"MADE FOR MAN, NOT FOR THE SABBATH": QUEERING THE BOUNDARIES OF HETERONORMATIVITY AND NATIONAL CONSERVATISM

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Abstract: When national conservatism entrenches rigid gender binaries as ideological strongholds, how might Jesus' radical declaration – "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27) - disrupt the heteronormative echo chambers that silence queer voices? This article reveals heteronormativity as a self-perpetuating regime, intensified by authoritarian state actions such as recent U.S. executive orders redefining "sex" in restrictive, exclusionary terms, thereby marginalizing transgender, non-binary and intersex lives on a vast scale. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of queer performativity, Nguyen's notion of epistemic bubbles and the UN 2030 Agenda, the article critiques national conservatism's anti-gender campaign as a grave assault on human dignity. It urges a decisive ethical reorientation: law must advance human flourishing, not sustain oppressive norms. A biblically grounded

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ethic of love has to challenge today's populist patriarchies.

1. Introduction

The foundation of political legitimacy rests on a nation's shared belief system, through which citizens acknowledge the government's rightful authority. Such legitimacy stands on two pillars: (1) tangible characteristics and (2) intangible, normative values. Ultimately, a government's authority derives from public perception of its right to govern, shaped by its capacity to embrace diverse cultural backgrounds and uphold values deeply grounded in human rights. Cultural inclusivity and alignment with social values are therefore essential for sustaining political integrity (Kwanhu, 263–64). The present study explores the convergence of heteronormativity, national conservatism, and human rights, particularly in relation to influential state policies and their impact on queer communities. Drawing on philosophical and sociological perspectives, it examines how heteronormativity operates as a self-reinforcing structure that sustains rigid gender binaries and limits individual freedom and dignity. Jesus's teachings emphasize the importance of prioritizing humanity's well-being and dignity over rigid traditions and rules, as seen in his statement, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27). This profound declaration advocates for compassion, acceptance and inclusivity. By bringing Jesus' call to love and uphold human dignity into dialogue with progressive thought and the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, society can envision a more inclusive and compassionate framework for human rights. Critical examination of traditionalist and authoritarian state policies that weaken human flourishing—exposing their damaging impact on queer communities and showing how national conservatism reinforces heteronormative limits—can cultivate a stronger commitment to equality and fraternity, thereby safeguarding human dignity.

2. Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a social bias that positions heterosexuality as the default and preferred orientation, perpetuating discrimination and erasure of non-heterosexual identities and experiences. Heteronormativity, as an ideology and social practice, naturalizes heterosexuality as the fundamental basis of society, assuming it to be the universal and expected form of sexual identity (Butler, 34; Warner, 12). Conversely, this ideology perpetuates the marginalization of non-heterosexual orientations, effectively rendering them aberrant, invisible or unintelligible within the dominant discourse (Foucault, 57; Rich, 632). This hierarchical categorization perpetuates discursive and normative dispositions that frame sexual minorities as "unnatural, immoral and inferior" (Sedgwick, 12; Halberstam, 54). Consequently, heteronormativity systematically erases or diminishes the existence of LGBTQAI+ individuals in social spaces, reinforcing their subordinate status (Berlant and Warner, 178).

In his 2023 article, Morantes-Africano employs the term 'queer' as a comprehensive category that resists the rigid gender binary imposed by heteronormativity, which perpetuates inequalities against sexual minorities (Morantes, 242). As Judith Butler elaborates, this concept encompasses a diverse range of gender and sexual identities and expressions, acknowledging the complexity and multiplicity of human experience beyond binary categories (Butler, 34). By adopting this term, Morantes aims to both honour and empower diverse forms of gender and sexuality. Through this affirmation, people can reclaim pride and challenge the stigma surrounding sexual diversity. This deliberate linguistic choice harnesses the transformative potential of language, acknowledging that unconventional identities are not inherently unnatural, but rather a natural part of human diversity (Butler, 1993, 12).

While the term 'queer' can be a potent instrument for subverting heteronormativity, it is essential to exercise caution and avoid imposing this label on individuals from sexual minority groups who may not personally resonate with or identify as queer (WHO 3). The root cause of educational and social disparities faced by sexual minorities lies in the unequal

distribution of power, leading to a spectrum of injustices, from insidious social marginalization to overt harassment, discrimination and violence (Morantes, 242).

