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HOMOPHOBIA IN SOME AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES
OF THE GREATER DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AREA

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

MAY 2017

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY	5
ABSTRACT.....	9
DEDICATION	11
CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT	12
Statement of the Problem.....	12
The Setting for the Project	24
The Importance of the Project.....	26
CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS	31
Understanding Church Teachers.....	31
What the Bible Says about Homosexuality	48
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW	75
Homophobia.....	75
Gay Rights versus Civil Rights.....	91
Is Celibacy a Viable Option?	101
Can a Place of Dialogue Be Found?	108
CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS	121
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS.....	125
Context Descriptions.....	126
Results.....	138
Qualitative Analysis.....	145
CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	150
Data Stream from the Interviews and Field Notes.....	152

The Affirming Church	164
Strengths and Weaknesses	166
Conclusions and Recommendations	168
CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS	174
Discoveries.....	174
Three Data Streams.....	175
The Future from Here	177
APPENDIX A: LGBT ACCEPTANCE SCALE.....	179
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	183
BIBLIOGRAPHY	185

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5.1, Schematic Representation of LGBT Acceptance Scale.....	140
Figure 5.2, Graphic Representation of Subject Scale Scores.....	146
Figure 5.3, Graphic Representation of Item Scale Scores	148

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1, Order of Review and Scoring for “Directional” Items	142
Table 5.2, Representative Item Responses.....	144-45

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

African American.....	AA
African American Churches	AAC
Region of the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia	DMV
Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender.....	LGBT
Same Sex Attraction	SSA

GLOSSARY

African American – “The term African American is used to refer individuals who identify with African ancestors who were brought to the colonies of the United States involuntarily. This is distinguished from individuals who immigrated to the U.S. voluntarily from Africa, the Caribbean, or other locales.”¹ Unless otherwise specified, “AA” will be used to denote African-American.

African American Church – Also defined as the Black Church. It is that peculiar institution that is “uniquely American”² and has historically belonged to African Americans. Historically it has stood as the one place where African Americans not only receive spiritual affirmation but love and acceptance. The AAC has a long history of being on the forefront of protecting civil and human rights, primarily for African Americans but also for all people oppressed globally. Its doctrine and philosophy, primarily based on Protestant Christian beliefs, range from ultra conservative to extremely liberal. The doctrine for the most part is defined by denominational affiliation, cultural setting and physical location.

The vast majority of Black Christian Americans are members of the original seven Black church denominations that have their origins in the struggles most Blacks endured as a result of slavery and emancipation. Although new Christian denominations with Black leadership continue to emerge, they often are modeled on the traditions of the seven original Black church denominations.³

¹Sana Loue, *Understanding Theology and Homosexuality in African American Communities* (New York: Springer, 2014), 86.

²Angelique C. Harris, "Homosexuality and the Black Church," *Journal of African American History* vol. 93, no. 2, 2014: 124-7.

³ Harris, 396

These seven churches are the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), United Methodist Church (UMC), Church of God in Christ (COGIC), National Baptist Convention (NBC), and the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC). “AAC” is the abbreviation that will be used throughout this paper to refer to the African American Church.

Affirming – Churches that welcome and accept Lesbian, Gay Bi-sexual Transgender persons but may not allow these persons to serve in certain ministerial capacities. Some churches in this category may or may not perform same sex marriages and ordain openly gay individuals.

Gay – A term used to include all persons in the LGBT community, though normally associated with males who have SSA and who may or may not act on that attraction.

Homophobia – the fear of homosexuality and an unreasonable attitude of anxiety towards people of that orientation. ⁴

LGBT – A reference to Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender. The LGBT abbreviation will be used throughout the project. Persons who identify themselves with one or more of these labels are often referred to as “LGBT.” These persons typically act on their same-sex attraction. Here is a brief definition of each: Lesbian, (females who are sexually attracted to members of their own gender); Gay (see above); Bi-sexual (male and female who are attracted both sexes); Transgender (males who are fluid in their sexuality, men in this category may dress as women); The ‘T’ in LGBT can also mean

⁴ Adrian Thatcher, *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 206.

“transitioning,” (from one gender to another). These are individuals, male and female, who have either undergone medical procedures to alter their gender, are in the process of doing so, or have not done so but for all intents and purposes live as the opposite sex.

Holiness Codes – Those passages of scripture found in Leviticus, Chapters 17-20. These are the instructions given to Moses to separate the nation of Israel from the pagan nations surrounding them. The intention is to keep the nation holy, as in set apart. The laws have been dubbed “holiness codes.” This study will concentrate on the portion of the codes found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

Both these verses are parts of the Holiness Codes of Israel, a set of regulations for the lifestyle of the Israelites that was meant to distinguish the Israelites from their neighbors by directing the life of the Hebrew people and their religious practices as they lived among foreign nations and foreign religions.⁵

The Holiness Code (Lev. 18:22, 20:13) originally established the connection between idolatry and homosexual activity. The Code specifically warns the Israelites against accepting the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites. One of the provisions of the Code is that homosexual activity is punishable by death.⁶

African American Leadership – The lead or senior pastor of the AA church. The AA senior pastor typically enjoys a position of respect and prominence due in large part to the historical significance of this office. In the AA culture, it was not uncommon for the pastor to be the most educated person in the community. Thus, he or she (most commonly he) was called upon to be all things to all his people, doctor, lawyer, psychologist, mentor, friend and any other capacity his status afforded. Thus, the person who held such office was accorded a great deal of respect. Along with that respect came a great deal of influence. While the senior pastor is no longer always the most educated

⁵ Marion Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 16.

⁶John J. McNeil, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 57.

person in the congregation, the senior pastor of most AA churches still enjoys and wields a great degree of influence over his or her congregation.⁷

Open and Affirming – Churches who not only welcome LGBT persons but allow them to serve in any ministry capacity. These churches also perform same sex marriages. This contrasts with more traditional AACs, which may be welcoming but will not perform same sex marriages or allow openly LGBT persons to serve in pulpit ministry.

SSA – Same sex attraction, persons who are attracted to people of their own gender, but who do not necessarily act on that attraction. Often, this person has been placed in the same category as a practicing homosexual. This researcher found during the interviews and research that many churches and leaders are now making a distinction between those who are attracted to persons of the same sex and those who are not only attracted but who act on that attraction.

Traditionalist – Those who hold the Scriptures to be the inerrant and plenary word of God. The traditionalist maintains that the Scriptures pertaining to homosexuality are as valid and binding today as when they were originally written.

Revisionist – Those who ascribe to the viewpoint that the Scriptures pertaining to homosexuality are taken out of context and need to be rewritten considering subsequent study to gain a more culturally relevant interpretation that will facilitate ministry to the LGBT.

⁷ Bruce Makato Arnold, “Shepherding a Flock of Different Fleece: A Historical and Social Analysis of the Unique Attributes of the African American Pastoral Caregiver,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* vol. 66, no. 2 (2012): 1-14.

ABSTRACT

The problem this project addressed is homophobia in the AAC in the Greater Washington D.C. area. This includes the D.C. area, along with surrounding suburbs in Maryland and Virginia. Henceforth this area is referred to as the DMV. This problem relates to many underlying issues, among them gay rights, same-sex marriage and an attitude of “don’t ask don’t tell” among many AACs.

The researcher asked the question: “from where does this homophobia stem?” He investigated whether the homophobia is present in the AAC of the DMV as a result of centuries of church dogma to which the leaders of AAC in the DMV have been exposed. He discovered that in some instances this homophobia results from the subtle inculcation of this dogma by church culture.

The Bible and homosexuality are controversial subjects. Those who are adamantly opposed to homosexuality and those who would extend grace to the homosexual to some degree are often diametrically opposed to one another. Yet the issue of homophobia still exists in the AAC of the DMV.

In order to achieve any form of resolution of this controversy, a reasoned discourse must begin. Any steps to begin such discourse must spring from a genuine place of understanding and not from accusation. The core goal of this project was to provide the leaders in the AAC of the DMV some insights about some of the root causes of the ideology that has manifested itself in homophobia in its present form today.

The researcher was not attempting to change minds as much as to provide information that can bring illumination to the leaders in the AAC of the DMV. The anticipated outcome would be a healthy discourse between the LGBT community and the AAC of the DMV. This discourse will provide the AAC of the DMV another tool to assist in ministering to the LGBT community in the church.

DEDICATION

No man or woman achieves any level of success on their own. I am no exception.

I must thank the following people:

To Purnell Lawrence, an elementary school librarian who cultivated in me a thirst for reading. To the late Annie Boone who told a young college dropout to go back and finish his undergraduate degree.

To my fellow cohort classmates who made this journey so much richer with our shared experience. To my ministerial colleagues who not only encouraged me, but consented to be a part of this study.

To my other brother, Darryl Spurlock. Without him this would not have been possible. To my wonderful Millennium Bible Fellowship family who allowed me so much latitude to complete this work. To my mom, dad, sisters (Faye, I feel you from on high) and my brother for calling me professor all these years. To my children, Kristen and Nurney II, who make me so proud every day.

To the best blessing, I got since the Holy Ghost, my wife Kay. You are the Proverbs 31 woman.

Finally, but first, to God be the glory! May this work bring you even more glory.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND CONTEXT

Statement of the Problem

The problem this thesis addressed was the homophobic prejudice against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people (LGBT) by the African American church (AAC). In response to this problem the researcher (a) surveyed biblical literature and theological resources relevant to homosexuality and the church; (b) surveyed academic and related literature and sources that pertain to homosexuality and the AAC in the DMV; (c) conducted seven case studies concentrating on leadership in AAC churches with memberships of less than seven hundred attending members in the DMV in order to evaluate how these churches minister to the LGBT community and to explore the tension between affirming the LGBT individual being faithful to the word of God, (d) interviewed one affirming AAC that performs same sex marriage as a contrast to determine its biblical justification, and (e) analyzed the data gained from the research and offered several recommendations that will assist AA churches in the DMV in determining where they fall on the affirming versus traditional spectrum and to assist AAC's in gaining a better understanding of how Jesus would have the AAC love the LGBT community and still obey His word. The goal of this project was not necessarily to change the minds of lead pastors, but to enable them to minister to the LGBT in the DMV's AAC.

The Context of the Problem

There is a lack of consensus regarding homosexuality and the church.¹ The African American Church is not exempt from this problem. The African American Church (AAC) in the Washington, DC area (DMV) has been accused of being homophobic. More specifically, leaders in the AAC in the DMV have been labeled homophobic as they interpret Scriptures in the way they have been taught. This influences the policies, practices and representations of the leadership of the AAC in the DMV. These practices, policies and representations are not just confined to the interpretation of scripture. They are also social, political and economic. The research centered around two questions: What are the views of the interviewed pastors toward homosexuality? How were their views shaped or informed?

This paper will offer AAC leaders some additional views of scripture that can help them expand their basis of scriptural interpretation about homosexuality. It will offer AAC leaders another interpretation to have in their toolkit regarding this issue that will better equip ACC leaders to minister to the LGBT members.

Homophobia can be likened to a form of prejudice towards homosexuals.² The perception of homophobia in the AAC in the DMV has other underlying issues, among them gay rights verses civil rights, and a form of a don't ask don't tell policy. These issues too, will be addressed during this project.³

¹ "Split Among American Baptists over Homosexuality is Final," Baptist Press, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.bpnews.net/23275/split-among-american-baptists-is-final>.

² Claire M. Renzetti and Jeffrey L. Edleson, *Encyclopedia of International Violence* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 338.

³ Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008).

Ironically, the AAC, which stood, and to a large degree still stands, as the protector of civil rights, seems to be in a quandary when it comes to dealing with the underlying issue of equating gay rights with civil rights.⁴ Recently there has been much debate in Christian circles about gay rights and civil rights because of the recent ruling by the Supreme Court in favor of same sex marriage. Most conservative Christians and many African American pastors argue that gay rights are not the same as civil rights. These Christian conservatives believe an individual does not have a choice over being denied civil rights. However, they argue that an individual does have a choice over being obedient to God when it comes to one's sexuality.

Though it is not within the scope of this project to wrestle with the problem of gay rights being equal to civil rights, this issue must be addressed in a cursory fashion. It is especially important to mention this issue, considering the long history of the AAC as a defender of civil rights. During the preliminary course of investigation, the issue of civil rights kept surfacing. Therefore, the researcher felt it important to address this for clarity.

Because of its long history in the civil rights struggle, it could be said that the AAC has an obligation before God to protect what this researcher would call the spiritual rights of its members as well as the civil rights of all members, gay or straight. Spiritual rights according to this researcher is the obligation of the AAC to present the gospel in love and obedience to what it understands God says through His word on the subject of homosexuality. Secondly, the AAC has a responsibility to make sure the rights of its Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) members are protected in this world,

⁴ "The Black Church: Part 3, 1791-1831" in PBS series, "Africans in America: Brotherly Love," accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.pbs.org/wgh/aia/part3/3narr3>.

and to make certain its LGBT members will stand rightly before God in heaven. This effort has been affected by the current tools the AAC leaders have in their toolkit.

This debate over gay rights verses civil rights takes on some additional poignancy when one realizes that a key advisor to Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, was a homosexual. Today, the AAC, while still struggling to defend and protect the civil rights of AAs, is being accused of ignoring the rights of the LGBT.

Patricia Nell Warren wrote Bayard Rustin was “Dr. Martin Luther King’s chief strategist and right hand man.”⁵ Not only was Rustin a chief architect of the civil rights movement, he was openly gay. Prior to his involvement with the civil rights movement, Rustin was a strong advocate of the fledgling gay rights movement in America. The 1950s in America have often been described as one of the most conservative and at the same time one of the most turbulent decades in this nation’s history. Yet, Bayard Rustin was advocating for gay rights as early as 1950.

Rustin was African American and as a matter of course for the times in which he lived was familiar with struggle. He was a man who knew how to sacrifice. Rustin somehow intuitively understood that his sexual orientation would have a negative impact on the Civil Rights Movement. Thus, while he was quite capable of taking a very public role he chose not to do so. Warren describes Rustin as tall, athletic, charismatic, and intelligent. With these qualities, Rustin was a force to be reckoned with in his own right. Yet he was willing to forgo his rights so that his people could achieve their civil rights.⁶

⁵ Patricia Neil Warren, in *The Right Side of History: 100 Years of LGBT Activism*, Adrian Brooks (New York: Cleiss Press, 2015), 30.

According to Warren, Rustin had a great deal of influence with King's strategy of embracing the non-violent stratagems of Gandhi. Though Rustin played a pivotal role in the movement, his involvement was not without controversy. At one point, bowing to pressure from more conservative pastors in the movement, King distanced himself from Rustin. King later reversed his decision. This time King bowed to pressure exerted from more liberal AA notables. Among them were James Baldwin, who was also an openly gay man in an era when most men were not. Many other AA celebrities showed support for Rustin as well as for civil rights struggle.⁷

The AAC has been accused of silencing the LGBT members with a form of don't ask, don't tell. It could be inferred from the controversy regarding Bayard Rustin's closeness to King that the AAC has a history of silencing gays to promote the wider freedoms of AAs. It would appear that the conservative fringe sought to placate the majority in its congregations over this controversy. This researcher could not but ponder what would the impact have been on the civil rights movement if Rustin had not been willing to take a backseat? How would the movement have been impacted if Rustin had insisted on placing the rights of gays on the same platform with civil rights? The question must also be asked: what would the impact have been on gay rights?

Historically, the AAC has been tolerant of gay members as long as the gay members remained silent. Today the social, political, and moral climate of the country is attempting to equate gay rights with civil rights.⁸ When this sentiment is coupled with the new ruling in favor of same sex marriage, those gay members who were once

⁷ Brooks.

⁸ Keith Boykin, "Why the Black Church Opposes Gay Marriage, Whose Dream?" *Village Voice* vol. 49, no. 21 (2004): 46.

tolerated if they kept quiet are no longer willing to remain silent. There is another irony here as well; the AAC can be accused of being just as intolerant of its vocal gay constituency, as the larger culture is of the church. In this very tolerant society, the church is tolerated as long as the church is quiet. It could be argued that the AAC leader in the DMV faces an additional challenge of obeying the law of the land and obeying the Law of God, simply because of his or her proximity to the seat of national government.

The LGBT members of today do not present themselves as those who were involved in struggle of the Civil Rights movement. Today these individuals are not willing to be silenced. The LGBT today are demanding a voice. This contemporary LGBT members are asking for what they feel to be a rightful place in the AAC. The LGBT feel they have been vilified, stigmatized and disenfranchised long enough by the leadership in the AAC.

Sadly, the LGBT feel that in the very place where they should be loved and affirmed, they get quite the opposite treatment.⁹ Many LGBT members want to feel the love of a father they tangibly see represented by overwhelmingly male leadership that constitutes much of the AAC. Not only do these LGBT members want to feel the love of an earthly father, or as Richard Cohen purports in his book *Coming Out Straight*, these individuals want to feel the unconditional love of an earthly male figure.¹⁰ By extension these LGBT individuals want to be affirmed that they are loved by their heavenly Father as well. Increasingly, at least to this researcher, LGBT are saying: “while Rosa Parks sat down so we could be free, it is time for us to stand up so we can be heard.”

⁹ Horace Griffin, *Their Own Received Them Not: African American Lesbians And Gays in Black Churches* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1961), 100.

¹⁰ Cohen, Richard, *Coming Out Straight* (Winchester, VA: Oakhill Press, Winchester, 2006).

Many LGBT individuals have grown up in their churches. They do not feel the need nor desire to leave the temple of their families to be with “like-minded” people. They were brought to the church as children and brought up in the church and are now adults. Now the LGBT find there is no place nor is there love for them in the very place in which they learned about the love of God. They were taught “Jesus loves me, this I know,” but now if they assert their sexuality there is a message, too often preached from the pulpit, and thus reinforced from the pew, that “you have to go.”¹¹

These frustrated but silent LGBT sufferers love God too much to leave His house, yet they often feel there is no longer a place for them in God’s house. Many LGBT do not want to turn over the table in the house. They just want what they feel is their rightful seat at the table.¹²

The AAC, which for the most part remains very conservative in its interpretation of Scripture, faces a dilemma. How is it to remain faithful to the word of God and at the same time to show the love demanded by the word of God? The word the Bible declares, “Became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). This is the Word who said, “We shall show love one for another” (1 John 3:11). This project will investigate the influences of homophobia and the lack of consensus with respect to treatment of the LGBT with seven AA churches in the greater metropolitan area of Washington, D. C. (DMV). This includes suburban Maryland and northern Virginia as well as the District of Columbia.

The scope of this project of necessity will be limited. This project cannot and indeed will not provide all the answers to this dilemma of homophobia in the AAC of the

¹¹ Griffin, 100.

¹² Griffin, 90.

DMV. However, using the data gleaned from the eight churches that have consented to be a part of this project, the researcher will endeavor to provide a rubric and offer recommendations to assist an AAC pastor in the DMV engage in a fruitful discussion to minister to the LGBT individual, and ultimately to remain faithful to the Word of God.

Delimitations of the Problem

The research was confined to seven AAC churches located within the DMV with attending memberships of seven hundred or less. The assumption is the larger the congregation the easier it may be for the LGBT member to hide, or go unnoticed. The intent of this project was not to “out” any member. Every effort was made to protect the privacy of LGBT members and to respect their rights. The researcher assumed the larger the congregation the harder it may be for the leader to accurately identify those individuals who may be LGBT. Therefore, for the purposes of this project churches with seven hundred attending members or less were the objects of the case studies.

The researcher included one church that approves of same sex marriage. The researcher sought to uncover the biblical interpretative lens this church relied upon to support its position. The researcher sought to uncover how this church presents its narrative regarding the meta-narrative of the AAC.

The researcher engaged members of the clergy who are openly gay. Again, it must be stressed the intent was not to disregard anyone’s privacy nor disrespect their rights. However, if in the course of the research that information was volunteered, that was not a basis for exclusion or inclusion in this project.

The researcher engaged churches that exist primarily to meet the needs of the LGBT community. Homosexuality has become a divisive issue within the greater church.

The same is true within the AAC. As was done with churches that approve of same sex marriage, the researcher sought to uncover what biblical evidence is used by these churches to support their position.

The researcher, while not ignoring the question of nature verse nurture, did not attempt to answer that question. That question is certainly worthy of study. However, for the purposes of this study that question did not fall with the parameters of this project. The question for this project was not how a person became gay. The question addressed was why the AAC in the DMV responds to the person who is gay in the way it does.

The research was focused on churches that have held to a historical and traditional view of the scriptures regarding homosexuality. The research focused primarily on the leadership in the AAC of the DMV. For the most part that leader is defined as the senior pastor of each church. The AAC leadership is still mainly dominated by men. However, the researcher did have the opportunity to interview a female pastor of a church that fell within the parameters of this project.

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the Bible contains the keys to discerning the wisdom necessary to confront the issue of homosexuality. The AAC in the DMV relies upon the Scriptures. Historically, and some now claim ironically, while the AAC has long been active in protecting civil rights, the AAC has not been perceived as being active in protecting the rights of its LGBT members. In addition, the AAC has been accused of taking a very conservative interpretation of Scripture on the issue of homosexuality.

The second assumption was that Jesus commands His disciples, especially those who comprise His church, to love everybody. The question then arises: does the

homophobia in the AAC have a negative impact on the love shown to the LGBT community? The question forces the AAC in the DMV to confront this dilemma: how to be obedient to God and show love to the LGBT, and at the same time maintain fidelity to the Scriptures. Homosexuality in the AAC in the DMV is often labeled as one of the vilest of sins. Historically, the AAC in the DMV is accused of stratifying sin. This means singling out the sin of homosexuality as greater than other sins. If this is in fact a valid allegation against the AAC in the DMV, it could be inferred that the AAC in the DMV has either forgotten, or ignored the efficacy of the cross to deal equally with all sins.

The third assumption was that being gay is not an automatic sentence to hell. In the past, the wider church, both evangelical and AAC in the DMV, has been condemning of the homosexual. Some churches have even gone so far as to single out the homosexual as a sinner beyond redemption. The cultural demand of the twenty-first century is for the AAC in the DMV to be more open and accepting of the LGBT individual.

The fourth assumption this project made was that a person can be saved and still identify as being LGBT. The assumption was expanded to assume that either the claims of Jesus are true or Jesus was a liar. In other words, Jesus either has power over all sin, or He has no power of sin at all. Therefore, if homosexuality is a sin greater than the power of the resurrected Christ, then as Paul said to the Corinthian church, “We are the most miserable of sinners.” (1 Corinthians 15: 19. KJV).

The fifth assumption was that leadership in the AAC leadership generally sets the tone for churches’ attitudes towards LGBT individuals who attend their churches. If the AAC in the DMV is homophobic, who is the logical person to be responsible for helping to change this attitude? Many of these leaders, out of frustration and lack of resources

adopt the prevailing attitude of their colleagues when it comes to ministering to the LGBT. This project will attempt to provide these pastors with another resource they can use to assist these leaders in ministering to their LGBT members.

Subproblems

The first subproblem was to explore biblical literature relevant to homosexuality and the church. The meta-narrative of scriptural interpretation in the wider church on this subject has impacted the scriptural narrative of the AAC in the DMV, and therefore its history of homophobia. The male LGBT person has felt the brunt of the homophobia in the AAC in the DMV. Lack of understanding and a perception of the LGBT male as weak by leaders in the AAC in the DMV is a contributing factor for this treatment. For an institution that must maintain an image of strength in order to defend the rights of its members, weakness in any form, however perceived, cannot be tolerated. As the scriptures are a weapon to combat sin and evil, leaders have often used scriptures to combat this perceived weakness. Many AAC churches adhere to the admonition of Paul to the church at Corinth, in which Paul wrote, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Cor. 2:4).¹³ This scriptural weapon must be used to rid the church of any weakness. If the LGBT is a form of weakness, then scriptures will be used to rid the church of this weakness. Homophobia is often the underlying motive that drives the AAC leader in the DMV to lash out against the LGBT in this fashion.

¹³ Unless otherwise specified all scriptural references are taken from *The New King James Version of the Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1982).

The second subproblem was to explore academic literature and related sources that pertain to homosexuality and the AAC in the DMV. The researcher used his access to the Library of Congress, Bethel University Library resources and the Internet to obtain this information. The researcher attempted to find the most important literary works that deal with some of the underlying influences that have contributed to homophobia in the AAC in the DMV.

