of the subhuman treatment and of the strong desire to make it out of the camp alive, some prisoners engaged in intra-prison social Darwinism by speaking out against their fellow prisoners so that they might survive. However, Levi recognized something beyond natural

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[15] Edwards, "The Attractor and the Energy of Love," 144.

[16] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 82.

selection that truly revealed who the best and the worst were among those imprisoned at the camp.

According to Edwards, God is "… not clearly revealed in all the processes of natural selection, God is not revealed in a concentration camp, but God is present in natural selection and in the horror of a concentration camp."[17] As previously discussed, it is evident that natural selection and evolution consist of steps that appear quite gruesome when viewed in isolation from the whole ecological schema. This comparison between natural selection and social Darwinism within concentration camps not only reveals that God is present in both situations but also highlights a key distinction between suffering created by the evolutionary processes and suffering created by human sin. Understanding why God is present in the concentration camp, yet not revealed, is needed to fully distinguish suffering caused by human sin from evolution-caused suffering.

For Johnson, natural processes like predation and natural selection are part of the inevitable suffering that allows evolution to take place, and that do not necessarily contradict God's intention for the progress of creation.[18] The concentration camp, however, is a unique example in that it is not at all a natural cycle that is fundamental to evolution. Comparing the camp to Jesus' crucifixion may be helpful to understand this phenomenon in the context of God's plan for creation. The crucifixion of Jesus was ordered by political authorities in a way that was grossly "unpredictable, unjust, [and] the result of human sin."[19] Similarly, Levi's experience at Auschwitz was no doubt unpredictable, unjust, and an event that took place as a result of the human sin committed by the leaders and enablers of Nazi Germany. The main insight provided by Levi is that there may be events that take place in human society that superficially appear to exhibit elements of natural selection and competition. In spite of the appearance of a survival-of-the-fittest human society, there is an additional moral lens through which humans are subjected to scrutiny. Levi's account demonstrates that this moral lens is ever-present and that, even in the hell of a concentration camp, the understanding of rectitude offered by this lens is unsurpassed by the will to survive by any means necessary.

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[17] Denis Edwards, *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019), 123.
[18] Johnson, *Ask the* Beasts, 202.
[19] Johnson, *Ask the* Beasts, 202.

By using Johnson's criteria for the crucifixion of Jesus as an unpredictable, unjust result of human sin it is possible to see how these same criteria may be used to demonstrate why the exploitation of non-human creation is distinct from the kind of natural suffering that promotes creation's progress. For example, imagine a scenario in which a textile factory dumps its waste product (e.g., unusable ink) into a nearby river. In such a situation, it is hardly plausible to suggest that this ink spillage will cause the kind of suffering that will catalyze positive physical adaptations in the creatures that inhabit or drink the water. It would be absurd to conclude that this suffering would ensure that only the strongest creatures survive—in reality, the toxic ink would probably kill any creature that consumed the river water before any became 'stronger' or appropriately adapted.

In terms of Johnson's criteria of Jesus's crucifixion and of the injustice that accompanied it, the dumping of ink into the river is an occurrence that is unpredictable and unforeseeable in nature. At no point would nature itself have produced a toxic liquid and then released that liquid into a river. While these first elements of unpredictability and foreseeability determine whether an event is natural or unnatural, the second criterion of the cause of an event serves to determine if the human action is unjust. Even if there were no laws to forbid dumping waste into rivers, the damage the waste poses to the common good is reason enough to consider this a moral wrong. Destroying the river's natural integrity, after all, is harmful to virtually all who live downstream. Lastly, this act of dumping ink into a river may be classified as a specifically human sin because it would only be performed by humans. It is important to note, however, that an objective action or set of actions would need to fail to meet one of the criteria in order to fail the entire test. This test, which asks whether a particular instance of suffering is unpredictable, unjust, or the result of human sin, is first meant to determine the justifiability of the action or set of actions and, second, to determine whether anything should be done to mitigate the resultant suffering.

Aside from the criteria that Johnson applies to the crucifixion of Jesus, the crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus as individual events are significant within the socio-ecological outlook spurred by the relationship between pain, knowledge, and suffering. When Jesus is crucified, He experiences the suffering of all creation while nailed to the cross, including that of the prey in predation and in natural selection.[20] The crucifixion of Jesus is the joining

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[20] Edwards, "The Attractor and the Energy of Love," 135.

of creation with God as Jesus experiences the immense suffering associated with the "godforsaken moment."[21] The reality of this bond is further explained by Jesus's unique position as both fully divine and a part of creation that allows him to bridge this gap between human suffering and God's love. From an ecological perspective, the incarnation of Jesus also carries significant meaning. When God the Son joins humanity in the flesh, He also joins with the Earth and all the creatures that make up the natural world. In addition to becoming a man in the incarnation of Jesus, God also became the tiniest biological forms of human and non-human creatures alike. Johnson writes that Jesus is the "… self-expressing Wisdom of God, [he] conjoined the material conditions of all biological life forms (grasses and trees) and experienced the pain common to sensitive creatures (sparrows and seals). The flesh assumed in Jesus Christ connects with all humanity, all biological life, all soil, the whole matrix of the material universe down to its very roots."[22] In attempting to answer the question of the possibility of a *loving* God, God's decision to merge with His creation and take part in its suffering in human form certainly seems to be evidence of His unlimited love for creation.

Provided that God is omnipotent, the tempering of power He shows by choosing to become the same flesh as His creation shows a level of care and of love that is difficult to articulate. Edwards offers the important insight that by suffering with all of creation, the Word approaches us and enters into our pain with a new level of understanding and intimacy.[23] This idea aligns naturally with the concept of empathy: the ability to understand others in a way that is rooted in love and care for fellow members of creation. Jesus's crucifixion serves as a symbol that reveals profound truth and deepens our understanding of suffering. Even if God's omniscience would allow him to know what it feels like to be human without becoming flesh, the incarnation of the Word communicates to Christians that God loves creation so much that He is willing to live by human biological and political rules. In this way, we might know for certain that God suffered for creation. This understanding also gives new meaning to the suffering of creation in that it can be understood to continue the cosmic progress willed by God.

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[21] Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 191.
[22] Johnson, *Ask the* Beasts, 196.
[23] Edwards, "The Attractor and the Energy of Love," 140.

Evidence of God's love elucidates the distinction between natural evolutionary suffering and suffering induced by human sin. The suffering that serves as the byproduct of the natural evolutionary processes is more accurately described as a pain response to external stimuli that pose a threat to God's creation. It is not difficult to recognize the necessity of pain; the absence of pain would complicate life by increasing its proximity to danger. At least part of this unfamiliarity would stem from a growth in the complicatedness and dangerousness of living in a world without pain. Injury and death, after all, are still possible without pain. In a world lacking pain, creation would have to devise an artificial means of determining the relative danger posed by any given interaction. God's demonstrated love for creation implies that the ability of non-human and human creation to recognize threats is by design. Further, this pain benefits humans by facilitating the development of another form of knowledge about the environment and about other sentient forms of creation.

Through this simultaneously theological and ecological lens, each aspect of evolutionary suffering can be understood as part of God's loving plan for His creation. For example, Darwin observes that predation is the mechanism by which species adapt to biologically improve over generations. God's love for creation means that He intends this physical progress for each species so that creation might reach its full potential. In a predator-prey relationship, the predator typically inflicts suffering by hunting and eating the prey. This process aligns with God's intentions because the preyed-upon species improve when the predators remove the weakest members from the gene pool. Therefore, this form of suffering actually benefits the prey species; it is a form of suffering that ultimately proves necessary to achieve God's will of progress for His creation.

In contrast, ecological suffering through exploitative processes caused by human sin cannot be reconciled with God's will for species' evolution. Humanity poses a threat to the balance of nature by exerting power to pollute the environment or to overuse scarce natural resources. As humans attempt to become increasingly dominant over the natural world, the interconnectedness of nature, non-human animals, and humanity becomes ever more apparent. When longstanding environmental patterns begin to change drastically, so will our perception of these issues. The evolution and the inherent mutability of nature is not an excuse to exploit nature; to disrupt delicate natural forces is to commit human sin. The ecological interconnectedness of creation requires humanity to cease the destruction of the

environment and, rather, to uphold the intrinsic processes of nature that benefit God's creation.

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Holy Saturday in Liturgical Tradition: Making Sacred Space in the Gap of Holy Saturday, and the Pastoral Impetus for Doing So

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HOLY SATURDAY IN LITURGICAL TRADITION:

MAKING SACRED SPACE IN THE TRAGIC GAP OF HOLY SATURDAY, AND THE PASTORAL IMPETUS FOR DOING SO

NIKITA S. DEEP [*]

Abstract: While the Paschal Mystery is central to the Christian tradition, this article is concerned with the lack of robust liturgical focus on Holy Saturday, or Easter Saturday, and will articulate the immense pastoral value in strengthening the focus on this middle day of the Paschal Mystery. This pastoral value is especially salient in dealing with a shared human experience of trauma. Trauma is used here not only in reference to the traditional psychological and physiological understanding of trauma, but also encapsulates spiritual struggles of guilt, shortcomings, sin, and grief—in short, all that which pierces and lingers on our conscience and memory. This article weaves together liturgical, historical, and systematic perspectives to argue for a "theology of pause" regarding Easter Saturday, which can be a sacred space in which one acknowledges the trauma and memory of the human condition, instead of burying them in the rush to remember the joy of the Resurrection and all that it brings. Continuing with the lens of shared experience, this article also explores various Christian denominations' narrative theologies regarding, and liturgies for, Holy Saturday, to the end of establishing an ecumenical liturgy of contemplation and healing.

Introduction

The Paschal Mystery is a series of events fundamental to the very fabric of the Christian faith, but the focus here will be Holy Saturday, or the day between Christ's crucifixion/death and His Resurrection. This article is an examination of the liturgical elements of various Christian traditions because, as Maxwell Johnson puts it: "The paschal mystery, like all good theology, begins and ends in doxology. For it is in the liturgy above all that this mystery is most clearly revealed."[2] By examining a denomination's traditions and theology, one may understand how a liturgy takes shape in the vessel of an individual

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[2] Maxwell E. Johnson, "The Paschal Mystery: Reflections from a Lutheran Viewpoint," *Worship* 57, no. 2 (March 1983): 134-150.

congregation, but is also connected to broader denominational traditions. More often than not, Holy Saturday is overlooked in the anticipation of Easter Sunday, becoming a placeholder in the theology and liturgical of many Christian churches. Thus, my first aim is to describe the immense pastoral and spiritual value in deliberately setting aside Holy Saturday as a day of worship and contemplation. To do so, I will examine the role of memory in liturgical theology, and the importance of memory in shaping narrative and sacramental encounters with the Divine through the liturgy.

My second goal is to discern a shared theology of Holy Saturday worship from the Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican (specifically, Methodist) branches of Christianity. My third and final goal will be to incorporate these findings—and that sense of pastoral responsibility for setting aside Holy Saturday—into an ecumenical, contemplative, daytime liturgy built on the Holy Saturday prayer service found in the Book of Common Prayer.[3]

Three Elements for Liturgical Analysis

Though there are many different ways to analyze Christian liturgies, I suggest we begin with considering three facets of the liturgy—narrative, sacramental encounter with the divine, and memory—to help elucidate a theology of Holy Saturday worship.

<u>Narrative</u>

David Stosur, a liturgical theologian at Cardinal Stritch University, has leaned on the ground-breaking work of Mark Searle to argue that narrative form is an inevitable result of religious interpretations of the world. This narrative approach may include re-enactments or praying upon the recounting of elements in question. In addition, Stosur has made a distinction between "mundane story" and "sacred story."[4] Mundane story refers to those elements of the narrative approach to liturgy that must be placed within our world. It is told, shared, and heard. With respect to Holy Saturday, this element of narrative is fraught with tension about *what* happened between Christ's death and Resurrection. Because all that is provided in the Gospels is an account of Christ's burial and, subsequently, Resurrection,

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[3] My reason for choosing this book of liturgies as a base for construction is that I am from the United Methodist Church, an offshoot of Anglicanism—an inheritance reflected in the Methodist Book of Worship's carrying over of many of the same lectionary readings and prayers.

[4] David A. Stosur, "Narrative Signification and the Paschal Mystery," *Questions Liturgiques/Studies in Liturgy* 96, no. 1-2 (2015): 42.

different Christian traditions have constructed the spiritual narrative about this day in conflicting ways. Indeed, some denominations mythologize the descent as an active Harrowing of Hell, in which Christ is a liberator of the souls stuck in that place. Other theologies, like those of Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar,[5] insist that the mythologized interpretation "of the descent into Hell, which considers it as the 'foundation' of a new existential dimension in the radical depths of cosmic being, is neither biblically justified, nor theologically sufficient."[6] So, Von Balthasar and Barth reject the notion of Christ being active in Hades, or Sheol, because they articulate an interpretation of Jesus's death that boldly affirms His saving of humanity from our sins by dying in our place, and that the death of Christ is the completion of salvation and "in need of nothing further to make it efficacious for human reconciliation and redemption."[7]

This narrative tension about Holy Saturday will not be resolved here. Consequently, in order to move forward with a liturgy that is truly ecumenical, finding common ground will be key. Within the Christian tradition, there are two shared elements of the Tridium upon which we can draw: Christ's death (fulfilling the ultimate human experience), and Easter Saturday's role as the pivotal point in the story of human redemption. With these foundational understandings, the way one receives this story of redemption, this sacred story, implicates feeling and experience. Indeed, theologian Alan Lewis has remarked, "What keeps the heart of the Christian church beating, and its blood circulating, if not the story of those days, so endlessly rehearsed, with such infinite variety and such steadfast unalterableness?"[8] Sacred story awakens and evokes. Through it, we find ourselves discerning and reliving the perennial elements of important narratives in our faith.

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[5] Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his book *Mysterium Paschale*, reflects on the death and resurrection of Christ and especially the descent into death on Holy Saturday. Von Balthasar's work is foundational to the concepts in the current essay, because he discusses in depth the questions of separation from God, abandonment from the divine, and death. A key piece of his book emphasizes Jesus as self-surrendering, not sacrificed. Another significant claim in von Balthasar's piece is the rejection of the notion that Christ entered the place of the dead as an active victor, but as a truly dead man in solidarity with every human in death. Von Balthasar also does not concern himself with harmonizing the Gospel accounts, but draws out theological meaning from them separately, a move which will pair nicely with the description below of the tendency of different Christian denominations to read from a particular Gospel or another during the Easter Triduum.

[6] Hans Urs von Balthsar, *Mysterium Paschale: Theology of the Easter Mystery*, (San Fransisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), 147.

[7] David Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell: God, Atonement and the Christian Life* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 4.

[8] Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 4.

Sacramental Encounter with the Divine

The concept of sacred story asks us which stories sustain our living faith and spiritual connection to God, thus tying directly to the second metric I propose for assessing liturgy: authentic encounter with the divine. We try to encounter God through the sacramental and ritual elements of liturgy. These include litanies, hymns, antiphons, and, of course, Communion. For Karl Rahner, the celebration of the sacraments revives and "makes explicit the cosmic proportions of the on-going relationship to all creation of the God who is its source, sustainer, and goal."[9] For Rahner, then, divine involvement in the liturgy is fundamental. Stosur posits that the liturgy of the church "are interpretations of human life and history, of that primordial liturgy which God has been celebrating since the dawn of creation and which has made its clearest manifestation in the saving Paschal Mystery."[10] With the inextricable sacramental elements of liturgy, one is able to reconnect to the beating heart of Christianity and reorient oneself to the image of Christ we are all charged with embodying. The Christian also uses the ritual and sacraments to *remember* the Mystery, to relive it over and over again, which provides one not only with eschatological hope, but perhaps, in the case of Holy Saturday, a space to deal with what one wishes *not* to remember.

Memory

As a theological category, memory has been essential to theological reasoning for millennia. Participation in liturgy, for instance, as in funeral rites, vivifies the memory of the deceased in such a way that revives the memory of the Passover of Christ, the Paschal Mystery.[11] While I identify three elements as interwoven facets of liturgical analysis, memory is perhaps the most fundamental for establishing the pastoral significance of Holy Saturday.

I agree with Alan Lewis's position that the three-day narrative is the Christian faith's supreme drama, and yet, "ironically, the center of the drama itself is an empty space. All the action and emotion, it seems, belong to two days only: despair and joy, dark and light, defeat and victory, the end and the beginning, evenly distributed in vivid contrast between what

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[9] Stosur, "Narrative Signification," 42.
[10] Stosur, "Narrative Signification," 42.
[11] Mariolle, Benedicte, "Funerals as Paschal Remembrance and Incorporation into the Risen Christ," *Studia Liturgica* 50, no. 1 (May 2020): 69-85.

humanity did to Jesus on the first day and what God did for him on the third."[12] Why do we not memorialize this middle day when it is the transformation point for the Christian tradition? Why do we not want to keep it at the forefront of our memory? The answer may be found in the dark depths of human experience. Rowan Williams offers a description of memory as more than just what we remember. It can be, in addition, an imprint and recollection of our "responsibility for rejection and injury, for diminution of self and others."[13] Memory, then, in a theological context, may necessitate the confrontation of what we mean to *forget*.

Memory is the remembrance of sin, denial, and trauma both imposed upon and by us. If one avoids memory, perhaps by diluting or rewriting it, he or she attempts to make it more bearable. A prime example in the Gospels comes in John 21. Peter, after having denied Christ three times, returned to his initial profession, fishing, far from the scene of his shortcoming in Jerusalem. From his boat, he does not recognize Jesus, and there is a sense that Peter has already pushed away the trauma and guilt of the last few days, longing to simply return to his life before the risen Christ returns to greet him. However, after recognizing and meeting the Lord, 21:15-23 tell us that Peter's trauma is healed, his guilt somewhat relieved after he undergoes a spiritual rehabilitation that replaces his threefold denial of Jesus with a threefold recommitment to Jesus. Christ's pastoral care for Peter reignited his purpose and potential to build up the early church, but it required a reckoning with the wounds in Peter's memory first.

The Pastoral Potential of Holy Saturday in the Context of Trauma

The denial of memory leads to a rejection of context and history, making any "liberation" from the present and future ineffective. In the United States, for example, the way teachers attempt to help students understand our painful history of slavery and subjugation of Black Americans has come under extreme criticism; so much so, in fact, that it has forced us to confront the concept of societal memory perhaps more concretely than ever. Indeed, the Southern Poverty Law Center maintains that we have a preference for

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[12] Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 1.
[13] Rowan Williams, *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2014), 23.

romanticism and nostalgia, not the difficult history and the collective sins of our past.[14] This translates into the way we teach about slavery, in some cases minimizing "slavery's significance so much that we render its impact—on people and on the nation—inconsequential."[15] Erasing or misrepresenting the nature of slavery prevents a full and honest reckoning with its ongoing cost in America and prevents an understanding of racial oppression as a systemic issue. One can see how the failure to address that memory, and our desire to rush into a post-Civil Rights Movement narrative—to insist that we are in a post-racism reality and should forget about the past—leaves much unresolved. Though just one example, the way Americans confront the history of slavery demonstrates the importance of historical memory.

Next, we must confront the relationship between memory and trauma. Shelly Rambo leans heavily on Alan Lewis and other theologians who focus on Easter Saturday, but she sees a gap in their scholarship: trauma. [16] Specifically, she posits that these thinkers do not "question the fundamental trajectory of the narrative—that death is behind and life ahead."[17] In other words, Rambo protests the linear progression of these existing theologies of Holy Saturday, rejecting the simple path from "end to beginning, death to life."[18] She urges that Christians reduce their anticipation of life on Easter Sunday, because one otherwise ignores "death's persistent intrusion into life" and fails to deal with the trauma of memory and spirit.[19] The popular adage *time heals all wounds* is problematic because trauma lingers long after the event that caused it and can continue to disrupt one's life. In the case of life and death, death persists, unwelcome, into the afterlife one hopes for in this post-Resurrection reality.

Rambo stakes her claim on the necessity of acknowledging that our wounds have a place, much like Christ's wounds lingered after His resurrection. Our trauma has a place, and that place is Holy Saturday. It would be unwise to deny the gravity of death or the weight

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[14] Southern Poverty Law Center, *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, 2018. https://www.splcenter.org/20180131/teaching-hard-history.

[15] Southern Poverty Law Center, *Teaching Hard History,* 5.

[16] Shelly Rambo is a theologian whose work is deeply entrenched in trauma studies, and several of her works lay the background for this essay's current discussion, but particularly *Saturday in New Orleans*, which urges the reader to appreciate the rich theological meaning of Holy Saturday within the framework of death, grief, and trauma.

[17] Shelly Rambo, "Saturday in New Orleans: Rethinking the Holy Spirit in the Aftermath of Trauma," *Review & Expositor* 105, no. 2 (May 2008): 235.

[18] Shelly Rambo, "Saturday in New Orleans," 236.

[19] Shelly Rambo, "Saturday in New Orleans," 235.

of guilt in the rushed anticipation of a new life, or of the final resurrection. This is where the pastoral value of a Holy Saturday worship service starts to become conspicuous. Though we do indeed live in the lasting light of the first Resurrection, we still live in a world of sin and hurt. The urge to ignore it in the hope of the coming resurrection, the desire to push past the stain of sin and death lingering within our very human condition, will end only in disappointment and the intrusion of death into life that Rambo describes. Death *does* have a sting. All humans have experienced grief and loss, including Jesus Christ Himself. Perhaps this knowledge is what may encourage on Holy Saturday a confrontation of that which causes one's spirit desolation and despair. In light of this analysis of Rambo, I am attempting to add a liturgical application to her theology by deliberately turning Holy Saturday into a day of pause.

The brief contemplation of one Methodist writer is something I have found immensely poignant regarding this spiritual potential of Holy Saturday. This reflection is contextualized by the account of the earthquake following Jesus's death in the Gospel of Matthew, and reads as follows:

> What a valley of tears continues to separate the old creation from the new. What perverse resiliency resides in all that harms, separates, angers, or saddens us. How tragic a gap yawns between glimpses of all that we hope for and the luminous fulfillment of our hope.

> When familiar contours disappear and the earth moves beneath our feet, where can we stand? We can stand in the tragic gap. This is Holy Saturday ground, the ground we occupy between the virtue we see to be possible and its actual flourishing throughout the land. It is holy ground because the unanticipated, painful, incomprehensible loss of cherished landmarks offers an Opportunity to see alternate perspectives, different paths, fresh horizons. It is holy ground because we stake our lives on it, holding fast to truth we know and holding out for truth yet to be revealed. It is holy ground because it holds within its soil the seeds of courage and the possibility of renewal.[20]

Christians ought to know that this tragic gap is a sacred space, that there is *time* on the church's calendar for a special opportunity of vulnerability—and that their guilt, sin, trauma, and hurt be addressed during the most significant period of the Christian tradition.

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[20] "Holy Saturday: Standing in the Tragic Gap," UMC Discipleship Ministries, January 22, 2015, https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/holy-saturday-standing-in-the-tragic-gap.

The constructed liturgy I will offer below not only accommodates but prioritizes sacred time for confession and contemplation.

