

Nature with water and the Spirit: a response to Rowan Williams

By: [Eugene F. Rogers](#)

Eugene F. Rogers (2003). Nature with water and the Spirit: a response to Rowan Williams. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 56, pp 89-100. doi:10.1017/S0036930603000176.

Made available courtesy of Cambridge University Press:

<http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0036930603000176>

*****© Cambridge University Press & Scottish Journal of Theology Ltd. Reprinted with permission. No further reproduction is authorized without written permission from Cambridge University Press. This version of the document is not the version of record. Figures and/or pictures may be missing from this format of the document. *****

Abstract:

For Paul, 'nature' works differently for free Jewish men (torah-observers) and others (slaves, Gentiles, women), so that in Paul 'nature' is a differentiated rather than universal philosophical concept. Paul so differentiates natures according to theological considerations we might call narrative. Stories about God's relations with Israel set the context in which Paul's use of 'nature' makes sense. 'Nature' is a character in a story of captivity observed in the light of release (Rom 1:17–18).

The eucharist mobilizes the related concept of 'body' to enact a parallel story of captivity and release – the binding of Isaac and the crucifixion of Jesus – in which God exposes the worst that human beings can do (child sacrifice, execution of innocents) so that it can be healed.

Nature is a character in a story liturgically enacted in baptism, eucharist, marriage. The character's changing circumstances are plotted by the Spirit in traditions Syriac, Latin, Greek, German, and Russian. (Nature is perfected by grace.) No mere scenery, nature is dynamic. A creature of the Spirit, it is to grow. Ontologies of nature depend on the narrative for which they seek conditions. This narrative requires a dynamic and differentiated account so that nature can serve the promise of blessing.

Keywords: Theology | Christianity | Nature | Eucharist

Article:

I

Rowan Williams asks whether 'nature' works in the rest of Paul as I suggest it does in Romans. I offer a hypothesis, which is for those better trained in NT than I to test. For Paul, 'nature' works differently for free Jewish men (torah-observers) and others (slaves, Gentiles, women), so that in Paul 'nature' is a differentiated rather than a universal philosophical concept. Paul so

differentiates natures according to theological considerations that we might call narrative: that is, stories about God's relations with Israel set the context in which Paul's use of nature makes sense. In Paul, as in other typological and narrative traditions (of which I cite Syriac, Greek, Latin, and German examples in Part 3), it comes as no surprise that 'nature' represents a concept differentiated by the work of the Spirit and articulated by typology and narrative. As de Certeau writes in another context, 'This surface, articulated but not unified, obeys therefore a different type of coherence than philosophical discourse.'² Nature is God-moveable and Spirit-malleable from the inside. It is dynamic, on the way from Eden to eschaton by way (as it happens) of the fall. Nature too is a pilgrim concept.

In *Sexuality and the Christian Body* I proposed that nature in Aquinas's Romans commentary became a character in a narrative, and I suggested that something like that held true in Paul's Romans, too. How far does that go for other uses of 'nature' in Paul? The instances of phusis in authentic Pauline letters seem to be Rom 1:26; 2:27; 11:21-4; 1 Cor 11:14; Gal 2:15 and 4:8.³ It is surprising to read them together: every case but one is about the distinct natures of Jews and Gentiles, about what we would now call ethnic stereotype.⁴ The other case (1 Cor 11:14) is about the heads of women. So in all cases 'nature' is a differentiated or articulated, not universal, concept.⁵ In all cases but one, the natures in question have explicitly or implicitly to do with a story which is a narrative of decline, in which God chose one ethnic group, Jews, to be a witness to others, Gentiles, ethnē, whom God gave up to their desires so that they would die out (1:32).⁶ This usage is if anything confirmed by the writer of Ephesians, who in 2:3 seems to be interpreting Rom 1:26 and 2:27 in thinking of the Gentiles as 'by nature children of wrath'.⁷ The odd example - that of women in 1 Corinthians - is of course also part of a decline narrative: women needed to keep their heads covered according to the story that women sinned with the Watchers, who looked down and saw their heads (Gen 6:4). In all those cases, therefore, natures are given and given up by God according to God's plotted initiative in one story that God shares with differentiated human groups.

