Another response to Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler's *The Sexual Person*

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In their book, which has received mixed responses, Salzman and Lawler develop a "revisionist" approach to Catholic sexual ethics. They invite respectful dialogue. In this article I offer another response and attempt to engage in such dialogue by addressing both some things they say which I agree with and some things they say which I find problematic in certain ways. This includes their treatments of experience, science, and the Bible as these relate to homosexuality, and their approach to Christian sexual ethics and how they apply this to homosexuality and some other sexual issues. While Salzman and Lawler attempt to undermine a number of traditional Christian and official Catholic norms on these subjects, I offer some evidence and arguments in support of these norms. In this way I hope to contribute in a small way to the understanding of sexual persons and ethics.

Keywords: sexual ethics, person, Christian, Catholic, homosexuality, sexual issues, Todd Salzman, Michael Lawler

INTRODUCTION

In *The Sexual Person: Toward a Renewed Catholic Anthropology* (TSP), Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler develop a "revisionist" approach to Catholic sexual ethics.¹ This book, as one would expect, has received mixed responses, praise from some other revisionist ethicists and criticism from some others including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine which says the book applies a "deficient theological methodology" and reaches "erroneous conclusions on a whole range of issues."² Here I offer another response as a lay married Catholic moral theologian. Sexual moral issues, in particular homosexuality, have divided those who identify as Christian today including those who identify

as Catholic and as moral theologians. Related to this Salzman and Lawler call for a respectful and charitable dialogue. They say they look forward to "ongoing dialogue" to build up the Church (214 and 265). I very much agree with them in the need for such dialogue. My own book, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*, attempts to do this. Among other things, Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples and calls us to love one another as he loves us.³ Concerning genuine dialogue Blessed Pope John Paul II says, "people explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth."⁴ Dialogue involves both humble listening and sharing. In this article I hope to fairly present some of the positions of Salzman and Lawler. I will

begin by noting a number of points in their book with which I agree. Then I will focus on some aspects of their book which I find problematic in certain ways including their treatments of experience, science and the Bible as these relate to homosexuality, as well as their approach to Christian sexual ethics and how they apply this to homosexuality and some other sexual issues.

SOME POINTS OF AGREEMENT

Since much of my article will be offering certain criticisms of Salzman and Lawler's TSP, related to dialogue I think it is first of all good to highlight some common ground. In an article of this size it is not possible to note everything but only some points or approaches of theirs with which I agree. To begin, Salzman and Lawler correctly appreciate both the value and limits of sociological and statistical research. For example, they say that "50 percent, and even 100 percent of Catholics, could be wrong.... Empirical research neither expresses nor creates the faith of the Church, but it does manifest what Catholics actually believe and do not believe" (231). With regard to determining the *sensus fidei*, "the connatural capacity to discern the truth into which the Spirit of God is leading the Church" (232), they are also correct in agreeing with a good point of Avery Dulles that "we must look not so much at the statistics, as at the quality of the witnesses and the motivation for their assent."⁵

Salzman and Lawler express well a number of good points concerning the biblical commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and casual sex. They note that "the cultures of many developed countries that emphasize radical individualism," encourage "ego-centric love" that is not "the healthy

self-love demanded by the gospel" and love of neighbor which gives the "good, valuable, and lovable self-in-God unconditionally to the other."

[Since this] type of self-giving to the other ... is reflected in a most profound way through sexual intercourse it is so important that the other in sexual intercourse never be objectified, as is the case in promiscuous sexual encounters. Many people, unsure of themselves, seek affirmation of who they are and strive to build self-identity and self-esteem through casual sex, but because casual sex is not an unconditional giving of self to the other, the search is constantly frustrated and neither self-identity nor self-esteem is ever truly established and affirmed. (131-2)

Salzman and Lawler also make some good points with regard to artificial reproductive technologies. For example, they agree with Catholic teaching that all innocent human life should be protected from fertilization which excludes the destruction of embryos, freezing them, and exploiting them in research (238). Concerning the high financial costs and low success rates of some of these technologies, the higher incidence of multiple births and disabilities with related higher costs to care for these children, and other available options, they raise some very good questions related to the common good, distributive justice, a preferential option for the poor, and solidarity. They think that providing necessary health care for everyone, including in developing countries, should be a priority over providing expensive reproductive technologies as a luxury for the wealthy few (256-8).⁶

As "revisionists" Salzman and Lawler throughout their book refer to many sources that support their views. Among others, they often summarize the views of other revisionist moral theologians. To their credit they also take seriously enough

the views of a number of Christian “traditionalist” ethicists—namely Germain Grisez and colleagues’ New Natural Law Theory, Martin Ronheimer’s Interpretation of Natural Law and Anthropology, and Pope John Paul II’s Thomistic Personalism and Theology of the Body (Grisez 1983; Grisez and Shaw 1991; Finnis 1983; Ronheimer 2000, 2003; Wojtala 1981; Pope John Paul II 2006)—devoting more than 30 pages to summarizing and critiquing them (see 57–92). Concerning these authors Salzman and Lawler note both some points with which they agree and disagree. Although their summaries are in general accurate, they do not cover all the main themes of these authors. I think their criticisms need to be read in the light of a sympathetic and careful reading of these authors themselves. For a counter to their criticisms of “traditional” authors, see, for example, William May, Joseph Boyle, and Ronald Lawler’s criticisms of “revisionist” authors in their *Catholic Sexual Ethics*. All of this can be very informative.⁷

EXPERIENCE, SCIENCE, AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Salzman and Lawler claim that “In the dialectic between the sources of moral knowledge [scripture, tradition, reason, and experience] for morally assessing homosexual acts and relationships, experience is foundational and even primary” (232; compare 56). In neither of these sections of TSP where they mention these four sources of moral knowledge do Salzman and Lawler explain what they are. From TSP one can gather that for them “scripture” includes the Christian Bible; “tradition” includes Christian traditions including the Fathers of the Church, subsequent Christian theological traditions, and official Catholic teachings; “reason” relates to the human intellectual

understanding or “natural law” reasoning with regard to morality; and “experience” involves what we humans observe, encounter, undergo, feel, think, and so forth. In this section we will consider some of the things Salzman and Lawler say concerning experience and science concerning homosexuality, as well as some problems related to these.⁸

Concerning sexual orientation Salzman and Lawler say, “The experts point to a variety of genetic, hormonal, psychological, and social ‘loading’ factors, from which the orientation may derive. There is growing agreement also in the scientific community that sexual orientation, heterosexual or homosexual, is an innate condition over which the person has no control and that she or he cannot change without psychosexual damage” (65). It “is a psychosexual attraction that the person does not choose and that she or he cannot change” (150). In our contemporary context “homosexuality is scientifically recognized as a *natural* condition” (223). They think “Homosexual sexual acts are ‘natural’ for people with a homosexual orientation, just as heterosexual sexual acts are ‘natural’ for people with a heterosexual orientation” (227). Although Salzman and Lawler do not explain what they mean by “natural” here it seems that what they likely mean is that if a person has an inclination to do an action, then that action is “natural” for him or her. This, however, does not equate to such an action being morally good or responsible. For example, an alcoholic can have an inclination to drink alcohol excessively to the point of ruining his or her life, and a married person can have an inclination to have sexual relations with someone other than his or spouse, which if acted upon would cause much harm. We will consider the morality of homosexual sexual acts later in this paper.

