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Christian Homophobia

Four Theological Discourses*

Based on the judgment that Christian homophobia is a structural sin, the study searches for its roots in the history of theology, using the discursive theory of hegemony of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau as its methodology. Four long lasting theological discourses are held to be responsible for Christian homophobia: the archaic discourse of cultic purity, the apocalyptic discourse of the Sodom-eschatology, the scholastic discourse of natural law and the patristic discourse of Christian Platonism. Their most important counterpart is the modern discourse of liberal theology, which has prevailed in the Protestant churches of the Western world. Because each church shows its own constellation of these discourses, specific strategies of criticism must be developed.

1. Introduction

The societal emancipation of homo-, bi-, and transsexuals, which started with the 1969 Stonewall riots, faces decisive opposition from Christian churches in the present day, e. g. in the form of

- verbal attacks and diplomatic interventions against same-sex marriage and civil unions¹ by the Roman-Catholic Church,
- the "culture wars" against the neo-fundamentalists and the religious right in the USA,²
- the crucial division within the Anglican Church between homophobic, predominantly African, bishops and the *Episcopal Church* in the USA, which for the first time in history ordained an openly homosexual bishop in Gene Robinson,³
- the furious insults directed against homosexuals by Metropolitans of the Russian-Orthodox Church.⁴

All these issues point to an open moral-political antagonism between conservative Christians and the gay and lesbian movement.⁵ Christian

* This contribution was written in German, using the German translations of the sources. These sources and quotes are here replaced by standard English versions (thanks to Richard Schorlemmer), also listed in the bibliography, next to the German versions (in brackets). The text itself has been translated by Niklas Fischer (revised by MG and VL).

¹ See Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 2002, no. 4; 2003.

² See Didi Herman 1997; Tina Fetner 2008; Cynthia Burack 2008.

³ See Andrew Linzey / Richard Kirker 2005; William Sachs 2009; Frank Kirkpatrick 2008.

⁴ See Michael Brinkschröder 2011.

homophobia has become a political issue for homosexuals, bisexuals, and transgenders in many parts of the planet.

This opposition also manifests itself in the attitudes of the believers. A Bielefeld study about group-based hostility toward others in eight European countries has shown that “the extent of religiosity negatively influences tolerance toward homosexuality.”⁶

Christian homophobia, however, exceeds the opinions of single believers. It exists in an institutionalized form in many churches. From a theological perspective, Christian homophobia is therefore to be conceived as a *structural sin*. It is a sin because homophobic and transphobic actions and utterances disregard the dignity of homo- or bisexual and transgendered persons as human beings. These are not less of a sin simply because the Church embraces such actions and utterances. For this reason, Christian homophobia constitutes a theological problem as well.

In regards to this problem, the question arises how institutionalized homophobia in the Churches can be dealt with. Homophobia has established itself in the churches not simply due to the existence of favorable power structures but also due to theological discourses legitimating homophobia.⁷

Many theological debates center around the question of what the Bible says about homosexuality. More precisely, what is at stake is the exact signification of the passages adversaries of “homosexuality” frequently cite as evidence for their position (Gen 19; Lev 18, 22 and 20, 13; Rom 1, 26f.; 1 Cor 6, 9f.; 1 Tim 1, 10). They treat the Bible as if the truth about the Christian faith could be accessed without further complications; however, the history of the reception of the story of Sodom in Gen 19, for example, accommodates a wide variety of interpretations of the sin of Sodom, as disparate as arrogance, breach of hospitality, excessive wealth, pederasty, sodomy, collective rape or illegitimate intercourse with angels. The many different interpretations of the same text show that just looking into the Bible according to Luther’s *sola scriptura* princi-

⁵ If the topic were religious homophobia in general, the list would have to be completed by fundamentalist Muslims who even defend death by hanging for sexual acts between men. This is an actual practice in some Islamic countries, particularly in Iran. See Hans-Joachim Mengel in this volume; Ali Mahdjoubi 2003; Ralph Ghadban 2004; Eva Gundermann / Thomas Kolb 2004. Georg Klauda (2008) distinguishes a traditional approach to sexuality between men in Islam and a more radical one. He finds the origins of the radical approach in the influence of Christian missionaries and colonial laws about sodomy in the age of colonialism on the one hand and on the other in the fundamentalist reaction of Islamic nations to globalization in the present age.

⁶ Andreas Zick et al. 2010, 12.

⁷ I will not engage more closely with the “Analytics of Power” within the structures of the Church, since the focus lies on the relevance of theology for Christian homophobia. See Michael Brinkschröder 2007, 43–55.

ple is not sufficient to fix the meaning of a biblical story. This also applies if we want to account for Christian homophobia.⁸

Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican theology therefore complements this *principle of scripture* with the *principle of tradition*.⁹ The concept of tradition forces the harmonization of the history of theology, the suppression of ruptures and discontinuities, and the subjugation of the “authentic” interpretation of tradition to the magisterium¹⁰ or similar institutions. In fact, the recourse to “tradition” might even facilitate the claim that the Christian faith has “always” denounced homosexual acts.

Scripture and tradition are basic principles of theological argumentation which both can be used to legitimate Christian homophobia in an abbreviated form. But under their surface they hide another level of theological reasoning. A genealogical-critical analysis of these homophobic traditions is therefore an important desideratum of research.

2. Methodology

Michel Foucault’s discourse analysis provides us with a method of seeing the disparate moments and discontinuities within these traditions. It allows for a sober and distanced analysis of the history of theology which also takes into account the power structures that install the “order of the discourse” in the first place. In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault defines the discursive formation as a disparate set of verbal and written utterances between whose thematic objects, modalities, terminologies, and argumentative strategies certain regularities may be described.¹¹ Such a concept of discourse, however, leaves ample room for the concrete methodology. One could, for example, examine the theological discourse of homophobia based on a selection of textual genres¹² or by following the rhetorical patterns and stereotypes which have been associated with same-sex sexuality in the history of theology.¹³

The critical development of Foucault’s theory of discourse by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau points in another direction. Mouffe

⁸ The history of the reception of the Bible does not provide a sufficient frame for my analysis either, because several subdisciplines of theology have developed over time.

⁹ The Anglican Church additionally includes the *principle of reason*.

¹⁰ The magisterium is the teaching authority in the Roman Catholic Church, which is embodied in the Bishops Inunion with the Pope. The executive organ of the magisterium is the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.

