

Gender and Justice: Human and Divine Gender in Analytic Theology

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Gender is everywhere. It shapes everything from our ‘feminine’ pastel or or ‘manly’ grey personal hygiene items to our linguistic interactions with complete strangers. And, yet, we rarely give it much thought unless our expectations are violated. Then gender becomes overwhelmingly salient as we cope with our surprise. This is true in theological discourse as elsewhere. Consider the following passage.

The Second Person of the Trinity is our Mother in Nature...And He is our Mother in Mercy...For in our Mother Christ we profit and increase. (Julian of Norwich 2016: 145)

See? Julian’s use of gendered language violates our expectations and renders assumptions about the nature of both God and humans starkly visible—and disrupted. In this chapter, I suggest that analytic theology (AT) would benefit from more such disruption, so that we are forced to see and to question gender’s role in our practices and our theories.

Despite gender’s centrality to our experience, and despite the robust literatures on the topic in feminist theology and analytic philosophy, little has been written on the topic within AT or its disciplinary cousin, analytic philosophy of religion (APR).¹ Because there is so little analytic theological landscape to sketch, in this chapter I reach beyond AT to describe the theories and questions regarding gender developing in neighboring fields which are directly relevant to those addressed in AT and to which I believe that AT is well-situated to contribute. In so reaching, the extant literature goes from being vanishingly small to overwhelmingly large, so I limit my consideration to three pertinent topics: (1) the role of gender in the practice of AT, (2) divine gender, and (3) human gender and soteriology. In each section, I demonstrate how attention to gender and the voices of those who have been historically marginalized would contribute to greater justice within our discipline and open the door to fruitful new topics in AT.

Throughout this chapter I assume a (not uncontroversial) distinction between sex and gender, according to which sex is related to features of bodies such as genitalia and chromosomes, while ‘gender’ refers to features of social selves.² I use the terms “woman,”

¹ In 2002, Sarah Coakley wrote that APR “has to date shown a marked (if largely silent) resistance to feminist reflection of any sort” (98), and dishearteningly little has changed in the nearly two intervening decades. Indeed, more recently, she writes that if AT were a club, “it might be one for Men Only [sic]” (2013: 601).

² This should not be taken as an endorsement of the distinction. Rather, it is simply a fairly familiar way to quickly divide up the space of possibility. For a critique of the distinction see Mikkola (2011). For a critique of the notion that sex is an entirely biological category, see Fausto-Sterling (2000).

“man,” “masculine,” “feminine,” “non-binary,” and “transgender” (or “trans”) to refer to people’s gender-identities, and the terms “male,” “female,” and “intersex” to refer to sex.)

I. Gender in the Practice of Analytic Theology

Two themes in feminist epistemology have emerged over the past several decades that provide helpful resources for analytic theologians wanting to think about the significance of gender in our practices as a discipline: standpoint epistemology and theories of epistemic injustice and oppression.

Standpoint epistemology makes explicit the ways that both knowers and the knowledge they can gain are at least partially socially constructed. Almost everyone acknowledges that one’s social role is relevant to what one knows (e.g., people who have uteruses are better positioned to gain phenomenal knowledge of pregnancy and childbirth). Standpoint epistemology goes a step further, claiming that differences in access to knowledge are not simply accidental differences in what individuals *happen* to be in a position to come to know, but a central epistemic feature of social contexts defined by inequality and oppression. Among other things, standpoint theorists seek to demonstrate that marginalized members of society are better positioned to understand reality in important ways because they must understand not only their own lives but also the perspectives of their oppressors in order to navigate an often-hostile world. The privileged, in contrast, may ignore the lived-experience of those less privileged than themselves, and may even have a vested interest in maintaining their ignorance of it (Mills 2007; Medina 2013). If this is true, then those marginalized within religious communities—including people marginalized on the basis of their gender identities, such as women, non-binary, and trans individuals—should be expected to have insight into theological realities unavailable to their relatively privileged counterparts. If the ultimate aim of AT is truth, AT will be worse off to the degree that it lacks contributions from those people.

