

Who are we? That is the perennial question which has always haunted us for millennia.

While different eras have answered this in different ways, sexuality has been the chief way many people have defined man today. Sexual orientation determines a person's identity, and society has embraced this categorization of man. For those who claim to be 'gay', it is something seen as intrinsic to them, core to who they are as human beings. Society at large has thus judged homosexual practice and desire as something not merely to be tolerated but welcomed and affirmed. In the past fifty years, Christian writers have increasingly sought to revise the traditional Christian ethic responding to the modern thinking on human anthropology based on orientation.<sup>1</sup> Many fine books have been written defending the traditional Christian view on marriage and sexuality, but not many have focused on a big issue in this debate: what does it mean to be human?<sup>2</sup> This essay seeks to examine this fundamental question and asks how that relates to our sexual desires, particularly in regard to the issue of homosexuality. To do this, we will therefore firstly look at how God's creation of us in His image defines our purpose and desires. Next, we will look at how God's image in man was affected in the Fall, before turning finally to how Christ's salvation redeems us in His image again and alters our desires.

### **Made in God's image**

When man is created in Gen. 1:26-7, God puts it like this: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' God then blesses

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2013); Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, Reprint edition. (New York: Convergent Books, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Joel R. Beeke and Paul Smalley, *One Man and One Woman* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2016); Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? : And Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible and Same-Sex Attraction*, First Edition. (United Kingdom: The Good Book Company, 2013).

Adam and Eve who are told to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). Much debate has surrounded what exactly it means to be made in God's image. Karl Barth and John Stott have suggested that being made in God's image is explained in the end of v. 27: being made male and female. As God is represented in other parts of Scripture as both male and female (Mal. 2:10, Matt. 23:37-38), Stott argues that only male and female coming together represent fully the image of God. This then rules out the morality of homosexual relationships.<sup>3</sup> However, G.C. Berkouwer has argued that the second clause of Gen. 1:27 does not give definition to first. It instead describes who God created in His image (male and female) rather than describing what the image of God in them entails.<sup>4</sup> Also, saying male and female are needed to represent God's image properly, would mean Jesus was not truly God's image (Col. 1:15).<sup>5</sup> Many of the early Church Fathers took another path, saying that the image of God was something related to a distinct faculty in man, such as the soul, which separated him from the animals. However, though our place as image-bearers of God does separate us from other creatures, Scripture does not attribute the existence of a soul or reason, though it may well be part of what it means to be image as that which constitutes the image of God. What is it?

John Calvin rightly departed from this tradition, showing that being made in God's image is primarily concerned with how man relates to God, not with how man is an ontological state in himself.<sup>6</sup> Image and likeness are synonyms in Gen. 1:27, since either term is used to represent

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<sup>3</sup> G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 72-3; John R. W. Stott and John Wyatt, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, ed. Roy McCloughry, Fourth edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006), 258-9; Susan Hammond, "The Imago Dei as Rebuttal to Homosexual Advocacy," *Reform. Revival* 14.3 (2005), 29-34.

<sup>4</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 73.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald T Sheppard, "The Use of Scripture within the Christian Ethical Debate Concerning Same-Sex Oriented Persons," *Union Semin. Q. Rev.* 40.1-2 (1985), 25; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 31-2.

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 186-9; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, 1.2.2011 edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2011), 393, Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 137.

the same concept (Genesis 5:3).<sup>7</sup> Images were common in the Ancient Near East and the most obvious example of this is in Daniel 3:1-7. Here, King Nebuchadnezzar setup an image of himself and with its great height and gold structure, it depicted the ‘likeness’ of the King, in his power and wealth. His subjects were to worship it because it symbolized and represented him. Other ancient rulers also made images of themselves to represent themselves in areas of their dominion they were not physically present. For example, in Mesopotamia, the ruler Ashur-Nasir-Pal II, setup an image in a land he conquered that he would not be physically present. It testified to his ‘power and glory’ in that area.<sup>8</sup> Kings also represented the gods on earth as images. The Tutankhamun took the name of the god Amun, something which showed that he was in communion with him and ruled in the god’s place, as his image, on earth.<sup>9</sup> Thus, man’s place as image of God means he represents God on earth, rules under Him and communes with Him.<sup>10</sup>

This understanding helps us to explain Adam and Eve’s role. As God’s image and son (Luke 3:38), Adam was the ruler in God’s place on earth, a vassal king crowned and tasked with advancing the kingdom and subduing the creation under his feet for the Lord (Gen. 1:26-28, Psalm 8:4-8).<sup>11</sup> Human beings, unlike the animals, were meant for communion with God, a covenantal relationship with the Creator which involved knowing, loving, obeying and glorifying Him (Rom. 1:19-21, John 17:3, Jer. 9:23-24).<sup>12</sup> Owing to man’s ambassadorial role, cursing and murdering people is wrong, since assaulting them on earth is an assault on God in heaven (Gen.

