

CHAPTER THREE
THE DESIRE TO BELONG: THE HOMOSEXUALS, GAYS AND LESBIANS
WHO REFUSE TO LEAVE THE CHURCH

*Honey, haven't you learned by now that it's the Jesus freaks who are the ones with the problems in this world?*¹

Introduction

The ideological struggle the Church and the gays and lesbians go through – as was recounted in chapters one and two plus the debates in public to alter the legislation the state approves to favor or exclude homosexuals from public life—would demonstrate that gays and lesbians are not wanted within the Catholic Church, because of their controversial actions and life style. It is thus surprising to discover that there are gays and lesbians willing to stay within the institution who attempt to negotiate their actions, ideology and lifestyle to be accepted by Catholic doctrine, despite the contradictions that arise, “once a Catholic, always a Catholic. Many gays and lesbians, loathing their church’s homophobic role in history, still find themselves looking to it for spiritual guidance and meaning,”² As this chapter will explain, some members of the gay and lesbian community are attempting to effect changes to fit in the institution that rejects them traditionally on principle. The desire of some gays and lesbians to fit in also brings conflict with the Church hierarchy, this is exemplified by the gays and lesbians who have chosen to wear the Rainbow Sash to take communion and the antagonism this has created with many members of the Church hierarchy.

¹ Reichen Lehmkuhl, *Here's What We'll Say: Growing Up, Coming Out, and The U.S. Air Force Academy* (New York: Carroll & Graff Publishers, 2006), 147.

² Thomas C. Fox, *Sexuality and Catholicism: Abortion, Homosexuality, Women and the Church, Birth Control, Clergy and Sexual Abuse, Carnal Love, Celibacy and Population Control* (New York: George Braziller, 1995), 131. “ ‘Once a Catholic, always a Catholic,’ meaning that whether or not they choose to practice their faith, Catholics are the products of its sacramental traditions, rituals and world views.”

Cardinal Francis Arizne³ was reported on February 4th [2005] as stating that wearers of the Rainbow Sash⁴ disqualify themselves from receiving Holy Communion because the symbol demonstrates their opposition to Church teachings in homosexuality.⁵

This laconic message written in the *2006 Catholic Almanac* demonstrates the occurrence of discrimination on the part of some members of the hierarchy within the Catholic Church toward homosexuals who are visible within the congregation, as the hypothesis of this thesis explained: “[e]ven though the Catholic Church discriminates homosexual acts, there may be a way in which Catholicism may accept or tolerate homosexuals not as individuals who commit a sinful act, but as members of a minority community which have been discriminated in the past and which can be tolerated or accepted as a group within the Catholic Church.” This highlights two observations that have been noted throughout the thesis the first observation is that the Catholic Church refuses to treat homosexuals as a group; if people who have same-sex desires choose to remain within the Church then their choice is to be *invisible*; they cannot be different from other parishioners and the desire to make themselves stand out by an item of clothing provokes their barring from the sacrament of communion.

The other observation to be drawn out is that this entry demonstrates that there are still gays and lesbians who choose to remain within the Catholic Church’s structure, despite the criticism and discrimination their conduct may elicit from the Church’s hierarchy. Some

³ “The head of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.” See Mathew E. Bunson, *2006 Our Sunday Visitors Catholic Almanac* (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2005), 25.

⁴ The International Rainbow Sash Movement began in Australia in 1998 and its members use colored sashes as a way of protesting the Church’s rulings on gays.” Bunson, *2006 Catholic Almanac*, 40. For more information on the International Rainbow Sash Movement within the United States visits its official site at Brian McNeill, *Rainbow Sash Alliance USA* ([cited 6 Oct. 2009]): available from www.rainbowsashallainceusa.org This organization is only represented within the North American continent in the United States; it does not have filials in Mexico or Canada.

⁵ Bunson, *2006 Catholic Almanac*, 25.

gays and lesbians⁶ wish to be incorporated as a group into the institution in which they grew up or to which they acquired membership through conversion. Some also feel⁷ that they owe allegiance to the gay and lesbian community they have chosen to belong to and they want to demonstrate their allegiance to both groups by wearing the colors that symbolize the gay community and participating in the sacraments Catholics believe to be an important component of their rituals. At present, gays and lesbians are put in a position where they must conform to Church rules, including downplaying this central component of identity, or be excluded from the sacrament of reconciliation. On May 9, 2005,

[d]emonstrators using rainbow-colored garments to protest the Church's teachings on homosexuality were denied Communion in the Cathedral of St. Paul ... Abp. Harry Flinn⁸ of St. Paul and Minneapolis announced the change of policy toward the sash wearers in a letter to the organizer of the Rainbow Sash Alliance in the United States.⁹

The conflict between both the Catholic Church and the gay and lesbian laity and their supporters induces the writer to ask the questions posed in the introduction: how has the identity clash between the Catholic Church and the gay community reshaped/reaffirmed/highlighted or otherwise affected perceptions of the gay community and how is this identity performed? The task of this chapter will be to explore and attempt to answer these questions using two themes around which the issues seem to revolve. The

⁶ "To give the question any force, we have to picture the Holy Spirit bestowing courage as well as insight (...) Let us suppose that God has worked a change in the Pope himself. It would take at least a thorough conversion of the Pope to make the doctrinal change possible. Let us imagine that the Pope's heart has been converted [and] he has decided to right a wrong done to homosexuals over centuries." Mark D. Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.

⁷ Though there is no clear bibliographical source to support this statement it can be inferred from the reading of Dignity's web page *Dignity USA* ([cited 24 Nov. 2009]): available from <http://www.dignityusa.org> "Dignity USA envisions and works for a time when Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Catholics are affirmed and experience dignity through the integration of their spirituality with their sexuality, and as beloved persons of God participate fully in all aspects of life within the Church and the State."

⁸ For a biography on Archbishop Flynn see "Meet Archbishop Flynn," *Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis web site* ([cited. 6 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.archspm.org/html/flynn2.html>

⁹ Bunson, *2006 Catholic Almanac*, 40.

first part of this chapter analyzes how homosexuals seek to be accepted in the Church by applying the Church's teachings in theology and philosophy that may be used to justify their entrance and acceptance by the institution. The second and final part of the chapter explores how Catholic gays and lesbians in North America have organized themselves in to groups that seek recognition by the Catholic Church, but who have different agendas in terms of how it is best to fit within the Catholic Church's structure.

3.1 The Constructualism vs. Essentialism Debate and its Importance for the Inclusion/Exclusion of Gays and Lesbians from the Catholic Church¹⁰

Authors that specialize in the field of queer studies are divided along two lines concerning the explanation of the origins or nature of homosexuality. The debate is important in the context of this thesis because, through emphasizing freedom of choice, the Catholic Church espouses a view in which the homosexual identity is considered to be a "social construction." In the purest form, conservative Catholicism embraces the belief that the homosexual is either a heterosexual who chooses to prefer members of their same sex, or a person who has a sort of mental disease.¹¹ Gay and lesbian Catholic activists, on the other hand, prefer to believe that their same-sex preference is innate, thus taking what is known as an "essentialist" view that explains why they have those sexual preferences. The future of whether homosexuality can and will be acceptable to Catholicism or not is based on these two points of view.

These opposing points of view are used, in theological and philosophical reasoning and argument, to determine whether or not gays and lesbians are committing a sin when

¹⁰ Steve Hogan and Lee Hudson, *Completely Queer: The Gay and Lesbian Encyclopedia* (New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1999), 149. "Also social constructionism vs. Biological essentialism."

¹¹John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), xix.

they are involved in a sexual relation with their partners, and this, in turn, determines the gravity of the sin and whether gays and lesbians can be ‘saved’ or not.¹² This theological argument, though cloaked under the contemporary names of “constructivism” and “essentialism,” reflect a deeper debate that has occurred within Catholicism since the time of St. Augustine of Hippo over the role of free will and predestination within Catholic ideology.

Clearly, one of the founding assumptions underpinning this thesis is that gays and lesbians who want to be accepted by the Catholic Church must find within Catholic theology and tradition ways to justify their acceptance by Catholicism. John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* attempted to demonstrate that Christianity was not originally antagonistic toward same-sex behavior and if the acceptance of homosexuality in the past had occurred, Catholicism and other Christian Churches could once more welcome homosexuals into the fold.¹³ His book created heated debate on whether homosexuality was accepted or not and created contestation surrounding his usage of the word ‘gay’ to describe same-sex conduct through the ages.¹⁴ It is still questioned or praised, depending what side one is on.

Another way of finding a space for gays and lesbians in the Church is by searching within Catholic philosophical tradition. The Catholic Church’s philosophy is inspired partly

¹² Raúl Lugo *Iglesia Católica y homosexualidad* (Madrid: Editorial Nueva Utopia, unknown date), 27.