With regard to the Catholic Church designating the homosexual orientation as

“objectively disordered,” they speak of “men and women with a homosexual orientation ... who feel personally rejected by the Church” (137). What Salzman and Lawler say here is generally in line with the self-reported experiences of many men and women who self-identify as gay and lesbian. Much of it, however, is not in line with the self-reported experiences of many other men and women who have experienced same-sex attraction but do not identify as gay and lesbian. For example, David Morrison, who lived as a gay activist from the ages of 21 to 28 years but later turned his life over to Jesus Christ and became a Roman Catholic, shares:

I am deeply grateful to the Roman Catholic Church for its position on homosexuality and homosexual acts. Roman Catholicism ... refuses to either patronize homosexuals with a watered down gospel or brutalise them with a message of irredeemable hostility. The Roman Catholic Church loves me and all the men and women who live with homosexuality, looks at us as the adults we are, and says that we, too, can resolutely cooperate with the Holy Spirit to sanctify our lives. We are called to sainthood and the narrow road that brings us there.⁹

Many other members of Courage, an international network of support groups that assist men and women with same-sex attractions to live Christ-centered lives of prayer, chastity, fellowship, friendship, and service, share similar experiences. Much of what Salzman and Lawler say concerning the homosexual orientation is also not in line with the self-reported experiences of many men and women who say they once were exclusively or predominately homosexual but have experienced profound healing and change including a diminishment of same-sex attraction and a development of their heterosexual potential. Many of these people are now living in fulfilling heterosexual marriages.¹⁰ The

Catholic Medical Association recognizes such healing and change. Referring to a large body of literature on the positive results of therapy for same-sex attractions it says in part: “Reviews of treatment for unwanted same-sex attractions show that it is as successful as treatment for similar psychological problems...” It also states, however, that “unfortunately, a number of influential persons and professional groups ignore this evidence ... and there seems to be a concerted effort on the part of ‘homosexual apologists’ to deny the effectiveness of treatment of same-sex attraction...”¹¹ Although Salzman and Lawler are correct in saying that the homosexual orientation seems to be caused by a variety of factors, a closer look shows that it is not “natural” in the sense of being the result of healthy sexual development which their treatment of homosexuality seems to imply. Psychologist Jeffrey Keefe says, “The general opinion among scientists who consolidate the various studies is that ... postnatal environmental and psycho-social history” are the “predetermining factors” of a homosexual orientation. According to psychiatrists Jeffrey Satinover and Richard Fitzgibbons, and many other experts, homosexual attractions are mainly a symptom of certain “psychic traumas” and/or unmet needs such as a lack of healthy same-sex bonding with one’s same-sex parent and/or same-sex peers during childhood and the developing years, and/or a mistrust of opposite sex love related to certain traumatic negative experiences with the opposite sex.¹²

Concerning “monogamous, loving, committed, homosexual couples” engaging in “homosexual acts,” Salzman and Lawler say that “Margaret Farley notes that the experiential testimony of these couples witnesses ‘to the role of such loves and relationships in sustaining human well-being and opening to human flourishing.’” They also refer to Lawrence Kurdek’s

research and say that in comparison to married heterosexual couples, "Gay and lesbian couples tend to have a more equitable distribution of household labor, demonstrate greater conflict resolution skills ..., and, most significantly, experience similar levels of relational satisfaction compared with heterosexual couples."¹³ Salzman and Lawler, however, do not mention other research findings such as that the rates of sexual infidelity are several times higher of gay couples as compared to men in heterosexual marriages and of lesbian couples as compared to women in heterosexual marriages.¹⁴ Related to his research and long clinical practice, Gerald van den Aardweg concludes that homosexual men feel inferior as men and come to admire, idolize, and attempt to contact other men as a passionate attempt to possess what they think they lack. Although many homosexual persons regard their homoeroticism as the deepest and purest love, he sees it as self-centered sentimentality, infantile romanticism, seeking to be loved and accepted.¹⁵ Psychologist Dr. Joseph Nicolosi says that "Men with a homosexual background who have [experienced healing, developed their heterosexual potential and] married describe a qualitative difference in their sexual experiences with their wives... [T]hey are richer, fuller, and more emotionally satisfying. These men describe a feeling of 'rightness' and a natural compatibility" regarding sex with their wives, whereas their former homosexual sexual relations were more like a drug "fix" providing temporary tension relief. According to a number of experts including psychotherapist Diane Eller-Boyko, lesbian relationships generally involve excessive emotional attachment and enmeshment, insecurity, and jealousy.¹⁶

Salzman and Lawler criticize the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for arguing against homosexual couples

parenting children and saying that "As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children."¹⁷ They refer to Patterson who summarizes 20 years of studies and concludes, "There is no evidence to suggest that lesbians and gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial [including sexual] development among children of gay men or lesbians is compromised in any respect relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents" (Patterson 1995). Salzman and Lawler also refer to some other research and state: "It is not the sexual orientation of gay and lesbian parents that produces negative outcomes in their children but the social discrimination toward them generated by myths propagated about their parents" (Salzman and Lawler, TSP, 229–30). They do not, however, refer to other researchers such as Dr. Timothy Dailey who point out serious deficiencies of the studies referred to by Patterson including "reliance upon inadequate sample size, lack of random sampling, lack of anonymity of research participants, and self-presentation bias" (Dailey 2007). More recently sociologist Mark Regnerus explains that most studies of same-sex parents "are based on non-random, non-representative data often employing small samples that do not allow for generalization to the larger population of gay and lesbian families." He reports on some of the findings of a recent large random sampling of American young adults who were raised in eight different types of family arrangements. These findings clearly reveal "that children appear most apt to succeed well as adults—on multiple counts and across a variety of domains—when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father, and especially when the parents remain married to the present day." Children whose mother had a lesbian

relationship or whose father had a gay relationship in general did significantly less well on a number of measures even after controlling for factors such as the extent that the environment in which they were raised was gay friendly or not. Regnerus concludes in part that “the empirical claim that no notable differences exist must go.”¹⁸

In the light of the above what Salzman and Lawler say concerning experience and science as it pertains to homosexuality is very one-sided. Their attempt to renew Catholic anthropology in this area without considering the experiences of those men and women who have experienced same-sex attractions and who are trying to live fully according to Catholic teaching, such as the members of *Courage*, is a serious shortcoming. Their failure to take seriously the findings of many scientific studies that would challenge some of their claims also undermines their criticisms of Catholic teaching and much of what they advocate in this area. A good or more adequate theory including a scientific theory does not ignore or dismiss any relevant data but incorporates all of the relevant data. In interpreting various experiences and scientific findings theologians need to keep this in mind. Lonergan (1971, 157) points out that “the wider the interpreter’s experience, the deeper and fuller the development of his [or her] understanding, the better balanced his judgment,” the better his or her understanding of the object being studied is likely to be. I think that Fr. John Harvey, a Catholic moral theologian who was the founding director of *Courage*, worked with many men and women with same-sex attractions for more than 30 years, and read widely, presents some of the best contemporary interpretations of homosexuality in his extensive writings. Consider, for example, also the writings of David Morrison on homosexuality, who besides extensive reading on the subject has personally experienced

same-sex attraction and over time changed his views from a non-Christian gay activist to a believing Christian and convinced Catholic. Both Harvey and Morrison support Catholic teaching on homosexuality in their writing. Unlike Salzman and Lawler’s one-sided treatment of homosexuality in *TSP*, they both consider a much broader range of human experience concerning homosexuality. They also do not ignore views on homosexuality different than their own but take them seriously and carefully respond to them.¹⁹ Salzman and Lawler do not even mention either Harvey or Morrison in their book.

In criticizing Salzman and Lawler’s approach to experience, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine makes some excellent points. They say in part:

One’s subjective experience is not an unfailing indicator of what is good and bad. Because of the effects of sin, one may experience pleasure in doing something bad and repugnance in doing something good.... [O]ne must begin the process of acquiring a virtue as learner, by following the guidance of the authoritative sources as to what actions are truly virtuous.... For Salzman and Lawler, however, since experience itself has become the foundational criterion, the question arises as to how one should act to acquire a virtue.... The very idea of unnormed, individual experience as foundational results in a dangerous circularity, so that one’s prejudices and those of one’s culture can be simply reinforced. There is need of a standard above one’s personal experience—provided by natural law, Scripture, and the Magisterium. (USCCB Committee, 2010, 20–21)

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Salzman and Lawler describe the Christian traditional view that homosexual acts

are intrinsically immoral as a distorting tradition. They say:

Neither the Bible nor the Christian tradition rooted in it prior to the twentieth century ever considered the homosexual condition; they took for granted that everyone was heterosexual.... The context in which both the Old and New testaments condemn homosexual acts is a false assumption, shaped by the sociohistorical conditions of the times in which they were written, that all human beings naturally share the heterosexual condition and that, therefore, any homosexual behavior is a perversion of "nature" and immoral. Because that biblical assumption is now scientifically shown to be incorrect, the Bible has little to contribute to the discussion of genuine homosexuality and homosexuals as we understand them today. (217)

In relation to this they add: "One might as well search the Bible for advice on buying a car or a computer" (217). More specifically, with regard to the Apostle Paul's treatment of homosexuality in Rom 1:26–27 and 1 Cor 6:9–10 (cf. 1 Tim 1:10), they state that he did "not live in our context in which homosexuality is scientifically recognized as a *natural* condition" (223).²⁰

In the previous section of this article, we considered some of the serious shortcomings of Salzman and Lawler's treatment of homosexuality with regard to experience and science. Among other things, we noted that the homosexual orientation is not "natural" in the sense that it is the result of healthy sexual development, and experiencing an inclination to do some activity does not mean that it is necessarily moral or responsible. In this section, it is beyond my purposes to respond to everything Salzman and Lawler say with regard to the Bible and homosexuality. Rather, we will focus on some of the serious problems of their contentions presented in the above quotes by which

they attempt to undermine the relevance of the Bible for homosexuality today.