The third subproblem was to do research in seven churches and produce seven case studies using mixed methods of research. The researcher concentrated on leadership in AAC churches with attending memberships of less than seven hundred in the DMV. These parameters were used to evaluate how these churches minister to the LGBT community. The researcher wanted to explore the tension between affirming the LGBT individual while conforming to the Word of God. He hoped to determine where various churches stand on same sex marriage He believed this was necessary because of the tension that has developed between the historic practices of the AAC in the DMV and the social realities that the LGBT community is forcing the AAC to confront.

The fourth subproblem was to interview at least one open and affirming AAC that performs same sex marriage. The point of this was to highlight the contrast between it and the other churches, and to explore its biblical rationalization. The researcher queried the leadership for the theological and biblical evidence that was used in making the determination to perform same sex marriages.

The fifth subproblem was to assist the church leadership in assessing where they fall on the same-sex (SSA) scale. This provides a measurement for where a church falls on the spectrum ministering to LGBT individuals. It also provides a tool to which the

church may refer as a guide that enables it to remain faithful to the Word of God and at the same time obey the Word of God. The intent is not just to construct a rubric spectrum or another standard of measurement but to provide a tool for ministering to the LGBT individual that is both biblically consistent and loving.

The Setting for the Project

The researchers' church, Millennium Bible Fellowship (MBF), is in Prince Georges County, Maryland. This county sits at the southern and eastern borders of Washington, DC. The research was focused primarily on AACs within Prince Georges County. The researcher was able to include in the seven churches one church located in the city of Washington and one church located in the Northern Virginia suburbs.

MBF is in the incorporated portion of the city of Capitol Heights, Maryland. This city has recently been designated as an enterprise zone. That designation means that concentrated and concerted efforts are being applied to attract new business and residential development to the city. Capitol Heights was once a sleepy little hollow of working class AA families. Many of these families derived their incomes from either low to mid-level government jobs or related government services. For the past five years, the city has been undergoing a steady change. Because of the designated zone status, new businesses are opening in the city's incorporated and unincorporated areas. One of the biggest changes has been in the new homes and communities springing up in and around Capitol Heights.

Capitol Heights is now being seen as an attractive location to live and to work, both because of its proximity to Washington, and the prices of the new homes that are being built all around the DMV. The city is enjoying revitalization. The affordable and

quality new homes being built also bring in new families. These new families are changing the demographic of the city from that of working class poor to upwardly mobile middle class. The next census will no doubt reflect the changing racial and economic demographic of Capitol Heights. One has only to observe the new faces that dot the community and the new businesses that are opening to meet the needs of the new residents to see that Capitol Heights is a city being revived.

This impact is perhaps felt most keenly in the neighborhood schools. MBF has partnered with one of the elementary schools in the city Capitol Heights Elementary School (CHES). The association with CHES has afforded MBF a unique opportunity to stay tuned to the needs of the community. This school, like many of the other schools in the city, county, state and nation has had to adjust for the emerging Latino population.

Fortunately for MBF, the pastor's mother-in-law is Latino. She was born in Panama and immigrated to the United States when she married the pastor's father-in-law. The mother-in-law has since retired from the District of Columbia school system after teaching English as a second language (ESL) for thirty-five years. Now she and her daughter, the researcher's wife, volunteer at the school once or twice a week. This need for ESL is but one of the many changes being reflected in the school and the neighborhood. Because these two meet a felt need with the emerging Latino population at the school, MBF has been afforded many other opportunities to be of service at the school.

The issue of SSA is being felt at every level of education, even in the elementary schools. There are same-sex parents whose children attend CHES. Because the researcher, his wife, and other members of the church maintain a highly visible presence

at the school, they are often asked casually about their reaction to families where both parents are of the same sex. The principal and other members of the school have turned to the researcher's wife on more than one occasion for moral support in dealing with these situations. Because MBF has no real guidelines regarding the gay community, the response has not been consistent, though for the most part scriptural and loving. This must change. Because of this project, the researcher will develop a model of response to the LGBT question that is consistent, loving, and scriptural.

MBF, like other churches across the nation, is impacted by political correctness. Converge Mid-Atlantic, the conference covering for MBF, has just recently issued guidelines for churches to adopt in dealing with the issue of same-sex marriage. The biggest threat this guideline addresses is the potential lawsuits the church could face for failing to minister to the needs of all the community, the LGBT in particular. MBF, like many of its sister churches in the surrounding area, needs to have a defined plan in place not just to protect itself against potential lawsuits, but also to minister effectively to all people who come with a need. At the same time MBF has a duty to remain faithful to the Word of God.

The Importance of the Project

The Supreme Court ruling on same sex marriage has propelled the issue of homosexuality or same sex attraction to the forefront. It is no longer possible to ignore the fact that LGBT persons attend church. The DMV, not unlike many urban centers around the country, is an area that is bustling with Millennials. If the church is going to minister to this burgeoning generation it must get beyond the old statement the church

used to deal with the issue of homosexuality “God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” The biblical reality is God made Adam, Eve, and Steve.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

MBF is a fifteen-year-old church plant. The researcher is the founding pastor and continues in this capacity today. MBF is organized on the elder led leadership model. However, currently there are no elders in place in MBF but this is the leadership model that will be followed when qualified persons are identified to serve as elders. MBF’s ministerial staff is a complement of four including the pastor and his wife. There are five trustees and four deacons. Two of the deacons are over fifty, the other two are under the age of twenty-five. One of these deacons is a college student who will be with the church on an interim basis until he completes his degree. A group comprised of all the ministry heads including the trustees and the deacons meets once a month. This group for the most part makes the decisions that govern the church and ministry activity. The researcher’s influence, like so many of his counterparts in the AAC in the DMV, carries much weight in determining church policy. For balance, the trustees for the most part handle all the financial affairs of the church, at the researcher’s insistence.

The church is on the way back from a serious decline. Part of the reason for the decline in membership was the move to the church’s current location. For more than ten years MBF was situated in an upwardly mobile section of Prince Georges County. The researcher, following the vision of God, was led to move the church to its present location. This new location is situated in one of the lowest economic areas of the county. The area is older and much of it is in serious disrepair. Yet at the same time there are pockets of prosperity as mentioned earlier. In addition, the gentrification of neighboring

Washington, DC is slowly but inexorably having an impact on the economics of the neighborhood. Whether that impact is positive or negative depends on whom you ask.

Two thirds of the two hundred membership left the church during the transition. At present the church has approximately sixty-five active members. Fifty are adults ranging in age from eighty-eight to twenty-one. Baby Boomers account for one third of the adult membership and the remaining two thirds are Millennials. There is a tiny core of the Great Generation.

MBF, while ministering to the community in its present location, has encountered members of the LGBT community. While not publicly declaring itself to be an affirming church, which in this locale can be misconstrued to be in favor of same-sex marriage, MBF has welcomed people from all walks of life. Last year MBF was approached by one of its members for help with a fifteen-year-old who was contemplating suicide. His parents had thrown him out on the street when he told them he was gay. The first response from MBF was that of love. Sadly, the young man could not receive the love and he drifted away. MBF wants to be a church that obeys God by loving Him and our neighbor and at the same time ministering to the LGBT.

Though MBF will not be a part of the seven churches in the case study, it is typical of many of the small to medium churches when it comes to the challenge of ministering to LGBT individuals in the DMV. Because of the controversy and the delicacy of this subject matter, this is not something the pastor should or desires to take on by himself. A rubric and a model that the leadership of MBF could use as a guide would be of great benefit.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

At a recent conference sponsored by Converge Ministries Worldwide, the researcher was informed that the Millennial generation is larger than the Baby Boomer generation. The Boomers, of course, are notorious for shaping the course of the United States of America. America is regarded as the greatest nation on Earth. By default, then the Boomers shaped the course of the world. As the oldest Boomer has turned seventy and the youngest has turned fifty, it could be said the Boomer generation is passing the baton. That baton is being passed on to the Millennial generation.

This millennial generation is said to be more relational, more philanthropic and more spiritual than the two generations that separate it from the Baby Boomers.¹⁴ The AAC is feeling this impact. The general perception in America is that the church is irrelevant and unimportant. Thus, the church in America is said to be in decline. In the AA community, the church has lost the place of prominence it once enjoyed. It no longer holds the place as the center of the AA community. The pastor is no longer the venerated individual he or she used to be. The AA church, along with the church in America at large, will suffer even more if it fails to reach this millennial generation. This generation is waiting and watching to see how the church will respond to the burgeoning LGBT movement.

Millennials value authenticity when it comes to relationships and organized religion. Though this generation is very fluid in defining spirituality, nevertheless it acknowledges the existence of a God. Whoever they determine He or She to be

¹⁴ United State Census Bureau, "Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse," last updated Thursday June 25, 2015, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-113.html>.

(Millennials often do not accept the masculine pronoun when referring to God) is the real question, one many Millennials cannot answer. Millennials tend to determine the validity of the church in direct proportion to the church's treatment of the LGBT community. Should the church, in this instance the AAC, fail to develop an authentic and loving yet biblical response to this community, the church will not only fail the LGBT community, but it very well may lose the Millennial generation as well. If the Boomers influenced the destiny of a nation and subsequently the world, failing to reach Millennials could consequently result in a failure of the church worldwide for future generations.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This section revealed the complexity of both sides of the debate on homosexuality in the Bible. Different scholars read the same texts and come away with different interpretations. To provide the AA pastor with some insight the researcher concentrated on two areas. The researcher reflects first on the history of how theologians have interpreted sexuality in the Bible. Secondly, he investigates scripture passages at issue in the LGBT debates and some of their contemporary interpreters. This reflection will help AAC pastors better understand the sources of homophobia in the AAC of the DMV. The researcher's objective is to provide AAC pastor-leader with tools to assist him or her in ministering to the LGBT in their midst. The core goal in this project is not to change a mind but to provide information that will lead to establishing a place of dialogue between the DMV AAC leadership and LGBT members.

Understanding Church Teachers

In this section the researcher surveyed the impact the church fathers had on how people view sexuality, homosexuality and celibacy. These are the sources the AA leaders in the DMV have drawn upon to interpret scripture for their own context. These sources have shaped the interpretations that formed the ideology, theology and methodology upon which AA pastors in the DMV rely to minister to LGBT members. Several of the early church fathers wrote explicitly about homosexuality. Among these are Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and John Calvin.

Tertullian

Tertullian is credited with facilitating the rise of a celibate priesthood. He did not hold women in high regard. According to Tertullian, woman is responsible for the original sin. The devil could not attack man, so the devil chose to deceive the woman Eve, who in turn was able to persuade the man, Adam.

And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devils gateway: you are the unsealer of what (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die. And do you think adorning yourself and above your tunic of skins?¹

Tertullian was motivated to exclude women from leadership in the church. During his lifetime women were not allowed to hold political office. Tertullian subsequently advocated that women should not hold any office of leadership in the church. As women were removed further and further from leadership in the church, the male dominated leadership was led further and further from interaction with a real, live woman. This ideology reinforced the ideology of a celibate priesthood. But this celibacy has become a source of frustration and even an obsession for priests. Carmen Berry writes: "It is fair to say that many of these church fathers and others in leadership became obsessed with sex, or the absence of sex, through their veneration of celibacy and virginity."²

Consequently, the church for generations has had a male dominated leadership that has been denied sex, one of the strongest desires in a human. This has only increased

¹ Tertullian, "On the Apparel of Women," *New Advent*, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0402.htm>.

² Carmen Renee Berry, *The Unauthorized Guide to Sex and the Church* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 74.

frustration and sexual obsession. The sexual molestation scandals that have rocked the Catholic Church in recent years are one indication of how too many of this so-called celibate priesthood has dealt with their own sexual frustration.

John Chrysostom

Perhaps borrowing from the tradition of earlier interpreters of the ancient Hebrew text, John Chrysostom in his “Homilies on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans,” like Augustine, believed that a man who lies with another debases his manhood by placing himself in the position of a woman.³ In the cultural context of Chrysostom, a woman was perceived as weak. For a man to willingly allow another man to subjugate him was unnatural not just sexually but psychologically as well.⁴ This attitude is still held by many AAC pastors in the DMV.

Augustine

Augustine has been a dominant influence on the church’s view towards sexuality for well over a thousand years. According to Christopher Dawson, Augustine is important to church because he is considered to be a bridge between the old-world order and the new world.⁵ Augustine’s brilliance, vulnerability and profundity made an impact on the church for generations both on Catholics and Protestants and on the AAC in the DMV.

John Gibb and William Montgomery sum up the influence of Augustine on the church:

Rarely since the Reformation have the theologians of the two great communions agreed to acknowledge the authority of any one teacher. But the theologians of

³ John Chrysostom, “Homily 4 on Romans Homosexuality,” *Orthodox Counselor*, accessed January 28, 2017, http://orthodoxcounselor.com/Articles/John_Chrysostom_Homily_4.

⁴ David Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of John Chrysostom* (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1996).

⁵ Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

Trent on the one hand, Melanchthon and Calvin on the other, appeal with equal confidence and give equal honour to Augustine. The same custom has prevailed among divergent schools of thought with the Churches.⁶

Augustine lived and wrote during the period when the fractures that would eventually bring about the fall of the Roman Empire began. In his succinct history of the Roman Empire, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, Dawson explains the importance of the office of bishop, an office Augustine eventually attained. In his capacity as the Bishop of Hippo, Augustine's influence was not just for the period of his lifetime but for centuries yet to come.⁷

Augustine enjoyed a unique status. He is reputed to have had more influence and thus more power than the local magistrate. He had charisma that led to his acceptance among his religious peers. Augustine coupled that with his love for language and training as a rhetorician with a theatrical bent when he wrote his *Confessions*. He brought all his considerable energies to bear to enlighten his congregants and readers.

As with many gifted men and women of the ages, Augustine's work was not fully appreciated during his lifetime. Dawson reports,

The age of Augustine ended in ruin and the Church of Africa was blotted out as if it had never been. [But] Augustine was justified in his faith. Augustine's spirit is said to have lived and bore fruit long after he died. His spirit entered the tradition of the Western Church and molded the thought of the Western Church and imprinted itself on western civilization.⁸

Sherwood Wirt provides an explanation on the enduring legacy of Augustine. In his introduction of *The Confessions of Augustine in Modern English*, Wirt poses the question

⁶ John Gibb and William Montgomery, *The Confessions of Augustine* (London: Cambridge University Press 1908), xv.

⁷ Dawson, 2009.

⁸ Dawson, 184.

“Who was Augustine?”⁹ Wirt states that while Augustine may not have been the most learned of philosophers of antiquity, his influence towers above them all. Wirt describes Augustine as “the very first psychologist of the ancient world.”¹⁰

AA pastors in the DMV are a type of Augustine. They marshal their charisma in tandem with rhetorical tradition inherent in the AAC preaching tradition to persuade their congregations. It is worth noting the influence wielded by Augustine as a bishop and the influence of a typical AAC pastor in the DMV is very similar. Like Augustine, they also often find themselves standing between their congregants who have little political and economic power and those institutions and people who have access to both economic and political power. Augustine’s influence is still being felt over the broader church culture and thus over the AAC in the DMV. Some leaders of AACs have been directly influenced by the writings of Augustine.¹¹ How the AAC leaders defend or represent the LGBT member’s political and economic interests quite possibly is influenced or tainted by entrenched Augustinian dogma.¹²

Augustine’s influence on current views of sexuality can be traced back to the overall development of his theology. Augustine converted to Christianity from Manicheism, which was a dualistic religion containing Christian, Gnostic, and pagan elements. It was founded in Persia in the third century and was a system based on supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness. Augustine’s view on good and

⁹ Sherwood Wirt, *The Confessions of Augustine in Modern English* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), Introduction.

¹⁰ Wirt, xiv.

¹¹ Horace Griffin, *Their Own RecieveThem Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006).

¹² Dawson, 177.

evil quite possibly was influenced by his earlier belief in Manicheism. Gillian Clark asserts that Augustine has been accused of being Manicheistic in his view of human sexuality.¹³ Many have accused him of this, even though it was his dissatisfaction with Manicheism's rigid doctrine of duality that led Augustine back to Christianity. Clark argues that Augustine agreed with theologians of his day that sex was to be between man and woman for the purpose of procreation. However, Clark points out Augustine's additional caveat about sex: "Children are born infected with the lust which was biologically necessary for their conception—even though this 'original sin' is a tidy explanation for the greed and possessiveness which worried Augustine in the little children."¹⁴

To this researcher's mind, if Augustine was melding his earlier belief in Manicheism with his newfound belief in Christianity, he would have been more inclined to agree with the concept of "original sin." To the Manicheist, black is black and white is white. There is no grace or mercy implied or implicit in this religion. This researcher would assert that Augustine was trying to legitimize the existence of his son Adeodatus. He was the son born of the union between Augustine and a concubine. The name of Adeodatus' mother was not mentioned in Augustine's writings. Clark maintains this was not out of neglect or disregard for his son's mother, but out of the respect and appreciation Augustine had for the mother of his son. Augustine seems inclined to include grace in his teaching. However often it may seem that the while the AAC still

¹³ Gillian Clark, *Augustine, The Confessions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60.

¹⁴ Clark, 60.

holds on to vestiges of Augustinian teachings about sexuality, the AAC does not seem to be willing or scripturally able to extend any grace to the LGBT.

Clark purports teenaged Augustine was torn between two desires, “sexual desire for a partner and the love of wisdom and philosophy.”¹⁵ Donald Boisvert suggests that there was a homosexual relationship between Augustine and this friend of his young adulthood. One of the things that differentiates Augustine from other church fathers is that Augustine acknowledges his sexuality.¹⁶

Augustine wrote his highly influential *Confessions* around 400 CE, after his ascendancy to the episcopacy as the bishop of Hippo.¹⁷ In the *Confessions*, Augustine does not decry his earlier debauchery, nor does he glorify his past sins. He presents himself as a man who struggled deeply with his human shortcomings and failures. This work explored the human motives that could make a person develop an idea of God. In this sense Augustine is much like C.S. Lewis. Lewis had the uncanny ability to look deeply into the psyche of a human to offer some explanation of why people think and act. Augustine and Lewis both were willing to be vulnerable to their readers and completely transparent about their human frailty. Wirt writes:

Augustine as seen in [the *Confessions*] is not a saint of the Fra Angelico type, seeking to scale the loftiest peaks of holiness, but a young passion-tossed, ambitious man wrestling with temptations common to all, and long conquered by them.¹⁸

¹⁵ Clark, 4.

¹⁶ Donald L. Boisvert, *Queer Religion—Sanctity and Male Desire: A Gay Reading of Saints* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 82-93.

¹⁷ Gibb and Montgomery, xi.

¹⁸ Wirt, xii.

The chief power of the Confessions, however, to rivet attention, is derived from their contents, which appeal to every man who has experienced the struggle between good and evil in his own soul.¹⁹

Gibb describes the church culture of Augustine's day as not being any different from the culture of the world: "There was at the time so little difference in morals between the Church and the world, that those who were in earnest about religion were inevitably attracted to a form of piety which bore upon its face the stamp of reality."²⁰ This "reality" drove Augustine to retreat into a quasi-monastic existence. While Augustine's asceticism was more practical and humane than those of his contemporaries, nonetheless it required one to be celibate. Augustine did not flee into a wilderness experience like Jerome. However, he had concluded that sex was a gift from God, designed to be confined to the marriage bed for procreation. If one was not married one should be celibate. However, Augustine agreed with Paul if some could not contain their lust, it would be better for them to marry.

Further, in the very case of the more immoderate requirement of the due of the flesh, which the Apostle[Paul] enjoins not on them by way of command, but allows them by way of leave, that they have intercourse also beside the cause of begetting children; although evil habits impel them to such intercourse, yet marriage guards them from adultery or fornication.²¹

Augustine would seem to confine the LGBT to a life of celibacy. Augustine makes no mention of why some people may have SSA. His views of homosexuality as expressed in his *Confessions* appear to be an indictment on the person with SSA.

Sins against nature, therefore, like the sin of Sodom, are abominable and deserve punishment whenever and wherever they are committed. If all nations committed

¹⁹ Wirt, xi.

²⁰ Gibb and Montgomery, iv.

²¹ Augustine, "Of the Good of Marriage," *New Advent*, accessed January 28, 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1309htm>.

them, all alike would be held guilty of the same charge in God's law, for our Maker did not prescribe that we should use each other in this way. In fact, the relationship that we ought to have with God is itself violated when our nature, of which He is Author, is desecrated by perverted lust.²²

There is adage of the AAC that says, 'It is better to yearn than to burn.' When AAC pastors in the DMV expect LGBT members to remain celibate, they are unconsciously basing this view on what they have been taught. The AA pastor is much like a modern-day Augustine. Most often these AA pastors are gifted in the unique oral tradition of preaching that is an integral part of the AAC and its style of worship. These pastors have often been accused of using the rich cultural heritage of this preaching to perpetuate homophobia in the AAC, in the DMV and throughout the United States.

Augustine reflected that the sex act itself between a man and a woman before the Fall was endorsed by God. If man had not transgressed as he did, God would have still encouraged sex not just for procreation but for pleasure as well. According to Peter Brown, Augustine in his *Confessions* linked sex with the term "disjunction." Brown concludes per Augustine that God had intended for man to dwell in harmonious relationships. "God had created man and woman to be sexual beings."²³ But Adam and Eve lost their "angelic" bodies they had enjoyed before the Fall. Brown uses the term "ascetic paradigm"²⁴ to describe this position. Man, now had an option between an "angelic and material" state of being.²⁵ In these states sex was not sinful in the context of heterosexual marriage relationship. However, if a man chose the "ascetic" or angelic

²² Gibb and Montgomery, iv.

²³ Brown, 19.

²⁴ Brown, 10.

²⁵ Brown, 10.

mode of existence he could somewhat assure himself of living closer to God. One consequence of the Fall was that the “material” mode of man relegated the sex act to the marriage bed.²⁶

Two takeaways are important to note from Brown’s work. First, Augustine’s life and philosophy sheds light on the rise of a celibate priesthood. Second, it shows how the sex act was restricted to the marriage bed. This Augustinian philosophy is consistent with his reliance on Pauline doctrine. No doubt Augustine would have found a degree of comfort in the seventh chapter of the book of Romans in which Paul wrestled with temptation. Augustine evidently concluded from this chapter that the sin is the commission of the act, not the thought, or the temptation.²⁷ These Pauline and Augustinian teachings influenced not just the Catholic church, but the Protestant church, and therefore the AAC in the DMV as well.

Donald Boisvert, is a post- modern apologist for the LGBT Catholic Church. He is a revisionist. Boisvert writes as an apologist for the LGBT Catholic community, and his views fall outside the traditional interpretations of scripture and the Fathers. Though Boisvert writes for the Catholic Church the researcher chose him because his views are so radical and extreme. If nothing else exposure to Boisvert will provide the AA pastor in the DMV with another viewpoint. The AA pastor may not agree with the views espoused by Boisvert, but at the very least the AA will have an idea of some of the more radical views about scripture. Boisvert makes the following comment on Paul and Augustine,

The church of Paul and Augustine is most definitely the church of rejection and oppression for queer people. One need only to read the official Vatican teachings and pronouncements on homosexuality to grasp the full impact of their pernicious

²⁶ Brown, 10.

²⁷ Wirt, 37.

and hateful speech. Queer people are non-heterosexual and therefore not within the traditional theological paradigm of husband-wife as a source of modeling for the church herself as Bride of Christ.²⁸

It is obvious from this statement that Boisvert blames the teachings of Paul and Augustine for a lot of the pain and angst he has experienced as a gay Catholic. Gay Catholics, according to the teachings of Paul and Augustine are “Double outcasts”²⁹ because gays have sex outside the biblical confines and because gays do not use sex to procreate. Thus, gays have been made out to be subverts to the church and not sinners to be embraced and loved. Some would attest this attitude has been passed down through generations to many AAC pastors in the DMV in their respective churches. It has influenced their theology, philosophy and preaching.

Boisvert puts forth an interesting argument about both the lives of Paul and Augustine. Both men were radicals to some degree. Paul was a radical in the way he persecuted the Christian church. Augustine was a radical in the prodigal lifestyle he led prior to coming to Christ. Augustine flaunted the mores of his day by living with a woman and fathering a son out of wedlock. Boisvert likens their conversion experience in responding to the call of Christ to that of a person, in this case a gay man, falling in love. To fall in love is to open oneself up to another. To Boisvert, when both men opened themselves up to God they were in fact falling in love with God. Thus, the AA pastor having been exposed to this interpretation of scripture, however radical it may seem, now has some additional insight that can foment a place to begin a discussion among themselves and help them minister to the LGBT in their churches.

²⁸ Boisvert, 82.

²⁹ Boisvert, 82-83.