¹³ Mathew Kuefler ed., *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 2006), 2. “There were four main points that form the narrative of the book: First that Christianity had come in to existence in an atmosphere of Greek and Roman tolerance for same sex eroticism. Second, that nothing of the Christian scriptures or early tradition required a hostile assessment of homosexuality; rather, that such assessments represented a misreading of scripture. Third, that early medieval Christians showed no real animosity towards same sex eroticism. Fourth, that it was only in the 12th and 13th centuries that Christian writers formulated a significant hostility towards homosexuality, and then read that hostility back in to the scriptures and early tradition.”

¹⁴ Kuefler ed., *The Boswell Thesis*, 9.

by the Platonic and Aristotelian schools represented by two intellectual giants and Saints who espoused each philosophy respectively: St. Augustine utilized Plato and St. Thomas Aquinas was inspired by Aristotle.¹⁵ Both tried to interpret the Christian doctrine reflected in the scripture using the Greek philosophical belief system. Both saints believed in the concept of natural law,¹⁶ which is relevant to homosexuals because it helps explain why certain actions are acceptable or not to the Catholic Church, on grounds other than scripture. Of two philosophical schools, Thomism and Augustinianism, there are elements which can be inclusive of gays and lesbians, even if both saints believed that sodomy was a sin.¹⁷ And as we shall see, in particular their treatment of the concepts of free will and naturalness, feed into much of today's debate.

St. Augustine was the creator of the concepts of free will and predestination, and responsible for their insertion in Catholic doctrine. The development of both concepts occurred trying to answer the following question "are we saved by God's grace or by ourselves?"¹⁸ "Augustine (354-430 C.E.) initially maintained that the will was an anthropological power effective across a range of actions regardless of their moral status. Later, he came to think it was possible for humans to will only the bad, for the good

¹⁵ H.D. Gardeil, *Iniciación a la filosofía de Santo Tomas de Aquino: Introducción- Lógica*, trans. Salvador Abascal Carranza (México D.F.: Editorial Tradición, 1973), 15.

¹⁶ John Cornwell, *Breaking Faith: The Pope, the People, and the Fate of Catholicism* (New York: Viking Compass, 2001), 129. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (The University of Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 150. St. Augustine "was ultimately unconcerned about 'nature' itself, and his phrases reflect contemporary linguistic conventions rather than consistent philosophical constructs. It was not, after all, 'nature' which saved anyone or gave value to his actions but grace. 'Nature' was the old dispensation; grace the new."

¹⁷ John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 95-96.

¹⁸ Thomas F. Martin O.S.A., *Our Restless Hearts: The Augustinian Tradition* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 37.

belonged to the grace of God and not to the actions of humans.”¹⁹ Augustine in his early years wrote that evil did not originate with God, and “developed the idea that humans possessed the capacity for initiating actions that were not ultimately caused by or predetermined by God.”²⁰ This belief that humans have a free will,²¹ is still important in Catholic tradition and differentiates from other Christians, particularly John Calvin’s followers who believed in predestination.²² The Catholic goes to confession to explain that he or she sinned by their own will. In the vision of free will gays and lesbians choose to sin because as God gave humans the capacity to will either good or bad conducts they choose to act on accordingly. But the Bishop of Hippo²³ changed his mind on the validity of free will. “In his letter to Sixtus, later Pope Sixtus III, [Augustine] insisted that humans were totally dependent on God’s grace and could not aspire to the good without it.”²⁴ The Pelagians, a group of Christians who had espoused St. Augustine’s early view on the free will entered in to a heated controversy about free will and grace,²⁵ with the founder of free

¹⁹ Paul Barry Clarke and Emma Norman, “Amor, Amor Mundi: Augustine and Dante on Will, World and the Roots of Democracy” (University Of Essex: Department of Government, 1998), 2.

²⁰ Barry Clarke and Norman, “Amor, Amor Mundi,” 2.

²¹ Bunson, *2006 Catholic Almanac*, 142. “The faculty or capability of making a reasonable choice among several alternatives. Freedom of will underlies the possibility and fact of moral responsibility.” *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, 486. “Hasta que no llega a encontrarse definitivamente con su bien ultimo que es Dios, la libertad implica la posibilidad de elegir entre *el bien y el mal*, y por tanto de crecer en perfecciono de flaquear y pecar.”

²² Martin O.S.A., *Our Restless Heart*, 128. “While most assert that the notion of ‘predestination’, perceived by many as the cornerstone of his [John Calvin’s] Reformed theology, was Calvin’s greatest borrowing from Augustine.”

²³ Another title by which St. Augustine is known.

²⁴ Barry Clarke and Norman, “Amor, Amor Mundi.” 5.

²⁵ Bunson, *2006 Catholic Almanac*, 143. “Grace: A free gift of God to persons (and angels), grace is a created sharing or participation in the life of God. It is given to persons through the merits of Christ and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It is necessary for salvation. The principal means of grace are the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), prayer and good works.” *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, 488. “La gracia de Cristo no se opone de ninguna manera a nuestra libertad cuando esta corresponde al sentido de la verdad y del bien que Dios ha puesto en el corazón del hombre. Al contrario, como lo atestigua la experiencia cristiana, especialmente en la oración, a medida que somos más dóciles a los impulsos de la gracia, se acrecientan nuestra intima verdad y nuestra seguridad en las pruebas, como también ante las presiones y coacciones del mundo exterior.”

will. To history the incident is known as the “Pelagian heresy.” Freedom of choice was the center of this debate as Augustine recanted from his early belief and claimed that “the good was a divine gift bestowed unconditionally rather than a free faculty. Therefore willing the good could not provide a means to God’s grace (...) Augustine (...) introduced the doctrine of predestination (...) God existed in eternity and thus saw that which was at the end of time even at the beginning.”²⁶ But the doctrine of predestination is not considered part of the Catholic catechism, it is though a doctrine found in the Calvinist branch of Christianity.²⁷ Frederick the Great,²⁸ and William III of England,²⁹ both homosexuals at different points in their lives, believed that maybe Calvinism’s belief in predestination was correct in explaining their personality and perhaps their homosexuality.³⁰ Currently homosexuals who want to be accepted by Christianity are using a similar argument to justify their preferences and sometimes, their lifestyle: God made them that way and consequently their actions are not sinful, for God does not make mistakes, though his work is not entirely finished because it needs to be perfected.³¹ This argument has weaknesses to it, if the theory of predestination can be used to justify homosexuality, then it could also be

²⁶ Barry Clarke and Norman, “Amor, Amor Dei Mundi,” 6-7.

²⁷ Martin, *Our Restless Heart*, 126. “There are some 1,700 explicit references to Augustine in John Calvin’s writings and an additional 2,400 quotations or allusions without citation. In his most important work, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, Augustine, after the *Scriptures*, is the most quoted of the fathers, appearing some 800 times.”

²⁸ A.L. Rowse, *Homosexuals in History: A Study of Ambivalence in Society, Literature and the Arts* (USA: Dorset Press, 1977). For a biography of Frederick the Great in the context of his homosexuality read pages 91-98.

²⁹ There is debate as to whether this king was a homosexual or not. See Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 59, 254.

³⁰ Jacob Burkhardt, “Frederick the Great- Judgments on History and Historians,” *The Online Library of Liberty: A Project of Liberty Fund, Inc.* (2009[cited 24 Nov. 2009]): available from http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=534&chapter=69849&layout=html&Itemid=27

³¹ *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, 89. “La creación tiene su bondad y su perfección propias, pero no salió plenamente acabada de las manos del Creador. Fue creada ‘en estado de vía’ hacia una perfección última todavía por alcanzar, a la que Dios la destino.”

used to justify pedophilia or murder, to conducts society agrees are not acceptable. Christianity argues that if God made homosexuals that way, then they must repress their feelings and live chastely, the argument used by the Catholic Church in the documents pertaining to homosexuality in the last quarter of the 20th century. In the 13th century another saint would modify some of the beliefs that the Catholic Church had held until that time by embracing Aristotle's precepts and incorporating them in to Catholic doctrine.

The Dominican Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), believed that in order to understand how the world operated and how humanity should behave, one needed to also be able to look outside the Bible and look at the natural world, particularly at the way animals acted with each other to better understand how God expected humans should behave.³² This belief that God had preordained a natural way—and thus a positive way—to do things and its counterpart, an unnatural way of behaving still resonates to this day.³³ Thomas Aquinas “was the only great scholastic theologian to discuss the subject of homosexual practices in any detail.”³⁴ His treatment of homosexuality must be placed within the context of his time and the information he had which was not always reliable. As John Boswell demonstrates, what the people believed at the time could be highly fantasized and misinformed.³⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas himself wrote or is quoted as saying that it is not possible to know the

³² Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, 319.

³³ Hogan and Hudson, *Completely Queer*, 478.

³⁴ McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 95.