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<sup>7</sup> John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015), 128; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 69; Calvin, *Institutes*, 187-88; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 392.

<sup>8</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 55, 57-8.

<sup>9</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 56; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 398.

<sup>10</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 54.

<sup>11</sup> Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 42-43; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 387.

<sup>12</sup> Kelly M. Kapic, “Anthropology,” in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Kelly M. Kapic, First Edition edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2012), 182; Goheen and Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads*, 43.

9:6, James 3:9).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, as man was created male and female, the first couple were tasked with this great commission together, to serve God and protect the garden from evil (Gen. 2:15-18, 20-25). Man thus inherently relates to God to other people, a relationship meant to be one of love and care (Matt. 22:38-40).<sup>14</sup> In this sense we mirror the inner Triune relationship of God. God says: 'let us make man...in our image, after our likeness', because man is also a relational being with desires of love, as the Father, Son and Spirit for each other from eternity past.<sup>15</sup> Man, as image of God, was made first originally holy and upright (Ecc. 7:29, Eph. 4:24), akin to the Creator, and so was expected and able originally to obey God's law and covenant.<sup>16</sup> To summarize then, man's task as image-bearer was a covenant relation matter: to represent God and his rule on the earth in righteousness and relate to Him and His fellow creatures in love.<sup>17</sup>

### **The image and the Fall**

The Fall, however, has radically affected the way man represents God's image on the earth and his desires. Before Adam fell, man was blessed with knowledge of the Creator, a love for Him, a desire to do his will with righteousness and holiness. But with sin has come spiritual blindness, darkness and a disobedience in mind, heart and will.<sup>18</sup> We do retain some knowledge of God and His power in the world (Rom. 1:18-21). We also do retain God's image after the Fall, since being made in God's image describes our covenantal relationship of obligation toward Him

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<sup>13</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 116-20.

<sup>14</sup> Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 391-2.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation And Change: Genesis 1.1 - 2.4 in the Light of Changing Scientific Paradigms*, First Edition. (Fearn: Mentor, 1997), 227; Timothy R. Gaines and Shawna Songer Gaines, "Uncovering Christ: Sexuality in the Image of the Invisible God," in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 92–94.

<sup>16</sup> The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms As Adopted By the Presbyterian Church in America with Proofs Texts* (Lawrenceville, Ga.: Christian Education & Publications, 2007), 4.2, 18-19; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 395-7; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 126.

<sup>17</sup> Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 388-9.

<sup>18</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 126; Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 157. WCF, 6:2-4, 26-28.

(Gen. 9:6, James 3:9), a duty to obey His law still laid on our conscience (Rom. 2:14-16).<sup>19</sup> Yet despite all the vestiges of God's image in us, we are corrupted, evil in heart (Matt. 7:11) and living life for the desires of our sinful flesh (Rom. 2:5, Eph. 2:3). We like Adam are barred from Paradise, under God's wrath and through sin, subject to natural and eternal death (Gen. 2:16-17, 3:22-24, Rom. 5:12-14, 6:23, 7:5).<sup>20</sup> Since Adam we are all born with a natural inclination and slavish hankering for sin (Gen. 6: 5, 8:21, Rom. 3:9-20).<sup>21</sup> Our relationships are corrupted as we hate naturally rather than love (2 Tim. 3:2-4, Titus 3:3).<sup>22</sup> Tyranny marks our relationships, rather than servant lordship and love as it was supposed to be (Gen. 3:16, 4:7-8, 4:23-24, 6:11-12).<sup>23</sup> In sum, sin means we do not love God, one another and fail to obediently represent Him to creation. We cannot fulfil our role rightly as image bearers, since we fall short of the glory we were meant to exhibit to the world (Is. 43:7, Rom. 3:23).<sup>24</sup>

How does this bear on our discussion of homosexuality? For one thing, if the Bible defines our anthropology primarily as covenantal and God-orientated. Secular psychology and the modern gay rights movement have defined people in terms of their feelings towards others, rather than by their relationship and duty towards God.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, some professing Christian writers still maintain that since some experience same-sex desire as a natural part of their humanity, same-sex unions are lawful. James Brownson has suggested that the desire for relationship and kinship, seen in Adam (Gen. 2:18), is common to all image-bearers and so

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<sup>19</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 93; Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 157.

