

NORTHWEST UNIVERSITY

A HISTORY OF, AND RESPONSE TO, THEOLOGICAL THINKING ABOUT  
ORDAINING GAYS AND LESBIANS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the theological concept of humanity created in God's image as a context for a discussion of humans created as fully embodied persons that includes their sexuality, leading to the research question: is a leadership position within the Presbyterian Church (USA) a unique calling requiring specific human characteristics and excluding others? Presbyterians believe Jesus Christ calls individuals to ordained ministries.

The paper is informed by the Presbyterian Church 1978 *Blue Book, Part I*, report, *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Confessions Part I and Book of Order Part II*, the canon of Christian Scriptures, pertinent ancient Near Eastern literature, and the extensive writing of Karl Barth and other theologians.

The scope of the paper encompasses only the theological challenge and interpretation of information used in the decision making process by the Presbyterian Church (USA) concerning the ordination of gays and lesbians in relation to the research question. This paper does not attempt to investigate the causes or origins of any form of gay and/or lesbian sexual behavior or comment on the manifestations of human sexuality other than its impact on the qualifications of those desiring to be ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) leaders.

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## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Is a leadership position within the Presbyterian Church (USA) a unique calling requiring specific human characteristics and excluding others? The desires of gays and lesbians to gain full equality as church leaders has been at odds in the past with the qualifications for serving as ordained church leaders in the Presbyterian Church (USA). A vote has changed the qualifications, and now gays and lesbians do have the opportunity to be ordained as church leaders. Should persons having a gay or lesbian orientation be ordained, based on Scripture?

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method consisted of investigating pertinent literature, including the Presbyterian Church 1978 *Blue Book, Part I*, report, *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Confessions Part I and Book of Order Part II*, the Christian canon, the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals of Mental Disorders*, and ancient Near Eastern literature. The selected literature included authors who support and those who oppose the ordination of gays or lesbians. The literature investigation also included the extensive writing of Karl Barth.

## INTRODUCTION

The Presbyterian Church (USA) voted “in favor of Amendment 10-A” in 2011 to allow the ordination of gays and lesbians to the position of ordained office.<sup>1</sup> This vote by the individual congregations in the 173 presbyteries approved a proposed constitutional change the General Assembly had endorsed in 2010. The change took effect July 10, 2011. During the years leading up to the vote, some congregations left the Presbyterian Church (USA) and, as the result of this “attrition,” those in favor of gay and lesbian ordination were able to pass the amendment that approved their ordination.<sup>2</sup> This paper begins by considering the theological analysis done by advocates and opponents within the Presbyterian Church (USA) that was used to support or oppose the passage of the ordination amendment.

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<sup>1</sup> Leslie Scanlon, "P C (USA) Opens Door to Ordination of Sexually Active Gays and Lesbians," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 13, 2011, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Haberer, "Editor's Outlook: Memo to the Celebrants," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 13, 2011, 5.

## SECTION ONE: CULTURAL BACKGROUND

### *The Cultural Problem Facing the Presbyterian Church (USA)*

As the result of a constitutional change in 2011, the Presbyterian Church (USA) permits congregations to ordain sexually active gays and lesbians. This section considers the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s process that has led to this decision and the factors that have influenced the decision.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has faced an internal theological challenge for many years that almost culminated in separation and a "formal schism" in 2011.<sup>3</sup> The theological problem concerned the dispute over the ordination of gays and lesbians to hold church offices within the Presbyterian Church (USA). The three ordained offices are deacon, ruling elder, and minister of the Word and Sacrament.

Attention to the problem began in earnest in 1976 when the 188<sup>th</sup> General Assembly directed its Advisory Council on Church and Society to establish a nineteen-member task force "to study Christian approaches to homosexuality, with special reference to the ordination of avowed practicing homosexuals."<sup>4</sup> The task force focused its study in four areas. First, it was to "Identify and evaluate various theological and biblical perspectives on homosexuality, giving attention to specific biblical texts and themes. Give attention to the positions taken by the 182<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (1970)."<sup>5</sup> Second, "Survey general studies and research, and assess theories and assumptions about homosexuality, in light of biblical perspectives and current understandings about

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph D. Small, "Why Stay? Why Go?," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 27, 2011, 26.

<sup>4</sup> *The Blue Book I, 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, (New York: The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1978), D-1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, D-2.

homosexuality in the social and behavioral sciences, in homophile groups, and in society at large.”<sup>6</sup> Third, the task force was to, “Identify and evaluate areas of ethical concern, with particular emphasis on personal freedom, personal responsibility, human rights, and discriminatory practices, both in the church and society generally.”<sup>7</sup> Fourth, “Suggest guidelines for faithful Christian response to the conflicts between values, rights, and human communities manifest in relation to homosexuality, both in the life of the church, including ordination, and with respect to broad social policies.”<sup>8</sup>

The 201 page task force report, *Blue Book, Part I*, was submitted January 1978, and then studied at the 190<sup>th</sup> General Assembly that year. The report noted the American Psychiatric Association had deleted homosexuality as a category from the American Psychiatric Association mental disorders list by a majority vote of 58.4%, and reclassified homosexuality as a “sexual orientation disturbance.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1968, the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, known as DSMII, placed homosexuality into DSMII Section Five, Personality Disorders and Certain Other Non-Psychotic Mental Disorders. This diagnostic manual serves as the standard reference for mental disorders. Inclusion or exclusion in the manual affects patient treatment, drives research, and influences insurance decisions.

DSMII subdivided Section Five into Code Number 302 Sexual Deviations, and listed homosexuality together with “fetishism, pedophilia, transvestitism, exhibitionism,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., D-18.

voyeurism, sadism, masochism, other sexual deviation, and unspecified sexual deviation.”<sup>10</sup> In the subsequently published manual, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-III-R*, under Code Number 302.90, the new section, “Sexual Disorders Not Otherwise Specified,” did not include the term “homosexuality” and provided the following description of the non-specified sexual disorders:<sup>11</sup> *DSM-III-R* states, “Sexual Disorders that are not classifiable in any of the previous categories. In rare instances, this category may be used concurrently with one of the specific diagnoses when both are necessary to explain or describe the clinical disturbance.”<sup>12</sup> The explanation goes on to provide three examples: “(1) Marked feelings of inadequacy concerning body habitus (physique or body build), size and shape of sexual organs, sexual performance, or other traits related to self-imposed standards of masculinity or femininity. (2) Distress about a pattern of repeated sexual conquests or other forms of nonparaphilic sexual addiction, involving a succession of people who exist only as things to be used. (3) Persistent and marked distress about one’s sexual orientation.”<sup>13</sup> With that new description in place, the term “homosexuality” was no longer included in the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DS-MIII-R*.

Irving Bieber, M.D. published an article documenting the reasons why the term “homosexuality” was removed from the American Psychiatric Association’s *Manual of Mental Disorders*, DSM-III-R. Dr. Bieber led the American Psychiatric Association’s

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<sup>10</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-II* (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1968), 10.

<sup>11</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-III-R* (Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987), 296.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

research team that studied “106 male homosexuals and a comparison group of 100 heterosexuals, all in psychoanalytic treatment” over a nine-year period.<sup>14</sup> The decision to remove the term was, according to Dr. Bieber, done in a “unique” manner, in that a scientific controversy had been decided by the vote of a “large professional society.”<sup>15</sup> Even though the American Psychiatric Association’s board of trustees voted, “unanimous, with two abstentions” to remove the term, “a substantial minority of the membership, 39.5 percent, voted against deleting homosexuality from *DSM-II*.”<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Bieber summarized the factors that affected the decision as follows. First, “The gay activists had a profound influence on psychiatric thinking.”<sup>17</sup> Second, “A sincere belief was held by liberal-minded and compassionate psychiatrists that listing homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder supported and reinforced prejudice against homosexuals. Removal of the term from the diagnostic manual was viewed as a humane, progressive act.”<sup>18</sup> Finally, “There was an acceptance of an altered concept of psychiatric conditions. Only those disorders that caused a patient to suffer or that resulted in adjustment problems were thought to be appropriate for inclusion in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*.”<sup>19</sup>

The chairperson that led the work on the subsequent edition of the manual, *DSM-III*, Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, also commented on the decision and the gay activists’ influence

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<sup>14</sup> Irving Bieber, "On Arriving at the American Psychiatric Association Decision on Homosexuality," in *Scientific Controversies: Case Studies in the Resolution and Closure of Disputes in Science and Technology*, ed. H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr. and Arthur L. Caplan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 418.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

to remove the term. Dr. Spitzer wrote, "This decision was made after an acrimonious debate within the association initiated by lobbying efforts by gay activists."<sup>20</sup>

The invented term "homosexuality" has only been in use since 1869, when it appeared in two tracts that were written anonymously by Austrian-born Karl Maria Kertbeny.<sup>21</sup> Kertbeny worked as a translator and writer in Europe and legally changed his surname from Benkert in 1848. The previous term in Kertbeny's era had been "man-love," and the new term was initiated by Kertbeny to "replace the older names marked by persecution and suppression."<sup>22</sup> Kertbeny also wanted to distinguish the same-sex acts he called homosexuality from pederasty, and to separate these acts from the prevailing European same-sex theories of his time. Kertbeny is considered to have provided a "slightly ordered accumulation of well-known arguments from the Enlightenment, natural rights, and philanthropy."<sup>23</sup>

In 1995 the Task Force on Bias-Free Language of the Association of American University Presses suggested that, "Although many writers now avoid *homosexual* because of negative connotations of pathology or criminal behavior, some individuals still accept it as a term referring to either a woman or a man and may prefer *homosexual man / homosexual woman* because of the still ambiguous gender marking of *gay*. Others use the term *gay* and *homosexual* interchangeably . . . some writers employ the adjective *same-sex* interchangeably with *gay* or *lesbian* to describe sexual orientation or

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<sup>20</sup> Robert L. Spitzer, "The Diagnostic Status of Homosexuality in DSM-III: A Reformulation of the Issues," in *Scientific Controversies: Case Studies in the Resolution and Closure of Disputes in Science and Technology*, ed. H.T. Engelhardt Jr. and A.L. Caplan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 401.

<sup>21</sup> Manfred Herzer, "Kertbeny and the Nameless Love," in *Journal of Homosexuality* (New York: Haworth Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

relationship.”<sup>24</sup> Fifteen years later the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation *Media Guide* includes *homosexual* in their list of offensive terms to avoid. The *Media Guide* describes *homosexual* as an, “Outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay and lesbian people. The Associated Press, New York Times and Washington Post restrict usage of the term. Gay and/or lesbian accurately describe those who are attracted to people of the same sex.”<sup>25</sup>

The current glossary of psychiatric and psychological terms defines homosexuality as “sexual attraction or contact between same-sex persons. Some authors distinguish two types: overt and latent.”<sup>26</sup> Overt homosexuality refers to “physical, sexual contact between members of the same sex.”<sup>27</sup> Latent refers to desire and impulses toward the same sex the homosexual person is not conscious of or “are not openly expressed.”<sup>28</sup>

#### *1978 Presbyterian Blue Book, Part I Report*

The 1978 Presbyterian *Blue Book, Part I*, report included responses to a questionnaire from a cross section of “representative” church members, elders, and pastors about homosexual activities.<sup>29</sup> In part, questions and responses by the church members, elders, and pastors to the ordination questions are as follows.

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<sup>24</sup> Marilyn Schwartz, *Guidelines for Bias-Free Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 83-84.

<sup>25</sup> Cindi Creager, *Gay & Lesbian Alliance against Defamation 2010 Media Guide* (New York: Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, 2010), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Harold D. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, *Comprehensive Glossary of Psychiatry and Psychology* (Baltimore: William and Wilkins, 1991 ), 86.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Jean Campbell, *Psychiatric Dictionary*, Fifth ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 284.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *The Blue Book I, 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, D-101.

1. Homosexual activity is a physical (physiological) sickness.

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Strongly agree	16%	21%	10%
Agree	26	21	18
Agree and disagree	17	13	24
Disagree	18	20	26
Strongly disagree	6	9	7
No opinion / don't know	11	13	13
No response	5	4	2

2. Homosexual activity is a sin.

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Strongly agree	18%	25%	22%
Agree	15	17	26
Agree and disagree	14	12	28
Disagree	21	17	13
Strongly disagree	9	5	5
No opinion / don't know	17	19	4
No response	5	5	2

3. Homosexual activity is a mental or emotional problem.

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Strongly agree	19%	29%	17%
Agree	40	32	44
Agree and disagree	18	16	23
Disagree	6	4	5
Strongly disagree	3	3	2
No opinion / don't know	10	12	8
No response	5	4	2

4. People who engage in homosexual activities have as much opportunity for a loving relationship as do heterosexuals.

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Strongly agree	3%	2%	2%
Agree	13	11	14
Agree and disagree	16	14	22
Disagree	22	20	26
Strongly disagree	16	19	22
No opinion / don't know	25	28	14
No response	5	5	2

5. Do you believe it might ever be judicious and proper for a presbytery to ordain to the professional ministry a person who engages in homosexual activities?

	Members	Elders	Pastors
No, never	45%	51%	39%
No, probably not	26	26	29
Yes, possibly	14	12	20
Yes	4	4	10
No opinion / don't know	7	3	2
No response	5	4	1

6. Would you accept as your pastor a person who engages in homosexual activities?

	Members	Elders	Pastors
No, never	55%	64%	43%
No, probably not	25	19	30
Yes, possibly	6	6	13
Yes	4	2	8
No opinion / don't know	6	4	6
No response	4	3	1

7. Please indicate the extent to which each of the following situations or sources have contributed to the formation of your present attitudes and opinions concerning homosexuality.

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Scripture			
Has not contributed in any way to my opinions and views.	22%	13%	2%
Has contributed slightly to developing my opinions and views.	17	14	4
Has contributed moderately to developing my opinions and views.	20	26	23
Has contributed greatly to developing my opinions and views.	34	41	71
No response.	7	6	less than 0.5

The *Blue Book, Part I*, report concluded that even though Paul and Leviticus spoke against what is today called gay and lesbian behavior and called it a sin and “contrary to the law of God” those verses “do not of themselves presently act as a legal restriction on the power of the congregation and elders or of presbytery to elect (approve) and ordain.”<sup>30</sup> The *Blue Book, Part I*, authors’ rationale for that statement is that there may be candidates for ordination that based on “their interpretations of other biblical verses and themes, to affirm in clear conscience and to the satisfaction of some congregations and elders and of some presbyteries the ordination questions: Do you accept the Scriptures? Will you be [a Deacon, an Elder, a Minister of the Word] in obedience to Jesus Christ...? Will you govern the way you live . . . ? Will you . . . try to

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., D-126.

show the love and justice of Jesus Christ? ” the candidates will answer in the affirmative.<sup>31</sup>

The report concluded on a neutral note, admitting that there was no phrase in the church’s Constitution that prohibited the ordination of self-affirming practicing gays and lesbians, and the Constitution did not explicitly mandate that sexual orientation be disregarded for those seeking ordination. In the process of writing the report, the nineteen members divided into a majority and a minority. The task force members were not required to make their votes known; when the report was completed, however, three members requested that their names be made known and published as voting in the negative.

Although the Northern and then the Southern Presbyterians had confirmed statements in the 1970s that did not allow gay and lesbian ministers “who state their homosexuality publicly” to be ordained, the ordination debate continued at the General Assemblies.<sup>32</sup> Advocates for the ordination of gays and lesbians did not give up, and after their repeated attempts to have the fidelity and chastity amendment removed from the *Book of Order*, they succeeded in 2011. The Presbyterian Church (USA) passed amendment 10-A during the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2010. A sufficient number of presbyteries ratified the amendment during the week of May 9, 2011. Amendment 10-A included new language that outlines the requirements of ordination, setting aside wording that had been in place since 1997.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., D-126 - D-127.

<sup>32</sup> James Orr and F.F. Bruce, "Image," in *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1963), 226.

The essence of the difference between the 1997 and 2011 wording is the removal of a Presbyterian Church (USA) nationwide standard that prohibited the ordination of any person in a sexual relationship outside of marriage between a man and a woman. The new wording moves the responsibility from the national level to the local presbytery to examine each candidate for ordination and leaves it to the presbytery to make the decision if the person is acceptable or not. The new standard does not delineate behavior that would automatically disqualify the person for ordination.

The language prior to the 2011 Amendment 10-ratification was,

“Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”<sup>33</sup>

The wording after July 10, 2011 is,

“Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.”<sup>34</sup>

Guidance is not given on how to interpret Scripture.

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<sup>33</sup> *Book of Order: Part Two*, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 2007), G-6.0106:b.

<sup>34</sup> *Book of Order: Part Two*, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 2011), G-2.0104:b.

The adoption of Amendment 10-A does give individual congregations the right to ordain as ministers, elect as elders, and elect as deacons any gay or lesbian who is otherwise qualified to function in a church office. Jack Haberer, an observer of the controversy, has noted that those who are considered the legal victors in the 10-A amendment controversy should recognize their arguments, including “God doesn’t care what goes on in bedrooms; if only you’d get to know us, you’d support us; and the rest of you are homophobes” as “poorly presented” reasons in support of gays and lesbians.<sup>35</sup> Haberer points out, “the recent voting margin change has come primarily via attrition of voters” who were against 10-A, as many either have left the Presbyterian Church (USA) or just have given up fighting against what 10-A stands for after many years.<sup>36</sup>

In 1999, the average weekly Presbyterian Church (USA) worship attendance was 1,329,000, and by “2009 worship attendance averaged 1,083,000 per week, a drop of 19%.”<sup>37</sup> At the end of 1999, there were 11,216 congregations with a reported membership of “2,560,201.”<sup>38</sup> At the end of 2010, there were 10,560 congregations with “2,016,091” members in the Presbyterian Church (USA).<sup>39</sup> When membership gains and losses are taken into account between 1999 and 2009, the result is a net loss of “61,047” members from 1999, and a net loss of 97 congregations.”<sup>40</sup> One result of the congregational attrition is that since the theology of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is determined through the voting process, it raises the question whether or not theology can be

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<sup>35</sup> Haberer, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Jack Marcum, "Down for the Count: The Smaller the Congregation, the Larger the Percentage Who Attend Regularly," *Presbyterians Today*, March 2011, 7.