³⁵ Another author speaks of how the perceptions of the Middle Ages could be misinformed. St. Isidore of Seville wrote twenty books titled *Orígenes o Etimologías*. “It’s important to understand that in the Middle Ages Science became confused with fantasy and so we see that he [St. Isidore] writes about beings that did not exist- griffins, dragons, giants and Cyclops...- as if they really existed. For example St. Isidore describes a monopod. He wrote that they were found in Ethiopia and that they were remarkable for their leg and the velocity with which they ran; Greeks named them ‘monocoli,’ because in the summer heat they would lie down on the earth and they would shade themselves from the sun with their foot, which was excessive in longitude.” Néstor Lujan y Juan Perucho, *El libro de la cocina española: Gastronomía e historia* (España: Tusquets editores, 2003), 56 [my translation].

whole truth in one's lifetime³⁶ and thus left future disciples the option to correct some of his assertions.³⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas' school of thought (known as Thomism³⁸) was very much debated for many centuries after his death,³⁹ particularly by the followers of St. Augustine's philosophical thoughts and the Platonic ideals which had inspired the Church since the 5th century.⁴⁰ Many eminent men, like St. Bonaventure,⁴¹ even though they were friends and contemporary with the Dominican Saint from Naples, believed that he was wrong and his writings were even execrated by some of the Bishops of the time as heretical.⁴² By the late 19th century Pope Leo XIII "recommended in his encyclical "Æterni Patris" (1880) the study of Scholastic philosophy, especially that of Saint Thomas Aquinas"⁴³ Because he believed it could be used as a method to create a better understanding between Catholicism and the modern world.

In sum, then, St. Thomas Aquinas applied a combination of rationalism and natural law theory to endorse and defend Christian beliefs using more than just internal reference to

³⁶ Robert Audi ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 31.

³⁷ Some of Saint Thomas beliefs are quaint to the modern reader "[h]e theorizes that since every child born should be male, because the effect should resemble its cause, there must be some etiological explanation for the birth of the inferior female. Such a birth he claims need not necessarily be the result of some intrinsic factor but may sometimes arise from an extrinsic accident. He quotes the Philosopher (Aristotle) to the effect "that a moist south wind helps in the generation of females, while a brisk north wind helps in the generation of males." McNeil, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 96.

³⁸ Audi ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 800-801.

³⁹ Bertrand Russell *Wisdom of the West* (London: Crescent Books, Inc., 1959), 156, 160.

⁴⁰ Russell, *Wisdom of the West*, 160.

⁴¹ St. Bonaventure biography can be found at Tim Noone and R.E. Houser, "St. Bonaventure," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Nov. 1 2005 [cited 5 Oct. 2009]): available from : <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bonaventure/> Gardeil, *Iniciación a la filosofía de Santo Tomás*, 34. "The strongest opposition to St. Thomas's teachings was led by the Franciscans in the 13th century" [my translation].

⁴² Gardeil, *Iniciación a la filosofía de Santo Tomás*, 33 [my translation]. "Bishop Robert Kilwardy of Canterbury censored some of his writings." Also Audi ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 800. "Some of Aquinas's positions were included directly or indirectly in the 219 propositions condemned by Bishop Stephen Tempier of Paris in 1277 (...) only after Aquinas's canonization in 1323 were the Paris prohibitions revoked."

⁴³ Leo XIII, "Æterni Patris," *New Advent* (August 4, 1879 (cited 24 Nov. 2009]): available from <http://Newadvent.org/cathen/09169a.htm>

the Bible. The adoption of Thomism by the Church is a way to best understand what occurs in the postmodern world can apply to the understanding of homosexuality,⁴⁴ by accepting that homosexuality is a natural phenomenon,⁴⁵ and by describing it as a natural occurrence that can only have been created by God, and thus the condition in itself is not sinful, because it is natural. It is precisely this argument that is used by the Vatican to state that homosexuals are not sinful in and by themselves.⁴⁶ Rather, it is their actions in bed which make constitute the sin and distance them from the Church. Being able to demonstrate that homosexuality is genetic would not be enough for some members of the Catholic Church who argue that even if homosexuality were proven to be a natural occurrence, the individual should still struggle to live a chaste life.⁴⁷ This belief does not satisfy the aspirations of some of the gays and lesbians who are members of the Catholic Church and who want to parallel the lives of their heterosexual counterparts. They want the Catholic Church to accept gay and lesbian couples as normal and frame the sexual activities that occur within their bedroom walls as acceptable (or at least of a totally private concern) and maybe even be able to enter in to marriages approved by the Church. The Catholic hierarchy is leery and unwilling of doing this, because it would have to modify its stand on

⁴⁴ The Catholic Church espouses two philosophical schools of thought neo Platonism and neo Aristotelians. Russell, *Wisdom of the West*, 157. “Neo platonic theologians [believed] that revelation was external to the system. Thomism produced a reversal doctrine against neo platonic theory. Aquinas believed being is seen exclusively in the particulars, and from this the existence of God is inferred. Two sources of knowledge are now postulated first there is reason, which obtains its food for thought from the experience of the senses and there is revelation as an independent source of knowledge. Where reason produces rational knowledge, revelation gives men faith.”

⁴⁵ Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 26. “A few years ago, when neuroscientist Simon Le Vay reported that the brain structures of gay and heterosexual men differed (and that this mirrored a more general sex difference between straight men and women) he became the center of a firestorm (...)Le Vay’s, and later geneticist Dena Hammer’s work suggested to them that homosexuality was inborn or innate.”

⁴⁶ Juan A. Herrero Brasas, *La sociedad gay* (Madrid: Foca, ediciones y distribuciones generales S.L., 2001), 190 [my translation].

⁴⁷ Herrero Brasas, *La sociedad gay*, 190.

sexual relations, redefine what is good in sexual activities and begin to look at sexuality as an action that entails more than a biological occurrence and explore other ramifications that sexual relations have,⁴⁸ besides procreating life.

Gay and lesbian Catholics must then espouse an “essentialist” argument to find acceptance within the Catholic Church, because it justifies their belief that God made them the way they are.⁴⁹ Their argument may run into difficulties if it is ever proven—presumably by scientific methods and via DNA analysis—that same-sex preference is not genetic, but acquired later on in life. If the counter argument is taken to be true and homosexuality is a construction, the Catholic Church can justify that same-sex relations are a conduct practiced by urban dwelling⁵⁰ individuals who have accepted this life style because they are sick or know no better. Yet the debate would not be entirely solved by adopting an essentialist point of view because of the Catholic Church’s use of terms like “natural law” or “normal.” These are labels that “can be an imposition of a gender norm that is socially, not scientifically driven.”⁵¹ Agreement between homosexuals and the Church on key concepts is still far off in the future. While the debate of whether gays and lesbians are born that way or are acculturated is clarified, it is important that gays and lesbians receive protection from the discrimination of the Catholic Church and the other Christian groups that question their existence. Hate crimes against homosexuals have been standard in the three North American countries and the justification for these hate crimes can usually be found in the perpetrators’ religious beliefs. The protection for sexual

⁴⁸ Lugo, *Iglesia Católica y homosexualidad*, 114.

⁴⁹ Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 144. “A belief in biologically based difference is often linked to conservative social policy, although the association between political conservatism and biological determinism is by no means absolute.”

⁵⁰ Didier Eribon, *Reflexiones sobre la cuestión gay* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1999), 34.

⁵¹ Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*, 8.

minorities necessarily comes from the state in each of the three North American countries. Though legislation is approved or denied to sexual minorities, the front even if it sometimes is offensive to the members of the different Christian groups.

3.2 The Catholic Groups that Represent Homosexuals, the Gay and Lesbian Community

Here it is appropriate to explore what the gay and lesbian communities and the Catholic Church have done to try to reconcile their differing points of view. Most of the dialogue, if there is any dialogue at all, occurs between the organizations at an official or semi-official level. Members of the gay community who also happen to be baptized Catholic, and thus are technically members of the Catholic Church, are confronted with various options of what to do as Catholics who are not entirely accepted or denied entry by the Church to which they belong. It is important to reiterate that ‘the Catholic Church’ is constituted by all those people who are baptized,⁵² and thus it does not to the Catholic hierarchy and the Church’s bureaucracy. Any Catholic individual can and does have an impact on the way gays and lesbians are viewed.

The idea that Catholics can shape the way they want the Catholic Church to function may seem novel, but as has been demonstrated in chapter one, it is possible to effect changes through the modification of certain conducts and the necessity of the Church to conform to the signs of the times and to new ways of thinking and believing. The example I mentioned about how the Vatican is trying hard to shepherd disillusioned Anglicans into its ‘fold’ demonstrates more than merely the latest method in the Catholic Church’s attempt to reinvigorate itself in Europe. It also reveals, variously, the center of the

⁵² See chapter one of this thesis.