<sup>20</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 141.

<sup>21</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 128, 133, 141-3.

<sup>22</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 184.

<sup>23</sup> Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 394.

<sup>24</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 157.

<sup>25</sup> Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ*, 2nd edition. (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2015), 94-95; Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 9.

should not rule out long-term homosexual unions.<sup>26</sup> Desire, Brownson argues from Romans 1:27, is not itself wrong, but excessive desire is, which can be expressed in any sexual deviances, homosexual or otherwise. Homosexuals can pursue a committed, Christ-like union that is marked by sacrificial self control.<sup>27</sup> He goes on to say that if we label natural desires and sexual orientation as sin we actually prevent people from acknowledging who they truly are and becoming whole human beings.<sup>28</sup> Brownson argues also that homosexuality is natural. When Paul seemingly says it is ‘against nature’, (Rom. 1:26-7) he means not what is against the natural order as God created them (Gen. 2:18-24), but describes people acting against their own natural inclinations. In this case, it is heterosexuals who act in a homosexual manner. There is a subjective as well as societal aspect to this since he also argues that in acting against our orientation, perhaps to seek the approval of others, we ruin the social fabric.<sup>29</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard argues the same claiming what Paul means by ‘unnatural’ is the same as 1 Cor. 11:14-15, where long hair for men is prohibited for being ‘unnatural’. Thus he takes it as Paul’s ‘ecclesiastical rule’ (1 Cor. 11:16) ‘illuminated by his pre-modern quasi-scientific observations’.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Paul’s understanding can be set aside as homosexuality is deemed natural today by our modern empirical knowledge of the world, which includes our psychological definitions of orientation.<sup>31</sup> Committed same-sex relationships may therefore be natural expression of image bearers of God who have desires for love and kinship.

However, when we consider what our desires are and what is natural in regard to the *imago Dei*, there is a huge problem. Firstly, desire in the beginning was pure, in accordance with

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<sup>26</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 86-90.

<sup>27</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 164-5, 167-8.

<sup>28</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 172-3.

<sup>29</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 225-9, 230-2.

<sup>30</sup> Sheppard, “The Use of Scripture”, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Sheppard, “The Use of Scripture”, 25-27, 30-32.

man's design. His charge as image-bearer was to represent God and spread His kingdom to the world and thus a major part of that was through the natural means of male and female multiplying the earth through procreation, raising up godly seed. Man's desires were in line with that purpose (Gen. 1:27-8, Mal. 1:15, Eph. 6:4). An outworking of man's rebellion in the Fall is that homosexuality exists, a frustration of God's plan to spread His kingdom through procreation. Unlike normal marriage, it does not fulfil the purpose for which sexual desires were given to us (1 Cor. 7:1-5).<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, sin is defined not by excessive desire but by the object of our desires. Some desires can be good, like wanting to see the kingdom (Matt. 13:17) but coveting what God prohibits, like a neighbor's wife or goods is against His law. Act and desire for wrong things are sin, however strongly they are desired (Ex. 20:13, 17, Matt. 5:27-28).<sup>33</sup>

We also cannot import our modern understanding of what is 'natural' today into the biblical text. Even as believers we still struggle with sinful desires (Rom. 7:20-22). When we impose our subjective ideas of orientation or society's modern fixation with sexual identity onto the what it means to be human, we miss the main point of what it means to be an image of God, according to the Bible.<sup>34</sup> Our sexuality, psychology and the world must not define us, but God's Word on our lives.<sup>35</sup> Our desires and actions, as image bearers, must represent and glorify the God who created us.<sup>36</sup> In Romans 1, Paul plays out the consequences of the Fall in the lives of normal human beings. Forsaking the vertical revelation and relationship with God we were made for, man turns to idolatry and his horizontal relationships with others are spoiled by impurity (Rom. 1:18-25). Sexually, our desires become warped, not the natural desires God gave us, male for

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<sup>32</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Denny Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?," *J. Evang. Theol. Soc.* 58.1 (2015): 100–101.

<sup>34</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 71; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 90; Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?," 113.

<sup>36</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 20; Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?," 113.

female in marriage (Gen. 2:18-25). For some, this turns to female-female and male-male desires and relations, which are against the nature of creation (Rom. 1:26-27).<sup>37</sup> Though it might seem natural and desirable, it is sin and leads to death (Proverbs 14:12, Rom. 1:32).<sup>38</sup> All sins are natural since they come from our hearts and this includes sexual immorality of any type, including homosexuality (Mark 7:21).<sup>39</sup> Sexual desire against God's law is wrong, even involuntary homosexual desires, since sin is never considered neutral or 'natural'.<sup>40</sup> We sin because we are sinners, we are orientated that way. God defines our humanity, not our persistent patterns of sexual desire or temptation.<sup>41</sup> Yet, if God-glorifying holiness is not natural to us and indeed impossible for us after the Fall, how do we live as proper image bearers of God again?