This seems to be of a piece both with the views of the rabbis, and with ancient Mediterranean notions of sacrifice worked out in various ways among Jews, Greeks, and others. God gives the offspring of the lamb and of the land, and God gives them as wealth to human husbandry. A donor therefore offers back to God the best of the crop.⁸ In Romans the circumcised are given by election and the gift of children to grow and increase, while 'those uncircumcised by nature' (2:27) - what a phrase! - are given up to desires we might now call homosexual so that they will die out. In this sacrificial substrate to Mediterranean culture, nature, culture, and history come together not because of ancient confusion, but because God gives nature/culture/history as an articulated unity.

If Pauline Christianity both participates in and undermines this, it is not because Gal 3:28 is an individualist charter of liberty in the modern sense. Rather, Gal 3:28 comes to have consequences perhaps unintended by Paul because of peculiar Pauline practices. 'Paul's attack on slavery and the abuse of women and children came not through any doctrine of social equality or

program of liberation or any intentional plan, but through refusing to marry and thus form a traditional household and by insisting on living by his own labor.⁹ These practices comport with a change in the nature of sacrifice.

Pauline sacrifice does not exist to underwrite the household, with its commitments to human and husbanded offspring. Rather, Paul is a proto-ascetic who discourages marriage, downplays the importance of wealth, and works with his hands, rather than depending for aristocratic leisure upon the work of women, children, and slaves. Gender categories are overturned not so much because 'in Christ there is no male and female', but because the eucharist is striking in the context of ancient religious meals in featuring no (observable) meat.¹⁰ If they conformed to gender norms, men cooked meat exclusively, and women cooked grain, or baked. Despite the development of an all-male priesthood, the Lord's supper is a sacrifice that many observers would gender, in ancient terms, female.¹¹ Or, since sacrifice must be male, their critics thought Christians had no sacrifice at all - no men killing an animal and sharing it as food - and therefore no religion properly so called. Today we might even say that the eucharist ends gender, because it represents the male-gendered flesh of the sacrifice with the female-gendered bread. But 'sacrifice' brings us to another topic that Williams raises, that of the relation of sacrifice to eucharist.

II

In *Sexuality and the Christian Body* I wrote that the trinity breaks not apart but open with the breaking of the bread. With that I meant to claim that the opening up of the trinity goes all the way down, while the form that its opening takes ('breaking') is contingent. A metaphysics of rupture, therefore, can only be a contingent, postlapsarian metaphysics, even if it is also, *felix culpa!*, a metaphysics of healing, the rupture of exploration, exposure, and surgery. God comes close to us in nuptial mystery and exposes the worst we can do, so that we can be healed. As Jesus explains to his mother in a hymn of Romanos, he becomes the patient in order to heal as physician:

'Be patient a little longer, Mother, and you will see how, like a physician, I undress and reach the place where they lie and I treat their wounds, cutting with the lance their calluses and their scabs. And I take vinegar, I apply it as astringent to the wound, when with the probe of the nails I have investigated the cut, I shall plug it with the cloak. And, with my cross as a splint, I shall make use of it, Mother, so that you may chant with understanding,

''By suffering he has abolished suffering, my Son and my God." '12

Rupture and surgery do not go all the way down, but respond to sin. All three Abrahamic traditions tell a story in which God seeks to transform sinful human nature with an offering (promise and feasting) that becomes sacrifice by interruption, by God's attempt to take up, assume, and redeem human sin, before being revealed as essentially thanksgiving. One imagines that apart from sin gift would turn to gratitude without interruption, as in the trinitarian life. Only

after the fall does the offering of thanks become sacrifice for sin. 1 Cor 10:17 glosses the fraction of the bread as distribution for unity's sake: 'we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread', and that conception predominates into the second century (as in Ignatius of Antioch). Gradually the fraction came to carry a more complicated symbology, that of the breaking of Christ's body, so that in some rites the priest pierces the bread with a lance.¹³ The complexities of thanksgiving's persistence and restoration are clearer in narrative than in conceptual analysis: let us consider the complex of stories in Gen 18.