Boisvert, points to Paul's and Augustine's conversion stories to underscore his theory. In a painting done by Michelangelo Caravaggio of Saul's conversion on the Damascus road, maintaining his pro-gay apologist bias, offering a very different interpretation from traditional apologists, Boisvert infers a homoerotic theme.³⁰

The heavenly light of conversion is reflected on the animals' body hitting a Saint Paul lying flat on his back, his arms stretched heavenward, his legs parted and opened out, one knee upraised. He is dressed in a military uniform, his helmet to the side of his head. An unusual element is the almost erect nipple that protrudes from the left side of his torso. The face is young, though bearded. His hair appears fine and curly. His eyes are closed in an attitude of willful submission. The mouth, slightly open seems to speak words of supplication. It invites kissing. This is a Paul literally being seduced by the Christian god he has so fanatically and systematically persecuted. Religious conversion is very much like being ravaged by a possessive and demanding lover.³¹

That last statement is most telling in this researcher's mind. Gay men may feel betrayed by the church that invites them to open to God. But at the same time this church tells these same men that God despises them. Such is the sentiment expressed by many LGBT who sit silently in the AAC.

While Boisvert infers Pauls' homoeroticism, he asserts that Augustine homoerotic experience was implied. Augustine in his early twenties lost a close friend to a recurring fever. In his *Confessions* Augustine reflects on his grief,

At this sorrow my heart was utterly darkened. Whatever I looked on was death. My native country was torture to me, and my father's house a strange unhappiness. Whatever I have been use to share with him became, without him, a cruel torment. My eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not there. I hated all places because he was not in them, nor could they any more say to me "Look he is coming," as they had when he was alive and absent from me. I became a great puzzle to myself, and asked why she was so sad, and why she so disquieted me; but she did not know what to say in reply. If I said "Trust in God," she did not obey me, for good reason: that most dear friend who she had lost was better and

³⁰ Boisvert, 87.

³¹ Boisvert, 91.

more than the Manichee phantasm in which I bid her trust. To me nothing was sweet but tears; they succeeded my friend as the love of my heart.³²

Boisvert finds obvious homoerotic overtones on this discourse about grief. “For Saint Augustine to have a close intimate relationship with another man would not have been entirely out of character for him at this stage of his life. He admits to ‘being seduced in various desires,’ and he was notorious, as he himself writes, for his licentious ways.”³³

Boisvert feels pity for Augustine. He sees the saint as a man who appreciated the love of another man both physically and emotionally. Yet metaphysically Augustine rejected both desires when it came to church dogma, which still afflicts the Catholic church and to a degree the Protestant church. Boisvert calls such rejection the “most pernicious of self- hatred.”

Augustine was given to extremes: from being the hedonist, he moved to being the perfect religious convert. In so doing, he rejected everything that had gone before, including all the human relationships, in fact, that had been his support and solace.³⁴

In contrast to traditional thought on the psyche of Augustine, Boisvert seems to suggest Augustine was a man in denial and riddled with guilt. He believes that Augustine projected these same feelings onto the Catholic Church and by default then to gay men and women throughout the centuries. In doing so, Augustine turned the church from a place of solace to a place of condemnation per Boisvert.

Boisvert is thoroughly homosexual and unashamed. He chose several saints to view through the lens of his personal life experience. In a manner that borders both on

³² Boisvert, 91.

³³ Boisvert, 91.

³⁴ Boisvert, 91.

brilliance and vulgarity he examines the reasons why a gay male would be attracted to these saints. Paul and Augustine are two mentioned in this project. In Boisvert's eyes, these two are the least attractive. Paul was not attractive because of the damage he has done to the gay saints through the ages. Augustine was not attractive because of the denial on his part of his same sex attraction.

Boisvert intertwines sensuality with sainthood in the lives of the believer. He insists that all are called to be saints, at least by the Catholic church. Consequently, it is okay to fantasize, even sexually, about the saints. For in this manner of opening up to the saints, one is opening oneself up to God. To be open to the penetrating power of the saint is akin to open one's spirit to the penetrating power of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, to penetrate the saint is to delve deeper into the depths of the spirit.³⁵ Rather than condemn one's flesh for being perverse according to the societal normative interpretation of scripture, one should use this attraction as a conduit to a deeper relationship with God.

Boisvert not only interpreted Augustine through this queer lens. He also interpreted scripture through that same lens. For instance, he suggests that Jesus and John the Apostle were lovers. This seems to be a common theme among affirming authors.

Perhaps Boisvert's intent was not to smear Jesus with sin, but to reconcile with His (Jesus) intense love for another man. The premise is that by reconciling oneself to Jesus' love AA pastors will be led to reconciling with LGBT members out of love. A reconciling love that will not deny any truths of scripture, but a love that recognizes the privilege and responsibility to love all men as Jesus would. In contrast to Boisvert's assertions, thus Jesus need not be a sinner for the gay person to be loved. It is not

³⁵ Boisvert, 90.

necessary to drag Jesus down to the sin position of humankind. It is far better to lift men up to the pristine level where Jesus is. One tenant of the Christian faith is while Jesus walked with humanity in the flesh, He was without sin. The challenge is to find a way to love all God's children recognizing the sin while reconciling the sinner. Boisvert presents a different view of scripture. Though some of his ideas seem extreme, his thoughts offer the AA pastor another lens to use as a tool to understand LGBT members in their congregations. The challenge is to create a working outline that can assist an AAC in the DMV to define where they fall on the spectrum of traditionalism versus affirming and use that spectrum as a tool to minister to the LGBT.

John Calvin

John Calvin has had an enormous influence on Protestantism, of which the AAC is a part. This in turn has influenced how the AAC interacts with LGBT members.

The Pastor-Teacher's Authority

One major way in which Calvin has influenced the AAC is in its veneration of the near-infallible pastor-teacher. Gary Smith explains,

There has always been a tendency to combine in one person the doctor or teacher, who with academic learning declares the doctrine or teaching, and the pastor or preacher, who explains and applies it to the people. Calvin indeed did not object to pastors being called doctor so long as we know that there is another class of teachers (*alterum doctorum genus*) who preside in the education of pastors, and in the instruction of the whole church.³⁶

This attitude toward the pastor-teacher gives the AAC leader enormous control over the church. He or she sets the tone for whole the church. His or her preaching determines the beliefs and doctrines of the congregation. All this has a direct impact on how the AAC

³⁶ Gary Scott Smith, *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America, 1870-1915* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdman Publishing, 1985), 12.

deals with LGBT members. If the pastor-teacher of a congregation says homosexuality is an abomination, then all its members tend to regard homosexuality that way.

Calvinist Doctrine

Calvinist doctrine has heavily influenced AAC practice of Christianity, especially in AACs. Laurence Vance explains how Calvinism is at the heart of doctrine held dear by historically Black churches, Baptist churches in particular.³⁷ The AAC has borrowed heavily from general Baptist polity and thought. Calvin's reforms centered around helping the church better conform to what he regarded as the basic tenets of God's word. Calvin, would not encourage nor would this researcher, have the AA pastor in the DMV to deviate from the truth in the scripture. However, this philosophical foundation reinforced by years of exposure to church dogma does contribute the AAC's reluctance to accept LGBT or to seek a place of dialogue with the LGBT member because the AAC exalts scripture above all alternative viewpoints, including viewpoints promoted by LGBT advocates.

Calvinist Philosophy versus Civil Rights

Ironically, another way in which Calvinism has influenced the AAC's attitude toward LGBT people is the way in which Calvinism can contradict the philosophy of civil rights according to Smith. He writes that Calvin was not necessarily racially prejudiced. But Calvinism's proponents intermingled his predestination with capitalism as far back as the Great Awakening, through the Revolutionary War era and into the Industrial Revolution. This syncretism of Calvinism and capitalism tended to promote the exploitation of AAs in slavery according to Smith because it upheld the idea that those

³⁷ Laurence Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola: Vance Publications, 1999), 65.

who were successful (Whites), were destined to be so, and those who were oppressed (AAs), were also destined to be so.³⁸ Thus, even when AAs gained freedom, those who followed the Calvinist-capitalistic syncretism came increasingly to oppose the rights of the working class and the growing labor movement near the turn of the twentieth century as America shook off her isolationism and began to emerge as an “international force”.³⁹ Because many proponents of Calvinism felt threatened by the dismantling of their myth that the wealthy were predestined and thus entitled to rule over the poor, some fought against the civil rights efforts. Smith therefore concludes that Calvinism has been antagonistic toward the Civil Rights Movement, even though the AAC has been ironically influenced by Calvinism in its beliefs.

And just as Calvinism was used in earlier American history to uphold Whites as the ruling class, it is used today to uphold heterosexual leaders as the ruling class in the AAC.⁴⁰ Heterosexuals are predestined to rule, and homosexuals are predestined to be oppressed. In the same way in which Smith’s understanding of Calvinism reinforced White over Black class structure, it reinforces a heterosexual over homosexual class structure. This same philosophy is used by AACs to turn homosexuals into second-class citizens.

³⁸ Smith, 12

³⁹ Vance, 65.

⁴⁰ Smith, 12.

Summary

Early church fathers, along with famous Medieval and Renaissance church teachers, have heavily influenced how AAC leaders understand and respond to LGBT members.

What the Bible Says about Homosexuality

AAC leaders have been strongly influenced not only by church fathers but also by the interpretations of the Bible. Commentators have used the Christian Bible as a reference and a starting point for a discourse on theological reflections on various passages of the scriptures regarding sex and homosexuality. This section focuses on what the scriptures say about homosexuality and sexuality in general by looking at some of the various interpretations of Moses, Jesus and Paul. The researcher focused on the writings of Moses and Paul, as well as the Gospels, and the interpretation theologians and scholars discern from these scriptures and the subject of homosexuality.

To accomplish this the researcher expands upon the traditionalist view as well as on the revisionist view of the scriptures. By way of reminder, those who hold to the biblical prohibition of all forms of homosexuality are labeled traditionalists. Those who insist that the scriptures speaking to the subject of homosexuality are out of context in today's culture and need to be revised are labeled revisionists. Thus, AAC pastors in the DMV who are traditionalists are sometimes called homophobic. This may be an unfair and inaccurate label in this instance as AAC pastors rely on what they have been taught.

If an AAC pastor really is homophobic, then the question to ask is how did the AAC pastor in the DMV get to this point? Because the AA pastor has all too frequently used scripture as a bulwark to support his or her stance on homosexuality, it is important

to understand the kinds of interpretations that influence AAC leaders. One would assume that AAC pastors in the DMV would not intentionally inflict hurt upon any of their members. Yet in the course of ministry many have been accused of inflicting hurt on LGBT members because homophobia has often been laced with fear and venom from pulpit and has been directed toward the LGBT member in the pew.

Moses

Moses, as the author of the first five books of the Bible, has much to say about homosexuality. At several points his writing is the center of the controversy between traditionalists and revisionists.

Creation

The debate between revisionists and traditionalists begins in with the creation account of Adam and Eve's union.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen. 1:26-27).

This is evidence that God was intentional in His design for two separate and distinct genders. Both the male and female were made in the image of God and both were to have dominion over the Earth.

John MacArthur writes that God gave Adam specific commands for caring and tending to the Garden of Eden: "God also gave man the power of choice and set before man the privilege of growing in divine favor."⁴¹ This is the beginning of the free will of man. Humanity has the choice to serve God.

⁴¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson Reference, 1990), 5.

In Genesis 1:18, God said, “It is not good for man to live alone live alone, I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Woman was formed to be a help-meet for man. This relationship was first established and blessed by God. According to MacArthur, Wycliffe believed that God’s intention for the woman was to be, “The one who could share man’s responsibilities and respond to his nature with understanding and love.”⁴² Adam and Eve were designed by God to work in cooperation with God first and with each other second. As the woman was taken from the side of man, they are bound to walk and work together. The woman has the responsibility to help the man. The man has the responsibility to protect and provide for the woman.

This relationship between a man and woman is revealed in the marriage covenant. Marriage is designed by God to be between one man and one woman. The covenant of marriage is a forerunner of the ultimate marriage that will take place between Christ and His bride, the church. Until the marriage celebration takes place in heaven, the marriage relationship between a man and a woman is to serve as example. God explained His intention in this manner in Genesis 1:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” A man and a woman are to be united unto each other on Earth until death parts them. After death, the marriage continues as man and woman are to be united forever through the church with Christ. Thus, those who do not marry here on Earth will still be united with Christ through the church.⁴³

⁴² MacArthur, 5.

⁴³ MacArthur, 5.

In Genesis 1:28 God gave the command to both the male and the female to “be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it.” The command was given to both, but spoken to Adam as Eve was not yet formed. Nevertheless, both the man and the woman were to be involved in reproducing their species. This reproduction was explained in Genesis 4:1, “Adam knew his Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the Lord.’” Sex was intended by God to be between a man and a woman for procreation. This act was not to be without pleasure. When God was casting Adam and Eve out of the Garden, God informed Eve “she would desire her husband” (Gen. 3:16).

Adam “knew his wife and she conceived.” (Gen. 4:1) The verb from the Hebrew *yadah*, which translates “to know,” is relevant in the context of this project because it is the same word the men of Sodom and Gomorrah used when they demanded Lot to release the angels to them. Homosexuality in this context is in violation of God’s intended design for a man and a woman. God had given man free will. Humanity acting on free will has the option of obeying or disobeying God. God had also tasked Adam with the responsibility of tending the Garden. Adam had full access to everything in the Garden, with one exception:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but the tree of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

Adam did not fulfill his responsibility towards Eve in that he allowed her to eat of the fruit and he also ate of the fruit. However, Adam’s failure to obey God did not nullify God’s command to Adam.

Traditionalists relying on these passages believe God designed two separate genders, male and female. God gave both the male and the female specific duties. God established a covenant relationship of marriage between one man and one woman. Sex is to take place within the confines of marriage and sex is intended by God to be between a man and a woman. A blessing of that sexual connection is children. MacArthur writes,

Not only do a man and a woman share God's image—they share dominion over creation and are to obey God's command to multiply. God's design is for both sexes to have a part in reproducing. God added the dimension of pleasure as a gift, not a right.⁴⁴

Traditionalists argue that homosexuality, though not yet specifically mentioned in the Genesis account, falls outside of these parameters, and is therefore prohibited. Thus, homosexuality, in this traditional contextual interpretation, is a violation of God's created order for humankind.

Many revisionists assert that this view of the creation account is "heterosexist," and therefore invalidating to LGBT people. Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche disagree with the revisionist assessment and offer what they consider to be appropriate biblical responses.⁴⁵ They address the revisionist argument that the creation account is biased towards the heterosexual and therefore the creation account as it has been traditionally interpreted is therefore irrelevant. They argue that God's created intent was for sex to be between one man and one woman within the confines of marriage. To argue otherwise calls for another source other than the Bible.

Sodom and Gomorrah

⁴⁴ MacArthur, 150.

⁴⁵ Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche, *The Complete Guide to Understanding Homosexuality* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2010), 117.

The first mention of homosexuality in the Bible is the Sodom and Gomorrah account (Genesis 19). Many theologians have written on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, resulting in considerable debate. These writings have an impact on the teachings AA pastors relied upon to form biblical interpretations of homosexuality. This story in Genesis is usually the first one of Moses' writings to which AAC leaders turn to find a biblical basis for their views of homosexuality.

At issue for this project is whether the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of homosexual sex. The view most often held by the conservative AA church is the men were guilty of homosexual sex. Thus, conservative theologians have traditionally reasoned from this opinion God and the Bible prohibit homosexuality. This is a view that is deeply entrenched in the ideology of the AAC in the DMV. But there are rumblings of discontent among the LGBT members in the AAC in the DMV. These rumblings have challenged the leadership in the AAC of the DMV, appealing to the leadership to take another look at some long-held doctrines on homosexuality and the Bible.

Also at issue here is the common extension of the act of homosexuality to the person of the homosexual. This is often coupled with the association of abomination with anything that pertains to homosexuality. Therefore, by association the homosexual is now an abomination. Such thinking on the part of leadership in the AAC of the DMV widens the gulf between the LGBT and the leadership.

The question that is most often asked about this passage of scripture is, "What was the sin of Sodom?" The revisionist B. A. Robinson lists the most commonly held

beliefs regarding why Sodom was singled out for such extreme judgment.⁴⁶ He explains that there are three possible interpretations of Sodom's sin. First, Sodom was destroyed because the men were engaged in homosexual sin. Second, Sodom was destroyed because the city was uncharitable and abusive to strangers. Third, Sodom was destroyed because the men wanted to humiliate the visitors.⁴⁷ The earliest revisionist theorist was Derrick Sherwin Bailey asserted as early as 1955 that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not homosexuality but inhospitality.⁴⁸

To back up Bailey's view, Robinson refers to Ezekiel 16:49-50,

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore, I did away with them as you have seen.

Thus, according to Ezekiel, Sodom's real sin was that of inhospitality and a lack of concern for the poor and indigent. Robinson and others cite pride as another contributing factor in God's decision to destroy the city. The prideful people of the city chose to ignore the plight of the poor in their midst, and such lack of concern eventually warranted their destruction.

John Boswell reads Genesis 19 and insists the Bible does not prohibit homosexuality in all forms.⁴⁹ Boswell refers to the Hebrew word *yadah* which translates

⁴⁶ B.A. Robinson, "About the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah: Topics from Genesis 18 and 19," *Religious Tolerance: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, (Feb. 29, 2012). Accessed September 2016, http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_bibg192.htm

⁴⁷ MacArthur, 5.

⁴⁸ Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longman, Green and Co. 1955).

⁴⁹ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 100.

“to know” as being misinterpreted. He maintains the verb can be translated “know” in the biblical sense of sexual relations and it can also mean “to get acquainted with in a social context.” These two revisionists insist that this current interpretation is the result of additional research and that it indicates the men of Sodom only wanted to have social but not sexual intercourse with Lot’s guests.⁵⁰

Stanley Grenz disputes revisionist theorists like Bailey and Boswell. He highlights the use of the word *yadah* the Sodom account in Genesis. He points out that *yadah* in the Hebrew is translated to know in the sense of “being acquainted with.” He also points out that no less than ten times in the Old Testament the word also means to have sexual intercourse.⁵¹ As additional proof that the revisionist are mistaken in their assumption that the sin of Sodom was inhospitality rather than homosexual rape, Grenz cites the response of both Lot in Genesis 19 and the Hebrew host in Judges 19. Both men offered females to the clamoring mob in appeasement for the demand to send out the foreign male guests. Grenz maintains that the violent men did not want to have social intercourse but sexual intercourse. If the intent was purely social, then why was the offer of the women made? Could not either host, Lot or the Hebrew, gone out to engage the mob?

Grenz asserts that even though the church has been inconsistent with its response to and teaching about homosexuality, nevertheless there is no compelling argument to be found in scriptures for homosexuality as an accepted lifestyle. He asserts that the silence

⁵⁰ Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Homosexuality* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), 67.

⁵¹ Grenz, Stanley. *Welcoming but not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. (Louisville:Westminister John Knox Press 1998.), 36.

of Jesus on the subject should not be construed as an affirmation of homosexuality. Grenz states that Jesus “condemned sexuality immorality which He differentiated from adultery (Mark 7:21).” However, he appeared to leave an open door for the revisionist with this statement, “What Jesus meant by immorality we can only conjecture. But nowhere did he condone genital sexual activity outside the context of a lifelong heterosexual commitment.”⁵²

Kerby Anderson poses this question to the revisionist. If the only intent of the men of Sodom was social, then why did Lot offer his virgin daughters?⁵³ Clearly the men wanted to have homosexual sex with the angels. The sin here is not just inhospitality but the grossest form of inhospitable behavior on the part of the men of Sodom towards the guests in Lot’s home.

John Eron concluded the primary reason for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not just the desire of the male population to rape the angelic visitors of Lot. According to Eron, Sodom had a reputation for being insensitive to the plight of the poor and neglecting to right injustice in the city. As he put it “The attempt to rape the visitors is not the specific sin of the Sodomites but it is emblematic of their general sinfulness.”⁵⁴ He cites Jeremiah 23:14 and Ezekiel 16:18-49 as proof to support his assessment.

⁵² Grenz, 61.

⁵³ Anderson, 66-67.

⁵⁴ John Lewis Eron, “Early Jewish and Christian Attitudes towards Male Homosexuality as Expressed in The Testament of Naphtali,” in *Homophobia and the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, eds. Michael L. Stemmeler and J. Michael Clark, (Dallas: Monument Press, 1990), 25-49.

Eron goes a step further and states the failure on the part of the men of Sodom to see the angels as sent from God is a failure of the men to see God. Thus, the act of rape was not just about physical lust, but of rebellion and rejection of God. In that same manner, the homosexual is not just satisfying an unnatural lust, but rejecting and rebelling against God. Eron does assert that this rejection of God must not be confined to the homosexual but to men and women who fail to see God's appearances in their lives in whatever form He chooses to appear. Nonetheless, speculation is warranted whether this attitude contributes to the homophobia the AAC in the DMV. So, theoretically, when the AA pastor relies on the teaching that the LGBT lifestyle is a violation of God's command, it can form the perception that LGBT members are rejecting God by choosing to live that lifestyle.⁵⁵

Revisionist Richard Hays believes the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is not actually about homosexual sex. He contends that the real sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was pride and neglect of the poor.⁵⁶ Hays also cites Ezekiel 16:49 as a proof.⁵⁷ Hays also contends that consensual sex between two men is not expressly forbidden in this context.

Dallas and Heche respond to the contention that the real sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was inhospitality. The use of the term "yadah," which translates "to know" in the Hebrew, does not suggest that the men wanted to make amends for their lack of

⁵⁵ Eron, 25-49.

⁵⁶ Richard Hays, "The Biblical Witness Concerning Homosexuality," in *Staying the Course: Supporting the Church's Position on Homosexuality*. ed. Maxie D. Dunnam and H. Newton Malony (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 73-75.

⁵⁷ Hays, 73-75.

hospitality, but that they wanted to have sexual congress with the angels. “Lot’s offer of his daughters” in lieu of the angels further substantiate this fact.⁵⁸

Then Dallas and Heche frame a response to the revisionist assertion about homosexuality’s place in the so-called abominations mentioned by Moses. According to those passages, it is punishable by death in the holiness codes of the Old Testament. The revisionist argument goes that just as the death penalty is no longer meted out for these abominations today, the homosexual should not be automatically consigned to hell. They say that homosexual rape or forced sexual activity was the “real point of this story.”⁵⁹ Dallas and Heche counter by pointing out that bestiality, incest, and child sacrifice were also mentioned as abominations and none of these are tolerated today, either morally, socially or legally. They conclude by extension neither should homosexuality be condoned as biblically acceptable today.⁶⁰

John McNeil approaches this debate by dividing homosexuals into two groups, the invert and the pervert.⁶¹ According to McNeil, the pervert is an individual who acts out in homosexual behavior due to the situation and not due to his or her natural inclination. For instance, men isolated with other men in prison, in the military or at sea might find homosexual expression is their only alternative. Or, men who have experienced a traumatic event that damaged them psychologically might feel compelled to act out sexually with other men. But the pervert is most likely to cease to engage in

⁵⁸ Dallas and Heche, 116.

⁵⁹ Dallas and Heche, 117.

⁶⁰ Dallas and Heche, 117.

⁶¹ John McNeil, “The Church and the Homosexual” (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 248.

homosexual behavior once he has access to females or receives treatment for his psychosis. The invert on the other hand is attracted to members of their own sex and cannot find an outlet for sexual expression except with other men.⁶² Thus, according to McNeil:

the real moral problem of homosexuality has to do with judging the moral value of the sexual activity between genuine homosexuals who seek to express their love for one another in a sexual gesture. Scripture can be understood as clearly and explicitly condemning true homosexual activity only if it can be interpreted as condemning the activity of a true invert.⁶³

McNeil believes the Bible does not condemn the inverted homosexual. Rather, he believes that it speaks to the behavior manifested by the perverted homosexual. He believes that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were perverted men who wanted to commit homosexual rape with the angelic visitors of Lot.⁶⁴

McNeil asserts that men, theologians and mankind in general, despite the illumination and inspiration sent from God, to some degree have allowed their own bias to influence their interpretation of the scriptures. Thus, on the subject of homosexuality the traditionalist does not take cultural considerations into account.⁶⁵ McNeil, a revisionist, gave the following definition of the word homosexual,

The prefix homo- in the word homosexual is derived from the Greek root meaning “same,” and not from the Latin word for “man.” Consequently, it designates anyone who is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex and includes both male and female homosexuals, or lesbian.⁶⁶

⁶² McNeil, 41.

⁶³ McNeil, 40-41

⁶⁴ McNeil, 248.