3. Echo Chambers

Although the concept of 'echo chambers' existed prior to 2000, it gained widespread recognition and momentum around that time. American philosopher C. Thi Nguyen, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Utah, further popularized the idea in his 2018 article "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles", bringing it into mainstream discourse. However, it is essential to acknowledge that Nguyen was not the sole thinker to introduce and popularize this concept, as others also contributed to its development and dissemination. For Nguyen, "An epistemic bubble is a social epistemic structure in which other relevant voices have been left out, perhaps accidentally. An echo chamber is a social epistemic structure from which other relevant voices have been actively excluded and discredited. Members of epistemic bubbles lack exposure to relevant information and arguments. Members of echo chambers, on the other hand, have been brought to systematically distrust all outside sources" (Nguyen, 1).

Epistemic bubbles refer to social structures that restrict knowledge by selectively omitting pertinent information sources, rather than actively discrediting them. This exclusionary process is driven by two key factors. Firstly, individuals typically gravitate towards information that aligns with their existing views, a phenomenon known as "*selective exposure*", where they actively seek out affirming information while avoiding divergent perspectives (Nelson and Webster, 1-13; Nguyen, 3). This selective seeking behaviour perpetuates epistemic bubbles, ultimately hindering the development of a comprehensive and nuanced understanding, as individuals become increasingly isolated from diverse perspectives and information. Secondly, the information environment surrounding an individual can be manipulated by external agents, such as states or other entities, through tactics like systematic censorship, media control or other forms of influence, which can further distort their access to information and reinforce

epistemic bubbles (Nguyen, 3-5). Subsequent consequence of algorithm-driven personalization is the creation of '*filter bubbles*' which tailor online information to individual preferences (Nguyen, 4). Epistemic bubbles are fragile, forming from unintentionally omitted information. They can be easily disrupted by introducing new sources or arguments, expanding an individual's knowledge. In contrast, echo chambers are more robust, requiring greater effort to dismantle due to their active reinforcement of existing beliefs (Nguyen, 5).

Here, Nguyen is using 'echo chamber' "to mean an epistemic community which creates a significant disparity in trust between members and non-members. This disparity is created by excluding non-members through epistemic discrediting, while simultaneously amplifying members' epistemic credentials. Finally, echo chambers are such that general agreement with some core set of beliefs is a prerequisite for membership, where those core beliefs include beliefs that support disparity in trust (Nguyen, 6).

Epistemic discrediting occurs when a group distrusts outsider as unreliable, while trusting insiders. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle; 1) Insiders discredit outsiders. 2) Outsiders are distrusted, blocking counter-evidence. 3) Insider's credibility rises, solidifying their beliefs. This feedback loop creates a stark credibility gap between insiders and outsiders. As trusted insiders continue to dismiss outsiders, the echo chamber's belief system becomes increasingly entrenched and resistant to revision. Additionally, echo chambers often utilize a '*disagreement reinforcement mechanism*', where member's beliefs are paradoxically strengthened by the presence and expression of opposing views. Ironically, criticisms and counterarguments end up reinforcing the original beliefs, further entrenching the echo chamber's narrative (Nguyen, 7).

4. The Heteronormative Echo Chamber

Heteronormativity, which posits heterosexuality as the standard and ideal orientation, functions as a toxic echo chamber that amplifies harmful biases and discriminates against non-heterosexual individuals (Butler, 23). Heteronormativity, as an

echo chamber, is built and sustained by a complex interplay of social institutions, cultural norms, personal interactions, media representation, education and language. These factors collectively reinforce heteronormative values, creating a self-sustaining cycle of exclusion that propagates inequality (Rich, 637). The absence of diverse representation in media, literature and history fosters the idea that heterosexuality is the sole legitimate orientation. When non-heterosexual individuals are portrayed, they are frequently relegated to the periphery, reduced to stereotypes or confined to subordinate roles (Warner, 35).