Salzman and Lawler use a "circular" argument in their attempt to discredit the scriptural condemnations of homosexual behavior according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine. Concerning this they say in part:

Whether or not the scriptural writers, along with the rest of society until the twentieth century, were indeed ignorant of the fact that some people have a predominantly homosexual inclination, is a historical question that cannot be considered resolved by the evidence provided in *The Sexual Person*.... As for the scriptural writers' "assumption" about the naturalness of heterosexual behavior and corresponding unnaturalness of homosexual behavior, this has in no sense been "scientifically" disproved.... It is disingenuous for the authors to imply that their opinion has been proven by science."²¹

Salzman and Lawler's view that biblical authors and Christians were all unaware of the homosexual condition before the twentieth century is undermined by some facts. Biblical scholar Robert Gagnon (2001) points out that "In fact, there is considerable testimony in ancient sources to the belief that same-sex passions, at least in some cases, are congenital." He discusses the evidence in 15 pages of his well-researched book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, including in some Platonic and Aristotelian sources which have been read by many Christians for centuries. Concerning this he says in part: "At the very least, it is likely that Paul (like Philo who made explicit reference to the creation myth propounded by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*) was familiar with one or more of these theories. Moreover, he could not have been unaware of the existence of men whose sexual desire

was oriented exclusively toward other males (the *kinaidoi*, for example)." Gagnon concludes: "...[C]urrent theories of homosexual causation are, at least in terms of broad strokes, compatible with ancient theories that may have underlain Paul's views. Indeed, Paul's own views on homosexuality did not depend on any one particular theory of causation but rather on the male-female complementarity embedded in creation and accessible to all through either Scripture or nature."²²

That some people would have known about the homosexual condition and thought about it before the twentieth century is not surprising since we have no reason to think that some people with a homosexual orientation did not exist in biblical times and throughout the history of the Church. Salzman and Lawler's analogy to cars and computers is, therefore, inappropriate.

A number of biblical scholars speak of the importance of biblical scholar Robert Gagnon's book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*. For example, John Barton, Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford says: "No Christian concerned with homosexuality can afford to ignore this book [I]t presents a meticulous scholarly account of biblical and post-biblical traditions about same-sex relationships, and shows the weakness of many modern discussions." Along similar lines, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., Professor of New Testament, École Biblique, Jerusalem, says: "Gagnon's incisive logic, prudent judgment, and exhaustive research should make this book a dominant voice in the contemporary debate on an extremely sensitive subject." Even a "revisionist" theologian, James Keenan, says that Robert Gagnon's book "provides the most comprehensive, up-to-date treatment of the biblical texts generally associated with homosexual practice."²³

Unfortunately, Salzman and Lawler ignore Gagnon's book even though it was published several years before their TSP. It is beyond the purposes of this article to even summarize the detailed exegesis and hermeneutics that Gagnon provides in his well-researched and written 520-page book. Rather, we will simply cite two quotations toward the end of Gagnon's book which express some of his overarching conclusions:

With two millennia and more dividing the biblical texts that speak about homosexual behavior from our own time, it is inappropriate to simply assert the Bible's authority at face value. At the same time, the strong biblical testimony against homosexual practice sets the burden-of-proof bar very high for Christians who wish to discount the Bible's witness. We have investigated the main arguments employed to discount the normative force of the Bible's perspective for our own day and found each of the arguments wanting. The Bible does not limit its rejection of same-sex intercourse to particular, exploitative forms

Same-sex intercourse is strongly and unequivocally rejected by the revelation of Scripture.... Scripture rejects homosexual behavior because it is a violation of the gendered existence of male and female ordained by God at creation. Homosexual intercourse puts males in the category of females and females in the category of males, insofar as they relate to others as sexual beings. That distorts the sexuality intended by God for the health and vitality of the human race. God intended the very act of sexual intercourse to be an act of pluralism, embracing a sexual "other" rather than a sexual "same." The biblical proscription of same-sex intercourse, like those against incest, adultery, and bestiality, is absolute (encompassing all cases), pervasive (by both Testaments and within each Testament), and severe (mandating exclusion from God's kingdom).²⁴

The interpretation of Romans 1:26–27 by Salzman and Lawler that “All men and women are heterosexual Paul believes, with the Judaism of his time, and to engage in homosexual acts they have to pervert their true ‘nature’” (222), is also undermined by the following conclusion of biblical scholar Romano Penna. Concerning the condemnation of male and female homosexual practices in Rom 1:26–27 he says:

Some authors have tried to minimize the radical importance of this condemnation, claiming that Paul is thinking either of a depravation connected with idolatry, or of homosexuality that is contrary to the proper nature of heterosexuals, or again thinking that the expression “unnatural” is equivalent to “against the common patterns of social convention” ... Interpretations of this kind are basically artificial, because they lose sight of the fact that the Apostle bases his argument on a view that is not cultural but rooted in creation [W]hatever may be said about individual tendencies and attitudes, Paul could only have considered all erotic homosexual behavior as contrary to the Creator’s plan for human life, and so to be abandoned at the moment of conversion.²⁵

Like Gagnon and Penna, Salzman and Lawler appreciate the value of the historical critical method with regard to interpreting the Bible (232). Concerning the human authors of the Bible they appropriately cite the Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, n. 12: “The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture.” They do not, however, address some other themes in *Dei Verbum*, which are also part of a truly Catholic approach to the Bible, such as

that the whole Bible has been “written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 2 Tim 3:16–17) and:

In composing the sacred books, God chose men and ... made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted. Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.²⁶

CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS

Regarding sexual morality, among other things, Salzman and Lawler say: “The judgment of whether or not a particular sexual act is moral ... is to be determined, as all moral judgments are to be determined, on the basis of its impact on human flourishing within the context of a particular interpersonal relationship” (156); today the “claim that sexual activity is moral when it is loving ... is vapid because it is usually devoid of content.... Our task here is to give it content” (157); and “We believe long-term commitment is required for a just and loving relationship, including truly human sexual acts, to mature into fruitfulness” (158). More specifically they affirm: “For any sexual act to be truly human, it must exhibit holistic complementarity, equality between the partners, equal freedom for both partners, free mutuality between the partners, and the mutual commitment of both partners. The Christian tradition will add that those characteristics are all to be informed by the love of God and neighbor enjoined by Jesus” (161). I agree with much of what

Salzman and Lawler say in these statements. Values such as human flourishing, justice, love, the equal dignity of persons, and commitment are certainly relevant to sexuality and human fulfillment. From a Christian perspective it is also correct to relate sexual morality to loving God and people properly since Jesus related all of morality to the great and second commandments of loving God with one's whole person and one's neighbor as oneself (see Mt 22:37–40 and parallel passages). I think these values and commandments can serve as a good starting point for dialogue on sexual ethics today including between those who advocate more traditional or revisionist approaches. Since many people today mistakenly think Christian sexual morality is arbitrary or negative, it is worthwhile to point out that there is nothing more positive than loving God, oneself, and others properly in all areas of life including the sexual.