Holy Saturday in Liturgical Tradition: Theologies and Examples

<u>Lutheranism</u>

The Lutheran liturgy tends to use the Johannine account of the Passion in Good Friday services, because, as Johnson notes, it is John above the other Gospel writers "who narrates Jesus's crucifixion and death from the perspective of the Easter faith."[21] Matthew and Mark "clearly place more emphasis on the human reality of Jesus's suffering and death,"[22] and while Johnson is careful not to minimize these accounts, he does propose the importance of having a narrative of Jesus as both Victor and Victim at the same time, a paradox that "must be held in dialectical tension."[23] Moreover, Johnson explains, "The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the one, unified, and central mystery of the Christian faith. Without the cross the resurrection would be little more than a myth of life after death, with Jesus not much different from other divine or immortal figures in the history of religions. Similarly, without the resurrection the cross would mean tragic defeat and the ultimate frustration of God's salvific will, rather than the divine victory over sin, death, and the reality of evil."[24]

Given this dual theology of the Passion and Resurrection, there is a blank space on Easter Saturday, but not without concern from within the Lutheran church. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is among those who lament the rush over Holy Saturday in anticipation of Easter Sunday. She writes that parishioners are "occupied with busy anticipation" of Easter. Eaton realizes that the Lutheran perspective holds dear the idea that all Christians are living in the aftermath of the first Easter—the story is known, and commemorating Holy Saturday without any premonition about the joy of Easter would be difficult. However, Eaton urges, this holy space of Saturday might be used as a day to pause and grieve, "to be empty, to realize that life, as we know it, is over."[25] This

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[21] Johnson, "The Paschal Mystery," 137.
[22] Johnson, "The Paschal Mystery," 137.
[23] Johnson, "The Paschal Mystery," 137.
[24] Johnson, "The Paschal Mystery," 135.
[25] Elizabeth Eaton, "Holy Saturday," *Living Lutheran*, February 24, 2016, https://www.livinglutheran.org/2016/02/holy-saturday/.

is uncomfortable, of course, as demonstrated by the urgency to seek closure immediately after a tragedy or loss, in an attempt to lessen the pain. "There is danger in moving too quickly from grief," Eaton warns, concurring with Shelly Rambo. [26]

As for existing worship opportunities for Holy Saturday, the Lutheran liturgical calendar accommodates an Easter Vigil, with shared scriptural elements but varied supplemental litanies. Benjamin M. Stewart describes how the night of Easter Saturday into Sunday creates "a hole, a gap in the Easter story where the crucial event takes place."[27] This is, first of all, another concurrence with the idea that Saturday is *the* turning point in the Salvation story. The vigil he describes, carried out at a seminary in the countryside, includes the ritual passing of an outdoor fire to a large paschal candle, which is then carried inside to burn while Old Testament selections are read. The prayer reads: *"*Bless this new fire, and increase in us a desire to shine forth with the brightness of Christ's rising, until we feast at the banquet of eternal light."[28]

In contrast to the presence of light, Stewart beautifully emphasizes the sacramental, narrative, and memorializing significance of darkness to the vigil: "Under the cover of darkness, slaves cross rivers into freedom; dry bones rise up to live; the fiery furnace of the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar goes dark; and long before any human eyes have opened, a blue-green world is given light and a sheltering dome of air, while the land, sea and sky are filled with fruitful creatures of every shape and kind. From the beginning, God has called new life out of darkness, often against great odds."[29]

These stories from Scripture, particularly the valley of dry bones, the parting of the Red Sea, and the fiery furnace, are included in the vigil elements of another Lutheran church (St. Peter's Lutheran Church in New York City), demonstrating the significance of these narratives to remembering God's restoration of hope after a dark time. Thomas Schmidt recounts Holy Saturday at this Manhattan parish, where the Easter Vigil has similar ritual and narrative elements to the one described by Stewart (though the urban setting makes for an unpredictable spin on the outdoor portion of the vigil). There is one element that Schmidt

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[26] Elizabeth Eaton, "Holy Saturday," *Living Lutheran*, February 24, 2016, https://www.livinglutheran.org/2016/02/holy-saturday/.

[27] Benjamin M. Stewart, "Reflections on the Lectionary," *Christian Century/Living by the Word* 130, no. 6 (March 20, 2013): 23.

[28] Stewart, "Reflections on the Lectionary," 23.

[29] Stewart, "Reflections on the Lectionary," 23.

details that will be helpful in finding a common foundation with Orthodox liturgies in the next section. The vigil ends in the renewal of baptismal vows, which is commemorated by the sprinkling of the people gathered around. There is too a greeting of peace and a procession forms behind the Paschal candle out the door to the surrounding plaza. Stanzas of "I bind unto myself today" from the Lutheran Book of Worship 188, and "Holy God, we praise your name," found in Lutheran Book of Worship 535, are sung, and the journey around the city block is interrupted six times for prayers. Worshippers return to a brightly lit, flower-adorned sanctuary in the church.[30]

It was Schmidt's fleeting mention of a contemplative daytime labyrinth that especially caught my attention as an element of pause before Easter and a potential element for the synthesized liturgy I will recommend at the end of the essay. On Holy Saturday, the parishioners borrow "a large canvas labyrinth from some nuns uptown and lay it out on that now empty granite floor in the sanctuary. From noon until 6:00 people are invited to come and walk the labyrinth and experience its spiritual, meditative qualities. A guide for using the labyrinth for meditation is provided."[31] This contemplative element is certainly compatible with the positions of Rambo, Lewis, and Williams, and has value as a daytime worship element for looking inward. It encourages worshippers to turn inwards and discern points of spiritual trouble, primarily by simply making deliberate and guided time for this sort of reflection.

<div align="center">Eastern Orthodox Christianity</div>

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Resurrection is inseparable from the death of Christ, because the "descent into Hell is the image of our present age. The Resurrection of Christ is the sign and guarantee of the final victory. For nothing is more absurd or contradictory than the entry of Life into death. Yet this is precisely what our faith proposes,"[32] writes Jerry Ryan, a prolific journalist and writer who belongs to the Russian Orthodox tradition. However, the contemplation of Holy Saturday—which is commemorated as Great Saturday[33] is much more salient in Orthodox traditions than in the

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[30] Thomas Schmidt, "Holy Week in the City," *Cross Accent* 14, no. 1 (2006): 22.
[31] Schmidt, "Holy Week in the City," 22.
[32] Jerry Ryan, "The Descent Into Hell," *Commonwealth* (April 11, 1997): 18.
[33] "Great and Holy Saturday - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America," Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, accessed April 19, 2021, https://www.goarch.org/holysaturday.

Lutheran tradition. Where the Lutheran theological perspective emphasizes looking at one salvific event from two sides, Orthodox liturgy highlights a third dimension—the intense Harrowing of Hell on Holy Saturday.

Archbishop Hilarion Alfeyev refers to the Eastern patristic fathers to establish a vivid picture of Christ and Holy Saturday. This is where narrative as an evaluating element comes to the analytical forefront. Christ is the hero, pictured as liberator, as chain-breaker, as vindicator. In a homily titled "On the Soul, Body, and Passions of Our Lord," attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria, "the descent into Sheol is presented in expressions redolent of particular liturgical texts from the ancient church."[34] The homily reads: "He burst open the gates of brass, he broke through the bolts of iron, and he took the souls that were in Amente [Hell] and carried them to his Father. When the Lord had broken up Amente, and had gained the victory over death, he set the enemy under restraint. Now the souls he brought out of Amente, but the bodies he raised up on the earth."[35] This homily relies upon the Gospel of Matthew, which recounts, "tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many."[36]

There is a focus on the Tomb of Christ, but it is important to emphasize that this is no ordinary grave. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America summarizes its theology: "Great Saturday is the day of the pre-eminent rest. Christ observes a Sabbath rest in the tomb. His rest, however, is not inactivity but the fulfillment of the divine will and plan for the salvation of humankind and the cosmos."[37] The American leaders of this tradition urge a "solemn observance of Great Saturday" to help members remember that "despite the daily vicissitudes and contradictions of history and the abiding presence of hell within the human heart and human society,' life has been liberated! Christ has broken the power of death."[38]

The focus in this tradition's liturgy for Holy Saturday is on the present, taking time in it and gradually moving into the celebration of Easter. In this theology, sorrow cannot simply be replaced by joy. It is *transformed* into joy. Saturday is a day of *transformation*, a

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[34] Archbishop Hilarion Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell: The Descent into Hades from an Orthodox Perspective* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 54.
[35] Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell*, 54.
[36] Matthew 27:52-53 (New American Bible, Revised Addition)
[37] Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, "Great and Holy Saturday."
[38] Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, "Great and Holy Saturday."

transition from sorrow to joy—and in the Orthodox liturgy, the transition is slow and deliberate, not rushed. There is plenty of time to connect with our own grief (or trauma or painful memory) in the Eastern liturgy.

Reverend Alexander Schmemann explains that from the Saturday morning service to the evening vigil, worshippers experience on a yearly basis the "liturgical commemoration which becomes for us a saving and transforming present."[39] Lamenting the death of Jesus Christ is a deliberate pause point for Orthodox Christians on Saturday morning. The death of Christ is considered the ultimate proof of His love for the will of God and of His obedience to His Father—and therefore necessary to contemplate as a significant point in our redemption story. Here is that common ground with those Christians and theologians who reject the highly charged image of Christ on Holy Saturday. All of the presented traditions can agree that, at the core, Saturday, the day of Christ's burial, is the focus point. I suggest that the two perspectives—one which embraces a mythologized theology of Holy Saturday, and the other which rejects it—could indeed work well together if ritualized accordingly.

So how is Holy Saturday ritualized in Eastern Orthodox traditions? The Matins of Saturday starts in the morning, and is a funeral service, a lamentation over the Epitaphios (the icon of Christ in His tomb). Schmemann explains that "after the singing of the funeral troparia of Friday and a slow censing of the church, the celebrants approach the Epitaphios. We stand at the grave of our Lord, we contemplate His death, His defeat. Psalm 119 is sung and to each verse we add a special 'praise,' which expresses the horror of men and of the whole creation before the death of Jesus."[40] What is interesting about Psalm 119 is that in the Orthodox liturgical practice, this psalm is used only at funeral services.[41]

The Epitaphios is sprinkled with rosewater and myrrh, and ancient funeral hymns played or sung. The process is repeated twice or three times, and worshippers are also sprinkled with the rosewater and myrrh. Near the end of the service, worshipers engage in a procession reminiscent of a funeral procession, proceeding with the Epitaphios around the Church chanting the Thrice-Holy hymn and holding candles to symbolize the victory of

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[39] Alexander Schmemann, "This Is the Blessed Sabbath: (Matins of Great Saturday)," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1958): 2.
[40] Schmemann, "This Is the Blessed Sabbath," 3.
[41] Schmemann, "This is the Blessed Sabbath," 3.

Christ over death.[42] There is a striking resemblance to the liturgy that St. Peter's Lutheran Church practices for Holy Saturday, especially in the procession and sprinkling of parishioners—a sensory and ritual element which brings the worshippers together in fellowship not only with each other, but with Jesus Christ.

<div align="center">Methodist Liturgy</div>

Though extensive scholarship on the Methodist's liturgical theology is limited, paying attention to and analyzing the premise and spiritual theology of Methodism, as well as the commonly used Gospel accounts for Holy Saturday in particular, can yield an adequate analysis for liturgy. As mentioned earlier, Maxwell Johnson purports that the reason for using the Johannine Gospel in the Lutheran Church is the Resurrection-focused lens of the account. In the Methodist Church, Matthew's account is key—especially the mention of the earthquake in Matthew 28:2. There is no warning before the violent disruption of the earth, before the faults scar the surface of the ground. Matthew frames Jesus's passion and death with earthquakes, suggesting a cosmic breaking-in by God into human history. Saturday is, once again, considered the day of transformation, this time marked by a tumultuous event. This transformation is far more abrupt than the one posited by Orthodox theology, but there is still an encouragement within the Methodist Church to understand the change that is happening, and not to rush past it.

There is a spiritual advisory here to not expect one's sins (or trauma or guilt or painful memories) to be washed clean from them with the dawn of the Resurrection. John Wesley, the founder of the Wesleyan and subsequent traditions, in his sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," implores his parishioners not to put hope in the idea that sin was washed away from this world: "How naturally do those who experience such a change imagine that all sin is gone; that it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein! ... But it is seldom long before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return, and sin revives; showing it was but stunned before, not dead."[43]

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[42] Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, "Great and Holy Saturday."

[43] John Wesley, "Sermon 43: The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Sermons on Several Occasions* (London: New Chapel, City Road, 1788), 5-6.

This acknowledgement that sin continues post-Resurrection, along with a sense of individual spirituality between God and believer, prompts the Methodist confession model. Confession is not a sacrament, but one is prompted to confess sins before God and one another. This means confessing sins and temptations to those who are a source of strength. It is about spiritual growth through the act of confession. Given this, I have identified room for a confessional element in the creative liturgy I propose in the next section, especially for those who lean on the strength and fellowship of other Christians in their lifelong spiritual journey.

What about liturgies within the Methodist tradition? While it is difficult to identify a specific example today, I detail here the advice provided by the official worship planning guide from the United Methodist Church. [44] The daytime service (not a vigil, as that is a separate accommodation in the evening, as with the previous two traditions) is mostly a quiet one, not characterized by hymns or long litanies of any kind. As for the atmosphere: "Simplicity, even starkness, continues for this service. No flowers, no paraments, no banners or other decorations anywhere. Consider using little music and no musical instruments—and no projection, if possible."[45] Interestingly, this quiet service is directly opposite the active liturgy of the vigil in the other two traditions, a similar one that a Methodist church may carry out in the evening time as well.

The Construction of an Ecumenical Liturgy

It is the hushed simplicity of this daytime service that may be the most conducive to that contemplation and spirituality of Holy Saturday. I will not focus on revising an Easter Vigil at this time, though I am intrigued by the similarities in processionals and rites between traditions that have different underlying theologies. I believe the vigil is indeed a good transition point from a day of quiet contemplation and mourning to astonished joy, and the ritual, narrative, and memorializing aspects of the vigil is a part of Christian history that should not be removed. As such, I would like to construct here an ecumenical liturgy for a morning or early afternoon Saturday service.

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[44] "Worship Planning Helps for Holy Saturday Morning or Early Afternoon," UMC Discipleship Ministries, February 18, 2016. https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/worship-planning-helps-for-holy-saturday-2016-morning-or-early-afternoon#notes.
[45] UMC Discipleship Ministries, "Worship Planning Helps for Holy Saturday Morning or Early Afternoon."

Looking back at the separate analyses of these Christian traditions' activities on Holy Saturday, there are several elements that seem to have emerged either as points of similarity, or points of potential ecumenical worship in keeping with "a theology of pause" for this day. These elements, which consider the initial three metrics of assessment I have proposed, include: (i) A silent meditative, personal activity—such as the labyrinth walk, which would center the individual spiritually in the quietude of Holy Saturday and in the silence of Christ's tomb; (ii) A confessional and/or counseling opportunity—both of which may be carried out in silence, under guidance of a minister, in the prayer service, or in small groups—which will provide time to acknowledge the heaviness of sin and hurt on one's heart and mind; (iii) A ritual prayer or litany, with Scripture readings reflecting the solemnity and void of Holy Saturday. This prayer can be a revision of a common liturgy specifically for this day, or perhaps even a shortened and revised funeral liturgy might be used. With all of these pieces in mind, we will soon encounter an ecumenical, noonday Holy Saturday liturgy. It is my hope that this can be a framework for setting aside this middle day as a day of solemn contemplation, as a space to deal with trauma.

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1. As congregants enter the quiet space of the church, they are encouraged to embark on a silent walk of the floor labyrinth to center their minds and hearts on this Easter Saturday morning. There are many intricate guides for walking a labyrinth, but popular steps include:[46]

    a. Removing heavy or noisy personal items—such as watches, shoes, or large jewelry—before entering the labyrinth.

    b. Walking the inward path with a focus on the things standing in the way of one's spiritual flourishing.

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[46] "How to Walk a Labyrinth," Randy Johnson, (July 16, 2015), Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Verona, New Jersey. http://holyspiritverona.org/content/how-walk-labyrinth
* Image from: St. Andrew by the Lake Anglican Church in Toronto. http://www.standrewbythelake.com/labryinth.html

> ## Holy Saturday
>
> *There is no celebration of the Eucharist on this day.*
>
> *When there is a Liturgy of the Word, the Celebrant begins with the Collect of the Day*
>
> O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*
>
> *Old Testament* Job 14:1-14
> *Psalm* 130, *or* 31:1-5
> *Epistle* 1 Peter 4:1-8
> *Gospel* Matthew 27:57-66, *or* John 19:38-42
>
> *After the Gospel (and homily), in place of the Prayers of the People, the Anthem "In the midst of life" (page 484 or 492) is sung or said.*
>
> *The service then concludes with the Lord's Prayer and the Grace.*
>
> *Holy Saturday* 283

c. Spending time in the center, in any comfortable position, and engaging in silent prayer or contemplation.

d. Walking the return path with a special focus on the things that you wish to bring back to the center of your life. Perhaps these are things you must address, or the things which you have taken for granted and wish to remember. Release your memory. Remember your encounter with Christ, good and bad. What do you wish to change?

2. As we move to our seats prior to the prayer service, take this time for confession. You may find yourself contemplating in silence, or perhaps you prefer the pastoral element of fellowship. As we move into the prayer service, center your heart on where we are in Christ's story.

3. The Holy Saturday collect is from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (reproduced here).

a. The opening prayer is optionally spoken as written in the collect, or as produced in the Methodist Book of Prayer: "Merciful and everliving God, Creator of heaven and earth, the crucified body of your Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy day. Grant that we may await with him the dawning of the third day and rise in newness of life, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen."

b. The Scripture readings for the collect are significant. The selection from Job is a lament on the finality of death. After this reading, there is silence.

c. After the reading of Psalm 130 as indicated in the Book of Common Prayer, time may be taken to remember departed loved ones, either aloud or in the silence of hearts.

d. The Gospel reading preferred is Matthew 27:57-66, as it brings us to the "present" of the story. This is where we are left, this is *when* we are left—in the wake of Christ's burial.

e. Silence, punctuated by voices, is what is preferred, and no music. This absence of music at the daytime service may well end up making the musical elements at the Easter Vigil and procession much more powerful.

Conclusion

The theology of pause underlying this liturgy is one of great pastoral value that can extend beyond Holy Saturday, but this space between Christ's death and Resurrection also holds spiritual value. While we lack a clear narration from the Gospel regarding the events of this "middle day," all Christian traditions share some elements—namely, that Christ had died, fulfilling a universal human experience, and that this day was pivotal in the redemption of humanity. Precisely because of this shared reality, Holy Saturday may be the perfect moment to pause and reflect on other distinctly human experiences. In the Gospels, there is little indication of what is happening. We are left, in the tragic gap, to wait with grief, loss, sin, trauma, hardship looming over our human condition as we look forward to what is to come.

Instead of acquiescing in this reality, I suggest we pause, deliberately, and seek those liturgical elements which help us re-encounter God even in the darkest of our memories, to work through all the times we denied Christ, all the times we hurt our neighbor, all the times we have felt the stain of sin, all the times we have felt the sting of death. This is where elements of confession, contemplation, hymns and prayers of mourning, and a Gospel account which leaves us in the wake of a burial fits in. These elements empower us to repent and turn back to God. In rejecting the urgency to seek "closure" about our human condition by pushing through to the Resurrection, and in instead slowing down and confronting what it means to overcome sin and suffering, we may find the healing transformation of the Resurrection far more vivid, and God's liberation all the more fulfilling.

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Research and Interpretation of the Parable of the Lost Sheep as Recorded in Luke 15:4-7

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RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE

OF THE LOST SHEEP AS RECORDED IN LUKE 15:4-7

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Abstract: This article will analyze the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:4-7. By employing Ruben Zimmerman's definition of a parable, it will outline Luke 15:4-7 and show that by using literary, historical, and reader-oriented approaches, the parable (like all others) creates a field of meaning. This article engages with various parable scholars and argues for the need to include various perspectives in interpretation. After discussing the parable's field of meaning, the final section of the analysis puts forth five possible interpretations of the parable. These interpretations include the author's understanding of the parable, a systematic theological interpretation, a reader-oriented interpretation, a queer interpretation, and an anti-capitalist interpretation.

Introduction

Each mountainous biblical figure provides insight on God and His covenantal kingdom in different ways. Moses was the law bringer, David was the poet, and Jesus was the parabolic preacher. There is a consensus among historical-critical scholars that the parables found in the synoptic gospels are the closest one can get to hearing the words of the historical Jesus. Great emphasis has been placed on the study of parables due to their historicity, puzzling nature, and rhetorical form. The goal of this essay is to provide thorough research on the parable of the lost sheep that is found in Luke 15:4-7. Throughout my personal research and interpretation, I will be interacting with scholarly work that surrounds the parable of the lost sheep in the Gospel of Luke.

This essay is broken up into two main sections: "Methodology" and "Analysis." In the methodology section of this article, I lay out the groundwork needed to properly analyze and interpret Luke 15:4-7. In the analysis portion, I dissect Luke 15:4-7 and surrounding writings to garner a greater understanding of what was written. I do not come to a single conclusion of meaning from my findings, however. Rather, as I hope to show, parables have

multiple meanings that are created by interacting with the text from different perspectives. Therefore, Luke 15:4-7 does not have a single correct interpretation, but instead creates a field of meaning ripe for study today.

Methodology: Identifying Luke 15:4-7 as a Parable

In order to present an organized and justified analysis of Luke 15:4-7, I will be employing Ruben Zimmerman's definition of a parable. Zimmerman explains: "A parable is a short narratival fictional text that is related in the narrated world to known reality but, by way of implicit or explicit transfer signals, makes it understood that the meaning of the narration must be differentiated from the literal words of the text. In its appeal dimension it challenges the reader to carry out a metaphoric transfer of meaning that is steered by contextual information."[2]

With this definition, for Luke 15:4-7 to be considered a parable, it must be narratival, fictional, realistic, metaphorical, active in appeal, and contextually related to its surroundings. It is obvious that Luke 15:4-7 is narratival as Jesus tells a short-story that contains a basic plot in which a character, presumably a shepherd, realizes that one of his sheep is lost and goes out to look for it. Upon finding it, he rejoices with his neighbors. Moreover, this sequence of events is fictional. In the narrative, there is no specific character ever mentioned that could be tied to an actual person or event that once took place. Rather, this story is extremely realistic, yet fictional as nomadic farming was common in antiquity and the sequence of events could have taken place; however, the parable lacks reference to an actual shepherd or sheep. Zimmerman describes this dynamic concisely in saying "It is a narrative in a narrative—a fictional, imaginary episode that is nevertheless realistic because it is based on a shepherding scene that would have been part of daily life in rural society in first-century Palestine."[3] Luke 15:4-7 is also metaphorical because the depiction of the shepherd and his career is a common stock metaphor used in Old Testament writings and other works in antiquity.[4] In support of this notion, metaphoric transfer of this imagery takes place in verse 7. The beginning of Luke 15:4-7 illustrates active appeal. By directly

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[2] Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 137.

[3] Zimmerman, *Puzzling the Parables,* 216-17.

[4] Duncan J Derrett, "Fresh Light on the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin." *New Testament Studies* 26 (1979): 37. *New Testament Studies* will hereafter be abbreviated *NTS.*

questioning the audience, Jesus invites the audience to participate in the story. The reader or listener would be able to put themselves in the place of either the shepherd, the flock, or the lost sheep.[5] This short story is also contextually related to the greater narrative of Luke. It is a parable that discusses "the Kingdom of Heaven," a recurring theme of Luke's gospel.[6] Moreover, the parable appears to be a response to the actions that take place in Luke 15:1-3. Finally, the story displayed in Luke 15:4-7 shares thematic elements with the other two parables in Luke 15. Therefore, a nuanced application of Zimmerman's definition allows us to consider Luke 15:4-7 a parable.

Methodology: Parameters of the Parable

Regarding the parable's parameters, I suggest that verses 4-7 contain the scope of the parable we must analyze. The parable definitely begins in Luke 15:4, highlighted by the wording of Luke 15:3, "So he told them this parable." Here, the word parable is $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\beta o\lambda\acute{\eta}$ or *parabole*. This word is used by all of the synoptic authors to describe other similitudes (that share the definition previously described) spoken by Jesus. Therefore, Luke clearly indicates that the parable begins with Jesus's words in verse 4.

As for determining the end of the parable, a more in-depth analysis is required. I suggest that the parable proper[7] is contained within Luke 15:4-6, whereas the parable pericope[8] is Luke 15:4-7. It is necessary to differentiate the two as each can lead to different interpretations of the text. I propose that Luke 15:4-6 contains the parable proper because this section holds the entire "story" of the fictional man and the lost sheep. Moreover, there is a noticeable change in subject that takes place in verse 7: the story is no longer about the shepherd, rather, it is about the Father's heavenly affairs. In verse 7, this abrupt change is purposeful, denoted by Jesus saying "in the same way." By saying this, the parable undergoes explicit metaphoric transfer by comparing the two stories with one another. Therefore, since there are two stories provided, the parable proper must be 15:4-6 as it

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[5] Zimmerman, *Puzzling the Parables,* 218
[6] Ernst R. Wendland, "Finding Some Lost Aspects of Meaning in Christ's Parables of the Lost--and Found (Luke 15)." *Trinity Journal* 17, no. 1 (1996): 27.
[7] The "parable proper" refers to the story-like similitude that contains all aspects of the parable definition described on pages 1-3. The parable proper follows a single, uninterrupted plot structure and does not undergo any explicit metaphoric transfer.
[8] A pericope refers to a set of verses that forms one coherent unit or thought. Therefore, a "parable pericope" is the text that surrounds the parable proper and helps formulate a certain theme or thought.

maintains narrativity and does not undergo explicit metaphoric transfer.[9] However, we cannot overlook verse 7 as it is clearly connected to the parable proper, maintaining the same theme and motif of rejoicing when the lost are found. Hence, Luke 15:4-7 is the parable pericope of the lost sheep because each verse is utilized to express one coherent thought. Additionally, the explicit metaphoric transfer in verse 7 is used to finalize the point Jesus is attempting to convey to his audience. Through explaining the meaning of the parable proper, Jesus subsequently concludes the parable pericope.[10] This is further highlighted in verse 8 with the use of "or" before transitioning to another similitude.

Some writings list the parable of the lost sheep as Luke 15:1-7; however, I believe verses 1-3 are used in the greater narrative of Luke rather than in the narrative of the parable. Thus, Luke 15:1-3 explains why Jesus shares the parable and is not a part of the parable itself. Some scholars believe that Luke 15:1-3 gives context to all of the parables in Luke 15 (despite the singularity of "this parable" used in verse 3) because all the parables share a similar meaning and theme.[11] For these reasons, Luke 15:1-3 should not be included in the parable of the lost sheep, but instead must be looked at closely when trying to interpret the parable.