There are at least two reasons analytic theologians might be skeptical of standpoint theory. First, they might understand standpoint theory as a form of relativism according to which there is no Truth, only true-for-you and true-for-me. But relativism is not a fundamental feature of standpoint theory (Harding 1993; Anderson 2001; Fricker 2006).³ In fact, a central tenet of realist standpoint epistemologies is that some standpoints are *better* than others at getting at certain truths (Harding 1993), and the critical engagement of individuals thinking from multiple marginalized standpoints is better still (Anderson 2001). As Pamela Sue Anderson puts it,

We must be able to make true claims...but our perception of what there is is potentially distorted or obscured by actual states of oppression, and these states of oppression can only be discerned by thinking from the lives of marginalized others...The role of standpoint, then, is to enable less partial thinking that, ultimately, seeks to transform unjust power relations. (2001: 145-6)

³ Some versions of standpoint theory do endorse it.

A second concern might be that standpoint theory advocates the uncritical acceptance of any claim expressed by members of marginalized groups. Yet it seems clear that not every claim made by a woman, non-binary, or trans person should be taken to be true, even when those claims are about gender or gendered experience. No one is epistemically perfect, and the uncritical acceptance of views expressed by marginalized individuals would require endorsement of a plethora of contradictions, since people who share gendered social identities do not agree on everything or even on the issues most central to their experience. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to ignore the ways in which the experience of oppression can distort one's self-understanding and limit one's knowledge (Nelson 2001; Tessman 2005, 11-52; Fricker 2007; Dotson 2011, 2014). Internalized sexism or transphobia—the well-documented phenomena of coming to endorse or unconsciously accept oppressive prejudices and biases about one's own gender (David 2013: 8; Nelson 2001; Bartky 1990)—are clear examples of how oppression can distort one's thinking.

Fortunately, standpoint theory is not committed to accepting every claim made by a member of an oppressed social group. A privileged standpoint, for many theorists, is not one that an individual occupies just in virtue of their group membership: it is one that their group membership *situates them to develop* given appropriate critical engagement with their experiences and the broader social world. While marginalized individuals are more likely and better-positioned to develop such a standpoint, their status as marginalized hardly guarantees that they will. In addition, people who are relatively privileged can also work to think about the world through the lens of the testimony of those more marginalized than themselves.

Closely related to the epistemic benefits that marginalization creates are the epistemic injustices to which it renders one vulnerable. The term “epistemic injustice” denotes the ways in which people can, in virtue of their social identities, be unjustly harmed in their capacities as knowers – most often, by being unjustly prevented from participating in knowledge production and communication. Kristie Dotson and Miranda Fricker identify three orders of epistemic injustice that the marginalized may encounter (Fricker 2007; Dotson 2011, 2012). At the first-order level, an agent may suffer from a credibility deficit due to social stereotypes regarding one or more aspects of their identity. Despite being a reliable and competent witness, for instance, a trans woman of color claiming to have been harassed may be seen as a less reliable source than her cis, white counterparts, simply because of her race and gender-identity. This is *testimonial injustice*. At the second-order level, an agent may struggle to make certain experiences intelligible because those members of society who occupy the positions and structures that contribute most to shaping the hermeneutical resources available within the community tend not to have similar experiences and often have little interest in understanding them. Prior to the women's movement, a woman being harassed was likely to lack the terminology or conceptual resources to describe the harassment or its harm adequately to herself or to others (Fricker 2007: 149-150). This is *hermeneutical injustice*—“the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource” (Fricker 2007: 155). At the third-order level, members of marginalized groups may have already developed the conceptual resources needed to make their experience communicatively intelligible, but privileged members of society fail to attend to or make use of those resources. When women activists developed the notion of sexual

harassment, for instance, many in society initially resisted the concept, preferring to view unwanted sexual attention as harmless flirting or teasing. This is *contributory injustice* (Dotson 2012: 31ff).