Although I agree with Salzman and Lawler's statements above at face value, I find their application of such generalities to some specific issues such as homosexuality, contraception, and premarital sex to be problematic in some respects as we will consider below. I think that the Thomistic understanding of evil—as a lack of good that should be there, and moral evil or sin as a lack of a properly ordered love that should be there—can also be helpful with respect to dialogue on controversial issues of sexual ethics. For example, while most people today would agree that free mutual consent is a good that should be there for sexual relations to be moral, many today including Salzman and Lawler do not agree with traditional Christian teaching that the good of heterosexual marriage needs to be there. My own approach to sexual morality, in general, also includes trying to follow Jesus including trying to grow in living his new commandment to

love one another as he loves us, as God loves (see Jn 13 and 15). Jesus calls us to love perfectly as God our Father loves (see Mt 5:48). Related to this the Second Vatican Council teaches that we are all called to holiness.²⁷

CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Some aspects of Salzman and Lawler's views on experience, science, and the Bible as these relate to homosexuality were critiqued above (see "Experience, Science, and Homosexuality" and "The Bible and Homosexuality"). Concerning the morality of homosexual acts they also say in part: "On the basis of our revised foundational sexual ethical principle, some homosexual and heterosexual acts, those that meet the requirements for holistic complementary, just, and loving sexual acts, are truly human; and some homosexual and heterosexual acts, those that do not meet the requirements for holistic complementary, just, and loving sexual acts, are not truly human" (161). Let us first consider more closely the requirements of "loving sexual acts." According to Salzman and Lawler they exclude promiscuous, exploitive, and coercive sexual acts.

According to David Morrison, who was once a gay activist in a sexually active relationship with another man, loving as Jesus loves also excludes same-sex genital actions. When Morrison became a Christian he initially accepted "gay theology." After carefully reading and reflecting on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, he came to realize that "gay theology" lacks a true Christ-centeredness and involves a gospel of "cheap grace." It wants the comfort of religion without the requirements of taking up one's cross to follow Jesus and loving as Jesus loves. In the light of these requirements Morrison

came to realize that the sexual acts with his same-sex partner were “not so much love as utility. Each made the other, with their consent, a means to an end. But that is not love.” When they stopped having sexual relations their friendship improved. He came to realize that same-sex genital acts do not love the whole person as God created them to be but treat the other as an object, making people into toys, for sexual pleasure. They lack deep personal meaning and real communion. Morrison’s experience and realization can be related to Dietrich von Hildebrand’s Christian ethics. We can discover that certain goods such as the dignity of persons, truth, justice, life, friendship, fidelity, and self-giving love are valuable in themselves and not just for fulfilling human needs or for subjective satisfaction. These are values of the Kingdom of God which are rooted in the nature of God and our nature created in the image of God. In order to experience true communion with God and each other, it is necessary to subordinate our seeking of the merely subjectively satisfying including sexual pleasure to always respect these morally relevant goods. This is part of what it means to love as Jesus loves, to take up one’s cross to follow him, to lose one’s life for Jesus’ sake to find it (see, e.g., Mt 16:24–25 and 1 Jn 3).²⁸

Although Salzman and Lawler say some good things with regard to pleasure such as that it is a gift of God that can be abused, they mistakenly understand sexual pleasure as a good or meaning equal to the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexual relations (128–9, 125 and 206). Although sexual pleasure can be morally enjoyed together by a husband and wife who properly respect the unitive/total-giving/marital and procreative/life-giving meanings of their conjugal relations, it is a value that does not transcend the immediate experience of it like the marital and procreative meanings. As

Karol Wojtyła (later Pope and Blessed John Paul II) correctly explains, sexual pleasure is a secondary value of the person. If pleasure becomes an end then the person in sexual relations is used as a means. True love subordinates secondary values of the person to the primary value of the person as a whole, and ultimately to God, who is Value or Good in an absolute sense. Among other things Salzman and Lawler fail to appreciate enough the God-given procreative design and meaning of human sexuality. God, the Creator, has given men and women the wonderful gift to collaborate with him in creating new human persons who are meant to share in his Trinitarian life forever.²⁹

Concerning “holistic complementarity” Salzman and Lawler are correct to note that there are more kinds of human complementarity than heterosexual including genital and reproductive complementarity (138–61). They are mistaken, however, in thinking that we do not always have a moral obligation to respect heterogenital complementarity (145). Failing to respect heterogenital complementarity fails to appreciate and respect properly God’s design of human bodies. Male and female genitals and reproductive organs are obviously designed for each other, both from an evolutionary perspective as well as a proper understanding of God’s wonderful plan of creation. What they advocate is thus not really “holistic” in the sense of properly respecting the whole human person. It also reflects a mistaken form of dualism. Regarding same-sex genital relations, Fr. John Harvey, a Catholic priest, moral theologian and founding director of Courage, explains that:

Some have held that for the sake of ... psychic intimacy ... one may violate the physical structures [and inherent meanings] of heterosexual intercourse, as it is meant to be, a physical union of man and

woman, through penetration of the vagina by the penis, and the pouring in of the seed of the man ... This is *dualism*, i.e., the failure to recognize the essentially composite structure of the human person which makes the psychic and the physical inseparable. One will find in the writings of Pope John Paul II concerning the nuptial meaning of the human body a powerful repudiation of such dualism. (Harvey 1987)

Such dualism is contrary to the biblical view that the human being is an embodied person, a profound unity of body and soul. It is also contrary to good phenomenological descriptions of human experience which show that we experience our bodies not as instruments or tools but as integral to ourselves.³⁰

For Salzman and Lawler “holistic complementarity” includes “sexual orientation complementarity.” Concerning this and homosexuality they say in part: “If what a person is unalterably by ‘nature’ and the design of God is homosexual, then both sexual integrity and self-integrity require that the homosexual orientation be embraced and integrated into the personality, and they allow expression in just and loving acts” (168). As we considered above (see “Experience, Science, and Homosexuality”), however, many with a homosexual orientation have experienced a diminishment of same-sex attraction and a development of their heterosexual potential. The best evidence points to the homosexual orientation being the result of certain “psychic traumas” and/or unmet needs. Although God allows us to experience various traumas and some of us to experience same-sex attraction, and works all things for good for those who love him (see Rom 8:28), it is a serious mistake to think that God designed or directly caused someone to be homosexual. Would Salzman and Lawler also say that God designed someone to be a pedophile?

Although they try to relate “sexual orientation complementarity” to homosexuality, they do not relate it to other disordered human sexual inclinations such as to engage in the immoral sexual actions of pedophilia, incest, or bestiality. With regard to sexual integration, among other things, we should note as Jesus did that not everyone is capable of heterosexual marriage which is part of God’s plan of creation, and that some choose to be celibate for the sake of God’s Kingdom (see Mt 19:3–12). It is important not to reduce intimacy to genital intimacy. We individually do not need to have genital sexual relations, but we all need healthy human friendship and God, including his infinite love, life, and truth, to find true and lasting human fulfillment.³¹

CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS AND SOME OTHER ISSUES

Family planning: Concerning family planning Salzman and Lawler argue that Pope Paul VI contradicts himself in *Humanae Vitae* (HV) by speaking of the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of the marital act on the one hand and saying on the other hand that marital intercourse can be legitimate “when, for reasons independent of their will, it is foreseen to be infertile” (187). They point out that “among Catholic theologians” the “debate is about the means that may be taken to prevent procreation” (190). They conclude “that *some* intentionally conceptive and *some* intentionally nonconceptive marital acts, whether achieved ‘naturally’ or artificially, are moral, namely, those that promote the complementary, just, and loving marital relationship between the spouses and/or the just and loving relationship between parents and their children.” They consider

these same acts to be immoral when they damage these values (191).

