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## **LGBT Catholics: a paradigmatic case of intra-confessional pluralism**

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### **Abstract**

*I will reflect on the reconciliation between 'subjective' life and 'objective' doctrine experienced by Catholic LGBT couples. Even though their particular experience cannot be considered as universal it can nevertheless constitute a case study for theological reflection. I will propose a theological model for the integration of LGBT Catholics into the Christian community. The case of LGBT Catholics also helps us address the theoretical difficulties of religious pluralism. Their experience of faith is an example of "lived pluralism". In the lexicon of religious pluralism, this experience is a case of intra-system or intra-theistic diversity, but it also touches upon the meta-theological issue of the model of reason that is to be applied to every system. I believe that every possible case of pluralism is worth considering if we want to theorise this concept. This may lead us to consider pluralism as a premise from which to start that is articulated at different levels. This premise has several theoretical consequences that I want to elucidate.*

**Key Words:** religious pluralism, natural law, epistemic fallibility, relational truth, critical faith

### 1. Preliminary remarks

In the following pages, I will reflect on the reconciliation between 'subjective' life and 'objective' doctrine experienced by Catholic LGBT couples. I will use the acronym LGBT, even if my reflection is mainly based on the affective experience of lesbian women and gay men; however, the theological considerations that emerge from these observations can apply to the other sexual minorities encompassed in the acronym. This is not a sociological or psychological study, but a personal re-elaboration and theological reflection on a life experience that cannot be examined or measured in terms of statistical samples, questionnaires or quantitative sociological surveys. Even though their particular experience cannot be considered as universal (I will describe the Catholic LGBT faith starting from my acquaintances with specific groups and people; there are LGBT Catholics who abide to the Church's current moral teaching about chastity, but I will not refer to this kind of experience), it can nevertheless constitute a case study, or at least a favourable *locus* for theological reflection. On the basis of these observations, I will propose a theological model for the integration of LGBT Catholics into the Christian community.

The case of LGBT Catholics also helps us address the second theme of this article, namely the theoretical difficulties of religious pluralism: can such a theological model of reconciliation enable the peaceful coexistence *between* religions/societies and *inside* a religion/society? The insights drawn from this case study might confirm previous theories (even if the aim of the paper is not to bring "evidence" in favour of any one of them). The experience of faith of LGBT Catholics is an example of "lived pluralism", which is something that we do not often consider. I believe that every possible case of pluralism is worth considering if we want to theorise this concept. In the lexicon of religious pluralism<sup>1</sup>, this experience is a case of *intra-system* or *intra-theistic diversity*, but it also touches upon the meta-theological issue of the model of reason that is to be applied to every system. It can be also seen as an example of *intersectional pluralism*, and it would be interesting, in the future, to analyse

how and to what extent the case of LGBT Catholics is similar to that of LGBT communities with different religious affiliations. This could also help us take stock of the often-underestimated diversity and pluralism that exist within every religion, confession, and community (not to mention theological faculties). This may lead us to consider *pluralism as a premise from which to start* – we will see why in the paper – that is articulated at different levels, and generates various degrees of difference, and even strong incompatibilities. This premise has several theoretical consequences that I want to elucidate.

The aim of this work is neither to say something new about the experience of LGBT people in the Catholic Church, nor to speak for all of them. I will merely try to reflect on the experiences that I had the opportunity to encounter, in the hope that their inferences may be meaningful for the current discussion on religious pluralism. This experience of faith can shed light on the theoretical framework in which people are living their faith in this religiously pluralistic age. I have described the details of the actual reconciliation experienced by Catholic LGBT couples in another short essay<sup>2</sup>. Here I shall sum up the most salient keywords in order to develop my theological reflection: *struggle* and *illusion*; *conversion*, *forgiveness* and *liberation*; *minority*, *responsibility* and *conscience*. Catholic LGBT people received a Christian sacramental initiation and acquired what we may call a Christian *structured moral conscience*<sup>3</sup>. However, due to the theological apparatus – the synthesis between the Bible and the “natural moral law” – these two positive experiences (the Christian faith and the fact of falling in love with someone of the same sex) can lead to a dramatic conflict. The situation is very paradoxical for them: the doctrine causes two positive experiences to clash, causing frustration and suffering.

LGBT persons must face – possibly more acutely, or earlier than other groups – the necessity to discern between what is illusory and what is real in their life, relationships, beliefs, doctrine, the social models, and in the narratives that are being told. They begin to examine their own conscience and to ask themselves: can I have a *critical faith*? How much freedom can I grant to my conscience? Does my choice of disobeying religious moral norms exclude me from the Church and the Holy Communion? Is my conscience well-formed, and does it allow me to make an independent decision that does not break my relationship with God?

Through individual study and exchanges with priests and theologians, Catholic LGBT people may achieve a well-formed conscience and a position of serene *conscientious objection* to the official doctrine. They must reconcile *two antithetic truths* (one reached through love, the other through religious teaching). Paradoxically, it is by reconciling with themselves (i.e. by embracing their existential condition and their love as fruitful and positive) that they can reconcile with the Church and with its slowness and reticence to recognise the positive values of their human experience. This becomes possible only when the Church is *de-idealized* and understood for what it really is, in its historical evolution and human component. LGBT persons are thus able to remain in the *faith, beyond resentment*<sup>4</sup>. The human experience of LGBT people, moreover, allows them to access the sense of the Christian faith, and, at the same time, influences this access; and the result of the mutual “contamination” between life and faith fosters a particular (and deeply Christian) attitude toward other human conditions.

## 2. *Sexual minorities’ love as a reasonable truth*

As mentioned above, many Catholic LGBT people study the doctrine in search for a possible reconciliation with their life experience and for arguments that support the perception that their love is a *reasonable truth* that can be integrated into a theistic rational system. Today, they can find many interesting texts on this subject<sup>5</sup>. Most LGBT Catholics believe in a personal God who created a world with its own order, finality and accomplished system of moral norms. They do not consider that a change in the religious moral system implies a metaphysically different God. In this respect, most feminist or queer approaches<sup>6</sup> are quite different: in the feminist approach, a non-patriarchal, non-heteronormative God is a God who loses His classical attributes (omnipotence, impassibility etc.) and proper names (Father), in favour of maternal-immanent ones<sup>7</sup>. Western rationality, being associated

to a male model, is also challenged by feminist approaches. Greater emphasis is placed on the receptive capacity and intuition of women, and on the interior perception of God. This is quite different from the faith experience of most LGBT people. Even though they share many battles with feminism (for example their arguments against *complementarity*<sup>8</sup>), they do not necessarily abandon classical metaphysics, symbolism, or ethics (such as *natural law*). Nor do they push for “weak reason”, subjectivism, a vaguely fideistic intuitionism, radical constructivism or other positions we could find in some feminist theories. They prefer – this is my interpretation – a “humble” and fallible model of reason. We shall examine what it is, and the theological implications of this model.