The Perspectives Involved in Interpretation

Before we move forward with any further analysis of the text, I must first introduce the different aspects of interpretation that I will be using, and the of using these tools in any parabolic interpretation. In this section, I lay out literary, historical, and reader aspects to show the value they provide in interpretation.

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[9] It must be noted that Luke 15:4 has the parable directly question the audience. This could be seen as a form of explicit metaphorical transfer; however, this question not only sets up the crisis for the narrative, but also seems to be rhetorical, and justifies the actions of the fictional Shepherd. Moreover, due to its rhetorical nature, the audience would be able to place themselves or anyone in the place of the fictional shepherd. Not to mention, by beginning the parable proper with a question, it adds an engaging factor to the story. Therefore, verse 4 is both a part of the narrative of the parable proper and engages the audience.

[10] The counterpart of the parable of the lost sheep found in Matthew 18:12-14 shares the same structure of parable proper and parable pericope. In both gospels, the parable proper remains almost identical in terms of its narrative and characters. Both pericopes also contain a second story in the final verse that is compared to the parable proper. The difference between the pericopes is the interpretation. Luke's comparison reveals the theme of rejoicing when the lost is found. Whereas in Matthew, the theme presented is the obligation to keep "little ones" from being led astray. The different themes in the final verses of both parables further highlights the need to differentiate the parable proper from the parable pericope.

[11] Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: a Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 93.

Literary Aspects

When interpreting any parable, it is important to consider its literary aspects because parables come from ancient writings that are in themselves literary works. As Steven Notely has written: "The [G]ospel parables belong to a larger landscape of emerging Jewish thought. These didactic short stories give voice to the hopes and concerns that one can hear elsewhere in Second Temple Jewish literature."[12] Therefore, as literary works, parables belong to their own ancient genre and must be seen as such. Viewing them in this manner, parables function as literary devices the biblical authors employ to get a point across to the reader.[13] With this in mind, interpreters can grasp a greater understanding of the parable by taking a step back and looking at different elements and themes surrounding the parable. In addition, viewing the literary aspects of a parable leads to greater focus on syntax and diction, which can reveal previously unknown meaning hidden within language. On the other hand, by viewing parables as literary works, one can also take on Mary Anne Tolbert's view, receiving parables as timeless literary texts rather than historical artifacts belonging to a long-dead culture.[14] Either way, by paying keen attention to the literary aspects of parables, the interpreter gains valuable tools to interpret meaning.

Historical Aspects

As previously mentioned, parables were written in antiquity, meaning the gospel writers and parable speakers were surrounded by an entirely different culture than our own that undoubtedly influenced their work. Ernst Wendland describes the necessity of looking at the historical aspects of a parable insofar as they allow one to "think more deeply about a given passage and not simply to assume that he/she knows what is going on or to impose immediately on the text his/her own perception and culturally conditioned framework of interpretation."[15] Understanding the historical aspects of a parable (i.e., its original setting,

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[12] Steven R. Notley, "Reading Gospel Parables as Jewish Literature." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41, no. 1 (2018): 40.

[13] Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*. (Nashville. TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 237. It is important to recognize that a biblical author *employs* a parable to guide their audience towards creating a particular image of Jesus and those who surround him. Therefore, it is not out of the question of whether biblical authors may have altered parables. It will not be explored much in this essay; however, parable pericopes due to their uniform narrative may have a higher historicity than a parable proper, as the summary or explanation at the end of a parable proper very easily could have been added or manipulated by biblical authors to better fit the parable within their narrative.

[14] David B. Gowler, *What Are They Saying About the Parables?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 24.

[15] Wendland, *Finding,* 36

historical context, and the prevailing socio-cultural conditions) leads to a broader understanding of the characters within these stories, the actions that unfold, and the oddities that are usually packed within Jesus's parables that might otherwise go unnoticed. Therefore, it is paramount to consider parables' historical dimensions if one has any desire to forge any interpretation that is in line with the original audience's understanding of the message.

<u>Reader Aspects</u>

Approaching parables with the reader in mind is important because all parables draw the audience in with their active appeals. Parables were composed with the audience in mind and were crafted in such a way that the tale would invite the reader to participate in the story that it tells. Parables are literary works of art with meaning built into them, meaning that can only be elucidated through interaction and interpretation. Consequently, I agree with Mary Anne Tolbert's reader-oriented approach to parabolic interpretation: "A parable requires the reader to participate in the creation of meaning."[16] To take the reader out of the picture leaves us with a dead, purposeless story; just as if there were no listeners, Jesus would not have uttered any parables. Zimmermann puts it nicely in stating that "[m]eaning thus occurs only through this interaction between text and recipient and cannot be objectively determined."[17] Thus, we need to account for different forms of audience and readers when interpreting a parable. For example, a parable addressed to the Pharisees may have a different meaning than a parable used to teach the disciples. Beyond this, a parable recorded or written in the Gospel of Matthew to a Jewish audience could be interpreted differently by the readers than the same parable written in Luke to a Hellenistic audience. Consequently, it would be the interpreter's own folly to not include attention to the reader when searching for meaning, not least because the audience is the catalyst for the parable's creation of meaning.

The Steps Involved in Interpretation

Now that the value of literary, historical, and reader attention has been described, in this section, we will encounter various aspects of parables that are important in our interpretation of Luke 15:4-7.

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[16] Gowler, *What are they Saying,* 24.
[17] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 47.

Text: Analyzing Narrative Elements and Contexts

Literary aspects of interpretation can help extract meaning from the parable of the lost sheep. Since all parables (according to our definition) have a degree of narrativity, we can look at the plot structure of Luke 15:4-7. More specifically, to find the parable's point of emphasis, I will look to its unique form and the key concepts Wendland describes. Furthermore, we can examine the recounting of the parable by analyzing how the external focalization of the narrator leads to the indirect characterization of the shepherd and surrounding figures.[18]

Reality: Mapping the Socio-Historical Background

In the second section of our analysis, we must place appropriate emphasis on the historical aspects of the parable. By looking at the socio-historical context of the parable, a greater understanding of ancient economics is revealed, prompting questions such as: "What type of shepherd is described?" "Who is responsible for the sheep being lost?" "Is the sheep worth going after?" "Why does everyone rejoice when the sheep is found?" In an effort to answer these questions, I will rely on both Snodgrass's and Zimmermann's methodological tools, as well as that of Wendland and Bishop.

Tradition: Exploring Stock Metaphors and Symbols

Next, we must combine literary and historical aspects in order to expose symbolism and stock metaphors that were common to the writing tradition surrounding the parable. To have intersubjective traceability in our interpretation, I will find conventional probabilities of metaphors surrounding shepherding as described in Zimmermann's work. Beyond this, I will also explore the stock metaphor surrounding a shepherd that comes from the traditions of ancient Near Eastern writing.

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[18] Regarding context, this parable is recognized as one of the three parables of lostness found in Luke 15. As such, I will analyze the introduction of Luke 15 to help determine the overarching meaning that Luke is trying to express in the three parables of the chapter. I will also look for similarities between the other two parables found in the chapter, in search of continuous themes or structure that extend through the chapter and aid in the analysis of the parable of the lost sheep.

<u>Meaning: Opening up Horizons of Interpretation</u>

In the final section of our analysis, I will put forth five separate interpretations of the parable. The reason for doing so is because I agree with Tolbert: the structure of a parable does not generate a meaning, instead it provides basic constraints and possibilities within which a variety of meanings may be perceived.[19] Therefore, because a parable requires the reader to participate in the creation of its meaning, I must consider multiple reader interpretations. The first interpretation will be my own and also deduced from the research expressed in this essay. The second will be a systematic theological interpretation that aims to decipher what the parable means in reference to Jesus and His mission. The third interpretation will be reader oriented and look at the parable as if it speaks directly to Luke's reader, functioning to guide the reader as a follower of Jesus. The fourth and fifth interpretations will be ideological and view the parable through queer and anti-capitalist lenses.

Analysis: Characters in Luke 15:4-7

The narrator that describes the characters in the parable of the lost sheep takes on an external focalization that inhibits the reader from knowing any of the characters' thoughts or motivations behind certain actions. This leads to the parable *showing* us what happens more often than *telling*.[20] The first prime example of this "showing" is the main character never being explicitly named a shepherd. In fact, the parable is addressed to an audience of Pharisees, not shepherds, and the main character is referred to in the third person. Because of the actions described, one can automatically deduce that the main character is a shepherd. Despite the parable's brevity, other characters are clearly included, namely the sheep that is lost, the ninety-nine sheep that are left behind, and the neighbors that rejoice with the shepherd when his sheep is found. Again, the parable does not tell us about these characters, but rather describes them through the actions of the main character: "having a hundred sheep and losing one of them" (15:4a); "leave the ninety-nine" (15:4b); "he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me'" (15:6). Through this indirect method of characterization, the parable author aptly imbues the story with emotion and

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[19] Gowler, *What are they Saying,* 24.
[20] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 222.

paints a vivid portrait of each of the characters involved. Indeed, Zimmermann says, "[t]he parable thus seeks to create an emotional plurality that draws the audience directly into the event."[21] Undoubtedly then, an integral piece of the parable's goal is to have members of the audience put themselves into the parable, whether that be as the shepherd, the sheep, the flock, or the neighbors. Clearly, this emotion extends to the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. Thomas Golding explains that the shepherd-sheep image is a highly relational one between human and animal and the only other relational metaphors that depict a covenantal relationship with God are of a human-to-human nature.[22] Therefore, this relationship between the two characters is emphasized above all the rest and must be seen as the central interaction that takes place in the parable.

Analysis: Plot of the Parable of the Lost Sheep

By examining the parable's plot, we are better able to determine the focus of the parable, and thus its possible meanings. The narrativity of the plot is easy to follow, but it does not adhere to the normal quinary scheme. Instead, the parable begins with a complication of one of the ninety-nine sheep getting lost, followed by the transforming action of the shepherd leaving the flock in the wilderness to find the lost one. Interestingly, this is followed by another transforming action of the shepherd finding the sheep and rejoicing. After this, the final solution is presented as the shepherd comes home, presumably with his entire flock, and celebrates with his neighbors. Then, Jesus puts forth the metaphoric transfer of the celebration of the lost being comparable to the celebration of a repentant sinner in heaven. Due to the odd narrative scheme, it is difficult to determine the climactic event of the parable which ultimately holds the most metaphorical meaning. Is the climax the finding of the lost, or the rejoicing after they are found?

Wendland provides some helpful insights on this question. He claims that the parable "manifests a parallelism that is both linear and concentric in nature." He calls its make-up a "'rhetorical-structural' development because the larger contours of the text appear to be shaped in order to accent the main points of Christ's implicit argument as well as the

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[21] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables*, 218.
[22] Thomas A. Golding, "The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163, no. 649 (2006): 26.

principal aspects of his incisive message…"[23] Wendland then breaks down the parable into its "key concepts" in each verse:

>15:4 contains concepts of: You, One, Many, Lost.
>
>15:5 contains concepts of: Found, Joy.
>
>15:6 contains concepts of: Fellowship, Joy, Found, Lost.
>
>15:7 contains concepts of: You, One, Many.

Even though the structure of this parable is not chiastic in nature like its counterpart in Matthew,[24] there are still definitive poetic elements. Wendland asserts that the "structurally significant central core of this pericope emphasizes the 'kingdom principle'..."[25] Though I agree with Wendland's argument, in viewing parables out of context, I believe we can only pull out the three larger themes that are found within: finding repentance, joy, and fellowship. Consequently, we need to look at the parable in its surrounding context to derive the parable's main point of emphasis.

Analysis: Surrounding Context of Luke 15:4-7

As has been discussed, the parable of the lost sheep is the first of three "Parables of Lostness." These parables are intimately connected because they all function as a response to the criticism that takes place in 15:1-3. In his opening chapter on the "Parables of Lostness," Snodgrass emphasizes the need to see the parables of chapter 15 in context with one another: "Luke has clearly arranged chapter 15 for rhetorical effect, and an understanding of how this section functions assists in interpreting the individual parables."[26] As acknowledged in many scholarly commentaries and essays, each of the parables in chapter 15 contains two main components: (1) the climax of something that is lost or that has gone astray being found/returning, and (2) the emotional conclusion of a joyous fellowship. Tannehill considers the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin to be pairs that share basically the same story from two perspectives: male and female.[27] Wendland, in his structural analysis, finds these parables remarkably similar. He explains, "... the structural correspondences again serve to reinforce the main point that is being

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[23] Wendland, *Finding,* 26.
[24] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 100.
[25] Wendland, *Finding,* 27.
[26] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 93.
[27] Tannehill, *Luke,* 237.

metaphorically made, namely, that genuine JOY should characterize the response of all who witness the finding."[28] Snodgrass also highlights that the rejoicing in the parable of the lost coin seems exaggerated, out of place, and therefore emphasizes the theme of rejoicing.[29] Tannehill makes a fair assessment to prove the parables' emphasis on rejoicing. He claims that when viewing the parables in the greater context of Luke and 15:1-3, the rejoicing fellowship at the end of the three parables contrasts the grumbling and questioning of the Pharisees.[21] So, when looking at the parable of the lost sheep in its context with its surrounding parables and chapter, we can narrow down its main emphasis to rejoicing.

Historical Background: Nomadic Shepherding

The parable of the lost sheep depicts the main character as a nomadic shepherd.[30] Zimmermann points out in his analysis that this form of shepherding was common in antiquity.[31] Due to lack of details in the parable, it is difficult to determine whether or not the shepherd was the owner of the flock. Snodgrass believes that the shepherd did own all one hundred sheep, and therefore, was materially well-off.[32] On the other hand, Wendland has argued that the shepherd depicted is not the owner of the sheep, but rather a hired hand. Wendland does not believe that a man wealthy enough to own one hundred sheep would perform the "disagreeable and disreputable" job of shepherding.[33]

My view deviates from the notion that a rich man would not be a shepherd because it is disreputable. In fact, there is extremely positive imagery of shepherds in the Hebrew Bible.[34] Either way, the ambiguity of the shepherd may be purposeful and will be explored further in the next session of analysis regarding metaphoric transfer. Regardless of whether or not the shepherd owns the sheep, it seems there is no blame assigned in the parable. Wendland believes the sheep's lostness is not due to negligence of the shepherd, nor is it the sheep's fault for getting lost, it is simply the sheep's nature to get lost.[35] Therefore, it must be noted that in this parable describing the Kingdom of Heaven, there is no blame assigned to the

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[28] Wendland, *Finding,* 27.
[29] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 102.
[30] Thomas A. Golding, "The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163, no. 650 (2006): 159.
[31] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 220.
[32] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 100.
[33] Wendland, *Finding,* 37.
[34] Derrett, *New Light,* 37.
[35] Wendland, *Finding,* 27.

sheep, the metaphoric sinner. The same theme is carried on throughout the chapter. It is not the coin's fault for being lost, nor does the Father blame the Prodigal Son for his folly. As some have pointed out, this lack of responsibility for lostness creates a difficulty in the metaphoric transfer of being found representing repentance.[36]

Historical Background: The Value of Sheep

A common question that arises from interpreting the parable regards the origin of why the shepherd leaves all ninety-nine sheep alone to find the single lost one? Some scholars suggest that the reason for this behavior is validated if the shepherd was a hired hand, as the value of a single sheep could be close to one month's wage.[37] Others, such as Snodgrass[38] and Wendland,[39] argue that one hundred sheep could never be managed by a single shepherd, so the man left the ninety-nine in the wilderness with other shepherds. Some also argue that it is simply the job of the shepherd to find the lost sheep no matter the value. Regardless, again, Snodgrass makes a valid argument in that the disregard for the ninety-nine puts an emphasis on the joy of finding the single lost sheep.[29]

Historical Background: Communal Celebration

Unlike the celebration in the parable of the lost coin, the joy of the fellowship in 15:6 seems justified. As many have pointed out, if the sheep was not found quickly, the shepherd was at risk of losing the animal to a wild beast.[40] Beyond this, in finding the sheep, the shepherd did not just save the animal and protect his own pocket, but he also brought honor to himself and the local community. Wendland describes this well in writing: "The people who would have been most aware of or affected by the shepherd's loss and the economic burden and social shame that this would entail—his close friends, fellow herdsmen, and family members… In a communal society, personal joy must be shared to be genuine."[41] Therefore, the rejoicing in the parable that seems out of place to the modern eye would be a common and expected occurrence in antiquity.

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[36] Derrett, *New Light,* 36.
[37] John S. Kloppenborg and Callie Callon, "The Parable of the Shepherd and the Transformation of Pastoral Discourse," *Early Christianity* 1, no. 2 (2010): 233.
[38] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 105.
[39] Wendland, *Finding,* 26.
[40] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 220. Derrett, *New Light,* 40.
[41] Wendland, *Finding,* 38-39.

Metaphors and Symbolism: Who is the Shepard?

To use Zimmermann's formulation, the imagery of the shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep has the conventional probability of being a metaphor. This is because the shepherd metaphor was commonly used in Jewish texts[42] and the "entire linguistic world of antiquity."[43] Golding, for instance, points to Ps 23, Isa 56:9-12, and Ezek 34:3-4 as metaphoric images of shepherds.[44] Zimmermann explains the *Bildfeldtradition* of the shepherd demonstrates four variations of the shepherd metaphor in the Old Testament: the King-Shepherd metaphor, the Leader-Shepherd metaphor, the Yahweh-Shepherd metaphor, and the Messiah-Shepherd metaphor. While the metaphoric transfer that takes place in this parable could belong to any of these four stock metaphors, Zimmermann explains that the most probable image would either be the Yahweh-Shepherd or Messiah-Shepherd, because these traditionally show the shepherd as a caring figure for the sheep like in Luke 15:4-7.[45] Tannehill agrees that the image of the shepherd in the parable is either Jesus or God, stating, "The seeking shepherd mirrors Jesus' role but also represents God…"[46]

As was previously suggested, this duality of the shepherd metaphor may come from the ambiguity of the shepherd's ownership of the flock. If the shepherd described in the parable was the owner of the sheep, it would be a more appropriate metaphor for Yahweh; whereas if the shepherd was a hired hand, it would make more sense for the shepherd to be seen as the Messiah. Overall, the metaphoric transfer in the parable pericope is clear. The flock is the 'lost sheep of Israel' as it has been in every shepherd motif of the Old Testament and the shepherd stands as the Messiah (whom Luke regards as Jesus throughout his Gospel) or Yahweh.[47]

In analyzing the parable proper, the reference to the heavenly community that rejoices as described in verse 7 is left out. Therefore, in many ways the parable proper does not guide the reader to believe the shepherd represents the messiah or Yahweh. In fact, it seems as if you solely consider the parable proper, Jesus's direct address towards his audience, "Suppose one of *you* has a hundred," would more often lead the reader to place themselves

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[42] Derrett, *New Light,* 37.
[43] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 224-225.
[44] Golding, *Imagery of the Shepherd,* 26-28.
[45] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 220.
[46] Tannehill, *Luke,* 239.
[47] Derrett, *New Light,* 37.

in the position of the shepherd in this parable rather than Jesus (Luke's messianic figure) or Yahweh. This is not to say the reader would not understand stock metaphors of shepherding from the Old Testament, as they very well could. If this were the case, they may view the parable proper as a challenge to replicate the actions of the Messiah or Yahweh.

Metaphors and Symbolism: Carrying the Sheep

The image of the shepherd placing the sheep on his shoulders is unique to Luke and most likely contains some sort of metaphoric meaning. Kloppenburg and Callon believe the image of the shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulders could be reflecting a popular Greco-Roman figure, Hermes-Kriophor, creating an image of an idealized shepherd.[48] I would, however, tend to agree with Derrett's interpretation that the carrying of the sheep on the shoulders alludes to Yahweh taking the lost sheep upon his arms in Isaiah and Hosea.[49] Furthermore, Derrett believes this imagery could also be related to a legend of Moses carrying one of his own lost sheep on his shoulders.[50] With this in mind, the symbolism of the shepherd placing the sheep on his shoulders follows the same metaphoric transfer of viewing the shepherd as either Yahweh or the Messiah and the sheep being a person or people group.

Interpreting the Parable

With all the research we have thus far reviewed, it is clear that the focus of the parable is on the rejoicing that occurs in the Kingdom of Heaven when a sinner recognizes their wrongdoing and enters back into a covenant with God. Of course, this may seem obvious as it is the theme presented in 15:7, but the interpretation which I endorse nevertheless requires further discussion.

First, Wendland's breakdown of the structure of the parable and the Sondgrass's identification of the dichotomy of the one to ninety-nine sheep should help the parable's

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[48] Kloppenborg, and Callon, *Pastoral Discourse,* 255. This interpretation does not come without merit. John Darr, in many of his works on Luke-Acts, uses literary criticism to evaluate the Lukan author. Darr argues that author of Luke-Acts implements Hellenistic motifs into his writing such as *synkrisis* or sophist-philosopher imagery to portray Jesus as a "philosophical Messiah" figure, so that Jesus and the emerging "Christian Way" could be viewed more favorably by highly Hellenized groups. See, for example, John A. Darr, *On Character Building: the Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 58-69.
[49] Most notably, Isaiah 40:10-11
[50] Derrett, *New Light,* 43.

reader move away from an emphasis on the lost being found, and rather towards the rejoicing that takes place. Furthermore, with the knowledge of the parable's historical context, it is all-the-more obvious that the parable paints a picture of a good shepherd that holds the idealized traits of being loving, caring, and strong. It is neither the sheep's nor the shepherd's fault that the animal gets lost, it is simply in the sheep's nature to stray. Due to the stock metaphor of Yahweh being a shepherd and the symbolism of the sheep being placed on the shoulders, the shepherd must thus best be understood as God. Therefore, I suggest the parable attempts to explicate that it is only in man's nature to stray away from God, and when we sinners are finally reunited with God (who is always ready to find and accept members of His human creation), there is great rejoicing in heaven.

A Systematic Theological Interpretation

Someone who seeks to interpret the parable for its Christological implications may perceive a different meaning than that which I have described. One may look at the structure of the parable, for example, and notice the emphasis on rejoicing, but also view the "finding" more important. As Zimmermann puts it, from this perspective, the "happy ending would not be possible without the dauntless actions of the shepherd. He sets out on his search and brings the sheep home…"[51] Thus, the question in verse 4 functions to show the duty of the shepherd: to seek and save the lost. There is no doubt that someone viewing the parable from this lens would also see the stock metaphor of the shepherd; however, they may view him as the Messiah rather than Yahweh. With this interpretation, the parable functions solely as a response to the Pharisees questioning Jesus. Jesus places himself in the parable as a defense for eating with sinners. By demonstrating in the parable that the Messiah (and Kingdom of Heaven) brings forgiveness to all, he justifies his actions as righteous and reveals himself as the Messiah.

A Reader-Oriented Interpretation

From a reader-oriented perspective, one may view the opening question of the parable as addressed directly to the reader, rather than to Jesus's historical audience in the text. With this perspective, one might emphasize the showing rather than telling of the parable and the

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[51] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 228.

72

external focalization of the narrator as more beneficial to the reader than the narrative. In this paradigm, the narrative form is used to allow the reader to easily put themselves in the place of the shepherd. Zimmermann alludes to this, saying: "The appellative character of the text creates a special proximity between the recipient and the shepherd."[52] Someone with this interpretation most likely would not be aware of the stock metaphors of shepherding in the Hebrew Bible. However, if they were aware of such metaphors, they might recognize the shepherd to be Jesus. Nonetheless, the reader may still put themselves in the place of the shepherd by reasoning that they must replicate Jesus's actions. In this reader-oriented perspective, it is the shepherd's paramount duty to find the lost. Therefore, the reader functions as the shepherd and the sheep function as their community. To this reader, the parable is a teaching mechanism that instructs them to disregard the members of their community who are doing well spiritually, and to make every effort to find the sinner and carry them to repentance. Thus, the emphasis is on 'the finding,' and 'the rejoicing' is a reward. With this interpretation, the repentance of the sinner is celebrated but is not credited to the sinner. Instead, the shepherd's heroic action of finding the sinner is what led to repentance, and as such, is what is truly celebrated in heaven.

A Queer Interpretation

Before considering a potentially queer interpretation of the parable, it is contextually necessary to acknowledge that in many Christian traditions, homosexuality and gender fluidity are considered sinful abominations. In these religious circles, a person's sexuality or gender identity is viewed as something that can be chosen, controlled, or changed. Consequently, many queer individuals do not engage with the Christian faith because they are either barred from engaging in a local faith community or choose not to engage with religious doctrines (or, rather, interpretations thereof) that condemn their actions.