<sup>38</sup> "Comparative Statistics 2010 - Table 1: Presbyterian Church (USA) Congregations and Membership, 1999 to 2010", Presbyterian Church (USA) <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/compstats2010-1/> (accessed April 10, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

determined democratically. If congregations that are considered conservative leave, are the results fair and balanced? In the Presbyterian polity, the resultant vote mediates Christ's authority down to the congregations.

The 2011 Presbyterian Church (USA) Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons, wrote the following about the approval of Amendment 10-A, "This decision begins with an unequivocal affirmation that ordained office will continue to be rooted in each deacon, elder, and minister's joyful submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life."<sup>41</sup> Parson's statement is taken to mean that candidates for ordination only need to acknowledge their joyful submission to Jesus Christ, regardless of their admitted sexual orientation. This acknowledgement releases the congregations from their responsibility to adhere to previous ordination guidelines that required candidates to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001) or adhere to chastity in singleness.

This statement and hermeneutic of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is found in the *Book of Order*. *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)* is divided into two parts. Part I is *The Book of Confessions* and Part II is the *Book of Order*. The *Book of Order* consists of the Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and Rules of Discipline. In the 2007/2009 *Book of Order* prior to the approval of Amendment 10-A, the Form of Government, Chapter I, section G-1.0100 titled "The Head of the Church" was as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> Gradye Parsons and others, "Leader's Church Wide Letter Concerning Amendment 10-A," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 13, 2011, 14.

(a) All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God, who raised Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body.

(b) Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission to the world, for its building up, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. It belongs to Christ alone to rule, to teach, to call, and to use the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of his Kingdom.

(c) Christ gives to his Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its officers and ordinances. Insofar as Christ's will for the Church is set forth in Scripture, it is to be obeyed. In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

(d) In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope and that the Church, as Christ's body, is bound to his authority and thus free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God."<sup>42</sup>

In the *Book of Order* after the approval of Amendment 10-A, section G-1.0100 titled "The Head of the Church" has changed to section F-1.02 Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

Presbyterian church leaders who oppose gay and/or lesbian ordination have asserted that adherence to a naturalistic theology leading to a natural religion within the Presbyterian Church (USA) has caused the church to endorse "romanticism, folly, and idolatry" with the result that those attributes are said to not only characterize but to destroy the Presbyterian Church (USA).<sup>43</sup> Those Presbyterians define natural theology as humankind discovering God primarily through the natural world.<sup>44</sup> Statements about

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<sup>42</sup> *Book of Order: Part Two*, G-1.0100.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Patterson, Paul Dugan, and Marsha Martin, "Appropriate Response: A Declaration of Theology and Action," (Session of Community Presbyterian Church of Ventura, California, 2007), 1.

<sup>44</sup> This thesis does not propose to explore all forms of "natural theology." This is the definition of "natural theology" I'm working with in this thesis. For this discussion, readers should be aware of the definition of "natural theology" found on page 3 in "Appropriate Response: A Declaration of Theology and Action," Community Presbyterian Church of Ventura, California.

what God is like come from the visible creation, with the result that natural theology produces a natural religion which, according to the opponents of Amendment 10-A, is endorsed by Presbyterians who want the right to ordain gays and lesbians.

Presbyterians that oppose the ordination of gays and lesbians allege that Presbyterian advocates of such ordination ascribe to natural theology by way of asserting that as humanity is God's creation and humans experience God, then it can be derived from this who God is and what God does. Concerning the issue of gays and lesbians, those in opposition hold a theology that maintains that the will of God, revealed through his act of creation, and testified to in the Scriptures, declares the practice of same-sex relations to be sinful. A theology, based on the logic of natural theology, holds that because such feelings or attractions exist in humans, whom God made, then God approves of the practice and life style; therefore, a same-sex relationship is a faithful expression of God's diverse creativity. Those who consider the complementary nature of the male and female human anatomy as evidence that God designed it that way from the beginning, use the account of creation to support their conclusion. They suggest that those who employ human understanding of what they believe God has indicated about sexuality have a "progressive theology" in contrast to their "evangelical theology" view.<sup>45</sup> The evangelicals hold that this progressive view is only human wisdom based on experiential knowledge, and not theology based on what God has revealed in Scripture. Barth said, "'Evangelical' means informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ as heard afresh in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Reformation by return to the Holy Scripture."<sup>46</sup> He went on to say

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<sup>45</sup> Patterson, Dugan, and Martin, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Karl Barth, *Karl Barth: The Humanity of God*, trans., Thomas Wieser and John Newton Thomas (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 11.

that, “’Evangelical theology’ must thus be understood as the science and doctrine of the commerce and communion between God and man, informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ as heard in Holy Scripture.”<sup>47</sup>

There is another side to the issue of gay and lesbian ordination that has supporters just as steadfast in their beliefs that insist there is room for gay and lesbian clergy within the Presbyterian Church (USA) leadership. Presbyterians supporting gay and lesbian ordination bring into the discussion gay and lesbian participation in the church as lay members, civil rights, job discrimination, housing, and church-endorsed marriages between gays and lesbians. Supporters suggest that as long as the gay and/or lesbian activity is part of a loving, long-term, same-sex relationship, it is not contrary to the will of God, nor is it sinful. Supporters believe that, because all humans are created in the image of God, then according to Galatians 3:28 “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” then all have equal rights in God’s world, including the right to be leaders within the church. (NRSV) This alternate view is supported by those viewing same-sex relations not as sin, but as only an “orientation” with their argument focused on biblical references wrongly attributed to the original context.<sup>48</sup> Galatians 3:28 is usually brought forward around economic inequality, or to argue about the role of women in church, and not same-sex relations.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Seward Hiltner, "Homosexuality and the Churches," in *Homosexual Behavior: A Modern Reappraisal*, ed. Judd Marmor (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 228.

*Gay and Lesbian Ordination Controversy is Not Unique to America*

The issues raised by gay and lesbian ordination are not unique to the Presbyterian Church (USA), as the issue has caused similar controversy within other denominations in both the United States and England. Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, when faced with a schism after a practicing gay man was ordained without his consent, wrote, “The Church cannot publicly endorse any form of life other than singleness or monogamous heterosexual marriage as a legitimate expression of response to God’s call.”<sup>49</sup> In the United Kingdom, conferences were called, committees formed, and reports written about gays and lesbians within the Anglican Communion that led to the 2004 Windsor Report but, ultimately, to no consensus. The Anglican Bishop of Durham, N. T. (Tom) Wright, observed in 2009 that the vote by the Bishops of the Episcopal Church in the United States “to allow in principle the appointment, to all orders of ministry, of persons in active same-sex relationship” marked “a clear break with the rest of the Anglican Communion.”<sup>50</sup> Wright called the American’s decision a “slow-moving train crash of international Anglicanism,” and noted the vote ignored the Anglican Communion’s plea for a “moratorium on consecrating practicing homosexuals as Bishops.”<sup>51</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church’s position towards gay ordination maintains that same-sex acts are, according to Scripture, “condemned as a serious depravity and even

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<sup>49</sup> Rowan Williams, "Knowing Myself in Christ," in *The Way Forward?: Christian Voices on Homosexuality and the Church*, ed. Timothy Bradshaw (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 17.

<sup>50</sup> Tom Wright, "The Americans Know This Will End in Schism", The Times Newspapers Limited <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/law/columnists/article2049128.ece> (accessed December 24, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

presented as the sad consequence of rejecting God.”<sup>52</sup> In addition, the Roman Catholic Church states, “Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved.”<sup>53</sup>

### *Cultural Background Summary*

In summary, the 2011 Presbyterian Church (USA) constitutional change was influenced by the report written thirty-three years earlier. The 1978 Presbyterian *Blue Book, Part I*, report relied on a questionnaire the task force submitted to “its representative sample” of Presbyterians.<sup>54</sup> The report did not disclose how those who received the questionnaire were selected to be representative of all Presbyterians. The size of the sample that received the questionnaire was not divulged, and the total number of respondents that replied to the questionnaire was not released. The questionnaire influenced the nineteen members of the task force. The task force members’ qualifications were directed to be “people broadly representative of the life of our church, both ministers and laypersons . . . experts in such fields as biblical interpretation, theology, ethics, psychiatry, sociology, and law and that those persons shall represent a spectrum of all sides of these issues.”<sup>55</sup> The task force did not adopt the final report unanimously. Three members requested that their names be published as having voted in the negative. The *Blue Book, Part I*, report was influenced by the American Psychiatric Association’s voting decision to remove homosexuality as a category from the American Psychiatric Association mental disorders list. The *Blue Book, Part I*, report did not note

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<sup>52</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Catholic Church, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1975), 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *The Blue Book I, 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, D-101.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, D-1.

for its readers the American Psychiatric Association's, "acrimonious debate within the association initiated by lobbying efforts by gay activists."<sup>56</sup> Nor did the *Blue Book, Part I*, report note whether or not the American Psychiatric Association had relied on any theological guidance preceding their membership vote, or that the process to decide a scientific controversy was finalized by a vote of a professional society that did not rely on scientific findings.

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<sup>56</sup> Spitzer, 401.

## SECTION TWO: NATURAL THEOLOGY

### *The Impact of Natural Theology*

The theology of Karl Barth is used by conservative Presbyterians to support their defense in rejecting gays and lesbians for leadership within the Presbyterian Church (USA). This section sets forth Karl Barth's position on natural theology and why he considered it incompatible with Christianity.

### *Defining the Terms*

To begin with, a basic understanding of natural theology is needed. For the scope of this study, a definition will help to provide a platform to view the Emil Brunner–Karl Barth disagreement. In addition, we need to clarify how “natural theology” is different from a “theology of nature.” The definition for natural theology starts with the general concept that all human beings by their very nature have some level of an awareness of and knowledge of God. They possess, at the very least, some capacity to have an awareness of God through their conscience, through beauty, through the structure of the world, or because of a sense of truth and goodness. This awareness or “pre-existing natural knowledge of God” then came to humans when God made a “special revelation” in Jesus Christ, and through the Bible.<sup>57</sup> The pre-existing embedded knowledge then is the key for humanity to be able to understand the aspect of the special revelation. For some, the extension of the concept of natural theology to include special revelation may or may not be needed as God can be talked about in general without reference to the

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<sup>57</sup> James Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology: The Gifford Lectures for 1991 Delivered in the University of Edinburgh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

aspects of the special revelation. The brand of natural theology in view here, starts without faith and then finds in nature evidence of God. Through this process, the human arrives at what they believe is the truth based on their own feelings, ideas, and reasoning. Barth did not see any way for humanity to understand God through this process. Barth could only see a way to the knowledge of God through God's self-revelation by the events that were recorded in the Bible. Barth wrote, "We start out from the fact that through His Word God is actually known and will be known again."<sup>58</sup>

A definition of a theology of nature would start from a "standpoint of faith" and subsequently an interpretation of nature with the idea that nature does provide a glimpse of God, since the world is God's creation.<sup>59</sup> Humans can then view Creation as the object of God's love and care and join in the care of Creation. God is not to be read off that Creation, or tried to be glimpsed through the Creation. The purpose of defining the parameters for the definition of natural theology is to work within the dispute between Barth and Brunner, and that dispute centered on the question whether or not any knowledge has been acquired about God "antecedent to his self-revelation in Jesus Christ" through the sole use of reason.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Why is Karl Barth so Important for this Discussion? A Case in Point*

In 2007, the Session of Community Presbyterian Church of Ventura, California, wrote a letter to all congregations and governing bodies within the Presbyterian Church

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<sup>58</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans., T.H.L. Parker, vol. 2,1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 4.

<sup>59</sup> Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal - Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 17.

<sup>60</sup> Barr., 3.

(USA) to “unite behind the Scriptures, confessions, and polity of the church.”<sup>61</sup> The Session wrote,

“The issues tearing apart the church are neither peripheral nor incidental. At stake is nothing less than our integrity, our future, our mission and our message. At question is whether we have been, are, and can be trustworthy before God or whether we will abandon the faith once and for all delivered to the saints for a populist, culturally determined Gospel that is hostile to the work of Christ. Ensconced within claims of piety and words of faith are alien principles that have entered our church damaging the theological basis and standards that have defined and shaped the church. At issue is a natural theology that forms the essence of the progressive theology in the PC (USA).”<sup>62</sup>

The letter went on to cite Karl Barth’s stance against natural theology in support of their argument against natural theology.

### *The Brunner-Barth Debate*

In 1934, Karl Barth introduced to the theological conversation his answer to a major contested issue at the interface between science and Christian theology. Emil Brunner initiated the conversation Karl Barth had been invited to join around natural theology. The theological disagreement between Emil Brunner and Karl Barth that came to a head in 1934 has had a long-term, significant effect on the discussion around theology, natural theology and science, largely due to Barth’s influence on Protestant and Roman Catholic theology. Karl Barth’s position is “not only is there no salvation, but there is no true knowledge of God, save in and through Jesus Christ.”<sup>63</sup> Emil Brunner had

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<sup>61</sup> Patterson, Dugan, and Martin, 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" By Dr. Karl Barth*, trans., Peter Fraenkel (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 5.

pressed Barth to agree to six points that included agreeing that evidence of the creator can be found in creation, and Barth emphatically said “No!”<sup>64</sup>

Protestants have labeled Karl Barth the “most influential twentieth-century theologian.”<sup>65</sup> Catholic scholars, who have not always agreed with him, nevertheless have called Barth “the great theologian.”<sup>66</sup> Catholic scholar Hans Urs von Balthasar, who appreciated Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* and found it forceful, was aware that Barth had called Catholicism “the artifact of the Anti-Christ,” but he also believed Barth was the conversation partner that Protestants and Catholics could use to bridge their differences.<sup>67</sup> Emil Brunner, a Professor of Theology at Zurich, who was called a “thoroughly unreliable theologian who showed treacherous inclinations” by Karl Barth, believed Barth to be so formidable and influential that Brunner had to “clear my theology of the charge.”<sup>68</sup> Brunner said, “Barth appeared to me like a loyal soldier on sentry duty at night, who shoots everyone who does not give him the password as he has been commanded, and who from time to time also annihilates a good friend whose password he does not hear or misunderstands in his eagerness.”<sup>69</sup> The negative answer Barth gave to Brunner’s six points had an impact not only on personalities, but also on the direction Protestant and Catholic theology would take around the discourse on natural theology and how it intersected science.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>65</sup> Gerald R. McDermott, *The Great Theologians: A Brief Guide* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010), 170.

<sup>66</sup> Boniface A. Willems, *Karl Barth: An Ecumenical Approach to His Theology*, trans., Matthew J. van Velzen (Glen Rock: Paulist Press, 1965), 14.

<sup>67</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans., John Drury (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972), 37.

<sup>68</sup> Brunner and Barth, 15-16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 16.

The theological disagreement did not center on whether or not Brunner's or Barth's individual approaches to salvation or "knowledge of God" were different, as both believed this came through Jesus Christ.<sup>70</sup> The theological difference was well in place for Barth before Brunner had disagreed with Barth. The disagreement had first been initiated by Barth's reaction to "almost all of his theological teachers'" support of German militarism in August 1914 at the beginning of World War I.<sup>71</sup> Barth, at that point, believed he could no longer subscribe to his German teachers' biblical understanding, their dogmatics, or their ethics, as they had signed a manifesto supporting the war. Barth said, "Their ethical failure indicated that their exegetical and dogmatic presuppositions could not be in order."<sup>72</sup>

The basis of Brunner's natural theology is an idea that relies on the theology of Martin Luther. Luther wrote that there are "three hierarchies ordained by God."<sup>73</sup>

"The first government is that of the home, from which the people come; the second is that of the city, meaning the country, the people, princes and lords, which we call the secular government. These embrace everything – children, property, money, animals, etc. The home must produce, whereas the city must guard, protect and defend. Then follows the third, God's own home and city, that is, the church, which must obtain people from the home and protection and defense from the city."<sup>74</sup>

These three hierarchies or "orders of creation" were put in place by God to prevent creation from falling into disorder and chaos.<sup>75</sup> The idea that God had a plan in place that relied on the cooperation of the church and the government was reflected in

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>71</sup> Barth, *Karl Barth: The Humanity of God*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans., John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 81.

<sup>73</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Church and Ministry* ed. Eric W. Gritsch, vol. 41 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 177.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 104.

Brunner's natural theology. Karl Barth was concerned that Emil Brunner had unintentionally put in place a "theological foundation" that labeled the German government the first hierarchy, as characterized by Adolf Hitler, to become a model of God for the German people.<sup>76</sup>

Thomas F. Torrance analyzed Barth's fundamental objection to natural theology in this manner.