⁶⁵ McNeil, 248.

⁶⁶ McNeil, 39.

Opponents of homosexuality have used this text from Genesis as evidence that God hates homosexuality. By extension many AA pastors in the DMV have embraced this theology and in addition projected the actions of the homosexual onto the person of the homosexual. Such projection is a breeding ground for homophobia because of the lack of differentiation between the person and the act.

McNeil offers another interesting theory on the condemnation of homosexuality. He argues that the inverted homosexual had not been truly identified by the culture during the period when the ancient scriptures were written. Thus, the intent of the “inspired” men of God regarding homosexuality was most likely flawed by the actions of perverted homosexuals and not the inverted homosexuals. Though inverted homosexuals were present, they had not been properly acknowledged or identified. This category of the perverted homosexual was so clear that, per McNeil, even if some of the forty men and women who authored the writings that eventually were canonized as the sixty-books of Bible were themselves inverted homosexuals, these men and women would have written from the accepted societal norm of heterosexuality, not from their own sexual orientation.⁶⁷ The AAC pastors in the DMV, relying on what they have been taught, follow the same construct. Their ministry to the LGBT will be based on their cognitive construct, a construct shaped by what they were taught.

McNeil cites the real sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was “primarily one of inhospitality to strangers.” To support his theory he quotes Jesus in (Luke 10:10-13)

But whenever you come to a town and they do not welcome you, go out into the open streets and say: “The very dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off in protest. But understand this: The Kingdom of God is at hand!” I tell you, on that day Sodom will fare better than that town!

⁶⁷ McNeil, 48.

McNeil goes on to explain the parallel passage in the Book of Judges:

In the book of Judges' derivative, then, the crime of inhospitality included the design to murder the stranger. The obvious stress, once again, is not so much on the implied sexual contact with the stranger as on the right of the stranger to a hospitable reception.⁶⁸

The idea of "the absolute dignity of the male sex" was one of the factors underlying the Jewish hostility to male homosexual practices.⁶⁹

For McNeil, this is confirmation that the real sin of Sodom is inhospitality and not a condemnation of inverted homosexuality. In what he calls one of the "great ironic paradoxes of history," McNeil accuses the church and Western Civilization of being guilty of the very thing for which God condemned Sodom in Genesis and Gibeah in Judges: inhospitality. When the AAC in the DMV acts on the homophobia present in its midst, the AAC could be accused as being guilty of this same inhospitality.

According to McNeil, homosexuals (male and female) have been tortured, murdered, and treated with disgust and disdain by the church for centuries. To this researcher's mind, this is ironic and perhaps even paradoxical. If the accepted interpretation of the homosexual acts in both Genesis and Judges have been misinterpreted, as McNeil and others like him purport, then those who mistreat the homosexual do not see or are not able to discern the fault in their actions. This mistreatment is not to be justified, as much as clarified so that the real meaning or intent of the inspired word of God as given to man can be understood. The researcher believes this is the first step in dealing with homophobia in the AAC in the DMV. It is the beginning to an open dialogue between the AA pastor and the LGBT member.

⁶⁸ McNeil, 48.

⁶⁹ McNeil, 48.

The AAC pastor in the DMV who unconsciously acts on years of inherited biblical interpretation and assumption often fails to distinguish between the action and the person. Thus, the act of sodomy and the sodomite are usually perceived as one and the same. It should be noted that Robinson had already mentioned that the act of sodomy could be performed by heterosexuals also.⁷⁰

Leviticus

Moses writes in Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” The debate around this scripture centers around the word abomination.

The revisionist Boswell opined that the use of the Hebrew word abomination in the Levitical holiness codes was meant only to be ceremonial and ritualistic rather than moral and universal.⁷¹ Further, he argues that it was meant to be confined to the Jewish nation during a specific period. He believes that those scriptures that have been used to denounce homosexuality as sin have been taken out of context and need to be re-assessed in view of later study.

Dallas and Heche write that adultery is also mentioned among the abominations.⁷² Though adultery is not a crime in most states in this country, in today’s culture, adultery is still unacceptable and a violation of the biblical covenant relationship between a husband and wife. Therefore, Dallas and Heche argue that the Levitical prohibition

⁷⁰ B.A. Robinson, “About the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah: Topics from Genesis 18 and 19,” *Religious Tolerance: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*, (Feb. 29, 2012). Accessed September 2016, http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_bibg192.htm

⁷¹ Boswell, 277.

⁷² Dallas and Heche, 117.

against homosexuality in Leviticus 18:22 is still valid, just as the prohibition against adultery is still valid. They argue that while the LGBT person today should not be regarded with the same abhorrence that those who engage in such practices were regarded at that time, the biblical injunction still stands.

This word abomination is one that is used most frequently by AAC pastors in the DMV when referring to homosexuality. The AA pastor's language condemning the act of homosexuality often has the effect of being translated as a condemnation of the person. Consequently, the LGBT person becomes an abomination whether he or she may be living a homosexual lifestyle or whether he or she is just attracted to members of their own sex.⁷³

Moses was tasked by God to write a series of laws that would separate the nation of Israel from the nations that surrounded them. These laws comprised the first five books of the Bible, often referred to as the Pentateuch and or the Book of Laws. In these five books Moses made it clear that some of the practices of those pagan nations were not to be performed by the children of God. From these laws a set of codes were derived that are often referred to as holiness codes. These codes specifically point out homosexuality as one such practice found among the pagan nations surrounding the nation of Israel that was prohibited for the children of Israel.

The AAC pastor in the DMV has a similar duty to Moses He or she stands in the shadow of the Capitol of the United States, and has a duty to define God's people. This begins by making sure the message is biblically sound. The AAC pastor must simultaneously work to refine the ministry and message to meet the spiritual and social

⁷³ Boswell, 277.

needs of the people. In other words, because of their proximity to the seat of government the AAC pastors in the DMV are tasked with being politically correct while at the same time making certain they are scripturally sound.

Jesus

Revisionists use the record of Jesus' ministry on earth to defend the gay-affirming interpretation of the scriptures. They argue that even if Moses' writings prohibit homosexuality in the Old Testament, Jesus abolished the Mosaic Law by ushering in the New Testament.

In response to this argument, Anderson makes this statement: "Even though the theocracy of the Law in the Old Testament has been done away with the spirit of the law, the intent of the law remains."⁷⁴ He claims that, "a moral law is in force."⁷⁵ This moral law is the law that renders adultery and bestiality, among other abominations mentioned in the Old Testament, as "morally unacceptable today."⁷⁶

Anderson's assertion here seems to be consistent with the teachings and intent of Jesus. Jesus stated He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). The New Testament church no longer observes many of the ordinances in Leviticus, and many of the laws of the Old Testament seem to be discarded in modern society. Those laws served a purpose then and still serve a purpose today. In the Old Testament, God placed restrictions on the Hebrew people to set them apart. God wanted to mark His people as chosen from among the pagan nations that lived during biblical

⁷⁴ Anderson, 68

⁷⁵ Anderson, 68

⁷⁶ Anderson, 68

antiquity. Homosexuality was one practice among the pagan nations from which God wanted the nation of Israel to abstain. That prohibition was not abolished in the New Testament, but extended and adapted to Jesus' more fully revealed purpose. According to Anderson the "moral law" is still applicable.⁷⁷ Traditionalist AA pastors in the DMV follow this logic of extending the Old Testament law into the New Testament church. Therefore, for them the prohibition on homosexuality in all forms remains in force.

Pastor-scholars James White and Jeffrey Niell also refute the idea that Jesus changed Moses' law about homosexuality:

Where in the Bible has God abolished the prohibition against homosexuality? Nowhere! Though God has changed His Law with respect to the dietary regulations, and other matters that distinguished between the Jews and other nations (laws concerning the separation of fabrics and seed), He has not done so with homosexuality. We must not allow sexual preferences to interpret the Bible; the Bible is to interpret the Bible. Again, the pivotal concern is the authority of God's Word.⁷⁸

For White and Neill, the church must not bow to cultural relativism. On the contrary, the church is to have an impact the culture. In the tradition of many of their colleagues past and present, White and Neil purport the church is to be a transforming agent rather than an organization that conforms to the world.

Did the New Testament abolish the laws of the Old Testament or expand those laws? The revisionists contend that some of the Old Testament laws were abolished when the New Covenant was established and when subsequent changes in the culture occurred. Therefore, according to revisionists, the Bible needs to be updated to reflect this. For instance, Hamilton argues the Old Testament prohibitions, most notably Leviticus 18:22

⁷⁷ Anderson, 68.

⁷⁸ James White and Jeffery D. Niell, *The Same Sex Controversy: Defending the Bible's Message about Homosexuality* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 73.

and 20:13, are not transferrable to other future cultures. He cites the laws that prohibit beard trimming Leviticus. 19:27 and lobster eating Leviticus 11:10 as examples of laws that have been modified in light of contemporary culture. If these laws have been modified or disregarded, then why does the church not do the same with those laws that deal with same-sex practices?

Arnold disputes Hamilton's argument by asserting there is a difference between the civil laws, ceremonial laws and moral laws in the Old Testament. Some categories of law (the civil and ceremonial laws) may have changed, while the moral laws have not changed. He calls Hamilton's treatment of scripture "proof texting," which fails to gain the full context of scripture. Arnold also explains that United Methodist consider themselves bound by the "canon of Scripture. This dictates that the Bible was not written for men to know things (epistemology) [but the] the Bible was written for men to know God through personal and corporate salvation."⁷⁹ Thus Moses' prohibition on same-sex practices are still applicable despite present cultural norms.

Another revisionist argument that cites Jesus as evidence for biblical approval for homosexuality, argues just as Jesus did not say much about homosexuality then the church should stop focusing so much attention on a subject that obviously was not that important to Jesus. The revisionists refer to this argument as Jesus' silence on the subject. Revisionists like Hamilton argue that Jesus was too loving to reject homosexuals because of their orientation, over which they had no choice.⁸⁰ Rather, Jesus would have embraced homosexuals. Arnold challenges this argument, pointing out that Jesus also did not speak

⁷⁹ Arnold, 79.

⁸⁰ Hamilton, 134.

on child molestation or bestiality, yet most people today would shun anyone who was guilty of either.⁸¹ Arnold concludes that likewise Jesus' silence should not be used as criteria for or against homosexuality. Just because Jesus was silent on a subject does not imply that He approved of or endorsed certain behaviors. His silence on a subject is not an argument for His approval. An argument from silence is logically invalid. .⁸²

Paul

Like Moses, Paul wrote to define God's new purpose for the church-over against the people of the world. Paul wrote to establish a set of criteria for the church to follow. His goal, as in Moses' case, was to make the people who comprise the church separate and distinct from the culture surrounding it. He did this not just for converted Jews but also for new Gentile Christians as well.

The AAC in the DMV today finds itself in a quandary not unlike those that both Moses and Paul faced during their lifetimes. Today the issue facing the AAC in the DMV is how to maintain what the leaders of the AAC have come to understand as the biblical definition of church doctrine according to the precepts given to Moses and Paul. The AAC leader in the DMV must also meet the challenge of refining the message to meet the ministry needs of an ever-changing culture. The LGBT members who no longer wish to remain silent are part of that changing culture.

⁸¹ Bill Arnold, *Seeing Black & White in a Gray World: The Need for Theological Reasoning in the Church's Debate over Sexuality* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2014), 13.

⁸² Arnold, 78.

Romans One

Paul's writing in Romans chapter 1 is a major source of contention between revisionists and traditionalists. Heche and Dallas mention Paul's injunction to the Romans when they argue that God's intention was for a man and woman to engage in sex within the confines of marriage:

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Romans 1:26-27).

They explain that this is a valid prohibition of homosexuality. Revisionists typically maintain that Paul was not referring to committed relationships. Heche and Dallas write that Pauls' prohibition includes all forms of homosexuality and even committed homosexual relationships are included in this prohibition. These authors conclude that even though the term homosexual is a relatively modern one the prohibition of the homosexual act between those of the same sex is not modern.⁸³

Grenz comments that this passage is unusual for its prohibition on female homosexuality. He acknowledges that most often the biblical subjects in passages about homosexuality are male. Romans 1:26 is the only scripture that specifically mentions female same-sex activity. He explains this by saying that the Bible was written primarily by men and therefore the authors' masculinity took primacy in their thought processes. These authors interpreted both the passive and the aggressive participants in homosexual acts as demeaning to some degree to the notion of the superiority of the male over the female. Also, female homosexuality was less of a threat to the perpetuation of the nation

⁸³ Dallas and Heche, 117.

of Israel because when men spilled their seed in homosexual acts they failed to reproduce. Therefore, Grenz concludes that lesbianism was less of an issue and therefore did not warrant mention in the Bible. However, it became a greater issue in the New Testament because of Paul's views of personal holiness.⁸⁴

This attitude has influenced AAC pastors in the DMV. In today's wider contemporary culture there exists a notion of machismo in which any form of weakness cannot be tolerated and is met with censure and derision. This is especially true in the AAC. The LGBT male especially is not viewed in a positive fashion while female homosexuality is considered less of a threat.

Revisionists look for alternate explanations that do not prove a universal condemnation of homosexuality when they read Romans 1. For instance, Berry suggests that Paul may have been referring to the unnatural acts committed by temple prostitutes in their same sex rituals, as opposed to same-sex attraction in general. "The issue at hand was the idolatry and the impersonal nature of the sexual acts, not the acts themselves."⁸⁵ Berry infers that these temple prostitutes may not have been homosexual by orientation but heterosexual. Thus, it was as unnatural for these prostitutes to engage in homosexual ritual sex as it would have been for the homosexual to engage in heterosexual ritual sex. In this manner, Berry's view is similar to McNeil's that the biblical condemnation of homosexuality is against "perverted" rather than "inverted" homosexual behavior.

Richard B. Hays also points out the scarcity of scripture passages that deal with homosexuality. To emphasize this point he turns to Romans 1:26, "Even their women

⁸⁴ Grenz, 61.

⁸⁵ Berry, 161.

exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.” According to Hays this is the only scripture that mentions lesbianism specifically. All the other scriptural references to homosexuality include lesbianism by default.⁸⁶ Though most of the homophobia in the AAC is focused primarily on the gay male, the lesbian sister often finds herself the object of censure should she no longer remain silent.⁸⁷

White and Neill agree that the Romans passage makes a universal prohibition against homosexuality. They argue not only from this passage but also from Paul’s wider call to holiness throughout his letter. For instance, they reason that Paul’s call to be a “living sacrifice” is a call to sexual purity in all forms.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

According to White and Neill the church is the agency that represents God in the world. The scriptures, which provide the foundation of church doctrine, must operate in tandem with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be that agency of transformation in the culture. White and Neil assess that the church has an obligation to show God as the antithesis of sin while and at the same time show God as the only One who can wash away sin.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Richard B. Hays, “The Biblical Witness Concerning Homosexuality,” in *Staying the Course Supporting the Church’s Position on Homosexuality*, eds. Maxie Dunnam and H. Newton Malony. (Nashville: Abington Press, 2003) 73-75.

⁸⁷ Irene Monroe, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Struggling with the Black Churches Heterosexism and the White Queer Community’s Racism,” in De La Torre, *Out of the Shadows* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press), 39-50.

⁸⁸ White and Neill, 2002.

First Corinthians Six

John Boswell turns to 1 Corinthians 6:9, another popular Pauline text used to defend the traditionalist view, to point out the subtleties of Paul's specific word use. "The Greek words in 1 Cor. 6:9 are *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. The second term *arsenokoitai*, occurs again in 1 Timothy 1:10."⁸⁹ He explains that little effort has been done to delve into the meaning of these two words. This passage could also be translated, "As neither the effeminate nor the abusers of themselves with mankind" 1 Corinthians 6:9. According to Boswell, the translation taken from the King James Version implies weakness on the part of the person engaged in these activities. But it does not describe these persons, and therefore may not refer to homosexual activity.

It is truly surprising that despite the fact that the tradition of moral condemnation of homosexuality springs in large part from these biblical passages, little serious scholarly work has been produced concerning their exact meaning. Translations appear at times to be based on preconceptions rather than serious scholarship.⁹⁰

In other words, according to Boswell, this passage cannot be used as proof that God prohibits homosexuality.

Robin Scroggs agrees with Boswell's distinction of language in this passage. She writes,

In I Cor. 6:9 and I Tim 1:10 the words usually thought to point to homosexuals are extremely ambiguous. One word, *malakois*, literally means "soft" and is not a technical term for a homosexual. The second, *arsenokoitai*, obviously has sexual connotations.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Boswell, 100.

⁹⁰ Boswell, 101.

⁹¹ Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 8.

But Scroggs says that even though the second term has sexual connotations, it does not refer directly to homosexuality. Again, she cites Boswell: “John Boswell in his recent studies denies that it (*arsenokoitai*) refers to a homosexual person in general but rather specifically to the male prostitute, who could serve heterosexual or homosexual clients.”⁹² Scroggs’ conclusion then is that,

The Bible does not oppose homosexuality because it does not speak of true or innate homosexuality but rather of homosexual acts by people who are not homosexuals. A person may be born inverted with homosexual orientation, or is directed towards same-sex fulfillment early on in life. A pervert on the other hand is the person who engages in same-sex activities that are contrary to their orientation.⁹³

The revisionist argument for homosexuality contends the Bible does not distinguish between either of the two persons, inverted or perverted. According to these theorists the focus is on the actions of both the inverted homosexual and the perverted homosexual. Therefore, the inference is drawn that Paul in the New Testament was not speaking of those persons who were homosexually oriented from birth and are engaged in committed loving relationships

Could the AAC in the DMV, by relying on what has been taught, be guilty of failing to see the need for an open dialogue or further investigation of these two words? Boswell’s concern is an almost direct refutation of the attitude held by many AA conservative pastors toward homosexuality.

⁹² Scroggs, 14.

⁹³ Scroggs, 8.

Boswell seems to agree with McNeil's assessment of the inverted and perverted homosexual. Boswell does not see Paul's letters as a prohibition of inverted homosexuals who are engaged in a loving, monogamous, committed relationship.

The Pauline epistles do not explicitly treat of the problem of homosexual activity between persons who share the homosexual condition, and as such cannot be read as explicitly condemning such behavior. Neither the *malakoi* nor the *arsenokoitai* were necessarily homosexuals; the former were simply debauched individuals and the latter were probably male prostitutes or those given to anal intercourse, which is not necessarily nor exclusively a homosexual activity. The persons referred to in Roman 1:26 are probably not homosexuals—i.e., those who are psychologically inclined toward their own sex—since they are portrayed as “abandoning their natural customs.”⁹⁴

Boswell asserts that for a person who is naturally inclined to individuals of their own sex, it would be acting unnaturally if they were to engage in sex with a person of the opposite sex. While this statement is hard to accept for some, it might possibly enable others to understand LGBT individuals. If homophobia is based on fear, ignorance and a refusal to even dialogue openly on the topic, Boswell's statement might possibly persuade AA pastors in the DMV to attempt to understand the LGBT in their congregations.

Howard Snyder, a traditionalist, explains that Paul's prohibitions against homosexuality are part of a general call to holiness. He says it is unreasonable to leave homosexuality out of this call: “There is no basis in Paul, nor in the whole of Scripture for that matter, to claim that this passage refers to all other forms of biblically proscribed behavior, but not to homosexual behavior.”⁹⁵ Paul's call to holiness includes a call to homosexuals to abandon their lifestyle. Snyder admits that, “the question of homosexual

⁹⁴ Boswell, 100.

⁹⁵ Howard A. Snyder, *Homosexuality and the Church: Defining Issue or Distracting Battle?* (Wilmore: Seedbed Publishers, 2014), 18-19.

practice is not in itself a matter of essential Christian doctrine.” However, he explains that, “one cannot condone homosexual practice without running into conflict with, and thus in practice disregarding, essential Christian doctrine.”⁹⁶ Therefore, to be faithful to Paul and faithful to basic Christian beliefs, one must believe that Paul calls homosexuals to holiness along with everyone else.

Conclusion

There is complexity on both sides of the debate on homosexuality in the Bible. This is not a simple issue. This section has revealed some of the points of contention and disagreement. Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible, concluded Ecclesiastes with these words, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (12:13-14). This is germane in this context because the AA pastor must balance the delicate tension between being faithful to scripture and being obedient to the command to love all God’s children. For some AACs in the DMV, this argument is a polemic between the traditionalist and the revisionist. The revisionist would have the Bible be re-written to conform to the current cultural climate and approve homosexuality. The traditionalist would cling to the biblical prohibition of homosexuality in any form. However, there is one God, who must be obeyed. His word does not change, nor can it be altered to suit the culture.

Leaders act on what they have been taught. The AAC pastor in the DMV is no different. Many of these leaders have been labeled homophobic because they act on what they have been taught and to what they have been exposed in seminaries that formed their

⁹⁶ Snyder, 18-19.

hermeneutic. The researcher hopes that as a result of the survey of the theological reflections in this section the AAC pastor in the DMV will come away with a better awareness of the extent to which they have been influenced and how this influence has had an impact on the formation of a ministry praxis. The AAC pastor in the DMV can then add this to their toolkit to enable them to better minister to LGBT members.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem this thesis project addressed was homophobia in some AAC's in the DMV. The goal of this project is to establish a place of dialogue, or a starting point for discussion, among AAC leaders. The researcher does not wish to force AAC pastors to change their minds on this subject but to persuade them to engage in open dialogue about homophobia and its negative impact both on LGBT members and on the AAC in the DMV. This Chapter seeks to establish this starting point of dialogue, first by defining homophobia, then by examining the ongoing controversy over whether the fight for gay rights is the same as the fight for civil rights, and finally by investigating serious scholarship that promotes dialogues around these issues.

Homophobia

To arrive at a place of respectful dialogue, the researcher felt a good starting point was to look at homophobia and analyzes how it manifests and sustains itself in the AACs of the DMV.

Definitions

Before it can be determined if the AAC in the DMV is homophobic, it is best to define or explain what homophobia is. It could very well be that the AAC is just ignorant of what it is being accused of by its LGBT members.

In simplest terms, homophobia is the fear of homosexuality and an unreasonable attitude of anxiety towards people of that orientation. Adrian Thatcher, in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality and Gender*, suggests that homophobia was developed

over centuries.

The homophobic hermeneutics of scripture was a long time in the construction. Homophobic hermeneutics has less to do with personal loathing of same-sex love, than with cultural and philosophical constructs that become regulative for the interpretation of texts, and for the selection of those texts that are determinative for assessing the scriptural archive with respect to same-sex love. Thus, even those who are by no means personally homophobic find themselves faced with what may appear to be a uniform biblical rejection of same-sex sexuality and love. More recent advances in biblical interpretation have rendered this monolithic edifice questionable.¹

This infers that the homophobia in the AAC is historically entrenched in church doctrine.

The AA pastor in the DMV who is perceived as homophobic quite possibly has adopted this attitude over a period of time. Most likely this attitude has been reinforced by the culture of the AAC. Thus, there is a worldview that has been passed down through centuries and reinforced by the church culture. It is in this tension with the demands that the current culture is placing on the AAC, the AA leader has to minister to their LGBT members.

Horace Griffin is highly regarded among his peers on the subject of the AAC and homosexuality. In his book *Their Own Received Them Not*, Griffin defines homophobia as “Not simply a fear, but also a broader meaning to include discomfort, disgust, and in some cases where black heterosexuals have beaten and killed homosexuals, hatred.”²

Griffin explains a companion phrase, “heterosexual superiority,”³ which is the idea that heterosexual behavior is superior to homosexual behavior. The roots of this notion can be traced back to the Middle Ages: “Gay historian John Boswell ...

¹ Adrian Thatcher, *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 206.

² Griffin, 19.

³ Griffin, 30.

maintained that it was during this period the additional stigma of homosexuality [occurred]. [It was] compared to murder. [It] is [called] ‘one of two sins that cry out to heaven for vengeance.’”⁴

The Origins of Homophobia

The researcher has discovered several sources of homophobia in the AAC, including internalized violence, the veneration of the family, making the same interpretive mistakes made by proponents of slavery, too great a focus on purely genital sex as opposed to a holistic view of people as sexual beings and fear.

Internalized Violence

Marti Nissinen argues that some of the perceived homophobia in AAC stems from the violence AA men have experienced in this country. He explains,

In a patriarchal society manly honor largely is equivalent to human value. To offend [it] is a grave shame. Gang rape of a man has always been an extreme means to disgrace one’s enemies and put them in their place. Homoeroticism appears in the story of Sodom only as one aspect of hostile sexual aggression toward strangers. Other than that the Yahwist’s attitude towards same-sex interaction remains unknown.⁵

During slavery, the AA male was often castrated both physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. AA men were brought to this country initially in chains against their will. The AA male was not just enslaved, he was also emasculated to the point where he had to watch his women and children raped and sold in front of his very eyes. The AA male lived in a culture that sought to demean his humanity and dignity at every turn. He lived in a society where he had no control over his body or his destiny.