Between the promise of a son and the ransom of Isaac another episode intervenes, the hospitality of Abraham.¹⁴ In Gen 18 three visitors appear to Abraham and Sarah at the oaks of Mamre, and Abraham makes them a great feast of cakes of meal, a calf, curds and milk. The three visitors repeat the promise of the covenant. Now in Gen 18 some passages refer to three men and some passages refer to two angels and the Lord. This shifting back and forth between the three and the Lord has caused some traditional Christian interpreters to see the trinity here. Furthermore, since the members of the trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, one God, are here feasting with human beings, these interpreters see a foretaste of the feasting or celebrating or dancing that God intends human beings to share when they come to participate in God's own trinitarian life. Jesus says, 'The kingdom may be compared to a father who gave a feast for his son.'¹⁵ This is the feast that God has prepared for his people from before the foundation of the world, and to which they look forward at the end - the feast that Abraham shares with God under the oaks of Mamre and at the reception of the promise.

Abraham receives a promise that by him all the nations of the earth shall be a blessing one for another. Abraham celebrates with three visitors at a festive meal. Abraham exposes his son to the knife. Abraham receives a ram to restore the son. Christian interpreters have often read the sequence meal-sacrifice-restoration in the context of another meal, sacrifice, and restoration: namely the last supper, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. Christians celebrate that sequence as often as they take bread and wine in memory of him. Thus too they enact the hospitality of Abraham and the binding and ransom of Isaac as often as they do it.

But the story in Gen 18 does not end with a festive meal. The meal precedes a sinister episode in which the feasting exchange of gift and gratitude is exposed to traditions of first-born sons sacrificed to Molech.¹⁶ The critics of religion are right: religion, like love, is highly ambiguous; the highest form of human activity becomes, under conditions of sin, precisely the most dangerous. Can God deal with this feature of human beings, or does holiness tie God's hands? The text does not portray God as stopped or thwarted or pulled up short by the ambiguities of human loves and loyalties, or even by human religious tendencies to violence. God exposes the worst that human beings can do, so that it can be healed. God risks telling Abraham to sacrifice his son in order to show Abraham what to offer instead. God provides a ram - a ram that according to rabbinic interpretation God had prepared for the covenant since before the creation of the world. The initial command is chilling, as if to say 'OK, go ahead'. But the story as a whole enacts a dramatic irony and relief. God transforms the Molechite impulse to violent

sacrifice into the peaceful offering of praise and thanksgiving. This transformed offering becomes the Jewish tamid and the Christian eucharist.¹⁷

The NT does not soften but intensifies that pattern. God imitates Abraham: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son'. Jesus cries out from the cross as if in the voice of Isaac, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

And yet Jesus and the Father, like Isaac and Abraham, are oddly not at odds. Jesus, like Isaac, is willing. Abraham and Isaac, Jesus and the Father are at one in pursuing the promise. This feature of the stories is odd enough to become one reason why Christians say that both Jesus and the Father are God, so that God's sacrifice is first of all a sacrifice of himself. Thus we return to the feast. 'This is my body,' Jesus says, 'given for you.' God would renew the feast even on the night in which he was betrayed. A vain attempt, perhaps; a deathbed wedding. But God risks the worst that human beings can do - crucifixion, child sacrifice - and transforms it into yet another invitation to the feast, another occasion of gift. God gives back for love the son that Molech would kill; God gives back for feasting the body the Romans would break. When Christians break the bread of communion, it is the breaking of God's own body that they enact. By God's dramatic irony it does not so much break apart, as break open: the trinity takes this occasion to lay itself open, and human beings, with Abraham and Sarah under the oaks of Mamre, join Father, Son, and Spirit in feasting. Surely the feast of Abraham will turn hostility into hospitality, as in Ps 23: 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies'. It is part and parcel of this pattern that the community formed by the eucharist provides a means to resist both evil and victimage: turning the other cheek, walking the extra mile, loving one's enemies, and praying for those who persecute one both expose evil and preserve agency.¹⁸ Then the promise will be fulfilled that by the name of Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be, not curses, but blessings to one another.¹⁹