As for queer theories and theology, many of their ideas are not well received by LGBT Catholics. Of course, these theories are often misunderstood<sup>9</sup>. For example, few lay-people understand that they are *critical political theories*, i.e. that they are not *normative*. If correctly understood, queer theories help us to discover the wrong naturalizations<sup>10</sup>, without necessarily denying that a person seeks or possesses a dynamic (but not disintegrated) identity. This means that humankind has several sexual identities, but not that individuals *must* necessarily have a fluid identity. Thus, God is queer in the sense that He\She is the God of creative exuberance, variability and complexity, not the God of disorder and arbitrariness. Many LGBT Catholics – unlike most queer theorists – believe that there is a spiritual, Christian way of living one’s sexuality – a way that is viable for all. In the Catholic LGBT approach, moral religious norms are not necessarily incompatible with the existence of different bodies, sexualities, sexual practices and genders: the relationship between body and culture is complex and any generalization based on an inaccurate phenomenological account is to be viewed with suspicion. Science shows us how we can understand and accept variability inside regularity<sup>11</sup>. In this approach, the variability of nature implies different ways of living sexuality; what we must do is try to understand this complexity without giving up *some criteria*, that Christians formulate according to Scriptures and Tradition: the inductive-phenomenological and the deductive-systematic moments must go hand in hand, correcting each other. Of course, the view of queer theories or scientific discoveries illustrated above is not the only correct one; it is merely a widespread view among LGBT Catholic groups: it is the way in which some of them understand their experience.

Among these criteria, one concerns the expression of sexuality “in a love relationship”. But this criterion is clearly too general. We must therefore find a non-subjectivist way to define the context in which “love” manifests itself in the fullness of the meaning that the Catholic doctrine attributes to this term. In the case of homosexuality – but this may also apply transsexuality, intersexuality, bisexuality and queerness – these criteria can be grouped into two macro-areas.

*Scientific criteria.* A homosexual person has the same relational, emotional, professional, etc. – identity as anyone else. Homosexuality is in all respects a *psychologically healthy variant*, just like being left-handed. Homosexual love is no more immature or narcissistic than heterosexual love; homosexual persons are no more promiscuous or psychologically unstable than heterosexual ones. Hence, homosexuality is not a disease, a perversion or a disorder<sup>12</sup>. Contingent difficulties are causally determined not by the person’s homosexuality, but by environmental and social pressures or by specific life trajectories. From a psychological point of view, there is no doubt that homosexual love is comparable to heterosexual love, in terms of both modality and intensity; and that it can blossom into a fulfilling erotic life<sup>13</sup>.

*Theological criteria.* The Church affirms that, in order for an affective relationship to be called “love”, there must be reciprocity, respect, fidelity, altruistic giving and solidarity (all components of what is called ‘conjugal chastity’). Sexual acts that are consistent with this definition of love must have three features: procreative purpose, complementarity of the sexes and integration. The lack of any of these three fundamental characteristics is described by the expression ‘objective moral disorder’, which designates the situation of homosexual persons who live in a (sexual) love relationship. Any action derived from such an objective disorder is *intrinsece malum*.

How can these criteria be rationally updated without falling into subjectivism? Let us consider a few possible solutions.

### 3. Interpretations of the 'natural law': a fallible understanding of human nature

'Natural Law' (hereafter NL) is one of the main 'theological devices' used to debate the goodness of homosexual acts<sup>14</sup>. NL can be interpreted in a *conservative* or *revisionist* way<sup>15</sup>. Without claiming to be exhaustive, let me mention a few tenants of the second interpretation. According to Oliva's thomistic approach<sup>16</sup> it is possible to understand the 'naturally against-nature' consistently with Aquinas' metaphysical anthropology. Seeking union in sexual pleasure is *ex parte animae*, and this makes it possible to distinguish 'sodomy' (a vice) from 'homosexuality' (part of an individual's nature). Sexual pleasure depends on the soul, and therefore on a person's rationality (and relationality): a sexual act that follows from homosexuality is licit. The passage from the essence (e.g. human nature) to individuation (this particular man, e.g. Socrates), therefore, can bring with it some alterations that imply *proper inclinations*, specific of some individuals. 'Homosexual inclinations' that have at least one good end (the communion with another person) and do not damage an individual can be included among the *good individual inclinations*. Of the well know three orders of thomistic NL, homosexuality is part of the second (individual inclinations) and, the only aspect missing from homosexual unions is dimorphism, but its end can remain equally good<sup>17</sup>. Oliva's interpretation of Aquinas' teaching, in combination with today's reflection on homosexuality and marriage, allows us to rethink the condemnation of the homosexual act: the capacity to procreate and sexual complementarity are objective, but not universally applicable criteria. According to Cahill<sup>18</sup>, the human moral project must start from the individual body, its inclinations and individually-innate needs.

What is problematic is not the existence of a NL, but the definition of what is natural and, therefore, the formulation of specific laws: our knowledge of human nature is progressive<sup>19</sup> and new scientific discoveries can alter the definition of what is 'natural'. Aquinas himself seems to hypothesize that disorderly actions can become orderly in certain circumstances<sup>20</sup>. The good ends and the general law of the human species – though valid – can require differentiated application to the individuals, where certain natural variations arise due to the specificity of human nature (animal *and* spiritual). There are *accidentally necessary characteristics*: they are acquired but they become necessary for the person (and in this sense they are *innate*, in the common use of the term)<sup>21</sup>. Some psychologically/relationally characteristics acquired in the early stages of development, become innate, part of the essence of the individual person. The error of conservative NL interpretations of homosexuality lies in interpreting sexuality only as an impulse to procreate, and in defining a 'good' sexual act as one where the participants adapt their behaviour to physical mechanisms and to their "obvious" finality<sup>22</sup>. The respect due to the body is thus reduced to the respect for the body's procreative function. Psychological and relational aspects are neutralized, and priority is given to the biological ones<sup>23</sup>. And yet, it seems that, in some cases, the 'unitive end' is *naturally separate*<sup>24</sup> from the procreative end (not by and individual's choice, but because of his or her nature).