⁴ Boswell, 40.

⁵⁵ Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 19.

The AA male lived in the threat of being stripped naked and whipped at the whim of capricious slave owners.⁶ This was a country where, even after emancipation, he was often referred to as the strange fruit of southern trees, an image that comes from the inordinate number of lynchings that took place in the South. It is small wonder then that in the one institution that he has been able to call his own historically, any perceived weakness will be met with contempt.

Thus, in Nissenen's line of reasoning, homosexuality came to be perceived as wrong because it dishonors the dignity of the male, a dignity that has already been rendered fragile by the years of slavery and Jim Crow. This fragile male dignity further endorses masochism, which in turn provides a buttress for homophobia.⁷ All of this comes from the perception on the part of AA pastors that homosexuality is a weakness on the part of the homosexual. In a society where the AA male has to constantly fight for his worth and dignity, any sign of weakness cannot be tolerated.

Fear over the violent acts of rape and almost-rape in the Old Testament, both homosexual and heterosexual, quite possibly found their way into the psyche and culture of the AAC leadership.

The Veneration of the Family

Another possible source of homophobia in the AAC is its veneration of the matriarch in the family system. In the AAC, the concept of the strong mother has long held a place of high esteem. Small wonder then that any lifestyle or person that would

⁶ David McBride, "'Slavery As It Is: Medicine and Slaves of the Plantation South,'" *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* vol. 19, no. 5 (2005): 37.

⁷ Michael Stemmeler and Michael J. Clark, eds., *Homophobia and the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (Dallas, TX: Monument Press, 1990), 61.

seem to be contradictory to the family or to the matriarch would not be accepted. From this point of view, LGBT people negatively influences the family, because the LGBT lifestyle falls outside the biblical definition. It contradicts the hallowed role of the matriarch because LGBT people cannot fulfill the mother's role of reproduction.

Misinterpreting the Bible on Slavery and Homosexuality

Another source of homophobia in AACs, and an ongoing cause of the major areas of debate between traditionalists and revisionists, comes directly from way in which the scriptures were misinterpreted by slaveholders in America to justify slavery. This concept is of importance to this project because the AAC is comprised of those whose ancestors were once slaves in this country.

Revisionists remind their audience that the Bible was used to sanction slavery in the United States. They contend that since passages of scripture used to defend slavery have been revised, likewise passages of scripture that prohibit homosexuality should be revised. They argue that these passages need to be revised to reflect the illumination that history has brought to the texts. Traditionalists on the other hand remain adamant that these passages in the Old Testament and the New Testament that prohibit homosexuality are still applicable and have binding authority on the world today.

Ken Stone, a revisionist, states, "Views about homosexuality and related matters do change."⁸ Stone presents the case for the Bible once being used to sanction slavery in America. Stone's basic premise is that if the Bible can be manipulated to sanction slavery, then it can be manipulated to condemn homosexuality. This does present a two-

⁸ Ken Stone, *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 22.

fold sense of irony for this project because homophobic AA pastors rely upon the same Bible that once was used to enslave their ancestors. These AA pastors would overwhelmingly agree that the Bible was taken out of context on the subject of slavery. They would assert that this mistaken interpretation of and misuse of scripture was used to deny the humanity of AAs. The researcher wonders if AA pastors who remain unwilling to admit or accept that they are homophobic are quite possibly just as guilty of misinterpreting the Bible and denying the humanity of their LGBT members.

Stone's commentary is both ingenious and disingenuous. It is ingenious because his methods regularly amaze his readers and his university students by making them aware of how the Bible can be manipulated to support even the most heinous of institutions. In this instance, it was an institution that was sanctioned by the government and widely accepted as the norm across much of American society.

But Stone's work is disingenuous on two levels, contextual and historical. First, contextually he takes subtle jabs at traditionalist scholars. He points out the scarcity of biblical texts that speak to the subject of homosexuality in contrast to those passages that strictly prohibit eating certain kinds of food. He also points out that Jesus was remarkably silent about homosexuality. He infers that perhaps too much emphasis is placed on the subject of homosexuality when this subject is weighted in comparison to other subjects discussed at length in the Bible. He cites the lack of scriptures that speak to this topic as evidence to support his supposition. But this approach leaves Stone open to criticism. As with the major and minor prophets, it is the mere physical size of the respective books that makes them "major" versus "minor." They are not major or minor because of their importance. Thus, it is not accurate to say homosexuality does not matter to God simply

because there are relatively few passages that explicitly deal with them. A lack of verbiage is not necessarily support for or against an issue regarding the scriptures. If God had told Moses only once “Thou shalt not kill,” that one instance would be sufficient to prohibit indiscriminate murder.⁹

Second, Stone’s argument is disingenuous from a historical perspective. Stone ponders how this present society will be regarded 200 years from now. When passages in the Bible that supported slavery are read today these passages are interpreted in light of current history. This is history that did not come about overnight, but has emerged from the outcome of a Civil War that almost split this country irrevocably apart. And yet well over a century and a half later, this country still struggles with racism, prejudice, and bigotry, not just against people of differing skin color, but sexual orientation as well. Stone wonders if this present society will be regarded as just as unenlightened about homosexuality 200 years from now as those who lived and supported slavery were 200 years ago. He writes:

Today, of course, most Christians agree that slavery was a bad thing, and something with which Christians should not have been involved. But the biblical texts have not changed at all since the time of the Civil War. However, the social context for reading those biblical texts has changed.

Now this historical shift in reading habits may have a great deal of relevance for the ways in which we think about Christian deliberations over the Bible and homosexuality, as several Christian writers have recently observed. The relevance has nothing to do with any implication that slavery as an institution is at all like homosexuality ... [Culture] will often shape the specific ways in which we select, deem relevant, and otherwise interpret particular biblical texts.¹⁰

⁹ Stone, 35.

¹⁰ Stone, 35.

In other words, Stone is saying that people today ought to be open to new interpretations of the Bible and homosexuality, just as people are now open to new interpretations of the Bible and slavery. The Bible is the same book that was once used to uphold slavery as a valid social institution. Subsequent study and history has revealed that slavery in America was not condoned in the Bible. If this is so, it is possible that the injunctions against homosexuality are just as invalid as those injunctions the greater culture once relied upon to sanction slavery?

But this is disingenuous because the researcher questions if this argument is enough evidence to cause AAC pastors to take another look at the subject of the Bible and homosexuality.

Too Great A Focus on Genital Sex

An alternate interpretation asserts homophobia in AACs is the over-focus on purely genital sex. James Nelson and Sandra Longfellow draw heavily upon Michal Foucault to explain their interpretation of Adam's covering of his genitals in the Garden of Eden. They write that Adam was not so much ashamed of his genitals as he (Adam) was ashamed of his physical, sexual reaction in the presence of God. Because Adam had no control over his reaction, he was ashamed. Nelson and Longfellow likened this uncontrollable action to the spirit of rebellion in mankind. They write that Christianity's "sexual legacy," especially about men, is mostly centered around genital sex. In this alternate view of scripture, the assumption is put forth that Christianity has always taught

that, “Genital sex is intrinsically uncontrollable and antithetical to authentic spirituality.”¹¹

The AAC has often been accused of placing too much emphasis on the act and not the person. Revisionists insist that the scriptures that have been used for centuries as proof sources are focused primarily on homosexual acts and not the person who is homosexual.

Michael Stemmeler and Michael Clark put forth this argument in their book *Homophobia and the Judeo-Christian Tradition*. Using Leviticus 18:22, which they label “The most significant passage in the Old Testament concerning homosexual acts,”¹² they argue “The main reason homosexual practices were thought abominable was that one man uses another as a woman, and the other allows himself to be used as a woman. Thus, both men dishonor the dignity of the male.”¹³ In other words, the shame of homosexuality is not about the sex act itself but about the dishonoring of male sexuality that occurs when one behaves like the weaker, more passive female partner.

Those who ascribe to this view accuse both persons engaged in the act of homosexuality as dishonoring the dignity of the male. The dishonor is not assigned only to the male who is taking the assumed passive role of the woman. It is also assigned to his partner who is engaged in the dominant act. In the AAC culture, any perceived assault on the dignity of the male cannot be tolerated in any form. This is a dignity that has been hard to come by and harder sometimes to maintain. AA gay men who are open

¹¹ James Nelson, “Introduction,” in Marvin Ellison and Kelly Brown Douglass, *Sexuality and the Sacred Sources for Theological Reflection* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010).

¹² Stemmeler and Clark, 9.

¹³ Stemmeler and Clark, 10.

about their sexuality will find themselves the objects of scorn, shunning and derision. These will be viewed as traitors to their race as well as to their gender.

Nelson and Longfellow suggest that a revision of Christian thought on the matter of sex is required. A quest must begin to uncover the “Central meaning of human sexuality.” The authors assert that a man and a woman are more than the sum of his or her sex organs and the ensuing actions of said organs. Human sexuality and spirituality are not dichotomies within an individual. The two are interwoven together. “Sexuality includes the range of feelings, interpretations, and behaviors through which we express our capacities for sensuous relationships with ourselves, with others and the world.”¹⁴ Thus, this provides the AA pastor in the DMV another interpretive lens to use in ministering to the LGBT member.

Humankind in the expression of its sexuality is not acting in rebellion to God. Rather, humanity is expressing the totality of its being. Nelson and Longfellow take their argument one step further and state that the church is not just a community of believers. The church is a community of believers who are acting out their sexual expressions in community, not in rebellion. As the church is made of sexual beings then the church is also a sexual community.¹⁵

Nelson and Longfellow infer that the relegation of sex to one part of a person without considering the entire person frustrates not just the individual but the community of which the individual is a part. In this instance that community is understood to be the church. They believe that human sexuality, to the degree that it is not hindered by

¹⁴ Nelson, Introduction.

¹⁵ Nelson, Introduction.

“distortions and abusive power relations” can be expressed in such a way as to “move the individual from loneliness to a wholeness found in communion with God and community with fellowman.”¹⁶

Perhaps the AAC has placed too much emphasis on the purely genital actions of the LGBT and not the whole LGBT person. The AAC now cognizant of this assertion could reassess themselves to determine if their AAC is acting as an abusive and hindering force.¹⁷

Fear

A final source of homophobia is the raw fear felt by many AAC leaders regarding all issues connected to sexuality. Miguel De La Torre writes that the church has brought an aura of sinfulness to every aspect of sexuality.¹⁸ He insists that even though those who wielded power in the church were not successful in their attempts to stop sexual misconduct. But they were successful in attaching an aura of guilt and fear to every act of sex. He argues this consideration has to be kept in mind whenever the issue of the Church, the Bible, and sexuality is under consideration.¹⁹ He writes:

About fear, it is hardly controversial to point out that when the topic is sex and sexuality, fear abounds; so do confusion, guilt, and shame. The problem may not be reconciling the Bible and homosexuality but rather reconciling Christians and sexuality.²⁰

¹⁶ Nelson, Introduction.

¹⁷ Nelson, Introduction.

¹⁸ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Out of the Shadows into the Light: Christianity and Homosexuality* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2009), introduction.

¹⁹ De La Torre, introduction.

²⁰ De La Torre, introduction.

The homophobia in AAC in the DMV could very well be drawing upon an entrenched attitude of fear that has been present but not acknowledged nor understood by AAC leaders. This fear theoretically could be a driving force for an undercurrent of negative thoughts towards any form of sex that does not fall within the narrowly defined constructs of scripture.

Fear has a way of perpetuating itself by creating a gulf between people who are different from one another. It perpetuates itself when a viewpoint is not understood. In this situation, the gulf exists between the AA pastor and LGBT members. AA pastors may act on fears of which they are quite possibly not even aware. Though they may be aware of the gulf between them and LGBT members, they remain bound by fear and they are unwilling to make the first step to bridge the gap.

The Manifestation and Maintenance of Homophobia

Homophobia manifests in several distinct ways in the AAC, and it is maintained by several ongoing attitudes and practices.

Homophobia Manifested

Homophobia manifests itself today in the AAC when homosexuality is singled out among other sins as the worst of all sins. Maxie Dunnam and H. Newton Malony²¹ admit to the reality of this. They quote Richard Hays who states:

We live in a society that often ranks immoral behavior. People place lying and gossip on the loser rungs of the moral ladder and murder and pedophilia on the tops rungs. Usually they do this to feel better about their wrong attitudes or behaviors.

²¹ Maxie D. Dunnam and H. Newton Malony, *Staying the Course: Supporting the Church's Position on Homosexuality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 73-75.

Dunnam and Malony explain that in this ranking, homosexuality gets ranked among the worst by Christians:

Christians do this as well. We have our hierarchy of sins. And there is some validity to this. After all some sins are worthy of criminal punishment, while others are not. But in God's eyes sin is sin. Jesus died for all sins both great and small.

Nevertheless, in Christian circles, some view homosexuality as the worst of all sins. One reason for this is the way the Bible describes God's reaction to homosexual sin. The Bible calls homosexuality "an abomination" Leviticus 18:22. The Hebrew word for abomination is 'toeva' and it is used about adultery and many other sins.

Homosexuality is not listed in the sins of abomination in Proverbs 6:16-19. Considering the many sins that God calls an abomination, homosexuality is merely one of them.²²

The last sentence is key and to this researcher a key point to this project. The AA pastor has often singled out homosexuality a sin unto God. The AA pastor will refer to Paul and point out sexual sin is in a different category because of the potential effect on the spirit of a man. All other sins Paul said are done outside of the body, but sexual sin takes its toll on the spirit of a man. This sin toll will eventually affect the entire body of Christ as the believer is part of the body of Christ. To the AAC pastor in the DMV the LGBT member who engages in such abominable acts is potential poison to the body of Christ.

Homophobia Maintained

Thomas Thurston argues that too often the unfamiliar, different, strange or abnormal is defined with pejorative words.²³ These words become labels that have tendency to attach themselves to the person or act. In this case the word "abomination"

²² Dunnam and Malony, 73-75.

²³ Thomas Thurston, *Leviticus 18:22 and the Prohibition of Homosexual Acts* ed. by Michael Stemmeler (Dallas: Monument Press, 1990), 7-23.

has evolved through the ages to attach to both the act and to the person. Thus, the LGBT person in the AAC has too often heard that he or she is an abomination before God.

Martti Nissinen maintains the word “abomination” has been taken out of context it could very well be a root cause for homophobia in the AAC. It is the one word often used to condemn the homosexual in the AAC. Nissinen writes:

“Abomination” is a translation of the Hebrew word *td'ebd*. It is a general term with strongly negative connotations and which denotes a transgression of a divinely sanctioned boundary. It is often used in connection with different, usually not fully defined, customs of a mostly cultic nature affiliated with worship of foreign gods.²⁴

The word abomination pertains to the worship of false gods in the Canannite culture. But the word has been used out of a contextual misunderstanding on the part of the AA pastor, who is acting out of unreasonable fear. This fear perpetuates a cultural bias against LGBTs due to a lack of understanding on the part of the AA pastor and serves to perpetuates a false dogma.

Another idea in the AAC that helps to maintain homophobia is that homosexuality is essentially a White problem. One historian suggested that homosexuality was not originally found in Africa but was introduced by European conquerors. The researcher initially dismissed this idea out of hand as irrelevant if no other reason than such an idea is ludicrous, pernicious, incendiary and historically inaccurate. However, when scholars such as Kelly Brown Douglas refer to this theory aura of academic credence is accorded to it. Although she does not agree with this precept, and neither does the researcher, Douglas does offer some insight that provides a possible connection between this concept

²⁴ Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 20.

and homophobia in the AAC.²⁵ If this concept had an iota of truth, if there was one scintilla of veracity in such a theory then this could be a very valid cause of homophobia's maintenance in the AA. Since some people base their beliefs on perception as well as reality, it very well could be that some AA pastors embrace this viewpoint and ignore all historical evidence to the contrary. This belief can make AAC leaders feel justified in ferreting out LGBT members to persecute. This belief says it is OK to target LGBT people not just because they are different but also because they are betraying their people by their sexuality.

Homophobia is also maintained and accentuated by AAs assumed inferiority in American society. Griffin sees the notion of heterosexual superiority as the same assumption of superiority that White Americans have over those who are non-white.²⁶ He maintains that this same attitude is present in the AAC where the culture of heterosexuality is the perceived norm. Within the AAC, anything contrary to this assumed view of sexuality is an aberration and an abomination. In other words, the culture of the AAC borrowed the idea of superior sexualities from America's larger idea of racial superiority. Consequently, the AA LGBT labors under a double stigma, the color of their skin and their preference for their same sex.

Anthony Stanford asserts there is a strong connection between the ongoing homophobia and funds made available by the US Federal government to many AACs through the faith-based initiatives of the George W. Bush era.²⁷ AAC pastors who

²⁵ Douglas, 40.

²⁶ Griffin, 31.

²⁷ Anthony Stanford, *Homophobia in the Black Church: How Faith, Politics and Fear Divide the Black Community* (Santa Barbara: Prager, 2013).

opposed homosexuality benefitted from grants obtained from these initiatives. The George W. Bush administration awarded grants to churches based on the church's alignment with the agenda propagated by the administration. One component of the agenda was a stance against homosexuality.²⁸

Bishop Eddie Long, who just passed recently, is one example of a church that applied for and received federal funds. Long's church took advantage of the faith based funds first offered by the George W. Bush administration. Long was adamantly opponent to homosexuality. Sadly, it was revealed that Long had maintained several homosexual trysts with young men in his congregation. Long somehow weathered that scandal in part because of the size of his church.²⁹

To build this case of collusion between AACs and the Bush administration's conservative agenda, Stanford highlights the AAC's quest to defend itself against the misconception that Black people are more sexually promiscuous than other races in America. His premise is that the idea of the Black male virility is at the heart of racism towards AA in this country. Stanford traces history to show how White men enacted laws designed to defend and protect their women from this oversexed creature. The AA male was thus dehumanized by White men in order to satisfy their conscience.

Kelly Brown Douglas describes how media and literature has perpetuated this stereotype of AA male sexuality.³⁰ In this way, the sexuality of AA males came to be

²⁸ Keith Boykin, "Why the Black Church Opposes Gay Marriage, Whose Dream?" *Village Voice* vol. 49, no. 21 (2004): 46.

²⁹ Boykin, 46.

³⁰ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 33.

regarded as a strength that White men could exploit for economic profit. In this regard, AA pastors who spew homophobic vitriol from their pulpits are not unlike their white counterparts of old. Both groups exploited another member of society for their own gain, and neither was willing to consider the full humanity of the people they railed against.

To fight this stereotype of the oversexed AA male, many AA pastors, some from the DMV, publicly opposed homosexuality or allied themselves with those who did. This stance helped AACs when they applied for or became recipients of federal funds for the Bush-era faith-based initiatives. Therefore, homophobia was maintained in earlier part of this century as a means to secure money for churches and as a means to defend the image of the AAC.

Keith Boykin writes that many AAC leaders hold on to homophobia out of a fearful desire to impress White evangelical counterparts. It could very well be this sentiment on some level that moved many AA clergy to unite with the larger evangelical body. In their hearts these AA pastors told themselves they were following scripture. Fear then could be a motivating factor for the anti-LGBT rhetoric that seems to be so common in the AAC. This is the fear of not being perceived as being respectable.³¹

Gay Rights verses Civil Rights

One of the biggest debates among AAC pastors is over the similarity or dissimilarity between the fight for gay right and the fight for civil rights. Some argue that the two movements have nothing to do with each other. Yet other AA pastors maintain that they are essentially the same movement.

³¹ Boykin, 46.

This debate has been going on since the original Civil Rights Movement. James Baldwin, an openly black, gay author in an era when it was not fashionable to be either gay or black, castigated Martin Luther King when King distanced himself from Bayard Rustin. Rustin was a key advisor of King and is said to have influenced King to adopt the non-violent characteristic of the Civil Rights Movement. King, bowing to pressure from his more conservative colleagues, had asked Rustin to minimize his presence in the movement because Rustin was a homosexual. Baldwin and other celebrities were influential in forcing King to rethink his decision.³² Though King eventually did rethink his position, his early actions were an example of don't ask don't tell.

On the side of the argument that insists civil rights and gay rights are not the same are scholars like Howard Snyder. Snyder begins by arguing for equality: "Biblical Christians affirm the equality of all humans created in God's image. We should work to end oppression and injustice; we ought to help everyone enjoy the full freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ."³³ He goes on to argue, "Homosexuality goes to the very heart of human identity; it is not at heart a civil rights issue, from a Christian standpoint."³⁴ Snyder concludes that while the AAC may have the duty to stand with the oppressed and downtrodden even to the point of opposing the government, scripturally the church is bound to obey the moral codes in the scripture. The church then must stand for civil rights and at the same time stand for the eternal truths in scripture.³⁵

³² Yvonne Chireau, "James Baldwin's God: Sex, Hope, and the Crisis in Black Holiness Culture," *Church History* vol. 74, no. 4 (12, 2005): 883-4.

³³ Howard A. Snyder, *Homosexuality and the Church: Defining Issue or Distracting Battle?* (Wilmore, KY: Seedbed Publishers, 2014), xii.

³⁴ Snyder, 5.

³⁵ Snyder, 5.

Kerby Anderson writes that those who ascribe the occurrence of homosexuality to natural causes tend to favor gay marriage.³⁶ He explains the reverse is also true. Thus, if the LGBT is perceived of as unnatural, then the AAC in the DMV is justified in refusing to perform same sex weddings. For the traditionalist AAC in the DMV, this is not a matter of civil rights, but scriptural obedience.³⁷

Jesse Jackson famously called the connection between gay rights and civil rights “a stretch.”³⁸ Jackson, as do many other AA pastors, believes to some extent that people have no choice in their skin color, but they do have a choice to act out their sexual preference.³⁹ Thus, Jackson is not predisposed to defend the rights of the LGBT. It is ironic that the rainbow was first used by Jesse Jackson to represent his coalition to protect and defend the rights of the oppressed. It has now been appropriated by the gay community as their symbol.

Others argue that civil rights and gay rights are identical and people cannot champion one without the other. Patrick Cheng observes,

Many conservative Christian communities are toxic sites for LGBT people of color in which the mutually-reinforcing oppressions of racism and queerphobia converge. In particular, this dynamic can be seen in the context of the marriage equality debate in which the religious right has actively used racism and queerphobia to prevent the enactment of same-sex marriage laws.⁴⁰

In other words, racism and homophobia reinforce one another, and it is ineffective to just fight one but not the other.

³⁶ Anderson, , 63-64.

³⁷ Anderson, 63-64.

³⁸ Monroe, 58.

³⁹ Monroe, 58.

⁴⁰ Patrick Cheng, *Rainbow Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2013), xii.

Cheng accuses Harry Jackson, a prominent pastor from Maryland, of creating a false dichotomy between race on the one hand and sexuality on the other hand.⁴¹ Cheng accuses mainstream conservative Christianity of employing a divide-and-conquer strategy that pits the gay community against oppressed minorities.⁴² Irene Monroe agrees. She writes: “While our black skin ostensibly allows us residence in our black communities, our sexual orientation, most times, evicts us from them.”⁴³

There is an unavoidable connection between gay rights and civil rights with the recent controversies around same sex marriage. The Supreme Court’s ruling in June of 2015, *Obergefell vs. Hodges*, that overturned all state prohibitions of same sex marriage, established that connection. The underlying premise of *Obergefell vs. Hodges* is that LGBT people have the same right to marry as their heterosexual counterparts. This focus on rights forces the AA pastor in the DMV to not only be spiritually proficient but politically correct as well.

Sallie M. Cuffe agrees that the issue of same-sex marriage forces a connection between gay and civil rights.⁴⁴ Cuffe castigates the AAC for being on the wrong side of history on the issue of same-sex marriage with their “moral ambivalence” about the issue. The Black church as she defines it owes a debt to those individuals who against all odds founded and forged this unique institution. This debt is to be paid to current generations

⁴¹ Cheng, xii.

⁴² Cheng, xii.

⁴³ Irene Monroe, *Between A Rock and a Hard Place* ed. by Miguel De La Torre (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2009), 39-40.