¹¹ See Michel Foucault 1995, 41–58.

¹² Textual genres of theological texts are, for example, apologies, heresiologies, penitential books, handbooks for morality, canonical collections, Bible commentaries, documents of the magisterium etc.

¹³ Common associations are, for example, the sodomite as the other / stranger, sodomy as the mute sin, as the “sin that dare not speak its name”, sodomy in the sense of homosexuality as illness, as a criminal act, as heresy, as idolatry, as the worst sin, as the “sin that cries to Heaven”, as well as decadence, degeneration, being contrary to nature etc.

and Laclau understand discourse as a “structured totality” which has the “regularity of a system of structural positions.”¹⁴ Instead of viewing discourse as a set of scattered utterances they see it as a system of differences that requires borders which in turn stabilize these differences. It is impossible to fix the differences completely, because their borders and consequently the significations of the utterances are objects of permanent combat.¹⁵

Their theory hinges on the concept of *articulation* that ties in discourse analysis with the analysis of hegemonic structures.¹⁶ Each articulation does not only express something, but links it with one or several discourses. Through articulation, an isolated *element* – as Mouffe and Laclau call it – becomes a *moment* of a discourse. On a second level they ask which chains of equivalents and antagonisms put these (frame) discourses in relation to each other and which of them combine to constitute a hegemonic formation.¹⁷

Following Mouffe and Laclau’s line of thought, I will assume that different directions of systematic theology will articulate the element “same-sex sexuality” in specific ways. My claim is that four theological discourses have central relevance for Christian homophobia:

1. the archaic discourse of cultic purity,
2. the apocalyptic discourse of the Sodom-eschatology,
3. the discourse of natural law in scholastic moral theology,
4. the patristic discourse of Christian Platonism.

The changing configurations and articulations of these discourses in theology (exposed in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4) effectively legitimate church-driven homophobia. However, their hegemony is no longer uncontested, as a fifth theological discourse forms a counter discourse to them:

5. the liberal discourse.

From this liberal discourse (paragraph 3.5) has arisen a new articulation of same-sex sexuality, which has prevailed in European Protestantism and also exerts influence in theological faculties of other churches. Gathering the varying pertinence and the connections between these five discourses then permits to delineate the different contours of Christian homophobia in various denominations (4). Finally, the analysis will allow the formulation of specific conclusions about how to deal with hegemonic homophobia in the Catholic Church (5).

3.1 *The archaic discourse of cultic purity*

The archaic discourse of purity is based on the prohibitions in Leviticus 18, 22 and 20, 13. They are part of the Holiness code, which was written

¹⁴ See Chantal Mouffe / Ernesto Laclau 1991, 155f.

¹⁵ See Chantal Mouffe / Ernesto Laclau 1991, 162.

¹⁶ See Chantal Mouffe / Ernesto Laclau 1991, 155–167.

¹⁷ See Chantal Mouffe / Ernesto Laclau 1991, 183–205.

post-exile around 400 BCE at a time when Jerusalem's population did not exceed 2'000 inhabitants. The Holiness code expresses cultic thinking: it formulates the requirements for the priests of sacrificial cults and applies these rules to the people in general – often in a gradual fashion.¹⁸ The priest has to be holy and free of any possible defilement when offering the sacrifice, which it is hoped God receives sympathetically (e. g. Lev 19, 5–8). Cultic purity demands, for example, that things that are supposed to be separate not be mixed. The Holiness code for example prescribes not to mix textile like wool and linen in the weaving of a garment; different kinds of seeds must not be sown on the same land acre and bodily fluids must not be mixed or reach a spot they are not supposed to reach.¹⁹

This cultic thinking is archaic insofar as during the contact with the sacred everything depends on the exterior, material procedure while the agents' intentions are insignificant. Consequences of sacrilege were imagined to be triggered automatically. The sentence of Leviticus 20, 13 that "a man lying with a man as he lieth with a woman" shall perish, must be understood within that cultic logic: not in the sense of capital punishment doled out by humans, but in the sense of an "electric shock" which will hit anyone who defies the positively sacred by bringing it into contact with the negatively sacred, the abomination.²⁰

The discourse of cultic purity held a dominant position in the early Middle Ages with their archaic tendencies. The Church historian Hubertus Lutterbach of Essen has proven that in penitential books from the 6th to the 12th century, which were heavily consulted by priests to learn the price of penance, male-to-male sexuality was seen above all as impurity.²¹ Any sort of impurity, including heterosexual intercourse, would disqualify the priest to handle the sacrifice "with pure hands" so that it "pleases God."²² In that case, his sacrifice would at best be useless to the community if not potentially harmful.

In his *Liber Gomorrianus*, written for pope Leo IX in 1049, Petrus Damiani chiefly argues with cultic purity, even when he criticizes the mild and contradictory penitences for intercourse between men in the penitentials.²³ His intention was to defrock priests who had defiled

¹⁸ See Michael Brinkschröder 2006, 258–275.

¹⁹ Lev 18, 23 treats sexual intercourse between women and animals; Lev 19, 19 prohibits crossbreeding between different animal species, the mixture of two different types of seed on one acre and the wearing of cloth that has been woven out of two different materials.

²⁰ See 2 Sam 6, 1–11.

²¹ See Hubertus Lutterbach 1999, 147–161. For sexuality between men or between women in early medieval penitentials see Lutterbach 1998; Pierre Payer 1983; Allen Frantzen 1996 and 1998.

²² See Arnold Angenendt 1993.