Language serves as a powerful tool in upholding heteronormativity. The prevalent use of binary pronouns, assumptions about romantic partnerships and phrases like 'husband and wife' or 'boyfriend and girlfriend' solidify heterosexuality as the norm (Butler, 45). This linguistic conditioning creates a cognitive bias, making it challenging for people to consider alternative sexual orientations.

Heterosexual relationships are frequently favoured and normalized within various social spheres, including family, education, law, even the state and government institutions resulting in the marginalization and exclusion of non-heterosexual individuals from these domains (Rich, 642). The legal system's emphasis on heterosexual couples neglects the needs and rights of LGBTQAI+ individuals, reinforcing their invisibility and exclusion. This promotes the notion that heterosexuality is the only, sole, valid and recognized form of relationship, further marginalizing queer identities (Rubin, 17). Educational institutions often perpetuate heteronormative values through curricula, textbooks and policies that focus on heterosexual experiences, creating a hostile environment for queer students. This exclusion can lead to isolation and marginalization, limiting opportunities for diverse perspectives and reinforcing echo chamber that silence queer voices.

Abigail M. Folberg et al., in their 2024 research article, discusses the relationship between tolerance of homo-negativity and trans-negativity evaluations of LGBT people and supportive policies (Folberg et al. 3). The article states that thought patterns can perpetuate the heteronormative and gender-normative status

quo, driven by a psychological tendency to justify the existing social order. According to System Justification Theory[*], people tend to view the status quo as fair, legitimate and stable (Folberg et al. 3). There are associations between thought patterns and justifying ideologies such as traits of authoritarianism (Folberg et al. 3). This article suggests that tolerance of homo-negativity and trans-negativity (TOHT) may be linked to ideologies that justify and maintain heteronormative and systemic norms. Authoritarianism, which emphasizes conformity to traditional values and suppression of dissent, can perpetuate prejudice against stigmatized groups, including LGBT individuals (Folberg et al. 4). In authoritarian regimes, LGBT rights are frequently curtailed in systematic ways, as queer individuals are portrayed as endangering traditional cultural values (Folberg et al. 4).

Social and cultural norms and practices maintain heteronormativity by enforcing traditional gender roles, which dictate that men embody masculinity and heterosexuality, while women embody femininity and seek heterosexual relationships. These popular expectations exert pressure on individuals to confirm to heteronormative standards, potentially leading to internalized homophobia, self-doubt and marginalization of those who don't fit within these narrow categories (Orella, 6-10). Here *'the disagreement reinforcement mechanism'* of heteronormativity further reinforce gender binary and gender roles by responding with hostility, dismissal or accusations. When queer individuals or allies' question heteronormative attitudes, they are often met with defensive reactions, implying that heterosexuality is under attack. This backlash encourages the echo chamber, solidifying the notion that heterosexuality is the norm and marginalize non-heterosexual identities.

Heteronormativity's echo chamber devastates LGBTQIA+ individuals through discrimination, violence and psychological harm—including depression and anxiety (Warner 52)—while embedding assumptions in policies across healthcare and

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[*] System Justification Theory (SJT)- The tendency for people to justify and maintain the status quo, even in the face of injustices or flaws, driven by psychological needs such as consistency, security and identity

employment that restrict opportunities and resources, deepening inequalities. Challenging it demands multifaceted action: inclusive education celebrating diversity and dismantling stereotypes, accurate media representation of varied sexual orientations and gender identities, and policy advocacy to protect LGBTQIA+ rights against discriminatory practices.

5. National Conservatism vs. Gender Ideology

In the 2024 article, Folberg et al. suggests that certain groups of heterosexual and cisgender individuals are more likely to tolerate homophobic and transphobic attitudes (THOT)[*]. For instance, conservative politicians in the US and elsewhere promoted legislation and rhetoric that stigmatize and discriminate against LGBT individuals (Folberg et al. 4). Conservatives tend to hold more negative views towards LGBT people and are less supportive of LGBT rights, often citing concerns about changing social and sexual norms (Folberg et al. 4). Conservatism is linked to a preference for traditional hierarchy and values, which can justify prejudice against marginalized groups, including LGBT individuals (Folberg et al. 4).