⁴⁴ Sallie M. Cuffee, “On Sex and Sexuality in Black Churchwomen’s Lives: A Womanist Call for a Moral and Justice Conversation in the Black Church,” *The Journal of Religious Thought* vol. 59-60, no. 1-1, (2006): 45.

who are similarly fighting for the establishment of gay rights. Therefore, she argues that gay rights and civil rights go hand in hand. She maintains the AAC has an obligation to the legacy of Martin Luther King to defend the rights of the LGBT.

William Kay and Stephen Hunt argue that homosexuality is an issue that is confronting all mainline church denominations and that the AAC must engage it, along with all other churches in America.⁴⁵ The AAC has to confront the issue of gay rights versus civil rights and its impact, and conservative denominations like COGIC, AOG and other mainline denominations that can be identified as AAC, find they can no longer remain silent on the subject of homosexuality, if for no other reason than the association, however perceived, between gay rights and civil rights.

Kay and Hunt conclude that the matter of homosexual activity is no longer just seen as the purview of pastoral discipline, but a church issue.⁴⁶ Thus, the AA pastor in the AA church may very well find that he or she will not be allowed to dictate church policy on the issue of homosexuality. These pastors may find themselves compelled not just by the culture but by their congregations as well to address this issue. A retreat to preconceived notions that have been buttressed by homophobic indifference and or ignorance is not going to be a viable response, nor will such thoughts and attitudes contribute to a solution.⁴⁷

If made more aware of this controversy, The AAC in the DMV might be moved to provide ministry to the AA LGBT, if for no other reason than its long history of

⁴⁵ William Kay and Stephen Hunt, *Pentecostal Churches and Homosexuality*. *Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality and Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Chapter 22.

⁴⁶ Kay and Hunt, Chapter 22.

⁴⁷ Kay and Hunt, Chapter 22.

defending civil rights. This ministry can occur even if AACs remain divided on the issue of accepting the gay lifestyle.

Racism within the Gay Community

An issue that further complicates this discussion over civil rights versus gay rights is ongoing racism within the gay community itself. Cheng explains this phenomenon by using his own coming out experience as an example. The gay community Cheng encountered when he came out was largely gay white men and the divide between black and white people did not change when he entered the gay. Nor did he find unity between gay men and gay women. Cheng found that gay white men do not embrace gay men of color.

Thus, a gay man of color according to Cheng faces double isolation. Not only is he cut off from his family of origin and his faith community, but when he encounters racism he has no one or nowhere to turn for either consolation or commiseration. Cheng once again attributes this strategy to the efforts of conservative Christians to “divide-and-conquer.”⁴⁸ For instance, they (conservative Christians) pit gay Anglos against gay people of color. Conservatives, according to Cheng, also pit Lesbians against male gays and Black lesbians against other Anglo and non-Black lesbians.⁴⁹ Cheng purports that queer people of color never find acceptance because of what he terms “queerphobia” that exists not just in the non-queer community.⁵⁰ This racism is another dynamic the AA pastor may not have been aware due to lack of any dialogue between them and the LGBT

⁴⁸ Cheng, xiii.

⁴⁹ Cheng, xiii.

⁵⁰ Cheng, xiii.

member. Awareness of this racism is another benefit this study provides to the AA pastor in the DMV to minister to the LGBT member.

Cheng describes how even some queer theology promotes racism. He points to Womanist theology, which was developed by Black lesbians out of necessity, to give a voice to the Black lesbian.⁵¹ It was necessary because the binary notions of black or white, gay or straight did not include the Black lesbian or to some degree the gay man of color either. This binary notion divides the gay male from the lesbian. But it was a notion that AA lesbians insisted upon to establish their own identity.

Irene Monroe agrees with Cheng that racism exists in the gay community.⁵² She argues that the gay community can ill afford to spend precious time on infighting. The community must present a united front toward gaining equality for all its members. “While our sexual orientation gives us residence in the larger LGBTQ community, racism constantly thwarts any effort for coalition building, which weakens the larger movement for sexual equality.”⁵³

AA Millennials have a term, code switching, that describes how they change their pattern of speech and behavior to suit the environment. They speak and behave more “White” or “Black” depending on the crowd of people with whom they find themselves. AA gay individuals do the same thing. They must learn to act a certain way in the larger community but another way to conform to the gay community. For the AA who is LGBT and religiously affiliated, yet another layer of code switching is sometimes necessary to fit in. Monroe writes about how this racism negatively impacts AA LBGT:

⁵¹ Cheng, xiii.

⁵² Monroe, 39-40.

⁵³ Monroe, 39-40.

As spiritual wanderers to white queer religious culture, we navigate through the dominant queer spiritual lexicon for words to speak truth to our reality. . . . Terms such as “lesbian,” “gay,” “queer,” “Butch,” and “femme” all strip us of our particular history, struggle, and spirituality as a sexual group, forcing us, without consent, to assume a white queer universality.⁵⁴ As resident aliens to black religious culture, we black LGBTQ people speak of a God we know about through heterosexist theological language because sexuality has never been a comfortable topic of discussion in the black community.⁵⁵

Monroe feels that once again black people, in this instance the LGBT AAs, have been systematically excluded from society, whether by commission of crimes and prejudice against them, or by omission of those in power to advocate for them, or perhaps by a combination of both. Monroe pleads with the LGBT community to stop the racial infighting. “We must understand that we all carry multiple identities into the world. Racism in our community continues to separate us in a Herculean struggle against heterosexism that cannot afford to underutilize any of its people.”⁵⁶

Black Liberation Theology

A large part of the backdrop to the civil rights versus gay rights debate is Black Liberation Theology, a concept that promotes an agenda of social justice and that has at its core freedom from oppression for African Americans.⁵⁷ One of its central tenets is the affirmed worth of the AA. In other words, Black Liberation Theology argues that AAs are inherently worthy to be accorded the full measure of human dignity. One of its proponents James Cone makes the case that these principles apply to gay rights as much as they apply to civil rights.

⁵⁴ Monroe, 40.

⁵⁵ Monroe, 40.

⁵⁶ Monroe, 57.

⁵⁷ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press. 1969), 127.

Cone builds his case on the logic that since AAs have been treated as second-class citizens they need to speak up for other people, such as LGBT individuals, who are also treated as second-class citizens.⁵⁸ The AAC has been the place where second-class citizens can be treated as first-class citizens. The janitor could put on a suit for at least one day a week and be looked upon with dignity and respect. The maid could exchange her maid's uniform for a choir robe and sing to her God of the misery she was experiencing in the present world. She could inspire future generations in her Sunday school class as she taught them about Jesus and simultaneously impart to them a sense of dignity and self-worth. In summary, the AAC has been a place where the worth of AAs has been affirmed.

Cone acknowledges that this has been the legacy of the AAC. But he thinks that it is this very sense of affirmed worth that the AAC appears to be withholding from its LGBT members. It is to this institution that the LGBT has historically turned to for sustenance, for support, and on some level for acceptance. Sadly, it is this very same institution that has in too many instances afforded neither sustenance, support nor acceptance. This could be due to the homophobia that comes out of ignorance that is based on fear and not necessarily based on hate. Perhaps it is a fear that the AAC has missed the mark of God's command to love. Or perhaps it is a fear that the AAC will lose some of its hard-earned status and dignity in the larger culture if it accepts its LGBT members.

Cone argues that the AAC must be on the right side of history regarding the issue of homosexuality.⁵⁹ To him the very nature of Black Liberation Theology is the freedom

⁵⁸ Cone, 129.

⁵⁹ Cone, 128.

of and protection for the rights of all oppressed people. It does not matter whether the oppression is due to skin color or sexual preference. The AAC is bound by duty and history to defend against such oppression.

At issue, then is whether the AAC will heed the call of this modern prophet or ignore him because of his non-conformist approach. Cone advocates that the AAC take a very different approach than that taken by its White counterpart:

To carve out a Black Theology based on black oppression will of necessity mean the creation of new values independent of and alien to the values of white society. The values must be independent because they must arise from the needs of black people. They will be alien because white American “Christian” values are based on racism.⁶⁰

Some AACs are repelled by this non-conformity of Cone’s. But Cone argues that AACs must become even more radically non-conformist than when he began his career 40 years ago.⁶¹ He says this because he believes that the traditional Black Liberation Theology of his younger years is not broad enough to encompass the issue of gay rights. Cone thinks the AAC has not been particularly supportive of gay rights thus far. If Black Liberation Theology is to be effective in securing gay rights several things must occur.

First, the AAC must come to a consensus that gay rights are equal to civil rights. Next, the AAC must engage in serious dialogue to either accept or deny that it as an institution has sold out to gain respectability. Then the AAC must take the bold step in saying to mainstream White evangelical churches that for all of the gains in legal rights in this country, racism is still apparent and inherent in evangelical theology and must be acknowledged before the problem can be effectively addressed.

⁶⁰ Cone, 127.

⁶¹ Cone, 130.

Cone identifies several layers with which AACs must deal if they are to effectively minister to their LGBT members. First, there is the layer of cover up or shut up or don't ask don't tell. Then there is the layer of managing the image of respectability. In other words, many AACs feel they have worked too hard and gained too much to sacrifice their image of respectability on the cross of LGBT sexuality. Third, there is the layer of fear. Many AACs are afraid of what they do not know and are not willing to understand. Fourth, there is the attitude that says to LGBT members: "Why can't you just go along to get along?" Finally, Cone identifies the layer of "umbrage" toward the LGBT. This is the unspoken declaration from the AAC to the LGBT: "How dare you question God's word!"⁶²

Cone dares AACs to use Black Liberation Theology for the benefit of their LGBT members. He insists that the AAC has taken dares before and survived. He believes the AAC will survive as it always has, but he wonders if the LGBT will be able to find a place in the AAC?⁶³

Is Celibacy a Viable Option?

So often the LGBT in the AAC are tolerated not only if they will remain silent, but also if they will remain celibate. Celibacy is not a new concept in the Catholic Church and it is not a requirement for pastors in Protestant churches. Yet the AAC often demands celibacy of the LGBT. Is celibacy a viable alternative to meet the traditionalists' demand for holiness as well as the demand for equality?

⁶² Cone, 127.

⁶³ Cone, 127.

William Phipps did not think so. Phipps criticizes the Roman Catholic Church requirement of celibacy in the priesthood.⁶⁴ According to Phipps, celibacy is not only contradictory to the implied views of Jesus, but it is a contributing factor in the sexual abuse of children by the Catholic priesthood. Phipps does not infer or imply that if people are homosexual they are also prone to child abuse. Rather he asserts that if a priest is given no other alternative for natural expression of sexual urges, then he may misuse his positions and abuse his parishioners—male, female and children.

Phipps outlines the rise of celibacy as an expression of the opinions of the early church fathers.⁶⁵ He cites the Vestal Virgins as one such example of the requirement for celibacy in the Roman culture. “These virgins selected for the office were regarded for virtually all of their lives as personifications of the virgin goddess Vesta.”⁶⁶ The penalty for violating this requirement was to be buried alive. Celibacy during the era in which Church fathers wrote was taken very seriously. It must be noted that male pagan priests who violated celibacy rules did not suffer the same fate, an indication of a male dominated culture.⁶⁷ So according to Phipps, the requirement for celibacy, however biblical its proponents proclaim it to be, has its root in pagan influence. This makes it appear as though the contemporary church is using ancient pagan standards of celibacy rather than biblical precept in an effort not to bow to the contemporary pagan culture.

⁶⁴ William Phipps, *Clerical Celibacy: The Heritage* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 14.

⁶⁵ Phipps, 14.

⁶⁶ Phipps, 14.

⁶⁷ Phipps, 14.

Many LGBT do not find celibacy to be a sustainable alternative and the failure to remain so only adds to the guilt already heaped upon them by the church. Many LGBT do not feel that the same requirement is placed upon the heterosexual. These persons may eventually marry but the LGBT, if they are to remain in right standing, must remain celibate.

According to Stanley Grenz the only alternative Jesus offered to marriage was celibacy. Grenz quotes Jesus:⁶⁸

But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.” (Matt. 19:11-12)

Grenz makes a distinction between celibacy and abstinence. He makes the distinction in response to LGBT who argue that the bible is unfair in calling homosexuals to a lifestyle devoid of any means of sexual expression. LGBT argue that for the heterosexual marriage is an option and thus an outlet to fulfill their sexuality. The homosexual is not given this option. Celibacy according to Grenz, is applicable to both the homosexual and the heterosexual. Grenz defines celibacy as the self-imposed abstaining from sex to fulfill a particular purpose, usually spiritual. Yes, he concedes that for the heterosexual this may be temporary or for a lifetime. However, Grenz remained adamant that abstinence is for both homosexual and heterosexual individual. In fact, Grenz contends that abstinence is the lifestyle for all people who are not married. He points out that not all single heterosexuals will marry. Those who do not marry either by choice or inability to find a

⁶⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 61.

suitable partner are to remain in a state of abstinence or chastity, or as Paul put it “to possess their vessel in honor,” before God. These are people who do not have marriage as an option.

Miguel De La Torre, an historical sexologist, contextualizes this issue in a more modern light, “Even so, many gay and non-gay people, having discovered the joy of sexual desire intertwined with a spirituality of compassion and justice, are no longer willing to turn back, reject erotic power, or take comfort in facile moralism.”⁶⁹

LGBT in the AAC in the DMV are not willing to accept a mandate they deny, what many of them feel to be an essential part of themselves, their sexuality. Not only do they resent such a demand, but many LGBT point out the blatant hypocrisy in the AAC surrounding the issue of homosexuality. The scandal with Bishop Eddie Long is only one that received national attention. Doubtless there are others that have happened in other churches that may not have received national attention. But they did not escape the notice of the LGBT in the local congregation. Incidents like these present yet another quandary for the AAC in the DMV, how do the church minister to an LGBT constituency that is not willing to be celibate, or silent.⁷⁰

Martin Luther was “a German Professor of theology, composer, priest, monk and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation.”⁷¹ “Luther rejected several teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, among them the idea that money could buy one’s absolution

⁶⁹ Miguel A. De Latorre, *Out of the Shadows into the Light: Christianity and Homosexuality* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2009), preface.

⁷⁰ De La Torre, Introduction.

⁷¹ Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 88.

from sin in the form of indulgences.”⁷² In protest according to tradition Luther nailed his “Ninety-Five Theses” to the door of the church.⁷³ Luther’s refusal to recant his protests led to his excommunication from the Catholic church. From this movement, the Lutheran Church was begun. Thus, Martin Luther is called the founder of the Protestant church.⁷⁴ Martin Luther still has an important voice in this debate. The seven denominations that comprise the AAC in America are Protestant, and Martin Luther still impacts the AAC in the DMV in surprising ways. His stance on celibacy offers a way forward for the AAC’s ministry to LBGT members.

Luther was adamantly opposed to the celibacy required of the priesthood. Luther struck history’s greatest blow against the Catholic view of a celibate priesthood. He writes,

They were completely unjustified in forbidding marriage and in burdening the divine state of the priesthood with the demand of continual celibacy. In doing so they have acted like anti-Christian, tyrannical, unholy scoundrels, occasioning all sorts of terrible, ghastly, countless sins against chastity, in which they are caught to this day.⁷⁵

Luther accused church leadership of being hypocrites in this area. In this way, he was not unlike Jesus’ railing accusation of the Jewish leaders of His day. Much like Jesus Luther accused the leaders of imposing a burden on others they were unwilling to honor themselves. In the case of priestly celibacy, Luther felt that not only were the leaders’ liars, but they had no right to withhold from others that which is a fundamental desire in a

⁷² Hans J. Hillerbrand, “Martin Luther: German Religious Leader. Indulgences and Salvation,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last updated January 24, 2017, accessed January 28, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther#toc59845>.

⁷³ Hillerbrand.

⁷⁴ Hillerbrand.

⁷⁵ Berry, 100.

man and a woman. Luther went so far as to encourage all the nuns and priests in his diocese to marry. He married the last celibate nun remaining in diocese, Katherine von Bora. “They had a passionate relationship of many years, raising six children together.”⁷⁶

As in Luther’s day, the AAC today finds itself frustrated by an LGBT constituency that is no longer willing to be celibate. Luther argued that a celibate priesthood violates God’s intention for church leaders. If all Christians are priests, according to Luther’s theology then the questions could be asked if any Christian should be required to be celibate in order to be included as church members? The inference is forced, celibacy for the LGBT in the AAC should not be required if it is not required for its leaders.

The logic of Luther’s stand against celibacy also strikes a blow against the current don’t ask don’t tell policy in the AAC. The prevailing attitude found in many AA churches is: You (LGBT) are ok if you keep silent. When one is no longer silent about same sex attraction and behavior, one is no longer tolerated. One example of this don’t ask don’t tell policy was exposed by the scandal that occurred with Bishop Eddie Long. Long vehemently opposed homosexuality in public proclamation. But it was sadly revealed that Long had been involved in several homosexual relationships with young men in his congregation. Some of these trysts allegedly took place at intervals during the worship experience. Quite a few of these so-called relationships went on for years. These young men involved in these trysts could be likened to modern day catamites. A catamite is a young man who comes under the sexual influence of an older man who has access to position and power. This ersatz relationship is not just about financial remuneration but

⁷⁶ White, 97.

affords the young man a false sense of security by providing him with either a job, emotional support, or both. These relationships were hypocrisy at its worst and shameful behavior at best. What is most egregious about these trysts is that, according to the unofficial don't ask don't tell policy, they were tolerated as long as they were not brought into the light. Bishop Long could publicly denounce homosexuality as long as he could secretly contain his behavior.

Luther's logic against celibate clergy applies to the AAC's current don't ask don't tell policy. Just as required celibacy allowed Medieval Catholic leaders to be hypocrites who privately expressed their sexuality, the same requirement for gays today is revealed when Christian leaders behave hypocritically, as in the Long scandal.

The AAC in the DMV must be cognizant and careful not to blindly mandate the repression of sexual expression in the LGBT member without providing proper spiritual motivation, without offering an appropriate expression of love, or without attempting to achieve a level of understanding. A failure to provide any of these could very well prove to be a breeding ground for dissension at a minimum and more hypocritical scandal at its worst.

Luther was provoked by the blatant hypocrisies and scandals of church leaders of his day. AAC pastors today must ask themselves questions about how Luther might interact with LGBT issues today? The researcher conjectures that today Luther might defend the faith of LGBT members as personal and between themselves and God instead of mediated through the professional clergy leadership of the AAC.

Carmen Berry provides a modern viewpoint about celibacy.⁷⁷ Berry asserts celibacy is more of a spiritual discipline. Nevertheless, she concludes somewhat reluctantly that even in the context of today's sex-saturated culture she could not find any biblical support for a single person to be non-celibate. Given her humorous and perhaps irreverent review of biblical characters in her book, this comes as somewhat of a surprise. Berry's stance of celibacy demonstrates her respect for the Bible. Had Berry sought to dismiss celibacy as out of sync with the times she quite possibly could have run the risk of being dismissed by evangelical scholars as just another heretic. However, because she demonstrated her love for God by making a statement that was unpopular for some, including for herself, she establishes herself as credible to conservative evangelicals. Her book may be titled *Unauthorized* but clearly her intention is to remain faithful to the Bible.

One of the major benefits of practicing celibacy as a spiritual discipline is learning how to resist becoming sexually involved with people outside the boundaries of marriage. Self-control is a discipline that is needed whether a person is married or not. As any married person can attest being married does not eliminate attraction to others. If a person has learned to be sexually chaste when single, he or she will be better equipped to deal with sexual temptation once married.⁷⁸

Berry offers hope to both heterosexual and homosexual adults who would remain single. "If you are a single adult I highly recommend transforming your experience into a meaningful journey with God, rather than simply a waiting period of deprivation."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Berry, 161.

⁷⁸ Berry, 161.

⁷⁹ Berry, 161.

Berry's perspective gives the LGBT member at least the alternative to transfer their sexual desires into a journey with God. They can counterweight their frustrations caused by their flesh with their love for God by balancing the temporal with the eternal. They can ask themselves if it is better abstain for a few years and to gain eternal rewards or satisfy the flesh and run the risk of losing rewards for eternity. Better still, when they are tempted beyond their ability to endure, they can ask in the words of an old standard AAC church song, for "a closer walk with thee." In that daily walk, they not only gain strength to endure, but love to carry on.⁸⁰

Can a Place of Dialogue Be Found?

The question remains, how will the church navigate the controversy? Does the church have the capacity to handle the respectful dialogue that is necessary to navigate the controversy successfully? The researcher believes that a good place to begin the dialogue is for AACs to model their conversations after the respectful conversations between expert theologians, such as Bill Arnold and Adam Hamilton, Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche, Willard Swartly, Robert Gagnon and Christopher Yuan. The researcher presents both sides of the argument to provide the AA pastor with a balanced approach and with a beginning point for dialogue.

Arnold and Hamilton

Bill Arnold and Adam Hamilton agree to disagree on the issue of homosexuality. AA pastors in the DMV would do well to follow their example of how they do this. The researcher finds their dialogue to be particularly helpful.

⁸⁰ Berry, 161.

Bill Arnold and Adam Hamilton are both respected leaders in the United Methodist Church (UMC). They weighed in on the subject of homosexuality within their denomination. Arnold, the traditionalist, wrote *Seeing Black and White in a Grey World*,⁸¹ to counter what he felt were misconceptions put forth in revisionist Adam Hamilton's book, *Confronting the Controversies: Biblical Perspectives On Tough Issues*.⁸²

Hamilton's basic premise was that the UMC should bow to the inevitable changing cultural norm and accept homosexuals in the life of the church.⁸³ According to Hamilton, God's perfect will is for a man and a woman to live together in a monogamous relationship within the confines of marriage. However, an omniscient God must have a place for those persons who were either born with a same- sex attraction or for those persons who were conditioned by environment or have been forced to adopt a homosexual life style. This is what is called the "circumstantial will" of God.⁸⁴ Hamilton concludes by using Paul's phrase from 1 Corinthians 13:12, saying that Christians see "dimly" now and are therefore unable to judge the wrongness or rightness of homosexual behavior in the church. Thus, until God allows His people to see with more clarity, Christians should "extend unlimited love and grace towards all of God's children."⁸⁵ The LGBT are God's children. So, while Hamilton agrees with the Bible that

⁸¹ Arnold, 68

⁸² Hamilton, 15.

⁸³ Hamilton, 15.

⁸⁴ Arnold, 13.

⁸⁵ Hamilton, 15.

God intended for sex to be between a man and a woman, he presents a defense or an explanation for homosexuality.

Arnold counters by maintaining the traditionalist view of scripture. He writes that scripture is still binding and thus still prohibitive of homosexuality.⁸⁶ However, Arnold does not seek to use Scripture to categorically condemn the homosexual to eternal damnation.⁸⁷ This is unlike the typical AA pastor in the DMV, who often highlights homosexuality as the worst of sins.

Hamilton argues for a “middle road theology.”⁸⁸ This is a third way of reinterpreting scriptures that will allow the embracing of all peoples regardless of their sexual orientation. This is a revisionist broad stroke of scripture interpretation that has at its core a premise for a more progressive hermeneutic. Arnold counters that Hamilton’s “middle road” is little more than hospitality over fidelity. Arnold states Hamilton’s middle or third way is not unique nor is it a new concept. He says that Hamilton’s middle ground is often not centrist thinking. Rather, it is Hamilton taking a firm position on one side of the argument, the revisionist side.

Arnold accuses Hamilton of being pragmatic and thus insensitive to scripture.⁸⁹ Arnold defines this spirit of pragmatism as basing the truth of a matter on successful outcomes rather than scriptural truth. This is a reference to the traditional use of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” or John Wesley’s recognition of four authorities for Christian

⁸⁶ Arnold, 68

⁸⁷ Arnold, 68.

⁸⁸ Hamilton, xvii.

⁸⁹ Arnold, 15.

doctrine: Scripture, reason, church tradition (including the primitive church before Emperor Constantine up through the tradition of Church of England) and experience. Arnold suggests that Hamilton is giving more weight to experience than to the other sectors of the Quadrilateral. Arnold points out that just because something works does not necessarily mean that something is true, nor in line with scripture.⁹⁰

The United Methodist Church, which Arnold and Hamilton represent, has always drawn heavily on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to shape its doctrine. It has long been this denomination's method to formulate answers to difficult questions. United Methodists always carefully analyze all four elements of the Quadrilateral to make sure they are in balance. Thus, Hamilton presents a case both for and against homosexuality in what he terms a "Wesleyan fashion."⁹¹ After presenting the arguments from both sides, Hamilton maintains there can be a middle way.