If a person has a certain *innate* sexual orientation, the sexual physical act must correspond to his or her biological *and* psychological configuration. Therefore, if the orientation is homosexual, in order to be *integrated* with the whole person, the sexual act must be with a person of the same sex<sup>25</sup>. In the absence of charism or of a calling to celibacy (both infrequent occurrences), sexual love is the *greatest possible good* for the given situation and individual nature. The genital organs are part of the whole person, and their end are not independent from his or her psycho-affective configuration. The ends to which individuals are inclined depend partly on general factors (being a human), and partly on individual (biological and relational) ones. The homosexual act therefore respects a person's complex psycho-physical unity. What homosexual persons are denying, therefore, is not their physical nature, but the current traditionalist and stereotyped interpretation of nature and the body. Accepting the existence of an innate homosexual orientation that is discovered (not chosen) by the person forces theologians to rethink, at least in part, the set of natural inclinations that allow them to

identify the ends entailed by NL. These arguments can be adapted to all sexual minorities covered by the acronym LGBT and its variants.

What is at stake here is the concept of *integration*. ‘Integration’ is a moral good<sup>26</sup> that consists in the harmony between the components of a person’s actions: biological body, personality, relationships, psyche, emotions, and spirituality. The sexual act should integrate enjoyment, ‘biological end’ and love. According to Wojtyła<sup>27</sup>, a sexual act is “human” if it *integrates* the various physical and spiritual activations. In the act, therefore, all elements must be in harmony and integrated with values and truth<sup>28</sup>. *Adequate anthropology* – to use Wojtyła’s expression – can grasp the perennial truths drawn from science and from Christ’s revelation<sup>29</sup>. In the case of the homosexual act, biological potential and biblical symbolism are not implemented, and therefore they are *dis-integrative*. This approach lends itself to various objections. The first is that Wojtyła’s phenomenology is not personalistic, because in my opinion, in his thought, a person’s general nature precedes his or her acts and determines their order (their morality). Moreover, his phenomenology selects, among natural data, only the (prevailing) experience of heterosexual attraction, whose procreative value is identified with what is good and transformed into the norm that regulates the use of someone’s organs. In doing so, Wojtyła’s phenomenology overlooks personal relationships, giving a clear priority to the biological aspect<sup>30</sup>. Ultimately, Wojtyła’s phenomenology bases its normativity on one of the many possible interpretations of a limited number of biblical texts.

In order to reinforce Wojtyła’s arguments, cardinal Scola<sup>31</sup> claims that the *objective order of desire* implies that *amor naturalis* is the tendency towards procreation. Human beings seek *gaudium* (which is eternal), not pleasure (which is ephemeral): humans desire what is eternal, infinite, and good. Man and woman, transcendently open to infinity, feel an *absence*, but sexual union can bring them only pleasure, not the *gaudium* that could fill that absence. Their thirst for infinity is *frustrated* by the fact that orgasmic pleasure ends quickly. Generating a child (or even the mere possibility of doing so), however, leads them to experience *gaudium*: the fruit of sexual love fulfils their longing for infinity<sup>32</sup>. The frustration is thus overcome by the idea that the sexual act will lead to procreation. As a consequence, any sexual act that is not conducive to a new life is reduced to false mutual self-satisfaction (reciprocal masturbation), because it does not respect the participant’s authentic desire. In the essence of the sexual act, the ‘ought to be’ (heteronormative) is inscribed in the ‘being’ (heterosexuality as an inclination to ends)<sup>33</sup>. To a large extent, this is also the argument of New Natural Law theorists such as Finnis<sup>34</sup> and Rhonheimer<sup>35</sup>, who consider *marital good* as a value, and its negation as irrational<sup>36</sup>.

Scola’s argument can be criticised on several counts. Although we can agree that sexual love between two human beings should be conducive to a third reality (which we may call the ‘infinite’), I believe that this ‘third reality’ is love itself, the Spirit, or at least the couple. Only a hyper-materialist culture would understand the ‘third reality’ in a biological sense and the ‘infinite’ as the continuation of the species. The act of loving someone already entails the presence of God. There is already a ‘third’<sup>37</sup>, although we cannot physically touch it. In every orgasm, even non-procreative ones, one can find a striving for endless spiritual and physical union. People are ‘re-created’ in the couple, because mutual love reconnects them to the Love that is the *source of life*<sup>38</sup>. Every loving sexual relationship that aims for physical and psychological integration achieves an indissoluble unity of the body-persons and therefore keeps a *promise* (covenant, in a biblical sense), the openness to the future that overcomes the frustration. The partners are giving *eternal life* to each other. LGBT sexuality does not work any differently: the sexual act is a personal act, because it involves the person in the unity of body and spirit. When the act is physical and spiritual, should there be no physical fruit (for whatever reason), its spiritual fruits are sufficient to legitimate it. *The spiritual fruitfulness of sexual love requires a sexual act, because that act is inherent to that kind of love: it is the act that celebrates it*. Sexual love does not have ‘procreation’ as criterion of verification: the criterion is the spiritual *generativity* (ability to give life and future to those who perform it<sup>39</sup>).

Even in several philosophical texts<sup>40</sup> the attention paid to the procreative union is finalized to define the specificity of a relationship in which there is a “true love”<sup>41</sup>. If the procreative act (in a

love relationship) unites two people in the mind and body, some authors conclude that ‘true love’, expressed in an integrated and mutual physical gift, is achieved only in the conjugal dimension of the unitive-procreative act). Love and marriage, therefore, can exist only when there is the *potential* for biological procreation, and therefore only between a man and a woman. ‘Potential’ means that it adopts a *generative form* (penis-vagina penetration) even if the couple is sterile or aged. This philosophical argument is often brought back to the biblical expression *una caro* (Genesis 2:24)<sup>42</sup>. The argument is that the union *as if* they were ‘one flesh’ does not happen by uniting male’s and female’s body or biological material, but by *moving together as one organism* in view of a *potential biological purpose* (procreation). However, in my opinion we cannot affirm that collaboration in a biological act means that the two are one organism, since there are counterexamples<sup>43</sup>. The coordination (*coitus*) aimed at a good biological end (reproduction) creates a unity *as if* the two bodies were one, but only by analogy: coordination towards a purpose does not guarantee unity.