Church's perceived weakness of itself (based on a fear of appearing to be too archaic), and the central source of its longevity and power (its willingness to downplay, if not fully reject, once-sacrosanct doctrinal principles in favor of greater and more flexible membership). Given that the Church really does seem to feel that conforming to the "times" is a necessity, then a further conclusion may be drawn: the hierarchy of the Catholic Church is, to some degree, open to –even subject to—being affected by certain forms of public opinion. The basic point to take away from all of this is that individual Catholics can shape the way the Catholic Church functions by espousing or rejecting ideals which may be considered by its present and potential members to be extreme. These range from ideals to the left and to the right of the political spectrum, without discounting the moderates—a sect within the Catholic Church which includes individuals who are welcoming of homosexuals as individuals or as a group—to others who outright reject gays and lesbians, their life style and who tend to view same-sex preferences from a disease to a mental disorder.⁵³

As was noted in the introduction to this chapter, it is clear that one of the options a homosexual has is to leave the Catholic Church if he or she does not feel validated or respected by the members of his or her parish and by the diocesan hierarchy.⁵⁴ Some

⁵³ McNeill, *Taking a Chance on God*, xix. "God intends all human beings to be heterosexual, and (...) homosexuality therefore represents a deviation from God's divine plan- a deviation usually explained in terms of sin or more recently, in terms of sickness."

⁵⁴ Kevin Orlin Johnson, *Why Do Catholics Do That? A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 132-133. Discriminated against "[t]he gay lifestyle, like any other is a matter of choice, and nobody has to live that way. It can be hard to see that, especially since the people these days often use the words homosexual and gay as if they meant exactly the same thing, but in the Church's view there is a big difference: the same distinction between the inclination to act and the action itself."

members of the Catholic Church would prefer that homosexuals take this option,⁵⁵ let the homosexuals leave and let the people who follow the Church's precepts to the letter stay.

Two points need to be made in response to this kind of argument. First, even the hierarchy of the Catholic Church is, as we have seen, prepared to downplay some of its own precepts in favor of adding substantially to the Catholic flock and thus preserving the institution for future generations. Given this kind of strategy, which might be called historical institutional flexibility or it might be called political opportunism, just in terms of logic it does not appear to be fully consistent to expect homosexuals to leave the fold because they do not follow all Catholic precepts "to the letter."

The second point to be made in response to those who advocate that homosexuals should leave the Catholic Church is more involved. It is a convenient solution for the members of the institution who feel that gays and lesbians are only doing harm by not following Vatican policies to the tee and staying within the Church. If the homosexual feels discriminated or persecuted within Catholicism, leaving may be an option which better suits him or her because there may be other issues within the Church that gays and lesbians may find distasteful⁵⁶ and leaving is a positive step to helping them feel happier, and there are other options for the people who choose to leave. One option is to simply abandon any form of worship and develop a set of beliefs which may or may not include the vision of the

⁵⁵ See for a good discussion on exactly this issue, Joan Venocci, "Should Liberals leave the Catholic Church?," *Boston Globe* (March 5 2006[cited 21 Nov. 2009]): available from http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles2006/03/05/should_liberals_leave_catholic_church/

also see Gregory Baum, "Should Homosexuals Remain in the Catholic Church?," *Catholic New Times* (Jan. 16, 2005[cited 18 Oct, 2009]): available from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0MKY/is_1_29/ai_n8706905/

⁵⁶ McNeill, *Taking a Chance on God*, 14. "For most of my clients the idea of God became so identified with homophobic self hatred that the only way they could deal with God was to take a vacation from religion while they dealt with the processes of coming out."

Catholic God; there are movements which reject the belief in God, or that condemn Christianity and Catholicism outright for the grievances that homosexuals feel the church was responsible for,⁵⁷ and would prefer to see the whole institution disappear.⁵⁸ There are also other groups devoid of any Christian content that are more welcoming to gays and lesbians that range from well-known old religions like Buddhism⁵⁹ with a more benign attitude toward homosexuality, to many of the New Age groups who have a liberal bent and accept individuals regardless of their sexual orientation.⁶⁰ If the homosexual is inclined to pursue a life in which the Christian message within a Catholic context is still important to him or her and desires pursue a religious course which follows a message of Christ and is inclusive, then the option would be to follow the same strategy as those Anglicans uncomfortable with female and gay priests are doing: contemplate entering another Church, just as the Catholic Church is suggesting they do. Likewise, homosexuals have the option of entering a gay-friendly church (just as some from the Catholic Church are suggesting

⁵⁷ Carolyn Dinshaw, "Touching on the Past" in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, ed. Mathew Kuefler (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 2006), 58.

⁵⁸ Kuefler ed., *The Boswell Thesis*, 12. "A great many gay people in the United States want to believe that Christianity is the enemy and that if they could get rid of Christianity everything would be much better."

⁵⁹ Buddhism is seen as a religion which is more tolerant toward homosexuality though historically this has not always been the case. Some gay Buddhists have tried to influence Buddhism to have a more positive light on homosexuality. Damian Keown, "Homosexuality," *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (2004 [cited 13 Sept. 2009]): available from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O108-homosexuality.html> "The question of whether homosexual acts are in some sense worse than heterosexual ones and perhaps intrinsically immoral is not pursued in the (Buddhist) literature. However, Buddhism is generally conservative in matters of sex, and references in certain texts suggest it was regarded with disapproval by some ancient authorities. Contemporary Buddhist groups concerned with gay rights, on the other hand, argue that such comments reflect the taboos of pre-modern society and need to be reassessed in the light of more tolerant contemporary attitudes. To a large extent the arguments in Buddhism mirror the debate taking place on the issue of homosexuality within other religious traditions." Also see

B.A. Robinson, "Buddhism and homosexuality," *Religious Tolerance.com: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance* (April 29, 2009 [cited 13 Sept. 2009]): available from http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_budd.htm "Many women, gays and lesbians have been attracted to Buddhism because of its relative lack of misogyny and homophobia, when compared to some other religions. But others report "virulently anti-gay sentiments and teachings from religious teachers in Tibetan and other Buddhist" schools."

⁶⁰ There are New Age groups that accept homosexuality and write favorably about it.

they do), particularly one like the Metropolitan Community Church which is inclusive and embraces homosexuality within an ecumenical message.⁶¹

But if the Catholic gay or lesbian decides to remain within the Catholic Church he remains with the idea of accepting the Catholic doctrine as is, or modifying its beliefs to improve the relationship between both groups. It is important to note that there are other Christian denominations which have accepted homosexuals and have made the Christian message work for the gays and lesbians which seek acceptance into the Christian communities.⁶² It is not impossible to expect, therefore, that Catholicism can at some point in the future heed the messages from these churches and incorporate gays and lesbians to their bosom if it so desires, based perhaps on scripture from the New Testament or the development of a theology around natural law that reflects that homosexual sex does not exclude the individual from God's plan.⁶³

For the purposes of this chapter and to answer the question posed in the introduction to this thesis, it should first be emphasized what the gays and lesbians⁶⁴ who choose to

⁶¹ Hogan and Hudson, *Completely Queer*, 387. Metropolitan Community Churches/ The Fellowship of (MCC) "Nondenominational religious group formed by the Reverend Troy Perry, an ordained Pentecostal Minister, at a series of meetings beginning in 1967. MCC's first service, attended by twelve people, took place at Perry's home in Los Angeles on October 6, 1968. By 1996 MCC had more than 40,000 members and about 300 churches in 16 countries. The Church has welcomed lesbian and gay people of all faiths."

⁶² Jean-Louis Bruguès, Guy Bedouelle and Philippe Becquart, *La iglesia y la sexualidad* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2007), 185. "In the 1960's gays and lesbians began to be accepted by mainstream Liberal Protestant groups and the Council on Religion and the Homosexual was founded. The purpose was to provoke a revision of the Church's stance on homosexuality."

⁶³ And if the works of John Boswell are true, then it wouldn't be the first time the Catholic Church does incorporate and accept people with same sex preferences, Mark D. Jordan, "Both as a Christian and as a Historian: On Boswells Ministry," in *The Boswell Thesis* ed. Mathew Kuffler (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,),89. "We have an abundance of ecclesiastical precedent to encourage the Church to adopt a more positive attitude [toward gay people]."

⁶⁴ It is not uncommon to hear jokes that ridicule homosexuals in certain contexts. Though the truth is said not all members of the clergy engage in these jokes and some of them are repulsed by the jokes. The author recalls being in the seminary of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, and the Priest remarking that no homosexuals would be allowed in the seminary, then he went in to detail how disgusting it was to feel facial hair against another man's cheek. The comment was received with laughter from the prospective seminarians. Author's personal experience 1996.

remain within the Church do to make up for the negative message that they receive from some of the members of the Church hierarchy. This is particularly so, given the messages discussed throughout this thesis from authorities in the Vatican and many of the Bishops within the North American continent down to the parish priest. The contention I wish to put forward here is that the reforms in the Vatican II Council, which gives the laity a greater degree of recognition⁶⁵ than it had had since the Tridentine Council of the 16th century, *open a window of opportunity* for gays, lesbian and their friends and families to believe that they can effect change because their voices can be heard by the Church hierarchy.