These conceptual resources from feminist epistemology can both help AT to diagnose weaknesses and injustices within the discipline and point the way toward greater epistemic health (Anderson 2001, 2004, 2012; Coakley 2002; Kidd 2017; Merrick 2019; Panchuk 2019; Pogin 2019, 2020). The kinds of social conditions that contribute to epistemic injustice have been as present within the Christian tradition (which is the tradition that dominates AT and APR) as elsewhere in society. Women and LGBTQ individuals have had markedly less opportunity to contribute to the development of theology and tend not to be viewed as authorities on theological issues. Their voices are less often invited, present, attended to, respected, or cited within AT than than their non-marginalized counterparts. In addition to unjustly disadvantaging women, non-binary, and trans scholars, these circumstances also appear to make the discipline worse off, epistemically speaking.

The dearth of people with marginalized gender identities in AT also has a skewing effect on the range of questions addressed and the shape of dominant responses. For example, why has perfect being theology assumed that independence is greater than dependence, impassibility more perfect than passion, immutability better than responsive change? Many feminists have argued that this is because the former of each of these pairs has historically been understood as masculine traits and there are implicit biases that favor of the “masculine” virtues. God is constructed in the image of the powerful ruling male (Johnson 2015: 247). In similar vein, Jewish theologian, Melissa Raphael, argues that standard free-will defenses of God’s non-intervention in Auschwitz depend in problematic ways on patriarchal norms (2004). First, they adopt an ideal of human autonomy that has been largely inaccessible to women. Second, they propose that the value of this masculine autonomy outweighs the disproportionate suffering of women and children in the camps and throughout history: “Here both the covenant, and women, children and men feminized by their powerlessness, pay the price for masculine becoming” (146). Finally, it assumes that masculine autonomy depends for its existence on divine hiddenness, but “if the patriarchal aspiration of omnipotence is not attributed to God, she can be present to humanity without disabling their humanity” (146). Others have argued that the existence of pervasive epistemic injustice is grounds for non-deference to religious authority (Merrick 2019), and that diverse voices from the religious margins can contribute to the epistemic health of theological reflection (Dormandy 2018; De Cruz 2019).

A central theme in emerging work on epistemic justice and standpoint epistemology within AT and APR is that we should welcome the disruption of our gendered assumptions and systems -- and that doing so is likely to make our practices both morally and epistemically better.

Divine Gender

A few years ago, Owen Strachan tweeted that referring to God using feminine pronouns, as Julian of Norwich (following a robust Christian tradition)⁴ and Melissa Raphael do above, is

⁴ See Bynum (1984).

“heresy, straight up” (2014). Perhaps few Christians would go quite as far as an accusation of heresy, but there *is* a pervasive assumption in the history of Christian theology and philosophy that God is masculine.

This assumption has been criticized by feminist theologians for decades (e.g., Daly 1985 [1973]; Reuther 1993 [1983]; Johnson 2015 [1992]), but it is only within the past few years that analytic theologians have joined the conversation (Rea 2016, 2019; Pogin 2019b). In this section I consider the reasons one might have for thinking that God is masculine and consider two arguments to the contrary offered by analytic theologians.