The researcher thinks that perhaps the AAC may rely, however unwittingly, too heavily on scripture and tradition for truth. This may have kept the AAC from benefiting from the Quadrilateral model as a tool to develop and refine a theology it can use to minister to the LGBT. But at the same time neither can the AAC bow to experience, the fourth element of the Quadrilateral, to interpret what the scripture says with regard to sexuality, both heterosexual or homosexual. To do so could make the AAC guilty of, "Bowling to what is accepted in the contemporary cultural norm and disregard what historical reason has borne from scripture."⁹²

⁹⁰ Arnold, 15.

⁹¹ Hamilton, 137.

⁹² Arnold, 86.

Arnold and Hamilton's dialogue demonstrates a dilemma. Hamilton argues that it is time for radical revision of the scriptures about sexuality and in particular regarding homosexuality. Arnold on the other hand would argue that the pursuit of a "middle ground" is just succumbing to cultural relativism. Both appeal to the Quadrilateral to help shape the approach to the LGBT community.

For this researcher, Hamilton's middle way is a point of intersection where the traditionalist and the revisionist can meet. Hamilton's middle way goes to the core goal of this project. The goal of this project is to lead AA pastors in the DMV to a place not necessarily of change, but to provide sufficient stimuli to engage the mind of the AA pastor in the DMV. This is an engagement that hopefully will enable the AA pastor to minister to the LGBT in the AAC in the DMV.

One of Arnold's critiques of Hamilton gives the researcher hope that the AAC can engage in respectful dialogue over LGBT issues. Arnold says that Hamilton's middle way is not dissimilar to the way in which the early church fathers settled many of the questions the church faced in its infancy. According to Arnold, "much of what Christians today accept as orthodoxy was worked out in the first five centuries by a series of church councils."⁹³ He explains, "much of the gritty, and sometimes brutal work of the early church councils was the way the church resolved conflict and often had as much to do with power politics as it did theology."⁹⁴ These councils are examples of how the early church found the "middle ground" on many issues. This history raises the question in the researcher's mind: If the early church councils comprised of godly men met and debated

⁹³ Arnold, 58.

⁹⁴ Arnold, 58.

to make church policy that served the church for thousands of years, perhaps then church councils comprised of godly men and women meet today and do the same? Hamilton's and Arnold's conversations and arguments may very well create a credible argument for a middle ground in imitation of the early church councils.

Hamilton asserts that the church stands to lose a generation of young people because of its response to the question of homosexuality. He advocates "combining a love of scripture with a willingness to see both its humanity as well as its divinity."⁹⁵ To that statement Arnold responds "The largest and fastest-growing Christian universities and seminaries, campus ministries, and youth movements are ones that hold to traditional Christian definitions of morality and marriage."⁹⁶ In other words, Arnold is not fearful that a traditional stance on homosexuality will drive out young people from the church.

These two gentlemen agree to disagree on the issue of homosexuality. The researcher opines that AA pastors in the DMV would do well to follow the example of these two men. To do so would be a starting point for dialogue to combat homophobia in the AAC in the DMV. The use of the Quadrilateral as a model in a balanced way would be a helpful tool for the AAC leader as they proceed in this dialogue.

Dallas and Heche

Respectful dialogue can be improved with Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche's recommendations. Dallas and Heche present a reasoned and biblical apology for scriptural prohibition against homosexuality. They maintain that the issue of

⁹⁵ Hamilton, xvii.

⁹⁶ Arnold, 13.

homosexuality must be dealt with in a manner that is both accurate and loving.⁹⁷ They challenge the revisionist argument, which states that “idolatrous homosexuality is the problem” (rather than homosexuality being “one of many abominable practices punishable by death”). According to them, in the revisionist viewpoint, “the practices mentioned in . . . Leviticus have to do with idolatry, not homosexuality. God was not prohibiting the kind of homosexuality we see today; He forbade the sort that incorporated idolatry.”⁹⁸ Instead, they take issue with this point of view and maintain the traditional view of scripture. Dallas and Heche argue that the church should not modify or revise the scriptures to accommodate LGBT people or to bow to cultural relativism.

But instead of condemning LGBT people, Dallas and Heche assert that Christians ought to defend LGBT people against discrimination and hurtful language that seeks to diminish their humanity. They agree with Arnold that the church should extend grace to LGBT members. Additionally, they insist the church must not use pejorative language when referring to LGBT individuals because it is not God-honoring and has no place in the church. Church leaders should use speech that is not “just biblical, and doctrinally sound, but considerate as well.”⁹⁹

AA pastors in the DMV should heed these admonitions and modify their tone from the pulpit. LGBT members will never hear a loving, biblical response if the tone and language do not betray love and respect. Pejorative language, if it has been deemed crude and unacceptable by the larger gay community, has no place in the ministry to the

⁹⁷ Dallas and Heche, 120-121

⁹⁸ Dallas and Heche, 120-121.

⁹⁹ Dallas. and Heche, 5

LGBT. This is true even if such terms are used by the LGBT. This is similar to use of the “N” word in AA community. Even though this word is still widely spoken throughout the AA community, the pulpit being no exception, it must never be used by non-Blacks under any circumstances.

Another novel and helpful modification about language use from Dallas and Heche is that not all people who are attracted to persons of the same sex should be labelled as “gay.”¹⁰⁰ Removing this word as a universal label can help remove the stigma, insisted upon by some AA pastors, that all homosexuals are automatically doomed to hell. Dallas and Heche’s recommendations will go a long way in helping AA pastors who wrestle with the tension of serving God and serving their LGBT members. Dallas and Heche, though they are not AA nor are they pastors, their loving responses to the LGBT challenges provide a good resource for any pastor, especially AA pastors in the DMV.

Swartly

Willard Swartly offers a way forward in the dialogue by pointing out how redemption is embedded in the word “abomination.” He disagrees with revisionists who want to jettison the word abomination for their “ambiguous interpretations of scripture.”¹⁰¹ He takes issue with their arguments that scripture does not refer in its condemnation to committed relationships between people of the same gender. Rather, he argues that scripture does condemn all same-sex activity. However, in line with the revisionists, Swartly concedes that contemporary society is facing the issue of homosexuality from a “different vantage point” than what the ancients faced. He points

¹⁰⁰ Dallas, and Heche, 5.

¹⁰¹ Willard M. Swartly, *Biblical Interpretation and the Moral Discernment* (Scottsdale, AZ: Herald Press, 2003), 50.

out that the word homosexual is a fairly new word, believed to have been coined by Carr, a German psychologist in 1869.¹⁰²

Therefore, Swartly agrees that all biblical passages that translate ancient terms as “homosexuality” need to be revised. However, he does not see that as sufficient evidence to warrant a reversal of the biblical prohibition on homosexuality. He argues that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was homosexual rape, and by extension homosexuality is prohibited by scriptural mandate.

Swartly’s insights center around the use of the word “abomination.” He concludes that the word “toevah” (abomination) does indeed apply to modern day homosexuality. However, he sees the strong possibility of redemption when the word is used. He looks at the association in Deuteronomy of abomination with prostitution to demonstrate that there is hope for homosexuals rather than permanent condemnation.

There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God (Deut. 23:17-18).¹⁰³

If prostitutes, who are connected with “abomination” in this text, can find redemption, then surely gay people can as well according to Swartly. This word “abomination” is therefore crucial to opening dialogue in the AAC in the DMV.¹⁰⁴

The word must be separated from the act. If the AAC can embrace a former prostitute, then it can at least make the attempt to get beyond the negative historical connotations affixed to this word abomination and embrace homosexuals. Just and AAC

¹⁰² Swartly, 50.

¹⁰³ Swartly, 50.

¹⁰⁴ Swartly, 50.

leaders can currently see prostitutes through a redemptive lens, they ought to be able to see homosexuals through a redemptive lens.

Gagnon

Robert Gagnon, another traditionalist, concedes the church has an obligation to extend love to the LGBT.¹⁰⁵ Gagnon imposes a duty upon the church to understand people who struggle with what he terms “homosexual temptations.” Consequently, AACs and their leaders who refuse to acknowledge the LGBT member, except to condemn them, fail to fulfill their duty. AAC leaders must explore ways to minister to the LGBT members.

Gagnon also concludes that the church should not hold out false hope to the LGBT members that the Bible contains anything that will affirm a homosexual lifestyle. Gagnon believes the act should be condemned and not the person. To those in the LGBT movement who would label him and AA pastors as homophobic, Gagnon states, “A denunciation should not be construed as an indictment.” The only way a statement like this will be understood is through healthy and open dialogue. The AA pastor in the DMV cannot ignore the LGBT any more than the LGBT can label the AAC and its leadership as homophobic just because the church is saying something the LGBT does not want to accept.

Some might accuse Gagnon and those who agree with him of forcing more LGBT to remain in the closet. For LGBT members of the AAC, sentiments like Gagnon’s are sighted as the source of “silent suffering” in the pews. The AAC has long been a

¹⁰⁵ Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 31.

mainstay in the AA community even in this increasingly secularized culture. There are some LGBT people who long for the church experience. Yet the place where the LGBT should go for nurture is the place where they may find rejection and abuse. Nevertheless, the viewpoint of Gagnon and others is the greeting and reception many AA LGBT can expect and receive in AAC.

Yuan

Christopher Yuan in his dissertation “A Qualitative Study of Reducing Marginalization of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Same-Sex Attracted Student at Christian Colleges and Universities,” determined that “God still has great concern and compassion for the sinner.”¹⁰⁶ According to Yuan God’s grace is unmerited favor toward undeserving humanity. God has no desire that humanity, His highest form of creation, should perish. But because God is holy, He also may not look on sin. Thus, according to Yuan there is a holy tension for the church between loving the sinner and not condoning sin.¹⁰⁷ This applies to all people, even though this thesis project focuses narrowly on the homosexual.

Per Yuan the traditional view is that while homosexuality is a sin, temptation to same sex attraction (SSA) is not. Yuan purports the writer of Hebrews made a distinction between temptation and sin¹⁰⁸: “For we do not have a high Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” Hebrews 4:15. The Greek word for “weakness” here is *asthenia*.

¹⁰⁶ Christopher Yuan, “Giving a Voice the Voiceless: A Qualitative Study of Reducing the Marginalization of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Same-Sex Attracted Student at Christian Colleges and Universities” (Doctor of Ministry Thesis, Bethel University, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Yuan, 60.

¹⁰⁸ Yuan, 60.

This word in the Greek conveys the thought of having the propensity to sin. So, in this way Yuan agrees with Gagnon's view that a "homosexual impulse" is not an accountable sin unless on acts on the impulse.

Summary

The AAC has been accused of labeling homosexuality as the vilest of sins. As Berry suggests too often the actions of the homosexual have been equated with the homosexual. Consequently, the LGBT individual, and not just his or her actions, is considered to be an abomination. But this chapter has shown that both those who see homosexuality as a sin and those who do not see it as a sin, do find agreement that too much emphasis is placed on the genitals and on the specific sexual behavior, rather than on seeing LGBT individuals as humans. The revisionist would ask that orientation not be automatically linked to action and the traditionalist would say both are the same.¹⁰⁹

The AAC to some degree still focuses on the actions of the LGBT as opposed to the LGBT as person in at least two ways. First, its often unspoken but subtly enforced rule of don't ask don't tell policy communicates a focus on action instead of personhood. Its message of don't flaunt your lifestyle in another's face is interpreted by LGBT members as you are second-class citizen here. Second, the AAC communicates its focus on behavior by sending the dehumanizing messages. If you do wish to stay do please confine your lifestyle to those ministries that can best benefit the church—the arts and music. This message of confinement reinforces the idea that LGBT members are second class citizens. The rationale behind these messages is contained in the old adage 'Love the Sinner and hate the sin.'

¹⁰⁹ Swartly, 50.

Which one is correct? That is a question the researcher declines to answer, as the answer falls outside the purview of this project. What the researcher will concede is that the impact of what he has been taught has shaped his theology. As for the AAC in the DMV the answer is still up for debate. Both sides will only grudgingly concede that only God has the answer. Until God clearly gives the answer the debate continues. For the AA pastor in the DMV one thing must occur: a willingness to at least engage in the debate. The material in this section will be another tool to which the AAC pastor can refer as they minister to the LGBT member.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Project Overview

This project followed the prescribed outline for the development of a thesis as required by Bethel University. During the project, some steps were done in sequence and others were developed as the research dictated. Each of the steps were essential in bringing the project to completion.

The AAC in the DMV is facing a unique zeitgeist surrounding homosexuality and its ministry to the LGBT. Ronnie Lessem and Alexander Schieffer attribute this quandary to postmodernism.¹ They define postmodernism as, “Multiple truths, depending on the time and place and that discontinuity rather than continuity is then order, or indeed disorder of the day.” Lessem and Schieffer further assert that under the “cloak of Western values, too many sins have been committed.”² By contrast then and resorting to what Lessem and Schieffer define as a modernist approach this researcher relied on one standard of absolute truth, the Bible. This researcher believes that Bible contains the best methods for transformation to occur. Thus, the methods used in this project up to and including the interview questions were developed and designed to facilitate transformation for the AAC leader in the DMV.

¹ Ronnie Lessem and Schieffer, *Integral Research and Innovation Transforming Enterprise and Society* (London: Gower Publishing, 2016), 274.

² Lessum and Schieffer, 290.

Step One

The first step was to explore the biblical literature relevant to homosexuality and the church. This was done by first examining the writings of influential church teachers such as Augustine and Calvin to uncover the impact these men have had on the development of homophobia in some AA churches in the DMV. These influences have gone unacknowledged for years and have had an impact on the methodology the AA pastor in the DMV employs to minister to LGBT members. Next, the researcher consulted theological reflections that various and contrasting commentators and theologians, both revisionists and traditionalists, have done on passages of scripture on the topics of sex and homosexuality, such as the writings of Moses on the Sodom and Gomorrah account in Genesis 19 and the holiness codes in Leviticus. He also looked Paul's writing to the churches at Rome and the Corinthians.

Step Two

The second step was to survey literature on the topic of homosexuality and its relationship with the AAC leadership in the DMV. The researcher first looked at homophobia and its origin in the AAC, as well as how it is manifested and maintained. He then traced the ongoing tension in the AAC over whether to include the idea of gay rights in the Civil Rights Movement. Next the researcher looked at the issue surrounding celibacy and the LGBT community. Finally, he asked the question "can a place of dialogue be found" between the various AAC perspectives on LGBT issues. He sought to answer this question by outlining the thinking of several scholars, both traditionalists and revisionists, who have written about how the church might better approach it.

Step Three

The third step was to identify seven AA churches in the DMV with attending memberships of seven hundred or less on Sundays. The pastors of each of these churches were contacted and agreement was obtained to interview each of them. Six of the pastors were male and one was female. Research was done to produce seven case studies using mixed methods in order to evaluate how these churches minister to the LGBT community and to explore the tension between affirming the LGBT individual while conforming to the word and God and to determine where each church stood on various issues dealing with homosexuality.

Step Four

The fourth step was to interview at least one open and affirming AAC in the DMV as a contrast to explore the biblical rationalization this church uses. The researcher queried the leadership for the theological and biblical evidence this church uses to justify performing same sex marriages.

Step Five

The fifth step was to develop an interview guide that was used with each pastor. The questions on the interview were carefully developed to provide the researcher with sufficient data to determine how each pastor dealt with the subject of homosexuality in their ministry setting. Although the project included data collected from seven churches, in fact eight churches were interviewed. The first church was interviewed as a test to make sure the interview questions were eliciting responses that were germane to the problem statement. The data from that church is not included in this project. The interview with this pastor was conducted in the same manner as all the other interviews.

Five of the interviews were conducted on site. Two were done at the researcher's office. All the pastors interviewed by the researcher were familiar to the researcher and had fellowshiped with the researcher or vice versa. The questions were posed in the same manner with each pastor. Field notes and a brief overview of each ministry were conducted also. The sessions were recorded. Following each session, the researcher created a written transcript of each interview. Lastly each pastor was afforded the opportunity to comment on any other relevant topic they felt was most impactful in the current cultural climate for the church. Each of the pastors interviewed gave their permission to be interviewed and signed an agreement to participate in the project. All the pastors agreed that their names could be used if that would help the project. However, to protect the confidentiality of some of the people mentioned during the interviews the names of the pastors have been modified.

Step Six

The sixth step was to analyze and synthesize the data gathered from field notes, interviews and other sources, and then to develop a rubric for the pastors to use in assessing where they fall on a scale. Additionally, the data was filtered through the data streams, codified, analyzed and interpreted to determine patterns and themes. From these steps, fourteen recommendations were formed. This rubric and the recommendations were constructed to provide the pastor with another tool to use to assist them in ministering to the LGBT in their churches.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The seven churches chosen for this project represent a good sample of AA churches in the DMV. The researcher was able to select a church located in each of the locales that comprise the DMV. One church is located within the city of Washington DC, one is in Northern Virginia and the rest are in Prince Georges County, a Maryland suburb of Washington, DC. Each of the churches in the project are unique and different. Three of the churches are mainline traditional Baptist churches, two of which are over one hundred years old. Three of the churches are deliberate church plants. One church came about as the result of a split from another church. One church is pastored by a female.

After consultation with the thesis advisor the decision was made to interview churches that had attending memberships of seven hundred or less. In congregations of this size the leader is more likely to be engaged in ministry to all the members, including the LGBT member. This researcher believes that many people in the DMV go to church to be covered as under a tent. In a large or mega church one can be covered, but not necessarily touched as if under a tent. In a medium to small church one is likely to be touched and covered. For the purposes of this project the researcher aimed to interview pastors who had a better opportunity to touch and cover the members in the respective congregations due to their sizes.

Although none of the pastors interviewed for this study had a problem with their names being used in this project, the researcher modified the names. This was done to protect the privacy of any person who may have been mentioned by the pastor during the

interview process. Each of the pastors was familiar to the researcher. However, the pastors' viewpoints about homosexuality had never been discussed with the researcher. The churches were chosen because the churches fell within the parameters of the project. As mentioned earlier all the pastors in the project, with exception of the affirming church pastor, have at one time fellowshiped with the researcher's church in some form or another. This proved to be helpful to the researcher in describing their ministries and making field observations. The interviews revealed that the pastors who were a part of this project for the most part hold to the traditional view about homosexuality. During the interviews it was revealed that one straight pastor had a son who is gay, and that the gay pastor had a son who is straight. The gay pastor's son has a close relationship with his father and the straight pastor has a close relationship with his son. Neither the sexuality of these sons nor the sexuality of these fathers had an impact on their respective relationships. The straight son is not involved in his father's ministry. The gay son is an active member in his father's ministry. All the pastors share a common bond, which is a love for God and a love for His people who they serve. These pastors want to be faithful to the word of God and fulfill the mission of God in loving all His children.

Context Descriptions

To provide the reader a better view of the churches, here is a brief description of each of the seven churches, including their physical plants, pastor profiles and the pastor's philosophy about homosexuality. The researcher was not able to visit the physical location of the affirming pastor, however a profile of the affirming pastor is included. The locality, the church design and the pastor can impact the course of ministry in a church. Interestingly in this project the pastors of the churches that had a traditional

exterior and interior design also held to the traditional biblical view towards homosexuality. Whereas the pastors of the churches having a less traditional setting were more flexible in their view towards homosexuality. These descriptions are based on field observations gleaned during the interview and information the researcher has obtained from past interactions with each church.

Case One

Case One is in the city of Washington, DC. The church is one hundred and fifty-two-years old and has been at its current location for fifty-three years. The pastor describes his church as a “silk stocking,” church. He labels his church in this manner because the church is situated in one of the most affluent sections of Washington, DC. The church architecture is like any other church built a half-century ago. The sanctuary is outfitted with pews and stained glass windows. The demographic of the church is homogeneous. The congregation is for the most part AA. The church has many prominent members, some of whom are involved in higher echelons of the federal and local government. Because of these connections, the church is frequently mentioned in the newspaper and has been visited by President Obama twice in the past eight years.

The pastor of Case One is the ninth pastor in the one hundred fifty-two-year history of this old-line, traditional Baptist church. This is his first senior pastorate. When the pulpit of this church became vacant, applicants from all over the nation vied to fill the position of senior pastor because of the reputation of this church. The church’s calling of this man who had never been a senior pastor indicates on some level that it recognized a need for change. The pastor has served in this capacity for the past ten years. As the senior pastor of the church he sets the tone for the church. However, the pastor is

experienced and wise enough to understand that any major change, especially on a subject as controversial as homosexuality, must be done with care and caution. Prior to this appointment, the pastor served at a moderately sized church as one of several assistant pastors in the Maryland suburbs. The pastor of Case One is in his late forties, married, with two sons. He is gregarious, approachable, and passionate about ministry. He and his wife are native Washingtonians.

The Case One church is a family-oriented church that is steeped in AA history. Many leaders of the Civil Rights Movement have spoken or preached at this church. Thus, the church is no stranger to the struggle for civil rights. Because of its location, the policies and mandates of the city and federal government impact the church rapidly. By the pastor's own admission, the church has functioned for the most part with a don't ask don't tell policy about the issue of homosexuality. The interview revealed this pastor to be a traditionalist toward homosexuality. However, he is open to discussion on the subject. This pastor is affiliated with many AA ministerial alliances in the DMV. He is somewhat dismayed at the negative stance many of his colleagues hold about homosexuality. He welcomed being a part of this project and is hopeful a project of this nature will provide pastors another tool to help them minister to the LGBT.

Case Two

This church began as an alternate location and a different worship style of a mega church in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. The church first held worship services in a renovated movie theater. About five years ago, the church purchased an undeveloped property from another church. This property has been approved for church development and is located roughly ten miles from the original location. The current site

has barns and a single-family home that has been retrofitted to accommodate Bible study, ministry meetings, and administrative offices. The church is hoping to break ground in the next year on a new building.

Currently worship services are being held in the high school next door. This auditorium set up is like the seating at the church's first location. The new location is situated in an area currently under development. New homes that bring new families are springing up all around the church. Once the new facility is built the expectation is that this will draw people to the church, out of curiosity, if nothing else.

The pastor was initially appointed as the overseer. When the church was five years old it was officially separated from the mother church. At that time the pastor was installed as the senior pastor. The church is sixteen years old. The church was initially begun to attract people of all ethnic groups. At present the church is primarily AA. The church was designed to be non-denominational but the worship style and ideology are heavily influence by AA Baptist polity. This is because of the influence of the mother church and the ideology of the pastor.

The pastor is bi-vocational. He is in his early fifties, married, a father of three grown children, and a grandfather. He grew up in a traditional AA Baptist church. As a teen, he wandered away from the church. He came back to the church in his early thirties because of a men's ministry outreach. That outreach was extended from the mother church that birthed this church. The outreach was a call to play basketball. The pastor says, "I came to play basketball, and stayed to serve God." Thus, the pastor recognizes the necessity for creative methods for outreach, especially when it comes to attracting men. He has a very dry sense of humor and is not given to small talk. For that reason,

some think he is standoffish. However, when called upon to serve, his passion for ministry dispels any reticence he may have and any doubt this man is committed to serving God. The interview revealed the pastor is traditional in his view towards the subject of homosexuality.

Case Three

Case Three is situated in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC. The church is one hundred and forty-three years old. The church sits atop a knoll that was once a winding two lane country road. In the years since urban sprawl has turned that lane into a wide road with a stop light. At some point the entrance of the church was shifted from the main road to a side street to accommodate the increasing flow of traffic. Where once rolling fields surrounded the church, one field had been developed into a road that runs under a toll road. This toll road allows access for commuters to travel to and from various points in Northern Virginia. The road terminates at a major international airport. One of the largest shopping districts in the DMV is less than two miles from the church. This brings a constant influx of people to the area.

The Case Three facility has undergone major renovations in the past ten years. Though it retains some of its rustic charm on the outside, the inside of the facility has been totally revamped. The renovations include an elevator, a new dining hall, and administrative offices. The sanctuary is in the traditional church design, complete with stained glass windows and rows of pews. In keeping with the original rural theme of the church the graveyard is right outside. Where once the view from the graveyard was unobstructed, that view is now limited as the graveyard is bordered on two sides by upscale homes.

The current pastor is the fifteenth pastor. This is his first senior pastorate. Initially he was bi-vocational. He is now full-time. He served as assistant pastor at a mega-church in Baltimore, Maryland prior to being called to this church. He is in his mid-forties, married, and his wife serves part-time with him on the ministerial staff. The pastor has an earned doctorate in ministry and is a prolific teacher and preacher. He is in demand around the DMV. Under his pastorate, the church has undergone many technological and ministerial innovations. The interview revealed this pastor holds to the traditional view of homosexuality, however he is open to more illumination on the subject.