The situation for homosexuals in certain dioceses or certain Catholic groups is in fact one of acceptance—in varying degrees—on the part of the laity and the clergy, determined very much by factors like where the gay and lesbian live. It is certain that groups that are welcoming to homosexuals are generally located in urban centers and not in the country side. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the secular or regular clergy who are more accepting of difference are located in urban centers as well.⁶⁶ The importance of the tolerance the city offers for gays and lesbians is attested by the *New Ways Ministry*⁶⁷ internet site which offers a directory for gays and lesbians in the United States and Canada which informs readers of what parish, or Catholic university is welcoming to people with a same-sex orientation.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Terrence J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics* (Montreal and Kingston, London and Ithaca: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002), 313.

⁶⁶ See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). “As early sociologists suspected, the emergence of an extensive and multifaceted gay male world was made possible in part by the development of distinctive forms of *urban culture*” [Emphasis added].

⁶⁷ New Ways Ministry.

⁶⁸ There are a few web pages in which one can locate parishes by city for both Canada and the United States which are gay friendly. The addresses for some of the web pages are located at *New Ways Ministry* (2008 [cited 21 Sept. 2009]): available from <http://www.newwaysministry.org/GFP.html> The New Ways Ministry

In Mexico it is not so easy to find such a page: extensive formal and electronic research of publicly accessible information almost always comes up completely blank. If one wants to find a gay- or lesbian-friendly priest for confession or conversation, one must ask around within the self-identified member of the gay and lesbian community to discern who is tolerant and understanding enough to act civilly toward the gay or lesbian who wants to go to confession. The practical way the issue is handled, in other words, is ineluctably private, not public. However, there are ways of dealing with this kind of situation that can potentially appeal to more publicly accessible information. In Mexico, it is believed that Jesuits, due to their reputation for being learned and of a liberal⁶⁹ bent, tend to be more accepting of gays and lesbians, though this varies with the inclinations of the individual priest. The Dominicans⁷⁰ and the Oratorians⁷¹ also tend to be more flexible in their approach to sexuality in confession.

Unfortunately, though, in the case of Mexico there is still not enough public information for the gay and lesbian community member to easily find a priest or a Nun who

also posts a page of gay friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities for Canada and the United States at *New Ways Ministry* (2008 [cited 21 Sept. 2009]): available from <http://www.newwaysministry.org/GFC.html>,

⁶⁹ For a role of the Jesuits in the “Liberation Theology” in Latin America see Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits: The Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church* (New York et al.: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 17-19.

⁷⁰ Richard Woods O.P., *Mysticism and Prophecy: The Dominican Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1998), 24. The Order of Preacher (or Dominicans as they are popularly known) tend to be more educated than members of other orders as can be attested by their logo and their desire to discover God through *VERITAS* “the Truth” which is done by following the four elements of Dominican spirituality “(1) Dominican spirituality is a share in Jesus Christ the Word in his mission of announcing the Good News of salvation which he himself is; (2) This calling is fulfilled by a community out of its experience of living for God and for neighbors; (3) The source of its light is prayer, especially liturgical prayer; for which one is freed by ascetic discipline and simplicity of life; (4) This prayer is fed by assiduous study of the scriptures and of all sources of truth that help us to understand the word of God.”

⁷¹ In the city of Puebla the author can attest that for the last 15 years if somebody gay or lesbian wants to go to confession with a Catholic order who is understanding and tolerant one must go to the Oratorian church in town which is the Church of *La Concordia*. Gays and lesbians are able to take communion: “A homosexual engaging in homosexual acts in good conscience has the same rights of conscience and the same rights to the sacraments as a married couple practicing birth control in good conscience.” Michael W. Cuneo *Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 26.

is accepting. Indeed, homosexuals may find individuals or entire communities who are antagonistic to anything which is remotely striking of homosexuality. It is also important to note that gay and lesbian Catholics who belong to the Catholic Church are seeking for ways to be accepted by the institution and they have done so by claiming that the gay and lesbian orientation is not a construction *per se*, but that it is an inborn quality which defines their same sex desires.⁷² The argument that they use is that of the essentialist theory, which was touched on earlier and is developed further.

3.1.1 “Courage”

Because this thesis focuses on the North American continent, only the organizations that have a presence in the three countries will be analyzed here. The Catholic Church officially recognizes and supports one group in the United States, Mexico and Canada whose focus is to incorporate homosexuals “back into”⁷³ the Catholic Church by treating them psychologically in order to become heterosexuals or at least chaste: the group’s name is “Courage.”⁷⁴ Because of the support it receives by some members of the Catholic hierarchy⁷⁵ and its presence in the three North American countries, it is interesting to analyze what the movement believes in and why the Church supports it.

⁷² Thomas C. Fox, *Sexuality and Catholicism: Abortion, Homosexuality, Women and the Church, Birth Control, Clergy and Sexual Abuse, Carnal Love, Celibacy and Population Control* (New York: George Braziller, 1995), 131. “Perhaps the most significant recent attitudinal change towards gays and lesbians has followed the realization that homosexuality for the most part is not chosen. By the 1970s the behavioral sciences were largely in agreement that homosexuality is a sexual ‘orientation.’ This makes a critical difference in Catholic morality. The Church has never taught that being gay is sinful. It teaches that sin must involve a personal choice. It teaches that sin must involve a personal choice and where choice is absent, there can be no sin.”

⁷³ [Emphasis added].

⁷⁴ Courage offers a list of centers where homosexuals can go to in the web page for Courage at <http://couragerc.net/WWWCCanada.html> For the United States visit *Courage* ([cited 21 Nov. 2009]): available from <http://couragerc.net/The United States.html> For Mexico visit *Courage* at *Courage Latino* ([cited 6 Oct. 2009]): available from www.courage-latino.org

⁷⁵ Tanya Erzen, *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 46. “Cardinal Terrence Cook of New York invited him

The 2006 *Catholic Almanac* defines “Courage” (the group) as follows, “[m]inistry to men and women who experience same sex attractions and desire to live Christian chastity in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church... The National Director is Rev. John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S.”⁷⁶ In an interview with the author, the facilitator of “Courage” in Puebla⁷⁷ was kind enough to answer some of the questions I had about the group. The main purpose of “Courage” is to help homosexuals live a chaste life, “Courage adheres to the Catholic idea that the solution to homosexuality is chastity and community,”⁷⁸ but in the chapter in Puebla they also believe homosexuality is a choice, and every man or woman, who has same-sex preferences can choose to not be attracted to members of his or her own sex,⁷⁹ because “we were all born heterosexual.” The group does not seek to pressure anybody to stop being a homosexual though; it will only effect changes that the individual wants to do.⁸⁰ “Courage” believes that homosexuality, viewing pornography and masturbation are addictions – which gays and lesbians engage in– and like any addiction the individual can fight it off; the organization can channel the person with psychologists approved by the Catholic Church to help them end the addiction(s). The

[Father John Harvey, founder of ‘Courage’] to establish a spiritual support system for men and women with homosexual inclinations in the New York archdiocese. Father Harvey began his first Courage meeting in 1980, and the archdiocese of New York continues to sponsor him.” In the case of Puebla, Mexico the leader of the Courage chapter in town informed me they had the tacit approval of the former Archbishop Rosendo Huesca.

⁷⁶ Bunson, *2006 Catholic Almanac*, 501.

⁷⁷ See appendix 2 for locations of Courage Latino in Mexico

⁷⁸ Erzen, *Straight to Jesus*, 46-7. “Courage adheres to the Catholic idea that the solution to homosexuality is chastity and community. The Catholic ex-gay movement emphasizes celibacy over heterosexual marriage because celibacy signifies a spiritual and sacrificial path that is in line with Catholic theology. Courage’s official goals are: To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church’s teachings on homosexuality; To foster a spirit of fellowship in which all may share thoughts and experiences, and so ensure that no one will have to face the problems of homosexuality alone. To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in a celibate Christian life and in doing so provide encouragement to one another in forming and sustaining them. To live lives that may serve as good examples to others.”

⁷⁹ McNeill, *Taking a Chance on God*, 66. “All human beings are by nature heterosexual.”

⁸⁰ He set forth two examples: the group can help the person fight against pornographic addiction and masturbation.

goal for many of the individuals who enter this group is to “become heterosexual,” and thus “normal” according to the teachings of the Catholicism.⁸¹ The facilitator explained that all people are born heterosexual, and that at some point the individual chose to become homosexual; to convince me of the truth in his assertions he explained that he had once been addicted to homosexuality, but now found that he was no longer attracted to men, and he found himself attracted to women.⁸² The facilitator's view is incongruous with the founder of “Courage's” belief.