In a subversive engagement with sacrificial bodies, Jesus redeploys the diversifying creativity of the Spirit, using it to deconstruct a structure of violence.²⁰ Apply the following passage to the eucharist:

To deconstruct the concept of matter or that of bodies is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power. Here it is of course necessary to state quite plainly that the options for theory are not exhausted by presuming materiality, on the one hand, and negating it, on the other. It is my purpose to do precisely neither of these . . . it does not freeze, banish, render useless, or deplete of meaning the usage of the term; on the contrary, it provides the conditions to mobilize the signifier in the service of an alternative production.²¹

At the last supper, Jesus mobilizes the body for the production of grace, neither presuming nor negating nature. As Williams suggests, Cavanaugh's Torture and Eucharist is a spellbinding account of how the eucharist might yet preserve that power of mobilization here on earth.²²

James Alison uses the term 'beyond resentment' to signal the power of the eucharist to get beyond violence and create fraternity. And yet there is more, something beyond not only resentment, but beyond even its absence. The eucharistic sequence of feasting-sacrifice-feasting, whether in Genesis or in Jesus, is somehow also non-reactive. 'I am talking about beginning', he writes - a creatorly beginning - 'beginning to sense a creative project of love which is not really beyond resentment at all. It is so much prior to resentment that it has to hide a vast, playful laugh at bringing us into being, lest we misinterpret such playfulness and such joy from within our resentment and shrink back, refusing to believe that all that tenderly suppressed mirth is not "at" us but "for" us.'²³ For after all, 'Isaac' means laughter.

III

'Nature' is the substrate of the potential for blessing. No nature is nature which is not transformable into eucharist, into thanksgiving. Even fallen nature, in the hands of God, retains this possibility despite itself, of going beyond itself. Nature is destined for excess, if it is excess received, and not a thing to be grasped. The character of nature, like that of the eucharist, changes with its fortunes in the hands of the Spirit, from offering of thanksgiving to offering of sacrifice and back again by God's sense of irony; fraction from distribution and unity to breaking open and unity renewed.

In the widest variety of Christian traditions, nature is no sheer rival to grace,²⁴ but the creature of God destined for consummation in God. Consider examples Eastern and Western, Catholic and Protestant, Syriac, Latin, German, and Greek. In Ephrem the Syrian, 'nature' is a secret hoard of types unlocked by Christ, a harp played by the Spirit, an olive tree planted by the Father.²⁵ In Thomas Aquinas, 'nature' appearing without further qualification is explicitly to be understood as 'nature reformed by grace'.²⁶ Even in Karl Barth, 'nature' is a sign that no one is 'living in some forgotten corner of the world, where God is not God or cannot be known as God',²⁷ so that Barth can 'gladly concede that nature does objectively offer a proof of God, though the human being overlooks or misunderstands it'.²⁸ In Romanos the Melodist, 'nature' is the water on which the Spirit hovers to collect the seas and rain upon the fleece; form into limbs, and wash in the river, the substrate of miracle:

At your conceiving without seed, O Mother of God, Joseph was struck with wonder as he contemplated what was beyond nature, and he brought to mind the rain on the fleece, the bush unburned by fire, Aaron's rod which blossomed.²⁹