"What Barth objects to in traditional natural theology is not any invalidity in its argumentation, nor even its rational structure, as such, but its *independent* character – i.e., the autonomous rational structure that natural theology develops on the ground of 'nature alone,' in abstraction from the active self-disclosure of the living and Triune God—for that can only split the knowledge of God into two parts, natural knowledge of the One God and revealed knowledge of the Triune God, which is scientifically as well as theologically intolerable. This is not to reject the place of a proper rational structure in knowledge of God, such as natural theology strives for, but to insist that unless that rational structure is intrinsically bound up with the actual content of knowledge of God, it is a distorting abstraction. That is why Barth claims that, properly understood, natural theology is included *within* revealed theology."<sup>77</sup>

Torrance's observation is that an adherence to natural theology produces an "independent character" which, when viewed within Barth's stance against homosexuality, is that homosexuality then closes the gays and lesbians off from the Christian community, and for Barth this is not acceptable.<sup>78</sup>

In summary, theology of nature starts with faith in God's self-revelation and self-giving. Natural theology starts with unfaith, with a faith in the human capacity to interpret God through reading the nature of the world, the human experience, and the laws of nature, outside of God's revelation. Karl Barth wrote, "By 'natural theology' I

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> T. F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology: Consonance between Theology and Science* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 90-91.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 90.

mean every (positive or negative) *formulation of a system* which claims to be theological, i.e. to interpret divine revelation, whose *subject*, differs fundamentally from the revelation in Jesus Christ, and whose *method* therefore differs equally from the exposition of Holy Scripture.”<sup>79</sup>

In *Nature and Grace*, Emil Brunner answered Barth’s denunciation of Brunner’s theology. Brunner wrote, “In the work in which he disowned (we might as well say) all other theologians, Barth’s ban struck me also.”<sup>80</sup> Brunner wrote that he was not angry with Barth, and that his intent in *Nature and Grace* was to explain, “What Barth really desires and intends.”<sup>81</sup> Brunner went on to detail a six-point counter thesis that described where he believed Barth was in error.

Brunner wrote in *Nature and Grace*, “It is the task of our theological generation to find the way back to a true *theologia naturalis*.”<sup>82</sup> Brunner took this approach based on the doctrine of creation in that he derived as human beings are created in the “image of God,” then humans have a nature that is formed in “such a way there is an analogy with the being of God.”<sup>83</sup> Brunner’s argument was that as humanity is created in the image of God, there exists a “point of contact” as humans have an inherent sense of sin.<sup>84</sup>

Brunner’s six points he wanted Barth to agree with are: (1) “The question concerning the *imago Dei* seems to be ultimately nothing but a dispute about words.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Brunner and Barth, 74-75.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>83</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Science & Religion: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 129.

<sup>84</sup> Brunner and Barth, 32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

Brunner agreed with Barth that “the original image of God in man has been destroyed.”<sup>86</sup> However, “personality constitutes the *humanum* of every man,” so Brunner contended humans are still human.<sup>87</sup>

(2) Brunner wrote, as “The world is the creation of God. In every creation the spirit of the creator is in some ways recognizable.”<sup>88</sup> Brunner’s point is “the two revelations, that in creation and that in Jesus Christ are related” in opposition to Barth that revelation is only through Christ.<sup>89</sup>

(3) Brunner wrote, “God is present even to his sinful creature which is far removed from him” through God’s preserving grace or “general grace.”<sup>90</sup> Brunner’s beginning point for natural theology is expressed here, “In the faith of Christ we know that even before we knew the saving grace of God, we lived by the grace of God, i.e. by the preserving grace of God without properly knowing it.”<sup>91</sup>

(4) Brunner maintained that included with God’s preserving grace were “ordinances” such as “matrimony,” and “monogamous marriage” that were derived from “an ordinance of creation.”<sup>92</sup> If a Christian adheres to the “ordinance of matrimony” then they “recognize the creator as only in Jesus Christ.”<sup>93</sup> Brunner contended, “Matrimony is

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

a natural ordinance of the creator” as even those who have no knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus do adhere to the ordinance.<sup>94</sup>

(5) The “doctrine of the point of contact” maintains that not only humans “but everything connected with the natural knowledge of God” is in the “sphere of being addressed” by God.<sup>95</sup> Brunner maintained it was not possible “to deny this point of contact of divine grace” between Christ and humanity, and if it was denied it was “a misunderstanding.”<sup>96</sup>

(6) In the final point, Brunner wrote, “It is possible to maintain that the act of faith involves personality and decision.”<sup>97</sup> Yet Brunner asserts, “faith is the gift and work of God,” and the New Testament emphasizes the act rather than “the later.”<sup>98</sup>

In response, Karl Barth replied “No!” to Brunner’s six-point counter-thesis, based on Barth’s assertion that as man is a sinner, humanity has lost the image of God, and therefore “the image of God in which he was created is obliterated entirely.”<sup>99</sup> Barth did not accept Brunner’s idea that God needs human help to be known. Barth wrote, “The Holy Ghost . . . does not stand in need of any point of contact but that which he himself creates.”<sup>100</sup>

In his *Instruction in the Christian Religion* lectures in Göttingen that Barth began in 1924 he said,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 121.

“We have to think especially of the increasing role played in Protestant theology from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by what is variously called natural theology or revelation or religion (as distinct from the supernatural or Christian revelation.) Natural revelation includes not only the voice of God in nature, as the name indicates, but also such things such as conscience, the moral light of nature, religious feelings or dispositions or tendencies in us, mathematical and philosophical axioms, what better pagans know about the existence and unity of God, and the creation and overruling of the world by him, and non-Christian analogies even to such central Christian mysteries as the Trinity and the incarnation.”<sup>101</sup>

Barth went on to emphasize that, “For my part, although I am Reformed, I want no part of it.”<sup>102</sup> “Either God speaks, or he does not.”<sup>103</sup>

In Trevor Hart’s view, the Brunner-Barth debate concerning the relationship between nature and grace was due to a mutual misunderstanding. In Hart’s context “nature . . . is the sphere of the human as given apart from any effective redemptive or revelatory activity on the part of God.”<sup>104</sup> And “grace is the condition and knowledge of those who have been acted upon in such a redemptive / revelatory way.”<sup>105</sup> Hart suggested a way to resolve the mutual misunderstanding is to provide a definition of nature that Barth and Brunner would both accept. Hart offers this definition:

“Nature is not, in its historical state, predisposed towards grace, but resists it. The old creation is not capable of the new creation, i.e. there is nothing in the old Adam, the flesh, which could simply be developed or extrapolated to posit the new Adam. Redemption, therefore, is not a matter of evolution, or of development, or perfection: but of revolution, crisis and crucifixion.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. I (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 91.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>104</sup> Trevor Hart, "A Capacity for Ambiguity?: The Barth-Brunner Debate Revisited," in *Tyndale Bulletin* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1993), 291.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

Brunner had argued for a “point of contact” for grace in nature.<sup>107</sup> Brunner wrote, “Wherever God does anything, he leaves the imprint of his nature upon what he does. Therefore the creation of the world is at the same time a revelation, a self-communication of God.”<sup>108</sup> Brunner did not question if there “are two kinds of revelation.”<sup>109</sup> He did question, “How the two revelations, that in creation and that in Jesus Christ are related.”<sup>110</sup> Brunner suggested that humans, “in faith” could perceive a “bright light” in Jesus Christ.<sup>111</sup> Hart offers that Barth also developed “the view that those aspects of the cosmos which he refers to as ‘the little lights’ of creation, while they certainly do not reveal God to the unregenerate mind are, nonetheless, given to do so as and when they are viewed by the eyes of faith.”<sup>112</sup> The creation, according to Hart, affirms “is thus invested with ‘a power of speech’ which persists regardless of whether humans hear what it has to say or not.”<sup>113</sup> Hart notes that Barth did write, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament showeth his handiwork. (Ps 19:1) To be sure, there is no speech or language, i.e., they have no power to do it themselves. But they acquire this power.”<sup>114</sup> Barth prefaced his remarks about lights by stating, “Our consideration of the connection between the one light of God and the many lights of His creation will necessarily be a comprehensive one.”<sup>115</sup> Barth said, “The Word of God is final in this strict sense. It is the eternal light.”<sup>116</sup> “It is in this character that it is the light of life.”<sup>117</sup> In the same section,

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<sup>107</sup> Brunner and Barth, 21.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>112</sup> Hart, 296.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans., G. W. Bromiley, vol. 4.3.1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 164.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

*The Glory of the Mediator*, in *Church Dogmatics* Barth made it clear he was still against natural theology, “we have no need to appeal either for basis or content to the sorry hypothesis of a so-called ‘natural theology’ (i.e., a knowledge of God given in and with the natural force of reason to be attained in its exercise.)”<sup>118</sup> The hoped for “formal link” that might have been found in Barth’s remarks about lights with a power of speech does not materialize, and we are left with Barth’s commitment against natural theology.<sup>119</sup> Barth states, “It might be suggested that in order to avoid confusion, to distinguish these lights from God’s own self-revelation, and to emphasize their persistence, we should not speak of the lights, but rather of the luminosity of the creaturely world, and avoid altogether the use of the term revelation.”<sup>120</sup>

Barth’s position was that it is only through God’s grace alone that fellowship between humanity and God is possible, and the “intermediary that establishes that fellowship is the Word of God, which became incarnate.”<sup>121</sup> The “point of contact” that Brunner had suggested was rejected by Barth. Brunner had argued that, “No one who agrees that only human subjects but not sticks and stones can receive the Word of God and the Holy Spirit can deny that there is such a thing as a point of contact for the divine grace of redemption.”<sup>122</sup> Brunner was arguing that it was the formal image of God in humans that makes them able to receive God’s grace, and specifically it is that humans have a “capacity for words” as a “purely formal possibility.”<sup>123</sup> Barth replied that if human’s “capacity for revelation” is the way the “Word of God ‘reaches’ man” he rejects

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>119</sup> Hart, 296.

<sup>120</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 139.

<sup>121</sup> Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2 ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 183.

<sup>122</sup> Brunner and Barth, 31.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

it.<sup>124</sup> This is based on Barth's insistence that if God encounters man, "then God himself must have created for it conditions which are not in the least supplied (not even 'somehow,' not even 'to some extent'!) by the existence of the formal factor."<sup>125</sup>

In *Divine and Contingent Order*, Thomas F. Torrance connected the light in the universe to the light of God. 1 John 1:5 states, "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all."

Torrance notes that because God's light has shined, "out into the world from its embodiment in Jesus Christ, and that it is as this Light that God illumines all nature."<sup>126</sup>

It then follows from Torrance that "Bathed in the Light of God that shines in concentrated form in Jesus Christ, the universe took on a radically different aspect."<sup>127</sup>

Since the sun cannot be looked at with the naked eye, the parallel is drawn that God also cannot be looked at in a direct manner, but "can only be known by the shining of his light upon creation."<sup>128</sup> Paul Molnar did not suggest that Torrance was constructing a theology of nature when Torrance wrote,

"there is a necessary and inescapable connection between theological concepts and physical concepts, spiritual and natural concepts, positive and natural theology, or rather between theological science and natural science, for it is in that connection that the changed status of natural theology has its place."<sup>129</sup>

However, Molnar does note that "there is room" in what Torrance wrote for a "new kind of natural theology."<sup>130</sup> Molnar suggests that Torrance thought there

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 65.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>128</sup> Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2009), 92.

<sup>129</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), 69.

<sup>130</sup> Molnar, 95.

should be a place for natural theology but only within a specific context based on

Torrance's statements:

“If the creation of the universe out of nothing means that we may have knowledge of universe only out of its contingent processes, it also means that it is only from within the same universe and through the medium of its contingent rationalities that we may articulate the knowledge God gives us of himself, even though he infinitely transcends the universe.”<sup>131</sup>

“If therefore it is to serve its function within theology, natural theology cannot be treated as being complete and consistent in itself, but only as attaining consistency within the empirical conditions of actual knowledge of God, and therefore as an essentially, *open, pliant structure*, involving basic concepts that are decidable only on other grounds or at another level.”<sup>132</sup>

“If natural theology is to have a viable reconstruction even in something like its traditional form, it can only be on the basis of a restored ontology in which our thought operates with a fundamental unity of concept and experience, or of form and being, within a contingent but inherently intelligible and open-structured universe.”<sup>133</sup>

However, as previously noted, Torrance did acknowledge that what Barth objected to in natural theology is its “independent character” that closes itself from the community of Christians.<sup>134</sup>

Barth was thoroughly Christocentric and Trinitarian in his theology. Barth wrote, “If in this way we ask further concerning the one point upon which, according to Scripture, our attention and thoughts should and must be concentrated, then from the first

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<sup>131</sup> Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, 36.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>133</sup> Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology: Consonance between Theology and Science*, 86-87.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

to last the Bible directs us to the name of Jesus Christ.”<sup>135</sup> For Barth, the “heart of the Bible” is Jesus Christ.<sup>136</sup>

In the nexus of natural theology and science, Barth maintained a consistent position of independence and separation between religion and science. Barth asserted there was no real need to prove the “vaunted independence of theology” above other sciences.<sup>137</sup> Barth would not let humans determine God’s nature, only God could do that. In addition, if theology did allow itself to be called science, or if theology refers to itself as a science, it would not be left up to any other science to be the standard, because other sciences studied only objects. Theology studies a subject, God, and this subject must not be reduced to a mere object. Further, Barth would not give up, to any discipline, the right to be known as a science or to be known as the science with final authority that would dispense the title of science on another discipline. Yet, even though he did not want to include theology with the “heathen character” of science, he did not want theology to be so superior as to not be considered a science.<sup>138</sup> Barth concluded his statements about knowing theology as a science by stating that even though the other sciences were heathen, the Church believed in the forgiveness of sins and “it reckons them with itself in the Church” thereby moving from a position of independence to one of possible partnership.<sup>139</sup> Perhaps Barth would have been comfortable working with science as a partner. However, science, in Barth’s estimation, could only see reality through science

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<sup>135</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans., G. W. Bromiley, vol. 2,2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 53.

<sup>136</sup> Sung Wook Chung, "A Bold Innovator: Barth on God and Election," in *Karl Barth in Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 62.

<sup>137</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans., G.T. Thomson, vol. 1,1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

and not through God, as theology did. Consequently, science would fall into the trap of natural theology, as it was humanity attempting to be self-assertive and define God. Science could not offer anything new to make Karl Barth change his mind based on any new scientific discovery, as he ultimately viewed any contribution of science as another way for science to participate in attempting to influence and control the church or prove God.

Barth did say a theology of the Holy Spirit would have changed the way the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed if theology had positioned man in relation to God as properly that of God dealing with man when he wrote, “There is certainly a place for legitimate Christian thinking starting from below and moving up, from man who is taken hold of by God to God who takes hold of man.”<sup>140</sup> “Starting from below, as it were, with Christian man, it could and should have struggled its way upward to an authentic explication of the Christian faith.”<sup>141</sup> Therefore, he did acknowledge man has a role to reach out to God and that it was a legitimate process. He prefaced this with an acknowledgement that there was no reason Christian anthropocentrism should not be engaged in as God had made man free to choose.

In Barth’s later years, the Vatican engaged in the conversation with him about natural theology. In a 1968 letter Cardinal Cicognani, on behalf of Pope Paul VI, wrote, “It is obvious that natural law and conscience are not, in the strict sense, sources of revelation ... but the Redeemer God is also the God who created man according to his own image and likeness ... in the depths of his conscience the presence of a law which he

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<sup>140</sup> Barth, *Karl Barth: The Humanity of God*, 24.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

did not give himself but which he is obliged to obey.”<sup>142</sup> In addition, the Cardinal noted this is “possible through the Holy Spirit.”<sup>143</sup> In his reply to the Cardinal, Barth agreed and continued to argue for revelation of God through his word, as nature and conscience do not have “speech, not language nor audible voice,” and it is only through the free grace of God that it is heard by man.<sup>144</sup>

### *Summary*

Presbyterians that are opposed to gay and/or lesbian ordination have taken the same position against natural theology as Karl Barth and have applied Barth’s reasons to be their reasons for rejecting natural theology and the ordination of gays and lesbians. Barth wrote, “In the church we are concerned with truth, and today with urgency such as probably has not been the case for centuries. And truth is not to be trifled with. If it divides the spirits, then they are divided. To oppose this commandment for the sake of a general idea of ‘peace’ and ‘unity’ would be a greater disaster for all concerned than such division.”<sup>145</sup>

The instability of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has come from within, as it has succumbed to the influence of revisionism, and from allowing secular intrusion from the outside.

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<sup>142</sup> Karl Barth, *Karl Barth: Letters 1961-1968*, ed. Jurgen Fangmeier, Hinrich Stoevesandt, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 357.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>145</sup> Brunner and Barth, 67.

### SECTION THREE: IMAGE OF GOD

#### *Part A: The Implications of Humanity Created in God's Image*

This section will show that arguments in favor of gay and/or lesbian same-sex relationships that are based on logic about God's relationship with humanity, including what God desires for humans as derived from philosophy, the supreme value of love, the interjection of science into theology, and humanity made in the image of God, are all human constructs that deviate from what is written in Scripture or lived in the life of Christ.

Some gays and lesbians assert that human desire, including sexual desire, is healthy and natural. Based on that premise, gays and lesbians assert that their same-sex desires are merely a different set of desires from heterosexual desires. The concept that desire is just a normal human response is viewed in the New Testament in a negative light. Jesus did not describe human desire as purely natural. In the parable of the sower, Jesus said, in Mark 4:19, "but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing."(NRSV) Jesus also said in Mark 7:20-23, "And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Yale Professor Dale Martin maintains that when interpreting Scripture about gays and lesbians, "all appeals, whether to the Bible or anything else, must submit to the test

of love.”<sup>146</sup> He defines the test as a demonstration by the church, “that it is more loving to condemn homosexuality than to affirm homosexuals.”<sup>147</sup> He asserts that the answer is located in “the question that must be asked: What is the loving thing to do?”<sup>148</sup> He asks Christians to overlook what Scripture calls sin because, in his estimation, love supersedes the biblical condemnation of sin. If love is “an expression of the essential nature of God,” and if love characterizes the “relationship between God and humans,” then does God logically approve of gay and lesbian same-sex act practices?<sup>149</sup> Is it the logical conclusion that same-sex relationships are a faithful expression of God’s diverse creativity, since all humanity is made in the divine image of God?

### *The Image of God*

The concept of what the divine image of God entails is not a simplistic idea. There are many proposals about what the image of God entails. When the statement “humans are made in the image of God” is made, the question is raised as to what it means to be created in the image of God. Secondly, the question arises “how is it that we are God’s image?”<sup>150</sup>

The authors of Genesis drew from a literary legacy that provided a means to illustrate the Israelites’ worldview of humanity, concepts, perspectives, including the world of nature, as they knew it, and their God. The authors drew, in part, from the stories about the gods of the people of ancient Mesopotamia and the surrounding area.