The whole purpose of evangelical ex-gay ministries is to recover heterosexuality through a relationship with God, but Father Harvey believes that there is no way a person will ever eliminate temptations, and his or her goal should instead be to live a chaste Christian life.⁸³

The Catholic conflict with homosexuality can be seen within “Courage” between the beliefs that gay and lesbian sexual preferences are sometimes chosen and sometimes constructed becomes apparent in the way this group handles the information. The Official Catholic stance to accept that people might be born with the preference based on the 1976 American bishops’ pastoral letter⁸⁴ yet, there is still an ongoing debate about whether the sexual identity can be changed. The author believes that the official principles “Courage” espouses in believing that gays and lesbians will remain that way are more congruent with the reality of gays and lesbians, assuming an essentialist point of view, and have to wonder out loud whether the idea of “returning homosexuals” to heterosexuality, as the coordinator of the group informed me, is possible; the contradiction between both stands demonstrate that the

⁸¹ There is a conflict of interests in the information I receive though. The coordinator of the group informed me that the individual could become heterosexual once more. This is one of the goals of evangelical ex-gay groups, not Catholic ex gay movement. Courage founder, Father John Harvey, does not believe this to be possible. Erzen, *Straight to Jesus*, 47. “The whole purpose of evangelical ex-gay ministries is to recover heterosexuality through a relationship with God, but Father Harvey believes that there is no way a person will ever eliminate temptations, and his or her goal should instead be to live a chaste Christian life.”

⁸² Personal interview.

⁸³ Erzen, *Straight to Jesus*, 47.

⁸⁴ Jason Berry & Gerald Renner, *Vows of Silence: The abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 34.

Church's official posture towards homosexuality is congruent in describing it as conduct which is bad, but it does not know how to solve the problem of "normalizing homosexuals," to bring them in the fold. "Courage" in Mexico is supported by a Catholic Order named the Legion (or Legionaries) of Christ.⁸⁵ The order is known to be a conservative⁸⁶ order within the Catholic Church.⁸⁷ Yet "Courage's" dependence on the Legion of Christ to survive has had a negative effect on the organization and its mission in Mexico due to the scandal that shook the order more than a decade ago, when the founder of the Legion, Marcial Maciel, L.C.⁸⁸ was accused by former seminarians of being molested by him when they were children and teenagers.⁸⁹ The language the Catholic Church utilizes to equate homosexuals⁹⁰ with paedophiles that I have discussed at length periodically throughout this thesis made a close association with "Courage" uncomfortable for the Legion, which did not want to be involved in anything that might give the

⁸⁵ Much has been written about The Legion of Christ in Spanish most of them deal with the sexual abuse that the Founder of the Order, Marcial Maciel is accused of having perpetrated against young seminarians: Alfonso Torres Robles, *La prodigiosa aventura de los Legionarios de Cristo* (Madrid: Foca ediciones, 2000). In English see Berry and Renner, *Vows of Silence*. J. Paul Lennon, *Our Father Who Art in Bed: A Naïve Sentimental Dubliner in the Legion of Christ* (Book Surge Publishing, 2008).

⁸⁶ Berry and Renner, *Vows of Silence*, 243. "The Legion of Christ is one of the new evangelical movements in the Catholic Church whose fundamentalism and organizational dynamics clash with the collegial spirit of Vatican II."

⁸⁷ David Gibson, *The Coming Catholic Church: How the Faithful are Shaping a New American Catholicism* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 2003), 55. "At the high-water mark of priestly vocations, during the Golden Age of American Catholicism in the 1950s, there was one priest for every 650 Catholics, studies show. By 1999, that ratio had nearly doubled, to one for every 1,200. According to one widely accepted survey, by 2005 the ratio could be one priest for every 2,200 Catholics." There has also been a declining rate of priests in Canada and Mexico.

⁸⁸ Marcial Maciel was also accused of fathering as many as six children while he was a priest, "[t]uvo Marcial Maciel amorío y procreó una hija, NYT," *El Universal.com.mx* (Feb. 4, 2009 [cited 8 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/574297.html> Also see "Aparecen más hijos de Maciel," *Noticieros Televisa* (Aug. 11, 2009 [cited 8 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.2.esmas.com/noticierostelevisa/mexico/nacional/086327/aparecen-mas-hijos-marcial-maciel> [my translation].

⁸⁹ Torres Robles, *La prodigiosa aventura de los Legionarios de Cristo*, 269-291.

⁹⁰ Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom*, 94.

impression that it does not hold high standards of Conservative Catholic theology. And so the order has kept a lower profile as to what its mission is in “Courage” Mexico.⁹¹

Even if the support of “Courage” is tenuous at the moment, the Legion of Christ is one of two orders⁹² within the North American Catholic Church that try to work with homosexuals and give them a voice and a space within the institution. “Courage” does not only rely on the Legion of Christ for its existence. It also needs the support of the Catholic hierarchy to survive. In Puebla, “Courage” had problems functioning appropriately because they did not have the Archbishop’s official approval. They have been within the arch diocese since 2006, but the former Archbishop, Don Rosendo Huesca, did not assign them a space where they could hold meetings, and he did not give the permission necessary for the meetings to be held at all. As a result, the members of “Courage” Puebla have to attend Mexico City group meetings that are a basic staple of the organization.⁹³

“Courage” is not viewed favourably by many gay activists who call it an ex gay⁹⁴ movement which seeks to transform the gay and lesbian person and turn them in to a heterosexual version of themselves.⁹⁵ John McNeill is blunt with his words when he describes what ex gay movements do.

Those religious groups that claim to be able to ‘heal’ homosexuals attempt to do so by intensifying the gay and lesbian person’s sense of being sinful and evil because of their

⁹¹ Interview with Ivan Sanchez at the “Courage” offices in Puebla November 25, 2008.

⁹² The other group, the order of St. Aelred will be analyzed in a few paragraphs.

⁹³ “World Wide Chapters,” *Courage* (2000 [cited 21 Nov. 2009]): available from <http://couragerc.net/WorldWideChapters.html> “Courage Chapter meetings are the most basic way to get connected. At meetings members pray together and share their stories and ideas, offering each other friendship and encouragement”

⁹⁴ An ex gay is a person who through psychological counseling and spiritual support, particularly of Christian inspiration becomes a heterosexual once again. The term is controversial as many members of the gay and lesbian movement do not agree that sexual orientation can be changed. For more information on ex-gays read Erzen, *Straight to Jesus*, 2-3.

⁹⁵ McNeill, *Taking a Chance on God*, 66-67.

sexual feelings. Since sexual orientation is fundamentally unchangeable, the best that can be hoped for from this process is that the gay person will suppress his or her gay identity.⁹⁶

Even if “Courage” repulses some gay and lesbian activists and their sympathizers it is an organization that gives recognition and a certain validation to homosexuals within the Catholic Church. Although looked at with distrust by groups both within the Catholic Church and the gay and lesbian community, Courage offers a venue for gays and lesbians to participate within the Church and may be beneficial in the future to open dialogue between Catholics and homosexuals. Yet it is not the only organization which seeks to bridge the differences between both groups.

There are other groups in the North American continent that are more supportive of the “gay and lesbian lifestyle” within the Catholic Church, but they do not have the official endorsement of the Church hierarchy. They seek to integrate gays and lesbians without taking in to account the Church’s central tenet that they must live chastely. They also ignore the 1986 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexuals* which insists that “not only are homosexual acts disordered, but the orientation that leads the people to behave in this way is objectively bad.”⁹⁷ These groups want the Church to recognize that their same-sex relationships are healthy psychologically and that they are not sinful. Some of these groups are supported by members of the Catholic bureaucracy or are constituted by men and women who are baptized and thus members of the Catholic Church but who are ostracized officially by the Church.

⁹⁶ McNeill, *Taking a Chance on God*, 66.

⁹⁷ Bruguès, Bedouelle and Becquart, *La Iglesia y la sexualidad*, 191 [my translation]. Also see Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1996), 60. “The Catholic Church believes virginity and chastity are very important. So important that a chaste person can save the world: “In the ‘Canons of Athanasius ‘we find the virgin’s fulfilling the same role as the Paschal lamb: In every house of Christians, it is needful that there be a virgin, for the salvation of the whole house is that virgin. And when the wrath cometh upon the whole city, it shall not come upon the house wherein a Virgin is.””

There are growing numbers of highly organized Catholic and ecumenical homosexual networks in the world today. They have their own chaplains, websites, newsletters and liturgies. They are telling Rome and their Bishops that whatever the Church's teaching, they want to belong. The leading groups include in the United States, Dignity, Conference for Catholic Lesbians, Courage, New Ways Ministry (the network established by the silenced religious Father Robert Nugent and Sister Jeannine Gramick), in Mexico Otras Ovejas.⁹⁸ A small semblance of the groups that have presence within the North American countries will be presented in the following paragraphs.

3.1.2 Dignity/Dignité

'Dignity' is considered the most "visible organization of queer Catholics"⁹⁹ in the North American continent. It is represented in both the United States and Canada, and it is particularly "numerous in the United States."¹⁰⁰ The group was founded in 1969 in the city of San Diego, a city that straddles the border between Mexico and the United States, by "Father Pat Nidorf as an advocacy and support group for gay and lesbian Catholics."¹⁰¹ The vision statement of Dignity USA is as follows: "DignityUSA envisions and works for a time when Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Catholics are affirmed and experience dignity through the integration of their spirituality with their sexuality, and as beloved persons of God participate fully in all aspects of life within the Church and Society."¹⁰² The belief of the Catholics that conform Dignity is that other Christian denominations have been able to integrate gays and lesbians to their congregations and the Catholic Church can at some point do the same.¹⁰³ But Dignity chapter were looked at with disfavor by the current Pope when he was head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the

⁹⁸ Cornwell, *Breaking Faith*, 128. Bernard Schlager, "Reading CSTH as a call to Action: Boswell and Gay-Affirming Movements in American Christianity," in *The Boswell Thesis*, ed. Kuefler, 76.