Nature is not destroyed, burst apart, violated, raped when God moves it beyond itself, but consummated. Concrete nature, therefore, belongs to a world not abstracted from grace but moved by grace. Pure nature is a Restbegriff, a remainder concept, that finds its integrity not in

its isolation from but in its communion with God. Concrete nature might have belonged to a deist's world, in which God created the world and let it go; but in fact it does not. Even Barth agrees that nature is not, in fact, God-forsaken. That is not the story we're in. Nature belongs to a world created in grace,³⁰ the grace of which is a backwards-effect of the incarnation.³¹

`Nature' is not a common biblical word outside Paul (whose usage we considered above), but `water' is. Let `water' stand for nature, and consider its relation to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit hovered on the face of the waters at creation. The Spirit overshadowed the waters of Mary's womb. The Spirit alighted upon Jesus in the waters of the Jordan. The Spirit overshadowed the transfiguration of Jesus with clouds of water. The Spirit delivers on the waters of baptism in the resurrection. The Spirit so far rules over nature as to kindle fire in the water. The Spirit is fire in water of the womb, and of the Jordan, fire in the wine and fire like water on the head.³² Nature might, in a story contrary to fact, have an integrity apart from the Spirit. But theologians from all traditions can treat nature as a creature (also) of the Spirit. Nature, in short, is what Spirit does with it.

This may make it sound as if nature can mean anything at all. One wants to know what the controls are. The controls, I think, are narrative. Even natural law reasoning, in Aquinas's hands, reflects God's providential – that is, storied - interaction with his creation.³³

`Nature', like water, is a character in a story, a story liturgically enacted by the community in baptism and eucharist. The ontologies of nature that the church and its theologians have from time to time produced are, like all ontologies, reflections upon stories. Reflection upon nature is about what must be the case if the biblical stories are true. At home in those stories, nature is no mere scenery, but interacts - patiently and by participation - with changing circumstances plotted by the Spirit. The interaction of plot and circumstance identifies nature as a character. Bible and theology construe it as not a static but a dynamic thing. Nature is created with an end in view; it is to grow. Even when it falls, it falls not into stasis, but into a counter-movement, into decay. Nature is redeemed not to status quo ante but to an excessive, surprising elevation and more growth. These are the changes of a character - of a human character, for the most part. `What role does free will play?' Bernard of Clairvaux asks himself: `I answer in one word: Salvetur, it is saved.³⁴ So it is with nature: it is not God-forsaken; it is God-moved.

Nature is not mere mechanical or even organic teleology, but is destined to come with surprise and transfiguration to an eschaton rather than a telos, an end in Christ's hands rather than in a domesticated development.

We know that the `physical' world [i.e., the world of phusis, nature], its matter (hule) is not closed out from nor alien to the Spirit. Created out of nothing, the world receives its reality, matter, and elements from the Holy Spirit, so that its most material elements are, at the same time, its most spiritual ones by virtue of their reality. Further, the diversity of the world, its all, its universality, in the sense of the presence of all its aspects, ideas, or words (logoi), together

with their inner interpretation according to a 'logical' order, becomes real by the Holy Spirit, who is the reality of the 'cosmos,' of universal being. In this aspect the world participates in the spirit by the fact that it is real . . . It is open to the spirit; it is materially spiritual.³⁵

This leaves room for more diversity than one often associates with Christian views of nature. Consider the lilies that neither toil nor spin! Consider God's parallel husbandry in grafting the wild onto the domestic olive! Suppose 'be fruitful and multiply' belongs with 'let the earth put forth vegetation' and 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures' and 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth' and 'let the earth bring forth living creatures' and 'everything that creeps upon the ground': in all these cases, the earth and the waters bring forth things different from themselves, not just more dirt and more water; and in all these cases, they bring forth multiply different kinds of things: one might almost translate, 'Be fruitful and diversify'.³⁶ Multiplication is always in God's hand, so that the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, the blessed fruit of the virgin's womb, the diversity of the natural world, and God's husbandry alongside (para) nature (Rom 11:24) in grafting the wild olive onto the domestic does not overturn nature but parallels and perfects it.³⁷

Notes

1 Allow me to express my gratitude for Williams's review, and for the opportunity to think further about the issues he raises.