In a recent publication, Elana Redfield and Ishani Chokshi analyze developments in the United States, observing that on January 20, 2025, the present administration issued an executive order titled "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government." The directive seeks to redefine "sex" within federal programs and services as referring solely to biological characteristics determined at conception and considered immutable (Redfield and Chokshi, 1). This development represents a substantial policy shift, with particular consequences for transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals (Redfield and Chokshi, 1). The directive forms part of the administration's broader agenda, which includes collaborating with Congress to codify a statutory definition of sex (Redfield and Chokshi, 1). It also builds on earlier initiatives to redefine sex, notably in relation

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[*] Tolerance of homo-negativity and trans-negativity; stigma, indifference and hostile attitudes towards LGBT Individuals.

to sex discrimination in education under Title IX. The accompanying policy brief outlines the order's implications and its potential effects on marginalized communities. Executive orders function as influential instruments of political signaling, enabling presidents to articulate their policy priorities and governing principles. Although they may produce concrete effects, their authority is not unlimited. Such orders must rest on constitutional powers or authority delegated by Congress (Redfield and Chokshi, 2). Moreover, their implementation is rarely instantaneous, as they generally operate through directives issued to federal agencies.

Sex has no universally accepted definition, but it generally refers to reproductive, hormonal, anatomical and genetic traits used to classify individuals as male or female according to reproductive function. Nevertheless, social scientists and medical professionals acknowledge that sex and gender are complex and nuanced, showing significant variation within and across categories (Redfield and Chokshi, 2). The connections among gender, sexuality and identity have long been debated by philosophers and social scientists. Some maintain that these dimensions are biologically determined, whereas others contend that they are socially constructed. Current evidence indicates that the social constructionist perspective offers more persuasive and comprehensive arguments. The following are central arguments in this discussion:

a. Gender identity emerges at the intersection of gender and sexuality, both of which are socially constructed (Butler, 23).

b. Gender and sexuality are not fixed or innate features of human nature; rather, they are shaped and sustained by cultural institutions and systems of power.

c. Understandings of gender differ across cultures and historical contexts (Butler, 23).

d. Identity is fluid and evolving, continually reshaped as individuals engage with social norms and expectations.

e. Dominant social forces reinforce a strict gender binary and normalize heterosexuality as the foundational structure of society (Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet*, 17).

Historically, courts have interpreted sex discrimination laws to extend protection against sex stereotyping and discrimination based on gender identity. Under the previous U.S. administration, this broader interpretation was incorporated into multiple areas of federal law. The current President, however, has sought to reverse this approach through an executive order redefining 'sex' for all federal purposes strictly in biological terms: (a) Female—an individual who produces the large reproductive cell at conception; and (b) Male—an individual who produces the small reproductive cell at conception (Redfield and Chokshi, 3). This executive order could affect a substantial number of people in the United States, particularly within the LGBTQIA+ community. Approximately 1.6 million Americans aged 13 and older identify as transgender. Around 1.2 million LGBTQ adults identify as non-binary, representing 11% of the total LGBTQ adult population. Intersex individuals—those whose sex characteristics do not fit typical male or female categories—are estimated to comprise about 1.7% of the U.S. population, although an earlier Department of Health and Human Services estimate suggested that as many as 5 million Americans may be intersex (Redfield and Chokshi, 3–4).

5.1 The Impact of this Policy for Queer People

The existing executive order redefining sex may have significant consequences across various federal policies.

i. Non-discrimination Laws: The present administration has instructed federal agencies to reassess sex-based civil rights protections, restricting their scope to biologically defined sexes and rolling back earlier interpretations that included gender identity and sexual orientation. However, the implementation of these changes has encountered delays and legal obstacles due to formal legislative requirements and judicial decisions that continue to uphold protections for LGBT individuals (Redfield and Chokshi, 5–6).

ii. Identity documents: The new executive order requires that passports 'accurately reflect the holder's sex' according to its narrow definition, a provision that may significantly affect transgender, non-binary and intersex individuals. Earlier policies

permitted applicants to amend their gender markers to M, F or X upon request; however, the practical implementation of the new directive remains unclear, generating uncertainty for those concerned (Redfield and Chokshi, 5–6).