²³ See Peter Damian: *Liber Gomorrianus*. See Introduction to *Peter Damian* by Pierre Payer 1982, 1–24. For the classification within the discourse of cultic purity see Hubertus Lutterbach 1998, 295–298 and 305.

themselves with “sodomy”. Coining the abstract concept of “sodomia”,²⁴ Damiani defines it by four acts “against nature”: masturbation, mutual masturbation and male-to-male intercrural sex and anal penetration.²⁵

Throughout the Middle Ages, the discourse of cultic purity remained virulent. Martin Luther still feared the effects of *pollutio*,²⁶ but at the same time initiated its surpassing in the Protestant Church by criticizing the sacerdotal understanding of the priest’s office and by allowing priests to marry.²⁷

The thinking in terms of purity and holiness shaped the understanding of sodomy among the English Puritans and the Puritan pilgrims towards America in the 17th century. Therefore, the sodomy laws of the New England states Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire quoted verbatim Leviticus 20, 13. According to their absolute esteem of the Bible, the Puritans kept to the purity laws of the Old Testament that concerned matters of sexuality, although they tended to exempt sex in marriage from the traditional charge of impurity.²⁸

The Catholic Church put the cultic understanding of the priestly sacrifice into the background with the Second Vatican Council, such that today it is only to be found among traditionalistic followers of the Tridentine Mass. The discourse of cultic purity, therefore, does not play a central role any more for the motivation of homophobia in Western Christendom. In both Churches, however, fertile ground for the archaic discourse is prepared if the Lords’ Supper is considered to be a cultic sacrifice instead of a commemoration.²⁹

3.2 *The Apocalyptic Discourse of the Sodom-Eschatology*

The origin of the second discourse lies in the early Jewish apocalyptic discourse, predominantly in the apocryphal books of Henoch and testament literature rather than in the Apocalypse of John. The so-called myth of the Watcher of the first book of Henoch constitutes its narrative

²⁴ See Mark Jordan 1997. Petrus Damiani does not demand capital punishment for sodomy, as Jordan thinks (57), but states that in spite of the Bible’s demand of capital punishment, the clerical tradition following the Synod of Ancyra (today Ankara) of 314 has opted for a penitence of fifteen to twenty years. This, however, is a more severe punishment than the three to ten years formulated in the books of penitence. During the Carolingic reforms of the 8th century, some had already demanded an intensification of the punishment of sodomy by referring to the Synod of Ancyra.

²⁵ The cultic discourse in the *Liber Gomorianus* is accompanied by a demonologic moral discourse, which treats sodomy as a vice leading the trespasser into the grasp of Satan and into hell. The numerous metaphors of contagious disease, which dramatize the danger of sodomy, represent a middle position between discourses of purity and discourses of vice.

²⁶ See Martin Luther: Commentary on Rom. 1, 24; Hubertus Lutterbach 1998, 299f.

²⁷ The long-term effects concerning the acceptance of homosexual relationships are discussed by Paul Capetz 2002.

²⁸ See Richard Godbeer 2008, 84–91.

²⁹ The power of ideas of purity in nationalistic and populist statements about male-to-male intercourse must not be underestimated, either.

frame.³⁰ According to this account, 200 angels rebelled against God, left Heaven, and brought weapons and make-up to the human beings on earth. By sleeping with women they created a progeny of giants, which consumed all the goods nourishing the human race. As God heard the wailing of the people over this doom he sent out the archangels to combat the fallen angels. The archangels defeated the Watchers, threw them into the abyss and imprisoned them in the Tartaros. The flood exterminated the giants, even though some continued to exist in the form of bodyless demons.

A second example for a primeval, divine judgment is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and sulfur (Genesis 18–19). The apocalyptic discourse draws on both of these primeval catastrophes as models to illustrate the eschatological Judgment of God. The shift from the primeval myth of Sodom to a Sodom-eschatology first surfaces in the *Book of Jubilees* written in the second century BCE.³¹ The next step of the development of Sodom-eschatology was the articulation of the sin of Sodom as same-sex intercourse (resp. pederasty) in the 1st century CE.³² At that time, many Jews considered same-sex practices as a cultural feature of the Roman occupation forces from whom they wanted to distinguish themselves.

The flood- and the Sodom-eschatology can also explain why Paul connected same-sex sexuality to God's Judgment of Wrath in his letter to the Romans (1, 26f.): men who burn with desire for other men represent, in the eyes of the apostle, a symptom of the coming Judgment of Wrath in the vein of Sodom. On the other hand, women who refrain from natural intercourse with their husbands correspond to the women who engaged in sexual actions with the Watcher angels.³³

Early Christian apologists of the second to third century CE (as e. g. Justin the Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras etc.) use the myth of the Watchers to undermine the status of the Greek Gods by depicting them as Watchers or demons. In their view, Zeus, notorious for his infidelity to his wife and, moreover, for his proclivity for pederasty, epitomizes the opposite of virtuous behaviour and Christian morality.³⁴ Motives from the Watcher's myth and the story of Sodom get mixed so that male-to-male intercourse comes to be seen as a potential cause of floods. In an

³⁰ See 1 Hen 6–16.

³¹ See Book of Jubilees 16,5f; 22,22; 36,10 and Testament Benjamin 9,1. The New Testament also uses the flood and Sodom as models for the eschatological Judgment of God. See Jude 6f.; 2 Pet 2,4–10a; Lc 17,26–29. According to the Sayings Source Q Jesus referred to the judgment of Sodom in order to surpass it by prophesying that those places which won't take up his messengers will be treated worse than Sodom in the final judgment (Lc 10,12 par Mt 10,15).

³² See Testament Benjamin 9,1; 2 Hen 10,1–6; Rom 1,26f.

³³ Important for the interpretation of Rom 1,26f. is the religious-historical comparison to the Testament Naphtali 3,1–4,1. See Michael Brinkschröder 2006, 505–537.

³⁴ See Aristides: Apology 8,4; 9,7–9; 13,8; 17,2; Justin: Apology I 21.25; II 12; Tatian: Address 8,3; 10,2; Theophilus: To Autolykus I 9.

allegorical interpretation of the Sodom story, Justin moulds this idea into a metaphysical antagonism of Sodomites threatening the Christian Logos who therefore takes revenge on them.³⁵

Another strand of the Sodom-eschatology locates the punishment of the offenders who have been found guilty of same-sex actions, in gruesome corners of hell in the afterlife where there will be “the unquenchable fire, the utmost darkness, the place where there will be howling and grinding of teeth, and where the worm never sleeps.”³⁶ Sodomites are among the earliest inhabitants of hell where they are tortured in most sadistic ways.