A few general conclusions<sup>44</sup>: (1) we do not have sufficient criteria to define when and how human *una caro* happens; (2) the concept of *una caro* is a theological concept, and this kind of union is a miracle that takes place through God’s intervention, which seals the union; (3) the excessive emphasis on the reproductive criterion for *una caro* perverts the personalistic meaning of the biblical expression. Procreation (even if only potential) is an inadequate criterion for ‘true love’ and a form of unsustainable reductionism. *Una caro* expresses the mystery of two humans who, through the Christ, act as one body<sup>45</sup>), day after day, in mutual fidelity. Sex between a man and a woman is not the only one expression of this mystery.

In conclusion, biological complementarity is fundamental for procreation, but not for authentic love, which arises from the search for a broader complementarity. Salzman distinguishes between *sexual orientation complementarity*, *biological-genital complementarity* and *reproductive complementarity*, and shows how Wojtyła’s failure to consider this distinction condemns his ‘theology of the body’ to be an inadequate description of sexuality<sup>46</sup>. According to Salzman, the focus must be on *holistic complementarity* that unites people bodily, affectively, spiritually, and personally: if sexuality has an intrinsic relational character (not only an instinctual-biological one), sexual acts are *truly human* when the complementarity is on the psycho-affective level, that is, when they are *integrated* with the whole self: «Sexual moral norms must be formulated [...] in holistic, not heterogenital, complementarity»<sup>47</sup>. The man-woman scheme, while important, is only paradigmatic and non-binding. A wider-encompassing view of human sexuality would allow us to imagine a *personalistic complementarity*: we seek completion in another person who, as a body-psyche unit, corresponds to what we feel to be our other half.

The current Catholic doctrine, therefore, blends an essentialist (static and biological) interpretation of the NL with a rather dubious form of phenomenology. This ‘theological device’ underpins Wojtyła’s spousal theology of the body, which is quite controversial and has been repeatedly challenged<sup>48</sup>. His incomplete phenomenology does not consider the totality of reality in order to grasp its rationality. According to Salzman<sup>49</sup>, the anthropology of Wojtyła is *inadequate* because it reduces complementarity to heterogenitality (reproduction) without integrating sexual orientation<sup>50</sup>: in other words, it fails to understand the notion of *sexual person* in all its complexity. Anthropology cannot be ‘adequate’ if it considers only heterosexuality<sup>51</sup> and becomes heteronormative, or if it selects the phenomena to be observed based on a set of inherited and biblical-oriented moral norms.

#### 4. A fallible understanding of the Scriptures

If the way I depicted LGBT person’s experience of faith in the first paragraph is plausible, we see that the person is forced to «concentrate on the essentials»<sup>52</sup> and to operate a very complex mediation between objective (doctrine) and subjective (his or her personal experience of God in Christ and of love for a partner). The synthesis that emerges in the individual conscience, however, is neither “relativistic” nor “subjectivist”, if that individual person has thoroughly considered the

magisterial teaching<sup>53</sup>. LGBT Catholics are Catholic, so they generally have a *realist theory of truth*, i.e. they try to *maximize truth*. However, even though they are not necessarily relativists, they can have a “critical” faith, i.e. a less naive view of “truth” and “reason”, and a less peaceful relationship with Church authorities and their infallibility. LGBT people are forced to assess their belief whenever they find that the contrast between life and doctrine is causing them to lose confidence in their faith. This internal conflict forces them to assess unreflective religious beliefs, and to re-articulate and re-create a *hierarchy of truths*: what are the *fundamental truths* of a Catholic as opposed to those of a generic Christian? There are no easy answers to this question (we will try to provide one at the end of the last paragraph).

One of these *truths* can be found in the argument about the *natural order*, and the philosophical system (the NL) from which the Church derives some of its moral conclusions. The other one is connected to Scripture interpretation. Certain ethical constraints that do not follow from the NL could be derived from a revealed truth, found in the Bible or in Tradition (as is the case in Wojtyła’s thought). Here lies the difference between a generic theist believer and a Christian one. But this entails a considerable problem: do biblical moral norms exceed the norms dictated by natural reason, and, if so, who is compelled to respect them? Obviously, to avoid a contradiction between NL and the divine law, the Bible and Tradition must be correctly interpreted. As we know, the current debate about the exegesis of the few biblical verses about homosexuality is quite heated. My personal opinion is that the Bible does not provide any clear and univocal indications on this matter: there are too many uncertainties about the terms used in New Testament Greek, the context and co-text of the verses, the biblical use of the concept of nature, etc. In short, it seems impossible to use a few verses without considering them within a wider anthropological, scientific and theological framework (*principle of actualization*<sup>54</sup>), as Catholics do with many verses that are no longer considered prescriptive<sup>55</sup>, but simply wrong or outdated. The problem, it has been noted, does not lie with the Bible, but with *biblical literalism*<sup>56</sup>.

Without a *comprehensive and reasonable biblical anthropology* that includes sexuality, we can neither interpret those verses, nor say whether they are right or wrong (as we do with so many other verses that we no longer follow today). A biblical anthropology must think about the inseparability of the unitive and procreative ends, the complementarity of the sexes, and several other highly controversial issues. Thus, the tension around the LGBT issue in Catholic thought concerns the formulation of this anthropology (the origin and hierarchy of its sources), and how we can apply it to ethics and biblical exegesis. There is probably no univocal way of resolving the tension, because anthropology, ethics, exegesis and Tradition constantly influence one another. Internal and external pluralism is determined by the various levels of interaction between these elements in the different Christian confessions and communities.

For a brief overview of the interpretation of the myth of Genesis and the so-called “nuptial mystery” argument derived from it (and from a few verses of the New Testament), I refer to a previous study<sup>57</sup>, where I have tried to show that there can be many doubts about the main theses the Church has developed recently in the so-called *spousal theology*, *theology of male and female*, and *theology of the body*. Let me briefly mention here that, as underlined by Johnson<sup>58</sup>, the mythological description of the Adam-Eve couple in Genesis, and later in the New Testament, cannot automatically be turned into ontological or moral normativity, into phenomenology or, even worse, into a pseudo-scientific account. Just as the myth of creation does not tell us anything about quarks or the Big Bang, so does the description of an obvious reality (dimorphism and heterosexual love) fail to tell us much about the existence and the ‘proper order’ of sexual minorities’ expression of the human, and implies no specific ethical evaluation. The difficulty of elaborating a theological anthropology therefore lies in keeping together God’s general revelation about humankind *and* the data that we acquired about its empirical reality<sup>59</sup>. More importantly, the *whole* Bible must be taken into consideration: see the recent emergence of *queer exegeses* and their discovery of numerous “hidden” biblical stories connected to LGBT themes.