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<sup>146</sup> Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 50.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 73.

<sup>150</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1996), 74.

Some scholars believe the “primeval history” starting in Genesis is attributed to literary traditions that were evident in that culture.<sup>151</sup> Stephanie Dalley believes this because Akkadian myths were also known in “Sumerian, Hittite, Hurrian, and Hebrew,” and Akkadian was the language used for both diplomacy and by traveling merchants from the “mid-second to mid-first millennium BC in the ancient Near East.”<sup>152</sup> For example, in Genesis 1:1-2:3, the story of creation is similar to the Babylonian’s *Enuma Elish*, and Genesis 2:25 – 3:24 has a likeness to the story of the first couple in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Both the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, “written about 2150 BC,” along with the *Epic of Atra-khasis*, incorporate elements of the Noah flood story found in Genesis 6:5 – 9:17.<sup>153</sup> Dalley believes the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was written as verbal “contest literature,” to provide the listeners with opposing points of view about their deities.<sup>154</sup> However, there are differences between these stories and the manner in which the Israelites shaped and adapted them to their needs. Genesis is not a “fanciful work of the imagination,” and it is referred to as a “historical narrative.”<sup>155</sup> The Israelites broke with the “polytheism of their neighbors” and identified with a God that was not the same as nature but a God who transcended nature.<sup>156</sup> The Israelites’ God is personally experienced in their history, and through a unique relationship with humanity, and is not “experienced as a force of nature.”<sup>157</sup> The God of the Israelites is experienced through “history, historical events,”

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<sup>151</sup> "Hebrew Bible," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

<sup>152</sup> *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others.*, ed. Stephanie Dalley, trans., Stephanie Dalley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xviii.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>155</sup> Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

and a relationship with humanity.<sup>158</sup> The Israelites' God does not mate with other gods to bear children, does not grow up or grow old, and does not die. The Israelites' God is "timeless, ageless, desexualized, incorporeal, and eternal."<sup>159</sup> Their God "transcends nature, so that the line of demarcation between God and the natural world is clear."<sup>160</sup> The biblical writers conveyed these principles by "transforming" these stories for their readers so they would be a means of expression from their God, Yahweh.<sup>161</sup>

Karl Barth explained that the Genesis text shows that, "the biblical history of creation is pure saga, and as such it is distinguished from history on the one side and myth on the other. Precisely in this form it is a constituent part of the biblical witness and therefore itself a witness to God's self-revelation."<sup>162</sup> Barth notes the text is "sacred saga" as "it is sacred saga because it speaks of God," and myths do not speak of God.<sup>163</sup> Barth used "saga in the sense of an intuitive and poetic picture of a pre-historical reality of history which is enacted once and for all within the confines of time and space. Legend and anecdote are to be regarded as a degenerate form of saga; legend as the depiction in saga form of a concrete individual personality; and anecdote as the sudden illumination in saga form either of a personality of this kind or of a concretely historical situation. If the concept of myth proves inadequate— as is still to be shown— it is obvious that the only concept to describe the biblical history of creation is that of saga."<sup>164</sup> The editors of

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>162</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans., J.W. Edwards, vol. 3,1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 90.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 81.

Barth's *Church Dogmatics* noted Barth's use of the term "saga or more simply 'story' is the telling of a historical event which cannot be historiographically expressed."<sup>165</sup>

There are major differences between the biblical creation accounts and their models, the ancient myths. The ancient myths that share a commonality with the Bible are an attempt to give a human explanation for an event. The most significant difference is the Bible places humanity as the "telos or goal of all creation," and not as a minor player in the acts of the mythological gods.<sup>166</sup> In the biblical creation account at Genesis 1:27, humanity is created in the image of God, and it is indicated a male and a female are created. In the Bible where humans are created in the image of God, they are not made to be divine, but are provided with the inherent ability to reason and make choices. In the Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*, humanity is created to be the servants of fifteen gods, and specifically for the god Marduk. The god Marduk decides to create humans in this manner, "Blood I will mass and cause bones to be. I will establish a savage, man shall be his name. Truly savage man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease."<sup>167</sup> In *Enuma Elish*, humanity has been created from the blood of a vanquished god and, as it was explained to the humans, "the purpose of their lives was to serve the gods."<sup>168</sup> The author of *Enuma Elish* explained the god-human relationship in this way:

"May Marduk rule unsurpassed among the gods," they declared. "May he shepherd the human race that he created. May he establish for them the rites of religious worship: the food to be offered, the incense to be

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>166</sup> Hayes, 45.

<sup>167</sup> "Enuma Elish," in *Readings from the Ancient Near East*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 42.

<sup>168</sup> "The Enuma Elish," in *World Mythology: An Anthology of the Great Myths and Epics*, ed. Donna Rosenberg (Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing Group, 1986), 158.

smelled, and the sacred spells to be recited. May all human beings remember to praise and revere Marduk to the end of days. May they support their gods and tend their sanctuaries without fail. May they improve their lands, build their shrines, and remember the Mother Goddess.”<sup>169</sup>

In contrast, Genesis portrays a deliberate contradiction to *Enuma Elish*.

Genesis describes a special relationship with humanity, as God created men and women as the “crowning touch,” to be companions to their Creator, not servants.<sup>170</sup> In the pagan myths, there are many gods. In Genesis 1, there is only one God, and the Genesis author explains the truth is proclaimed, “About God, about humankind, and about the world.”<sup>171</sup>

There are two accounts in Genesis noting the creation of humanity in relation to the image of God. First is in Genesis 1:26-28, where the proximity of the “human male-female complementarity closely alongside the image of God” is described.<sup>172</sup>

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

This first portion of text “has pride of place.”<sup>173</sup> It points to God as non-sexually differentiated; however, humanity, is not only sexually different but is differentiated

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 31.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>172</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 427.

spiritually, as man and woman are created with this concept, pointing to the relationship of “human gender complementarity” as an important part of the image of God.<sup>174</sup>

In the *Doctrine of Creation*, Karl Barth explained, the scriptural term “‘In our image’ means to be created as a being.”<sup>175</sup> This term reflects that there is an original item, or model, or norm, a “prototype” for humanity to relate to the divine.<sup>176</sup> Barth defines the term “in our likeness,” referring to God, to mean the nature of humanity “has a pattern in the nature of God himself.”<sup>177</sup> Only man, excluding all others in creation, is the “thou” with God, who is the “I” in the relationship from the beginning.<sup>178</sup> Then Scripture interprets itself as “male and female created he them” is directly after “God created he him.” Barth goes on to explain man would “not be man if he were not the image of God. He is the image of God in the fact that he is man [human].”<sup>179</sup>

The author of Genesis illustrates how God created humanity through his word by the phrases, “and God said” or “then God said.” When the author notes, in Genesis 1:27, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female created he them,” God acknowledges humanity is male and female with the only differentiation in their relationship being that it is both woman to man and man to woman. Man is only a “copy and imitation of God” in the sense that as God is alone, man is also alone.<sup>180</sup> When man is in the “confrontation of God,” he is in duality with God as

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<sup>173</sup> Shai Cherry, *Torah through Time: Understanding Bible Commentary from the Rabbinic Period to Modern Times* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2007), 41.

<sup>174</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 427.

<sup>175</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 183.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

man is in the duality with woman.<sup>181</sup> This relationship and the differentiation between man and woman through the relationship of sex indicates the “creatureliness of man.”<sup>182</sup>

The second place noting the creation of humanity is in Genesis 2:7, “Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” (NRSV) At this point, gender complementarity is considered in the context of the task of humanity, and the man needs the help of a woman to carry out their mutual mission as set forth in Genesis. The woman is to help the man and is not in a subordinate role. The preeminent position of Genesis 1:26 in relation to Genesis 2:7 does refer to man as male, and woman as female with both being created at the same time in the image of God. The account in Genesis 2:7 is different in that God is in the garden of Eden and forms just one human out of the dust, not unlike what was found in the *Epic of Atra-khasis*, and then “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.” In this second version of the creation event, which is “woven together with great skill and care by a final redactor or redactors,” the male is created first, then the animals are created, and then woman is created from one of the man’s ribs.<sup>183</sup> The Genesis narrative points to an image of God that, as a model for humanity, is both an embodied male and female, and includes a directive for humans to be fruitful and multiply.

Hebrew scholar Shai Cherry has suggested the first person created by God was a “hermaphrodite” and that first person shared both male and female qualities.<sup>184</sup> This is based on reading Genesis 5:2 that male and female were created simultaneously; “Male

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Hayes, 29.

<sup>184</sup> Cherry, 51.

and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them “Humankind” when they were created.” Another Hebrew midrash reading of Genesis 5:2 posits the first human or *adam*, as used generically referring to the human species, “had two faces, one on each side, with corresponding genitalia. What God did was to split the primordial androgyne in two and sewed up each of their back sides.”<sup>185</sup> The Hebrew scholars’ point here is a worldview in which full humanness acknowledges that man and woman both require and complement each other, as did the first human couple’s creation. This affirms the authorial intent found in Genesis 1:27-29 as the biblical explanation of humanness.

More importantly, the biblical text indicates that the male needs more than company, the male needs the help of a female to accomplish the human task of filling the earth, subduing it, and ruling over it, as noted in Genesis 1:28. This acknowledges human sexuality is an integral part of humanity, as humanity is “created in relationship, for relationship, and for a task that requires relational cooperation.”<sup>186</sup>

The narrative of the human being created in the previously mentioned Gilgamesh epic is different from Genesis in that the God “who had fashioned the first human beings out of clay, had also created Gilgamesh.”<sup>187</sup> In addition, “Gilgamesh was two-thirds god and one-third man.”<sup>188</sup> The image of the first human in Genesis is portrayed as a living, breathing, working, seeing, eating, sleeping, thinking person that with another human, a woman, they were to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 428.

<sup>187</sup> "Gilgamesh," in *World Mythology: An Anthology of the Great Myths and Epics*, ed. Donna Rosenberg (Lincolnwood: NTC Publishing Group, 1986), 175.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

that moves upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). Importantly, human sexuality enters the creation story when the woman was introduced, and that relationship is needed to fulfill God’s requirements. Both creation accounts do not give an actual physical description of either human, and only refer in the second account to their relation to the earth, as they were formed from the ground.

Reading the mythology stories found in *Enuma Elish* and *Epic of Atrahasis* helps the reader today understand how people in the ancient world explained and understood how their world worked. These stories provide a literary window into their culture. The ancient myths were their culture’s “theory of origins,” not functioning unlike the view of origins as provided by our modern science.<sup>189</sup> Colin Gunton wrote, “Genesis represents the close relations of the human species with God, on the one hand, and with nature on the other.”<sup>190</sup> The Genesis narrative sets the creation scene symbolically, not scientifically, for the “way we have thought about human nature and culture ever since.”<sup>191</sup> This closeness between humanity, nature, and God as creator as represented in Genesis leads to the human “practice of inferring the existence and wisdom of God from the order and beauty of the world,” which is often known as natural theology.<sup>192</sup>

Creation explanations provided by modern science generally do not include any notion of involvement by God, and in this respect are different from the ancient mythologies in the way they operated in the ancient world. Modern science represents

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<sup>189</sup> John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 12.

<sup>190</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 19.

<sup>191</sup> Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004), xii.

<sup>192</sup> William Paley, *Natural Theology or Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearance of Nature*, ed. Matthew D. Eddy and David Knight (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), xi.

what it understands and what it knows as the best available information in varying degrees of certainty, and it leaves room for new advancements and discoveries in the different fields of study. Science does not necessarily provide a scientific consensus concerning “what the world is, how it works and how it came to be.”<sup>193</sup>

### *Science Worldview*

If science provides the established worldview that describes the origin of humanity, then does scientific knowledge invalidate the Christian perspective that God created humanity? John Polkinghorne observed, “It is not what scientists say, but the way that they say it; their bright certainties put other sorts of thought into the shade.”<sup>194</sup>

Richard P. Feynman, a winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics for his research in quantum electrodynamics, said, “In fact, I believe, although I have not direct statistics, that more than half of the scientists do not believe in their father’s God, or in God in a conventional sense.”<sup>195</sup> Feynman described God as “the kind of personal God to which one prays, who has something to do with creation.”<sup>196</sup>

Biologist Jean Pond described a way for science and Christian theology to encounter each other in the public forum that will enable science to not present a superior face and for Christians to not distrust and reject science. Pond suggests the best way to enable this is for each side to be independent of the other, to not expect to engage, and to

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<sup>193</sup> Walton, 13.

<sup>194</sup> John C. Polkinghorne, *The Way the World Is: The Christian Perspective of a Scientist* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 4.

<sup>195</sup> Richard P. Feynman, *The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen-Scientist* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 35.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

have its own “domain of teaching authority.”<sup>197</sup> Pond believes the notion of using a magisteria as independent authorities to make decisions is the answer. She relies on Stephen Jay Gould’s NOMA, or Non-Overlapping Magisteria principle, and maintains that independence between science and theology is further supported by the existentialist movement that “stressed the detached objectivity of scientific research, as opposed to the subjective and personal nature of theological inquiry.”<sup>198</sup> Pond sees science and Christian theology operating in two distinct and non-overlapping arenas, and because of this independence, she allows for no possible conflict between the two.

In *Rocks of Ages*, Stephen Jay Gould wrote, “I do not see how science and religion could be unified, or even synthesized, under any common scheme of explanation or analysis.”<sup>199</sup> Gould addressed the debate between science and religion by offering what he believed had been the consensus for decades. Gould viewed science and religion as both having professional expertise in their respective domains—science was concerned with the “constitution of the universe, and religion in the search for proper ethical values and the spiritual meaning of our lives.”<sup>200</sup> Gould coined the term Principle of NOMA or Non-Overlapping Magisteria to denote “respectful noninterference” between science and theology as a way to solve the “false conflict.”<sup>201</sup> Gould did not take credit for the concepts behind NOMA, but pointed back to Charles Darwin’s assistant, Thomas Henry Huxley, who had maintained that religious ideas could not be subject to proof. Huxley

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<sup>197</sup> Jean L. Pond, "Independence: Mutual Humility in the Relationship between Science & Christian Religion," in *Science and Christianity: Four Views*, ed. Richard F. Carlson (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 71.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>199</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999), 4.

<sup>200</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria" [http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould\\_noma.html](http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html) (accessed February 24 2012).

<sup>201</sup> Gould, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, 5-6.

went on to posit that religion was “for morality, science for factuality, and love for sanctity,” and he could “neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man.”<sup>202</sup> Huxley maintained there was no rational test for immortality and man was out of his depths when trying to think about the question and Gould agreed. Gould took this kernel of Huxley’s philosophy and grew it into NOMA.

Gould also relied on support based on Pope John Paul II’s statement of October 26, 1966, to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Pope John Paul II wrote that his predecessor Pius XII in 1950 had “stated there was no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of faith about man and his vocation.”<sup>203</sup> This pronouncement by Pope John Paul II then officially accepted evolution for Catholics through their non-overlapping magisteria not as possible but as factual. Gould could now point to the fact the church has a magisterium and they make pronouncements, and science has theirs and they make their own pronouncements, and this affirmed the principle Gould was promoting, with the consequence of seeing the division between science and Scripture continue.

Michael Polanyi did not agree that it was possible for science to operate with detached objectivity while in the pursuit of research. Polanyi wrote, “I start by rejecting the ideal of scientific detachment.”<sup>204</sup> Polanyi believed it was a “false ideal” and had a “destructive influence in biology, psychology, and sociology.”<sup>205</sup> Polanyi offered in the place of objectivity what he called “personal knowledge.”<sup>206</sup> Polanyi explained humans

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>204</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), xiii.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

“know things in a purely personal manner,” and in many cases, humans do not articulate what they know.<sup>207</sup> Polanyi referred to this as an “ineffable domain of skillful knowing,” however, this ineffability does not preclude that it can be spoken about “but only that I can speak of it adequately.”<sup>208</sup> Knowledge depends “to some extent on the content of relevant experiences,” and since this is done through “personal participation,” the goal of detached objectivity cannot be accomplished.<sup>209</sup> In *The Tacit Dimension*, Polanyi further explained about human knowledge, “We can know more than we can tell.”<sup>210</sup> Polanyi asserted that when an experience is actively shaped while “in the pursuit of knowledge,” then “knowledge is discovered” through “tacit power.”<sup>211</sup> Polanyi contended that, as the goal of science is to arrive at “strictly detached, objective knowledge,” then not including personal knowledge in the form of “tacit thought” would result in the “destruction of all knowledge.”<sup>212</sup>

### *Heavens Tell the Glory of God*

In defining what it means to be made in the image of God, perhaps knowledge of God is open to humanity through nature as Romans 1:19 states,

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse.

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>210</sup> Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967), 4.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 20.

Paul went on to observe, “Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.” Natural theology adherents also note that the earth tells the story of God as described in Psalm 19:1-3, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.”

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* does affirm God’s work, but states a caution against natural theology.

“The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good and doeth unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in Holy Scripture.”<sup>213</sup>

The meaning of the image of God might be clearer if scholars knew for certain who wrote Genesis 1:26-27. What is known about the writing of Genesis, as David M. Carr explains, “Two hundred and fifty years of historical-critical scholarship have established that Genesis was written over a long period of time, using oral and written traditions.”<sup>214</sup> Genesis could have been in place prior to Moses, with Moses being the editor of documents from three main sources. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy have also been questioned regarding authorship with different theories.

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<sup>213</sup> *Book of Confessions: Part I*, The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Louisville: The Office of the General Assembly, 2004), 6.112.