iii. Federal Prisons: The present policy requires federal prisons to assign transgender women according to their sex designated at birth rather than their gender identity and restricts access to gender-affirming healthcare, impacting approximately 1,538 transgender women and 750 transgender men. Under the previous administration, individuals could request housing consistent with their gender identity and receive healthcare in line with anti-abuse standards. This policy reversal may encounter legal challenges, including constraints arising from Supreme Court rulings and state laws safeguarding the health and safety of transgender prisoners (Redfield and Chokshi, 6).

iv. Sex-Separated Spaces: The current executive order aims to designate spaces, like homeless shelters and bathrooms, by biological sex rather than gender identity. This could impact transgender individuals who already face significant barriers accessing emergency shelters and experience higher rates of intimate partner violence and homelessness *(*Redfield and Chokshi, 7).

V. Health Care: Although the order does not explicitly regulate healthcare, it has indirect implications by mandating a reinterpretation of sex discrimination laws and federal funding provisions, which may undermine LGBTQ+-inclusive services. Earlier administrations had expanded non-discrimination protections to encompass gender identity and gender-affirming care; the present shift could jeopardize related funding streams. However, the ultimate consequences remain uncertain due to ongoing legal challenges (Redfield and Chokshi, 9).

vi. Data Collection and Research: The President's order mandates that federal forms list only "male" or "female" as sex, excluding any reference to gender identity. This limitation may hinder transgender individuals from accurately self-identifying and restrict researchers' ability to collect reliable data on transgender experiences. The directive also prohibits federal funding for the promotion of what it broadly labels "gender

ideology," effectively barring the recognition of sex based on anything other than reproductive biology at birth (Redfield and Chokshi, 9). By adopting a narrow definition of sex, the order risks serious indirect consequences for LGBTQ+ communities—particularly transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals. Such measures may negatively affect mental health outcomes and limit access to affirming identity documents, which research has shown to be vital for transgender well-being (Redfield and Chokshi, 10).

5.2 National Conservatism's Anti-Gender Agenda

National conservatism, a political ideology emphasizing national sovereignty, traditional values and social order, has experienced a resurgence in recent years, significantly impacting global politics. It prioritizes the 'nation-state' as the primary unit of political organization, often advocating for protectionist economic policies, restrictive immigration measures and a strong emphasis on cultural homogeneity. This ideology's influence on gender, particularly within the context of US gender policy, is profound, as it seeks to reinforce traditional gender roles and challenge the advancements of gender equality and transgender rights.

National conservatism's tenets revolve around a pressing need to restore a lost sense of national identity and cultural unity. As Yoram Hazony argues in his 2018 book *The Virtue of Nationalism*, the nation-state provides the necessary framework for social cohesion and moral order, contrasting it with what he perceives as the destabilizing forces of globalism and liberal individualism. This emphasis on national sovereignty often translates into scepticism towards international institutions and preference for unilateral action. Furthermore, the promotion of traditional values, often rooted in cultural norms, leads to resistance against social and political changes that challenges established hierarchies.

Populism is a political ideology that champions the rights of ordinary people, often by pitting them against the elite and advocating for transformative changes. This ideology is closely tied to national conservatism, as populist leaders frequently

employ nationalist rhetoric to mobilize support and foster a sense of shared identity among their followers. Populism has become a significant concept in political science and electoral politics in the 20th century. It used to describe various political movements, from Democratic and Republican candidates in the US to left-wing presidents in Latin America. According to Cas Mudde, populism is a "thin-centred ideology" that divides society into two opposing groups: the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite". This ideology argues that politics should reflect the general will of the people (Thomas et.al. 414). Contemporary right-wing populists employ a divisive rhetoric, framing globalists and feminists as threats to national greatness and portraying them as elitist forces undermining traditional values and national identity. (Sanders and Jenkins, 2). This narrative is built around the idea that feminists and globalists are dangers to national identity and traditional values. Right-wing populist movements frequently denounce what they describe as "elite gender ideology," arguing that it advances radical social transformation and undermines national sovereignty. Consequently, legal protections for women's reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ equality are often reduced, with restrictive measures introduced in several countries governed by right-wing populist administrations (Sanders and Jenkins, 2).