With this contextual background in mind, it is likely that a queer interpretation of the parable of the lost sheep would focus on the ideas of lostness and rejoicing. A queer person may put themselves in the position of the lost sheep for two reasons. In the first instance, the queer person, like the lost sheep, is separated. In this view, the flock would represent the faith community, and as the lost sheep, the queer individual is singled out, separated, and

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[52] Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables,* 234.

73

different from the rest of the flock by virtue of their identity. Secondly, a queer person could identify with the sheep because the sheep's actions are not seen as inherently wrong but rather commonplace and expected.[53] Just as it is in the nature of a sheep to wander, it is in the nature of the individual to be queer. Furthermore, the queer individual may focus on the aspect of rejoicing because it stands in stark contrast to the prevalent Christian culture of rejecting and othering queer persons. Thus, from a queer perspective, the shepherd could either represent Jesus or the ideal Christian who seeks out and loves queer individuals unconditionally, rejoicing in their company. Furthermore, the neighbors may represent an ideal ecclesial community that welcomes and rejoices with queer persons. Finally, with this perspective, as verse 7 reads, "...there will be more *rejoicing in heaven...,"* the queer reader may explicitly recognize that the heavenly Father loves queer persons and wants them to be a part of his Church. Such a realization would proudly stand in opposition to some current Christian cultures which outright oppose and/or condemn queer persons. Ultimately, this queer interpretation can be summarized in the opening question of verse 4 that stands as a call to action for those who want to be righteous by mimicking the shepherd. Its rhetorical nature explains that Jesus (the shepherd) does not hesitate to reach out to queer individuals who are isolated and outcast due to their human nature, one that was not chosen and cannot be changed. In this interpretation, Jesus rejoices with the queer individual and does not view their life as sinful. Furthermore, Jesus belongs to an equally righteous community that celebrates and welcomes queer persons just as the Heavenly Father loves queer persons and desires for them to be a part of His heavenly kingdom.

<center>An Anti-Capitalist Interpretation</center>

Another interpretation of this parable stems from a quasi-Marxist lens. From this perspective, it is more efficacious to interrogate the parable proper rather than the parable pericope. With an anti-capitalist interpretation, the reader may view verse 7 as a "guiding summation" that was provided by the author rather than Jesus himself, and thus look to the parable proper as the true words and intentions of Jesus. Moreover, by looking at the parable in this way, the parable proper could also have been placed in a foreign context and thus not actually reflect a response to Jesus eating with sinners, but rather something entirely different

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[53] See my discussion of nomadic shepherding for more context.

and unknown. [54] Therefore, the parable would be taken out of its literary context and its socio-historical framework.

In this interpretation, Jesus's address to his audience in verse 4 leads the reader to take the place of the shepherd. Moreover, the question that follows this address is rhetorical, prompting the reader to believe it is obvious and expected to risk everything to find the single lost sheep. The rejoicing that takes place in verse 6 reinforces the necessity to find the single sheep. This "obviousness" is validated when the shepherd is viewed as a hired servant rather than the owner of the flock. With this view, when the single sheep was lost, the hired shepherd was under immense pressure to find the sheep because the shepherd would bear the financial burden of the loss which could bring complete ruin.[55]

Perhaps, in this parable, Jesus is pointing out the flawed capitalist structure of the world in which he lives. In this anti-capitalist interpretation, Jesus addresses his audience in such a way that they take the place of the *poor* hired shepherd, who by happenstance loses a single sheep, so that they too may understand a flawed economic structure. In this view, Jesus speaks out against capitalism and its effect on the poor. By shedding light on the situation, Jesus shuns the structural view that expects the poor to risk everything to find their masters' sheep. By pointing out the joy and relief when the lost sheep is found, Jesus emphasizes the absurd value of the animal that is higher than the man. By highlighting the rejoicing of the shepherd and his neighbors, Jesus rebuffs the economic structure[56] that places a deflating and debilitating stigma on the community of the poor for inevitable events[57] such as sheep wandering.

Therefore, with this interpretation, the emphasis continues to remain on the finding and rejoicing of the lost sheep, but for very different reasons than previous interpretations. The stress is on finding and rejoicing works to condemn the economic structure instead of serving as a spiritual metaphor. In my view, this interpretation is not particularly unorthodox as the synoptic Jesus in many instances condemns the attitudes and lifestyles of the rich and

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[54] With this framework, chapter 15 is viewed as a complete literary piece shaped by Luke to guide his reader into a certain way of thinking. The parables used in chapter 15 are spoken by Jesus as well as altered and placed in a context to further Luke's narrative rather than quote Jesus and convey his original message.

[55] See my discussion on the value of the sheep. The value of a male sheep would be worth up to one month's wages and a female sheep could be even more.

[56] Other parables that support the idea of Jesus "rebuffing the economic structure" include the Parable of the Laborers in Matthew 20:1-16, and the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22:1-14.

[57] See my discussion of nomadic shepherding for more context.

powerful who oppress the poor. Furthermore, many historical biblical critics have "found" a historic biblical Christ that was an apocalyptic Jewish prophetic figure who stood in opposition to contextual socio-political structures.

Conclusion

Luke 15:4-7 is a parable that contains the two themes of finding what is lost and rejoicing when the lost is found. In my analysis, I hope to have put forth a convincing argument that the parable of the lost sheep is a complex narrative that stands as the first of three parables on lostness in chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel. Due to this complexity, it is impossible to determine any "true meaning" from the parable. I have, instead, showed that when viewing the parable in its landscape of ancient Jewish thought and life, the parable opens itself to a range of meaning that revolves around the lost being found and the divine rejoicing by looking at the narrativity, socio-historical background, and literary history of Luke 15:4-7. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that parables are timeless literary works of art whose meaning is created only through readers' engagement. Due to this incredible feature of parables, I was thus able to provide more modern, ideological interpretations to Luke 15:4-7 that fit within the field of meaning and may resonate more strongly with a contemporary audience.

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Intersectionality and Genocide: Contributions from Catholic Social Teaching

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INTERSECTIONALITY AND GENOCIDE:
CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

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Abstract: In the wake of the passage of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United Nations and global powers have been unable to prevent dozens of genocides. The failure to prevent these horrible acts of mass violence is now a major concern for the foreign policy team of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. American presidential recognition of genocides serves as a promising sign for a future of human rights-centered diplomacy. Scholarship concerning state violence has not adequately addressed the role of intersectionality in genocide and other identity-based massacres. The current definition of "genocide" in the Convention lacks significant protections for identity groups whose inclusion is essential to effectively prosecute crimes and eliminate political violence in the twenty-first century. Through an analysis of the underlying ideological and practical systems that support this cycle of violence, and by offering a theologically premised denunciation of genocide based upon Catholic Social Teaching and the work of David Hollenbach, S.J., this article argues for a three-part action plan to address the crisis of genocide gripping the world. This article also serves as a call to action for the Biden Administration which should continue to recognize genocides and offer support in multilateral interventions.

Introduction

Genocides are one of the most horrible phenomena of human history. The contemporary term "genocide" is often used, however, without much concern for its actual definition. Some argue that the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 was a genocide, as well as the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, European colonialism in Africa and Asia, and slavery in the United States. Still, others like William Schabas argue the opposite: that only the massacres in Armenia, The Holocaust, and Rwanda can truly be categorized "genocides." Regardless of varying personal opinions on what events ought to be defined as genocide, the intensity of debate reflects the likelihood that a change in the legal and practical definition of the term may be necessary in order to create clarity and provide a means of real moral response. How ought we categorize genocide (and state

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violence as a whole) so that we can most effectively respond to it? If defining an action is the first step towards prosecuting it, then surely labeling an action correctly is critical.

The failure to prevent genocide will likely persist unless significant changes are made. There is a troubling lack of intersectionality in the current United Nations definition of genocide, even though genocides cut across more identities than are legally protected in most jurisdictions. This deficiency prevents a holistic and intersectional response. The issues with successfully defining and prosecuting genocide are supported by ideologies that maintain the power of current leaders and regimes. While the international community is unlikely to completely erase the threat of genocide in the near future, this paper offers a few possible steps that the Biden Administration and other non-government organizations in the United States could take to progress toward goal. The current definition and guidelines around genocide are problematic in their lack of intersectional attention to state violence, including in their narrow focus on specific individuals targeted by identity-based violence.

Description of the Problem

"In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: [1] Killing members of the group; [2] Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; [3] Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; [4] Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [5] Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."[2]

A word to describe the mass execution of a group of people by the state or de facto power was first coined by Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book "Axis Rule in Occupied Europe." The first part, "genos-," is Greek for race or tribe, and the suffix "-cide" is Latin for killing.[3] Thus, a genocide, in essence, is the destruction of a group of people because of some part of their identity. The term became used internationally in the post-War era. The Holocaust, or *Shoah*, catalyzed the Allies-led international community to charge the Nazis with a new type of crime. The goal? "Never again" would another Holocaust take place.

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[2] United Nations, "Definitions: Genocide," https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml.
[3] United Nations, "Definitions: Genocide," https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml.

Despite global efforts since the Second World War to prevent genocide, they have continued to take place across the globe. Similarly, the Convention's definition has been useful in prosecuting criminals, but only in limited circumstances.[4] Despite the promise to prevent future wholesale slaughter extermination campaigns by states, dozens of genocides have taken place since the initial signing of the Convention in 1948. The delayed adoption of the Convention by the United Kingdom (1970), China (1983), and the United States (1988) stymied the advent of any serious judicial processes for decades. Only three genocides since 1988 have been subject to internationally backed criminal trials: Cambodia, Bosnia & Herzegovina (Srebrenica), and Rwanda. The international community rarely engages directly with genocides, typically only acting in the aftermath when the weakened government welcomes international assistance. Political leaders are disincentivized from labeling another country's actions as a genocide because there is a public misconception that such a declaration would necessitate an intervening obligation. With the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002, there was hope of prosecuting future cases, but the trials in Cambodia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia show how difficult it is to convict individuals on charges of genocide, much less enact punishments that fit the scope of the crimes.

While the present definition of "genocide" encompasses most identity-motivated acts of mass violence, it operates from a narrow perspective. Currently, only four identity-based groups are protected: nationality, ethnicity, race, and religion. Political violence and marginalization, nevertheless, impact more intersectional groups than just these four. Gender, sexuality, spoken languages, class or profession, political affiliation, age, social status, physical appearance, and disability are all identities targeted by systems of oppression.[5] This becomes clearer when genocides are framed as "group building" instead of "group excluding."

Sometimes, a group is purposefully dehumanized and scapegoated, explicitly targeted by the state. In other cases, however, a government or population constructs an idealized version of a perfect group member, and proceeds to exclude any individual who

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[4] Currently, 152 countries have signed the Genocide Convention. "The Genocide Convention," https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml.

[5] Mehmet Orhan, "The Intersectional Dynamics of Political Violence and Gender in the Kurdish Conflict," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 19, no. 3 (December 2019): 270.

does not fit this narrow standard, a "core-group frame." Often, these processes work at the same time. For instance, an exclusionist framework in the United States might specifically target the Black population or the LGBTQ population for oppressive measures. The "core-group frame" is the opposite and supplementary focus of catering instead to White, cisgender men at the expense of all other demographics.

If political power means the ability to legitimately use force within state boundaries, when considering the future of a nation-state, we must also ask: "Who is this vision for?" Indeed, the ability to protect one group against "others" by means of control of the police or military necessarily reflects the vision of a political community, or at least its leaders. As long as a state's self-definition remains capacious and facilitates, in some instances, the commission of violence against so many identity-based groups, an intersectional response is the only way to achieve true justice.

There are some terms in academia used to describe identity-based mass killings that might ordinarily supplement the UN definition of genocide, but they lack either international legal force or specificity as to the role of the state. [6] Take, for example, "classicide" (killing of a group based on economic status or social standing)[7] and gendercide (the systematic elimination of a group based on gender).[8] This latter term is sometimes subdivided further, with "femicide" focusing on violence directed at women (most often by male perpetrators) and the male-centered "androcide."[9]

Additionally, there are aspects of identity that do not have any widely-used single term: violence based on a group's sexuality, disability, and spoken language. Brief summaries of three well-documented twentieth-century genocides—the Holocaust/*Shoah*, the Cambodian Genocide, and the genocide at Srebrenica—all show how identities outside of those outlined in the Convention have been largely ignored and thus need to be subject to more sustained attention:

[6] Political and social protections were initially considered in the drafting of the Convention, but were downvoted by multiple countries in the UN, notably Stalin's USSR.

[7] Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 21.

[8] Ervin Staub, "Genocide, Mass Killing, and Violent Conflict: Prevention and Reconciliation," *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000): 369.

[9] There is also scholarly disagreement as to whether there should be two separate definitions for to the current phenomenon of femicide: one for state-sponsored killings, and another for domestic violence. In this article I discuss primarily state-centered androcide and femicide. For transgender and nonbinary persons, I discuss below the term "queericide."

While the Jewish population was the most prominent target of hatred by the Nazis during the Holocaust, many other groups were oppressed. Indeed, Hitler's vision of a Third Reich called for the purification of the Aryan (Nordic) race. Achieving this goal thus required the mass-killing of Roma, Black Germans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviets, Poles, repeat criminal offenders, the disabled, and LGBTQ+ persons. Accounting for all of these people, some of which lie outside the categories outlined in the formal definition of genocide, drastically changes the final death toll scholars often reach.[10]

In the Cambodian Genocide, an estimated 1.5-2 million people were killed by Pol Pot's regime between 1975 and 1979, roughly a quarter of the country's population. In an anti-colonial and communist state-building struggle, the government defined intellectuals (those with secondary school educations) and French speakers as enemies.[11] The regime also sought to entirely destroy ethnic minorities and Buddhist monks; this decision meant that many ethnic and religious groups were rounded up and executed in the Killing Fields alongside those targeted in the classicide.[12] The state plan "purified" Cambodia through political, social, and class lines, along with ethnic and religious massacres.

Of the 8,000+ Bosnian Muslims killed in July of 1995 by the Republika Srpska, the vast majority were men and boys. Once the Serbian forces, under the control of Ratko Mladić, had seized control of the Bosnian refugee centers, the military executed all men of fighting age, citing strategic concerns. The women and girls that were transferred out of the region were raped and sexually abused by their soldier-captors, possibly as a form of gender-based warfare.[13]

In all three genocides, intersectionality is important for analyzing both the dehumanization underlying these acts and the mechanisms by which these groups were removed from certain populations. The list of examples does not stop with these three, however.[14] Because the beneficiaries of an outdated and limited definition of genocide are

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[10] "Documenting Numbers of Victims of the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust-and-nazi-persecution.

[11] Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 119.

[12] Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 119.

[13] Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 403-404.

[14] For example, I have also not discussed politicides, which often rival genocides in scope. Examples of politicides include the Indonesian Massacre, the Dirty War in Argentina, and Stalinist Purges. Many of these incidents, as well, function as cover-ups for concentrated genocidal movements.

the true perpetrators, and even the criminal punishments for genocides are relatively meager, a definitional change, followed by a restructuring of international genocide response, is essential.

Normative Analysis: Politics, Sociology, Ideology

While academic debates on the root causes of genocide and state violence are ongoing, some general trends have emerged. To understand the current lack of intersectional protections for human persons irrespective of their geographic location, the foundational practices guiding genocide itself must first be analyzed. The ideology of scapegoating, aided by the politics of nationalism and Westphalian sovereignty, appears to be a fundamental cause. Furthermore, intersectional progress is also hindered by a lack of regimes that opt-in to international human rights agreements.

To kill another group of people in a genocidal manner, one must be convinced that the targets are less than human (e.g., subhuman) and unworthy of life. Dehumanization, as Gregory Stanton outlines in the "Ten Stages of Genocide," is the fourth stage. This stage is crucial because "[d]ehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder ... [the population is] indoctrinated to believe that '[w]e are better off without them.'"[15] In order to physically mobilize to plan, concentrate, and exterminate, perpetrators must first be mentally trained and primed. Considering Stanton's formulation, we are thus prompted to ask: Through what steps can a group be made to seem "other," or, in the case of Nazi Germany, a disease in the body of the nation? To answer this question, I (as others) propose we turn to "scapegoating," blaming a specific group for the problems of the whole society.[16] An "other" takes the blame for the sufferings and sins of the group, and is either physically removed from the group or killed.

Pinning the blame on a minority group is convenient politically and psychologically, especially as a tool to unite a majority against a common enemy. Scapegoating provides a simple, visible solution to the complex problem of governance and societal wellbeing, one that does not fault the masses.[17] However, as effective as scapegoating is for those in power,

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[15] Gregory H. Stanton, "10 Stages of Genocide," http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/8-stages-of-genocide/.
[16] "Antisemitism." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism-1.
[17] Consider, for example, the modern example of anti-Asian xenophobia as the coronavirus pandemic swept across the United States.

it is horribly dangerous for the groups it targets. In fact, the next "logical" step is their removal. In interwar Germany, for example, due to the success of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the Nazis tapped into longstanding European anti-Semitism to single out the Jewish population as the cause for the German defeat in World War I and ongoing economic ills. Most pointedly, Hitler posited, "If at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain."[18] Following Hitler's ascension to the Chancellorship, German Jews fell victim to the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935, the *Kristallnacht* attacks in 1938, and ultimately extermination in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Scapegoating and "other-ing" serves as both an ideology and a practice. It seeks to remove a dehumanized ("problematic") section of the population and unite the larger whole around a shared hatred.

The desire for nationally homogeneous states has gained momentum over the last 500 years, culminating in increased focus on the use of violent force to craft an "ideal" country. Sovereignty, the practice in which "each would acknowledge the domestic structures and religious vocations of its fellow states and refrain from challenging their existence," is often closely tied to nationalism, which attaches a cultural (and often ethnic) identity to the political power of the political state. [19] Leaders and governments often pervert these interconnected ideologies to generate violent systems of power. As modern militaries and emerging technologies render states more centralized and more powerful, charismatic leaders are able to wield these forces to realize the nations they imagine. In interwar Germany, Hitler's vision of a perfect society was a homogeneous German state led by those of the Aryan race whom he praises in *Mein Kampf* as "the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine sparks of genius has sprung at all times."[20]

Respecting total sovereignty in the Westphalian fashion has historically meant ignoring human rights violations in other jurisdictions, which can be seen in historical responses to genocide. It is politically and financially costly to challenge vestiges of this

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[18] Adolf Hitler. *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Pimlico, 1994), 679.
[19] Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 3.
[20] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 290.

form of tacit sovereignty. Few states are willing to shoulder the cost of sending their own soldiers to war if it is not clearly in their strategic interest. While the concept of an international governing body (e.g., the UN) helps to mediate some conflicts regarding who should engage in direct intervention, and when a country has broken the rules, political leaders must voluntarily sign international agreements that would limit their own autonomy. This is, not surprisingly, infrequent.

Despite its relative novelty, intersectional thinking and scholarship is essential in unpacking the ideology of scapegoating. The term "intersectionality," describing how victims of interlocking systems of oppression must be studied along their multiple identities, has only been in use for a few decades, dating first to Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's use of the term in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex."[21] While originally used by Black feminists to describe their individual experiences apart from Black men or White women, the term now encompasses a broader understanding of mixed-identity individuals and groups, including those targeted by political violence and genocide. While women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other oppressed groups have gained some political foothold in just the past few decades, specific protections from state violence remain unfortunately difficult to enact. The lack of intersectional international political representation—caused by ongoing sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressive ideologies— prevents significant human rights progress. Efforts to prevent genocide cannot have any real impact until the intersectional ideologies that shape mass violence are addressed.

Ethical Argumentation: Learnings from Catholic Social Teaching

The framework of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), particularly its principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Rights and Responsibilities, and Solidarity, challenge the injustices driving genocide and political violence attacking multiple identities. Founded on the teachings of Saint Aquinas, CST was brought to the forefront of modern theology with the publication of Pope Leo XIII's landmark social encyclical *Rerum novarum* (c. 1891). It "can be seen in a sense as the Church's doctrinal pedagogical response to that evolving

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[21] Kimberle Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

cupido for radical change constantly felt in the world since the Reformation."[22] Thomas Shannon has written that *Rerum novarum*, a document focusing on the rights and responsibilities of the working class, came as "a crystallization of many of these ideas and thus initiated the body of papal encyclicals referred to as social teaching."[23] Additionally, *Gaudium et Spes* serves as "a major new contribution to modern Catholic social teaching by presenting more explicitly developed theological grounds … concerned with all human struggles for life and dignity, with building up the solidarity of the human community, and with the humanization of all human activity and work."[24]

Pope Francis's most recent encyclical, *Fratelli tutti* (c. 2020), points to continued emphasis within the Church on fraternity and community-building. Over the past 140 years, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has drawn on social encyclicals like *Rerum novarum* and *Fratelli tutti* to develop seven universal principles of American economic and social justice.

Catholic Social Teaching is uniquely Christian in that it is rooted in Holy Scripture and the teachings of Jesus Christ, yet it remains universal as it has been used as a successful basis for interreligious dialogue. In practice, CST strongly opposes the ideological and political structures discussed in the above section. Thus, CST's providing of a theology of human rights offers both a theoretical framework and a physical action plan to challenge oppression**,** especially in Christian-majority states.

The principle of Life and Dignity of the Person explains that human life itself is sacred, and that society should be structured around valuing the human persons. Theologians extrapolate this fundamental value to the prevention of war, explaining that civilian and soldier deaths might be prevented through peacemaking efforts.[25] Genesis 1:27 provides guidance, describing the particularly sacred nature of human life: "God created humankind

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[22] Gerard V. Bradley and E. Christian Brugger, *Catholic Social Teaching: A Volume of Scholarly Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

[23] Thomas Shannon, "Commentary on Rerum Novarum (The Condition of Labor)," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, et al. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 127.

[24] David Hollenbach, "Commentary on Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, et al. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 267.

[25] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching," https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.

in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." An injustice against someone made in the image of God is a sin against God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul moreover offers insight into this *imago Dei* tradition in writing: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." This verse serves as a reminder that the Holy Spirit exists in all creation, and in all people.

Evaluating a society based on the extent to which it values life creates space to challenge leaders and systems that disregard the humanity of individuals and groups of human persons. According to CST, murder is damaging to the sacredness of human life because it actively severs a part of God from God's self. War not only costs lives but also reduces a human being to the object of a political motive. If life is valued above all else, war should be unthinkable for every moral leader. In the extreme, a genocide separates an entire population from God. When a state eliminates a group of people, it actively extinguishes a part of God's own being, a uniquely crucial part of God's glorious vision. On an ideological level, to believe that a person is not actually human is to reject the gift of God's creation, and to doubt the omnipotent God's statement that all people are made in God's image. Someone who looks at the "other" and disregards their humanity purposefully turns from God towards the sins of violence and alienation.

The principle of Rights and Responsibilities resembles that of Life and Dignity in its respect for human beings. This principle states that a society can be healthy only when it protects and meets the needs of its people. Here, human dignity and the physical life of a person are directly connected to human rights.[26] It is also the duty of the whole community to challenge individuals who refuse to protect the marginalized and the poor. The Gospels demonstrate an orientation towards protecting society's oppressed. The fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew especially emphasizes this commitment in the Beatitudes (5:3-12) and in the following warning (5:19): "[W]hoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

In the midst of political violence, it is crucial to protect basic rights through intersectional and multi-identity action. Much like comparable American anti-racist activism in recent years, CST emphasizes thoughtful and intentional action over passivity.

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[26] USCCB, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching."

Democratic principles, founded upon key historical and philosophical teachings from the Greeks and Enlightenment thinkers, require that the primary concern of the state be to enable human flourishing. A society governed by its people, prioritizing all of the necessary protections for the minority, ought to be purposefully welfare-focused. Sovereignty can still exist so long as the basic rights of citizens are protected. In this way, CST's first two pillars outline how a government ought to treat its citizens, providing theological support for regimes that aim to protect human rights and do not pervert 'human flourishing' to mean not only mere bodily safety, but this and more.

Finally, the principle of Solidarity—the idea of being one worldwide family across any differences—helps to expand the principles of dignity, life, and rights offered by the other pillars of CST. 1 Corinthians further encapsulates the idea that CST and its embrace of intersectionality and encouragement of universal solidarity are meaningful ways of dismantling mass violence and genocide. The Apostle Paul posits that "there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25). Solidarity must move beyond national boundaries, calling for a recognition of a wider shared community that does not fall under a specific jurisdiction.[27] This international society, however, is distinct from a globalized hegemonic system that eliminates diversity and forcibly assimilates the "other." By emphasizing respect for the human person, solidarity aims to celebrate an overarching human race that is both united and diverse, one people with many unique cultures. This noble cause of acting as individual states on behalf of the whole human community is essentially the broadest form of collective action possible. This action requires states to accept responsibility for holding each other accountable for violence committed against their own people and to uproot extraterritorial injustice by a collective show of power on behalf of the marginalized.