2 Fritz Bauerschmidt, 'Michel de Certeau and Theology', *Modern Theology* 12 (1996), pp. 1-26, here p. 12, quoting Certeau, 'La Rupture instauratrice', in *La Faiblesse de croire*, ed. Luce Giard (Paris: Seuil, 1987), pp. 215-16. If I had wanted to increase my philosophical commitments, I might have put the project of *Sexuality and the Christian Body* in Certeau's terms: *Sexuality and the Christian Body* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) seeks to see whether marriage yet retains derivative reservoirs of meaning. One might regard Certeau as providing a pneumatology for that. Marriage is 'no longer what animates discourses', for it has become a site that 'no longer functions as an institution which founds a sense, capable of organizing a representation', but 'has ceased to be a site of production' (Michel de Certeau, 'The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing, a Christian Transit', in *The Certeau Reader*, ed. Graham Ward [Oxford: Blackwell, 2000], p. 218). Its recovery involves what Certeau calls 'the work of an excess' (p. 224), the kind of excess that God works when he grafts wild-olive Gentiles para phusin onto the domesticated, Jewish stock, or when the church grafts 'prodigal' same-sex marriages onto 'domestic' cross-sex ones. 'It is a risky proliferation, but controlled by procedures proper to this or that textual practice' (p. 232).

3 I have worked out this paragraph and the next three in conversation with Stanley Stowers. Readers should not assume that he agrees with conclusions not found in his published work, and should assume that mistakes are mine.

4 Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Jews, Gentiles, and Justice* (New Haven, CN, and London: Yale University Press, 1994 hb, 1997 pb), pp. 108-9.

5 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 111-18.

6 A possibility pointed out to me by Wayne Meeks. Cf. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, pp. 90-1, who does not quite draw that conclusion.

7 As Stowers pointed out to me.

8 Stanley K. Stowers, 'Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?', in Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville, KY, London, and Leiden: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), pp. 85-6, and the other articles cited on p. 279 n. 24, including 'Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion', in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 1995), pp. 299-320, and 'On the Comparison of Blood in Ancient Israelite and Greek Sacrifice', in *HESED VE-EMET: Essays in Honor of Ernest Frerichs*, ed. Jodi Nagness and Seymour Gitin (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 179-94.

9 Stanley K. Stowers, 'Paul and Slavery: A Response', *Semeia* 83/4 (1998), pp. 295-311, here 309. He continues: 'This model of Paul, the ideal ascetic, was followed by many thousands of later Christians and struck at the very foundation of Greco-Roman society. Thus even if Paul at some time owned slaves, the model life that he left in his letters structurally attacked slavery by attacking its social basis, the household, and its continuity through inheritance from master to master.'

10 Stowers, 'Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?', pp. 98-9.

11 But see Nancy Jay, *Throughout All Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

12 On the Lament of the Mother of God 13, in *St Romanos the Melodist, Kontakia on the Life of Christ*, trans. Ephrem Lash (Walnut Creek, CA: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 148. I owe the insight that Christ is both physician and patient to Stephanía Gianulis.

13 See George Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy* (Madison, WI, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp. 86, 91-2, 168-9.

14 The next five paragraphs were composed in slightly different form for the Children of Abraham Institute at the instigation of Peter Ochs and appear independently as 'The Ransom of Isaac', *Journal for Scriptural Reasoning* 1/2 (2001/2), forthcoming at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/ssr/>; they appear here by permission.

15 Matt 9:15; 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24; Matt 8:11; Luke 13:29; 5:34; Mark 2:18-22; Isa 62:5; Rev 19:9; prodigal son, Luke 15:22-3.