<sup>214</sup> David M. Carr, "Introduction to Genesis," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

Over time, some scholars concluded those books were derived from four separate documents. These source documents, known as J, E, D, and P, were brought together and redacted into the Pentateuch “beginning in the Babylonian exile after 586 B.C.E” by an anonymous editor or scribe.<sup>215</sup> The documentary hypothesis attributes these hypothetical Pentateuch sources to have been derived from “ancient oral tradition” in the form of sagas, creeds, psalms, and laws.<sup>216</sup> The J source is based on the German name for God, Jahwe. The E source is based on the generic name for God, Elohim. Deuteronomist or D denotes the author or compiler of Deuteronomy. The P source is based, according to Old Testament scholars, on documents from Hebrew priests and their “traditions and theological point of view.”<sup>217</sup> The P source encompasses Genesis 1:1 to 2:4, and provides the description of the creation of humanity. Not all scholars agree on the “nature, date and content of P, and the age and origin of the traditions.”<sup>218</sup> The P, or priestly code, is through documentary hypothesis believed to be also responsible for Leviticus chapters 1-7, 8:1-10:20, and 16:1-34.

The Hebrew Bible depicts priests as patriarchal. Women were not priests. Moses was a priest. Noah was the priest for his family in Genesis 8:20. King Melchizedek acted as the priest for his people in Genesis 14:18. Abraham is his family’s priest in Genesis 22:13, and Jethro was the priest for his family in Exodus 18:12. Later in Exodus, 32:28-29, the sons of Levi, as a result of the actions requested by Moses, are ordained as priests. The Levite tribe’s dedication to God set them apart from the other tribes. These tribesmen were then, “consecrated to the Lord,” and “were given charge of the services of the

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<sup>215</sup> Hayes, 28.

<sup>216</sup> Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 114.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

Tabernacle and only the sons of Aaron were to exercise the functions of the priesthood.”<sup>219</sup> Characteristics of the P source include a belief in a single God, and “any threat to God comes from humans who, given free will, defy God through moral and ritual sins,” and thus can drive God out of his temple.<sup>220</sup>

The combination of the biblical narrative around the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26-27, and the priestly P source as also the anonymous writer of parts of Leviticus points to a common authorial thread in the text in relation to the image of God. The authorial intent found in Genesis 1:27-29 through the “notion of prolepsis” sets the stage for complete humanness to be a couple composed of male and female.<sup>221</sup> There is an “anticipatory element” in the content of the relation between humanity and God as developed later in the biblical text.<sup>222</sup> The overarching meta-narrative starting in Genesis and continuing through the canon delineates a correct moral vision for humanity as formulated by the P source author of both Genesis 1:26-27 and the purity rules described in Leviticus. The proposal here is as stated by Amos Yong, “God’s activity supervenes upon human agency and does so proleptically according to the shape of the kingdom.”<sup>223</sup>

The purity rules described in Leviticus are an aid to knowing the original intent of the authors in the context of their time as to the proper relationship between male and female with respect to not only health and hygiene, but also as to what was morally pure and morally impure in their society. The “Priestly strand” texts in Leviticus 1-16 use

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<sup>219</sup> E.O. James, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1325.

<sup>220</sup> Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 95.

<sup>221</sup> Yong, 86.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

descriptions of “impurity terminology in a ritual context,” and the “Holiness code” in Leviticus 17-26 uses “impurity terminology in a moral context.”<sup>224</sup> The Holiness Code is specifically concerned with idolatry, murder, and certain sexual acts. Those people that are in conflict with the provisions of the Holiness Code are identified as not only defiling themselves, but also the land where they and God live. Both the Priestly strand and the Holiness Code represent “modes of impurity,” and both are considered to defile the land with social and legal consequences.<sup>225</sup> The Israelites were obligated to follow the “ritual purity” system laws as the laws kept a boundary between God, and death and sex. God’s sanctity was important to preserve because the Israelites’ God did not die and did not engage in sex.<sup>226</sup> The adherence to the purity laws was also how the Israelites behaved “in accordance with the underpinning of the Holiness Collection: *imitatio Dei*.”<sup>227</sup> However, moral impurity was differentiated from ritual impurity, as moral impurity was the result of certain defiling acts. Those acts are defined as “abominations” that caused moral impurity.<sup>228</sup> There are many differences between ritual impurity and moral impurity. Specifically, moral impurity is caused by a grave sin; moral impurity threatens the land; moral impurity “does defile the sinner themselves;” moral impurity has a long lasting “if not permanent degradation of the sinner,” and moral impurity is a “potent force” that will affect the sanctuary.<sup>229</sup> Where adherence to ritual impurity for humanity reflects on the image of God, the rules for moral impurity were designed ultimately for another reason. The Israelites believed that God viewed moral impurity as such a severe

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<sup>224</sup> Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>226</sup> Jonathan Klawans, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2044.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 2045.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

and abhorrent behavior that when the land was “defiled by idolatry, sexual sin, and murder,” God could not live on the same land with the Israelites, with the end result that Israel would suffer.<sup>230</sup> Not only could God not live with the Israelites in the land, moral impurity would defile “even God’s holy name.”<sup>231</sup> This distinction is important as the Holiness Code, as found in Leviticus 17-26, teaches that only God is holy, only God can bring holiness to humanity, only God can bring holiness to earthly spaces, and as God brings “a relationship of ownership,” when humans strive to be holy they “belong to God.”<sup>232</sup> This concept of holiness “involves a divine effort and human collaboration,” with the result that humanity is obedient to God.<sup>233</sup>

The Holiness Code found in Leviticus 17-26 includes prohibitions against eating meat that has not been cooked thoroughly and is rare, prohibits incest, prohibits harvesting all the grain in a field and all of the grapes in a vineyard, prohibits stealing, lying and cheating, prohibits bestiality, prohibits tattoos, and sets forth many other regulations to keep the Israelites holy.

Stanley Grenz wrote, “Human sexuality, as the basis for the human drive toward bonding, is related to the divine goal of establishing community among humans and between humans and God.”<sup>234</sup> However, as holiness is first derived from God, the Israelites were obligated to not only observe the rules for the Sabbath; they also were to obey the Holiness Code that set them apart as a “special possession of God.”<sup>235</sup> The

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 2046.

<sup>231</sup> Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*, 36.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), ix.

<sup>235</sup> Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*, 37.

contrasts of ritual impurity and moral impurity are in the context of contagious diseases, with each bearing its own consequences. Ritual impurity includes human bodily flows, and contamination from the dead, with the effect the person or object is temporarily defiled. The resolution of a ritual impurity occurrence in the Hebrew Bible was accomplished by bathing or waiting a prescribed time. The source of moral impurity which includes killing another human, idolatry, and sexual misconduct, has a consequence that is a “long lasting defilement of sinners, land, and sanctuary with the only resolution being “atonement, or punishment, and ultimately exile.”<sup>236</sup>

### *God's Plan in Genesis*

As the creation narrative in Genesis discloses that as male and female are physically able to come together and “become one flesh” and thereby conform to God’s plan as noted in Genesis 2:24, then it is evident the Genesis authors wanted God’s plan for marriage to be known as a heterosexual marriage to fulfill that plan. Humanity was created to be together in community, and to be God’s representatives “to mirror God’s nature to creation.”<sup>237</sup>

Humanity has been both created and at the same time consists of persons each with an individual personality. This recognizes the human is a “created person, yet each with the characteristic of being simultaneously a creature and a person.”<sup>238</sup> Human creatures, as do all creatures, reflect a reliance on God for existence. The defining quality of mature personhood is the characteristic of individuals making their own decisions. In

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<sup>236</sup> Klawans, 2046.

<sup>237</sup> Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, 77.

<sup>238</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 6.

addition, it should include the “fruit of the Spirit” as noted in Galatians 5:22-23, which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

How humans define God, or the qualities of God, then mirrors the resultant qualities in humanity, as persons are created in the image of God, or more precisely, as described in Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness’” where humanity is to reflect both God’s image and his likeness.

The use of the two terms “image” and “likeness” in Genesis 1:26-27 reflects that humanity is different from the creatures that are not human in that humans are the “result of a solemn and deliberate act of counsel on the Creator’s part.”<sup>239</sup> Scholars suggest there is no difference in the meaning of the words “image” and “likeness,” as the two words are used interchangeably as synonyms with “resemblance.”<sup>240</sup> The contextual distinction in this case is when “image” and “likeness” are used together, they “tell us that man is a representation of God who is like God in certain respects.”<sup>241</sup> Christians believe God is spirit, and the image of God then consequently implies humans “having been created male and female” in community with each other and thus complement each other.<sup>242</sup> This male-female humanness characteristic reflects the triune nature of a God who is also in community, and not a solitary God. The Genesis explanation of humanity created in the image of God is the implication that humans have both the image of God and together they are the image of God.

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<sup>239</sup> Orr and Bruce, 412.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Hoekema, 13.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 14.

Humanity in the ancient Near Eastern context did not believe the statues of kings or mythical gods were the actual king or god. Rather, the statue represented the distant king and this was his method of maintaining presence among his people spread out over a large geography. It is “generally agreed that the image of God reflected in human persons is after the manner of a king who establishes statues of himself to assert sovereign rule where the king cannot be present.”<sup>243</sup> A mythical god’s statue image was only a representative symbol as it “mediated and manifested the god’s glory and rule to those around.”<sup>244</sup> The ancients, through carved statues, attempted to produce what they thought represented an image of the god for all to see. As the statue of the god was the representation of the god, so humanity, as described in Genesis, is meant to be the earthly representation of God. The Genesis account represents Israel’s “theological summary” with the purpose to “claim primacy for Yahweh.”<sup>245</sup> In the Genesis account, humanity was not created to be equal with God, but as a representative of God. The Christian God is all-pervading, unlike the statues of the distant king or mythological god.

Genesis 1 is God’s descriptive “cosmology” for the ancients, and as such does not correlate to modern science, for modern science asks different questions about the same world.<sup>246</sup> A modern perception issue is the belief the Bible should agree with modern science and provide a concordant or “modern scientific explanations for the details in the text.”<sup>247</sup> In the Israelite’s time, Israel believed that all happenings were the result of an act

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<sup>243</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: In Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 32.

<sup>244</sup> Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 64.

<sup>245</sup> Amos Yong, *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 18.

<sup>246</sup> Walton, 14.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

of God and this precluded any natural law involvement. A modern reader's desire to translate what was written as ancient cosmology into something different in today's context will force the text to read incorrectly in terms of comparing it to what science has discovered, based on observation and belief in a knowable world, or what it might mean in the future. Another consideration, when translating today what was written in ancient times, is as information is received it is filtered and shaped by the receiver. When shaping the ancient world into a new image for today's reader does not work, the outcome can be "weariness, withdrawal, and cynicism."<sup>248</sup>

The intent of Genesis, in part, is for God to make known to Israel a study of the universe in descriptive terms they could understand, and there was no need to make known the details of formation. In the Israelites' world, God caused all happenings, and nature or "natural law," did not govern the universe.<sup>249</sup> What the Israelites saw in the natural world provided nothing more than the visible signs of God's activity in the world. This view is based on the descriptions in Genesis that provides an ontology of creation. It has been suggested the ancient world believed the existence of something was due to "its having a function in an ordered system" in society and their culture.<sup>250</sup> For example, the sun provides warmth and light for humanity, and everything fits together for an orderly human existence, as it was its intended creation. This notion of everything created to work together is not borrowed from but modeled in *Enuma Elish* as Marduk first defeats the opposing gods and then creates the universe. Scholars have noted that when the ancient world considered the act of creation, the ancients thought in conceptual terms of

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<sup>248</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), 4.

<sup>249</sup> Walton, 18.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

“function, not material properties” in a kingdom.<sup>251</sup> These symbolic materials included blood from gods, and clay from the ground as all of humanity is created with “archetypal significance.”<sup>252</sup> The sequential process of the creation of humanity was mankind and then womankind from mankind; and both are given the stewardship task to care for the earth.

The evolutionary sequence of events, or how scientists use explanations to propose how the material aspects of creation occurred, can all be considered on their own qualifications, as the Bible maintains God is entirely responsible for both functional and material origins. If scientific explanations of any of the processes change through time and discovery, then that shows God exists and is at work. The question of why God does or not do something will always be beyond human understanding, as that information is not available. Humanity has an intellect, and as humans do not know how or when God created the material world, the process may or may not be revealed by human intellect. When humans choose to label a process as natural, this process is still under the control of God. As John H. Walton notes, this is based on a reading that what is viewed as a natural “law-like quality” is because “natural laws take on their law-like quality because God acts so consistently in the operation of the cosmos.”<sup>253</sup>

Knowledge can be derived from either curiosity, or as an end from an application of science that began from curiosity. The knowledge gained from curiosity can be used to

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 133.

control the environment and humankind. Control leads to power, and power is “a passion notorious not only for its amorality but for its tendency toward corruption.”<sup>254</sup>

Parker Palmer suggests that knowledge is also available to humankind that does not stem from the need to control or from curiosity, but is derived from compassion and “love – a source not in our intellectual tradition but in our spiritual heritage.”<sup>255</sup> This type of knowledge is not derived from the desire to manipulate or exploit, but to facilitate a mutual embracing of the other. This knowledge is developed through the mutuality of being a member of a community, and stems from our passionate need “to recreate the organic community in which the world was first created.”<sup>256</sup> The human mind was given by God through grace to not only subdue the earth, but also to be alert to humanity’s “communal nature,” including the need for mutual love.<sup>257</sup> The knowledge that stems from love can be a “tough love,” as it is the “connectivity tissue of reality” that binds humanity together not only in passion, but also in responsibility.<sup>258</sup> This communal involvement and mutual responsibility are gained through the “practice of relatedness” as humans recognize they are each part of the original “community of creation.”<sup>259</sup> As the individual creates a world, by molding it from what is sensed and reasoned, then that world is defined from those conditions. The endless closed loop consisting of the individual against the world results in a continual pursuit for power over creation. This

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<sup>254</sup> Palmer, 8.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 11.

can only be broken through experiencing a process of prayerful transcendence to remove humanity from this “closed, circular logic.”<sup>260</sup>

As previously noted, the theological intent in Genesis is to “claim primacy for Yahweh.”<sup>261</sup> Genesis indicates Yahweh is in the garden with Adam and Eve and humanity is in relationship with what God created. The importance of the implication of what it means for humans to be made in the image of God is that it physically links humanity directly to two historic individuals, Adam and Eve, and then to the rest of humanity. Scholars have offered diverse opinions regarding Adam and Eve as historic persons. As Genesis transitions from describing the created relationships between humanity and God, the narrative progresses to specific biblical historical individuals. Genesis provides the names of those two as Adam and Eve and then details their descendants. The story of Adam and Eve can be described as the beginning of the story of humanity, and not just the “story of an ancient couple who lived in a garden.”<sup>262</sup>

Christians have many viewpoints regarding their faith and natural science. The many distinct viewpoints have one central theme, and that is “How is Christian faith related to developments in contemporary natural science, especially to biology, earth science and cosmology?”<sup>263</sup> The diverse opinions articulated regarding creation and science do not contradict Adam and Eve as historic individuals. Individual Christians have openness “to believe whatever descriptive model for origins makes the most

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>261</sup> Yong, *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*, 18.

<sup>262</sup> Darrel R. Falk, *Coming to Peace with Science: Bridging the Worlds between Faith and Biology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 221.

<sup>263</sup> Pond, 12.

sense.”<sup>264</sup> A biblical view does not exclude divine activity in creation with an inherent supervenience over creation.

Some scholars appreciate an evolutionary process trajectory that has been in place since the beginning and up through pre-human hominids, yet reserve the right to “posit substantive discontinuity between that process and the creation of the historical Adam and Eve.”<sup>265</sup> They rely on the textual support for the historical Adam and Eve as found in the genealogy noted in Genesis. Genealogy supporting an actual Adam and Eve, two people that were once alive, and are not understood as “symbols or teaching models” is based on not only Genesis but also 1 Chronicles, which provides the historical genealogical lists from Adam to Abraham.<sup>266</sup>

In a manner similar to the genealogy in Genesis, Luke 3:23-38 traces the direct ancestors of Jesus through seventy-seven generations of genealogy back to the “son of Adam, son of God.” This Scripture is important in the biblical narrative as it connects Adam, who was chosen by God to be the father of humanity, directly to Jesus. Karl Barth wrote, “We encounter the action of God in contemplating the crucified and risen Christ.”<sup>267</sup> The biblical images of Adam play an important role in helping humanity understand what it means to be created in the image of God. At Genesis 1:26-28, the text describes God’s intention for a capacity for relationship to be in place between God and humanity.

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<sup>264</sup> Walton, 139.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>266</sup> Hoekema, 113.

<sup>267</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans., Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 151.

The second account of God creating man is later in Genesis at 2:7-9, “Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” This narrative was designed to illustrate that “Adam is first and foremost related to God;” he was “stamped with the divine image” as Adam had been molded as if by a potter from the dust, and then God’s “divine breath blown into his nostrils.”<sup>268</sup> As God had formed Adam as the first human being, then though the documented genealogy the author shows, God had also formed Jesus.

The author of Colossians used imagery to present a picture of Jesus as the image of God, and in this manner to “enable human beings who reflect his image” to be creators.<sup>269</sup> This picture of God represented by Jesus formed in the image of God is echoed in Colossians 1:15-20:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

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<sup>268</sup> *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 9.

<sup>269</sup> N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 207.

Paul also used the imagery in the poem to counter the claims of the Roman Empire hierarchy that Caesar was the son of God and, through his political institutions, had “preeminence over all things.”<sup>270</sup>

The Greeks believed the individual has the ability to know ultimate reality and have a “kinship with it,” and this continues to influence modern thought about natural theology.<sup>271</sup> Plato viewed the individual as a “counterpart in miniature of the order and harmony of the cosmos” and he extends that to encompass the city and the state, all within a hierarchy.<sup>272</sup> This sense of a hierarchy as described in *Timaeus*, according to Plato, is the basis for natural law. Plato notes that even if we found God, it would be impossible to “tell of him to all men.”<sup>273</sup> For Plato, although the physical universe does change, ideas and concepts did not change. Plato uses the concept of Forms, which can also be thought of as ideas. In Plato’s story, there is no creation *ex nihilo* as order is brought from material that is preexisting and as material has an “inherent irrationality,” the material world will never be as perfect as the world composed of Forms.<sup>274</sup> Plato contends matter is evil and the soul or source of movement is in that world. Plato also refers to this world as the sensible world. In *Timaeus*, Plato used a craftsman to make the world from Forms. He believed time was not in existence until everything was created and even though the planets move they are not in time. The sensible or visible universe is a copy and consequently Plato does not have a creation story. According to Plato, Forms were already in existence. That thought could be repositioned to say Forms were “part of

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<sup>270</sup> Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 83.

