

CONCLUSIONS

On Wednesday December 16, 2009 the government of Mexico City approved modifications to its civil code which allowed same sex citizens to be married within the limits of the Federal District.¹ This joyful event for gays and lesbian throughout the world was marred by speeches given by the Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) and the Catholic Church's negative reaction to the new legislation. The PAN, the political party to which the current President of Mexico Felipe Calderon Hinojosa belongs to, has been historically associated as espousing the moral views of the Catholic Church,² wanted to repeal the law that was approved by appealing to the judicial system and condemned the newly acquired right of gays and lesbians to adopt children.³ Cardinal Norberto Rivera, Archbishop of Mexico City, was appalled by the approval of the legislation which he called "condemnable and immoral"⁴ and which went against the traditional Mexican family unit.⁵ On Sunday December 27 there was a confrontation between some gay and lesbian activists who had gone to the Cathedral in Mexico City to protest the Cardinals speech by showing images that offended the susceptibilities of some parishioners who had gone to mass that day.⁶ Without going in to the incidentals of the confrontation between both groups the scuffle

¹ Ella Grajeda, ALDF Avala dos veces el matrimonio gay *el-universal.com.mx* (Dec. 16, 2009 [cited 6 Jan. 2010]) available from <http://www.el-universal.com.mx/notas/646440.html>

² Luis Paredes/Enrique Cid* *Los secretos del Yunque: Historia de una conspiración contra el Estado mexicano* (México: Grijalbo, 2009), 238.

³ PAN recurrirá a la Corte por uniones gay *el-universal.com.mx* (Dec. 15, 2009 [cited 6 Jan. 2010]) available from <http://www.el-universal.com.mx/notas/646203.html>

⁴ Condenable e inmorales las bodas gay: Norberto Rivera *México Migrante: Información para nuestra identidad diario digital* (Dec. 22, 2009 [cited 6 Jan. 2010]) available from <http://www.mexico.migrante.com/?p=40971>

⁵ Condenable e inmorales las bodas gay: Norberto Rivera *México Migrante: Información para nuestra identidad diario digital* (Dec. 22, 2009 [cited 6 Jan. 2010]) available from <http://www.mexico.migrante.com/?p=40971>

⁶ Altercado afuera de Catedral por bodas gay *Vanguardia* (Dec. 28, 2009[cited 6 Jan. 2010]) available from http://www.vanguardia.com.mx/diario/noticia/politica/nacional/altercado_afuera_de_catedral_por_bodas_gay/447064

highlights that at the present moment there seems to be no dialogue at a public level between Catholics and gays and lesbians because emotions run deep about the subject. Gay and lesbian rights are still a touchy theme that can lead to verbal and in some cases physical confrontations which do not resolve the issues at hand and leave people feeling bruised by the experience.

The discrimination towards homosexuals which has been noted throughout the thesis, and the influence this discourse has on the State is highlighted once more by the incidents that occurred in Mexico City during the month of December 2009 and gives this thesis an added importance for it emphasizes that there is a middle ground where dialogue can be achieved between both groups and this could eventually lead to the incorporation of homosexuals who are interested in becoming full fledged members of the Catholic Church. Though the situation of the men and women who can be identified as queers, gays, lesbians and homosexuals has clearly changed in the last decades of the 20th century and the first one of the 21st century thanks to the expansion of a globalized culture, heavily influenced by the American view of what being gay or lesbian means, and the modifications to the legislation which have been approved by the State, there is a blockade against the legislation that favors people who are involved in same sex acts, particularly in countries heavily influenced by religion. In North America different Christian groups have been instrumental in blocking the granting of legal recognition to homosexuals because they believe it violates the precepts of their religious belief system. Historically, Christianity has influenced the Western World's political views of what is proper sexual behavior and what is not, and in the present they attempt to influence the State by blocking any

legislation that seeks to give gays and lesbians rights to marry, adopt children or approve laws that punish hate crimes based on a person's sexuality.