The pertinence of the Sodom-eschatology fades away with the Church Fathers of the fourth and fifth century CE. It is revived by the East Roman emperor Justinian who incorporates it in Roman law by the *Novellae* 77 and 141. The Christian emperor interprets two series of catastrophes including famines, earthquakes and the pest as well as military threats to the city of Constantinople before 542 and 559, the years of the edition of the laws, as signs of the wrath of God. He refers to the destruction of Sodom even though the destruction through heavenly fire differs from the occurrences in his city. He expected everyone who had committed an act contrary to nature to report his trespasses to the bishop and to do penitence for them. Anyone who failed to follow these instructions or who committed these acts more than once should receive the punishment of death in order to spare the city from the wrath of God by the extinction of those to be blamed. Justinian uses the myth of the destruction of Sodom both to interpret past catastrophes as divine punishment and to avert even worse future catastrophes inflicted by the wrath of God.³⁷

The Syrian apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius and the pseudo-capitularies of Benedict Levita continue the apocalyptic dramatization of male-to-male intercourse in the seventh and ninth century, respectively. But the reception of these pseudo-epigraphic texts did not happen until the high Middle Ages, at a time when the Sodom-eschatology reached

³⁵ See Justin: Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon 56; 57–60; 126–130. See also Clement of Alexandria: Paidagogos III 8: 43, 5–44, 4. These interpretations of the “Logos in Sodom” are continued in the Middle Ages in the legend of the dying of the Sodomites during Christmas, to be necessary for the Logos to incarnate and to begin his work of redemption (see Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller 1996, 255–258). – The Logos is not only articulated in apocalyptic discourse but also serves as an epitome of the world order, constituting the foundation of the stoic-scholastic concept of nature. Furthermore, Logos is the key notion in the establishment of the dogma, which operated primarily with the categories of Christian Platonism.

³⁶ Testament of Jacob 8, 3–5. See also the Slavonic Book of Henoch (= 2 Hen) 10, 1–6; the Testament of Isaac 9, 4–6; the Testament of Jacob 8, 3–7; 13, 3; Apocalypse of Peter (the Greek text of Akhmim) 32; Apocalypse of Paul 39; Acts of John 36.

³⁷ See Mischa Meier 2003, 592–599, who also argues for the datation of the first novella in 542 instead of 538. Of course Justinian’s main concern was to redirect questions of his own responsibility for the catastrophes to suitable scapegoats.

the peak of its influence.³⁸ It was the punishment of burning at the stake, first called for by Benedict Levita, that became the predominant method of dealing with sodomites in the Middle Ages. It was picked up in 1120 by the Synod of Nablus that justified its declarations by acute locust and mouse plagues, famines, and the attacks by the Saracens.³⁹

The representation of sodomy as heresy follows along the same lines of its representation as a danger to society and especially the church.⁴⁰ Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller (1996) has examined this discursive connection in detail with regard to the papal document “Vox in Rama” of 1233. In this text, pope Gregory IX constructs a phantasmal argument claiming the existence of a heretic sect in Germany that is supposed to practice sodomitic rituals.⁴¹ His call for the persecution of this sect marks the intersection of the crusades and the beginning of inquisition. His argument was prepared and extended by moral discourses of theologians.⁴²

During the Reformation it was Martin Luther and other Protestants who used the accusation of sodomy as verbal ammunition against the pope, the Curia, and the higher clergy.⁴³ After the Peace of Augsburg, this wave of Sodom discourse ebbed in Germany, but revived during the Thirty Years War⁴⁴ and to its end in Germany and France during the early period of the Enlightenment (ca. 1680).

In England, the Puritans held on to the idea of sodomy as a cause for natural disasters until around 1660.⁴⁵ But the Pilgrim Fathers brought Sodom-eschatology to the New World.

“Colonial leaders like William Bradford warned colonists that they would lose the New World unless they put an end to sodomy.”⁴⁶

In the USA, the puritanical traditions survive remarkably longer.⁴⁷ Neo-fundamentalists could immediately revitalize the discourse of the Sodom-eschatology as a reaction to the *Gay Liberation Movement*.⁴⁸ Only

³⁸ See Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller 1996, 225f. (for Pseudo-Methodius) and 83 (for Benedict Levita).

³⁹ See Klaus van Eickels 2009.

⁴⁰ In addition sodomy was seen as a crime against the majesty of God.

⁴¹ See Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller 1996, 1–190.

⁴² See Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller 1996, 191–329.

⁴³ See Helmut Puff 2003, 140–166. For sodomy as a sign for the apocalypse see *ibid.* 154f.

⁴⁴ See e. g. Samuel Baumgarten’s poem “Schwefel-Regen” (“rain of sulfur”) of 1648, attributing the outbreak of the Thirty Year’s War to the heirs of Sodom.

⁴⁵ See Thomas Beard’s *The Theatre of God’s Judgments* (first edition 1597; since the fourth edition revised by Thomas Taylor), ch. 34, quoted after Thomas Long 2006, 45.

⁴⁶ Wayne C. Bartee / Alice Fleetwood Bartee 1992, 37.

⁴⁷ See Michael Hochgeschwender 2007, 32–60.

⁴⁸ Its literal articulation is justified with the belief in the literal application of the word of the Bible. One of the most extreme consequences is drawn by the *Dominion-theology* of *Christian Reconstructionism* which aims to convert the USA into a theocracy by enforcing all Biblical laws, except for the cultic laws, including capital punishment for homosexuals, following Lev 20, 13. See Rousas Rushdoony 1973; Thomas Long 2006, 46.

two years after Stonewall, during a big prophecy conference in Jerusalem in 1971, did they condemn homosexuality as the cause for the near apocalypse, equal it with mass murder⁴⁹ and consider it as the cause for earthquakes, floods, and epidemics. Ever since Anita Bryant started her “*Save Our Children*” campaign in 1977, the apocalyptic discourse stimulated numerous homophobic campaigns of the *Religious Right*: the “*Moral Majority*” of Jerry Falwell and Timothy LaHaye in the 1980s and the “*Christian Coalition of America*” dedicated to the fight for *family values* in the 1990s. The Sodom-eschatology so dominated the ideology of neo-fundamentalists that their leaders Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson read the 9/11 attack of 2001 as God’s wrath against the USA for having accepted feminism and homosexuality.⁵⁰

3.3 *The Discourse of Natural Law in Scholastic Moral Theology*

The third discourse of Christian homophobia is based on the concept of natural law and mainly follows theological currents that refer back to Thomas Aquinas. It has known three influential phases: the high scholasticism of the 13th century, the Spanish Baroque scholasticism of the 16th and 17th century, and the neo-Scholasticism in between 1850 and the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). It constitutes one of the fundamental building blocks of catholic moral theology during the whole modern period.