16 Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1993).

17 Cf. Rowan Williams, *Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Roots of a Metaphor* (Bramcote, Nottinghamshire: Grove Books, 1982), pp. 14-17.

18 This sentence paraphrases David Matzko McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home* (London: SCM, 2001), p. 236 n. 26.

19 Cf. Kendall Soulen, 'YHWH the Triune God', *Modern Theology* 15/1 (1999), pp. 25-54.

20 Since *Sexuality and the Christian Body* I have learned from theologians like Gerard Loughlin and Sarah Coakley how to give Judith Butler a theological sense. See Coakley's reading of Butler as concealing an eschatology of yearning in 'The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God', in her *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 153-67.

21 Judith Butler, 'Contingent Foundations', in Seyla Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 35-57, here pp. 51-2, paragraph boundary elided.

22 William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Blackwell, 1998) makes a marvelous, magisterial application of this theme. It appeared as *Sexuality and the Christian Body* was in press.

23 James Alison, *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), p. 124.

24 For systematic accounts of nature and grace directly rather than inversely related, see Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Basil Blackwell, 1988), esp. pp. 46-8, and more recently idem, *Jesus, the Trinity, and Humanity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark/Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

25 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Virginity and the Symbols of Our Lord*, Hymn 4, in Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns*, trans. Kathleen McVey (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 275-80.

26 'Unde exponendum est "naturaliter," id est per naturam gratia reformatam', In Romanos 2:14 (lect. 3), #216. Cf. also terminological distinctions at In Johannem 6:44 (lect. 4). For commentary, see Rogers, *Sexuality and the Christian Body*, pp. 105-6, and idem, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth* (Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), p. 170.

27 Karl Barth, *Shorter Commentary on Romans* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), pp. 28-9. Not a version of the manifesto of the 1920s, the *Kurze Erzählung des Römerbriefes* (Munich,

1956) is an independent work.

28 *A Late Friendship: The Letters of Karl Barth and Carl Zuckmayer*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982); *Gesammtausgabe: Briefe 5*, §286. For commentary on these passages, with answers to the obvious objections, see Rogers, Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth, pp. 3-9, 183-202.

29 Romanos the Melodist, 'On the Mother of God', in *Kontakia on the Life of Christ*, p. 17.

30 E.g. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.95.1, 100.1; for commentary, see Otto Hermann Pesch, *Die Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin*, 2nd edn (Mainz: Matthias Gruenewald, 1985), pp. 516-26, 606-719.

31 E.g. John 1; Barth on creation and covenant; Aquinas as interpreted in Rogers, *Sexuality and the Christian Body*, p. 104, and idem, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, pp. 58-70, 143-6, 223-4 n. 64.

32 See Sebastian P. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, *The Syrian Churches Series*, vol. 9 (Poona, India: Anita Printers, 1979).

33 See my 'Narrative of Natural Law in Thomas's Commentary on Romans 1', *Theological Studies* 59 (1998), pp. 254-76.

34 Bernard of Clairvaux, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 1.2.

35 Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark/Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 401. For a compatible neopatristic account, see Dumitru Staniloae, 'The World as Gift and Word', in *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* vol. 2, trans. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), pp. 21-63.

36 Cf. Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, pp. 65-6; the exegesis can stand even without the conceptual context.

37 Among human beings, this diversity does not yield a common vocation for gay and lesbian people as a group, but one that demands discernment by each person if it is not to be washed out. So John of the Cross counsels the discernment of loves, if recent research is correct; see Christopher Hinkle, 'A Delicate Knowledge: Epistemology, Homosexuality, and St. John of the Cross', *Modern Theology* 17 (2001), pp. 427-40, here p. 436; for a critique of more prescriptive readings of John, see Sarah Coakley, 'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance', in her *Powers and Submissions*, pp. 40-54.