Given the definitions I offered in the introduction and the commitments of classical theism, it should be clear that, apart from the incarnation, God lacks *sex*. However, it is often assumed that God nonetheless has a masculine *gender*. There are a number of factors that might help explain this assumption. First, the social contexts in which classical monotheism developed as the dominant religion have been largely patriarchal and have tended to assume that properties understood as *masculine*—like strength, intelligence, self-sufficiency, and impassibility—are superior to those understood as *feminine* (e.g., weakness, intuition, receptivity, dependence, and emotionality). From this, it is easy to infer that the ‘being greater than which cannot be thought’ must be masculine. But this hardly seems like a sufficient explanation of the tendency, since patriarchal cultures have sometimes embraced feminine deities and patriarchal norms are often supported *by* theological commitments (Daly 1985, 13; Johnson 2015, 5, 23), rather than (or in addition to) causing them. So these social facts should be considered in conjunction with a second reason: the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Scriptures frequently refer to God using masculine pronouns and more frequently represent God using masculine metaphors than feminine ones. The third reason people tend to assume that God is masculine is that the monotheistic traditions, likely influenced by the previous two points, tend to endorse divine masculinity (although not exclusively, as we have seen above). Take the Christian theological tradition. Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle in arguing that, although she is not defective in virtue of her *human* nature, in her *individual* female nature woman is defective and instantiates a misbegotten nature (Aquinas 2009: 334). If being feminine is a defect, and God is that greater than which cannot be thought, it follows that God cannot be feminine. Such considerations lead Aquinas to conclude that masculine terminology is more appropriate for referring to God. He argues that because the female principle is passive in generation while the male is active, and the son is begotten by the self-contemplation of the Father, who is active, ‘Father’ is a more appropriate term than “Mother” for describing the relationship between the first and second persons of the trinity (Aquinas 1975: 90).

Proponents of exclusively masculine speech about and pronouns referring to God (henceforth ‘exclusivists’) fall into two main camps. First, one might claim that God is *literally* masculine. Second, one could take the weaker position that God is metaphorically or analogously more masculine than feminine. In what follows, I describe and evaluate two

arguments against these views that have recently emerged in AT: the argument from the *imago Dei* and the argument from injustice.⁵

1. The Argument from the *Imago Dei*

The *imago Dei* is often invoked in arguments against exclusively masculine speech about God, but it often plays only a peripheral role. In contrast, Michael Rea makes the human possession of the divine image central in this (2016) argument⁶:

- 1.) God is most accurately characterized as masculine only if God is masculine and God is not equally feminine.
- 2.) If God is masculine and not equally feminine, then masculine people are more like God than feminine people.
- 3.) Men and women are equally made in the image of God, so masculine people are not more like God than feminine people.
- 4.) It is not the case that God is masculine and not equally feminine.
- 5.) God is masculine or feminine only if God is equally masculine and feminine.
- 6.) Therefore, God is not most accurately characterized as masculine.

For the sake of brevity, I set aside exegetical arguments against premises 1.) and 3.).⁷ 2.) seems plausible, but a detractor might object in the following way: while it is true that if God is literally masculine and not equally feminine, then masculine people (particularly men) share an attribute with God that feminine and non-binary people do not, it would be a mistake to think that this single attribute automatically makes men *more like* God than others. One might think that women can be just as much like God as men can, simply in different ways than men. Karen Swallow Prior (2014) points out that while she is a woman and her father is a man, she is much more like her father than her brother is.

It is true that merely being masculine will not make some masculine person, x, more God-like than some non-masculine person, y. It may be that y is more god-like than x in virtue of having fostered various God-like virtues. Perhaps y is more merciful, kinder, and more knowledgeable than x. Nonetheless, all other things being equal, x will have *the potential* to share more attributes with God than y. Swallow Prior may indeed share more attributes with her dad than her brother, but if her brother were equally like their dad in every other way, he would end up being more like him than she, simply in virtue of their shared gender-identity.

This is especially problematic because of the long tradition in monotheism of associating God with goodness. Things have value, among other things, in virtue of the relation in which

⁵ A third approach, popular among feminist theologians, is what we might call the argument from transcendence. I take it to be implicit in (Johnson 2015), for example.

⁶ While there is significant debate on what it means to be an image of God, and exactly what bearing it entails, I take it that the arguments offered here are compatible with most, if not all, of the prominent views.

⁷ Rea addresses them some of these arguments (2016, 2019).

they stand to God. To be God-like is a *value-conferring* status. To be more masculine is to be more God-like, and to be more God-like is to be *better* in both a metaphysically and morally significant sense.

The exclusivist could, of course, argue that while being masculine does make men more like God than others, and while this is indeed a value-conferring status, there are perhaps other properties that feminine and non-binary people can share with God that men cannot, such that masculine and non-masculine people are equally like God, just in different ways. If this is true, though, the burden of proof will be on the exclusivist to say how, if feminine and non-binary people share just as many properties with God as masculine people, God is not as feminine as masculine or as appropriately described with feminine and non-binary language as with masculine.