<sup>271</sup> Allen and Springsted, 36.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

the divine mind,” giving rise to the notion the universe was a “reflection of the mind of God.”<sup>275</sup> Consequently, the basis for natural theology was based on studying the universe, which would then yield knowledge of God. In addition, this is based on Plato’s assumption that the mind is receptive and it recognizes objects but does not create them. Forms are graspable but are “independent of both mind and matter” and consequently the Form, if portrayed back to God, would impose on God that Form.<sup>276</sup>

The concept of man, made in the image of God, should be recognized as humanity’s requirement to act on God’s behalf as a covenant partner, yet this does not give humanity the right to impose on God whatever qualities humans so desire. Plato wrote a series of dialogues and stories that were concerned with issues such as friendship, courage, and piety. Plato developed the idea that even though someone can be physically harmed, the only real harm that can come to someone is “harm to the soul,” and it is only by being virtuous that can one gain in life.<sup>277</sup> Plato extended that concept to “virtue is knowledge.”<sup>278</sup> This thought eventually leads back to crediting Socrates, his teacher, with the notion that “No one does wrong willingly.”<sup>279</sup> Plato developed his doctrines, including the theory of Forms and the doctrine that “learning is recollection.”<sup>280</sup> The doctrine of learning suggests humans already have certain innate knowledge, or ideas, when they are born and these ideas are part of the human soul. This knowledge is “part of the essential nature of the soul” and comes from the fact the soul is already in existence

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Bryan Magee, *The Great Philosophers: An Introduction to Western Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Inc., 1987), 17.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 20.

before one's birth.<sup>281</sup> Plato believed in reincarnation, and consequently after birth a person had knowledge from a previous life as the soul exists before birth in reincarnation. This meant that as humans have preexisting knowledge, humanity knows the correct answers to certain moral and ethical questions. Plato's Theory of Forms could then extend to include the concept that as we have latent prior knowledge through reincarnation, then humans instinctively know what is right. Plato believed the soul was separate from the body, and he divided the soul into three parts in his "theory of human nature" which lead to his discussion around the question of knowledge.<sup>282</sup> In the question around knowledge, Plato proposed knowledge is gained from perception, or natural theology.

In Plato's story dialogue between Socrates and Timaeus, Plato provided his scientific perception of the creator and the creation of the world. First, Plato, speaking through Timaeus, gives the reason why the creator made the world when Timaeus states about the creator, "He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be."<sup>283</sup> Timaeus went on to say, "God desired all things to be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable."<sup>284</sup> Plato believed that as the creator had framed the universe he had imbued the soul with intelligence, and then put the soul into the human

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>283</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, trans., Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 7 (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952), 447-448.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 448.

body. In addition, through these acts he was “the creator of a work that was by nature fairest and best.”<sup>285</sup>

The early Church Fathers who read Plato’s writings said either he had a “divine revelation” to know these things about the creation or he had read Genesis.<sup>286</sup> Plato was an individual “who allowed the world to speak to him at extraordinary depth” as he was passionately involved with the world he wanted to understand.<sup>287</sup> Plato or different forms of Platonism are the root of dualism. This method of knowing what God has intended for humanity is based on the ancient philosophy of Plato that, because humans have preexisting knowledge, humanity knows the correct answers to certain moral and ethical questions. This can be done, according to Plato, because when the body dies the soul that had been imprisoned in that body is released and is then “able to contemplate truth in its pure form,” the Form of the Good.<sup>288</sup> Plato’s Form of the Good illuminates the senses and gives to the objects of human intellect “their truth and to the person who grasps their truth, the power of knowing.”<sup>289</sup>

This concept, that humanity can know the nature of God, was also advanced in the Renaissance. In 1487, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola wrote the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* in which he introduced the concept that the dignity of humanity is derived from “the fact they are created in the image of God.”<sup>290</sup> For Pico della Mirandola, the dignity of man referred to “human nature as redeemed by Christ,” and it meant to signify “the high

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Allen and Springsted, 1.

<sup>287</sup> Palmer, 63.

<sup>288</sup> Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 91.

<sup>289</sup> Allen and Springsted, 28.

<sup>290</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, trans., Christopher Kaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 81.

nobility of disciplined reason and imagination.”<sup>291</sup> In Pico della Mirandola’s speech God speaks to Adam and said, “We have given to you, Oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision... I have placed you at the very center of the world, so from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round you on all that the world contains...in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer.”<sup>292</sup>

This speech, by Pico della Mirandola, placed humanity at the center of the universe and prepared the Western World for anthropocentrism through which the world would be understood in terms of human experiences. Considering the question whether or not persons having a same-sex orientation can be ordained, based on Scripture, Pico della Mirandola put the decision directly onto the person to decide for themselves to do whatever is in their personal interest, as they are the center of the world and not God.

In 1844, Søren Kierkegaard was concerned with the differences between philosophic idealism and Christianity. Kierkegaard did not agree with Plato’s doctrine of learning. Plato believed that what humans come to know through learning is not really learning but only an appearance of learning, as it is actually recollecting what is already known. Kierkegaard was concerned with how truth is learned and whether or not the truth can be learned. Kierkegaard rationalized that if he always had known the truth, yet he had

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<sup>291</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, trans., A. Robert Caponigri (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1996), xvii.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

not known he knew the truth, then the second he realized he did know the truth it would all be lost because “hidden in the Eternal” there is only nowhere and everywhere.<sup>293</sup> For Kierkegaard, if truth is “something to be learned, its non-existence is evidently presupposed, so that in proposing to learn it one makes it the object of an inquiry.”<sup>294</sup> Kierkegaard noted Plato’s teacher, Socrates, viewed each human as the center of the world because the individual’s “self-knowledge is a knowledge of God.”<sup>295</sup>

Kierkegaard also did not agree with Aristotle’s explanation that God is a “first mover” unmoved by anything else, yet moves everything in the universe.<sup>296</sup> Kierkegaard envisioned God as “not moved by some need, as if he could not endure the strain of silence, but had to break out in speech. But if he moves himself, and is not moved by need, what else can move him but love?”<sup>297</sup> Kierkegaard’s point is that God is not moved by some individual need such as derived by the reasoning of natural theology.

The concept that as humanity is created in the image of God, then the individual in a sense knows the mind of God, and consequently what God wants, absolving them of the need to do anything other than what the gay and/or lesbian individual, or their supporters desires. This inability to ever know is part of the argument used by conservatives against liberals who support the ordination of gays and lesbians in the Presbyterian Church (USA). No one, with any finality, including gays and lesbians who want to be ordained leaders within the Presbyterian Church (USA), has ever fully understood what it means to be made in the image of God since, as noted in Romans

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<sup>293</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy*, trans., David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 16.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

3:23, “Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Arguments about God’s relationship with humanity, including what gays and lesbians believe God desires for humanity as derived from philosophy, the supreme value of love, the interaction of science and theology, and the concept of humanity made in the image of God are all human constructs based on natural theology. Karl Barth contended against natural theology by presenting Christian doctrine based on biblical foundations. The following provides what Scripture states about homosexuality, and how some scholars have countered Scripture.

### *Old Testament and Homosexuality*

The Scripture in Genesis 19:4-8 is the most familiar narrative about homosexuality, because it introduces the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah had come to the attention of the Lord for an unnamed wickedness, and the Lord made it known to Abraham that the cities would be destroyed. Abraham tried to intercede for the cities and negotiated that if just ten righteous men could be found in the two cities, both would be saved from destruction. Two angels are sent to Sodom to find the ten righteous men. Lot saw the two angels, who appeared to be men, at the town gate, and invited them to stay the night at his house before they continued their journey.

There are differing explanations for what it was the men of Sodom wanted to do with the two men visiting Lot. One suggestion is the Sodom story is about violence and is told “in such a way to condemn homosexual gang rape,” and should not be used to

illustrate “contemporary homosexual relationships.”<sup>298</sup> The explanation is the men were attempting to aggressively use a same-sex act as violence against unwilling partners.

Another explanation of the Sodomite men’s behavior proposes that what the men were doing was limited to inhospitable behavior, and as such places the issue in the context of hospitality. The rationale is the two angels had wanted to stay outside overnight in the town square, and Lot was concerned with their safety, so they were invited to stay in his house. As the men of the town did not show “hospitality” to the two passing strangers and make them feel comfortable in the square, the story is then designed to draw attention to the need to show hospitality.<sup>299</sup> The problem with this explanation is the men in the town said to Lot in Genesis 19:5, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.” The word “know” does not refer to a change of pleasantries the men proposed to offer the two strangers because to “know” is “often translated as to have sexual relations with” someone.<sup>300</sup> Lot tells the town’s men they are wicked in Genesis 19:7. “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.” Even though Lot did not do the right thing offering his daughters to the men of the town, the story does show Lot did not approve of the lack of hospitality, the gang violence, the homosexuality, or the use of a same-sex act as violence. In the end, ten righteous men were not found in Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities were destroyed for “depravity and disrespect for God” since the two angels were representing God.<sup>301</sup> The story of Sodom and Gomorrah could be said to be not only

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<sup>298</sup> Dan O. Via and Robert A.J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>299</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 39.

<sup>300</sup> Michael R. Saia, *Counseling the Homosexual* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1988), 64.

<sup>301</sup> James P. Hanigan, *Homosexuality: The Test Case for Christian Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 38.

about condemning homosexual acts, but also pointed to Sodom and Gomorrah as “symbols of God’s judgment.”<sup>302</sup>

There is a literary connection between the Sodom story and the story of the angels in the *Book of Jubilees* 5:1-19. The sin the Sodomites committed was a transgression of order, and scholars believe the story in the *Book of Jubilees* “influenced the Christian interpretation of the Sodom story.”<sup>303</sup> In the *Book of Jubilees*, the angels took human wives, with the result that the determined order of creation was violated.

“And lawlessness increased on the earth and all flesh corrupted its way, alike men and cattle and beasts and birds and everything that walks on the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of all men (was) thus evil continually. And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt...”<sup>304</sup>

In contrast, in the Sodom story, the order of creation is violated when the residents of Sodom try to violate the men. A clarification of the unnamed wickedness in Genesis 19:4-8 is found in 2 Peter 2:6-10. Other references to Sodom and Gomorrah and God’s judgment are in Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12, 17:29; and Revelation 11:8.

Even though there is strong Scriptural evidence pointing to same-sex acts in Sodom and Gomorrah, scholars are divided over whether the Scripture points to same-sex acts, or just that the “scenario exemplifies the wickedness of the city.”<sup>305</sup> Hays states the Sodom and Gomorrah story has “nothing in the passage pertinent to a judgment about the

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<sup>302</sup> Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>303</sup> Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1955), 26.

<sup>304</sup> "The Book of Jubilees," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R.H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), vol.II, 20.

<sup>305</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 381.

morality of consensual homosexual intercourse.”<sup>306</sup> Nevertheless, same-sex acts are uniformly pointed to as a sin whether it is in the context of an activity by an entire city or by two individuals.

In the Holiness Code in Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13, the text is brief and to the point as it states it is an abomination for a male to lie with a male as with a female, and both males should be put to death. Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:13, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.” The penalty for this act is death. The implied warrant for the penalty is that same-sex acts were a “crime against the welfare of the nation” as men were to not waste seed that might have brought about a new human life.<sup>307</sup> In this Scripture, the act is the focus and not the person committing the act. The abomination is not the person, but the act. In addition, the Leviticus text is written to prohibit same-sex acts. Hays states that Scripture is unambiguous: “Leviticus explicitly prohibits male homosexual intercourse.”<sup>308</sup> Leviticus 18:22 provides the Biblical answer to the question of same-sex acts between consenting adults, as it prohibits male-to-male sexual intercourse.

In Judges 19:22, the story is similar to the Sodom story, with a passing stranger that only wanted to stay overnight in the open town square with his concubine and another young man. An old man saw the stranger and offered him and his fellow travelers overnight stay at his house. The old man also had to keep the town’s men away from his guests, as they had surrounded his house and were pounding on his door. The concubine

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Hanigan, 39.

<sup>308</sup> Hays, 381.

is eventually given up to the crowd who rapes her throughout the night, and leaves her dead in the morning.

Other references to male same-sex acts in the Hebrew Bible are in the context of prostitution that may have been “an institutionalized feature of the archaic civilizations of the Mediterranean.”<sup>309</sup> For example, in Deuteronomy 23:17-18, “None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the Lord your God.”

Also 1 Kings 15:11-12, “And Asa did that, which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.” And 1 Kings 14:22-24, “And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. And there were also Sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.” And finally in 2 Kings 23:5-8, there is a reference to male temple prostitutes.

These passages link the same-sex acts with the “idolatrous worship of Gods detested by the followers of Yahweh.”<sup>310</sup> Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible are same-sex relationships condoned, or endorsed as a desirable lifestyle, but it is treated as something

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<sup>309</sup> David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 94.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

to be avoided. Death as the punishment for the violation of Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 places the same-sex act into the sphere of violating a holiness law as opposed to a purity law.

### *New Testament and Homosexuality*

Scholars differ about what the New Testament states about gay and lesbian behavior, and its significance. One author has written, “The New Testament provides little ammunition to those wishing to condemn modern homosexuality.”<sup>311</sup> He suggests that the Greeks considered same-sex acts in the class of gluttony, as both behaviors were “contrary to nature because they went beyond the proper limits prescribed by nature.”<sup>312</sup> “Gluttony was too much eating, homosexuality was too much sex.”<sup>313</sup> He contends that the “ancients had no notion of homosexual orientation or homosexuals; it was not a question of disoriented desires but of legitimate desires that were allowed illegitimate freedoms.”<sup>314</sup> He asserts moderns read into what was written about the Greek occurrences of same-sex as differing from what is known today as gay and/or lesbian orientation, and it is “not what the ancients meant when they spoke of certain acts as unnatural.”<sup>315</sup> He also contends that an incorrect translation of *arsenokoites* and *malakos* in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10, “have often been taken to refer to people who engage in homosexual, or at least male homosexual sex.”<sup>316</sup> He believes that, “Paul, along with other Jews, probably assumed that this immorality” found in the *I Enoch* story about the

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<sup>311</sup> Martin, 37.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 37.

fallen angels “included same-sex intercourse.”<sup>317</sup> He asserts Paul is wrongly assuming the *I Enoch* story includes a reference to homosexuality. Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat contends the opposite about the ancients. She writes, “Male homosexuality was described from the third millennium BCE onward in Mesopotamia. Texts refer to sodomy between men as well as between men and boys.”<sup>318</sup> Nemet-Nejat wrote, “During the Middle Assyrian period (ca. 1300-1100 BCE), homosexuality was severely punished.”<sup>319</sup> If a man was charged with sodomizing another man and found to be guilty, “they shall turn him into a eunuch [that is, castrate him].”<sup>320</sup>

In the context of the New Testament, another author maintains, “texts are often taken out of their linguistic, historical, and cultural context and used to condemn a whole group,” and “to justify their positions in ways that subvert the central message of the text.”<sup>321</sup> The contention is that the New Testament only had in mind abusive pederastic relationships, and not relationships between loving same-sex adults. Advocates of this view believe same-sex relationships in the ancient Greek world “was primarily, if not exclusively, a matter of pederasty,” a relationship between a boy and a man.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>318</sup> Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 139.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 69.

<sup>322</sup> Via and Gagnon, 11.

## **Part B: Paul's Vision of the Natural World and Human Fallenness**

### *Background to Paul's Apostolic Authority*

Paul's apostolic authority is first confirmed in Acts 9:15, when the Lord said to Ananias, before Paul had begun to speak in the synagogues, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel."

Paul's apostolic significance in the Scriptures is found in that he not only defines what it is to lead a moral life, he also defines the Gospel for the Christians in 1 Corinthians 15:1-9, and he makes it unmistakable that the Gospel is about Jesus. Paul was concerned that the church not lose sight of what the Gospel meant, and his letters were meant to be studied by more than one church.

Paul makes it known in Galatians 1:1 and 1:11-20 that it was Christ who gave him his apostolic commission, and that he was not acting on his own. God had revealed Christ to Paul. "Paul an apostle — sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." Paul is acting under divine authority, and he wants to make it clear he is to be believed, as the risen Jesus is the source of the information that he began to receive in his Damascus Road experience. Paul experienced Christ because of a revelation from God. Paul wants to make it known the message he preaches "is not his own message" as it was received

directly from Jesus, he did not make it up, and it was as valid as the apostles before him.<sup>323</sup>

In addition to Paul's Damascus Road experience, he had access to people who were witnesses to the works of Jesus, Polkinghorne notes, when Paul said he had "received this early Christian statement, it is natural to suppose that he is referring to instruction he received after his dramatic commissioning on the Damascus road."<sup>324</sup> Based on the totality of the experiences in Paul's life, including living in a Greek world, it is apparent that Paul knew about same-sex relationships in its different forms. Those in favor of same-sex relations state about Paul, "It is sometimes admitted that Paul in Romans 1 does condemn same-sex intercourse, but these condemnations are so wrapped up in other ancient cultural assumptions, which we either do not or should not share, that they should not be used to condemn homosexuality today."<sup>325</sup> However, this paper will show through an understanding of Romans that the Biblical stance on same-sex acts is based on his view of the natural world in light of God's plan for redeeming creation, and "reversing the condition of wrath (and the promise of eschatological wrath)."<sup>326</sup>

#### *Paul's Narrative World: Second Temple Judaism*

Paul lived in a Roman world, as a Roman citizen, that was permeated by Greek culture. Paul confirmed in Romans 11:1 he was a Jew, "I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." Paul also said in

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<sup>323</sup> Robert Keith Rapa, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans - Galatians*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 568.