### **The image redeemed in Christ**

As Calvin has noted, the man functions properly as God's image again is through redemption through Christ.<sup>42</sup> He is *the* image of God, not just made '*in* God's image', like us, since He exactly represents the Father's being and character (Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:3).<sup>43</sup> In the incarnation, Christ displayed the invisible God perfectly, so to see Him was to see the Father (John 1:18, 14:8-11, 2 Cor. 4:6).<sup>44</sup> In essence, Jesus could do what Adam could not on earth, represent and glorify God perfectly by doing the will of the one who sent Him (John 4:34, 6:38, 17:4). Christ was tempted like we all are (Heb. 4:15) but unlike us, as God incarnate, in his desires he could not be drawn to (James 1:13-14). He, as the Second Adam, resisted the devil in the desert (Luke

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<sup>37</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 48-50; Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* 31-2.

<sup>38</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *One Man and One Woman*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* 41.

<sup>40</sup> Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?," 109-11; Coincidentally, Brownson agrees with this too, saying that if one is to say that homosexual acts are wrong, one must say sexual orientation is wrong as well, since sin comes from the heart, the desires, and is not purely about external acts. See Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 174-77.

<sup>41</sup> Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 96.

<sup>42</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 59, 88-9.

<sup>44</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 60-2; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 107.

3:38-4:13).<sup>45</sup> Perfectly human, He loved God, perfectly obeyed and communed with Him (John 14:31) and loved humanity by giving His life up for a people (John 15:12-13).<sup>46</sup> He bore our flesh and died, condemned for us who failed to fulfil our covenant duty as image bearers (Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:5-11).<sup>47</sup> Christ did what God's people always should have done, love God and neighbor with His whole being (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18).<sup>48</sup> With sin, we could not bear God's image rightly, so we needed Christ to conform to God's image, which He did.<sup>49</sup>

In light of Christ's great work as our image, he not only acts perfectly in our place as substitute, but also empowers us and models for us what it is like as God's image.<sup>50</sup> Since Christ took on our flesh, he has dealt with sin and can conform us to image of God (Rom. 8:29).<sup>51</sup> The original righteousness that we were made for as image bearers God can restore in us (Eph. 4:24). As we have been redeemed by Christ, our old selves, the sinful self, inherited from Adam, has been put off and now Christ has given us a new nature (Eph. 4:20-21, 24). This has huge ramifications in terms of our sexual desires. We no longer live for the passions of our flesh, or deceitful desires and no longer do we practice impurity or sensuality in our sexual acts and thoughts (Eph. 2:3-6, 4:17-24).<sup>52</sup> Brownson argues that the terms Paul uses are vague and that lust and licentiousness simply cover anything which details excessive, covetous desire, something which could be avoided by same-sex unions.<sup>53</sup> However, we should note though that here that in the Greek, sexual immorality, is *porneia* (Col. 3:5) and is a catch-all phrase covering

<sup>45</sup> Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?", 103-105.

<sup>46</sup> Kapic, "Anthropology," 189.

<sup>47</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 69, 71.

<sup>48</sup> Kapic, "Anthropology," 177-8.

<sup>49</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 132. On this score, we must furthermore reject the interpretation of some commentators, that the image of God originally was to be made in Christ's image, since this is backward. Christ is THE image of God, and takes on our image, not we the image of God that take on Christ's. See Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 94-6.

<sup>50</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 65.

<sup>51</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 79; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 109.

<sup>52</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 261; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 393-4.

<sup>53</sup> Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 193-203.

all types of sexual immorality outside of marriage, including homosexuality.<sup>54</sup> Such immorality is under the banner of general sexual impurity in Ephesians (Eph. 5:3, 4:19). In Romans, such impurity is equated with the dishonoring of one's body in sexual sins (Rom. 1:24), an example of which are homosexual acts (Rom. 1:26-27).<sup>55</sup> We therefore can forsake sexually immoral and impure desires. Unlike Adam who was called as God's son to image and imitate Him, but failed, we can imitate God again through our union with Christ (Eph. 5:1-2), and we are no longer enslaved to any impure sexual desires (Eph. 5:3-6)<sup>56</sup> In Colossians 3:10 furthermore, Paul says that through Christ, we have put on a new self, 'which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'.<sup>57</sup> As a new humanity (Col. 2:13, 20, 3:1-4), Christians we can put sin of all types away, anger, malice, obscene talk (Col. 3:8-9) as well as sexual immorality (*porneia*), impurity, passion, evil desire and covetousness (Col. 3:5-6). All the latter are manifested in homosexual desires and acts.<sup>58</sup> God's intention therefore to have people who represent Him, love Him and love each other rightly is achieved through Christ's redemption (Col. 3:11-15).<sup>59</sup>