This paradoxical situation may seem inconvenient: a biblically grounded judgment of value about the fact of being made ‘male and female’ does not necessarily imply a binding destiny to heterosexuality and married life, and does not seem to constitute a plausible basis for a satisfactory anthropology. However, this paradox seems faithful to the complexity of the sacred texts and of the human physical-spiritual existence<sup>60</sup>. It is probably inscribed in the indecipherability of the divine mystery of creation. We therefore accept God’s mysterious choice to make *most* of us into heterosexual males and females, even though we do not understand why. The interpretation of the Bible and its anthropology also entails a certain *progressivity*, a hermeneutical circle. The experience of LGBT Catholics is on the line of the christological sense of *Goel*: the history of the Bible, even in its classical interpretations, is the history of the inclusion of the humble and the excluded in a wider context of truth. In theology, it is therefore a matter of making, for sexual minorities, what the Bible – especially in NT – and theology have already done for equivalent human conditions: widening and deepening the truth field. LGBT Catholics firmly believe that the Bible, the Tradition and theology *already have within themselves* the resources for a progressive doctrinal update that does not betray the essential core of Christ’s message<sup>61</sup>.

##### 5. Pluralism in theology and the problem of infallibility

What model of truth and faith should be adopted by an LGBT Catholic? Let me refer to a previous work<sup>62</sup> inspired by the Italian scholar Dario Antiseri, whose position is similar to that of Quinn and Basinger<sup>63</sup>. Antiseri’s Popperian and Kantian understanding of religious beliefs starts from the acknowledgement that *epistemic fallibility* can be found everywhere: in scientific discoveries, in metaphysical constructions, in the axioms of ‘exact sciences’ (geometry, logic, mathematics), in the exegesis of sacred texts, and in basic beliefs. According to Antiseri, the existence of a plurality of reasonable metaphysics is a fact: no system is more authentic than the others. Karl Rahner hypothesized the same for Christian theology: «The theology of the future will be a plural theology, even if it must guarantee the confessional unity of the Church. [...] Pluralism is a fact»<sup>64</sup>. This fact has imposed itself after the Church abandoned its alliance with secular power, and therefore the practice of repressing dissent through violence. In a democratic and intercultural context, theology presents a wide variety of starting points, horizons, thoughts, representative models (*inculturations*), and assessments of the distinction between what is evident and what is not. These assumptions prevent theological thought from remaining confined within the unity of a system: they push for a kind of *coming out*, we could say. It is therefore no longer possible to achieve a complete vision of the world, and we must serenely bear with this “painful” pluralism. The Church, moreover, has often changed its doctrines, proving that synchronic and diachronic pluralisms can coexist within it<sup>65</sup>. However, in order to recognize its errors, Rahner argues that theology needs *structural dissent*<sup>66</sup>. We might add, it also needs *plural experiences of Christian life*: «Knowledge of God no less than any other kind of knowledge is a corporate enterprise. For human beings, knowing God depends on knowing other people»<sup>67</sup>. All of our theologies «must acknowledge their rootedness in groups with shared assumptions, practices and histories, and [...] must acknowledge that this human and corporate context is not a limitation on God’s self-disclosure, but the prerequisite for it – our *praeambula fidei*»<sup>68</sup>.

Antiseri argues<sup>69</sup> that if the idea of rationality changes, those who seek an *absolute truth* are *irrational* because this kind of truth is not suitable for humans. This does not mean that human intellect is incapable of truth, but only that it is incapable of *absolute* truth. A *fallible* reason is a reason that makes room for faith, because it cannot immunize faith from doubt. According to Antiseri ‘doubtful’ means neither ‘meaningless’ nor ‘irrelevant’, but only ‘non-absolute’<sup>70</sup>. Faith, as such, is a *gift* that can never be obtained by demonstration (that would be the opposite of faith!): it is the fruit of a decision, of the *choice of a relationship*, as we will see in the next paragraph. Similarly, a fallible reason is not a reason that failed to reach a truth: human truths are *potentially true*, in the sense any form of knowledge that has not yet been falsified (in a broad, and not only empirical sense) is true.

This does not exclude that a potential truth can be definitively true, but we cannot say when it is so. Our representation could be the only possible one, but this seems to be a position of faith/hope, as much debate on religious diversity has highlighted<sup>71</sup>. We are therefore bound to accept that even the most obvious truths may not be true forever. Human beings were created to achieve truth, but epistemic humility requires them to refrain from being too enthusiastic when drawing consequences from their contingent knowledge: a margin of uncertainty always remains.

Theology will have to do for homosexual love and other sexual minorities what Sapiential literature did for eunuchs and sterile couples<sup>72</sup>, what New Testament did for virginity, and Vatican II did for marriage and women: opening a window for new interpretations. In order to develop a theology of sexuality-*ies*, we must be willing to recognize the theological condition in which our community is living: Christian theologians – after the false and idolizing myths of uniformity and centralization that the Church has been pursuing for some time – find themselves in a situation of uncertainty and plurality similar to that of early Christians<sup>73</sup>. Intra-religious pluralism is an insuperable datum: in Christianity, theological, institutional, doctrinal and dogmatic uniformity never existed and never will. This must lead us to ask ourselves not only why we are in the condition of *homo viator*, but also why God may have wanted this condition for human beings and the Church.

One hypothesis is that the Trinitarian God considers theological and religious plurality a value in itself (just like biological, linguistic and other forms of plurality)<sup>74</sup>: God wants us to *constantly* accept every kind of diversity. Moreover, if *there cannot be* theological unity in Christianity, another form of unity must be found, all the while keeping in mind that *unity is God's gift*, made possible only through Grace, and never accomplished on earth. These considerations could be applied to any major religion: all religions are synchronously plural and tend to become diachronically plural. The questions of having a well-formed conscience and of practising conscientious objection also concern every religious confession.

Christianity was born plural and has remained so throughout its history. What we need to ask ourselves is not how to recover unity, but how to *remain plural while maintaining some form of unity*, given that *in the beginning was plurality*, not unity. This is perhaps even more true of Christians than of other monotheistic confessions, as this lack of uniformity is also characteristic of the Christian Trinitarian God – the God of intrinsic plurality. Can the Trinity be a model for a plural theology and an inclusive institutional framework for multiple Christian confessions? Let us at least keep this idea as a suggestion or hope.