<sup>324</sup> Polkinghorne, 44.

<sup>325</sup> Martin, 19.

<sup>326</sup> David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 605.

Philippians 3:5 that he was a “Pharisee.” It is calculated, based on historical events and details in Acts 18:12-18, that Paul wrote Romans in 56-57 C.E. when he was in Corinth. Paul was living in the historical period of Second Temple Judaism that would end when the Romans destroy Herod’s temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

Paul had an awareness of himself as a participant within a real-life narrative. A mixture of “religion, faith, culture, and politics” characterized Paul’s Second Temple Judaism.<sup>327</sup> Paul’s perspective was gained from the Jewish narratives that formed the platform for his thoughts, actions, and letters. Paul’s Jewish heritage had informed his being that the “God of Abraham was the creator of the whole earth and that all humans were made in his image.”<sup>328</sup> More importantly, Paul perceived that he was living in the narrative that had been put into effect by the “coming, the death and the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.”<sup>329</sup> Paul is not just drawing on proof-texts as he writes Romans, but he believes he is among the “actors within a real-life narrative.”<sup>330</sup> Paul was connecting the Biblical narrative story that had started with creation to the point in the history when Paul was writing his letter to the Romans, and not just “appropriating the narratives.”<sup>331</sup>

The controlling principle for Paul was his belief that God would return and judge the entire world. Within this narrative the “creator God is the covenant God,” and “the covenant is there to solve problems within creation.”<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>331</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 2-3.

<sup>332</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 24.

*The Thesis of Romans is the Gospel*

In Romans 1:16-17, Paul provides his thesis statement that defines the good news of the gospel “as the powerful embodiment of the righteousness of God,” and provides a declaration of the saving activity of God.<sup>333</sup> Paul states his summary of faith, and sets out his theology through his main theme around the “faithful covenant justice of God.”<sup>334</sup>

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

Paul’s statement about faith draws on a portion of Habakkuk 2:4, “but the righteous live by their faith.” Paul is confident in the message of the gospel, and he is ready to confront the religions and philosophies in Rome because the gospel is the power of God. Paul’s links “the power of God” with “salvation to everyone,” to illustrate that observance of the law was no longer the source of power. For Paul, “salvation” is that what “promises the restoration of all that sin has marred or destroyed.”<sup>335</sup> Paul continues with his statement that the gospel is to be heard first by the Jews because “Jesus came first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” therefore the gospel must go to the Jews first.”<sup>336</sup> Paul wanted the Jews to be the first to receive Jesus in the “Christian Era.”<sup>337</sup> The Greeks, or gentiles, would come later. Paul makes it clear that salvation is for those who receive it by faith. In Paul’s statement, “salvation” and “righteousness” are almost equal terms.

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<sup>333</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia - a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 135.

<sup>334</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 30.

<sup>335</sup> Everett F. Harrison and Donald D. Hagner, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans-Galatians*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 42.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

This concept is important for the Greeks as it illustrates that “God’s righteousness is the way he acts, and notably the way he acts is to maintain the covenant.”<sup>338</sup>

The righteousness of God is “God’s saving activity.”<sup>339</sup> This is how Paul explained to the Jews and the Greeks that God saves, because God is faithful to his covenantal promises, and their salvation is not based on observing the law.

The story of Abraham is the foremost example of faith. God promised Abraham in Genesis 17:4, “You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.” Abraham believed God’s promise, “and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.” Genesis 15:6. For Paul, this meant that “God always had a plan,” and that plan would come “through a particular people — Abraham and his descendants.”<sup>340</sup>

Paul lays out the thesis for Romans that the gospel is the embodiment of the righteousness of God with the goal to establish salvation for everyone who has faith. This implies that faith communities are to be established “where righteous relations are maintained” through preaching the gospel.<sup>341</sup> It is then through small faith communities that “God will be restoring arenas where righteousness is accomplished,” consequently creating salvation.<sup>342</sup> This is accomplished by preaching the gospel “to establish faith communities,” and then it is through this process “by which such righteousness is restored.”<sup>343</sup> Paul’s overall point is that

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Witherington III, 30.

<sup>341</sup> Jewett, 143.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

the gospel will bring “God’s saving power to life in all who trust,” and it does not matter if they are Jew or Greek.<sup>344</sup>

*Paul’s Target: Jew and Greek Idolatry*

In writing Romans 1:18, Paul starts with a view of the Gentiles that portrays them as wicked and ungodly, they cover up the truth. Paul illustrates his points against sin by developing them based on his knowledge of the Second Temple Period Wisdom of Solomon. For example, Paul would have known from the Wisdom of Solomon:

“For the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life.” Wisdom 14:12.

“Then it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but though living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evils peace.” Wisdom 14:22.

“and all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, confusion over what is good, forgetfulness of favors, defiling of souls, sexual perversion, disorder in marriages, adultery, and debauchery.” Wisdom 14:25-26.

Based on this, Paul attacks “humanity’s neglect of God,” and makes his points about male and female same-sex acts in Romans 1:26-27.<sup>345</sup>

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

The issue of female same-sex is mentioned for the first time in the New Testament, and it is called unnatural. There the concept of what is natural is contrasted with what is not natural. Finally, the text mentions the concept of degrading passions as

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<sup>344</sup> DeSilva, 605.

<sup>345</sup> Robin Griffith Jones, *The Gospel According to Paul: The Creative Genius Who Brought Jesus to the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 399.

the cause for the acts. The text does not mention same-sex acts as an inherent orientation to be the cause of the passions. The essence of the message is that God has been rejected by society; they are no longer bearing the image of God as he had intended, and humanity is worshipping in God's place "the satisfaction of disordered human desires," rather than God.<sup>346</sup> Their basic sin is idolatry. They are worshipping idols as the text explains in Romans 1:28-32,

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

Paul is not just concerned with the same-sex acts the men and women were engaging in, as they were also engaging in a lot of other sinful behavior. Yet, it is the same-sex acts in the Greek culture Paul is focusing on, as those same acts would not have been accepted in Judaism. As a result, Paul uses the same-sex acts to not only "characterize one culture over against the other," but also point to these "partnerships as God's punishment upon that Greek world."<sup>347</sup> Paul makes the point in Romans 1:23, "They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being." Paul asks in Romans 3:9, "What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin." Paul's point is they did not "acknowledge God as Creator," and they were only interested in self-gratification.<sup>348</sup> The end result of not honoring God is "God's wrath takes the form

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<sup>346</sup> Hanigan, 40.

<sup>347</sup> Jones, 400.

<sup>348</sup> Hays, 385.

of letting human idolatry run its own self-destructive course... and homosexual activity... is a consequence of God's decision to give up rebellious creatures to follow their own futile thinking and desires."<sup>349</sup> Paul notes that those who have rejected God now have a "debased mind" with the consequence they cannot think straight, and they do wrong things because they are sinners. This is in contrast to thinking that humans sin because they do wrong things. Paul explains this in Romans 7:20, "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me." Paul offers a solution for this situation later in Romans 12:2 when he writes that they need to change their mind: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect."

### *Paul's Theology of New Creation*

Paul did not quote the Hebrew Bible at random to support his theology. He used the text to anchor the "controlling narrative, the historical story of God, the world, humankind and Israel" in the minds of the new listeners and readers.<sup>350</sup>

Paul took from the narrative in Genesis 1:26 the principle that humanity was created in the image of God, "according to our likeness," and created a link to his Romans 1:23 statement that those involved in sexual perversion "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles."

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 388.

<sup>350</sup> Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 25.

Romans 1:26-27 also stands in relation to and echoes Genesis 1:27 that humanity was created male and female, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Paul, based on Genesis, understands that it is male together with female who reflect the image of God. The Garden of Eden story states the male and female are to “Be fruitful and multiply.”

The purpose Paul intended for his statements was to point out that those who participated in same-sex intercourse violated the image of God as the act did not acknowledge the complementary of females and males. Those involved in moral perversion were suppressing the truth about God’s intention for humanity that God put in place at creation, and revealed in Scripture.

Paul had started this discussion by noting in Romans 1:19-21 that even if they had not read Genesis or Leviticus that it was obvious that God had created males and females to be complementary. This had always been that way from the beginning, and it had always been visible, and understood. Paul wrote,

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse.

Paul makes it clear that God had provided a clear indication as to what He willed for human sexuality. If that is not adhered to, then they are sinning against what is plainly the will of God.

Paul even brings into the discussion and indicts non-pederasty female with female sex in Romans 1:26, “For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural.”

In Paul's analysis, the moral perversion that he addresses in Romans 1:26, "is the result of God's wrath, not the reason for it."<sup>351</sup> Same-sex acts are used by Paul as the example of the "most egregious instance" because it demonstrates the worst kind of human deformation in the view of the Jewish community.<sup>352</sup> Paul is not out to prove that this sexual perversion is evil, he knows that his audience understands it is and that in their minds "it is simply assumed" that it is not harmonious with Christian living.<sup>353</sup> How does this affect the question of this paper? Is a leadership position within the Presbyterian Church (USA) a unique calling requiring specific human characteristics and excluding others? Should persons having a gay or lesbian orientation be ordained, based on Scripture? DeSilva suggests that humanity's inclination to sin does not reflect what God desires for humans but "rather a reflection of our need for redemption."<sup>354</sup> The need for our culture to live life to the fullest is in many ways in conflict with Scripture as exemplified by the debate around gay and lesbian Christians' right to the "expression and gratification of their sexuality" rather than resisting the "passions of the flesh."<sup>355</sup> Paul offers hope and goes on to say in Romans 8:21-23 that God's plan for redemption includes not only humanity but all of creation and "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies."

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<sup>351</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980), 47.

<sup>352</sup> Jewett, 173.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> DeSilva, 633.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

*Karl Barth's Comments on Romans 1:25-28*

Here is what Barth sees is the proper understanding of same-sex acts in Romans 1:25-28. Barth wrote that humans sometimes think their behavior is equal to God's, and they believe they can experience what God experiences. This experience then becomes a substitute idol for God with the result they are given up, and their "confusion avenges itself and becomes its own punishment."<sup>356</sup> Conduct is then driven by human desire with idols becoming both the "content and end" and humanity ends up in slavery to culture.<sup>357</sup> Humanity is then on its own without protection from God, their souls are "desecrated," and the experience they had hoped for becomes real although not the intended one.<sup>358</sup> Their relationship with God then becomes perverse, their life is chaotic, and they have the mind of a reprobate. This is all because "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

*Summary*

In summary, Jesus does not speak directly to same-sex acts as a sin, and when he is questioned by the Pharisees about the women they had caught in adultery, whom they could stone under the law of Moses, Jesus said, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." What Jesus did do was to tell her to not sin anymore, and he showed her grace.

Jesus' silence about gays and lesbians or same-sex acts does not confirm that he would have approved or disapproved. Paul is the one that keeps the same-sex acts on the

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<sup>356</sup> Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 51.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

list of behavior to be avoided as sinful, and Paul does not suggest it is a human orientation but a sin, and idolatry. In 1 Corinthians 6:12-13 Paul writes, “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. “The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” In this Scripture, “All things are lawful for me,” is what the Corinthians had been saying in defense of what they had been doing. Paul responds by saying, “but not all things are beneficial,” and that includes same-sex immorality. Paul is not nullifying the condemnation of same-sex acts in the Hebrew Bible; he is saying that a same-sex act is a sin, not a state of uncleanness. Impurity and uncleanness are no longer the issue, but same-sex acts are a sin, and an act of idolatry.

The goal of this section has been to show there are many references throughout the Bible to same-sex acts as sins. The Bible does condemn same-sex behavior, and Paul, the New Testament’s principal speaker about same-sex acts, never suggests it mirrors the image of God. Both Old and New Testament Scripture condemn same-sex acts as sin, and idolatry.

## SECTION FOUR: QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

### *Christian Leadership and Prerequisite Qualifications*

The purpose of this section is to determine, based on the findings in this paper, whether or not leadership in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a unique calling requiring specific humanness characteristics, meaning heterosexual, and excluding gays and/or lesbians. This section also considers the consequence of gays and lesbians serving in a leadership position, and how Karl Barth viewed that relationship in the church community.

The 2011/2013 *Book of Order* G-2.01 states the “Church’s ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ to the whole Church. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills, exercising his authority by the ministry of women and men for the establishment and extension of God’s new creation.”<sup>359</sup> The *Book of Order* goes on to define a call to ministry as the “act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by the movement of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience.”<sup>360</sup> The recipient of the call should also be “of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and the world.”<sup>361</sup> What is happening here is, even as the church sets standards for those in ordained service that will “reflect the church’s desire to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life,” the church is changing the standard through new

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<sup>359</sup> *Book of Order: Part Two*, G-2.0101.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, G-2.0103.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, G-2.0104.

language, thus making it possible for gays and lesbians to submit to the standard.<sup>362</sup> The definition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ is found in the *Book of Order* Section F-1.02.

Karl Barth has been quoted in this paper as against natural theology, which is the making of claims about God based on the natural order of the world, and consequently his remarks and theology are taken as support for conservatives within the Presbyterian Church (USA) and their stand against gay and lesbian leadership within the Presbyterian Church (USA). In the 1950's Karl Barth wrote, in *Church Dogmatics*, that same-sex relationships are a “physical, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay, which can emerge when man refuses to admit the validity of the divine command, in the sense in which we are now considering it. In Romans 1, Paul connected it with idolatry, with changing the truth of God into a lie, with the adoration of the creature instead of the Creator (v.25).”<sup>363</sup> Barth went on to write,

“And since humanity as fellow-humanity is to be considered in its root as the togetherness of man and woman, as the root of this inhumanity there follows the ideal of a masculinity free from woman and a femininity free from man. And because nature or the Creator of nature will not be trifled with, because the despised fellow-man is still there, because the natural orientation on him is still in force, there follows the corrupt emotional and finally physical desire in which—in a sexual union which is not and cannot be genuine—man thinks that he must seek and can find in man, and woman in woman, a substitute for the despised partner.”<sup>364</sup>

Barth clearly sees gays and lesbians as not following what God has commanded, a same-sex act is a form of idolatry, human relationships properly consists of only a man and a woman, and anything else is going against the Creator. Barth also placed the issue within the term of ethics when he wrote, “the decisive word of Christian ethics must

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., G-2.0104.b.

<sup>363</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans., A.T. Mackay, vol. 3,4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 166.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

consist in a warning against entering upon the whole way of life which can only end in the tragedy of concrete homosexuality.”<sup>365</sup>

In 1968, when Barth was 82, anthropologist Rolf Italiaander was gathering material to publish an anthology concerning “neither disease nor crimes with the homosexuals,” and he wrote to Barth for background information and his current opinion on gays and lesbians.<sup>366</sup> Italiaander noted in his letter to Barth that the vast majority of the world’s nations no longer punish gays and lesbians, and, as he was concerned about legislation against gays and lesbians, he was looking for Barth’s support. Barth asked his assistant, Eberhard Busch, to reply to Rolf Italiaander’s request. Busch responded that Barth had commented on homosexuality in *Church Dogmatics* volume 3.4; however, for Italiaander’s new anthology those comments Busch wrote, “Cannot well appear suitable and appropriate.”<sup>367</sup> Busch went on to clarify Barth’s remarks in *Church Dogmatics* that the nature of same-sex relationships forms an “unfree community—or as a behavior in which the man closes his freedom to the community and beyond.”<sup>368</sup> Busch pointed out Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* remarks were to not be construed as “permission for defamation” or “the even nonsensical legal punishment of homosexuals.”<sup>369</sup>

Eberhard Busch closed his the letter to Rolf Italiaander by writing, “Today Professor Barth is no longer satisfied with the incidental remarks he made at that time and, in the light of the changes and the new insights that have occurred since his writing, he would most certainly formulate these remarks somewhat differently today. Therefore

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Karl Barth, "An Den Ethnologen Rolf Italiaander, Hambur, (Von E. Busch), 1968 " *Offene Briefe 1945-1968 (GA v.15)* (1984). [http://solomon.dkbl.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/dkbl/details\\_toc.pl?&philodocid=3530&showfullrecord=ON&gesamt=ON](http://solomon.dkbl.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/dkbl/details_toc.pl?&philodocid=3530&showfullrecord=ON&gesamt=ON) (accessed February 24, 2012).

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

one is permitted to think that, in conversation with doctors and psychologists, he could come to a new judgment and description of the phenomenon precisely against the background of the context, namely, that fundamentally God's command is also to be understood and followed as 'freedom' for community."<sup>370</sup> Barth had not changed his mind, and he was still against same-sex relationships, because it closed them off from the community of Christians, and made gays and lesbians self-centered and independent from God.

The issue of gays and lesbians as leaders within the Presbyterian Church (USA) should also be decided by what Scripture has to say about leadership, as it does define what the characteristics of Christian leadership entail. The consequences of a leader not having a good heart are described in 1 Kings 11:9-13, "Then the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the Lord commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant.'" What Solomon was involved with that turned his heart away from God was idolatry in the form of following other gods.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Paul describes the definitive leadership qualifications in a letter to Timothy. "The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well,

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.” Paul’s statement begins and ends with what is needed for leadership by noting the person “must be above reproach,” and “he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace” as the bookends holding everything else up, and the “essential requirement for candidacy.”<sup>371</sup>

In Titus 1:5-9, Paul elaborates again on the Christian leadership qualifications for elders and bishops. Paul writes to Titus, “I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.” Paul wanted the Christian Church to continue with good sound leadership and in doing so he provides a list of negative human qualities to avoid, and a list of positive virtues needed, to fulfill the requirement. Common to both elders and bishops is the concern for reputation, with the requirement to be “blameless” within both home and ministry areas of influence. To be “blameless” is to

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<sup>371</sup> Philip H. Towner, "The Letters to Timothy and Titus," in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 250.

be “above reproach,” and there must not be any “ground for accusation of civic or domestic impropriety against him.”<sup>372</sup> The person must also be “married only once,” or as other translations suggest, “the husband of but one wife,” or “faithful to his wife.”<sup>373</sup> However, the requirement to be blameless is the shared requirement for bishops and elders.