The Biblical sources of the discourse of natural law are Paul’s letters to the Romans 1, 18–25 and 2, 14–16. In these passages, Paul argues that reason permits to infer the existence of a creator from the fact that there is creation. In addition, apart from the Bible’s commandments, there is a natural law dictating moral commandments to the pagans, written into their hearts. Between the two passages, the apostle underlines the counternatural quality of women leaving their husbands and men having intercourse with men in Rom 1, 26f. Consequently, this *topos* became part of the foundations of the Christian theory of natural law.

The ethics of natural law start with Plato and Aristotle, but it was Stoic philosophy that made the *secundum naturam vivere* the ideal of ethics. It is therefore no surprise to find moral arguments based on natural law as early as around 200 CE in the writings of the Christian theologians Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, both heavily influenced by Stoic thinking.⁵¹ Two centuries later, Augustine accomplished “the first decisive systematization of Christian natural law in the terms of Stoic and neoplatonic philosophy.”⁵² It was Thomas Aquinas, however,

⁴⁹ The Bible also qualifies murder as a “sin that cries to Heaven” (Gen 4, 10).

⁵⁰ See Thomas Long 2006, 42.

⁵¹ See Tertullian: *De corona militis* 6; Clement of Alexandria: *Paidagogos* II 10, 83–91.

⁵² Alexander Hollerbach 1973, 14. “After Augustine, the current of Christian natural law theory seemed to have disappeared for centuries. Still clearly recognizable in Isidore of Seville [around 600], who transmits its elements together with those of the

who coined its lasting form based on the reception of Aristotle in the 13th century. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas subsumes same-sex intercourse in the category of sins against nature, which he in turn discusses as *lust* (the Latin term being *luxuria*: unchastity). For him, all forms of sexual lust which do not result in procreation are against nature: masturbation out of sheer lust, sexual intercourse with animals of another species, sexual intercourse of man with man or woman with woman (the “sodomitic” vice; following his reading of Rom 1, 26 f.) as well as sexual intercourse between man and woman using the “wrong” organs or in “despicable” positions.⁵³

The sin against nature is supposed to be more severe than other instances of unchastity because it is an “offense against God, the creator of Nature.”⁵⁴ Thomas refers to an argument in Augustine’s *Confessions* that deduces the order of creation not from empirically observable anthropological reality but from divine laws:

“Even if all peoples practiced them [abominations against nature], they would be equally criminally guilty before the divine law, which has not formed man to act in such a way. Misguided lust befouls nature and consequently violates the community between man and God.”⁵⁵

The theology of Thomas is a synthesis of Augustine and the rediscovered philosophy of Aristotle. Since Thomas adopts Augustine’s concept of nature which is embedded in a theology of revelation, Aristotle’s empirical conception of nature must remain neglected.⁵⁶

In contrast with this tendency, Thomas does indeed follow the footsteps of Aristotle in another passage of the *Summa*, when he considers the individual’s nature next to the nature of the species. He touches on this topic while discussing the question whether there can be unnatural lust. For in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that some pleasures are “sick and unnatural”.⁵⁷ Thomas argues:

“For it happens to individuals that one of the natural qualities of its species is damaged such that an action otherwise unnatural for members of

Roman Stoic theory of natural law as transformator to later times, it only reappears [in the 12th century] with Hugh of St. Victor and with Gratian whose famous definition of natural law referring to ‘Law and Gospel’ would become determining for decretists.” (ibid., 15).

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas: *Summa* II-II q 154 a 11.

⁵⁴ Thomas Aquinas: *Summa* II-II q 154 a 12 ad 1.

⁵⁵ Thomas (ibid.) citing Augustine: *Confessiones* 3, 8, 15.

⁵⁶ Aristotle had already used the example of the sexual behaviour of hyenas to argue against Plato that homosexual behaviour does very well exist in the animal kingdom and, therefore, cannot be considered contrary to nature (Aristotle: *De gen. animalium* 757 a 2f.).

⁵⁷ See Aristotle NE 1148 b 25–1152 b 22 about the love of boys: “For these arise in some by nature and in others, as in those who have been the victims of lust from childhood, from habit. Now those in whom nature is the cause of such a state no one would call incontinent, any more than one would apply the epithet to women because of the passive part they play in copulation; nor would one apply it to those who are in a morbid condition as a result of habit.” (1148b29–35).

the species becomes natural to that individual, as is the nature of hot water to give off warmth. This is why that which is against the human nature both with regard to reason and to the conservation of the body, becomes natural for this individual due to corrupted nature.”

Thomas also explicitly applies this to the coitus between men.⁵⁸

The further career of the concept of individual nature was brought to a sudden end by the bishop of Paris who in 1277 condemned a thesis in which even the pathological aspects of Thomas’s formulations were absent:

“The sin against nature, i. e. the abuse of sexual intercourse, may go against the nature of the species, but not against the nature of the individual.”⁵⁹

This line of thought was not revived before 1864, when Karl Heinrich Ulrichs interpreted the love of the same sex as an individual, congenital and therefore natural quality.⁶⁰

Francisco de Vitoria is known as the founder of the School of Salamanca and the Spanish Baroque scholasticism. At the beginning of the 16th century, he replaced the commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard with Thomas’s *Summa* as the basic text in studies of theology. Critical research in the history of moral theology has shown that Baroque scholasticism did not blindly perpetuate Thomas’s theology but effectuated subtle theoretical shifts. Unlike Thomas, Baroque scholasticism extends the concept of natural law beyond the first principles of human nature to also include their consequences. While Thomas only considered self-preservation, the development of the self and the preservation of the species as “natural inclinations” and therefore belonging to the first principles of the *lex naturalis*, de Vitoria deduced a more concrete set of sins against nature, such as cannibalism, incest, idolatry, sodomy and shamelessness (nudity).⁶¹

The fact that in the 16th century some theologians tried to legitimize the Spanish war against the native population in America based on sins against nature, added political relevance to this legal-theological category. During the famous dispute of Valladolid in 1550, Gines de Sepulveda, for example, advocated this position while his adversary Bartolomé de las Casas simply negated the assumption that the natives were sodomites in order to undermine his opponents’ argument.⁶²

⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas: *Summa* I-II q 31 a 7. This “corruption” (*corruptio*) does not only occur in the body in the form of a disease or some privation, but “also in the soul”, as some “find pleasure out of habit (*consuetudinem*) in cannibalism or in sexual intercourse with animals or with men” (ibid.). It is noticeable that Thomas only adapts from Aristotle the aspect of *corruptio* of natural human conditions, but neglects the statement that the love of boys can develop naturally.