⁹⁹ Jordan, "Both as a Christian and As a Historian," in *The Boswell Thesis* Kueffler ed., 88.

¹⁰⁰ Herrero Brasas, *La Sociedad Gay*, 189 [my translation].

¹⁰¹ Hogan and Hudson, *Completely Queer*, 478.

¹⁰² "Dignity USA Celebrating the wholeness and holiness of Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender Catholics" ([cited 10 Sept. 2009]): available from <http://www.dignityusa.org/>

¹⁰³ Hogan and Hudson, *Completely Queer*, 478. "Many gay and lesbian Catholics had believed that a rapprochement similar to those achieved by other Christian denominations could be achieved."

Faith and in fact the organizations was barred from holding meetings in Church property to signal a distancing by the Church of anything that went against the official doctrine. “But Ratzinger’s¹⁰⁴ 1986 letter signaled the hardening of attitudes within the Church hierarchy. More than 50 Dignity groups were ordered to cease meetings on Church property, and the Church put its support behind campaigns to fight pro-gay and lesbian legislation.”¹⁰⁵ The purpose of his 1986 letter was to stop the advances that gays and lesbians in Dignity were obtaining from the Church.¹⁰⁶ However, and despite this attempt to derail this GLBT-Catholic alliance, Dignity has had some successes since 1986.

Dignity is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, gay Catholic support group in the United States and Canada and it is composed by lay men and women, “priests, Monks, Nuns, Sisters that claim that they have a right to declare publicly that they are homosexuals and that prefer to do their apostolate preferably in the gay and lesbian community.”¹⁰⁷ Dignity members seek to obtain rights, particularly the right to marry members of their own sex. Dignity endorsed the National Equality March that took place in Washington D.C. October 10 through the 11 of this year and released a statement which explains the posture of its members.

DignityUSA endorses the National Equality March, October 10-11, 2009 in Washington, DC, and will participate fully in this event. As the nation's foremost organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender Catholics and our allies, we call on members and friends to support this March, and the principles for which it stands. Civil rights for our community is a hallmark of justice, and as Catholics, members of the largest denomination in the US, we believe we have a particular responsibility to witness to our belief in justice for all people in

¹⁰⁴ Current Pope Benedict XVI.

¹⁰⁵ Hogan and Hudson, *Completely Queer*, 478.

¹⁰⁶ Herrero Brasas, *La Sociedad Gay*, 189 [my translation].

¹⁰⁷ For locations of Dignity Chapters in the United States see *DignityUSA* ([cited 8 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.dignityusa.org/map/chapter> For locations of Dignity Chapter in Canada see *Dignity Canada Dignité* ([cited 8 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.dignitycanada.org/>

the places where public policy is made, as well as in our Church. We urge those who are able to be present to March with Dignity in Washington, DC on Oct. 10-11.¹⁰⁸

While it is the largest Catholic group that represents gay and lesbian interests it currently has no filial organization in Mexico, though it is represented in Canada and the United States. The positive – and I dare claim– more realistic approach that “Dignity” takes to integrating gay and lesbian lifestyles is hopefully a harbinger of positive relations between both groups in the future. But at the moment this does not seem to be the case. The Church has not modified its stand on “Dignity” chapters holding their meetings within Church property and the relations between both groups are publicly nonexistent at this moment.¹⁰⁹

3.1.3 Other Sheep

Instead of Dignity, there are two groups in Mexico which seek to give Catholic gay and lesbians a part in the Catholic Church, and at the same time offer a positive message on being gay and lesbian and pursuing the Christian faith. Both these organizations are American in their origin¹¹⁰ but have branched out to Mexico in the last two decades. One of these groups is Other Sheep¹¹¹ which was founded in 1992¹¹² in the United States in with the purpose of

[s]erving in geographical areas where information and organizations are still relatively scarce. To share the good news that God loves all people and calls us into inclusive communities; To provide programs, support, and counseling that build self-esteem and wholeness, capacity to love and the freedom to participate fully in religious and community life; To network with and equip those who seek to challenge existing prejudices and discriminatory practices, especially in the areas of theological and pastoral training, human and civil rights, and HIV/AIDS prevention and care.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ “DignityUSA Endorses National Equality March, Oct. 10-11, 2009,” *DignityUSA* (Aug. 27, 2009 [cited 20 Oct. 2009]): available from www.dignityusa.org/content/dignityusa-endorses-national-equality-march-oct-10-11-2009

¹⁰⁹ [my emphasis]

¹¹⁰ Originally formed and created in the United States.

¹¹¹ The translation in to Spanish is “Otras Ovejas.”

¹¹² “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities” (2007 [cited 18 Oct. 2009]): available from www.othersheep.org/About_Other_Sheep.html

¹¹³ “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities.”

The messages anyone can read on the web page and which include titles like “Clobbering Back With the Clobber Texts”¹¹⁴ or A Gay Apostle’s Queer Epistle for a Peculiar People¹¹⁵ are encouraging to gays and lesbians and seek to demonstrate that the Bible and Christianity have nothing bad to say about homosexuals or the lifestyle they lead. Other Sheep is, however, not exclusively Catholic and it seeks to include members of any Christian denominations,¹¹⁶ and it is represented in the three North American countries which are analyzed in this thesis.¹¹⁷

3.1.4 The Order of St. Aelred

Another Catholic group which can be found in two of the North American countries is the Order of St. Aelred. Its presence is localized in certain geographic areas, and may not well be known. For example, the group is present in only one Mexican state, Coahuila where they were invited by the present Bishop Vera. I was not able to find this religious group in Canada. The friendly position it holds toward gays and lesbians is demonstrated by their guidelines which state,

[i]n these times in the world we are confronted with a homophobic Roman Catholic pope, and at the same time we are comforted by a courageous parliament in Catholic Spain who made that country become the third of four countries which have opened up "marriage" equally to heterosexual and homosexual people. The Order of St. Aelred must sound the clarion call loud and clear for the reality of God's unprejudiced and unhomophobic love for all people -- in the face of the false picture of God (white haired old judgmental hateful man in the sky) which have misled God's beloved people for centuries.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Bernard Schlager, “Reading Csth as a Call to Action,” in *The Boswell Thesis*, Kuefler, ed., 76. Clobber texts, “Those seven passages from the Old and New Testaments which have been most frequently cited as clear condemnations of homosexual behavior.” Also see: “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities” (2007 [cited 18 Oct. 2009]): available from www.othersheep.org/Clobber_Outline.html

¹¹⁵ “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities.”

¹¹⁶ Cornwell, *Breaking Faith*, 128.

¹¹⁷ “Other Sheep Multicultural Ministries with Sexual Minorities.”

¹¹⁸ “About the Order of Saint Aelred (O.S.Ae.),” *St. Aelred Monastery Manila* (1999 [cited 25 Sept. 2009]): available from <http://www.geocities.com/staelredmonasterymanila/>,

The Order of Saint Aelred was incorporated as a religious society in the Philippines,¹¹⁹ and the order's name comes from a saint, Aelred of Rielvaux, presumed by some to be a gay¹²⁰ saint best known for his writing on friendship titled *De Spirituali Amicitia* which was "considered to be his greatest work,... a Christian counterpart of Cicero's *De amicitia* and designates Christ as the source and ultimate impetus of spiritual friendship."¹²¹

The order of St. Aelred seeks to include gays and lesbians within the Catholic Church and give them a positive message about their sexuality and their faith. This is achieved through "The Gay Men's Support Groups"¹²² and "The Center for Study of Spirituality and Sexuality"¹²³ which "[g]uided by its central tenet that spirituality and sexuality are equally essential elements of human fulfillment, members of CSSS study the implications and applications of unifying spirituality and sexuality (soul and body) in today's world. They do this through seminars, workshops, symposia, and group sessions – and in their daily lives." The group was introduced in Coahuila Mexico by Bishop Raul Vera the only Church representative in North America who has apologized publicly for the

¹¹⁹ "About the Order of Saint Aelred (O.S.Ae.)."

¹²⁰ The Catholic Church does not believe St. Aelred (1109-66) was gay; in the Catholic Encyclopedia located at Kevin Knight, "St. Aelred," *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (2009 [cited 18 Oct. 2009]): available from www.newadvent.org/cathen/01172b There is no mention of his homosexuality. Boswell disagrees in John Boswell, *Same Sex Unions in Pre Modern Europe* (New York: Villard Books, 1994), 259.

"Within religious communities, although marriage was not officially permitted, permanent and abiding relationships were nonetheless a familiar part of life. St. Aelred of Rielvaux had several such relationships in his twelfth century Cistercian abbey, and even appealed to the relationship between Christ and St. John as a "marriage" by way of precedent."