Patriarchal populism promotes a nostalgic vision of a bygone era, portraying a past where traditional family values and social norms prevailed. This narrative obscure historical reality, such as family violence and economic instability and ignores the existence for diverse family formations and LGBTQIA+ individuals. By romanticizing the 'selective' past, patriarchal populists aim to roll back progressive social norms and legal protections, particularly those related to women's bodily autonomy and LGBTQ rights (Sanders and Jenkins 4). This ideology, is deeply intertwined with anti-gender campaigns, which reject non-normative and non-binary gender roles and expressions. This framework is particularly hostile to LGBTQ+ rights, with transgender individuals facing violent rhetoric and eliminationist threats from right-wing politicians and neo-Nazi groups (Sanders and Jenkins, 4-5). The hostility towards

transgender people stems from their challenge to biological essentialism, which undermines efforts to maintain rigid distinctions between men and women. Transgender individuals are also vulnerable to attacks due to their cultural ostracism and minority status (Sanders and Jenkins, 4-5). Interestingly, some self-proclaimed "gender critical" feminists have joined forces with right-wing populists to challenge transgender rights, often scapegoating transgender people for violence against women. This alliance aims to weaken feminism by exploiting anti-trans moral panic, while also providing political cover for reactionaries who attack feminism and women's rights (Sanders and Jenkins, 4-5).

5.3 Gender Ideology: The Anti-Fascist Front

The term "gender ideology" has emerged as a highly contested and politically charged concept, lacking a universally agreed-upon definition. It generally refers to a set of beliefs and theories that challenge the traditional, binary understanding of gender as solely determined by biological sex. It posits that gender is a social construct, fluid and potentially independent of assigned sex at birth. This concept's significance in the current world political scenario is profound, as it has become a central battleground in debates about individual rights, social norms and the role of the state. In the United States, gender ideology has particularly impacted political discourse and government policies, sparking intense controversy and shaping the landscape of social and legal debates.

To understand so-called gender ideology, it is necessary to recognize its intellectual foundations in feminist and queer theory. Scholars such as Judith Butler, particularly in *Gender Trouble* (1990), argue that gender is "performative," meaning it is shaped through repeated acts and social practices rather than being an innate, fixed trait. This approach has contributed to wider acknowledgment of gender diversity, including transgender and non-binary identities. However, the label 'gender ideology' is frequently employed by conservative and right-wing groups to delegitimize these theories, framing them as a radical or threatening agenda. As Jack Halberstam observes, the

unease surrounding "gender ideology" often reflects a deeper fear of unsettling established power structures and social hierarchies (Halberstam, 2018).

The gender ideology debate has had several positive outcomes from a progressive perspective. It has brought greater visibility to transgender and non-binary identities, increasing awareness and acceptance. By challenging traditional gender norms, it has created space for individual expression and autonomy. Furthermore, its advocacy efforts have led to significant legal protections, including court rulings that recognize the rights of transgender individuals under existing anti-discrimination laws, ultimately advancing the struggle for transgender rights and social justice.

6. "Made for Humanity, Not for the Sabbath": Love as the Supreme Law

Jesus' striking declaration - "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," - offers a platform for interpreting the relationship between law and human need. Spoken during a confrontation with the Pharisees (Mark 2:27), the saying arose when his disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath. For the Pharisees—careful guardians of Jewish law—such an act breached strict Sabbath regulations. Their outlook reflected a highly legalistic mindset that equated fidelity to God with meticulous rule-keeping and treated deviation as defiance. Jesus counters by recalling scriptural precedents that question rigid interpretations. He redirects attention to the Sabbath's original purpose: human well-being. Acts of mercy and sustenance, he insists, outweigh mechanical compliance. In reframing the law's intent, he affirms that authentic religiosity safeguards life rather than burdening it. The spirit of the law, grounded in compassion, must prevail over literalism, and human dignity becomes the decisive criterion for religious understanding.