In Europe secularizations seems to be on the rise and the recognition of gay and lesbian rights has been approved with more ease than in the North American context were the influence of the different Christian groups has permitted legislation favorable to the granting of gay rights has been curtailed; within North America the most important Christian organization is the Catholic Church, which has the most numerous adherents in the three countries. Because of the size of its adherents and the influence they exert on the State it is important to analyze what Catholicism bases its dislike of homosexuality to understand the discrimination that occurs against homosexuals through the approval or denial of rights through the legislation of each country. These issues reaffirm the statement used in the introduction of this thesis that "because there are several arguments suggesting that more and more successful changes can be made using the perspective I have chosen(...) the "piecemeal" approach which uses "small adjustments and readjustments which can be continually improved upon;"⁷ this thesis inserts itself in that argument that minute steps taken towards improving homosexual and Catholic relations are better than no dialogue at all, and may eventually help both groups to develop an understanding.

To answer why Catholicism views homosexuality as an action that separates man and woman from God this thesis explored the discourse that justified the discrimination by exploring the Church's past and its theological basis for the discrimination of homosexuality. By exploring the past the reader was able to ascertain that the Church has in

⁷ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 66.

fact managed to modify central beliefs to adapt to new ways of thinking, making the acceptance of gays and lesbians within the Church a possibility and thus helping to end the discrimination. This thesis proposes that change can occur by demonstrating that there are arguments that can be used to justify the tolerance or acceptance of homosexuals. This could be achieved by changing the way certain beliefs are viewed in the light of recent scientific, archaeological and historical discoveries which are giving us new ways to interpret information the Church once believed to be true, but which is now questionable and which will be explained throughout the thesis.

Questioning the basic beliefs that condemn homosexuality was done throughout the thesis by exploring the justifications that Catholic Church uses to discriminate homosexuality and which will be briefly explored in the next paragraph. In the introduction an argument espoused by Daniel Helminiak in his book *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality?* was presented to justify that the discrimination of same sex acts in the story of Sodom could be modified by claiming that God punished the twin cities for committing the sin of being inhospitable to foreigners, rather than blaming them for the attempted homosexual rape of two angels by the male citizens for the incident. This argument does not seem to hold up for the Bible is full of incidents that claim same sex acts are sinful in nature; Jack Miles's statement that it is "only by a forced political correctness that the Bible as a whole can be read as neutral on the subject of homosexuality"⁸ holds true as the Bible reveals several stories where same sex acts are not agreeable to God. Though the literal interpretation of the Bible may be a problem for Christian Church's who assume that the Bible must be taken literally, and thus homosexuality should be considered a sin, this

⁸ Jack Miles *God: A Biography* (New York: Vintage House, 1995), 57.

problem does not arise for the Catholic Church who besides using the Bible to understand God's message to humanity also uses philosophy and theology to make sense of what God wants from humans.

This Catholic perspective seems to open more possibilities for the gays and lesbian Christians to be accepted into a Christian group through the use of other sources other than the Bible that may excuse homosexuality. John Boswell, a gay Historian and a Catholic believed that Catholicism could include gays and lesbians based on the study of Classical and Medieval sources that seemed to confirm that early Christianity did not exclude homosexuals. In his book *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 in to the fold.

The historical approach that Boswell used opened doors for dialogue between Catholicism and gay and lesbian groups but the effort to reconcile differences ended when John Paul II became Pope and adopted a stance that can be described as ideologically conservative, which excluded gays and lesbians in Canada and the United States from holding meetings for homosexuals within Church property. Boswell was also criticized for espousing an essentialist view of homosexuality and by using the word gay indiscriminately throughout his work when referring to any historical figure who may or may not have had a same sex relationship or leaning. The criticism came mostly from the Catholic Church who viewed his interpretation of documents as erroneous and members of academia who espoused a constructionist approach to viewing homosexuality.