A *fallibilist and humble* – but not relativist<sup>75</sup> – *model of reason* also entails a more *realistic account of the infallibility* of the ecclesiastic institution. To rethinking the idea of truth is to rethink the heart of theology and its relationship with the authority that must promote or protect it. Without delving too deep into this issue<sup>76</sup>, we can think that the Church is infallible in its entire history (because it is guided by Christ), and is also potentially infallible in some decisions: a decision is infallible because it is guided by the Spirit, which is able to overcome human epistemic fallibility. Yet, we could accept that we do not know which decision is eternally infallible: during our time on Earth, potential infallibility must be verified through free discussion. A decision is infallible only at the end of times, in the *entire historical path of the Church*<sup>77</sup>. There may be a time when an infallible decision is corrected by another infallible decision, because it turns out that some fundamental elements (in order to take the first decision) were overlooked. The infallibility of the criteria we need to define an infallible decision presupposes infallibility itself (and therefore the criteria): we do not have a solid foundation for the doctrine of infallibility. In order to at least problematize past infallible decisions, it is sufficient to extend the criteria for infallibility, or to discover formal errors in the previously infallible decision. The creativity of the Spirit, here, is quite abundant (although we may find it frightening). In any case, this common-sense position allows us to maintain the principle of authority and repository of faith while limiting its abuses. Let us not forget, however, that, to date, the doctrines on homosexuality, LGBT issues, and possibly of any sexual act are not subject to infallible teaching. Thus, LGBT Catholics do not necessarily have to support the *weak infallibility* hypothesis proposed in the present paragraph.

Do theologians have the right, therefore, to express themselves against a magisterial teaching? If so, when do they cross the line and place themselves outside the Church? Should there be consistency between professed faith, reasoned faith and lived faith? How to find a balance between unity and pluralism and between obedience and freedom of thought? These questions are pragmatic only on the surface; if we pause to reflect on the role that authority, conscience, Grace and Tradition have in theology, changing their mutual relationships – and making them more liberal – means rethinking theology as a whole. Theology must set limits for itself – for example the scriptural canon and the ecclesial authority (which we know to be closely linked, both historically and conceptually) – but must tolerate a certain degree of *criticism, dissent* and therefore *pluralism*.

Contextualized in the debate on religious diversity, a model of ‘fallible reason’ asserts that *religious exclusivism* is always and only *potential*, something that exists in progress, not in actuality. There are absolute truths, but humans do not know when they hold them. And humans are therefore always forced to respect religious plurality, i.e. the *choice of a relationship* (see par. 6). This plurality is inherent in every system of knowledge and life experience, in every religion, confession, and theological system. In the case of faith, however, it is fundamental the *context* in which the person is born, grows and is formed; this is also true of Catholic LGBT people, as their life experience leads them both to accept Catholicism and to dissent on some of its issues<sup>78</sup>. This disagreement entails a different relationship with Tradition and authority, but without undermining the core of their religious belief system. This relationship is based on a *de-idealized* vision of the Church.

#### 6. *A relational/personal model of truth: a path for intrinsic tolerance*

The faith of LGBT Catholics seems to paradigmatically implement the *relational truth model* that is now widespread in fundamental theology; this model asserts that *the relationship with Christ* is the first step toward a truth that is ultimately reached by approximations, through a path of spiritual growth within an influential community of faith. In this model – decisive but not sufficient<sup>79</sup> – truth is not a mere set of beliefs, but a personal, mediated relationship. Only Grace can make us receive a truth of faith and overcome epistemological fallibility. This model partly reflects the thesis that a Christian may have a privileged epistemic access to truth<sup>80</sup>. This privilege, however, involves considering the affective (existential) dimension of faith and overcoming every rational reduction: the evidence of faith and progressive Christian truths are entailed in the *act of choosing a relationship* with Christ, which is also a work of Grace.

Religious truth is founded on a relationship with Jesus – that is, on a life experience – the only possible mediation between subjectivity and objectivity. *The truth is a live person*, before being a doctrine, and truths are configured on Jesus, on our encounter with him. In Christian faith, ‘to believe’ means first of all to carry out an act of trust in Jesus and his mediators, the Scriptures and the Church. The truth, in Christianity, *is the choice of a relationship*: the access to Christian truth is primarily due to a human relationship<sup>81</sup> generated by the charisma of Jesus who manifests the love of God. It is Christ’s *form*, mediated by the Scripture and the Church, that generates the “evidence” of faith. Truths of faith, dogmas, magisterial teachings, are part of that personal encounter, but they cannot encompass it. LGBT people are able to remain in the Church (despite its apparently “hostile” faith), thanks to their relationship with the living person of Christ; their faith comes *before* and *after* reason (here lies its paradoxical character).

If we accept the above-mentioned model of ‘humble reason’, then our access to the Scripture, Tradition and our relationship with God must follow our customary way of knowing. This “way” is the “choice” and the fallibility. There is no Revelation if we do not receive-choose a certain book as its foundation; there is no Tradition if we do not receive-choose to an institution; there is no faith without a grace-choice, wherever we want to place this grace along the spiritual path. Believing is a fundamentally ‘risky’ option: we believe in a person, an idea or an institution; we grasp by grace that faith creates for us a *horizon of meaning* (on which it is worth placing a “wager”, as Pascal suggested), given by reasonable arguments, a humanizing ethics, and by spiritually enriching encounters during

one's life. This heterogeneous set of realities, taken together through what cardinal Newman calls *illative sense*, allows us to grasp the overall sense of our reality. Christian truth, therefore, is a *possibility* (this is the form of Christian truth), because it offers a meaning that humans can consider reasonable insofar as it corresponds to their own humanity<sup>82</sup>. The reception of a faith is not a passive and uncritical acceptance of a set of teachings: our trust in the institutional-doctrinal system (which we recognize guided by the Spirit) does not suppress our autonomy of conscience. Our relationship with truth is always mediated by subjectivity, existential events and the institution. The drama of living one's *agonic*<sup>83</sup> faith is played out in the encounter between two subjectivities, between objectivity and subjectivity, between what is social and what individual, finite and infinite, perfect and gradual.

If this is true, then any doctrinal change regarding LGBT issues will be possible only after meeting the members of that community, their stories, and their experiences of love: these people are able to strongly influence the hermeneutical circle. One could say that the Spirit, through its historical incarnation (the Church) and its individual specification (LGBT persons and their organizations), reaches a new level of consciousness, a form of Self-disclosure across history and individual biographies that leads to a new reality, which emerges by the mediation of subjectivities and objectivities (traditions). A relational truth *is essentially pluralist and tolerant* because the 'person' always comes first and before 'truth'. Tolerance is encouraged by 'epistemic humility': without 'epistemic humility', there is no *a priori* guarantee that a religion may achieve tolerance<sup>84</sup> and peacefully coexist with other religions, although one can hope so (depending on the religion). 'Epistemic humility' is not linked to any particular religion or religious teaching, and therefore is more general and more effective: we might even say that it is meta-theological. In addition, tolerance is also encouraged by life experience, especially in the case of LGBT people: tolerance comes from the experience of failure, from the discovery of a previously unknown love (the homosexual love); it is an experience of given and received forgiveness<sup>85</sup>.