CST demonstrates theology, and specifically Catholic theology, can guide national and international decision-making in intervention and crisis-response. Additionally, the pillars of CST are readily complemented by an intersectional framework, just as they, I think, necessitate such a framework. The intersectionally marginalized in society are deserving of dignity, rights, and an international order ready to protect them. Genocide and other forms

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[27] USCCB, "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching."

of identity-based state violence attack the sacredness of the human being as the image of God. Yet still, the task remains to determine how CST, a theological framework, can initiate active and concrete anti-genocide practice.

David Hollenbach and the Common Good

Since his ordination in 1971, Jesuit priest David Hollenbach has been a leading scholar of CST in the realms of human rights and solidarity. He has facilitated advocacy and peacemaking efforts through Jesuit Refugee Services, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and his many teaching positions. Notably, Hollenbach applies CST to ongoing political and social issues, demonstrating his ideas' practical efficacy. In his 2002 monograph *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Hollenbach analyzes structural challenges in modern political economics, human rights, and foreign policy by demonstrating the usefulness of a dialogue-centered theological approach to solidarity. His practical approach allows for pivotal breakthroughs in policy.[28]

Hollenbach's CST-informed approach to modern social and political issues focuses on the "common good," placing this concept in conversation with everyday relationships in order to highlight the importance of a human rights framework for international relations. In his review of Hollenbach's book, David Craig summarizes Hollenbach's understanding of the common good: "The common good exists between people. It shows in what people have, use, and need with others … they depend on networks of human interaction structured in large part by rights and institutions."[29] Hollenbach views globalization as an invitation to identify the common good in general economic and strategic interdependence, especially insofar as he has identified serious issues in the current state of human rights: "[T]ransnational issues that go beyond obvious interests of individual citizens, such as protection of human rights in other countries and assistance to poor nations, still receive low public support."[30]

In many cases, "globalization" is used exclusively to describe economic developments or social assimilation, rather than to envision a united world. It is difficult to

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[28] See David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Common and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[29] David M. Craig, review of *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* by David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 1 (January 2004): 140.
[30] Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 51.

predict how emphasizing human rights within one country impacts others, but some level of impact is inevitable because societies depend on others for ideas, protection, and solidarity. Refusing to actively advocate for justice destroys communication and goodwill between involved countries. Furthermore, Hollenbach posits that human rights and development are heavily linked to CST: "In short, a social vision that does not regard human connection as central to the attainment of well-being lacks the conceptual tools needed to think through these new issues raised by globalization."[31] Additionally, Hollenbach states that "the protection of human rights is part of the common good, not an individualistic alternative to the common good. That protection also suggests that a universalist human rights ethic is required by a Christian commitment to solidarity."[32] Those who commit genocide break this solidarity, undermining the common good of the world and ultimately causing far more universal devastation than a domestic mass killing might appear to have.

Hollenbach's framework, while distinctly Catholic and Christian, is translatable through dialogue and positive action with regions that are not predominantly Christian or monotheistic. In enacting the theory of the "common good" as an anti-genocide practice, Hollenbach acknowledges the role of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in prompting strong international solidarity and challenging the most destructive aspects of sovereignty:

> The Universal Declaration has become the charter document of an international human rights regime composed of overlapping global, regional, national, and non-governmental institutions … these institutions, often working together, have raised increasingly strong challenges to the sovereignty of states by seeking to hold them accountable to norms that reach well beyond their national interests as traditionally understood. Such challenges were evident in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda's first-ever genocide conviction in September 1998 and again when Slobodan Milošević was handed over to The Hague in 2001 to be tried for crimes against humanity during the horrors that occurred in Bosnia.[33]

Hollenbach approaches the challenges of a just intervention in a globalized world. Although preferable, it is not necessarily likely that states will hold themselves accountable. Solidarity bridges that gap between the problem of self-interested foreign policy and globalized human rights. Particularly in the African context, instances of American and

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[31] Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 58.
[32] Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 160.
[33] Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 217.

European intervention in weaker sovereign states are often interpreted as economic neo-colonialism. Hollenbach deduces that changes in global public opinion of governments, using new channels of communication, may find a solution without undermining governments by voting out or removing their violent leaders:

> Incipient movement of public opinion toward a stronger sense of responsibility across international borders is evident on a variety of fronts. Instantaneous communication makes the territorial borders between nation-states almost entirely porous to the transmission of information about what is going on in the larger world. Governments have little control over the flow of politically relevant information. This information explosion opens extensive new possibilities for action by non-governmental organizations with grass-roots constituencies.[34]

As non-government organizations increasingly support trans-national human rights, communication that lets us see the "other" more frequently begins to emerge, evidencing the positive aspects of globalization. In sum, the CST principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Rights and Responsibilities, and Solidarity work together to dismantle the ideologies that perpetuate genocide. CST, moreover, can be applied on the international stage to analyze how countries respond to human rights violations. The current crisis can be solved by making theological and ethical principles practical.

The Practical Application of CST

Now that we have described the issue of genocide and analyzed it through a framework that addresses problematic ideologies, the final step is to ask how this theory can be put into practice. In this section, three points will be instrumental for identifying a solution: an expansion and reframing of the word "genocide," a broad cultural and intellectual shift towards solidarity, and an international legal effort led by a new American presidential administration. While simply reopening an international political conversation about genocide is no easy feat, hope may lie in the potential for exceptional American leadership on the international stage.

Before engaging with international institutions, there must be new, clear definitions around genocide. While practical accommodations could be negotiated to ensure widespread adoption of the agreement, a strong initial statement of a solution to the problem of genocide is necessary to provide a foundation for international discussion. Previous iterations of an

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[34] Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 236.

international definition for genocide have failed to promote intersectionality and/or have been unclear about the role of the state. The option offered below attempts to address both the intersectionality of the victims as well as the role of the state in dehumanizing them.[35]

I propose a tri-sectioned approach to highlight the many intersections of identities that are targeted by policies of dehumanization, persecution, and extermination. Politicide and classicide should be recognized alongside genocide as three types of state political violence. The first two are based on political and economic standing, respectively, whereas genocide is grounded in personal identity. Additions to the four groups already protected by genocide (race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion) would demonstrate an international resolve that they would be treated with equal respect. I offer the following as new definitions, using the Greek and Latin forms when possible:

Term	"[a]cts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a group based on _____"
Politicide	political belief or affiliation
Classicide	class or economic status
Genocide	nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion
Gendercide	gender
Femicide	gender (female)
Androcide	gender (male)
Queericide[36]	sexuality
Linguicide[37]	language spoken
Transcide	cisgender/transgender

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[35] Rudolph Rummel, a former professor of political science at the University of Hawai'i, posited that "democide" would be a useful term for holding the state accountable for its violence. Democide, the killing of a person by their government, encompasses more of those who are killed than even the most expansive definitions of genocide. It is too broad a term for the phenomenon of genocide. In terms of identity, it would not speak to the particularity of any targeted groups or the specific hardships they faced. Additionally, the term would not likely be internationally popular for ratification, as most non-democratic nations (and quite a few that are) participate in extrajudicial killings.

[36] Queericide has been previously used in a handful of articles, notably in Abigail Morris's "The Brutality of 'Queericide' in South Africa" and Patrick Vernon's "Queering Genocide." The term could alternatively encompass the entire LGBTQ+ population; in this article I include "transcide" as an addition to highlight the particular challenges facing trans people.

[37] Linguicide alternatively has meant the general extinction of a language. The purposeful elimination of people who speak certain languages may shed some light on the complexity of language death as a whole.

Potenscide	disability
Aeonicide	age

These terms, with similar phrasing to that of the Convention's term for genocide, can help us better organize forms of violence that take place in any given war or macro-human rights violation situation. For example, understanding the atrocities at Srebrenica as a genocide (as it pertains to personal identities of an ethnic and religious group), with elements of gendercide (including androcide and femicide), is both more comprehensive and useful than a non-intersectional depiction. Describing the Cambodian Genocide as not only a genocide but also an act of politicide, classicide, and linguicide allows for a more nuanced understanding and a more widely-available justice-seeking program for victims. Even without using new definitions in justice-seeking, using them generally in conversation would help shift the academic perspective that drive political responses to genocidal crises.

Leaders are the product of their environments, education, and supporting population. A culture of solidarity is difficult to cultivate. Further, as Hollenbach has mentioned, preventing foreign human rights abuses is not usually a public priority. Some practical changes in fields and organizations that directly shape the political arena may create an environment of increased public interest.

A primary solution to the issue may come from redefining media coverage about state violence. To generate pressure for specific changes through public activism, the news media's attention must be widespread and long-lasting. Continuous media coverage of ongoing events, rather than a sensationalist or headline-grabbing approach, is crucial. By literally showing the faces of the oppressed and sharing their stories, as Emmanuel Levinas describes, we are brought into a new emotional closeness with the victims.[38][39] The progression of the field of comparative human rights and social movements is also promising for bringing separate demographics together in solidarity. Notably, in her bestselling book

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[38] Emmanuel Lévinas and Alphonso Lingis, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 207.

[39] The term "poverty porn" widely encompasses the phenomenon of media outlets, charities, or celebrities using the images of the marginalized groups for personal gain in the form of views or donations. However, carefully informing the public through storytelling, with consent and without self-interest, is necessary to generate social action and a culture of solidarity.

Caste: The Origins of our Discontents, Isabel Wilkerson highlights and examines the lives of African-Americans, Nazi Jews, and lower-caste Indians to highlight how American racism functions as a structural caste.[40] Would a groundbreaking book or documentary about police brutality in the U.S. on China, Sudan, or Myanmar lead to a culture of solidarity with the Uighurs, the Furs, or the Rohingya? It's certainly possible. As the field grows and becomes filled with important multinational works, a stronger consensus of universal human rights emerges.

Non-government organizations, including the Catholic Church, are often values-driven and have a missional pastoral goal to advocate through solidarity.[41] Millions of followers listen to and reflect upon papal directorates. Nonprofits, religious denominations, and academic organizations are in a unique position of power as non-state advocates when actual governments might feel constrained by political repercussions. To encourage change in national government policy, these organizations must be able to place and sustain pressure over a long period of time, as well as to effectively mobilize grassroots public support, through values-based campaigns.

The United Nations is the most important international actor in the implementation of international legal reform. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is a product of early UN discussions. With 152-member parties, it has near-universal international approval and recognition. The goal behind the UN is to foster a sense of public collective action, where many countries signal their cooperation in the effort to promote the common good. A brief analysis of treaties in "Chapter 4: Human Rights" of the United Nations Treaty Collection yields promising results—multiple intersectional protection agreements have been adopted by the majority of countries. Considering that these treatises enforced infrequently, and primarily serve as guidelines, they have incentivized regimes to enter into international human rights agreements that may make them appear more democratic and free. More regimes are likely to join these international human rights

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[40] Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020).

[41] It is important to note that all Christian churches must reflect and produce reparations for its own complicity in genocide. The forced conversion and "civilizing" of millions in the Americas, Africa, and Asia during the age of colonial expansion was founded upon a theology of white superiority. Upholding a post-colonial or decolonial Liberation Theology, if the Catholic Church means to seriously do so, necessitates purposefully seeking justice and accountability for crimes committed within and on behalf of the faith. In order for the Christian church in general, and the Catholic Church more specifically, to uphold its values of justice-seeking and peace-building, then it must reckon with and repair the damage caused by the institutions that have wielded the faith.

agreements and appear to be committed because lax enforcement minimizes the punishment.[42]

The most prominent country that has not ratified many of these human rights agreements is the United States.[43] The concept of American Exceptionalism in this case illustrates how the U.S. government positions itself outside the very structures it championed in the creation of a new liberal world order. This historiographical myth signals an unwillingness to participate in the international justice-seeking effort. Additionally, the United States has not ratified the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC), as the United States' signature was removed under the George W. Bush Administration. The ICC prosecuted cases of genocide in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, while aiding the ongoing cases relating to Cambodia. The courts may be slow, but without support from the leadership of the United States, they will truly never become an avenue for reparations.[44]

In order to effectuate the intersectional protection amendments that this article has described, ones which would positively reflect the United States' foreign policy interests, American leaders must agree to sacrifice military power by agreeing to international human rights agreements. The Biden Administration has authority to sign international agreements prior to congressional ratification. Beyond the U.S., the signatories of the other global powers would serve as an extremely meaningful sign of solidarity. Again, the challenge is that regimes cannot be easily incentivized to accept such agreements, and that ratification in one country does not mean another has to abide by the agreement. The United States and other countries must therefore resort to coercion. Diplomatic and economic forms of coercion would be the most desirable potential avenues to encourage treaty agreement, such as removing embassies, enforcing sanctions, boycotting events, etc. Ongoing targeted pressure, especially when applied multilaterally (such as by a unified Security Council) could also influence weaker countries to support the humanitarian goals of these agreements.

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[42] United Nations, "UN Treaty Depository," https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx?clang=_en.

[43] The United States is only a signatory for Sections 8 & 15, meaning it does not consider them to be binding, and the ratification of the agreement on genocide was not until the late 1980s.

[44] Concerns surrounding ICC ratification could comprise another essay entirely. However, if presidential administrations are concerned about their own members being tried in international courts for war crimes, then deeper questions concerning American values and human rights must be probed.

To address the delayed interventions, the implementation of Genocide Watch's "10 Stages of Genocide" warning system with UN peacekeeping forces would help create objective markers that necessitate certain forms of international response. Genocide Watch recommends intervention at "Stage 8: Persecution," though the UN actually ought to seek intervention as soon as a country enters the "Stage 7: Planning" phase. When leaders begin planning, the population they control is already primed and expecting violence because the moral suasion exercised by political leaders in scapegoating a certain population is already well-underway. Placing foreign troops in friendly neighboring nations signals a resolve to intervene and could be effective deterrence for political leaders demonstrating disrespect for fundamental humanity. A decapitation strike, which removes hostile leadership without an invasion, is also possible if the regime is personalistic and has not set its plans in motion. If the actions do continue to escalate despite deterrence, then the required troops are available to prevent "Persecution" from becoming the "Stage 9: Extermination," when the majority of killings take place.[45]

While international peacekeeping missions have not been as effective as many had initially hoped, they still offer a stronger solution than alliance-based security. An organization like NATO might feel more fragile than the United Nations, but it has a military force built for rapid response. It is worth noting, however, that an organized unit of Western liberal democracies countries exerting its will on weaker governments seems far too much like neo-colonialism, even if interventions would be rare. Voluntary regional alliances that focus on international human rights guarantees would also be welcome (or perhaps additions to in-place ones like the Quadrilateral Security Alliance (QUAD) or Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but having security silos worldwide is not an effective long-term plan. The United Nations, despite its flaws, is likely to remain the most optimal response tool.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to create a unified understanding of many different forms of identity-based state violence, demonstrating that more focused research into the categories

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[45] Gregory H. Stanton, "10 Stages of Genocide," Genocide Watch, 2016, http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/8-stages-of-genocide/.

of politicide, classicide, and genocide are essential. The action plan offered in the final section will only become viable if more scholarship is devoted to the formulation of a practical strategy for the implementation of human rights agreements. Bringing the entire field of state violence studies towards an intersectional approach is necessary, however, for responding to these abominable events in the twenty-first century. The implications of such a shift cannot be understated in the analysis of international security and human rights. Only with comprehensive dialogue and a moral willingness to take action at the highest levels of political leadership can the plight intersectional genocides finally end. The ideal goal of ending all genocide, along with classicide and politicide, will take years of concerted effort, along with major philosophical and structural changes in wider fields.

Christian churches, and particularly the Catholic Church, ought to seek common ground with President Biden to sponsor a new era of international human rights. Instead of focusing on wedge issues, these organizations should prioritize advocating for institutional and policy changes, in line with CST, that would appeal to the Biden Administration. With regards to human rights, Biden's team has already signaled a strong shift towards recognizing genocide[46] and other forms of state violence, a promising sign for future collaboration. Indeed, a push for solidarity and restorative justice might be well-received.

Without a serious and concerted effort to end the cycle of violence, it will continue to persist.[47] German pastor Martin Niemöller (d. 1984) well-described the essence of the need for solidarity to address genocides. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum notes that, while Niemöller's famous early post-War quote has been rewritten by countless groups for their own movements, "his [original] point was that Germans had been complicit through their silence in the Nazi imprisonment, persecution, and murder of millions of people."[48] Genocide is a challenge for all humanity, and we must rise up as one people:

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[46] In late April 2021, Biden has acknowledged that Turkey committed genocide in Armenia. It may seem hollow at first, being roughly 100 years late, but it is still promising. Turkey remains a NATO member and a crucial ally for the United States in creating and managing strategies against Russian and Middle Eastern threats, even as it drifts in an increasingly authoritarian direction. Multiple presidents have had the opportunity to make a formal recognition; the risks have not changed, but the prioritization of human rights diplomacy seemingly has.

[47] Genocide Watch contains a list of countries and regions in a current "emergency"; as of May 1st, 2021 there are a dozen: China, Nagorno-Karabahk (Azerbaijan), Syria, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria (Boko Haram), Central African Republic, Somalia, and Sudan. Experts can disagree on which of these should be considered official genocides, but evidence behind many of these is still damning, and the high count is startling.

[48] Martin Niemöller. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/martin-niemoeller-first-they-came-for-the-socialists

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

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Catholic Social Teaching and College Hookup Culture: Interrupting the Perpetuation of Gender Essentialism

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CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND COLLEGE HOOKUP CULTURE: INTERRUPTING THE PERPETUATION OF GENDER ESSENTIALISM

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Abstract: College is a time of identity-seeking and personal formation, and for many students the first opportunity to establish themselves as individuals independent of the influence of their parents or guardians. The social environment on college campuses, however, is not conducive to the free exploration of one's identity. On many college campuses, including that of my own university, "hookup culture," or an ethic of casual sex with no strings attached, is pervasive. Rather than being a source of freedom, the social norms associated with this culture perpetuate male power, female objectification, and binary gender roles that construct our social reality before, after, and throughout one's college experience. The college hookup culture is constructed on the ideology of gender essentialism, presenting binary gender scripts, and enforcing campus-wide conformity through social influence and structures of power. Rather than conform to rigid gender standards, this article suggests that we can reimagine gender roles and sexuality to encourage greater openness and authenticity. Based on the foundations of Catholic Social Teaching, we can first begin a dialogue about the harmful social environment on many college campuses. We may then take transformative action by addressing language; challenging normative behavior; and emphasizing affirmative, enthusiastic consent. This article concludes by proposing that transformation can also extend beyond the college campus by encouraging an affirming, non-judgmental environment throughout childhood in which the exploration of one's gender identity is encouraged.

Introduction: What is College Hookup Culture?

In her 2008 ethnographic study of college hookup culture, Kathleen Bogle of La Salle University noted that college students "were unsure whether the specific way they used the term [hookup] reflected how the student body in general used it… the meaning of hooking up depends on whom you ask."[2] The ambiguity surrounding the implications of a "hook up" leaves details up to the imagination, allowing students to make assumptions about the behavior of their peers and maintaining an aura of secrecy and mystique around the idea of "hooking up." In general, Bogle concluded, a hookup is defined by some form of "intimate connection," which ranges in student definitions from "just kissing" to intercourse and any sort of physical interactions in between. Such interactions come with no promise of an

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[2] Kathleen A. Bogle, *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 25.

ongoing relationship and can be considered "an outgrowth of how college students socialize today."[3]

Student ethnographers observing their peers have similarly noted key elements of hookup culture, including with women dressing in ways that suggest sexual availability, high levels of alcohol consumption, and the "scoping out" of potential sexual partners among friends.[4] Student ethnographers also frequently reported "men acting aggressively in the pursuit of a hookup; such behavior appeared to be the norm of college parties," and that in the cases of women being the aggressors they were perceived as overly "slutty" or drunk.[5] These standards are related to gendered expectations of the body and behavior; indeed, words used by students to describe the idealized male image include "strong, independent, courageous, aggressive, powerful, and dominant," while the ideal female is described as "fragile, weak, thin, sexy, obedient, and submissive."[6] Based on these stereotypes, 66% of student ethnographers asserted that male students held the power in the typical college hookup, with women actively cultivating their body and image to "work at getting the attention of men and keeping it."[7] Thus, while the specific details of a hookup are ill-defined, the overall dominant culture has key features including power dynamics and binary gender standards for both appearance and behavior.

Oppressive Social Scripts and Gender Binaries

College hookup culture presents itself as the dominant form for relating between men and women on college campuses, with heterosexual students expecting their peers to follow certain "social scripts." Sociologists have explained "scripting theory" as individuals serving as actors in social situations, playing out roles defined by cultural norms.[8] Social scripts construct the hookup interaction, from the ill-defined nonverbal "vibe" that initiates the hookup to determining how far the interaction will go.[9] Power dynamics play a key role in these interactions: men are expected to initiate the hookup and this contributes to the

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[3] Bogle, *Hooking Up,* 25-29.
[4] Jennifer Beste, *College Hookup Culture and Christian Ethics: The Lives and Longings of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19-24.
[5] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 39.
[6] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 80.
[7] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 85.
[8] Bogle, *Hooking Up,* 8.
[9] Bogle, *Hooking Up,* 33-37.

expectation that he is in control of the interaction. Women are consequently uncomfortable asserting their desires, from questions of moving the hookup in the direction of a long-term relationship to asserting her equal right to a pleasurable experience.[10] Popular culture writes the social scripts and leads students to assume what their peers are doing and what their role should subsequently be, despite the fact that students' perception of their peers is often a distortion of reality.[11]

Why do college students engage in hookup culture? Who writes the social scripts? A major factor influencing student behavior is depictions of sexual interactions in popular media. Television shows, movies, rap music, and pornography portray "prescribed roles" for both men and women, with women depicted as "seductive" and/or "submissive" and men as enjoying positions of power.[12] Men are held to standards of masculinity involving competition and displays of aggressiveness; maintaining one's social status often includes an expectation of sleeping with many women. This behavior can be understood as "toxic masculinity," and it is unsurprising that such aggression and dominance is harmful to those who experience the social pressure to behave in this way, as it is harmful to those who experience the effects of it. Women, too, have a "feminine script," embracing their role as a sexual object and displaying themselves as available and submissive.[13] These expectations are expressed through the dominant media and adopted by young males and females, and thus are put forth as social norms to be followed for the attainment and maintenance of social status. The gender norms presented are typically framed as strict binaries that are harmful to both males and females who struggle to conform, as well as those who do not conform to strict binary definitions of gender.

The oppressive nature of college hookup culture asserts pressure not only on heterosexual relationships, but also on members of the LGBTQ community. In fact, LGBTQ students testify that "the heterosexist assumptions of the hookup culture make it difficult for them to build their own, non-heterosexual relationships."[14] While there is a college hookup culture present for LGBTQ students as well, the dominance of the heterosexual hookup

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[10] Bogle, *Hooking Up*, 101.
[11] Bogle, *Hooking Up*, 87.
[12] Beste, *College Hookup Culture,* 50.
[13] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 51-55.
[14] Connor Kelly, "Sexism in Practice: Feminist Ethics Evaluating the Hookup Culture," Journal *of Feminist Studies in Religion* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 27-48.

culture as the perceived norm reveals that hookup culture not only promotes sexist values, but also heterosexist values as well. Being perceived as deviating from the norm can be challenging for students, particularly in a college environment where social pressure is strong and students are navigating the complex process of identity formation. When the heterosexual hookup culture is presented as dominant, students of the LGBTQ community may feel excluded from their social environment.

These expectations for gender behavior are presented as compulsory for social acceptance, producing conformity to these standards of gender.[15] The assumptions underlying college hookup culture brandish a narrow understanding of gender identity. When holding an individual accountable for performing their expected gender, the observer assumes that "sex" and "gender" are synonymous and have pre-determined characteristics, providing those who do not conform to such standards with a sense of incongruity.[16] Despite the societal standards for gender presentation, "not all people have an internalized sense of binary accountability… some do not experience themselves as gendered at all."[17] These individuals are susceptible to frequent misgendering and discrimination, which is harmful to their well-being and identity formation at all stages of life, but may be particularly impactful during their time in college. Young adults are in a key period of identity formation, and when that is diminished by the way society perceives them and burdened by the resulting expectations, they may not be able to flourish and embrace their true identity.

Beyond stunting authentic identity formation, the refusal to acknowledge gender as a spectrum rather than a binary can have serious consequences for non-binary and transgender individuals. The U.S. transgender survey found that 24% of students out or perceived as transgender (either binary or non-binary) experienced verbal, physical, or sexual harassment at college, with 16% of these individuals leaving college due to harassment.[18] Studies report that GQ students were more likely to have mental health challenges, with 47.2% first-year GQ students reporting feeling depressed as compared to

[15] Helena Darwin, "Doing Gender Beyond the Binary: A Virtual Ethnography," *Symbolic Interaction* 40, no. 3 (2017): 318.
[16] Darwin, "Gender Beyond the Binary," 319.
[17] Darwin, "Gender Beyond the Binary," 325.
[18] Abbie E. Goldberg, *Transgender Students in Higher Education* (Los Angeles: UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, 2018), 2.

the national average of 9.5%.[19] Institutional features that may exclude or put pressure on GQ individuals include standards of dress, appearance, gender pronouns, and sex-segregated dorms and restrooms.[20] College hookup culture, with its perpetuation of binary gender roles, exhibits strong pressure to conform to gender expectations in the college environment, and excludes those students who do not conform to such standards.