First of all Salzman and Lawler's interpretation of HV takes certain phrases out of context. Concerning the "inseparable connection" Paul VI says in part: Catholic teaching that "every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act" (HV, nn. 11–12).³² In their discussion Salzman and Lawler omit Paul VI's important point that humans are not to break this connection by their "own initiative." The fact that not every human act of heterosexual intercourse leads to procreation is something that happens beyond human voluntary control and is thus not a moral issue *per se*. Morality concerns what is within voluntary control. To use an analogy, consider that the death of a human being separates one's immortal soul from one's body. If this is caused by natural factors and not human initiative this is not a moral issue *per se*. But this does not justify murdering a human being by voluntary human initiative.

Paul VI also teaches that we are to respect both the inherent unitive and procreative meanings of the marital act saying in part: "a conjugal act imposed on one's partner without regard to his or her condition or personal and reasonable wishes in the matter, is no true act of love, and therefore offends the moral order" and "an act of mutual love which impairs the capacity to transmit life which God the Creator, through specific laws, has built into it, frustrates His design which constitutes the norm of marriage" and misuses "this divine gift" (HV, n. 13). On the other hand, he also teaches that "the Church does not consider at all illicit the

use of those therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result there from—provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever" (HV, n. 15). While Salzman and Lawler note that the Catholic moral tradition disapproves the "direct" killing of an innocent person but allows killing "an aggressor in proportionate self-defense or in a just war" (186), they do not apply this distinction to family planning. Catholic teaching is consistent in considering direct killing of innocent human beings including direct abortion and direct euthanasia, as well as direct sterilization and contraception, to be immoral and allowing legitimate defense, not using disproportionate means to prolong life, and natural family planning to space births for "well-grounded reasons" (HV, n. 16). Directly intending to destroy a gift of God such as the life of an innocent human being, or the procreative power of the conjugal act, temporarily or permanently, as in the case of direct contraception or sterilization, involves our failing to love as Jesus loves, as God loves (compare "Christian Sexual Ethics" above), who does not directly intend evil. God often tolerates evil and he does not cause all the good that he can. We can too for just reasons. A couple who uses natural family planning to try to avoid having a child for just reasons—for example, they just had a baby and they are not yet ready psychologically and financially to have another child, or a pregnancy would seriously endanger the woman's health—by abstaining from sexual intercourse during their fertile periods, would be choosing not to use their God-given power to procreate the good of a new child when inappropriate. They are not choosing to destroy this gift temporarily or permanently.

Salzman and Lawler, and some others, have accused Catholic teaching and

theologians who hold that direct contraception is always immoral of biologism or physicalism. This caricature has been responded to well, among others, by Dietrich von Hildebrand who says in part:

The creation of an immortal human person by God through the cooperation of the married couple ... requires biological conditions. Therefore, the fact that biological laws connect the conjugal act with the creation of a human person does not justify our considering the rupture of the connection only a biological intervention. An extreme case makes this immediately clear: a fatal shot through a man's head is not simply a "biological intervention" but a murder, because a man's life was connected with the physiological processes that were frustrated. Artificial birth control is thus no mere biological intervention but the severing of a bond which is under the jurisdiction of God alone. (von Hildebrand 1993; 79)

Salzman and Lawler do not apply to specific methods of artificial contraception their conclusion that family planning that damages just and loving relationships between spouses, and parents and children, is immoral. Especially since they argue that experience is a primary source of moral knowledge (see "Experience, Science, and Homosexuality" above), this seems to me to be a serious shortcoming. Concerning this consider the evidence that some popular kinds of direct contraception such as the pill and intrauterine device are really unjust in the sense of exposing women to unnecessary health risks. These methods which also work abortively at times or by design are also unjust to the child in its preimplantation stage of development. Moreover, studies by "Dr. Karen Kidd, of the University of New Brunswick and ... [others], found that estrogen from birth control pills flooding into the water system through sewage adversely affects fish populations" by adversely affecting the

"reproductive health" of fish. Salzman and Lawler also do not speak of the many benefits of modern means of natural family planning such as that they pose no health risks or risks to the environment, and that they promote better spousal relationships by fostering communication, understanding and respect for their bodies, self-control, chastity, and mutual love. The divorce rate of natural family planning users is much much lower than among users of various methods of direct contraception. A number of studies have also shown that the newer methods of natural family planning such as the Sympto-Thermal and Creighton methods are as effective or more effective than the birth control pill and condoms.³³

Concerning family planning Salzman and Lawler also say:

The Church's only approved method of birth regulation, natural family planning, presumes a fundamental equality and mutual respect between the spouses within the marital relationship. The human reality is, however, that the majority of cultures throughout the world are patriarchal cultures in which the husband is the authority in the household and in the marital relationship, and the fundamental equality required to freely practice natural family planning is absent. In this existential context, it may be oppressive for the Church to prescribe an approach to regulating birth that is countercultural and creates an undue burden, especially for women. (103–4)

It seems to me that this is contrary to authentic feminism, true personalism, and the equality and freedom in sexual relations that Salzman and Lawler profess (see "Christian Sexual Ethics" above). Unfortunately, they do not suggest any ways of trying to get such husbands to respect their wives better. Natural family planning has helped many husbands to understand, appreciate, and respect their

wives more profoundly. Compare also the dramatic decline in HIV/AIDS levels in Uganda between 1991 and 2001 “in sharp contrast with the 10–20% increase seen in other African nations throughout the same period.”

Uganda's approach ... [involved] information campaigns ... organized and brought ahead at all levels of society... [W]omen and teenage girls [were encouraged] ... to act in ways that allowed them to maintain their dignity and take control of their relationships with male partners ... Fidelity in relationships and in marriages became something that was spoken about and encouraged... Ugandans began to hear not only of a dangerous disease, but also of proposals for changes in behavior that had never before been spoken of in public. Discussions on abstinence—in schools, village centers, and religious settings—were also a central part of the battle against the disease. Governmental, religious and non-governmental organizations reached out to everyone. (Kopp 2003)

This experience shows that good information and educational programs, as well as good pastoral care, which the Church promotes, can make a real positive difference. With regard to direct contraception we can also note here that Pope Pius XI said that sometimes a spouse “is sinned against rather than sinning.” For example, a wife who agrees with the Church that direct contraception is immoral should never use such herself but she may tolerate her husband's using such for proportionate reasons (cf. HV, n. 14). If her husband pressures her to use a method of direct contraception instead, to suggest that she should submit to him because the culture is patriarchal, is to fail to respect her legitimate rights of thought, religion, and conscience.³⁴

Oral sex, anal sex, and mutual masturbation: “Oral sex, anal sex, and mutual

masturbation can be forms of sexual pleasure and enhance sexual intimacy for marital couples,” according to Salzman and Lawler (117; cf. 129). Concerning anal sex Jeffrey Satinover, M.D., however, says:

Even if condoms are used, anal intercourse is harmful primarily to the “receptive” partner. Because the rectal sphincter is designed to stretch only minimally, penile-anal thrusting can damage it severely.... Furthermore, anal intercourse ... traumatizes the soft tissues of the rectal lining. These tissues are meant to accommodate the relatively soft fecal mass as it is prepared for expulsion ... and are nowhere near as sturdy as vaginal tissue. As a consequence, the lining of the rectum is almost always traumatized to some degree by any act of anal intercourse. Even in the absence of major trauma, minor or microscopic tears in the rectal lining allow for immediate contamination and the entry of germs into the bloodstream.... Because receptive anal intercourse is so much more frequent among homosexual men than among women, the dangers of this kind of sex are amplified among homosexuals [T]he environment of the vagina is vastly cleaner than that of the rectum.... As a result, homosexual men are disproportionately vulnerable to a host of serious and sometimes fatal infections caused by the entry of feces into the bloodstream. (Satinover 1996, 67–8)

Salzman and Lawler's approval of anal sex is uninformed to say the least. It also reflects their dualism and failure to appreciate and respect God's wonderful design of the human body including the different purposes of different organs. With regard to oral sex and mutual masturbation, I agree with several orthodox Catholic theologians: “The Church's teaching that natural intercourse open to procreation is the only legitimate form of complete sexual expression ... does not

imply that mutual genital stimulation other than intercourse is forbidden for spouses as part of the preliminaries to marital intercourse..." In other words, it can be moral for a married couple to engage in foreplay with each other that prepares them including their genitals to engage in sexual intercourse and that respects their dignity as persons and other morally relevant values including the inherent total-giving and procreative meanings of human sexual relations (compare parts of "Christian Sexual Ethics and Homosexuality" above). On the other hand, it would not be moral for even a husband and wife to engage in oral sex or mutual masturbation with each other that was not an integral part of the complete conjugal act where they both intend that the husband ejaculate inside his wife's vagina since such deliberately chosen acts cannot properly respect the innate total-giving/unitive and procreative/life-giving meanings of the marital act.³⁵