This also means that the communitarian faith of Catholic LGBT groups is different from that of the increasingly widespread charismatic groups, because it has undergone centuries of discrimination and prejudice. LGBT faith is usually not fundamentalist, but open to dialogue. *Being a minority* was the condition of the early Christians, and this experience, if kept in mind, can save any religion from transforming into its diabolical caricature: a totalitarian, theocratic, fundamentalist and violent system. Minorities and intra-systemic pluralism, therefore, are perhaps *essential* for religions because they constantly *remind them of their essence*.

## 7. Critical and agonic faith

Let us return to LGBT Catholics. Does their critical and agonic experience of faith still qualify as faith? Are they still Catholic? Does a believer have the right to dissent, to practise a conscientious objection *inside* his or her confession? Unamuno<sup>86</sup> would answer that this kind of critical faith is the only possible Christian faith, whereas "blind" faith (i.e. doubt-free or fundamentalist faith) is inhuman and anti-Christian because it requires no responsible choice, but only passive submission. Critical faith does not imply subjectivist closure: most LGBT Catholics want to remain in the Church and express this willingness by asking to be acknowledged (and not commiserated) by the establishment. The ensuing confrontation with religious authorities can become quite heated: LGBT Catholics firmly believe that their love can logically fit into a shared rationality; which is why they claim that the doctrine can be renewed without rejecting the ethical categories and the system of beliefs (including the pope's authority) of the Catholic Church. They firmly believe in all the essential truths of Catholicism, such as Christological and Marian dogmas and the authority of the Church, the Pope and Scriptures. Aware of the persisting difficulties of philosophical and theological speculations, most LGBT Catholics believe that their case can contribute to a public discussion: their experience of faith is not private, but *inevitably* pluralistic within the Catholic confession: it is the illustration of a more widespread and fundamental pluralism.

One may wonder to what extent the experience of faith of today's LGBT Catholics is similar to that of the "dissident Christians" (saints, reformers, mystics, objectors...) who, in the history of the Church, have brought to its attention the expectations of lesser-known communities: by reviving the Gospel, these initially misunderstood dissidents later became the pillars of a house whose cracks were beginning to show, to use a famous Franciscan image. If associated with the experience of these "dissidents", the faith experience of LGBT people is not new in history. However, it unquestionably is the most relevant experience of faith in contemporary Christianity, together with the feminist one. For this reason, it deserves to be carefully investigated and maybe discussed with more sophisticated theological and philosophical tools than those used in these paragraphs.

The experience of LGBT Catholics is probably similar to that of every believer, because faith, as such, demands internal pluralism. If this is true, then, perhaps the faith of LGBT Catholics could serve as a model of coexistence between religions and within a religion. This experience of faith should support intra and infra-religious *innate pluralism*. *Indispensable* because pluralism is *inevitable*. We are *all* minorities within a faith, because everyone's faith is agonic.

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Basinger, “Religious Diversity”, 2018; Tuggy, “Theories of Religious Diversity”, 2018; Hick, “Religious Pluralism”, 1996.
- <sup>2</sup> See XXX [omissis blind review].
- <sup>3</sup> See Svanera, “La formazione della coscienza”, 2018.
- <sup>4</sup> Alison, *Faith Beyond*, 2001.
- <sup>5</sup> Meyer, *The Moral Defense*, 2015; Corvino, *Debating Same-Sex*, 2012; Pope, “The Magisterium’s Arguments”, 2004; Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 2008; Farley, *Just Love*, 2006; Via and Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 2003; Moore, *A Question of Truth*, 2003; Gamberini, “Coppie omosessuali”, 2015; Perry, “The Morality of Homosexual”, 1995; Pickett, “Homosexuality”, 2015; Macedo, “Homosexuality”, 1995; Piana, *Omosessualità*, 2010; Countryman, *Dirt greed*, 1988; Curran, “Dialogue with”, 1980; Curran, “A Vatican II view”, 2003; Jennings, “Same sex relations”, 2014; Keenan, “The Open Debate”, 2003; Porter, “The Natural Law”, 2010; Jung and Coray, *Sexual Diversity*, 2001; McCarthy, “The relationship of Bodies”, 2002.
- <sup>6</sup> Gugliermetto, “Perché un Dio Queer?”, 6.
- <sup>7</sup> Tripodi, “Beyond the Transcendence”, 2018.
- <sup>8</sup> See Shine, “Equality in the Church”, 2018; Grimes, “Is Sexual Complementarity”, 2011.
- <sup>9</sup> Migliorini, “È possibile una teologia”, 2018.
- <sup>10</sup> I refer to gender naturalized roles (introduced in Butler’s speculation).
- <sup>11</sup> Migliorini, “È possibile una teologia”, 2018.
- <sup>12</sup> Rigliano et al., *Curare i gay?*, 2012; Brogliato, “Non poniamo limiti”, 2014.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Pickett, “Homosexuality”, 2015.
- <sup>15</sup> Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 2008.
- <sup>16</sup> Oliva, *Amours*, 2015.
- <sup>17</sup> Oliva, *Amours*, 2015; Borgman, “Non “fissare” la natura”, 2008.
- <sup>18</sup> Cahill, *Sex, Gender*, 1996.
- <sup>19</sup> Vendemiati, *San Tommaso*, 190 and 314.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 166-7.
- <sup>21</sup> For this interpretation of *innatism*: Migliorini, “È possibile una teologia”, 183-91.
- <sup>22</sup> This error was committed, among others, by Wojtyła (“La visione antropologica”, 141; *Persona e atto*, 515; *Amore e responsabilità*, 1980; cf. Buttiglione, *Il pensiero*, 117).
- <sup>23</sup> Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 91.
- <sup>24</sup> This position is different from what is stated in *Humanae Vitae*.
- <sup>25</sup> Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 67.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 64.
- <sup>27</sup> Wojtyła, *Persona e atto*, 451-79.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 551; Buttiglione, *Il pensiero*, 136.
- <sup>29</sup> Biancalani, *Il pensiero antropologico*, 186.
- <sup>30</sup> Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 91. Against “biologism” see: Chiavacci, “Sulla morale”, 2009.
- <sup>31</sup> Scola, *Il mistero*, 2005.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 130-1.
- <sup>33</sup> Appealing to inclinations is how *Natural Law* theorists avoid *naturalistic fallacy*.
- <sup>34</sup> Finnis, “Is homosexual conduct wrong?”, 1993; Finnis, “Law, Morality”, 1997; Finnis, “The Good of Marriage”, 1998.
- <sup>35</sup> Rhonheimer, “Le inclinazioni”, 2012.
- <sup>36</sup> Against this argument, cf. Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 60.
- <sup>37</sup> Waaajman, *Spirituality*, 2002.
- <sup>38</sup> Migliorini, “Fenomenologia”, 2017.