The Objectification of Female Bodies

Social norms do not only perpetuate strict gender binaries, but additionally contribute to the objectification of the female body. As seen in advertising, music videos, and pornography, women's bodies are overly-sexualized and presented as objects and commodities available for consumption. Objectification fuels a culture of disordered eating and cosmetic surgery, as women attempt to cultivate the idealized image put forth in popular media, also contributing to such behaviors as teenage sexting.[21] Examples of teenage sexting have become legal battles amplified by the media in children as young as twelve years old, showing how early the culture of female objectification and sexualization is assimilated.[22]

Objectification of women has even further, more dangerous consequences through its contribution to rape culture on campus. When women are seen as "sex objects" and their availability is assumed, women's agential personhood is undercut and a sexuality that fosters sexual violence is normalized.[23] The threat of sexual violence is high for women on college campuses, with about twenty percent of undergraduate women experiencing rape or attempted rape.[24] Instances of rape cannot be viewed as isolated occurrences of violence, but rather as indications of a broader "rape culture" that normalizes the objectification and use of coercive force over women.[25] One study reported that forty-four percent of women had experienced at least one unwanted sexual encounter, ninety percent of which occurred within a hookup.[26] The rigid social scripts and assumptions underlying college hookup culture have

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[19] Goldberg, "Transgender Students," 8.
[20] I Goldberg, "Transgender Students," 4.
[21] Karen Peterson-Iyer, "Mobile Porn? Teenage Sexting and Justice for Women," in *Sex and Gender,* eds. Mary Jo Iozzio and Patricia Beattie Jung (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 156.
[22] Peterson-Iyer, "Mobile Porn," 148.
[23] Meghan K. McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic Response to the Social Sin of Rape Culture," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46, no. 4 (December 2018): 640-641.
[24] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic Response," 635.
[25] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic Response," 637.
[26] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic Response," 639.

damaging consequences, not only for student identity formation and relationship building, but also for students' health and safety.

Despite their apparent willingness to conform, students are not satisfied with this dominant social climate on college campuses. When expressing their desires for college social climates in a recent study, students reflected on the need for women to dress and act however they feel comfortable, for more honest communication surrounding relationships, for acceptance of greater diversity and inclusivity, for the elimination of excessive drinking as the norm, and for freedom from the norm of hooking up as the dominant means of social interaction.[27] Only 10% of student ethnographers reported that students seem happy with and satisfied by the college hookup culture, while the other 90% reported that students experienced temporary happiness while intoxicated or were completely unfulfilled and dissatisfied with college hookup culture.[28] While individuals may experience temporary validation or satisfaction in a hookup scenario, students described the "negative psychological consequences" of a hookup, including emptiness, loneliness, and longing for something more.[29] Hookup culture, while presented as the normative form of social interaction on college campuses, is not regarded favorably by all students, and serves as a barrier to positive relationships with both oneself and others, creating harmful consequences for students of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

There are many issues underlying college hookup culture, including toxic masculinity, female objectification, heteronormativity, and normative gender binaries. Each of these issues requires acknowledgement and addressing, and could be analyzed and addressed individually. However, I propose that the problematic ideology underlying all of these issues is gender essentialism, or assuming certain immutable characteristics of each gender that mandate certain behavior in society. By confronting this ideology directly, we can address the root of the many challenges created by college hookup culture.

Historical Analysis of Sex and Relationships

The current reality of college hookup culture is a product of historical understandings of sex and sexual relationships. The legacy of power dynamics in sexual relationships is

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[27] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 114-117.
[28] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 103-105.
[29] Beste, *College Hookup Culture*, 108.

deep. Biblically, women were understood as "fields into which men planted their seeds,"[30] making women "the servants, not only of the husband, but of the whole community."[30] In Catholic contexts, Pope John Paul II's "nuptial meaning" of the female body suggests that women are particularly well suited to passivity and receptivity, supporting motherhood as women's primary vocation.[31] This patriarchal framework establishes the basis for treating women as subservient in sexual relationships and generates patriarchal systems of power. As the male-female difference has served as the basis of many forms of human relationship, including sex, parenthood, and kinship, women consistently come out on the bottom in social contexts.[32] Against this historical backdrop, one can see how an understanding of women as subservient in sexual relationships has pervaded society. Furthermore, these historical understandings of sexual relationships are based in a strict, heteronormative binary, insinuating that only male-female relationships are acceptable as they are the only relationships that are "fruitful" (in the child-bearing sense of the term).

The feminist movement of the 1960's countered the dominant narrative that women's role in a sexual relationship is merely one of a receptacle and an incubator, and that the only goal of a sexual encounter is reproduction. The "sexual revolution" promoted the idea that women had sexual needs and deserve sexual freedom. While social conservatives considered the movement an "invitation for sexual promiscuity," the movement was based in female empowerment and reimagining the sexual relationship. The movement rejected the philosophy that only heterosexual, married sex was appropriate and instead purported that the reverse, "having lots of sex, in lots of different ways, with whomever you liked," would be freedom.[33]

The focus on sexual and reproductive rights of feminists in the 1960's and 70's is often referred to as "second wave" feminism, and its tenants can be critiqued on several grounds. Firstly, defining "freedom" as sexual promiscuity, while potentially liberating by alleviating the pressure for abstinence, places a new pressure to "prove oneself an acceptable sexual machine." These standards can produce a new guilt, transferring guilt from being too sexual

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[30] D.R. Bechtel, "Women, Choice, and Abortion: Another Look at Biblical Traditions," *Prism* 8, no. 1 (1993): 81.
[31] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan," (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing, 2009), 19.
[32] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 118-119.
[33] Rachel Hills, "Sexual Revolution Then and Now: Hook-Ups From 1964 to Today," *Time*, December 2, 2014, https://time.com/3611781/sexual-revolution-revisited/.

to not sexual enough.[34] Such standards are prevalent in the college hookup culture, where sexual encounters can become a competitive pursuit.

On the opposing side of the sexual freedom movement is "purity culture," often associated with American evangelical Christians. Purity culture encourages young people to control their sexual desires until marriage as "a way of being faithful to God's plan for human sexuality and relationships."[35] At first glance, such a theory may appear to encourage young people to identify with their faith communities and morals and exercise choice over their bodies and relationships; however, purity culture has been critiqued for being "paternalistic (emphasizing male control of women's sexuality) and because it too simply links a woman's moral goodness to her ability to refrain from sexual activity (emphasizing passivity)."[36] Equating a young woman's value with her virginity is comparable with the objectification of women as sexual objects, since both tie a women's worth to her body. Furthermore, considering a young woman who has lost her virginity as "used goods" is entrenched in patriarchal ownership, with a father handing over his "pure" daughter to her husband.[37] We need a revolution in our understanding of human sexuality. Neither promoting sexual freedom nor demanding purity give respect to the full worth and autonomy of all people. This includes resisting a heteronormative vision of sexuality, requiring the consideration of what the "good" of a sexual relationship is, and what power structures serve as obstacles to truly free sexual expression.

Catholic Social Teaching and College Hookup Culture

Analyzing the college hookup culture in dialogue with Catholic Social Teaching (CST) challenges the assumptions underlying the college hookup culture. CST is grounded in the inherent dignity of all human beings, and obligates us, as social beings, to respect the human dignity of others. CST suggests a certain way for existing in a social world, that we cannot seek our individual good without tending to the good of others. College hookup culture demonstrates the inherently social nature of human beings, and that our behavior and our

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[34] Hills, "Sexual Revolution."
[35] Bridget Burke Ravizza, "Feminism a Must: Catholic Sexual Ethics for Today's College Classroom," in *Women, Wisdom, and Witness: Engaging Contexts in Conversation*, eds. Rosemary P. Carbine and Kathleen J. Dolphin (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 150.
[36] Ravizza, "Feminism a Must," 151.
[37] Ravizza, "Feminism a Must," 152.

ability to flourish are highly dependent on our social environment. Furthermore, examining the social analysis previously addressed, many social factors contribute to a restrictive understanding of gender identity and expression. When placing the current college social environment in contrast with the vision for our flourishing social selves suggested by the tenants of CST, we can identify the flaws in the college environment and thus where it needs amelioration.

To suggest ways that CST can be used to critique college hookup culture, we must first establish the flawed nature of college hookup culture from a Catholic perspective. Analyzing the hookup culture on college campuses requires addressing it as a problem of both social and structural sin. Social sin may be understood as "the unjust structures, distorted consciousness, and collective actions and inaction that facilitate injustice and dehumanization."[38] Such sinfulness specifically devalues other individuals, including through systemic racism or sexism.[39] While individual persons are the agents of sinful behaviors, these actions are informed by larger social structures. In terms of college hookup culture, individuals are devalued and treated merely as means to an end (sexual pleasure or social status). Additionally, it devalues students by placing assumptions on gender presentation and does not respect their full human dignity in self-identification and expression.

Social sin is both a cause of and result of individual sin. As such, any behavior that participates in and perpetuates the dominant gendered hookup culture contributes to social sin, even if the action is not inherently sinful in itself.[40] This includes failures to resist traditional beliefs of masculinity and femininity in everyday life, from the shows we watch to the jokes we make, to the way we dress and the way we speak about one another. All of the social influences explored in the social analysis, including media and sex education, contribute to social sin.

Structural sin is a more specific definition under the broader umbrella of social sin. A structure of sin can be understood as an institution or collective practice that promotes self-interested behavior over the common good due to social idealization or economic

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[38] Kristin E Heyer, "Social Sin and Immigration: Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 413.
[39] Heyer, "Social Sin," 414.
[40] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 650.

incentive.[41] Thus, while social sin encompasses all social influences on sinful behavior, structural sin is specifically tied to "causal power" implemented by institutions or collective practices.[42] Such structures operate by using authority to skew one's perception of morality or limit free will.[43]

College hookup culture can be seen as a structure of sin, as it operates through collective practices that skew reality so students believe that such behavior is normal or even necessary for social acceptance. Such collective practices have been explored in previous sections of this paper, including the deferential behavior of females in a party setting, the drinking behavior encouraged by toxic masculinity, and the binary assumptions underlying such behaviors. Social sin can be understood as the broader social environment promoting toxic masculinity, feminine availability, and binary gender expression, including media influences or limited sex and gender education. Structural sin, however, is tied to the collective authority that normalizes this culture, operating through the collective buy-in of students to the perceived norms. As individuals participating in social and structural sin, we have an obligation to interrupt it and to foster a culture that fosters the flourishing of all members of society.

Social and structural sin on college campuses deviate significantly from the vision of CST. CST calls us to consider the common good of all fellow human persons and the promotion of collective flourishing. A foundational component of CST is human dignity, the belief that that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. Because of this foundation, all human lives are bestowed with inherent worth. The dignity of all is violated by college hookup culture as an example of social sin, which devalues and takes advantage of certain groups and thus violates their human dignity. As asserted by Meghan McCabe in her analysis of college rape culture, it is the responsibility of the Catholic Church to "identify the social systems that threaten human dignity and work toward their deconstruction so that those that promote the dignity and flourishing of all persons."[44] Thus, an understanding of college hookup culture as a perpetuation of social and structural sin should indicate that CST demands a response.

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[41] Conor M. Kelly, "The Nature and Operation of Structural Sin," *Theological Studies* 80, no. 2 (2019): 301.
[42] Kelly, "Structural Sin," 301-303.
[43] Kelly, "Structural Sin," 305-308.
[44] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 636.

McCabe explains that college hookup culture denies students of their full human dignity, as students of all gender identities are "inhibited by social expectations that limit which gendered and sexual ways of being are possible."[45] By perpetuating a sinful social environment in which students' self-expression and relationships are restricted by harmful norms, the human dignity of all students is violated. CST calls for a collective response to such disrespect of human dignity, to foster an environment in which all may flourish.

Another tenant of CST that specifically addresses social and structural sin is solidarity, which calls for a response to past and current suffering with actionable support, demonstrating an "incarnation of Christian love" in concrete form.[46] The goal of solidaristic action is to transform the social and cultural environment to develop "a reality in which suffering and violence are no longer present."[47] Because we are all complicit in perpetuating social and structural sin, we are all called to solidaristic action to address it.

What does solidarity look like in the case of college hookup culture? As the gender norms and power dynamics shaping hookup culture are manifest in the daily social and sexual lives of college students, the context of the everyday is extremely relevant.[48] Interrupting the scripts dominating social and sexual interactions requires commitment to questioning and restructuring dominant language and beliefs, both by being conscious of oneself and being willing to confront others. Calling out a peer on their use of harmful sexist language (e.g., referring to a female as a "slut"), or on their heteronormative assumptions, (e.g., asking a male peer about their female interests), are simple examples of solidarity to disrupt structural sin.

In his analysis of the college hookup culture, Conor Kelly asserts that language has an important role in combatting structural oppression, as it is the means for asserting identity and can serve as a means to empower the silenced.[49] Thus, he suggests that an essential first step to subverting college hookup culture is "allowing men and women to voice their own concerns in a culture that functions to silence frank conversation."[50] It is essential to add to

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[45] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 645.
[46] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 653.
[47] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 653.
[48] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 654.
[49] Conor Kelly, "Sexism in Practice: Feminist Ethics Evaluating the Hookup Culture," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 28, no. 2 (2012): 45-46.
[50] Kelly, "Sexism in Practice," 45.

this assertion that students of *all* gender identities should be welcome to voice their concerns, not limiting the conversion to men and women. Language as a means of solidarity is in alignment with CST's vision of flourishing for all.

Students experience true harm at the hands of college hookup culture. The promotion of toxic masculinity harms students who feel pressure to adopt these outward gendered displays and those who suffer from the results of derivative actions. The assumption of female availability contributes to the normalization of rape on college campuses. The promotion of gender-based expectations for social behavior isolates those who do not identify with binary understandings of gender. Once we are aware of this suffering, solidarity demands action. The CST principle of solidarity calls us all to "respond to the suffering of the past and the present, for the sake of fostering the full personhood of all people."[51] It is through solidarity that campus cultures may be restructured to "embody new gendered norms that recognize the full personhood of all and reject the patterns of masculine domination and feminine submission."[52] Students must look inward to how they embody and accept gender norms on campus, determining how they wish to present themselves and encouraging others to do the same. Because of how deeply conditioned we are by virtue of pervasive social and structural sin, discerning how and when to engage in such interruptive solidaristic action is challenging, requiring the use of conscience. Conscience is understood as the force of responsibility that guides us towards morally good action, allowing us to make judgments of what is true and what to do in light of that truth.[53] Thus, guided by conscience, students may discern what action can effectively disrupt the patterns of hookup culture in everyday life.

Unveiling the Social Reality and Opening Dialogue

All individuals deserve respect for their inherent dignity, and similarly deserve the right to seek relationships that enable their flourishing. The current social and sexual culture dominating most college campuses does not make this possible. Hookup culture operates upon strict binary standards for gender expression that are harmful to the relationships and identity formation of all students. Such a social climate encourages female objectification

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[51] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 653.
[52] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 654.
[53] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 654.

and male dominance, fails to honor the authentic personhood of all students, serves as a barrier to just sexual relationships, and, most dangerously, contributes to rape culture on college campuses. The social scripts displayed on college campuses is a reality that all members of society participate in and perpetuate, and thus social transformation requires collective action.

We must first lift the veil and the silence about hookup culture. Sex does not need to be a taboo subject. Encouraging dialogue and educating young adults is an essential step in their flourishing. Seminars that engage students in conversation about the reality of the college hookup culture will reveal the highly gendered social scripts that dominate the college experience, and empower them to reject these scripts. Opening up spaces for dialogue on college campuses will empower students to undergo their own discernment process to determine what kind of sexual encounters and social presentation promote their flourishing.

This process of lifting the veil necessarily challenges traditional methods of sex education exclusively emphasizing abstinence. A renewed sexual ethic should be developed to accommodate the reality of college social environments and encourage the flourishing of all students. Margaret Farley suggests a framework for renewing Christian sexual ethics in *Just Love*, wherein she highlights the importance of developing a "living tradition." She suggests that "beliefs and theologies that interpret beliefs can be challenged by new experiences, cultural shifts, and new perspectives on the past," a process that takes the "usable past" and admits new insights to develop "new and better rationales."[54] Farley grounds her proposed sexual ethics in justice, which, in her definition, requires that all people are "affirmed to their concrete reality, actual and potential."[55] As emphasized by CST, our personhood and inherent dignity imply an obligation to be treated well by others as an end, never a means; to have free choice; and to be connected through nourishing relationships in order to achieve flourishing as human beings.[56]

Another sexual virtue proposed by Farley is fruitfulness. The virtue of fruitfulness applied to sexuality is traditionally understood in the procreative sense, but also can be

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[54] Margaret A Farley, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 187.
[55] Farley, *Just Love,* 209.
[56] Farley, *Just Love,* 213-214.

reimagined to apply to a greater range of sexual relationships. "New life" can be produced in other ways, through "nourishing other relationships; providing goods, services, and beauty for others;" and other such fruitful activities.[57] Other virtues may also be applicable; applying the process of discernment, grounded in our inherent dignity and relationality, can be used to develop a fulfilling virtue-based sexual ethic.

Reimagining sexual ethics in this way is likely to be met with resistance, particularly on Catholic college campuses. However, it is important to keep in mind that the Catholic tradition is not stagnant, but is rather a "living tradition" meant to adapt to the circumstances of the contemporary world. As such, moral theology involves the practice of deliberation by employing "the skill of practical hesitancy." Hesitancy and scrutiny inherently produce uncertainty, opening the door for "the possibility of development."[58] Indeed, moral theology can be used as a "mode of deciphering what is most important for the person" in their attempt for "survival in a crisis of suffering."[59] Thus, acknowledging the true suffering of students under current sexual expectations can facilitate legitimate, constructive questioning of how we have come to understand the Catholic tradition, just as others. Following the mission of CST to respect human dignity and uplift the suffering, we must be willing to revise our long-held beliefs to address the reality of the broken society we inhabit.

Bridget Burke Ravizza of Saint Norbert College has described her efforts to create a course addressing the issue of sexual ethics on college campuses based on virtue ethics. In her course, she works to provide students with tools that allow them to discern their path to flourishing in a college environment. She arms students with magisterial teachings and balances papal proclamations with the challenges of living out such principles in a broken world.[60] She also presses students to consider their "gender boxes," the socialization of gender, and potential methods of resistance.[61] She grounds her teachings in virtue ethics, which she believes "affirms the autonomy and relationality of students, calling them to live with integrity and set expectations high for themselves and their relationships."[62] Her efforts

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[57] Farley, *Just Love*, 227-228.
[58] Raphael Gallagher, "Catholic Medical Ethics: A Tradition Which Progresses," in *Catholic Ethicists on HIV/AIDS Prevention,* ed. James F. Keenan (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), 273.
[59] Gallagher, "Catholic Medical Ethics," 280.
[60] Burke Ravizza, "Feminism a Must," 154-157.
[61] Burke Ravizza, "Feminism a Must," 159.
[62] Burke Ravizza, "Feminism a Must," 165.

highlight the importance of arming students with knowledge and empowering them to reflect on how they can best seek fulfillment in the college environment.

Virtue ethics primarily explores the questions of "Who am I?" and "Who am I called to be?"[63] Thus, college students, who are at a pivotal time of self-determination, are poised to delve into a virtue-based discernment process around sexual relationships. Does a hookup culture based on gender binaries assuming male dominance and female submissiveness foster mutuality? Equality? Does it allow both parties to be vulnerable? Does it ensure free consent? By providing students with the tools of ethical discernment, they may discover and employ the tools of virtue ethics to foster fulfilling relationships.

The virtue-based approach to developing sexual ethics is not a sufficient response to the current social climate on college campuses. Burke Ravizza's educational approach based in virtue ethics is limited to individual sexual encounters, without addressing the "broader social, cultural, and political context in which individual sex acts take place."[64] This approach places more emphasis on individual behavioral choices, rather than addressing the underlying social and structural sin that perpetuates the gender essentialism inherent om the college social environment. The collective buy-in of students is key to perpetuating the structural sin promoting college hookup culture, thus it is important to lift the veil on such structures influencing behavior to give students true autonomy.

Logistically, isolating these conversations in an elective seminar course is likely self-selective for students interested in reflecting on hookup culture, whereas to be most effective, such dialogue must be encouraged university-wide. On Boston College's campus, for example, it may be more effective to make a Burke Ravizza-style course required for first-year students, or as a component of the University Core Curriculum. It may also be effective to allow students to serve as peer educators in this space, leading discussion groups in the various residential life communities.

Initiating Social Transformation on College Campuses

Not all sexual activity on college campuses is freely chosen, and much of it is shaped by the existing culture rather than individual choices. This can be understood through the

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[63] Burke Ravizza, "Feminism a Must," 163.
[64] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 645-646.

analysis of college hookup culture as an example of social and structural sin, rather than purely individual behavior. By opening a safe space to share their stories, students may recognize the brokenness in our current social and sexual environment and be encouraged to accompany their peers who are suffering. Connor Kelly emphasizes the need for more open dialogue as "the hookup culture functions to deprive [students] of their unique voices," and thus unveiling the cultural reality and encouraging "an open conversation about this culture and its shortcomings is itself a change."[65] Kelly acknowledges that while opening a dialogue is no assurance of action, if no conversation occurs, "things will undoubtedly remain the same."[66]

Providing students with the tools of CST, as well as an open and non-judgmental space for discussion, provides the first step in initiating social change. The process begins with unveiling the unjust social reality, then empowering students to share their experience, and finally fostering identity and allyship with one's peers. When we are allowed to recognize the humanity in others, we acknowledge our duty to help facilitate their flourishing. Thus, while a female-identifying student may be empowered by her ability to express the objectification that she has been damaged by in the college campus environment, she may also be impacted by hearing a non-binary student's lack of identity affirmation experiences, or the pressure to express ultra-masculinity experienced by a male-presenting student. Once dialogue is open, the next step of "emancipatory transformation of structures" can hopefully occur.[67]

One challenge that will inevitably be faced in this regard is how to encourage this conversations university-wide. As discussed previously, this may be accomplished in a classroom setting, but other environments may be conducive to free dialogue as well. A small group setting is an important component, ensuring students a safe space to feel heard. At Boston College, for example, many such small group reflection spaces exist: Freshman League and Ascend (first-year mentorship cohorts), and faith-based groups like Christian Life Communities (CLC). Creating reflection groups specifically for the purpose of discussing the hookup culture and gendered social scripts could be a positive step in

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[65] Kelly, "Sexism in Practice," 48.
[66] Kelly, "Sexism in Practice," 48.
[67] Kelly, "Sexism in Practice," 46.

promoting social transformation. Such reflection groups would go beyond the role of a seminar, giving students space for more equal discussion among peers and allowing them to put the tools of ethical analysis they have learned into practice. It could also allow such dialogue to occur longitudinally, rather than over the course of a single semester, and allow students time to explore their identity and environment throughout the stages of college life.

The next step in addressing the college social climate is cultivating solidarity, transforming the social environment through concrete action. One essential area of revision is language. We must change the way we speak about ourselves and others, and not allow words like "slut" or "easy" to be used in reference to females while males are referred to as "players." We must revise the objectifying way that female bodies are discussed with an emphasis on certain features defining their desirability or worth. Furthermore, we must address language with underlying gender assumptions, including presuming he/she pronouns and using phrases like "ladies and gentlemen." Such phrases can instead be replaced with gender-neutral ones, such as "the person in blue" or "friends and colleagues." Students should be affirmed in their right to self-identify and receive the full respect of their humanity. Revising language is challenging, requiring conscious reflection and the willingness to correct others in their harmful use of language. It is important to note, however, that part of respecting our full humanity is to respect our capacity to make mistakes. We must give ourselves and others the grace to err, as social transformation is challenging, while encouraging dedication to improving the social environment for all.

We must encourage open conversation about our desires sexual relationships, and affirm the importance of mutuality in a sexual encounter. This includes the features discussed in Farley's *Just Love*, including autonomy and equality of power. If students are mature enough to physically and emotionally engage in sexual interactions, they must be mature enough to have a conversation about the expectations in such a relationship. Another essential component for a just sexual relationship is affirmative and enthusiastic consent. Solidaristic action places demands on bystanders; this includes resistance to "tactics like blocking doors and pressuring drinks on women to foster their incapacitation" as well as the conversations that make light of such tactics as funny or acceptable.[68] Encouraging enthusiastic consent also requires education on what such consent necessitates. McCabe

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[68] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 653.

notes that the lines between "seduction and domination, pleasure and danger, responsibility and exploitation, agency and objectification, consent and coercion" are often blurry and interpreted as part of the "normal" sexual experience.[69] Consent to one action does not mean consent to another or the same action at a different time; the presumption should be "no" until explicitly and freely told "yes." Alcohol also blurs the lines on true affirmative consent. Education is necessary on the blurred lines between consent and coercion, and not simply at a one-time bystander education course offered to naïve first-year students.