Paul also wrote to the Corinthians, the Philippians, and the Thessalonians about the life he lived, as an example that he wanted them to follow; their lives should also be without misbehavior. He wrote to the Corinthians, “Make room in your hearts for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.” (2 Corinthians 7:2) In Philippians 3:17, Paul expresses his concern, “Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.” In addition, in 1 Thessalonians 2:10, Paul reminds the Thessalonians to be without blame in all of their conduct, “You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers.”

Are gays and lesbians qualified to be leaders in an occupation that needs a calling, when they would engage in behavior Scripture calls sin? Karl Barth gave his thoughts on vocation and calling in *Church Dogmatics*. Barth wrote that humans are limited to what God has chosen and although this “implies limitation,” humanity has freedom to be obedient in a manner that is perfect as long as it falls within what God has chosen.<sup>374</sup> Barth calls this “freedom of obedience” or “obedience in freedom” which implies a call

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 682.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans., Harold Knight, vol. 3,2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 595.

on God's part and a human response.<sup>375</sup> We are not free to do what we want but to respond to the loving invitation to live in correspondence or to reject and bear the consequence. Barth wrote there is a distinction between one's sense of vocation and God's calling. There is a special calling revealed in His Word for humanity to know as a "special freedom" or to become a Christian, and vocation is what a person already has or "rather which he brings with him, as the new comes to him."<sup>376</sup> A vocation is a job, and in the larger picture, a group of jobs or functions. In many cases, there are those who do not have a vocation, such as the unemployed, sick, children, elderly, or students preparing for a vocation. Barth takes his support for his position on vocation not from the New Testament but from the lack of a narrowly equivalent Greek word for vocation found in the New Testament. Barth points to *klhsiV* and Luther's use to mean a "divinely allotted sphere of work" that humans were to keep to and not become a monk as a way to serve God better. Barth believed the way *klhsiV* was changed to denote a religious calling to have lessened the meaning of the word and brought it in to be divisive between those called and those not called to be Christians. Barth saw the word change to a secular meaning as to whatever humanity inwardly believed they should do as an occupation and "to give the matter a Christian air, his divine calling" and Barth objected to this.<sup>377</sup> Barth believed the only avenue humanity had for vocation was to acknowledge the "command of God has called him to this place. . . remain in it so long and so far as the command of God summons him to do so."<sup>378</sup> Barth's point is that it is not important where a calling takes someone but that there is a calling to be obedient to and God gives it. Barth did

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 598.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 602.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 645.

write it was possible to change fields of work as perhaps the worker was put there by God, “that I might prove myself at that point. But now it is right that I am summoned to choose again; to choose what God has perhaps chosen afresh and differently for me.”<sup>379</sup>

In summary, from Barth’s perspective, humans have freedom to respond to their calling as long as it does not involve engaging in what Scripture calls sin, and if that is not done, then the person bears the consequences. As Presbyterians understand that it is Jesus Christ who calls individuals to ordained ministries, it is apparent that not all gays and/or lesbians understand what it means to be obedient to the calling of Jesus Christ. The calling to ordained ministry is not an endorsement of gay and/or lesbian practices, but a unique calling to a life that serves the church. The obligations of this calling include the role of counselor to those that engage in what the Bible calls sin. And that includes same-sex acts. It is doubtful gays and lesbians are best suited for this role within the Presbyterian Church (USA).

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 646.

## SECTION FIVE: CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper, the question was raised asking if leadership within the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a unique calling that only heterosexuals are qualified to fulfill. Scripture is authoritative for the Presbyterian Church (USA), and here is what Scripture says concerning its author and purpose: 2 Timothy 3:16 states, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” That principle is also confirmed in the Westminster Confession, “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture, is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”<sup>380</sup> As that rule is accepted, what Scripture has said about same-sex acts and church leadership has an important bearing on the issue of ordination.

Although biblical prohibitions on many activities are ignored on a daily basis by conservative Christians, a same-sex relationship is viewed as a different class of sin, since gay and/or lesbian relationships do not form a family that consists of a man and a woman. Even though Christians want to “hate the sin, love the sinner” as social penalties in society diminish against gays and lesbians and same-sex acts, then the same is seen to be done for other Christian designated sins, and this goes against the grain of conservative values.<sup>381</sup> The stand against conservatives by gays and lesbians is not specifically over the issue of same-sex acts, but can be located in gays’ and lesbians’ desire to be viewed as responsible members of society and to be recognized as normal in their own way, with their sexual orientation not considered a mental disorder.

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<sup>380</sup> *Book of Confessions: Part I*, 6.009.

<sup>381</sup> Greenberg, 471.

Nevertheless, a traditional Christian ethic views same-sex behavior to be “deemed a deviation from God’s intention and therefore sinful, and homosexuals are revising the biblical teaching regarding homosexuality.”<sup>382</sup>

The argument against any bias toward gays and lesbians in selecting church leaders contends, “The Bible is basically indifferent to homosexuality in itself.”<sup>383</sup> As well as, “The Bible supplies no real basis for the condemnation of homosexuality. Therefore people must stop opposing gays and lesbians merely by quoting the Bible, because, taken on its own terms, the Bible does not support their case.”<sup>384</sup> However, this paper has provided abundant references from throughout Scripture that clearly condemn same-sex practices. The criteria for a document to be included in the canon of Christian Scriptures is based on the “prophetic-apostolic principle.”<sup>385</sup> This principle means the document was written by an apostle, or it reflected “apostolic authority,” and it presented “important truth for salvation and Christian living.”<sup>386</sup>

The study of the issue of ordination, and the spiritual calling to church leadership does nothing to disprove that Christians are to love, show compassion, to be concerned, and show acceptance to all persons regardless of their lifestyle, because all are welcome into the church. In Galatians 6:1 Paul’s advice to the Christians is, “if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.” And same-sex acts are but one sin included in the list of transgressions.

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<sup>382</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Jay T. Smith, *Pocket Dictionary of Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 52.

<sup>383</sup> Daniel A. Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* (San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 1994), 13.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>385</sup> Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 133.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) *Book of Order Part II* emphasizes that all persons are welcome to participate in the life and worship of the church and this includes persons who are not members since they also may “receive its pastoral care and instruction.”<sup>387</sup> However, those involved in pastoral care do need to be morally exemplary. They carry with their obligations a need to seek after God’s heart as described in 1 Samuel 13:14, “but now your kingdom will not continue; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.” And, in Psalms 119:10, “With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments.” Their morals need to be above reproach, and this includes sexual conduct, for they need to be congregational and societal role models. In 2 Corinthians 6:3 Paul wrote, “We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry.” This advice is as true in contemporary times as it was in Paul’s day.

The argument, “The Bible hardly ever discusses homosexual behavior,” and so it is not a theologically important subject is difficult to accept, because the mere quantity of verses does not mitigate the guidance concerning this situation.<sup>388</sup> Scripture clearly states the standard for ordained church leadership. Those individuals who desire to be ordained leaders, yet say they have a gay or lesbian orientation, or engage in same-sex acts, are not good candidates for ordination, because they are engaging in what Scripture calls sin.

Is Scripture authoritative on the matter of gays and lesbians as leaders? Is the Bible “a repository of timeless truth,” or just “an abstract set of truths unrelated to space

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<sup>387</sup> *Book of Order: Part Two*, G-1.0404.

<sup>388</sup> Hays, 381.

and time,” that contains the exact answers to questions such as this?<sup>389</sup> What the Bible does do is to position Scriptural authority within Scripture and point out that all authority is God’s authority. For example, in Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,” God speaks, and through his word creation is put into effect. This authority is then invested in Jesus, as he states in Matthew 28:18, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Then, according to N.T. Wright, “perhaps to our surprise, authority is invested in the apostles,” and “Paul comes into this category, too, I believe.”<sup>390</sup> As previously noted in this paper, Paul and others also make this point for and about Paul, and as N.T. Wright states, “authority, according to the Bible itself, is vested in God himself, Father, Son and Spirit.”<sup>391</sup>

The authorial sources of Genesis that began the thread defining the relationship of God and the qualities of humanness throughout the biblical narrative set the podium for Scripture to define the correct moral vision for humanity as guided by supervenience of the Holy Spirit. The authors of the Levitical Holiness Code set the standard in its denunciation of same-sex acts. The Sodom and Gomorrah narrative fans out from one text to another, forming a web throughout the Bible. Theologian Amos Yong describes it this way, “God’s activity supervenes upon human agency and does so proleptically.”<sup>392</sup> This activity is evidenced in the life experiences and writings of Paul, for he was designated to define for the followers of Christ many things, including the prohibitions against same-sex acts which are grounded in the Genesis Doctrine of Creation. Karl Barth wrote, “fundamentally and in general practice we cannot say more of the Holy Spirit and

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<sup>389</sup> N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative," *Vox Evangelica* 21, 7-32, (1991): 11.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 15,17.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>392</sup> Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal - Charismatic Imagination*, 96.

His work than that He is the power in which Jesus Christ attests Himself, attests Himself effectively, creating in man response and obedience.”<sup>393</sup>

Did the Presbyterian Church (USA) act in a manner contrary to God’s word? The opinion offered in 2010 by the ecumenical advisor to the Presbyterian Church (USA)’s General Assembly, Archpriest Siarhei Hardun, indicated that they were not listening to the Holy Spirit but were advancing a wrongful agenda to ordain gays and lesbians. Scriptural advice to “test everything” is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. In 1 John 4:1, “test the spirits” is the advice that is designed to consider whether or not an inner voice is advising us toward acts that are not “violating the principles of his kingdom” but, even more, are advancing the cause of Christ.<sup>394</sup> Karl Barth explained the role of the Holy Spirit in the church in *Dogmatics in Outline*.

“*Credo ecclesiam* means that I believe that here, at this place, in this visible assembly, the work of the Holy Spirit takes place. By [but] that is not intended a deification of the creature; the Church is not the object of faith, we do not believe *in* the Church; but we do believe that in this congregation the work of the Holy Spirit becomes an event.”<sup>395</sup>

Scholars in favor of ordaining gays and lesbians have supported a process of dividing and conquering the opposition by insisting task forces study the issue, as evidenced by the 1978 Presbyterian *Blue Book, Part I*. The *Blue Book, Part I*, report’s findings were consequently divided into a majority and minority report. The minority, who were against gay and or lesbian ordination, represented 21% of the report task force; with the result they did not impact the overall report. The Presbyterian’s 1978 *Blue Book*,

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<sup>393</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans., G.W. Bromiley, vol. 4,1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 648.

<sup>394</sup> Bryan Chapel, *Praying Backwards: Transform Your Prayer Life by Beginning in Jesus Name* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 166.

<sup>395</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics; a Selection* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 143.

*Part I*, culturally conditioned report undermined the case of those in opposition to gays and/or lesbians being ordained as church leaders from the beginning. The report's inclusion of a non-theologically guided, non-scientific decision by the American Psychiatric Association played a detrimental role in the Presbyterian's theology decision.

In the final analysis, what appears to be an irresolvable difference—whether or not gays and lesbians may be ordained as ministry leaders—is based on the gay and lesbian foundational assertion that ordination is, for Christians, “the loving thing to do.”<sup>396</sup> The gays' and lesbians' argument sets aside the Doctrine of Creation, and their argument contends that the writers of the Bible did not understand or know about gays and lesbians relationships as merely a same-sex orientation in ancient society. This paper has shown ancient society did know about gays and lesbians. The argument that since humanity is made in the image of God, then what the individual desires is what God desires for that individual, does not support the ordination of gays and lesbians. The reliance on natural theology to support the premise that knowledge of God is available through the natural world “neglects to note that in all of history no human got it right,” because all of humanity needs “Gods personal revelation as the faithful way to know God.”<sup>397</sup>

This paper could be a treatise for political science, how strategy led to triumphs for gays and lesbians in first changing the categorization of homosexuality in psychological circles, and then eroding the barriers to ordination as ministry leaders in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The evidence found in the research for this paper and presented here points to the consistent theology of the purpose of God for his creation, as

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<sup>396</sup> Martin, 50.

<sup>397</sup> Marty Folsom, "The Two Books Metaphor: A Critique and a Caution," in *Crux* (2011), 31-37.

witnessed in the Bible, which provides a clear conclusion about gay and/or lesbian ordination. What has been revealed in Scripture is that God does not condone gay and/or lesbian same-sex behavior. It must therefore be concluded, that based on Scripture there is no support for the ordination of gays and lesbians.

## Appendix

### *What Jesus Said*

Jesus did refer to Sodom and Gomorrah. In Matthew 10:5-16 Jesus gave instructions to the apostles, and he told the apostles that if the towns they are being sent to show a lack of hospitality, he will deal with these towns on judgment day.

Jesus does not refer to Sodom and Gomorrah's gays and lesbians or same-sex sins, but cites Sodom and Gomorrah's inhospitality, as this "was a serious breach of Jewish custom, as it was for ancient Greeks."<sup>398</sup> Stanley Grenz suggested the reason Jesus did not say much about gays and lesbians is because "homosexual behavior was simply not a major problem in first-century Palestine" as it was not tolerated by the Jews.<sup>399</sup>

Jesus valued the relationship between men and women. In Matthew 19:3-6 Jesus is questioned by Pharisees, who asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause? He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who 'made them at the beginning made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'"

A similar telling of the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees is in Mark 10:2-9, where Jesus brings in the teaching of Moses about divorce. "Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a

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<sup>398</sup> Thomas C. Caramagno, *Irreconcilable Differences: Intellectual Stalemate in the Gay Rights Debate* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 61.

<sup>399</sup> Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming*, 61.

certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Both Matthew and Mark independently reported Jesus’ statements about the relationship between a man and a woman, the significance of their becoming as one, and the fact that the information had always been available that God had made humans as male and female as the answer to those who directly questioned Jesus.

Jesus valued the faithfulness of the marriage partners. One morning Jesus was in the temple, and the Pharisees and scribes brought in a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. The woman was made to stand in front of a group that had gathered around Jesus. They said to Jesus, “In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” Jesus said, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” He finished the conversation with the woman by showing grace and not condemning her conduct. He also told her the truth which was to stop sinning. “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.” John 8:1-12.

In Mark 7:21, Jesus did place sexual sins in a list of other sins without differentiating between them, “For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly.” The Greek word for sexual immoralities, *porneiai*, is what leads Robert Gagnon to suggest Jesus did know same-sex act behavior

was in the list of sins, and the textual “statement underscores that sexual behavior does matter.”<sup>400</sup> *Porneiai*, according to Gagnon, would include adultery, bestiality, incest, and same-sex intercourse.

Jesus does not specifically address the issue of gay and/or lesbian individuals, same-sex acts, or gays and lesbians as church leaders. The New Testament introduces a new commentator, Paul, on same-sex acts. There are specific references to same-sex acts in Paul’s letter to the Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and in 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

#### *1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, Acts, and Jude*

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul writes about persons that do acts that are not acceptable to God, “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers — none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.” In this text, Paul introduces the fact that those committing the listed sins— and he adds male prostitutes plus sodomites to the list—will not be admitted to the kingdom of God. Paul’s advice here is for the Corinthian church to recognize these are sins and to stop committing these sins. If they do continue, they will not be under the protection of the kingdom of God.

In 1 Timothy 1:8-11 Paul writes, “Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane,

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<sup>400</sup> Robert A.J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 191-192.

for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.”

In this text, the term sodomites is clearly used to refer to same-sex as a sin in a list of sinful acts, but it is not the worst sin. The list is a list of equal sinful acts that are not acceptable to God.

In Acts 15:29, Luke describes criteria the Gentiles must adhere to that includes purity rules based on Leviticus.

“that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

Scholars differ over the admonishment to abstain from fornication as to whether or not it includes gays and lesbians, however as the textual concern is “based on the purity regulations of Leviticus 17:1-18:30... then the umbrella Greek term *porneia* might well include ...homosexual intercourse.”<sup>401</sup>

Finally, the church found it necessary to include in the canon of Christian Scriptures the letter from Jude that includes a reference to same-sex acts as unnatural and immoral. The writer of Jude identifies himself in the opening of the letter as “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James.” In opening the letter with a reference to his brother James, scholars note this James is “James the Just of Jerusalem, the Lord’s brother.”<sup>402</sup> Jude does not say that he is writing as the brother of Christ, but as Christ’s

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<sup>401</sup> Hays, 383.

<sup>402</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 50 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 27.

servant. Jude's appeal is significant in that it was to all Christians as a "catholic letter" and not just to Christians in a specific church.<sup>403</sup> He writes in Jude 3,

I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who long ago were designated for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The significance of Jude 1:6:8 appealing to the Christians to "contend for the faith" connects with the "sexual immorality" in Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis.

"And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great day. Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

Jude makes the connection with the angels in Genesis 6:1-4 who did not keep their position in heaven but came down to earth to have sex with human women as a result of "unnatural lust." In Jude, angels and humans are having sex, but it is referred to as "sexual immorality" and tied to the immorality in Sodom and Gomorrah. As Hays notes, Jude 7 is an "obscure reference," yet "the sin of Sodom was particularly identified with sexual misconduct."<sup>404</sup> Hays suggests Ezekiel 16:49 is more accurate in the condemnation of Sodom, "This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." However, the appeal to Christians in Jude "To contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" and to not engage in immorality as was found in ancient times in "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities" is a direct reference to same-sex acts.

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>404</sup> Hays, 381.

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