2. The Argument from Injustice

Most feminist theologians who criticize exclusivism take as their starting point the belief that it harms women and gender minorities when God is spoken of in exclusively masculine ways, and that believing the truth about God cannot promote injustice. Kathryn Pogin introduces this style of argument into AT and APR in her (2020) work. She points out that “[g]endered associations make a difference not just in how we conceptualize God, but in how we conceptualize ourselves and our relationships to one another. If maleness is, in general, understood to involve a normative superiority, talent and intelligence in women is no longer strictly a gift, but an aberration” (304).

We can follow Rea (2020: 310) in reconstructing Pogin’s argument in the following way.

- 1) If God exists and is (exclusively) masculine, believing the truth about God would promote injustice and harm—especially to women, but also to men.
- 2) If God exists, believing the truth about God would not promote injustice.
- 3) Therefore, if God exists, God is not (exclusively) masculine.

Pogin supports point (2) by claiming that “[j]ustice and truth are ineluctably related” (302). That is, it should not be the case that in virtue of believing true things about God, we obtain theoretical grounds for injustice. The corollary is also true. If we find that some purported truth about God *does* justify harming others, then we have a *prima facie* reason to reject that purported truth about God.

There are two potential difficulties with this argument. First, not all harms are injustices. If the purported belief about God provides theoretical justification for some harm, then the proponent of that view of God has provided themselves with grounds for claiming that the harm is not, in fact, an injustice. Here the proponent of Pogin’s argument will be forced to depend on the weight of our moral intuitions and broader moral values (presumably informed by other religious commitments, such as love of neighbor and care for the oppressed), which may have little effect on the person whose moral intuitions and values entail that the harm done to women and gender minorities is neither an injustice nor a failure of love. In other words, while this

argument may provide a theoretical justification for an inclusivists like Pogin and Rea, it is unlikely to persuade the theologian who does not already share their values.

The second difficulty lies in showing that any particular belief about God logically entails the permissibility of some apparently unjust harm. How would such a demonstration go? Returning to the argument in the previous section, if we assume that God-likeness is a normative, value-laden property, then if God is masculine, men are superior to women in some significant ways. And, if men are superior, one is (likely) justified in treating them *as superior*. Indeed, even if people don't come to consciously endorse the view that men are superior to women, one might still think that the linguistic association of God with masculinity is likely to contribute to systemic injustice (by promoting implicit biases and the like) . As Pogin puts it:

How we put concepts to work...may ultimately shape the content we take them to have. Likewise, when we take God to be appropriately represented as masculine but not feminine, and when we repeatedly associate divinity with masculinity, something is communicated not just about divinity, but about masculinity itself. (307)

If either of these arguments is successful, they provide grounds for changing not only the language used to refer to God in AT and our assumptions about the relationship between God and gender.

Human Gender

I have so far discussed how gender relate to the practice of AT and to the nature of God. There are also a number of questions that analytic theologians might seek to answer regarding gender and human experience. For example, which contemporary theories of gender are most compatible with biblical theology (Peeler 2019), with particular theological traditions (Potter 2019), or with transphobes and misogynists making morally appropriate amends in the afterlife to the people they have harmed on earth (Hereth 2019a; Yancey 2019)? Does recent work in analytic theology on the incarnation offer any insight for the question of the ordination of women (Coakley 2004)? In what follows, I examine a question that has loomed large in feminist theological discussions of human gender: Can a Male Savior Save Women (Ruether 1993: 116ff)? Throughout, I assume, for the sake of argument, that Jesus was, in fact, male and that the answer to the question of whether he can save women is, "yes."⁸

Answering the question requires careful attention to (at least) three different theoretical issues. The references to a 'male' savior and 'women,' for instance, suggests that the answer will depend on what theories of gender and sex (and their relationship) that one adopts.⁹ Given that

⁸ To the best of my knowledge, no major theologian in the history of Christian theology has defended a 'no' answer.