This pronouncement encapsulates a broader vision. What began as a divine gift of rest had become, through excessive regulation, a heavy yoke. Jesus' teaching restores its liberating meaning, placing persons before prescriptions. His healings on the Sabbath dramatize this ethic: mercy is never misplaced, even

when it unsettles convention. True faith, therefore, is marked by loving relationship and freedom, not anxious conformity to codes. The wording also invites reflection on its scope. When Jesus speaks of "man," the term must not be read narrowly. A restrictive reading would contradict the inclusive trajectory of his ministry. Within its historical language, the expression signifies humanity as a whole. The Gospels consistently portray him engaging women, embracing the marginalized and confronting exclusionary norms. His message dissolves hierarchies by affirming equal worth across divisions of gender, class and status.

In contemporary society—dense with policies, procedures and institutional demands—this insight remains compelling. Laws and systems require continual evaluation: do they enhance life or impose needless hardship? This outlook challenges structures that perpetuate injustice and calls communities to shape regulations around compassion and equity. Whether in religious or secular contexts, norms should function as instruments of care and empowerment rather than tools of control. Jesus' influence extends well beyond confessional boundaries. As a moral teacher, he probes the meaning of human existence and centers it on relational responsibility. Love, respect and solidarity form the bedrock of human life. By addressing fundamental human experience, his vision transcends time and culture, urging moral growth and collective renewal. Amid present climates of stigma and hostility toward LGBTQIA+ persons and gender or sexual minorities, this ethic acquires renewed urgency. Policies that diminish dignity stand in tension with the priority Jesus assigns to human flourishing. Upholding the rights and well-being of those targeted by exclusion reflects fidelity to his vision of interconnectedness. A society shaped by such love seeks harmony through courageous commitment to justice for all.

7. Concluding Remarks

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda outlines a comprehensive plan for achieving sustainability worldwide. At its core, there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 sub-targets, providing a global framework for a sustainable future.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of pressing issues like poverty, hunger, health, education, gender inequality and environmental degradation, the agenda emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to address these challenges collectively. Implementing the SDGs in a comprehensive and integrated manner is the key indicator of the 2030 Agenda's success (Weiland et al. 90). Building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in 2000, the 2030 Agenda urges all United Nations member states to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets within their own borders, while also supporting global implementation by 2030. This collective effort aims to bridge the persistent gap between developed and developing nations, promoting greater equality and cooperation in environmental and development policies worldwide (Weiland et al. 90-91).

Core principles of international human rights law—especially equality and non-discrimination—affirm that every person stands equal before the law, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Although early global treaties did not expressly reference sexual minorities, regional instruments such as the European and American Conventions on Human Rights have developed jurisprudence prohibiting discrimination on these grounds (Anand 184–86). Protections of privacy within international law have likewise played a crucial role in shielding individuals from criminalization and intrusive state interference. The Human Rights Committee has further clarified that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights encompasses safeguards against discrimination based on sexual orientation (Anand 184–86).

Yet formal recognition has not eliminated widespread abuse. Across the globe, LGBTQAI+ persons encounter harassment, exclusion and violence tied to their identity or expression. Barriers to employment, housing and healthcare persist across diverse cultural and religious settings. In some contexts, arbitrary detention, torture and even extrajudicial killings occur, while punitive laws and administrative practices continue to criminalize or stigmatize queer lives, thereby entrenching systemic injustice (Anand 180–81). Against this

backdrop, a recent U.S. executive order defining sex strictly as "male" or "female" carries significant implications, particularly for transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals. Even where legal protections exist, such measures highlight the fragility of progress and the continuing contest over recognition and rights. By institutionalizing rigid binaries, policy frameworks risk amplifying heteronormative assumptions within national politics, marginalizing voices already pushed to the periphery.

In this context, Mark 2:27—where Jesus prioritizes human well-being over inflexible norms—offers a resonant ethical touchstone. The saying affirms that legal and social systems must advance justice, dignity and compassion, honouring the inherent value of every person. As the global community pursues the Sustainable Development Goals and builds upon earlier development commitments, this moral vision retains profound significance. It calls for societies structured around respect and wellbeing, nurturing hope for a more equitable and humane world.

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