⁵⁹ Thesis no. 166, quoted by Kurt Flasch 1989, 233.

⁶⁰ See Karl Heinrich Ulrichs 1864 (*Vindex*).

⁶¹ Francisco de Vitoria: *De indis prior; De indis posterior seu de iure belli*, 1539, in: de Vitoria: *Obras*, 641–1039 (quoted from Francisco Guerra 1971, 59–63).

⁶² See Lukas Sesoe 2007, 389–392.

Francisco de Vitoria in turn rejected sodomy as a legitimation for a just war by arguing that in that case, the king of France might also attack the Italians whom he obviously regarded as notorious sodomites.⁶³

Modern moral theology transformed Thomas' moral theology from a virtue ethics into a purely negative casuistic of sins. The transformation began around 1500 with Cajetan's commentary on Thomas and blossomed in the Jesuit school.⁶⁴ Even though the neo-Scholasticism of the 19th and 20th century decidedly tried to reach back to Thomas, it continued on this path. Concerning sodomy, the manuals of neo-Scholasticism only differ in their systematics and follow either the scheme of virtues and sins in Thomas (unchastity, *luxuria*) or the decalogue scheme of Alphonsus Liguori (6th and 9th commandment) or the catechism of Petrus Canisius classifying sodomy as a sin that cries to Heaven.⁶⁵

It remains a general feature of scholastic morality to always discuss sodomy as a sin of unchastity. The privileged position of chastity in scholastic moral discourse shows that the conception of nature, which constitutes its foundation, is not to be understood in a naturalistic way, but as conceived by a metaphysics of divine revelation.

4. *The Patristic Discourse of Christian Platonism*

The discourse of Christian Platonism claims to have unified Biblical revelation and Greek philosophy. It lays the foundations for the construction of Christian theology in the form of the dogma. Its precursors are Paul the apostle and the Jewish Hellenistic philosopher Philo of Alexandria, whose reception is predominantly Christian. The Christian school of Alexandria (above all, Origenes) and the great Church Fathers of late Antiquity (Ambrose, Hieronymus, and Augustine) established the hegemony of Christian Platonism – now in the guise of Neoplatonism – in the theological discourse in the Christian Church of the Roman Empire.

Plato himself is an ambiguous source concerning male-to-male sexuality. In the *Symposium*, his first dialogue on Eros, he concedes that pederasty as a bodily experience lays the foundation for the development of a sublime understanding of the good and beautiful. In the *Phaedrus* he calls physical sexual pederasty "contrary to nature" and in his late text "The Laws" he formulates a strategy to manipulate the public in order to lend pederasty the image of being against nature.⁶⁶ Christian Platonism dealt with this ambivalence in suppressing the importance of physical pederasty in Plato and replacing it with a platonic Eros conceived as

⁶³ Francisco de Vitoria: Fragmento, 6f.

⁶⁴ See Mark Jordan 2000, 60–72.

⁶⁵ See Herman van de Spijker 1968, 119–121 and 128–143.

⁶⁶ See Plato: *Symposium* 209 b, 211 b; *Phaidrus* 251 a; *Laws* 836 c – 842 a.

purely psychic attraction.⁶⁷ Jostein Børtnes (2000) has drawn attention to this kind of Christian reception of Plato's *Symposium* in a text of Gregory Thaumaturgos presenting his relationship with his teacher Origen and in Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral speech about his friendship with Basil the Great. In both cases, Eros becomes subliminally converted into the common veneration of the Logos.

Two concerns are constitutive in the discourse of Christian Platonism: the first calls for a clear gender dualism. Male and female sexual behaviour are disambiguated, naturalized, and put in line with the will of God, with the order of his creation. Christian Platonism sharply criticizes and pathologizes deviations from these gender norms in form of effeminate men or apparently masculine women. Pederasty and same-sex intercourse are primarily not accepted for their opposition to the "nature" of the genders.⁶⁸

The second particularity of Christian Platonism is the division of man into body and soul (Plato) or flesh and spirit (Paul). The material side is inferior to the mental side and considered less important in this discourse. This hierarchy allows for the spiritualization of Eros and to conceive love as an ascension from the physical to the mental. In neo-platonic mysticism, his ascension culminates in the *unio mystica* with God.⁶⁹

For this reason, Christian Platonism confines sexuality mainly to the realm of spirituality. Bridal mysticism knows three forms of spiritual marriage: the Church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5, 32), the soul as the bride of the Logos, generating the virtues as their children, and the Virgin Mary as the bride of God the Father or of the Holy Spirit. The Church Fathers of Antiquity and the Middle Ages firmly established the imaginary institution of bridal mysticism in numerous tracts about virginity and allegorical commentaries on the Song of Songs.⁷⁰

Conveyed in the works of Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Boethius, Christian Platonism dominated the theology of the 12th century. Alan of Lille's (1116–1202/3) "*De planctu Naturae*" is an influential and stylistically extraordinary example for the articulation of same-sex sexuality in this discourse.⁷¹ In this text, personified nature,

⁶⁷ Accordingly, the rediscovery of physical pederasty in Plato in the 19th century was an important contribution to the emergence of the modern discourse of homosexuality.

⁶⁸ The scholastic discourse of natural law and Christian Platonism articulate "nature" and "contrary to nature" differently. The first refers to the nature of the human species, the second to the gendered nature of man and woman.

⁶⁹ Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism (3rd century CE), reverses the order in letting the bodily unification between lovers "imitate" the unification of the soul with the One in the spiritual vision (Plotinus: *Enneads* VI 7, 34). See also Otto Langer 2003, 86–91.

⁷⁰ See Josef Schmid 1954; Friedrich Ohly 1958.

⁷¹ Alan of Lille: *Plaint*, especially 67–72, 133–139, 154–166. See also Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller 1996, 194–207 and Mark Jordan 1997, 67–91. Jordan decoded the artful

as a representative of God on earth, laments the deviancy of humans following a misguided Venus, misplacing male and female gender as well as active and passive roles, and the “natural unification of male and female gender”⁷² in favour of same-sex unification. Alan compares this behaviour with phenomena of grammatical irregularity: heteroclitic nouns, whose formation of gender is irregular; deponent verbs whose passive form expresses an active meaning; and wrong, “barbaric” combinations of subject and predicate, which symbolize carnal unification.