Solidaristic action can also serve the purpose of spreading awareness of the harms of the current social climate campus-wide. An obvious obstacle remains how to engage the entire student body in the conversations previously discussed. However, if the students who are engaged in such conversations spread awareness and promote change through solidaristic action, their peers may be encouraged to do the same. There is incredible potential for spreading awareness in the modern age, and the surge in "social media activism" highlights a method that may be particularly efficacious in a college setting. It is, of course, true, however that a one-time post on social media is not the way to social change. Nevertheless, if increased awareness draws more students into dialogue, more students will then be dedicated to concrete action, and slowly the social transformation becomes possible.

Social Change Beyond Campus

Action cannot be isolated to college campuses. We must interrupt expectations based on false assumptions of gender roles and work to present new, more inclusive role models for young people as they undergo the process of identity formation. The identity formation process begins at a very young age, from the way young children are dressed to the toys they play with to the shows they watch. Toys marketed to girls, including baby dolls, kitchen sets, and princess costumes, encourage domesticity and aesthetics, while traditional boy's toys, such as cars, action figures, and building sets, foster spatial reasoning and aggression.[70] Pigeon-holing children from such a young age can limit their later roles in society, and show them from an early age which traits of theirs are valuable and socially accepted.[71]

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[69] McCabe, "A Feminist Catholic," 638.
[70] Crispin Long, "'Raising Baby Grey' Explores the World of Gender-Neutral Parenting," The New Yorker, June 24, 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-documentary/raising-baby-grey-explores-the-world-of-gender-neutral-parenting.
[71] Long, "Raising Baby Grey."

Furthermore, the omnipresent gendering we undergo throughout childhood can be confusing and distressing for children who are "gender deviant," who may spend most of their childhood and later life feeling out of place or unseen. We need to foster an environment where children feel comfortable dressing or playing the way they choose without scrutiny or nudging, to ease tension surrounding gender roles from an early age.

The idea of "gender-neutral parenting" is a controversial issue at the moment. Critics cite the challenges these children will face in the "real world," potentially facing bullying or having no concept of gender in a society in which they will inevitably encounter it. Furthermore, critics point out that gender-neutrality may simply be another "box" or label placed upon the child, forcing them to lack a defined gender identity even if they gravitate towards one. It is important to not go to the opposite extreme when combating gender binary, limiting the child's choices in another way by refusing them the right to self-identify as one gender if they so choose. To allow a child to explore their gender and role in society without judgement or pressure should be the purpose, by providing children with a variety of options and role models.

A primary form of indoctrination to societal norms is through media such as television and movies; thus, we need to create and incentivize more inclusive and varied characters so that there are role models for all gender identities and presentations. Such representation must be reflected in movies, television shows, advertisements, and other popular media sources that normalize structural power dynamics between genders and shape the expectations of young adults emerging into their sexual lives. From Disney princess movies to *Animal House*, young girls are presented with an image of the submissive role they are to play in relationships and society as a whole. Until the late 2000s, film and television portrayal of gender non-conforming individuals was scarce and relegated primarily to roles of comic relief.[72] We cannot allow these representations to be the sole voice in the conversation on sexuality; we need to provide sexual education that is not only objective and scientific, or focused solely on promoting abstinence, but one that engages students in reflection on what the *telos* of sexual encounters is. The culture of college campuses is merely a microcosm of our wider society and remains open to its influence. To

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[72] Jon Mendelsohn, "Gender in the Media: The Evolution of Representation for Trans and Gender Nonconforming Characters," CBR (CBR.com, November 20, 2020), https://www.cbr.com/representation-gender-in-media/.

address the social sin on college campuses, we must engage in collective action to transform our society as a whole.

Because of the centrality of identity formation that occurs in college, we must transform the college environment so this identity formation can be unhampered by harmful social expectations. College-aged students are also, it is worth noting, a new generation of young adults at the precipice of the next stage in adult life. We do not have to passively enter society as it is, but can actively create a society in which all can thrive. We do not have to remain merely products of our environment, but have the opportunity to challenge and transform it towards one that is more accepting and supportive. Transforming social norms on the Boston College campus, as any other, can essentially serve as "practice," since the college campus is a microcosm of the social environment we live in. Upon graduating, we may leave with eyes-wide-open to the social pressure to conform to traditional gender and sexual standards, and continue to resist social and structural sin for greater transformation.

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Femicide in Latin America: Reimagining Catholic Symbolism in the Pursuit of Justice

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FEMICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA:
REIMAGINING CATHOLIC SYMBOLISM IN THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

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Abstract: Femicide—the killing of a girl or woman based on their gender—is a widespread horror that occurs frequently in Latin American countries. Because these countries are mostly Catholic, a Catholic theological framework that draws attention to these atrocities is crucial. In particular, there is an evident need for a theological framework that provides support for the fight against *machismo* and violence not only for women but also for families who have lost daughters, mothers, sisters, etc. This article argues the need for a feminist theology that breaks down systems of *machismo* and establishes community to combat femicide in Latin America. First, this article will explore the ways in which *marianismo* and certain symbols of women (e.g., the Guadalupe-Malinche binary and Mariana de Jesús) can perpetuate gender-based power dynamics in Latin America, making femicides permissible. Second, this article will highlight the importance of emphasis on family and community in Latin American society in attempting to transform societal structures to achieve justice for Latin American women. Lastly, the article provides a framework that emphasizes women's agency to stand together, grieve, and fight. This feminist theological framework is centered around the symbol of the Virgin Mary, as portrayed in John's Gospel during Jesus's crucifixion. It also focuses on the historical role of Mary as a mother who lost her child. These two aspects of Mary as a symbol provide a way for women in Latin America to hold spaces of solidarity and agency and demand the ending of femicides.

Introduction

It was March 8, 2017. I was attending my first International Women's Day march in Córdoba, Argentina. I was in awe of all the people, chants, movement, and dancing around me. It quickly became clear that we were protesting, mourning, and celebrating all at once. Most people carried signs which read "#NiUnaMenos" (#NotOneWomenLess), "Vivas nos queremos" (We want each other alive), and "Somos el grito de las que [ya] no tienen voz" (We are the scream of those who no longer have their voice). I remember carrying my own bright orange poster with red and pink letters that read "Nos mueve el deseo de no tener miedo" (We are moved by the wish to no longer be afraid). As an *ecuatoriana* (Ecuadorian

woman), I knew exactly what all these posters meant and to what they referred. The march itself symbolized a desperate scream of protest against femicide. Femicide, the shadow that obscures Latin America—the demon that condemns countless women to death—forces women to live in constant fear and uncertainty.

Every two hours in Latin America, a woman is murdered just for being a woman.[2] These brutalities are examples of femicides: the killing of a girl or woman on the basis of her gender. While Brazil and Mexico record the most femicides in the region, the countries with the highest rates in Latin America are Honduras, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Bolivia.[3] However, these atrocities are not confined to a particular area; rather, they are seen throughout Latin America. For example, Chiara Perez, a fourteen-year-old pregnant girl from Argentina was beaten to death by her boyfriend. Maribel, an Ecuadorian thirty-eight-year-old woman, was stabbed by a man one hundred and thirteen times. Gabriela Lima Santana, a twenty-one-year-old woman in Brazil was dismembered and shoved into a suitcase. The list of cases is ever-growing. These examples reveal that femicides are about not only killing but also the underlying exercise of male dominance over women's bodies. It is the ultimate way for men to demonstrate control. In Maribel's case, for example, one hundred and thirteen stab wounds surely were not needed to ensure her death. This case can be extended more broadly to reveal that femicide is like a show, a spectacle, a way for men to prove that they can and will do anything to dominate.

To find justice for the girls and women who have been killed and to prevent more women from dying, it is crucial not only to acknowledge the existence of femicides, but also to deconstruct the systems of dominance and *machismo* that allow such atrocities to occur. Marcela Lagarde, a Mexican anthropologist who first introduced the concept of femicide to the Spanish language said "Lo que no se nombra no existe" (What isn't named doesn't exist). Lagarde's words guide this article and its description of the systems of oppression against women in Latin America, and how they can be challenged through a feminist theology particular to Latin America. More specifically, this article will explain how certain Catholic concepts and symbols have been used to maintain *machismo*, allowing femicides to remain

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[2] Daniela Blandón Ramírez, "Una mujer es asesinada cada dos horas en América Latina por el hecho de ser mujer," *France 24*, March 3, 2020, https://www.france24.com/es/20200303-dia-de-la-mujer-feminicidios-latinoamericano-violencia-genero.
[3] Blandón Ramírez, "Una mujer."

an acceptable form of violence. Despite this potential harmful manipulation of Catholicism, religious symbols may still provide a path to relief, justice, and ultimately an end to femicide in Latin America. This article will explain how, through relying on the symbol of the Virgin Mary as a grieving mother, and through Jesus's words to Mary at the time of his crucifixion, Latines can stand in solidarity and challenge femicides together.

Before embarking on this quest, it is important to note that mujerista theology is central to this article. As described by Ada María Isasi-Díaz, the goals of mujerista theology are "to provide a platform for the voices of Latina grassroots women; to develop a theological method that takes seriously the religious understandings and practices of Latinas as a source for theology; to challenge theological understandings, church teachings, and religious practices that oppress Latina women, that are not life-giving, and, therefore, cannot be theologically correct."[4] The proposed feminist theological framework described herein promotes these goals by using examples of symbols and initiatives specific to Latinas that uplift the voices of grassroots projects. It is of the utmost importance to base any potential theological framework on the concrete and tangible lives of women around the world.

Social and Catholic Symbols of Oppression

Certain aspects of Latin American culture have worked to establish the dominance of men over women, forming continued space for brutal forms of violence such as femicides. The predominant religion in Latin America is Christianity, with a majority of people identifying as Roman Catholic.[5] This is one of the cultural aspects of Latin America that reinforces female inferiority and has preserved *machismo*. Hierarchies of male dominance cannot be separated from religious life and interpretations of Christian doctrine, texts, and symbols. For example, religion in Latin America emphasizes "the idealization of the dominant male hero" and the positive portrayal of strong masculine pride. [6] Due to this pervasively held idea, women are expected to be passive, and to give their bodies as a reward to men. One Catholic concept that upholds such domination is *marianismo*, the veneration

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[4] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Orbis Book, 1996), 10.

[5] Yubeira Zerpa de Kirby, "Un acercamiento al fenómeno religioso en América Latina a la luz de la crítica cultural," *Sapienza Organizacional* 5, no. 9 (2018).

[6] Teresa Delgado, "This Is My Body... Given For You: Theological Anthropology *Latina/Mente*," in *Frontiers in Catholic Feminist Theology: Shoulder to Shoulder*, ed. Susan Abraham and Elena Procario-Foley (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 35.

of the Virgin Mary, which "encourages women to follow the 'example' set by Mary. That is, to model 'self-sacrifice, self-effacement, and self-subordination' and by so doing become 'spiritually superior.'"[7] The veneration of the Virgin Mary emphasizes "the role of [the] woman as one who sacrifices herself for the good of others…[and] has served the domination and commodification of women's physical bodies."[8] These beliefs have served *machismo* and have led to the idea that some kinds of violence are permissible—devastating, yes, but nonetheless permissible.

In *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, Nancy Pineda-Madrid discusses the creation of social imaginaries and the making of evil. Specifically, she explains how Emilie Townes "examines in-depth the way particular images of [B]lack women (for example, Aunt Jemima, the Tragic Mulatta, Topsy, and others) have been used and continue to be used as 'conductors and seeresses.'"[9] These images sustain the stereotypes of Black women that perpetuate the evils committed against them. Pineda-Madrid relates Townes's work to femicide: "[she] recommends that stereotypes of Latina femaleness are likewise used to legitimize socially the furtherance of evil and, consequently, to inform the active ways we envisage suffering in our social and personal imaginations."[10] This is so because structural evil does not simply come from "rational mechanisms but is also 'maintained by more heuristic forces that emerge from the imagination as emotion, intuition, and yearning.'"[11] It is necessary to realize that the stereotypes and symbols of Latina femaleness do not stand alone; rather, they are part of historical and sociocultural narratives that "serve the interests of the most powerful and, accordingly, willfully exclude the interests of subjugated peoples."[12] These stereotypes and symbols are prevalent across Latin America and can lead to femicide when manipulated to justify violence against women. A few examples of such symbols can be found in Mexico and Ecuador, in the Guadalupe-Malinche binary, and in the symbol of Mariana de Jesús.

In her book, Nancy Pineda-Madrid discusses the way the Guadalupe-Malinche binary perpetuates patriarchal views in Mexico. Malintzín (or La Malinche) is known for

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[7] Nancy Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juarez* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 49.
[8] Delgado, "This Is My Body," 33.
[9] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 45.
[10] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 45.
[11] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 45.
[12] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 45-46.

contributing to the Spanish conquest of the Aztec nation, as well as other indigenous tribes, by acting as a translator for the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés. She is also known as Cortés's mistress and is therefore labelled as treacherous. As Pineda-Madrid says, "tagged as the ultimate traitor of Mexico, [La Malinche] comes to symbolize the 'total negative essence of the Mexican woman.'"[13] On the other hand, the Guadalupian Mary (or the Lady of Guadalupe) "is said to have appeared to an indigenous, middle-aged man, Juan Diego, and through him assured the people of her enduring love and care for them."[14] These two women present a binary: a woman is either a "Guadalupe" (good) or a "Malinche," (bad). This construct perpetuates male dominance and female submission, denying women their full humanity. Women are not recognized for who they are; instead, they are placed in these two reductive categories. Such a binary justifies certain kinds of violence, such as femicides: if a woman is killed, she must have been bad and unfaithful.

Despite extensive literature on Guadalupe and on other Marian images, very little scholarship has "addressed the ways these images have been used to limit and reduce Latinas' humanity."[15] In order for us to reveal the liberative meaning of these images, "we must address transparently and directly how this symbol and others are manipulated to influence how Latinas are seen and how Latinas see themselves."[16] It is not enough to call for liberation using religious symbols if we do not acknowledge the ways in which the same symbols continue to be used to reinforce oppression. Liberation first requires an understanding of the specific harm caused by such symbols. The need for a contextual understanding also emphasizes the importance of grounding theological work in the actual lives of Latine women.

Another symbol is Mariana de Jesús, the first Ecuadorian saint, canonized in 1950. Mariana was a very pious Catholic who is said to have performed various miracles. Mariana became a saint for offering her life in exchange for an end to both the earthquake and the epidemics devastating the city of Quito in 1645. She died sometime after the earthquake.[17] Mariana de Jesús is widely revered throughout Ecuador and, despite having lived hundreds

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[13] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 48.
[14] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 49.
[15] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 47.
[16] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 47.
[17] "Mariana de Jesús, La Primera Santa Del Ecuador," *El Comercio*, August 9, 2011, https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/quito/mariana-de-jesus-primera-santa.html.

of years ago, she is still hailed as an exemplary woman. Mariana's willingness to sacrifice her life for the city supports Delgado's view "that women's humanity is actualized when the will of another is made a priority."[18] Due to this focus on sacrificial women, many women have felt the need to be complacent and submissive in the face of injustice. This idea reinforces the belief that women only deserve rights and love when they sacrifice themselves for others, many times by giving up their bodies, like Mariana did. This expectation for women in Ecuadorian society renders femicide permissible by suggesting that women who do not meet this ideal are somehow less important and ultimately less human. Moreover, it can inform the notion that men are allowed to use and take women's bodies because the body is supposedly meant to be sacrificed for others. Though Mariana's example can be twisted to justify femicide, this manipulation in no way undermines her legacy. It is, however, essential to acknowledge how such constructs are capitalized on to generate *machismo*.

Symbols such as the Guadalupe-Malinche binary and Mariana de Jesús exist in every country in Latin America. These examples illustrate the role of symbols in promoting a portrayal of women that enables the justification and even the acceptance of violence against women. While the scope of this article does not follow further exploration of the ways these particular symbols have been used by various groups, it would be worthwhile to deconstruct them to consider other roles they've had in society. Nevertheless, in the following sections, our focus will primarily be on finding alternative ways of interpreting the memory and the life of the Virgin Mary.

The importance of *Familia* and *Comunidad*

Familia (family) and *comunidad* (community) truly matter—they are the pillars of Latin American society. Challenging and changing the symbols of oppression and *machismo* that persist in Latin American society requires a feminist theology grounded in *comunidad* and *familia*. For Latinas, it may not be fulfilling enough to reject the imposed narratives of oppression individually, which is why it is essential to stand together as a *comunidad* to protest femicides.

For most Latines, the individual person does not exist without the group: "the human person is fully actualized in communion with others; in fact, 'the community is the birthplace

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[18] Delgado, "This Is My Body," 33.

of self.'"[19] This notion of community, of being in relationship with others, extends beyond the nuclear family. As Ada María Isasi-Díaz says, "we do not conceptualize ourselves as individuals but as persons in relationship with our families and friends. [Latine] self-identity is not at all individualistic but rather is tied to our families, to the members of our extended families."[20] Here, it is important to note that *familia* and *comunidad* do not overshadow the individual. Rather, it is a relationship based on interdependence where one realizes "that the members of our families enable us to be who we are. *Familia* provides the security needed to extend ourselves into the community and form the kind of personal relationships that are vital to us without losing sense of self."[21]

In addition, the *familia* is a place where the self finds support and a space for expression: The goal of *familia* in [Latine] culture is to be a true home—*hogar*—where one belongs and is safe to be and become fully oneself. *Familia* for [Latines] 'is the central and most important institution in life… ' *Familia* is a duty but also, for most of us, it is a never-failing support system. From a very young age, Latinas begin to understand that because of our families we do not have to face the world alone … It is in the midst of *familia* and because of *familia* that at a very young age we are introduced to the ethical world of responsibilities and obligations, a world where one *is* because one is in relationship to others.[22]

This is not to insinuate that the institution of family is not *machista* and oppressive. In reality, it often furthers oppression by enforcing imbalanced gender roles and embedding male-dominated power dynamics. However, it is important to recognize that the communitarian nature of Latin American society is an imperative factor to consider when finding tangible solutions to deeply-ingrained practices. The idea of *familia* as a support system in facing life's challenges may prove a remedy for the horrors of femicide. The next section explores how to resist femicide by working together as a community, as a *familia*.

La Resistencia y la Memoria de la Virgen Maria

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[19] Delgado, "This Is My Body," 31.
[20] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Kin-Dom of God: A Mujerista Proposal," in *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*, ed. Benjamín Valentín (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 181
[21] Isasi-Díaz, "Kin-Dom of God," 181.
[22] Isasi-Díaz, "Kin-Dom of God," 181.

In John 19:25-19:27, Mary is said to have witnessed Jesus's crucifixion: " … standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."

As Elizabeth A. Johnson has written, it is unlikely that Mary was actually present at her son's crucifixion. Additionally, since the Gospels explain that Jesus's male disciples fled, it is unlikely that the one mentioned in John's Gospel was one of the Twelve.[23] While both are historical-factual figures, Johnson argues that neither the mother of Jesus nor the disciple are named in these lines "because they are functioning as symbols of discipleship. Standing by the cross they are turned toward each other by Jesus's words and given into each other's care."[24] The use of the word 'Behold' in these verses shows "that a revelation is to follow … Beholding each other in a new relationship, the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple mark the birth of a new family of faith founded on the following of Jesus and his gracious God."[25] This creation of a new relationship and community is crucial and must be acknowledged in the context of Latin America.

In her work, Johnson expands further on Mary's role in the crucifixion scene: "Even if she did not stand at the foot of the cross… news would have reached her. Then she joined the desolate cadre of women through the centuries who experience the terrible human condition of outliving one's child. There is no speaking this racking sorrow. It is out of the natural order of things. Worse yet, this death itself did not occur in the natural order of things but was violently inflicted, preceded by excruciating torment and carried out with public shame. One never really gets over the pain when someone you love is a victim of violence."[26]

With this in mind, Mary stands in a much broader historical and political context where women have lost their children to state violence. Mary was a "suffering Jewish mother" in the context of "Jewish suffering and death at the hand of the Romans."[27] As a mother who lost her son, Mary also stands "in solidarity with mothers of children dead by

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[23] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Dangerous Memories: A Mosaic of Mary in Scripture* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 154.
[24] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 154.
[25] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 154.
[26] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 155.
[27] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 156.

state violence everywhere … Calling on her memory, grieving mothers, wives, and daughters find strength in their bitter struggle against state repression and personal despair."[28] No matter where they are, women everywhere who have lost their loved ones can relate to the suffering and anguish Mary went through, and to the powerlessness she felt when unable to save her son. This shared experience includes all those who have lost their daughters, sisters, and other loved ones to femicide.

Though femicide is not necessarily committed by members of the state, the state cannot be absolved of blame. States often remain silent at the horrors of femicide and actively perpetuate *machismo*. A Chilean group called Las Tesis highlighted the culpability of the state in a song first performed in November 2019 in the streets of Valparaiso, Chile. "Un violador en tu camino" ("A Rapist in Your Path") condemns male violence and abuse, holding the state, judges, bystanders, etc. responsible for enforcing systems of oppression:

> *El patriarcado es un juez* (The patriarchy is a judge)
> *que nos juzga por nacer* (that judges us for being born)
> *y nuestro castigo* (and our punishment)
> *es la violencia que ya ves.* (is the violence you can now see)
>
> *Es femicidio.* (It's femicide)
> *Impunidad para mi asesino.* (Impunity for the killer)
> *Es la desaparición.* (It's the disappearance)
> *Es la violación.* (It's the rape)...
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> *El violador eras tú.* (The rapist was you)
> *El violador eres tú.* (The rapist is you)
> *Son los pacos,* (It's the cops)
> *los jueces,* (The judges)
> *el Estado,* (The State)
> *el Presidente.* (The President)
>
> *El Estado opresor es un macho violador.* (The oppressive State is a rapist)
> *El Estado opresor es un macho violador.* (The oppressive State is a rapist).

The performers sang the line "El violador eres tú" (the rapist is you), as they pointed their fingers at the audience.[29]

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[28] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 156.
[29] "Performance colectivo Las Tesis 'Un violador en tu camino,'" Colectivo Registro Callejero, November 26, 2019, 3:43, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aB7r6hdo3W4&ab_channel=ColectivoRegistroCallejero.

Even though the performance was not religious in nature and did not use religious symbols, it goes hand in hand with the memory of Mary in Christian imagination. As Johnson points out: "The fact that Christian imagination can picture Mary standing with desolated people under all the crosses set up in the world is due to the history of her own very real grief. This memory finds its liberating effectiveness when it empowers the church's women and men to say, STOP IT."[30] The pointing of the finger in "Un violador en tu camino," is exactly that: a call for justice and liberation. What this connection reveals is that Mary does not only function as a symbol of grief; she brings people together in their anguish and lament, embodying agency and *resistencia* (resistance). Through the shared memory of Mary, we may find the strength and hope to fight for a world where our children and loved ones are no longer murdered and tortured—a world where women are no longer killed for being women.

This cry for justice is echoed in Karen Baker-Fletcher's "More than Suffering: The Healing and Resurrecting Spirit of God," which discusses how Mamie Till-Mobley, mother of Emmett Till, mimics the Virgin Mary paradigm. Till-Mobley publicly grieved the death of her son in 1955. When Emmett Till died, Mamie Till-Mobley decided to have an open casket funeral and let the body of her son be photographed and displayed in magazines. In doing so, Mamie called for the world to face and to repent for their blatant evil, racism and violence. As Baker-Fletcher quotes Mamie Till-Mobley, "'I'M NOT TAKING THIS! LOOK! Look world, don't you see?'"[31] With these words, Mamie called on the memory of Mary as a grieving mother who lost her son not only to her direct killers, but ultimately to institutional and systemic racism.

These various representations of Mary lead us to question who she was and what she ought to represent. Drawing on Diana Hayes, Baker-Fletcher points out that for many Catholic women, "Mary is a 'role model, not for passivity, but for strong, righteous 'womanish' women who spend their lives giving birth to the future…'"[32] From Hayes' proposition, "one gathers that Mary is a symbol of what it means to intimately bear the power

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[30] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 156.

[31] Karen Baker-Fletcher, "More than Suffering: The Healing and Resurrecting Spirit of God," in *Womanist Theological Ethics*, ed. Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Torres, and Angela D. Sims (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 159.