¹²¹ "St. Aelred," *Encyclopedia Britannica* ([cited 18 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/154053/De-spirituali-amicita>

¹²² "About the Order of Saint Aelred (O.S.Ae.)," *St. Aelred Monastery Manila* (1999 [cited 25 Sept. 2009]): available from <http://www.geocities.com/fridayclubph/>

¹²³ "About the Order of Saint Aelred (O.S.Ae.)."

discriminatory actions the Catholic Church has conducted against homosexuals.¹²⁴ Bishop Vera has also worked with the community of St. Aelred to promote a forum which wanted gays and lesbians to look to Christ and offer him an encounter with his or her interior well being.¹²⁵

Bishop Vera belongs to the Order of Preachers or Dominicans as they are better known. Some of its members have helped impart a positive message for gay and lesbians in the North American continent. Bishop Vera of Coahuila is one of them, thanks to his support of the St. Aelred order and his public policy of endorsing seminars on being gay or lesbian within the Catholic Church; the Dominican community that administered the “All Saints Catholic Newman Center” in Tempe, at Arizona State University (ASU) was another. The Dominicans’ traditional link with education¹²⁶ has enabled them to receive from different archdiocese in the North American continent the right to administer several Newman Centers generally located at Public Universities.¹²⁷ The Newman Center at ASU led by Fr. Fred Lucci¹²⁸ had a ministry which was inclusive of the Catholic gays and lesbians in the ASU community and was also welcoming to anybody who was not a student within the University. It is rumored that the Dominican support of gays and lesbians at the

¹²⁴Cristian Rea, “Obispo Católico pide perdón a la comunidad lésbico-gay,” *Rola Gay* (March 2009 [cited 18 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://www.roclub.org.mx/09/03/ObispoPerdon03.htm>

¹²⁵ Arturo Estrada, “Promueve Diócesis Foro Lésbico Gay en Saltillo,” *anodis.com* (Mar. 31, 2006 [cited 18 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://anodis.com/nota/6708.asp>

¹²⁶ Gabrielle Kelly, O.P. and Kevin Saunders, O.P., *Dominican Approaches in Education: Towards the Intelligent Use of Liberty* (Australia: ATF Press, 2007), 6.

¹²⁷ For a list of University Ministries the Dominicans lead in the Western Province of the United States consult www.opwest.org

¹²⁸ Jessica Testa, “Newman Center Undergoing Change in Leadership,” *State press.com* (Aug. 24, 2009 [cited 20 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://statepress.com/node/6850#>

Center prompted Bishop Thomas Olmsted¹²⁹ to remove the care of the center from the Dominicans and giving it to the diocese.¹³⁰

The legacy of the Dominicans at the Newman Center cannot be too heavily underscored. It gave gays and lesbians a space within the Catholic Church to express their views and to find a bridge between the gay and lesbian lifestyle and the Catholic Church. An example of the positive impact it had on some Catholic gays and lesbians can be observed in one of its parishioners: Neil Giuliano, “a Catholic who acknowledged his homosexuality during the 10 years he was mayor of Tempe and who then moved on to lead the national organization Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) for more than four years.”¹³¹

The formation of Catholic groups that seek to protect the rights of gays and lesbians with the Catholic Church is an interesting feature of North American Catholicism.¹³² Some gays and lesbians refuse to leave Catholicism and are striving to make a place for themselves within the Catholic Church. Unfortunately the Catholic Church refuses to conduct a dialogue with any group other than “Courage.” It particularly censors or refuses to deal with any groups that espouse an agenda that is favorable to a gay and lesbian lifestyle. In order to understand whether a dialogue between both groups can be

¹²⁹ For a biography on Bishop Thomas Olmsted see “Biography of Most Reverend Thomas J. Olmsted,” *The Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix web page* (2000-2008 [cited 22 Nov. 2009]): available from <http://www.diocesephoenix.org/bishop/olmstedBiography.htm>

¹³⁰ Lawn Griffith, “Catholic Bishop moves on gay friendly ASU Newman Center,” *East Valley Tribune.com Metro Phoenix’s East Valley Region* (July 6, 2009 [cited 20 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://spirituallife.freedomblogging.com/2009/07/06/catholic-bishop-moves-against-gay-friendly-newman-center-at-asu/771/>

¹³¹ Lawn Griffith, “Catholic Bishop moves on gay friendly ASU Newman Center,” *East Valley Tribune.com Metro Phoenix’s East Valley Region* (July 6, 2009 [cited 20 Oct. 2009]): available from <http://spirituallife.freedomblogging.com/2009/07/06/catholic-bishop-moves-against-gay-friendly-newman-center-at-asu/771/>

¹³² Herrero Brasas, *La sociedad gay*, 187. “Aunque en España y otros países europeos la influencia de la religión ha descendido en las últimas décadas, en países como Estados Unidos es extraordinariamente fuerte.”

commenced and gays and lesbians can be accepted into the Church it is important to understand why Catholic homosexuals feel that they must be accepted by the Church. This entails explaining why one is a homosexual in the first place and this brings to the fore an argument of why an individual has same-sex preferences.

Conclusions

To answer the question posed in the introduction (Has the identity clash between the Catholic Church and the gay community reshaped/reaffirmed/ highlighted, or otherwise affected perceptions of the gay community and how this identity is performed?) I attempted to analyze what the gay community and the Catholic Church have done to incorporate or alienate each other from belonging to the Church. Despite the fact that many church going members would like gays and lesbians to leave the Catholic Church, there is a sizable amount of them who refuse to leave. Both the Catholic Church and the gay and lesbian community have organized themselves in to groups with the finality of permitting gays and lesbians to remain within the Church, under different conditions. The Catholic sponsored Courage seeks to allow gays and lesbians in as long as they renounce the gay and lesbian life style and attempt to live chastely. The gays and lesbians who reject this option have constituted themselves in to groups like Dignity and Other Sheep which intend to modify the Church's discriminatory stance on homosexuality in the future by finding ways to circumvent Catholicism's historically negative attitude towards homosexuality. The biggest hurdle gays and lesbians have in their dealings with the Church is that their sexual actions, the very actions that are an undeniably important part of their persona and which has helped them primarily to define themselves as a minority, are seen as sinful by the Church.

In order to revert the perception that homosexual acts equal a sin it is important for the members of the gay and lesbian community to find an explanation to why they have same sex preferences. This thesis is written under the assumption that homosexuality cannot be cured under the guidelines the Church currently offers and as the organization Courage envisions it. Celibacy is undoubtedly an option for the people who wish to pursue it, but not one that many gays and lesbians find realistic in their lives. Their hope is to find ways to justify homosexual relations within Catholicism that have a positive message for homosexuals whether they are single or living as couples.

Gays and lesbians that want to be accepted by the Catholic Church have attempted to find the answers that justify their homosexuality, with the hope of undermining the premise that they are acting sinfully. There have been two arguments to justify acceptance on the part of the Church of gays and lesbians: one argument was used by John Boswell who attempted to demonstrate that Christianity had at one time accepted gays and lesbians within its fold, and if it had done so in the past, then it could do so in the present. There are downfalls to this argument, particularly that the Church has used History itself in the guise of tradition to justify the persecution of people who engaged in sodomitical acts for centuries. Another way gays and lesbians have searched for acceptance is by claiming that same sex preference is inborn, thus natural and if it is natural it cannot be sinful. This arguments has several weaknesses as well, which will not be explained fully but can be exemplified with two controversies: the idea that a pedophile or an alcoholic could claim that their desires are genetically predisposed, like homosexuality, and thus makes them less accountable for their actions, can be used to deny homosexuals legal rights. Just because at some point it can be proved that pedophilia is genetic does not mean that society will give

them a free pass to engage in sexual intercourse with children, the same with an alcoholic who due to his drinking may be responsible for hurting other people because he drove irresponsibly. It is expected in western society that the individual can and should control urges that damage the fabric of societies well being. These arguments are used against homosexuality as well, if it is genetic they should still restrain themselves from acting on their instincts. The second controversy this argument causes is that if homosexuality is due to genetics the parents of future children will be able to determine the sexual preference of their unborn child, and that would mean that homosexuality would probably disappear even for parents would surely opt for heterosexuality for their children with the best intentions for the welfare of their unborn child. At this moment the arguments may seem moot, particularly because what causes homosexuality has not been determined, so gays and lesbians are left trying to bargain with the Church using the essentialist and constructionist argument when it suits them. This thesis concludes that the best way to get the Church to accept gays and lesbians is using the argument that in essence gays and lesbians are born with those preferences. The argument lessens the guilt of the parties before the Church's eyes and may be used as a dialogue starter between both parties. This discourse may be perceived as optimistically naïve, but the counter argument, the one that ascertains sexuality can be chosen, and gays and lesbians can change their sexual preferences to become heterosexual brings an ending to any discussion of assimilation between both groups, with the Church alleging that they must become heterosexual once more or else they are breaking the laws of God.