Premarital sexual relations: While Salzman and Lawler are correct in saying that long-term mutual commitment is necessary for a sexual relationship to be just, loving, and fully human (see "Christian Sexual Ethics" above), they mistakenly approve of sexual relations for those planning to marry but not yet married. Concerning this they recommend a "betrothal ritual" which "would differ from the present wedding ceremony only in the fact that the consent would be *consensus de futuro*, a consent to wed in the future. Such betrothal, as it did before, would confer on the couple the status of committed spouses with all the rights that the Church grants to spouses, including the right to sexual intercourse" (211–12). Only some time later would they ceremonialize their relationship with "their wedding when, with their families, friends, and Christian community, they will renew their consent *de praesenti* and celebrate their union" (213).

In orthodox Catholic theology and teaching of the past and present, however, a betrothal or promise to marry does not confer "the right to sexual intercourse." For example, the great *Summa Theologiae* of St Thomas Aquinas, written more than seven hundred years ago, considers all nonmarital sexual relations including fornication to be a serious sin. Marital consent given in terms of the future tense does not make a marriage. One who promises to do a certain thing (e.g., to marry) does it not yet. Expressing consent in the future tense does not make a marriage but a promise to marry known as betrothal. More recently John Paul II taught that because we are embodied persons heterosexual intercourse is "realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present" (FC, n. 11). A promise or intention or plan to marry in the future does not involve an unconditional commitment and total personal self-giving like "matrimonial consent" which "is an act of the will by which a man and a woman mutually give and accept each other through an irrevocable covenant in order to establish marriage" (CIC, Canon 1057.2).³⁶

With regard to getting married Salzman and Lawler also say, "[I]n the received Western tradition, as in the African traditions, becoming validly and indissolubly married is a process, which begins with the exchange of consent and ends with subsequent consummation" (192). According to CIC, Canon 1061, "A valid marriage ... [is consummated] if the spouses have performed between themselves in a human fashion a conjugal act

which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh.” Salzman and Lawler, however, do not think that one act can consummate the marital covenant (166). They support accommodating the “African custom” whereby “The birth of a child stamps a union as marital, marking the union in African eyes as a truly consummated marriage” (202; see also 192–3, 199, and 202–3). This African custom of not considering a “marital” sexual union as permanent or indissoluble until the “birth of a child,” however, treats fertility, a secondary value of the person, as more important than the value of the person as a whole. It is contrary to authentic personalism. Unconditional marital vows, however, express true love for the person since they affirm the primary value of the person and subordinate secondary values of the person to this, as Karol Wojtyla correctly affirms (compare part of “Christian Sexual Ethics and Homosexuality” above). Moral theologian John Gallagher also correctly points out that:

In a fully personal relationship one relates to a person insofar as he ... [or] she is this unique individual.... If the relationship is fully personal the other is irreplaceable *Agape*, that form of love to which the Christian is called and which is exemplified in Jesus Christ, is fully personal rather than functional.... The fact that *agape* is paramount in Christian marriage means that this covenant is radically unconditional and fully personal.... An unconditional marriage must be permanent and indissoluble (Gallagher 2009).

Catholic teaching—that the spouses engaging in a conjugal act “in a human fashion” is what consummates their marriage—is in accord with the biblical understanding of marriage (see, e.g., Gen 2:24 and Mt 19:3–6), our being embodied

persons and authentic personalism. With regard to this consider the following by Dietrich von Hildebrand: “Only when we understand that the sexual act implies a mutual, irrevocable self-donation and is by its very nature called and destined to constitute an indissoluble union, can we see the desecration involved in sexual satisfaction outside of marriage.”³⁷

Elsewhere I have provided a much fuller treatment of premarital sex including between those living together and those who are engaged to be married. Among other things, nonmarital including premarital sexual relations involve a failure to love properly oneself, one’s partner, a possible child, others, and God (compare “Christian Sexual Ethics” above) (see Flaman 1999). Let us conclude this section by noting that Pope John Paul recognizes various reasons for unmarried cohabitation today including “a certain psychological immaturity that makes them [i.e., the persons involved] uncertain or afraid to enter into a stable and definitive union. In some countries, traditional customs presume that the true and proper marriage will take place only after a period of cohabitation and the birth of the first child.” It seems to me that he presents a much better solution to the problem of unmarried cohabitation than do Salzman and Lawler. Concerning this Pope John Paul II says in part:

The pastors and the ecclesial community should take care to become acquainted with such situations and their actual causes, case by case. They should make tactful and respectful contact with the couples concerned, and enlighten them patiently, correct them charitably and show them the witness of Christian family life, in such a way as to smooth the path for them to regularize their situation. But above all there must be a campaign of prevention, by fostering the sense of fidelity in the whole moral and

religious training of the young. (FC, n. 81)

Worthy of note, Pope John Paul II does not take a condemning approach to couples who choose to live together and have sexual relations before marriage contrary to biblical and Catholic teaching (see Flaman 1999, Chaps 2 and 4). Rather, he advocates an approach that would help to lead them to grow in loving according to the truth of God's plan for human sexuality and marriage in this area of their lives.

SOME CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This article is not meant to be a fully comprehensive response to Salzman and Lawler's *The Sexual Person*. Above I have addressed some points of theirs with which I agree as well as a number of their specific views which I consider to be mistaken. In these concluding reflections I will address a few overarching issues concerning their book.

Salzman and Lawler's revisionist ethical methodology is along the lines of proportionalism which considers an action to be moral if the premoral values outweigh the premoral disvalues. They think that "the only absolute moral norm is the abstract norm that 'good is to be done and evil left undone,' and that every other moral judgment requires concrete, empirical discernment" (225). Related to this and Salzman and Lawler's "drastic revision ... of Catholic moral theology," the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine says, "The authors can offer only vague and essentially subjective guidelines for moral judgment" (USCCB Committee, 2010, 18). Among others, Germain Grisez has criticized the inadequacies of proportionalism including that it is subjective and arbitrary in practice (for critique of

proportionalism, e.g., see Grisez 1983). Those using this approach may rationalize doing evil (cf. Rom 3:8) to get what they want very much since this may appear as the greater good to them. Salzman and Lawler go further than earlier proportionalist thinkers like Richard McCormick who considered homosexual acts to be always premorally evil since they depart from the heterosexual norm. Salzman and Lawler's approach is even more subjective since according to them while homosexual activity for the person with a heterosexual orientation is a premoral disvalue, homosexual activity for the person with a homosexual orientation is a premoral value (see TSP, 102–109). For my response to Salzman and Lawler's position on homosexuality see "Experience, Science, and Homosexuality", "The Bible and Homosexuality", and "Christian Sexual Ethics and Homosexuality" above, where, among other things, I argue that homosexual genital acts violate God's plan in creating human beings male and female. Another example of Salzman and Lawler's "proportionalism" concerns their treatment of heterologous assisted human reproduction where the sperm or ovum comes from a donor. In general they consider this to be immoral because of the potential negative impact on "the marital relationship, the relationship of the parents with the child, the donor's relationship with both the parents and the child, and the social implications with regard to the nature of the family" (244–5). They, however, go on to say that a couple could in good conscience use donor gametes if they judged that it would not involve disproportional relational harm in their case (252–3). It is not too difficult to see how a couple who wants a child very much, would judge using Salzman and Lawler's very subjective criteria. Among others, Pope John Paul II has criticized proportionalism saying in part that there are indeed "certain specific

kinds of behaviour that are always wrong to choose" because they are not capable "*of being ordered* to God...."³⁸ Heterologous assisted human reproduction is an example of such a behavior. Among other things, it separates by human initiative the procreation of a child from the marital act which God has intended to go together (compare "Christian Sexual Ethics and Some Other Issues", first four paragraphs above). It also involves acting to create the tragedy of a child being raised without one or both of his or her biological parents.³⁹