The scholastic reception of Aristotle temporarily diminished the importance of Platonism in theology until it became reactualized in the Florentine Renaissance in the 15th century. Christian Platonism (as well as Scholasticism) never played an important part in Evangelical churches, because Luther, in his dispute with Erasmus, rejected the authority of Plato (and Aristotle) in favor of the “*sola scriptura*” principle.⁷³

The Catholic Church reactivated Christian Platonism in the 20th century. Immediately after World War I, the Benedictine Odo Casel (1886–1948) revived the ancient idea of liturgy as a celebration of the mysteries within the Liturgical Movement.⁷⁴ It is probably due to him that the renewed liturgy of mass is penetrated by the spiritual sexuality of bridal mysticism that takes the form of a sublime symbolism.⁷⁵

Within the *Nouvelle Théologie*, which voiced itself in the late thirties in France and Belgium, it was mainly the Jesuits of Lyon-Fourvière (Henri de Lubac and his disciples Jean Daniélou and Hans Urs von Balthasar) who revived Christian Platonism. Their movement of *Ressourcement* propagated a return to the ancient sources and a disclosure of their differing positions in order to renew theology then dominated by neo-Scholasticism. By “sources” they did not refer to the Bible, however, but to the Church Fathers.⁷⁶ These developments took hold during the

polysemy of the “Lament of Nature” as a subversive critique of nature’s challenges, since these were put in perspective by numerous allusions to the homoerotic poetry of Antiquity. But there is no proof that the text was read in this manner in the Middle Ages.

⁷² Alan of Lille: *Plaint*, 157.

⁷³ See Jan Rohls 1997, 37f.

⁷⁴ See Odo Casel 1918.

⁷⁵ The carnal order of the gender dualism presupposed by Catholic liturgy became manifest in the reasons the Catholic Church advanced against the priesthood of women and homosexual men: a priest must be male and heterosexual because the liturgy symbolizes the act of procreation. See John Paul II 1994; Paul VI 1976 (“*Inter Insigniores*”); Congregation for Catholic Education 2005, no. 1; Congregation for Catholic Education 2008, note 12: “Christ needs priests who are mature, virile, capable of cultivating an authentic spiritual paternity.” (transl. from www.vatican.va) – At the same time, the doubling of the physical by spiritual sexuality generates a series of paradoxes and queer elements (e. g. the Church as the bride of Christ consists of men and women), which are tabooed in Christian Platonism and forced into latency such that their enjoyment remains unconscious.

⁷⁶ See Roger Aubert 1969, 49ff.

Second Vatican Council that literally pulverized the century-long hegemony of neo-Scholasticism in Catholic theology.

Soon after the Council it became apparent that the theological developments which had shaped its view such as the Liturgical Movement, the *Nouvelle Théologie* and even the Council theology itself, were not coherent discourses but the results of a coalition of theological modernism and renewed Christian Platonism. As soon as 1968, the union of the theologians of *Aggiornamento* and of *Ressourcement* came to an end. The Platonists enforced their sexual morals with the encyclicals *Humanae Vitae* (1968) and *Persona Humana* (1975) and, turning their backs to the movement of 1968, chose a markedly anti-modern direction.⁷⁷ With Karol Wojtyła and Joseph Ratzinger they succeeded in occupying key positions in the Church within the last 30 years that enabled them to marginalize the most pertinent developments in modern theology inspired by social sciences: advanced developments in sexual morality, the Latin American theology of liberation, feminist theology, and pluralistic theology of religion.⁷⁸ In particular, the intense discussion of the gay and lesbian movement by the Catholic Church shows the influence of Joseph Ratzinger.

5. The Alternative Model: The Liberal Discourse of Theology

The panorama of Christian theology and its struggle with the question of homosexuality would be incomplete if it only included homophobic discourses. Next to these stands the liberal discourse as an additional theological paradigm. It characteristically relies on the historical-critical methods of exegesis and of research on the history of the Church, which have developed since the 19th century. The historical perspective in the approach to the Bible and the Dogma rejects fundamentalist literalism and an unhistorical traditionalist pursuit of the Dogma. In addition, the liberal paradigm assimilates modern scientific developments and favours a strong individualism in ethics.⁷⁹

The established methods of historical-critical differentiation enable the liberal theological discourse to incorporate the conclusions of social constructivism. Starting in the 1970s, constructivism abandoned the predominant conception of a timeless essence of (homo)sexuality and instead historicized different forms of sexuality and sexual roles and embedded them in their social contexts. Theologians arguing from a historical-critical perspective concluded that “homosexuality” was a “modern Western cultural construct” which differed completely from

⁷⁷ The cleavage became evident with the end of collaboration in the board of directors of the international journal of theology “*Concilium*”, commonly founded in 1964. In 1972, Joseph Ratzinger, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Walter Kasper, and Karl Lehmann founded the journal “*Communio*” (see John Allen 2002, 66f.).

⁷⁸ See John Allen 2002, 115–267; Hansjürgen Verweyen 2007, 114–125.

⁷⁹ See Friedrich Graf 1994, 69–94.

the ancient forms of same-sex intercourse condemned in the Bible.⁸⁰ The passages from the Bible cited in the beginning of this paper cannot therefore apply to the social and personal identities of present-day gays and lesbians. Instead the Biblical emphasis on love should be the yardstick, with the effect of morally welcoming homosexual love and partnerships. Of course, liberal discourse remains silent about sexual intercourse outside of love relationships.

The liberal discourse has asserted itself in most Protestant churches of Western Europe and Canada and in a few *mainline churches* in the USA with the result that lesbian and gay pastors are allowed to exert their office, to be elected by the parishes, and to live together with their partners in the parsonage. The Lutheran Church of Sweden recently installed the first openly lesbian bishop. The rapid pace of change in these churches is a remarkable phenomenon, despite the remaining conflicts between liberal and conservative or evangelical Protestants, which lead to church-internal compromises, especially in practical questions.

In Western Protestantism, the four discourses of Christian homophobia were overcome, in my opinion, by four reasons most of which I have already briefly mentioned:

1. The archaic discourse of cultic purity became obsolete with the abolition of sacerdotal priesthood in favor of the pastor who, as a preacher, is first of all a servant of the word.
2. Christian Platonism and late medieval scholasticism were cut off from reformed theology by the principle of "*sola scriptura*", which gives exclusive validity to the Bible, as opposed to the Catholic approach of "scripture and tradition".
3. A regression to Biblical verbalism and (apocryphal) apocalyptic traditions was blocked by the establishment of historical-critical and religious-historical methods of exegesis since the 19th century, in favour of history and scientific rationality.
4. The ordination of women by Protestant churches in the 20th century, accepted with the help of the liberal discourse, constitutes a precedent that allowed for a similar treatment concerning gay and lesbian pastors.