Elsewhere Scripture picks up on this theme also. 2 Cor. 3:16 says that through turning to Christ, the veil of sin is rent away and we can live in relationship with God again, as we were meant to as his image bearers. As we then behold Christ and the gospel as believers, we are gradually being transformed into image of God, by the Spirit, day by day and represent Him to the world (2 Cor. 3:18). Christ is the perfect image of God, and we can become like Him (2 Cor.

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<sup>54</sup> Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 854; Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* 41.

<sup>55</sup> BDAG, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 262.

<sup>57</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 77.

<sup>58</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 252-3.

<sup>59</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 257, 297-8.

4:4).<sup>60</sup> It is through Christ's redemptive work that we can become like God again and put off the corruption of our sinful desires (2 Peter 1:4).<sup>61</sup> Where Adam was created and fell, we are created anew in Christ, born again and enabled to do the works God obligates of us (2 Cor. 5:17, Eph. 2:20, James 1:18). Through the gospel, we have been made God's children again. Purity marks our desires (1 John 3:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:22, Titus 1:1:15) and a desire to do His will (Heb. 13:20-21).<sup>62</sup> In all things, our desires and bodies, we can glorify Him again (1 Cor. 6:18-20, 10:31).

There is, granted, a now and not yet aspect to this. We are already image bearers by Creation (1 Cor. 11:7), but because we are sin-spoilt creatures being gradually renewed through Christ, the process of our renewal into Christ's image will be completed only in glory (2 Cor. 4:16, 1 John 3:1-3).<sup>63</sup> Though we are pure now and able to overcome sexual immorality through Christ's death, temptation and struggle remains with sin (Gal. 5:17-24). Yet our bodies will be transformed from bodies of death, prone still to sin, to bodies which bear Christ's image and live eternally (Rom. 8:18-25, 1 Cor. 15:47-51).<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, we can be God's image rightly again, loving God as we were meant to (Rom. 8:28-29) and others (1 John 5:1-2). We, as God's children, can shine and represent God in a dark world again (Phil. 2:14-15).<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

We have seen in this brief study, how the doctrine of the image of God informs our created purpose and how the Fall has affected our desires and our ability to fulfil that purpose. Through Christ's redemption we can fulfil our ambassadorial role for God once more and our desires are

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<sup>60</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 92-3; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 111; Kapic, "Anthropology," 176; Gaines and Gaines, "Uncovering Christ," 95-6.

<sup>61</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 266.

<sup>62</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 99-100, 103.

<sup>63</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 92-3; Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 117-8.

<sup>64</sup> Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 292; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 189-90.

<sup>65</sup> Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 115.

changed by His Spirit. We must now finish with some thoughts on how this affects our view of homosexuality. Firstly, we must let the Bible define our anthropology and not let sins that may tempt us have dominion over us or define our identity. We are taught by evolutionists and psychologists that we are somehow bound to sin. Alcoholics are bound to their particular sin as their identity, homosexuals bound to theirs. Even some evangelicals of late, like Wesley Hill, though agreeing that homosexual erotic acts and desires are wrong and broken, see the same-sex attraction as hardwired into some.<sup>66</sup> Yet when we understand that Christ has redeemed us such that we can reflect His image rightly in our desires we should proceed with hope. We are not bound to our sinful desires but to Christ, and there is no part of our nature which Christ's redemptive power cannot touch (Rom. 8:13).<sup>67</sup> Finally, there is a vital community aspect to the image of God we miss as Christians. The gay rights lobby has excelled in promoting the idea that in confessing your orientation, you establish not just your own individual identity but enter into a redeemed community of those who have 'come out'. As Christians though, we have something better. When we become Christians, we are not just individuals recapturing our identity as image-bearers again, but through Christ are a new community bearing His image (Col. 3:10-11). We are those who have come out of the darkness of our sin and form a redeemed community, image-bearing kings who proclaim our King's glorious salvation to the world (1 Peter 2:9). That is an identity truly to be proud of and live out!

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<sup>66</sup> Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*, Updated and Expanded ed. edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 101, 103.

<sup>67</sup> Burk, "Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?," 114-5, Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 107, 110-2.

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