Salzman and Lawler contrast a classical, static, permanent achievement culture, anthropology, and theology, including a moral theology with universal norms, which they associate with "traditionalists" including Germain Grisez and colleagues' New Natural Law Theory and Pope John Paul II's Thomistic Personalism and Theology of the Body (cf. "Some Points of Agreement" above); and an empirical, dynamic, historically conscious culture, anthropology and theology, including a moral theology with changeable norms, which they associate with "revisionists" like themselves (see 2, 7, 57, and 225). This is an oversimplification to say the least since much of what Grisez and John Paul II say, for example, is original and a dynamic development compared to earlier theology. They also have a great appreciation of empirical science. No doubt they would also consider Pope Benedict XVI (now Emeritus) a "traditionalist" even though he has a great knowledge and appreciation of history as it pertains to the Church and theology. In response to Salzman and Lawler's approach to "historical consciousness," the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine astutely points out that, "The possibility of the perception and transmission of truth across historical contexts is absolutely essential for the Christian understanding of divine

revelation, which affirms that God has revealed himself in the history of Israel and enters history through the Incarnation of the eternal Word." Not to appreciate this is to deny Jesus' commission to bring his teaching to people of all nations and cultures by which they will learn the truth that will set them free (see Mt 28:19–20 and Jn 8:31–2). It is to fail to appreciate the meaning of inculturation, that the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ is meant to enlighten and transform all human cultures. Among other things, the Committee on Doctrine also criticizes Salzman and Lawler's approach to the natural law with their overly skeptical epistemology "that denies to human reason the capacity to grasp the intelligibility of nature and to discern an intrinsic order to nature." Such is not "compatible with a Catholic understanding of the human person as created in the image of God and a created order that has come into being and is sustained in being by the eternal Logos." Moreover, as this Committee correctly affirms, "It is possible and necessary both to acknowledge historical conditioning and to uphold the capacity of human reason to grasp something about the human nature that is shared by people in various ages and cultures" (USCCB Committee, 2010, 7 and 11–12). Indeed, being historically conscious does not exclude discovering and accepting universal truths including moral truths.

Salzman and Lawler say they do not accept relativism but perspectivism, that our judgments of truth within our perspective are partial because we "human knowers are finite" (53). Our limited understanding is also in need of dialectical "complementation by truths held in other perspectives" (265). While it is true that none of us has a complete understanding of reality and that we can learn from each other, this does not mean that everyone's judgment of truth is correct. One's

judgment is true if it corresponds to reality; it is mistaken if it does not. Jesus promised to send his disciples the Holy Spirit to lead them into the complete truth (see Jn 16, 1–15). We can relate a proper understanding of the development of doctrine in the Church to this.⁴⁰ This involves a growth in understanding certain realities including human sexuality and sexual ethics and a growth in articulating related truths, statements that correspond to these realities. Such a development like healthy life is organic, building on previous developments. While it affirms rather than denies certain perennial truths it is not static but dynamic. It is not a destructive growth like cancer. In their book Salzman and Lawler invite dialogue. In this article I have attempted to respond to this request pointing out both some things they say which I think are true and some things they say which I think are mistaken or false. Hopefully, this will contribute in a small way to a healthy development and growth in understanding sexual persons and ethics.

ENDNOTES

1. Salzman and Lawler (2008); unless otherwise noted all references in this article to Salzman and Lawler will be to their TSP.
2. One can find some other reviews of Salzman and Lawler's book by searching the *Catholic Periodical and Literature Index*, USCCB Committee, 1, and Google.
3. Flaman (2011); Chap. 2.1 specifically addresses "Divisions and Unity."
4. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint_en.html (08/28/12), n. 32, citing Vatican II, DS, n. 3. Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler cite this text on p. 30 of their article, "Theologians and the Magisterium: A Proposal of Complementarity of Charisms Through Dialogue," *Horizons*, 36/1 (2009), 7–31. Although I refer to this and another more recent article by Salzman and Lawler, my focus here will be on responding to their book TSP.
5. Avery Dulles, "Sensus Fidelium," *America*, 1 Nov. 1986, 242, as cited in TSP, 232.
6. Related to some other available options regarding problems in having children, see, e.g., <http://www.naprotechnology.com>; re: NaProTechnology developed by Thomas Hilgers, M.D., and colleagues.
7. May, Boyle and Lawler (2011) offer criticisms of many revisionist positions in Chap. 4 and following, and refer to many related sources in their endnotes. Cf. Lonergan (1971), Chap. 7 "Interpretation" regarding reading sympathetically and carefully.
8. Although Salzman and Lawler also relate experience to some other issues of sexual ethics, I focus on homosexuality here since it perhaps best illustrates their approach to experience and sexual ethics.
9. Morrison (1996); he shares his experience more fully in *Beyond Gay* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1999).
10. See, e.g., the Courage website: <http://www.couragerc.net>; the *Portraits of Courage* videos (New York: Courage Ministries, 2001); Exodus International's website: <http://www.exodusinternational.org>; and the website, <http://www.andrewcosmiskey.com>, and books of Andrew Comiskey.
11. Catholic Medical Association, *Homosexuality and Hope* (2007; statement online at <http://www.cathmed.org/publications/homosexuality.htm>), I.5. See, e.g., also Jones and Yarhouse (2007), concerning which Nicholas Cummings, former president of the American Psychological Association, states: "This study has broken new ground in its adherence to objectivity and a scientific precision that can be replicated and expanded ... This book is must reading for psychotherapists and counselors..." (first page inside the front cover). See <http://www.exgaystudy.org> for updates of this study. Flaman (2011) *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*, Chap. 3, treats healing and homosexuality more extensively than is possible in this article including free and informed

- consent, spiritual and psychological healing, healing and identity, and some mistaken views.
12. Keefe (2003), Satinover (1996), Fitzgibbons (1996); Fitzgibbons begins, "At the present time most Catholics have little to no understanding of the emotional causes of homosexual attractions and behaviour or of the powerful role that Catholic spirituality can play in the healing of the disorder." For many more articles by scientists and therapists related to the genesis and healing of homosexuality, see the National Association of Research and Therapy website: <http://www.narth.com>. Although Salzman and Lawler do not address the issue of pedophilia in their book it would be interesting to know whether or not they would consider pedophile sexual attractions and acting on these as "natural," and if not why not. Regarding pedophilia psychiatrist Satinover points out that some advocates of pedophilia such as the North American Man-Boy Love Association's "contentions as to the naturalness, normalcy, unchangeability, and ubiquity of pedophilia mirror precisely the arguments used to support the naturalness, normalcy, and so on of homosexuality..."(63). Re: pedophilia see, e.g., also the website: <http://b4uact.org/>. Although Salzman and Lawler think sexual relations need to be "natural" to be moral, they think they also need to be just and loving to be moral as we will consider later in this article.
 13. Salzman and Lawler TSP (2008, 228–9), referring to Farley (2006); Kurdek (2004); and some other studies on 313, n. 84. Note that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a Notification on June 4, 2012, Regarding the Book, *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2006) by Sister Margaret A. Farley, R.S.M. http://press.catholica.va/news_services/bulletin/news/29292.php?index=29292&en, points out that this book contains a number of "erroneous propositions, the dissemination of which risks grave harm to the faithful."
 14. See, e.g., Timothy Dailey, Ph.D., "Comparing the Lifestyles of Homosexual Couples to Married Couples." <http://www.frc.org>.
 15. See Harvey (1987), including his summary of Aardweg on 49–60.
 16. Nicolosi (2004) and Nicolosi and Nicolosi (2002), Chap. 7, including a summary of Eller-Boyko. See, e.g., also Andria L. Sigler-Smalz, "Understanding the Lesbian Client," retrieved in 2004 from <http://www.narth.com>; many testimonials on Exodus International's website; Harvey (1996); and other related materials and references in Flaman (2007a), 2.b.
 17. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons" (available at: <http://www.vatican.va>), n. 7.
 18. Regnerus (2012; the first quote is from 753; the second and third quotes are from 766). See, e.g., also Sprigg (2004), including testimonies of adult children raised by homosexual parents; Flaman (2007b) 2.d and Gallagher (2009), who has perhaps read more of the related social science literature than any other contemporary Catholic moral theologian. In an appendix that discusses the value and limits of empirical studies, he says he was surprised how much the evidence supports and does not undermine the traditional Christian view of sex, marriage, and the family.
 19. See, e.g., Harvey (1987), *The Homosexual Person* and *The Truth About Homosexuality* (1996); and Morrison (1999), *Beyond Gay*. Also relevant here is Lawler and Salzman's (2011) own reference to Mt 7:16. I think the wonderful fruits of Courage and many of its members witness strongly in support of Catholic moral teaching on homosexuality.
 20. Related to the Bible and sexual ethics, I focus on Salzman and Lawler's treatment of homosexuality in TSP since among contemporary sexual issues it is the one they relate the most to the Bible. The USCCB Committee, 2010, 3–7, also speaks of homosexuality as the primary example, re: Salzman and Lawler's approach to Scripture.
 21. USCCB Committee, 2010, 2–8; the quote is from 6.
 22. Gagnon (2001); the quotes are from 384, 385, and 395.
 23. The citations by biblical scholars John Barton and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor are from the back cover of Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (see also 1–2 for quotations by a number of other biblical