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- <sup>39</sup> Magatti and Giaccardi, *Generativi*, 2014.
- <sup>40</sup> E.g. Girgis, *What Is Marriage?*, 2012.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ib.*, 37.
- <sup>42</sup> See Granados, *Una caro*, 2014; Woźny, “Il significato”, 2014.
- <sup>43</sup> See XXX [omissis blind review] for some of them.
- <sup>44</sup> NL theories are also criticized by Salzman (*The Sexual Person*, 48-92).
- <sup>45</sup> Liperi, “Il matrimonio”, 2005.
- <sup>46</sup> See Grimes, “Is Sexual Complementarity”, 2011; Traina, “Theology or Ideology?”, 2018.
- <sup>47</sup> Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 151 and 160.
- <sup>48</sup> Modras, “Pope John Paul II”, 1998; Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 2008; Curran, *The Moral Theology*, 2005; Johnson, “A disembodied ‘Theology’”, 2001. According to Johnson, the pope only asserts and never demonstrates: «John Paul II thinks of himself as doing “phenomenology”, but seems never to look at actual human experience». See also: Moore, *The Body*, 2005.
- <sup>49</sup> Salzman, *The Sexual Person*, 84-91.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ib.*, 88.
- <sup>51</sup> In Wojtyła’s thought, Thomist ethics, based on Aquinas’ anthropology, operate as a “selector” of phenomena (Reale, “Fondamenti”, 12). It is the very setting of his analysis, moreover, which implies this selection. If the acts manifest the person and the morality (Wojtyła, *Persona e Atto*, 53-55), what is “moral” conditions what is a “person” and the nature of the acts. The result is an *ethically oriented phenomenology*, which betrays the very aims of phenomenology as a search for what is evident beyond the assumptions linked to the various philosophical systems.
- <sup>52</sup> Pope Francis, enc. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 35.
- <sup>53</sup> Rahner, “Sulle vie future della teologia”, 1975; Rahner, “La fede del cristiano”, 1975.
- <sup>54</sup> Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993), par. IV; Pontifical Biblical Commission (2008).
- <sup>55</sup> Brogliato and Migliorini, *L’amore omosessuale*, 199-222 and 312.
- <sup>56</sup> Barbour, “Ways of Relating”, 25-27.
- <sup>57</sup> See XXX [omissis blind review].
- <sup>58</sup> Johnson, “A disembodied ‘Theology’”, 2001.
- <sup>59</sup> Pelletier, *Creata maschio*, 46.
- <sup>60</sup> On the one hand, it is perhaps excessive to claim that the myth describes only the relational nature of humankind (relationality/primary alterity), and therefore to see in the man-woman love only a paradigmatic form (relationality/secondary alterity) (see Demur and Müller, *L’omosessualità*, 54-57; Brogliato and Migliorini, *L’amore omosessuale*, 209-220), because this interpretation overlooks the importance given to the relationship between a man and a woman in Biblical literature as whole: the predominance of *heterosexual conjugal symbolism* remains a fact. On the other hand, a position that moves from an indication of value and meaning (about the loving union between man and woman) to a general ethical prescriptiveness can also be misleading.
- <sup>61</sup> Tradition can be seen as the way in which “new books” enter the Canon, and become the history of the interpretations of the Scriptures. I believe that sooner or later, the Magisterium will have to allow feminist and queer interpretations “into” the Scripture, through Tradition.
- <sup>62</sup> See XXX [omissis blind review]
- <sup>63</sup> Quinn and Meeker, *The philosophical challenge*, 2000; Basinger, “Religious Belief”, 2011.
- <sup>64</sup> Rahner, “Sulle vie future”, 60 (my translation).
- <sup>65</sup> Rahner, “Discussioni attorno”, 415-422.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ib.*, 417.
- <sup>67</sup> Soskice, “Knowledge”, 182.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> Antiseri, *Teoria della razionalità*, 69.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ib.*, 80-86 and 108.
- <sup>71</sup> Runzo, *World Views*, 236; Alston, “Religious Diversity”, 443- 446.
- <sup>72</sup> Mattioli, *Le realtà sessuali*, 1987.
- <sup>73</sup> Meeks, *The Origins*, 2000.
- <sup>74</sup> «Affirming that “God so loved the world” means accepting the challenge that this world, in its cultural pluralism *and* its empirical complexity, is in fact the world “God so loved/s”» (Russell, “Quantum Physics”, 368).
- <sup>75</sup> A model of fallible reason does not imply religious relativism. Such a model does recognise the complexity of any perspective and assumption. It implies plurality, but also the potential existence of truth, which entails that all believers have the right to think that their own religion is the closest to truth, although they can never claim to absolute truth.
- <sup>76</sup> See XXX [omissis blind review]
- <sup>77</sup> Brogliato and Migliorini, *L’amore omosessuale*, 275-83.
- <sup>78</sup> See XXX [omissis blind review]
- <sup>79</sup> See Soskice, “Knowledge”, 1997.
- <sup>80</sup> Plantinga, “Ad Hick”, 1997.
- <sup>81</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, enc. *Deus caritas est*, n. 1.
- <sup>82</sup> Toniolo, *Cristianesimo*, 86.

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<sup>83</sup> Recalling Unamuno's (*Agony*, 1974) term.

<sup>84</sup> The term 'tolerance' is commonly used in philosophical discussions, but it only suggests accepting the differences on an intellectual level and making the sacrifice of tolerating them. From a Christian point of view, then, maybe the best word to use is 'fraternity', which underlines the joy of sharing and living with different people (see Brogliato and Migliorini, *L'amore omosessuale*, 331-333).

<sup>85</sup> See XXX [*omissis* blind review].

<sup>86</sup> Unamuno, *Agony*, 1974.