⁹ At the time Ruether posed the question, it was not quite as standard to use "male" to refer to sex and "women" to refer to gender, so I don't think she intended to highlight issues about the relationship between gender and sex. They nonetheless arise when we start to think carefully through the issue. I thank Michael Rea for pressing me to clarify this issue.

within traditional Christian theology this male savior is understood to be God incarnate, an adequate answer must also consider the metaphysical relationship between Jesus and his human nature. Finally, because what is at stake is the efficacy of Christ's salvific work, both of these metaphysical theories will need to be considered in conversation with theories of the atonement. Given the rich work on the metaphysics of gender being done within analytic feminism and of the incarnation within analytic theology, this question is ripe for analytic theological consideration. In what remains of this chapter I can only offer the broadest strokes of how that conversation might go—considering just two (very broad) theories of gender – gender essentialism and social constructivism – and sketching the questions that one might ask about the incarnation and the atonement with relation to them.

1. Gender Essentialism

Gender essentialism, as I will be using the term here, identifies or closely associates gender with a natural, biological kind—in particular, one's biological sex, narrowly understood as a dimorphic biological category. On this view, humans (with the possible exception of intersex individuals) are either male or female, and being male or female entails that one should exemplify certain masculine or feminine traits.

This form of gender essentialism seems implicit in many important documents of the Roman Catholic Church and is explicitly taught in many branches of evangelical Protestantism. For example, in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II describes virginity and motherhood as two special dimensions of the character of women, suggests that God has entrusted *care* for human persons to women in a special way, and describes *sensitivity* as part of the “genius” of women (1988). Throughout the letter these qualities are described as *essential* and *central* to what it means to be a woman. Evangelical pastor, John Piper, claims that “[w]hen the Bible teaches that men and women fulfill different roles in relation to each other, charging man with a unique leadership role, it bases this differentiation not on temporary cultural norms but on permanent facts of creation” (1991: 28). Being male, and thus masculine, entails that one has a sense of responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women (29), while being female, and thus feminine, entails that one have a disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture the strength of worthy men (37).

On this view, gender is metaphysically basic and essential to who one is and how one lives. If Jesus's human nature was both male and masculine, it was essentially so. This does not initially seem like a problem, since on most popular views of the atonement, Jesus came to redeem fallen *humanity*, and all men and women are equally *human*. However, a popular early Christian aphorism says that “whatever was not assumed was not redeemed.” Jesus can only redeem humanity because he assumed human nature. Does this entail that because Jesus didn't assume *feminine* humanity that feminine humans are not redeemed, or that only their humanity is redeemed but not their femininity?

One way to avoid this problem is to argue that Jesus' masculinity is of *no* significance to his atoning purposes (Johnson 1992). That is, Jesus is male only because in becoming human, Jesus must exemplify some determinate of the determinables of sex and gender. In terms of his

atonement work, Jesus could have just as well taken on a female and feminine nature. Thus, in virtue of assuming *human* nature, Jesus redeems all humans. This view would need some further metaphysical explanation to work out some possible objections, but assuming those could be addressed, it seems like a reasonable view. Yet a significant number of the Christians who are inclined toward biological determinist gender essentialism -- and who, therefore, need to deny that Jesus's maleness plays a salvific role if women are to enjoy redemption in the same way and to the same degree as men -- are the very ones most likely to see human representation of Jesus's maleness as necessary to symbolic representation in the Eucharist.¹⁰ As Reuther puts it, "The Vatican Declaration in 1976 against women's ordination sums up this Christological masculinism with the statement that 'there must be a physical resemblance between the priest and Christ.' The possession of male genitalia becomes the essential prerequisite for representing Christ, who is the disclosure of the male God" (126). It becomes difficult to explain why *this* and only this bodily feature, which is inessential to Christ's salvific work, is crucial for representation, but not other, equally inessential bodily features such as ethnicity, race, height, hair color, or eye color. It seems as though one must say either that a male savior cannot save women, or that women can represent the savior just as well as men. Explaining why this is a false dichotomy is one of the challenges left facing gender essentialists who endorse an all-male priesthood on these grounds.