[32] Baker-Fletcher, "More than Suffering," 158. To clarify, by *'womanish' women,* Hayes refers to the expression of Black feminist women.

of liberation, which is the hope for the future."[33] Coupled with Mamie Till-Mobley's public grief, this view of the Virgin Mary becomes crucial in considering ways in which women in Latin America can pursue justice. Just like Mamie Till-Mobley, women in Latin America must come together and let Latin American society and the world witness their desperation and frustration. By lamenting publicly, Mamie Till-Mobley pointed her finger and did not shy away from attributing blame. Likewise, women and others fighting against femicides—those who have lost their daughters, mothers, sisters, friends—have the power to express that enough is enough. Through public outcry, people can stop perpetrators of violence and prevent society from turning a blind eye to femicides.

Johnson acknowledges this need for solidarity in her interpretation of John 19:25-27, calling all to embrace each other in their anguish in the face of death. Women and people in general must create space or *comunidades* of agency and strength. This need for unity becomes especially relevant in the Latin American context where those affected by femicide, as well as their allies, must not only embrace the support of their already established *familias* and *comunidades* but also invite others into them. *Comunidades* can be created for those who grieve, protect, and work to dismantle the systems of oppression that enable femicides. Mary serves as the necessary guide in achieving this solidarity: "the memory of Mary near the cross abides, galvanizing nonviolent action to stop the violence as the only appropriate expression of faith."[34]

A primary example of this unifying theology is apparent in Ciudad Juárez. Women use the symbol of the cross to claim space, to claim justice, and to confront their pain together. In March 2002, the *Ni Una Más* coalition and *Mujeres de Negro* ("Women in Black") led a march from Chihuahua City to the Paso del Norte International Bridge in Ciudad Juárez. The two-hundred-and-thirty-mile trek began on March 8: International Women's Day. The women who marched (mothers, *campesinas*, professionals, etc.), "wore long black dresses and pink hats, the symbol of women in a perpetual state of mourning for Juárez's daughters."[35] Diana Washington describes the arrival of the marchers at the Paso del Norte Bridge in downtown Ciudad Juárez:

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[33] Baker-Fletcher, "More than Suffering," 158.
[34] Johnson, "Dangerous Memories," 156.
[35] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 102.

'When the protesters arrived . . . several of them climbed off a truck that had transported a large and impressive cross from Chihuahua City. They hooked up power tools and began to install it at the foot of the international bridge. The wooden cross was attached to a large metal panel, about twelve feet high, and which glistened with metal spikes. A sign at the top of the cross proclaimed "*Ni Una Más*" (Not one more). Other ornaments, including a plastic torso of a woman at the bottom of the cross, gave the new border fixture an eerily abstract quality. Tags with the names of victims, some labeled "unknown," were affixed to the metal spikes.'[36]

Since then, "this cross installation has become a shrine for grieving family, friends, and others who demand that the violence end. It serves as a public symbol of protest against the violence that as of this writing has still not ended."[37] After the march, people continued to raise crosses where the bodies of women were found. The crosses were pink and bore the names of the victims on the crossbars. This practice continues to serve as a way for women and other protesters to reclaim Ciudad Juárez, to transform it into a place of love and support where violence is no longer permitted. Acknowledging the women who have been killed and proclaiming their names restores their humanity. By painting the crosses pink, protestors do not let anyone forget that these victims were women. The pink paint serves as an essential visual reminder that women have been and continue to be killed simply because they are women. Like Mamie Till-Mobley and the performers of "Un violador en tu camino," the crosses hold society accountable for femicide. Protestors join as a suffering *comunidad*, demanding an end to the oppression, violence, and *machismo* that still clouds Latin America.

Looking back on the march in Córdoba, Argentina, I realize that we were just that—a *comunidad* of people, especially women, who were tired of having to prove their worth and humanity. "Vivas nos queremos" (We want each other alive) is not a cry for help; it is a demand for justice for those we have lost and for the women who have been lucky enough to survive. We want to live in a world where we do not have to be afraid, and where little girls can grow up knowing that their humanity will be respected and protected by society. It will take time and work to dismantle the systems and symbols of oppression—including religiously informed constructs—that have been forced upon people. However, through *comunidad* and *familia*, and guided by the memory of the Virgin Mary, we can strive for a better tomorrow.

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[36] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 102.
[37] Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez*, 103.

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Islamic and Christian Reconciliation Traditions in Post-Conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Comparative Theological Analysis

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ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN RECONCILIATION IN POST-CONFLICT BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:

A COMPARITIVE THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The Bosnian Genocide was a horrific ethnic and religious conflict that took place towards the end of the twentieth century. In the Genocide, Serbian nationalist fighters systematically killed over 80,000 Bosnian Muslims over a four-year period. The unique political and religious context of the conflict—in which Islam, Orthodox Christianity, and Catholicism were all important communal identifiers—should prompt a nuanced discussion of how religion functions in the midst of conflict. Utilizing Eboo Patel's concept of the "faith line" and religious pluralism as a point of origin, this article argues for increased attention to theological peacebuilding work in the wake of the Bosnian Genocide. To do so, this article will begin with a review of the historical roots of the conflict which will demonstrate the intimate role that religion played in the conflict, as well as the different religious justifications offered by the Bosnian government. This article will then engage in a comparative analysis of both Christian and Muslim reconciliation traditions, demonstrating that peacebuilding is not simply a political goal, but is also directly related to the respective faith traditions of Islam and Christianity. Finally, several reconciliation projects, both secular and religious, are highlighted in order to show how religious pluralism still plays an active role in breaking down communal boundaries and promoting peace.

Introduction

The unique context of the Bosnian genocide and subsequent civil war, during which Serbian nationalist fighters carried out the systematic murder of over 80,000 Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Catholic Croatians during a four-year period, granted both religious traditions an under-recognized opportunity to explore interreligious methods for sustainable peace. While the genocide was born out of a myriad of political and ethnocultural factors, religion played a key role in the justification and perpetration of the atrocities. For example, the Serbian Orthodox Church frequently authorized and blessed the massacre of Muslims, citing the potential threat they presented to Serbian dominance.[2]

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[2] Kate Temoney, "Religion and Genocide Nexuses: Bosnia as Case Study," *Religions* 8, no. 6 (2017): 8, 112. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8060112.

Appeals to religious traditions presents a unique opportunity for peacekeeping in this scenario because of the significance of religion in Bosnia-Herzegovina today. Indeed, the World Atlas has recorded than 51% of residents identify with Islam, 31% with Orthodox Christianity, and 15% with Roman Catholicism.[3] Considering the fact that 97% of the country belongs to one of the three religions actively involved in the genocide, it is unsurprising that religious tensions are still present in Bosnia today. Despite previous difficulties in reconciling religious differences, interreligious dialogue—defined by Jennifer Llewellyn and Daniel Philpott as "activities that aim to build sustainable, just, and peaceful relationships in the wake of war and other systemic human rights violations"—show great promise in helping achieve long-term peacebuilding. [4]

The notion of interreligious dialogue being used as a viable means for political peacebuilding is not new. Going back as far as the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo wrote in *The City of God* that, for human beings, the ultimate objective of war is peace.[5] In this way, important to any conception of religious peacebuilding is interreligious dialogue. In his memoir *Acts of Faith* Eboo Patel wrote and reflected extensively on the idea of the "faith line." Drawing from W.E.B. Du Bois's idea of the "color line," Patel wrote:

> On one side of the faith line are the religious totalitarians. Their conviction is that only one interpretation of religion is a legitimate way of being, believing, and belonging on earth. Everyone else needs to be cowed, or converted, or condemned, or killed. On the other side of the faith line are the religious pluralists, who hold that people believing in different creeds and belonging to different communities need to learn to live together.[6]

Understanding that Christian Orthodox Serbians were the primary aggressors while the Muslim Bosniaks were the largest victimized group, Patel's idea of the "faith line" will provide the basis for a later comparison of Christian and Islamic traditions of reconciliation and post-conflict justice. Beginning with a historical analysis of the ethnically fueled causes of religion's role in sanctioning violence, this essay will conclude with post-war efforts at religious pluralism and reconciliation that continue to be implemented today. The primary

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[3] Benjamin Elisha Sawe, "Religious Demographics of Bosnia and Herzegovina," WorldAtlas, April 25, 2017. https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/religious-demographics-of-bosnia-and-herzegovina.html.

[4] Sawe, "Religious Demographics of Bosnia and Herzegovina."

[5] Augustine, *The City of God,* trans. Philip Schaff and rev. and ed. by Kevin Knight (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1877), XIX.12.

[6] Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, The Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston. MA: Beacon, 2011), 5.

aim is to, through a comparison of the Islamic and Christian traditions, analyze the history of the conflict as well as emphasize the importance of religion and theological work as an agent in post-conflict peace.

Religious Roots of the Conflict

At the end of the Second World War, communist freedom fighter Josip Broz Tito reestablished the Yugoslav Federation, which had previously existed until it was dismantled by Nazi Germany in 1941.[7] Culturally and economically destroyed by the German Reich, the constituent countries of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia were united by the concept of "Brotherhood and Unity."[8] Despite religious differences, the countries comprising the federation recognized their cultural and linguistic similarities and were originally committed to the idea of an ethnically and religiously pluralistic Yugoslavia. Among all the countries and ethnic groups, it was the Bosnian Muslims in particular who were especially committed to this idea of religious tolerance. As Michael Anthony Sells writes, "many people in Bosnia-Herzegovina sought a nation based not on exclusive affiliation but on constitutional rule and respect for differing religions."[9] The Bosnian tendency towards religious tolerance is not surprising considering their historical context. As the original and most numerous indigenous community of Muslims in an otherwise Christian-dominated Europe, Bosniaks had spent years under the control of Christian empires. Nevertheless, they had always managed to maintain religious sovereignty through interreligious dialogue, particularly during their subjugation by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[10] Despite not always having governmental autonomy, the Bosniak community always considered itself to be Muslim first and was able to reconcile any ensuing political differences through frequent dialogue and tolerance of others.

This overtly tolerant stance towards other religions was significantly influenced by the religious and cultural influences of the Ottoman Empire and the Hanafi madhhab.[11] Husein Kavazović, Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2012, has been careful to

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[7] Michael Anthony Sells, "Fire in the Pages," in *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 1-29.
[8] Sells, "Fire in the Pages," 1-29.
[9] Sells, "Fire in the Pages," 8.
[10] Sells, "Fire in the Pages," 8.
[11] Sells, "Fire in the Pages," 8.

stress the importance of the Ottoman-inspired madhhab, often considered to be one of the most flexible schools of thought in Islam, on Bosnian Islamic social thought. He has claimed that Bosnian Muslims have always cherished an open, bright, and tolerant Islamic view of the world on account of the influence of the spiritual path of love (*tasawwuf*) that originated in the Ottoman Empire."[12] As a result of this historical precedent, by the time the Yugoslavian Federation was reformed, the Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina had a long history of living among and interacting with people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds, always managing to maintain their cultural and religious identity in a respectful way.

During the period of Yugoslavian unification prior to the 1991 Slovenian and Croatian declaration of independence, the religious narrative in the Christian-majority countries was vastly different than the one experienced in Muslim Bosnia-Herzegovina. While maintaining an official position of religious cooperation and tolerance, religious nationalists in Orthodox Serbia, as well as Catholic Croatia, constituted a small yet vocal percentage of the population. Those religious nationalists wanted their countries, and consequently their religions, to exert greater control and influence over the Yugoslavian Federation.[13] While consistently promoting racist attitudes and policies, the true extent of religious nationalism remained unseen until 1987, when the death of Josip Broz Tito allowed for more nationalistic leaders to take control of the Federation.[14]

Using a conflict with Albania over the Serbian-majority region of Kosovo to incite nationalist pride, Serbian president Slobodan Milošević dominated the Federation until the 1991 secession of Slovenia and Croatia.[15] Milošević's forces then invaded Croatia in an attempt to eliminate the Catholic resistance and achieve a "Greater Serbia," wherein those who were ethnically Serbian and religiously Orthodox Christian would be intrinsically superior to those who are not.[16] In the face of Bosnians using their religious beliefs as a basis for tolerance and for political cooperation, the Serbians used it as the rationale for the systemic murder of thousands of people. Within the context of the collapsing Yugoslavia,

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[12] Sells, "Fire in the Pages," 8.
[13] Temoney, *Religion and Genocide,* 8.
[14] Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed, 1-29.*
[15] Temoney, *Religion and Genocide,* 7.
[16] Temoney, *Religion and Genocide,* 2.

Eboo Patel would associate religious pluralism with the Bosniaks, whereas the Serbians, who committed genocide on the belief that Orthodox Christianity was the one true religion, would be classified as religious totalitarians.

Religious Justification of the Conflict

Following the Croatian cessation of territory to Serbian forces, nationalist fighters were able to invade Bosnia-Herzegovina to attack Muslim populations.[17] The fervor and cruelty with which they systematically murdered men, women, and children was greatly increased due to a propaganda campaign from the government. Speeches and radio announcements attempting to ethnically "other" the Bosnian population meant that the Serbian forces had no desire to simply annex or control the Muslim populations, but instead wipe them off the face of the Earth.[18] In a potent example of Serbian cruelty, General Radovan Karadžić, in a speech to Bosnian leaders, ominously said, "Do not think that you will not lead Bosnia-Herzegovina into hell, and do not think that you will not perhaps make the Muslim people disappear, because Muslims cannot defend themselves if there is war."[19]

While the persecution of Bosnians was initiated by the government and the first executions were carried out by the army, religious beliefs quickly made it so the entirety of Serbia was involved in the genocide. One of the key elements to understanding the conflict is the role of the Orthodox clergy in organizing as well as blessing the systematic killing. Through the use of heavy religious imagery, the Bosnian Muslims were shown to be a threat "physically, politically, and spiritually," to any conception of a homogenous Serbian nation.[20] The 44th Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, known colloquially as Patriarch Pavle, gave strong support to the cause of the Serbian forces, preaching, "Evil always attacks, and good must defend itself… Cain always tries to kill Abel, and Abel has to defend himself. Defending oneself against attacks by wrongdoers, defending one's life, life and the peace of one's nearest and dearest against the criminals. These are the limits that define a just war."[21] This incendiary sermon not only neglects the fact that Serbians were the aggressors but, while citing the Bible, the highest religious authority in Serbia condoned

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[17] Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed,* 1-29.
[18] Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed,* 1-29.
[19] Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed,* 9.
[20] Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed,* 9.
[21] Temoney, *Religion and Genocide*, 11.

torture and violence, encouraging anyone who considered themselves to be a true believer to participate in the Muslim extermination. This fusion of religious fervor and political authority led to demonic acts that not only killed Bosnians but served to discourage any potential resistance efforts. Blatant mortification of religious imagery, such as Muslim children being crucified in front of their parents, would have completely humiliated the proud Muslim tradition of the Bosnian community.[22]

Particularly egregious was the destruction of the Bosnian town of Zvornik. Widely known for its heritage of Muslim poets, saints, rebels, and mystics, it was completely decimated by Serbian forces after they murdered or expelled the entire population of the town. Michael Sells writes, "a representation of five hundred years of shared living between Christians and Muslims [was destroyed when] the mayor dedicated a new church, renamed a local, formerly Muslim village 'Saint Stephen,' and kissed a crucifix."[23] These acts didn't just kill the physical bodies of the Bosnian Muslims, they eradicated any sense of communal pride or tradition that could have given the poorly equipped Bosnian defenses something to rally around. Everything was brutally remade in the homogenous image of Orthodox Serbian Christianity.

What began as an attempt to eliminate any ethnic resistance to a homogenous Serbian state was quickly elevated, through religious propaganda, to a devastating genocide. Serbian Christians were told by their government as well as their religious authorities that Islamic believers represented a threat to themselves, their families, and the entire Serbian way of life. Such blatant "othering" of an entire religion marks the very extremes of religious totalitarianism. Serbian Christians could not reconcile with the fact that there were believers of another religion living among them, particularly a religion such as Islam, which they perceived to be heretical and bordering on cultic.[24] While the Serbian Orthodox Church eventually came to play a role in negotiating a ceasefire,[25] the devastating impacts that its immoral actions and its blatant "othering" had on the Muslim community cannot be forgotten.

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[22] Temoney, *Religion and Genocide*, 11.
[23] Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed*, 4.
[24] Kate, *Religion and Genocide Nexuses*, 11.
[25] Kate, *Religion and Genocide Nexuses*, 13.

Religious Reconciliation and Peacebuilding

Since religion was the catalyst that allowed an ethnically rooted political struggle to transform into the systemic massacre of tens of thousands of innocent Muslims, it is potentially difficult to conceptualize what possible role religion could play in post-war reconciliation. However, the primary religious issue during the Bosnian genocide was the way that the Orthodox Serbian nationalists warped religious doctrine and scriptural sources to demonize the Islamic faith. The brutal acts of crucifying children and making enslaved men sing Christian psalms were a demented attempt to correct the Muslim beliefs, which the right-wing Serbians, as religious totalitarians, saw as heretical. [26]

The issue, therefore, is not the fact of religious difference, but rather deeply ingrained religious misconceptions. A recent report on youth interreligious dialogue produces sobering statistics on the recent state of dialogue, with only 2% of Christian students in Central Bosnian schools able to explain the significance of the two main Muslim Eids (Islamic holidays), and only 32% of Muslim students knowing why Easter and Christmas are celebrated.[27] Religion itself is not the issue–the issue is devastating misconceptions in conversation with a historical precedent of hatred. In a poll questioning 2060 people from 13 cities across Bosnia, 59% responded that religious figures and traditional religion would be either "very important" or "important" to the reconciliation process.[28] Despite international doubt, there is a very clear place for religious peacebuilding in this post-conflict region of the world.

Despite the ever-increasing interconnectedness of the modern world, it wasn't until recently that the conception of Islamic reconciliation has been discussed authoritatively. Sayyid Jamàl Al-Dīn Al-Afghānī argues that the reasoning behind this fact stems from the didactic way that the Islamic faith, as well as Sharia law, guides the lives of Muslims.[29] In an argument that runs contradictory to any sense of nationalism, he claims that the bonds to one's place of birth are completely made up "… [which] explains the aversion which

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[26] Kate, *Religion and Genocide Nexuses,* 11.

[27] Gorazd Andrejč, "Youth Interfaith Work in Post-Conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Woolf Institute: Perspectives*, (2014): 11. https://www.academia.edu/9550196/Small_Steps_Youth_Interfaith_Work_in_Post-Conflict_Bosnia-Herzegovina.

[28] Lina Strupinskienė, "'What is reconciliation and are we there yet?' Different types and levels of reconciliation: A case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Journal of Human Rights* 16, no. 4 (2017): 15.

[29] Robert G. Landen, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East: Selected Readings* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970), 105-110.

Muslims have for manifestations of ethnic origin in every country where they live."[30] He goes on to argue that Muslims hold no clan loyalty and are solely connected through shared religious beliefs and the ensuing solidarity that comes from it.[31] This argument, while perhaps foreign to those outside of the Islamic faith, lends an explanation to the lack of Islamic reconciliation scholarship. If the Muslim community feels no political connection to any particular nation-state, they would feel no need to reconcile with anyone who does not share their faith. In the context of Bosnia-Herzegovina, this is a possible explanation for why there were not strong nationalistic tendencies among the Bosnian Muslims. The pain that they felt during the genocide came from the death of their fellow Muslims and the destruction of their mosques, not from the destruction of their country or any of its administrative edifices. They had always cooperated politically but maintained their cultural identity through their Islamic faith. Therefore, their loyalties were to Allah and the Islamic faith, not constructed political ideologies.

Nevertheless, in response to the growing globalization of the world community, a theology of reconciliation has begun to develop within the Islamic tradition. Any notion of reconciliation has to be primarily concerned with forgiveness. Any attempt at reconciling a right relationship between the faiths will require mutual acceptance as members of a shared community, a restoration of communication, and a mutual recognition of each other's humanity.[32] This notion of social reconciliation, expressed by Lina Strupinskienė, is important to the Quranic interpretation of forgiveness as written in *Al-Hujurat*: "The Believers are but a single Brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers."[33] The key phrase in this Surah is *the believers*. At the time the Qur'an was written, *the believers* would have referred to both Christians and Jews, as fellow Abrahamic believers were followers of the law.[34] Therefore, for the affected Bosnian Muslims as well as Islamic believers around the world, reconciliation is no longer a political matter, but something that is directly commanded by Allah. To forgive and reconcile with

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[30] Landen, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 108.
[31] Landen, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 108.
[32] Strupinskienė, *What is reconciliation*, 452-472.
[33] Qur'an 49:10. Translation from Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace an Ethic of Political Reconciliation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 156.
[34] Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Christians can be perceived as a sort of commandment, and therefore something that, even if an Islamic community chooses to reject political affiliations, would be obligated to fulfill.

Just as in the Islamic tradition, forgiveness is critical to the Christian tradition. Indeed, Daniel Philpott writes, "In the New Testament, righteousness, justice, and mercy converge to describe the process by which God reconciles his people to himself and then calls his people to reconcile with one another."[35] Just as the Islamic tradition teaches, those who are righteous and reconcile themselves with others are obeying and emulating God, and are therefore living holy lives. This would be incredibly important to any true Christian, but particularly important to the Orthodox Serbians. As the perpetrators of horrible war crimes, they were subject to an incredible amount of international scrutiny as well as unprecedented legal action.[36] Despite these harsh realities, their Christian faith, the same faith used to justify the genocide, offers the opportunity for reconciliation and forgiveness. By admitting their fault in an effort to restore right relationships, they are offering themselves up to their Muslim counterparts. This sacrificial mentality, emulating the sacrifice of Jesus, is essential to the ultimate longevity of peace and true reconciliation.

Reconciliation in Practice

While theoretical conceptions of reconciliation and practical attempts at peacebuilding have been proposed since the signing of the ceasefire, there are still disconnects in the theory of reconciliation and its realization in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. The previously mentioned lack of religious dialogue is extremely problematic due to the ignorance that it facilitates (if not encourages). If the two groups do not have a fundamental understanding of each other, it is exponentially harder to make positive progress. Nevertheless, there have been several promising areas of reconciliation following the genocide, most notably among the youth and female populations.

The current social situation among youth populations in Bosnia is extremely segregated.[37] Muslim and Christian followers rarely interact with each other, with schools and neighborhoods among some of the most segregated institutions. Without frequent

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[35] Daniel Philpott, "Reconciliation in the Christian tradition," in *Just and Unjust Peace an Ethic of Political Reconciliation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 139.
[36] "Cases." Cases | International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Accessed December 3, 2019. https://www.icty.org/en/cases.
[37] Andrejč, *Youth Interfaith Work,* 11.

interaction, it is very easy for religious and ethnic misconceptions to occur, and remain uncorrected.[38] However, youth activist movements such as Svi Zajedno (All Together), recognize this disparity and work tirelessly to help promote awareness and activism. The program gathers youth of all four major faiths in Bosnia (Islam, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Judaism) to participate in learning activities together, with activities ranging from organizing training seminars to volunteering in segregated schools.[39] By working together in segregated communities, they are not only able to heighten their own awareness but promote religious dialogue to their peers and adults in the communities they visit. This program, along with others all across Bosnia, are helping take move the region towards religious pluralism by eliminating the ignorance that can so quickly lead to totalitarianism.

Additionally, women's groups have had success at promoting religious pluralism since the beginning of the genocide. During times of conflict, Bosnian women often provided shelter for other women and children, and supported the neglected groups of Muslim refugees.[40] These shelters served as positive steps in peacebuilding efforts which have continued to grow and support victims in the post-war era. For example, Medica Zenica started as a secular women's NGO to support rape victims during the war.[41] It has since grown under its founder, Amra Pandžo, to be a secular space for religious learning and reconciliation to help avoid the religious intolerance that allowed the war to begin and increase in intensity. Similar to the youth groups, women, originally a subset of the population deeply affected by the conflict, are now proving to be indispensable to the post-war reconciliation process.

Conclusion

The genocide that occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s was the perfect storm of ethnocultural, political, and religious tensions. Struggling to recoup losses after the Second World War and avoid Soviet influence, the former Yugoslavia, when it eventually fell, led to a multi-year war that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. Central to the conflict

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[38] Andrejč, *Youth Interfaith Work,* 11.
[39] Andrejč, *Youth Interfaith Work,* 11.
[40] Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, "Women Citizens and Believers as Agents of Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*, October 29, 2015, 231–41.
[41] Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, *Shining Humanity: Life Stories of Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

was the issue of religious intolerance, as the state and clerical sponsorship of Serbian Orthodox Christianity led to the persecution and systemic murder of Bosnian Muslims. The conflict is a brutal reminder of the disastrous impacts of religious totalitarianism. Because of the central role that religion played in igniting the conflict, moving towards the religiously plural side of Eboo Patel's "faith line," wherein victims and offenders come to understand the other's religion and ethnicity, is essential to reconciliation within religious communities and between individuals. While there is still a substantial of progress to be made in achieving religious plurality, Bosnian activist groups among youth and women have garnered impressive grassroots support and are showing how effective interreligious understanding can be. Through reconciliation as taught by both the Islamic and Christian traditions, communities can hopefully be brought to a point of mutual understanding and a long-lasting peace can prevail.

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