6. *The Panorama of Discursive Constellations in the Churches*

The developments in Protestant churches demonstrate that Christianity and its churches are not a uniform and coherent homophobic block. Moreover, the distinction of the four homophobic theological discourses allows to point out differences in content and degree of homophobia between Christian churches, due to the connections between and the relative weight of each of the five discourses.

The homophobia of the Catholic Church leans on a theology that revitalizes Christian Platonism and relics of the neo-Scholastic natural

⁸⁰ See e. g. Wolfgang Stegemann 1998, 61–68.

law-theory, while apocalyptic and archaic discourses have been marginalized.⁸¹ The modern liberal discourse is quite influential in the Catholic Church of Western Europe – on the level of the parishes in its popular form, and on the level of academic theology, e. g. in the historical-critical exegesis, the history of dogma and in moral and pastoral theology. Platonism and natural law-theory have their most important bases not in the field of academic theology but in the hierarchy. For this reason the Vatican and often also bishops frequently and heavily attack progressive theological positions concerning homosexuality. As a result, liberal Catholic theologians rarely articulate their opinion about homosexuality officially.

The situation is completely different in evangelical and neo-fundamentalist Protestantism with its domination of the apocalyptic discourse that blames rights for gays and lesbians for the imminent end of the world. It is for this reason that neo-fundamentalists react to their emancipation with an amount of anger and relentlessness that are almost unbelievable for modern civilization.

Within the Anglican Church, antagonistic discourses are regionally determined. The African bishops are mainly influenced by the evangelical discourse and debate homosexuality in the context of the absolute application of Scripture.⁸² The predominant discourse in England and in the *Episcopal Church*, on the other hand, is liberal. Because both positions are firmly anchored in their respective regions, the conflict cannot be won by one of the two sides on the level of the Commonwealth.

The Russian-Orthodox Church, traditionally relying on the theological Platonism of the Church Fathers, is characterized by the reemergence of the apocalyptic discourse that informs the sharp criticism of homosexuality of the last years. A new articulation between these two discourses is to be observed in the Russian-Orthodox Church, where the liberal discourse's historical-critical methods have not yet taken hold.

7. Implications for the Catholic Church

I have argued so far that there is a plurality of theological discourses which each articulated and still articulates homosexuality in its special way. These discourses influence individual churches in completely different ways. In order to overcome existing homophobia in Christianity on the level of theology and clerical doctrine, these differences must be accounted for. The successful recipes in Protestantism cannot simply be transposed one-to-one to the Catholic Church where the idea of the lit-

⁸¹ However, a combination of apocalyptic hatred against homosexuals and cultic conceptions of purity characterize the "popular traditionalistic" authors of the successful internet page kreuz.net (see David Berger 2010, 210–224).

⁸² This includes, however secondary a thought, the impurity of homosexuality as a cause for the wrath of God.

eral revelation of the Bible is as irrelevant as the apocalyptic Sodom-eschatology.

For the Catholic Church, it is more important to overcome the dominating Platonism and the relics of the revelatory theology of natural law concerning sexuality in favor of the existing forms of the liberal-historical discourse.⁸³ Its success – maybe during the next pontificate or the one after the next –, mainly depends on the theological work that is to be achieved.

Ever since the beginning of the gay and lesbian movement, homosexuals themselves have developed liberal and even more radical approaches within theology, e. g. body theology, the theology of the flesh, gay liberation theology, lesbian feminist and queer theology. It is an open question to what extent they can contribute to the forthcoming developments and changes. Even if lesbian, gay and queer theologies occupy marginal positions within Catholic theology, it is up to them to motivate the liberal and academic mainstream to put the gay and lesbian question on the agenda instead of ignoring it for fear of the Pope.

The development of theological concepts and strategies that connect gay-lesbian-queer theology with the liberal discourse is therefore a task of central importance. In my opinion, this is a fitting moment to focus on the question of *human rights* of gays, lesbians, trans-, and bisexuals, i. e. the protection from *any type of* discrimination and the right to marry a person of the same gender. Pope Benedict XVI prioritizes natural law over human rights in his moral-political campaign against same-sex partnerships.⁸⁴ This relativization should challenge liberal theologians to defend the theological relevance of human rights. It is of great importance for the struggle against the sin of homophobia that they explicitly include the acceptance of human rights of gays, lesbians, trans- and bisexuals in the upcoming clarification of this fundamental question.

⁸³ Neo-Scholastic Thomism was followed in the 1970s by a separation of theoretical and practical reason, the so-called “Thomasian” interpretation of Thomas, which does not abandon the argumentation based on natural law, but radically reduces its field of influence. See Eberhard Schockenhoff 1996, 11–51 (on the aporias of natural law reasoning) and 143–233 (on a new interpretation of natural law in Thomas). Concerning the problem of inherently bad actions, Schockenhoff concludes: “Not all actions considered inherently bad in the past have to be interpreted as ethically prohibited under all circumstances, the criterion being strict incompatibility with human dignity [...] Using a narrow criterion of the inherently bad, it seems impossible, on this basis, to arrive at a complete ethical evaluation of masturbation, homosexuality, sterilization or at a clear distinction of ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ methods for the prevention of conception.” (ibid., 231).

⁸⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 2002. See Dag Endsjø 2010.

Need for research:

Reconstruct the discursive history of natural law and its effects on the moral valuation of same-sex intercourse.

Analyze the positions of the Church Fathers of the 4th and 5th century CE concerning same-sex relationships.

Analyze the Platonic Eros and the role of homoeroticism in the history of the reception of Plato's *Symposion*.

Collect and analyze rules against homoeroticism, e. g. in structures of disciplinary power in Christian monasteries.

Reconstruct the Burton line: homophobia in the history of Christian mission and colonization.

Document liberal theological movements (homosexual liberation theology, lesbian feminist and queer theology, theology of the flesh/body): its premises, persuasiveness of arguments against homophobia and political influence on current and dominant discourses in Christian churches.

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