2. Social Constructivism

Social constructivists about gender see gender as created by social relations, rather than being something metaphysically or biologically basic. Gender exists, on this view, the same way that the presidents and paper money exist. Paper money has no inherent value, but our social arrangements invest it with great power and significance.¹¹ Gender isn't an inherent property people have, but the way our societies function give gender great power and significance. There are a number of different social constructivist accounts of gender. One well-known example is Sally Haslanger's:

S is a woman if [by definition] S is systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.), and S is "marked" as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction. (2003: 6).

It is tempting to assume that the worry about redemption falls away for social constructivists. If gender is not something metaphysically deep, then it is not something that Jesus assumes just in

¹⁰ This is primarily true of Roman Catholics, although this argument does have varying degrees of influence in the Anglican and Orthodox communities.

¹¹ Social constructivists need not be committed to any particular view of properties in general for this view to be available to them. They could be realists, nominalists, or fictionalists. Just as Peter van Inwagen is a realist about abstract properties who thinks there are no tables, only particles arranged table-wise, a social constructivist might be a realist about properties but think there are no genders in a metaphysical deep sense, just people acting gender-wise.

virtue of the incarnation. His gender arises from the social conditions in which he lives. If one's theory of the atonement only requires that Jesus assumes the metaphysically basic "stuff" of human nature in the incarnation, then this might be sufficient. After all, few think that Jesus has to take on all of the social roles that humans can occupy. He does not have to have been a president to redeem presidents.

But theories of the atonement that take *metaphysical* commonality between redeemer and redeemed as essential are not the only theories. Moral exemplarist views and the christology and soteriology of liberation theologies take Jesus's *social* identity to be morally significant, even central, to his christological role. These theories might face problems when endorsing social constructivism about gender because the historical Jesus apparently does not share the social positions occupied by women or gender minorities of his time or ours. Does Jesus fail to save women, non-binary, and trans people?

This is why liberation and post-colonial theologians have often construed Christ as black, as the Corn Mother of Native American mythology, or as a queer person (Cone 2018 [1986]; Tinker 1998; Bahoche 2008; Pui-lan 2005). "The black community is an oppressed community primarily because of its blackness; hence the christological importance of Jesus must be found in his blackness. If he is not black as we are, then the resurrection has little significance for our time," declares James Cone (2018, 126; see also Brown Douglas 2019). Of course, neither James Cone nor Kelly Brown Douglas believe that the historical Jesus was actually of African descent. Rather, what they seem to suggest is that in his role as the *Christ*, as one who entered into the reality of unjust human suffering and oppression, who died and yet liberates, we can interpret his social identity through the lens of contemporary oppressed social identities. Jesus, like us, was oppressed, and so is a member of our social group. "Our being with him is dependent on his being with us in the oppressed...condition" (ibid., 127) So, perhaps, the social constructivist with moral exemplarist or liberationist leanings can say that while the historical Jesus may not have been a woman or trans, Christ our Mother and Queer Christ are with us in our oppressed condition as women and gender minorities, as well as in our identities as racialized, disabled, lower class, or religious minorities. This is the message one might see in Harmonia Rosales's breathtaking painting *I Exist*, which features a crucified black woman surrounded by mourning black women, with a skull lying at the foot of the cross—a painting that disrupts and reforms our expectations about the intersection of gender, race, divinity and redemption.

Contemporary conversations surround gender, both in popular culture and in theology and philosophy, are complex and quickly evolving. It might be tempting for analytic theologians to ignore them in favor of what they take to be more 'perennial' questions. However, I have demonstrated in this paper that we do so to our detriment. Gender is deeply relevant to the social health of our discipline and to the way we think about God and ourselves. Behold, the fields are white for the harvest of analytic theology of gender.

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