Though the historical approach is debatable, Boswell's view of homosexuality in Christian history is an eye opener for gays and lesbians who can question the Church's discriminatory attitude toward them, by giving them hope that Christianity does not necessarily mean exclusion based on their sexual preference. Boswell's ideas also brought to the fore the debate of whether homosexuality is acquired through social construction or if it is a condition which one has from the moment he or she is born. If Science demonstrates that all men and women are born heterosexual and construct an identity based on the flaws of human society, the discussion between both groups will probably come to an end, for then Catholicism is correct in its assumptions; the only option for gays and lesbians to be incorporated in to Catholicism would be to take the Church's message at face value and convert to heterosexuality once more or choose to separate from the Church and find whatever spiritual answers they may be searching for in another Church or spiritual group with a more liberal view on homosexuality. The constructionist theories cannot be discarded for it explains the forming of identities based on the social paradigm that the individual lives in.

For the debate between homosexuals and the Church the argument that seems to be the one that would improve relations between both groups would be the essentialist theory. If at some point in the future it can be demonstrated that gays and lesbians are born with the same sex preference gene encoded in their DNA, the relations between gays, Lesbians and the Church could be modified for it could be understood that in God's plan there is room for people with same sex preference. That probably would not be enough though for as it was explained in the introduction the problem between Catholicism and homosexuality stems mostly from the early Church father's views of the human body, particularly from the

views of St. Augustine of Hippo,⁹ who used Greek philosophical concepts of “natural” and “unnatural” to describe things that were good or not.

The denial of pleasure for the body will be one of the central arguments Catholicism will utilize to condemn homosexuality, along with the fact that there are questions about procreation, particularly in the case of the males. Do sperm cells have a soul? Masturbation is a sin based on the idea that sperms have souls and wasting the seed may be tantamount to killing future human beings by engaging in acts of lust. There are many questions that need to be answered but I propose that adopting an essentialist point of view may be the beginning of dialogue between both groups, particularly if in the future it is discovered that homosexuality itself is not a social construction, but an innate quality. St. Augustine’s ideas can also be used to justify homosexuality from an essentialist point of view, by arguing against his early theory on the idea that humans have free will. If humans do not have free will as he argued against the proponents of the Pelagian heresies, then that lessens their responsibility and puts responsibility on God’s shoulders. God as the creator of time itself stands outside of it and is able to foresee what the actions of his creation will be. This may seem a more Calvinistic in its approach than Catholics would like to accept, but then again an argument could be made that the Protestant Reformation was heavily influenced by Augustine and the Augustinian order (Martin Luther was a Augustinian Monk and Calvin was heavily indebted to Augustine as was explained in Chapter Three); it is a notion that has been held since the 17th and 18th centuries by homosexual men who believed that they

⁹ Kim Power, “Veiled Desire,” 7. “The fourth century was the time when `orthodoxy` was forged from the polemical debates about Christology’s and their concomitant anthropologies and ecclesiologies.”

were born with a preference for members of their same sex as was exemplified by Frederick the Great and William of Orange.

The essentialist argument can be carried further along to incorporate the Church's teachings of what is natural and what is not. If the Church fathers and the Thomists looked to nature and the way animals interacted to understand how God planned the world they can verify that homosexual acts *do*¹⁰ occur in nature by the actions of species who engage in same sex activities and justify homosexuality as natural. Though science is helping to push the dialogue forward by questioning old Christian paradigms of what is correct natural behavior there are still no clear answers to all the questions the thesis posed to help gays and lesbians end discrimination from the Catholic hierarchy; there are still many variables to draw a final conclusion on the arguments for or against homosexuality being accepted by Catholicism; future scientific discoveries will determine whether homosexual discrimination by the Church is based on reason or whether it is based on the flawed interpretation of facts throughout the centuries. Taking Christ's words at face value "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,"¹¹ the discovery of scientific data that supports the essentialist argument for homosexuality may mean that men and women born homosexual will be free from the persecution and disdain their conduct has elicited for Christianity and can determine whether or not they can be accepted by Catholicism.

¹⁰ My emphasis

¹¹ (John 8:32)