- and other Christian scholars regarding the significance of Gagnon's book). See also Keenan (2003); the quote is from 137.
24. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 485 and 487–88, respectively. Note: since the publication of his book in 2001 Gagnon has continued to write much on homosexuality, often engaging those who like Salzman and Lawler take "revisionist" approaches. See, e.g., Gagnon's website: <http://www.robgagnon.net/>.
 25. Romano Penna, Professor of New Testament Studies, Pontifical Lateran University, Rome, "Homosexuality and the New Testament," *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition, 2 Apr. 1997, 6, referring to all of Rom 1:18–32.
 26. The citations from the Second Vatican Council, are from the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (1965; from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html), n. 12 (Salzman and Lawler cite this in TSP, 14) and n. 11, respectively. Related to a truly Catholic approach to the Bible, *Dei Verbum* also considers Scripture in relation to Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. See also USCCB Committee, 2010, 7–8. In my book, *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*, I have attempted to treat some aspects of homosexuality from a Christ-centered biblical perspective, that is, in the light of Jesus, God-incarnate, light of the world (see Jn 8:12).
 27. Re: "evil" see, e.g., Jolivet and Whitney (2003). Re: the universal call to holiness see the Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (1964; http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), Ch. 5. I try to develop some implications of the call to follow Jesus and to love as he loves in *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*.
 28. The quote is from Morrison (1996), "Love that Speaks its Name," 1390. See also Morrison (1999), *Beyond Gay*, Chaps. 5 and 9 (in this book he shares many more details of his life journey and experiences and develops a good Christian theology of human sexuality in the light of these); and Dietrich von Hildebrand, who develops these and related themes in various books, including his foundational *Christian Ethics* (New York: David McKay, 1953) and *Transformation in Christ* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1963). In *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*, Chap. 4, I treat the "The Cross and Fullness of Life" more fully as it relates to homosexuality and those who have experienced same-sex erotic attractions.
 29. See Wojtyła (1981); John Paul II (2006); and biblical texts such as Gen 1 and Ps 139:13–18 which speak of the goodness and wonder of God's creation including the human body and power to procreate. It is beyond the purposes of this article to discuss pleasure in relation to other goods more fully here. For excellent and balanced treatments besides those of von Hildebrand and Wojtyła, see, e.g., Waldstein (2003); and May, Lawler and Boyle 2011, 118–25, which also provides a good treatment of the morality of homosexual acts on 286–96.
 30. Harvey (1987). Re: phenomenology, see, e.g., Wojtyła (1979). The USCCB Committee, 2010, 14–15, criticizes the dualistic view of the human person in Salzman and Lawler's TSP saying in part that even though they say they "reject the idea of dualism of body and spirit (125, 132) ... in their moral analysis they treat the body, along with its acts, as if it were an external instrument of the spirit [that can be manipulated according to one's desire] and not integral to the human person." Cf. also psychoanalyst Elaine Siegel, Ph.D., and psychologist Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., who "are in agreement that a primary therapeutic task is the need for both lesbians and homosexual men to 'claim' their female or male bodies, from which they have become emotionally detached, as part of their fundamental sense of self." Nicolosi and Nicolosi, *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*, 153. Siegel is author of *Female Homosexuality* and Joseph Nicolosi has counselled hundreds of male homosexuals.
 31. Cf., e.g., Gagnon (2001, 432), who speaks of our cultural obsession with sexual fulfillment as "a new form of idolatry"; May et al. (2011), Chaps. 6–8, who write well with regard to the virtue of chastity, married and unmarried persons, and

- celibacy; and my treatment of sexual morality, the virtue of chastity, celibacy and human needs as these relate to homosexuality in *Homosexuality and Following Jesus*, Chap. 5.
32. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* (1968; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html).
 33. See, e.g., related articles in Smith (1993) Hilary White, "Study Confirms Estrogen in Water from the Pill Devastating to Fish Populations," LifeSiteNews.com, February 18, 2008 (see the related 2007 and 2006 studies by Dr. Kidd and others at: <http://www.unb.ca/saintjohn/sase/research/kiddlab/publications.html>); The Alan Guttmacher Institute (1994), re: the pregnancy rates of the pill and condoms for various ages of women; "Is the Sympto-Thermal Method effective," <http://www.en.serena.ca/FAQ/#1>; and "Creighton Model: Effectiveness of the System," <http://www.creightonmodel.com/effectiveness.htm>.
 34. Concerning Pope Pius XI see his Encyclical Letter on Christian Marriage *Casti Connubii* (1930; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121930_casti-connubii_en.html), n. 59. Re: freedom of thought, conscience and religion see, e.g., the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948; <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng>), n. 18. It is beyond the purposes of this article to consider family planning further here. For a good treatment of some of the moral issues see, e.g., May, Lawler and Boyle 2011, 227–45 and related references.
 35. For a fuller treatment of these issues see, e.g., May, Lawler and Boyle (2011), Ch. 7.V "Other Violations of Marital Chastity" (the quote is from 246) and related references. It is beyond the purposes of this article to discuss these issues further here.
 36. See *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), 2–2, 154, 2–3; and Supplement, 45, 3–4; cf. q. 43 re: betrothal; Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* [FC] On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (1981; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html); and [CIC] Code of Canon Law (1983; http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM). For good historical treatments of Christian marriage see, e.g., Joyce (1948) and Schillebeeckx (1965).
 37. See Wojtyla (1981, 40–4 and 211–24) The quotes are from Gallagher (2009, 173–6) and von Hildebrand (1966).
 38. For Pope John Paul II's critique of proportionalism see his Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* [VS] Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching (1993; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html), nn. 71–83 (the quote is from n. 78). In Section 78 John Paul II also says in part: "*The morality of the human act depends primarily and fundamentally on the 'object' rationally chosen by the deliberate will* The object of the act of willing is in fact a freely chosen kind of behavior. To the extent that it is in conformity with the order of reason, it is the cause of the goodness of the will; it perfects us morally, and disposes us to recognize our ultimate end in the perfect good, primordial love.... An act is ... good if its object is in conformity with the good of the person with respect for the goods morally relevant for him...." Salzman and Lawler fail to appreciate properly the significance of the "object" of an action as understood by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and by Catholic teaching (compare VS, n. 78).
 39. For Catholic teaching on the morality of assisted human reproduction see the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Donum Vitae* (1987) and *Dignitas Personae* (2008). Both are available in English on the Vatican website and easy to locate with Google. See also May (2008), Ch. 3. Heterologous assisted human reproduction differs morally from adoption which is often the best response to an already existing tragedy—when the biological parents are unable or unwilling to care for their child.
 40. See, e.g., Newman (1909); and the Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, nn. 8 and 12.

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