The church was founded as a traditional Baptist church. The church began as a country church, and that influence was felt for many years. In the ensuing years, the area around the church has evolved into one of the wealthiest suburbs in the area. The urbanization of the area and the installation of the current pastor has had a significant impact on the philosophy and ministry of the church. The demographics of the area changed and the church has changed to some degree along with the demographics. However, the church is still entrenched in Baptist polity. The membership, though primarily AA, is reflective of the husband and wife ministerial team. The pastor and his wife are young professionals and thus the congregation is comprised of many young AA professionals, many of whom travel long distances to be a part of the church. There is a remnant of the great generation, many who are the children of the founding members of the church. According to the pastor the church is best described as a commuter church. All the members live outside the immediate vicinity of the church. The pastor commutes to the church from Prince Georges County, Maryland. The high cost of housing in the area prohibits him from relocating to the area.

Case Four

This church is situated on one of the busiest thoroughfares in Prince Georges County. The road is a major commuter connector and an alternate travel route for I-95. This gives the church a lot of visibility. The current facility has been renovated to accommodate a church. Formerly the building was a private club house. The church plans to tear down this facility at some point and construct one that will allow space for church ministries. At present the facility is adequate, but has a rather awkward arrangement for the administrative offices, class rooms, and fellowship space. The church is landlocked on all four sides. New businesses are being built all around the church. One of the newest businesses is a full-service car wash. This car wash is the only full service car wash in the area. It is certain to attract a lot of customers, who have had to travel miles to get a full-service wash. The church will likely benefit from this exposure. There is a digital sign on the church that is updated constantly. People passing by the church can see what the church is focusing upon at any time.

The pastor is the first pastor and serves full time as the senior pastor. His wife, now retired, serves with him on the ministerial staff. They have two grown sons. This pastor served as the assistant pastor of the mainstream Baptist church that planted this church. He is actively engaged in the church conference and just recently stepped down as the regional ministerial coordinator. The interview questions revealed the pastor holds to the traditional view that homosexuality is a sin. However, he is open to accepting all sinners, without singling out one sinner above another. He views homosexuals as no exception. During the interview this pastor was moved almost to tears when he recalled one experience his church had with a gay member.

The church is situated in an affluent section of Prince Georges County, Maryland a suburb of Washington, DC. The church demographic ranges in age from the Great Generation to the Millennial Generation. The church has a large young adult population, many of whom are married with children. The church is in a diverse location and has a few Anglo members. However, the church is overwhelmingly AA, as more than ninety-nine percent of the membership is AA.

Case Four is a twenty-year old church plant by a mainstream Baptist Church. At the time this church was planted this was a unique situation. AA Baptist churches were not in the habit of intentionally planting daughter churches in 1996. To further add to the uniqueness of the church, Case Four has been aligned with Converge Ministries, a predominately Anglo national conference for most of its existence. Converge, which has changed its name from the Baptist General Conference, is intentional about planting churches, fostering diversity, and forging racial reconciliation in God's kingdom on earth.

Case Five

Case Five is a twenty-year-old church plant located in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. The church worships at a local public school and rents space for administrative offices and class rooms in the same community. The interview was conducted in the conference room of the ministry center. The center is a warm, inviting space that is cluttered with all sorts of things that reveal the nature of the church. Their children's classroom is adorned with projects the children have completed. The conference room, which doubles as an adult classroom is lined with bookshelves. There is a small meeting space for the teens and young adults. It too has the well-worn look of space that is cared for but used. The pastor's office is small, but inviting. It too is typical

of the pastor's personality. This is a space that demonstrates a ministry that though small is caring and committed to serving God by serving His people.

This church is more typical of AA church plants of twenty years ago. The initial pastor began this ministry after he separated as the senior pastor of a large AA traditional Baptist church in the city of Washington, DC. The separation was not amicable. Most of the charter members of this church sided with this pastor and left the mother church to help start this new church. There are a few of these charter members who are still active in the church. A few of the original members left and some have passed on.

Ten years into the life of the church the pastor and his second wife, who is also a minister, experienced marital discord. The pastor abruptly left the church. The church decided to call the wife as the pastor. However, she declined and insisted that the church go through the normal vetting process to call a pastor. The church went through a formal call process for a senior pastor and after interviewing several candidates it extended a call to this wife to be the senior pastor. She accepted the call and has served in that capacity as the senior pastor for the past ten years. She remains unmarried and serves full time as the senior pastor.

This is a small church of approximately one hundred members. The membership ages range from eight years old to eighty years old. The pastor of the church has an earned doctorate and is in demand throughout the region as a conference teacher, preacher, and symposium participant. This affords her the opportunity to interact with her colleagues in the ministry on various topics that the AAC faces in the DMV. The interview revealed her to be a traditionalist regarding homosexuality. However, she stated in the interview, she is "evolving in her beliefs about homosexuality."

Case Six

The current church facility was originally an Anglo Southern Baptist Church. The building church sits atop a hill and has a commanding presence in the neighborhood. Its building is comprised of three components that were linked together as the original church expanded. The first building is now a fellowship hall. The second or middle building contains class rooms, administrative offices and meeting rooms. At the end of the facility is a large sanctuary, complete with a grand portico. There is a small chapel as well attached to this part of the building. The sanctuary is in the traditional church design with pews for seating.

At the time the church was built and expanded the neighborhood was predominantly Anglo. The neighborhood demographic changed over several years from Anglo to AA, but the church did not keep pace with the change. Thus, the membership of the Anglo church dwindled to less than fifteen members. The decision was made to sell the church and Case Six was poised to purchase. Prior to the move, Case Six was in downtown Washington, DC on a very lucrative parcel of land. However, the church was landlocked on all sides with no parking. The pastor and congregation made the decision to move the church to its current location. This has proven to be a good move for the church and the surrounding community.

The pastor worked for the federal government for eighteen years. Five of the nineteen years the pastor was bi-vocational. He is now full time. He is married, and the father of three sons. The current pastor is the fifth pastor of the church. He has served in this capacity for the past eighteen years. The church is affiliated with an AA denomination of which the Pastor serves as the bishop for a portion of the DMV. The

pastor is very involved in DMV ministerial conferences and fellowships with other churches in and outside of his denomination. He is a “hands on” pastor in that he serves by doing. The interview revealed this pastor holds to a very traditional view of homosexuality.

Case Six is best described as a mainline Baptist church that is seventy-four years old. The church relocated from the inner city of Washington, DC to the present location in the Maryland suburbs thirteen years ago. The church has a heavy emphasis on community involvement. The church sponsors a prison ministry, a half-way house and ministers in a local prison. The church has two Sunday satellite locations and ministers in two assisted living homes on Sundays.

Case Seven

Case Seven is a one hundred fifty-year-old church located in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. The church is affiliated with a mainline Baptist convention. The church is in a state of transition at the current time. The church has two locations and just recently sold one locations. That site was the main location. The church has embarked upon a building program and will be worshipping in temporary space in the same community. The two locations are in the Prince Georges County, and for the most part are homogeneous. The two locations are on opposite ends of the economic spectrum. The main location where the largest number of members attend is situated in a more economically challenged lower working class neighborhood and has many single parent households. The second location is in a more upwardly stable community with many professionals and traditional families. The emphasis in both locations is on community

outreach. The church has a senior citizen housing facility and a thriving day care business.

The current pastor is bi-vocational. He works full time in the local county government. This position brings him into contact with county, state, and federal leaders quite often. He was recently installed as the co-pastor of the church to serve with his father who is preparing for retirement in the next couple of years. Though this pastor was literally raised by his father in life and ministry, he has his own opinions. He admitted during the interview his views on homosexuality are much more lenient than those of his father. The two have come to an unspoken agreement to agree to disagree. Both pastors hold to the traditional view of homosexuality. The son is more open to allowing LGBT to serve in all ministries.

The Affirming Church

This pastor is a gay pastor-priest and bishop whose church is located in the Anacostia section of Washington, DC. The neighborhood surrounding his church is in the process of gentrification. Because of this gentrification, the racial makeup of his congregation is beginning to change. The church is still small with less than one hundred members. It is primarily LGBT with a mixture of children and young adults. The church currently is predominately AA. However, the bishop admits the last four members who joined were Anglo and he expects more Anglos to come. This may be due in part because the bishop recently affiliated his church with United Church of Christ (UCC). This is a multi-ethnic, national denomination of open and affirming churches. The UCC was founded in 1969 and has churches in many major urban centers throughout the nation.

The bishop is a native Washingtonian. He was raised in the Roman Catholic Church and served as an altar boy. He very candidly states he was never approached by a priest in any way that was inappropriate. He has five churches that were birthed under his ministry. Thus, he has been promoted to the office of bishop. The bishop is an accomplished Tai Kwan Do martial artist and he attributes some of his spirituality to his affiliation with the martial arts. He was the only pastor of an affirming church who agreed to meet with the researcher. The meeting did not take place at his church. It was held at a local restaurant.

The bishop gives the impression of being an articulate, passionate, and concerned pastor for his parish and for the city of Washington, DC. He is the father of a straight son. His sexuality has not affected his relationship with his son and they remain close. The bishop did not volunteer if he was married at some point in his life and the question was not asked. He is well connected in the clerical community. The researcher was referred to him as a result of his status in the community. He was one of the pastors involved in a reconciliation forum between traditional Baptist churches and LGBT churches that took place a few years back. One of the pastors interviewed for this project was also involved at that meeting. It was this association that led to the interview with this Bishop.

Results

The researcher reached out to Duvan Winborne, a behavioral specialist and statistician for assistance in coding and analysis. At Winborne's recommendation the researcher proceeded with the data analysis and interpretation in Chapter Six. Winborne evaluated the data from the field notes and interviews as a blind, and then compared his results with those of the researcher for Chapter Six. This was done as another way to

validate the data gathered was germane to the problem of homophobia in some churches in the AAC. There were no discrepancies found in the findings in this chapter nor the results arrived at in Chapter Six.

Presented in this section are results from the structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of seven African American pastors from traditional churches. Interview items were structured to explore attitudes and viewpoints relative to the inclusion of LGBT members within various dimensions for the church. The interview items were combined into an attitude scale using appropriate psychometric indexing methods. Critical to the scaling process were interview responses obtained from the AA pastor who headed the nontraditional church. Baseline measures were established from the nontraditional pastor. Technical consideration for scaling and statistical outcomes are presented herein.

Instrumentation and Scaling

The current study incorporated a qualitative design that was structured to obtain attitudinal measures from a small sample of purposively selected subjects. In review, the sample was comprised of seven AA pastors from traditional churches in the DMV and one AA pastor from a non-traditional, “affirming” church within the same locale. Based on research objectives, the use of purposive sampling is necessary to select subjects meeting a tightly specified set of criteria.¹ Moreover, findings from this study are intended to explicate attitudes and viewpoints for a limited population segment, rather than being broadly generalizable.

¹ Leslie Kish, *Survey Sampling* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1995), 384-401.

A structured interview was used with the study's sample to gather qualitative data regarding acceptance of LGBT members in these AACs in DMV. The interview schedule (i.e., data-collection instrument) contained twelve open-ended items developed for face-to-face administration and recording. Eleven of the items were worded for directional interpretation, where a given response indicated the degree of acceptance or non-acceptance of LGBT persons in various aspects of the church environment. The final, twelfth interview item was non-directional and allowed the subjects to respond freely (Appendix A).

Figure 5.1, Schematic Representation of *LGBT Acceptance Scale*

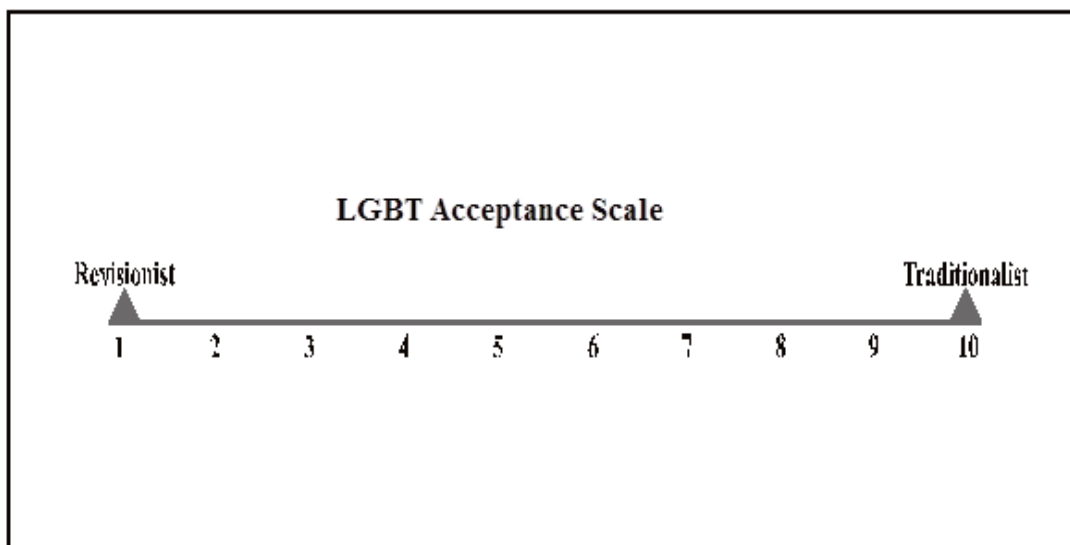


Figure 1. Schematic Representation of *LGBT Acceptance Scale*

Interview items one through eleven were combined into an attitudinal index defined as the "LGBT Acceptance Scale." Using conventional survey research methodology, each of these eleven items were given a rating value or "score" from one to ten, based on the assessed intensity of a subject's verbal response. Figure 5.1 contains a schematic representation of the LGBT Acceptance Scale, where lower values reflect

revisionist perspectives of a pastor and higher values indicate traditional views expressed by the pastor. Thus, for each on the eleven directional interview items, the subjects' responses were assigned a rating value of one to ten. These ordinal-level item ratings were subsequently combined into a single value or "score" to reflect a subject's overall perspective regarding the inclusion of homosexual persons in church matters.^{2,3}

Item Scoring

An open rating process was used to assign scale values to each direction item of the interview schedule, since no preexisting scoring rubric existed for the instrument. To ensure that objectivity and reliability were maintained, a psychometrics expert was consulted to complete the scoring process. This expert used single-blind scoring design in which subject anonymity was maintained throughout the process. Each interview schedule was assigned a numeric identifier and no background information for subjects was provided during the scoring process. Further, the order of interview items and subjects were randomized for the evaluation and scoring processes.

Regarding randomization, each interview item was scored in a random sequence rather than beginning with the first item and ending with item eleven. Table 5.1 presents the randomized order of the eleven directional items. As shown in the Table, Item 11 of the interview schedule was sequenced first in the review and scoring order, Item 7 was second, Item 5 third in the order, and so on. Again, this order was randomly generated. Implied in Table 5.1 is the strategy of focusing upon a single interview item for the

² Earl R. Babbie, *Survey Research Methods* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1973), 270-76.

³ Louis L. Thurstone "A Method of Scaling Psychological and Educational Tests," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, no. 16 (1925): 433-51.

completed sample before moving to the next interview item. This technique strengthened the reliability of scoring, as the singular focus on concepts and issues was maintained as score were assigned.

Table 5.1 Randomized Order of Review and Scoring for “Directional” Items of the *LGBT Acceptance Scale*

Item Oder		Subject Order						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Item 11	S2	S7	S3	S1	S4	S6	S5
2	Item 7	S4	S7	S6	S2	S5	S1	S3
3	Item 5	S5	S1	S7	S4	S6	S3	S2
4	Item 6	S1	S4	S3	S6	S7	S5	S2
5	Item 1	S6	S2	S4	S5	S7	S3	S1
6	Item 10	S5	S4	S1	S2	S3	S6	S7
7	Item 4	S4	S7	S6	S3	S2	S1	S5
8	Item 9	S6	S5	S4	S7	S2	S1	S3
9	Item 2	S3	S2	S5	S6	S7	S4	S1
10	Item 8	S7	S6	S1	S3	S2	S5	S4
11	Item 3	S3	S1	S2	S7	S4	S5	S6

In Table 5.1, note that each subject was anonymously identified as S1 to S7. These subjects were randomly assigned to a review sequence for each interview items. For example, the randomized sequencing for Item 11 placed subject S2 in first position, with subject S7 second, subject S3 third, and continuing to subject S5 in seventh position. Next, Item 7 began with the random sequencing of subject S4 first, subject S7 second, and continuing to subject S3 in seventh position. This randomized approach was followed

by the psychometrics expert for the entire review and scoring process, thereby optimizing rater reliability and eliminating implicit researcher bias.^{4,5}

The actual scoring was accomplished by assigning interview items ordinal values ranging from one to ten, as stated earlier. However, this scoring scheme must be amplified to understand its application. A complete interview was conducted with an AA pastor of a non-traditional, “affirming” church. Membership for the pastor’s church was somewhat diverse and included individuals who were open about their homosexuality. In fact, the pastor and other leaders designed their services and programs for meeting needs of differential sexual orientations. Thus, interview responses provided by this nontraditional pastor served as “baseline” for scoring those responses given by the seven traditional pastors in the study’s sample.

The wording and focus of interview responses provided by the non-traditional pastor were carefully evaluated and codified as baseline measures. Depending on how distally responses of the others varied from the baseline, values greater than one and up to ten were assigned. In this psychometric process of “response disassociation,” higher values are assigned to interview responses that increasingly diverge from the baseline.⁶ Therefore, a subject’s response that appeared diametrically opposed to the baseline received a score of ten, while those more moderately opposed responses were scored from six to nine. Scores of five or less were assigned to responses that displayed varying level of agreement with the baseline response. As a result, gradations of score values

⁴ Babbie, 147-48.

⁵ M. Clemens Johnson, *A Review of Research Methods in Education* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1977), 158-159.

were generated from the seven subjects. Table 5.2 presents exemplary prose of baseline responses and prose of diametrically opposed responses gleaned from the sample data.

Table 5.2, Representative Item Responses on the *LGBT Acceptance Scale* for Subjects and the Baseline Respondent

Interview Item	Baseline Response	Highest Subject Response
Item 1	“... I look at all forms of sexuality as an expression of God ...”	“... I view it the same as God views it ... according to God, it is a sinful lifestyle ...”
Item 2	“... consensual sex between two adult, none of the scriptures refer to that ...”	“... it would be an abomination to God’s design for not only man and woman, but also for the family ...”
Item 3	“...everyone is welcome to the table of God ... gay, straight, black, white ...”	“I don’t have an answer ... We have not had that experience ... but, we would receive them ...”
Item 4	“ ... gay and straight folks on our staff ... door is open, you cannot discriminate...”	“Sure, again we preach the word ... that homosexuality is a sin ... Probably no every ministry...”
Item 5	“... whether gay rights and civil rights are equal ... I say yes ...”	“... sexual orientation ... is a private matter ... I cannot hide my skin ... so, it is not the same ...”
Item 6	“... create a healthy relationship ... between two people no matter who they are ...”	“ ... it is not God’s choice, so I am totally against it ...”
Item 7	“... I don’t see tension ... with the compassion of your heart ... there is no conflict ...”	“... there is a tension there, as I certainly know what the scriptures say about homosexuality ...”
Item 8	“ ... That is the ultimate test of love ... If there is agape love, then it has no conditions ...”	“ ... No, my church policies would not change ... love my child ... but he/she cannot count on my support ...”

Table 5.2, Representative Item Responses on the LGBT Acceptance Scale for Subjects and the Baseline Respondent (continued)

I Item	Baseline Response	Highest Subject Response
Item 9	“... I will say not just in D.C., but throughout the country... has just been built into the	“... I don’t get that ... I don’t see the ACC as being homophobic ... So, I don’t agree with that ...”
Item 10	“... I say to them run, get into an affirming church... embrace a God of love, not a God of love with conditions ...”	“... God’s love is the most important thing ... you can’t expect people to love you ... some church people will shy away ...”
Item 11	“... it absolutely adds to the hate crimes in this country ... and they don’t want to take any responsibility for it ...”	“I don’t know of any rhetoric coming from the AAC ... not adding or detracting from hate crimes in the country ...”

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the interview data generated from the research sample of traditional AA pastors. In review, these seven subjects were interviewed to determine the extent to which their viewpoints diverged from baseline responses established from the non-traditional, affirming pastor. Each of the eleven interview items was scored on a ten-point scale, reflecting response disassociation, with higher values indicating greater variance from the baseline measure. Further, the interview items were worded in a directional manner that allowed for systematic quantification of response intensity. The table in Appendix B indicates the scores of the interviewees.

Figure 5.2 below provides as graphic plotting of scale scores for the sample. These plots are based on the numeric values found in Table 5.3. Figure 5.3 offers a visual interpretation of subject diversity.

Figure 5.2, Graphic Representation of Subject Scale Scores

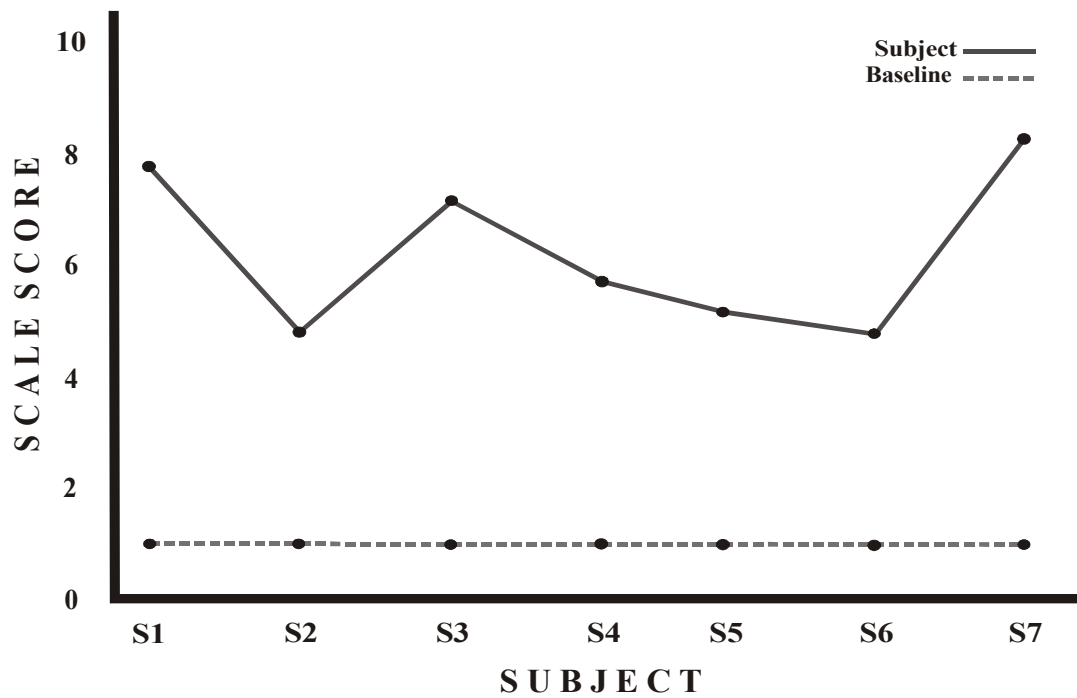


Figure 2. Graphic Representation of Subject Scale Scores

Figure 5.2 above shows that there is a relatively wide spread of score levels for the seven subject, with two cases displaying rather extreme disassociation from the baseline measure. The other five subjects display varying perspectives along the LGBT Acceptance Scale, with some viewpoints appearing to lean toward revisionist approaches.

Table 5.3 also presents summary scores for each interview item. The far right-hand column of the Table lists scale score means for each item, based on sample response. Item 2 (Baseline- “I look at all forms of sexuality as an expression of God” vs. Highest Subject Response, “I view it the same as God views it. ... According to God it is a sinful lifestyle.”) and Item 6 (Baseline-“Create a healthy relationship, between two people no matter who they are, vs. Highest Response- “It is not God’s choice, so I am totally against it.”) of the interview attained the highest mean values. This reflects more diametric opposition to the baseline measure. The respective means are 9.29 and 9.14. The lowest individual item mean was attained for Item 3, (Baseline-“Everyone is welcome to the table of God, gay, straight, black, white vs. Highest Response-“Sure, again we preach the word, that homosexuality is a sin.”) with a value of 3.14 that indicates more attitudinal association with the baseline perspective. Other interview items attained relatively low scale means, including Item 9 (Baseline- I will say not just in DC, but throughout the country vs. Highest Response – I don’t get that, I don’t see the AAC as being homophobic.”) (4.86) and Item 7 (5.14) (Baseline – “I don’t see tension, with the compassion of your heart there is no conflict.” Vs. Highest Response – There is a tension there, as I certainly know what the scriptures say about homosexuality.”)

Figure 5.3 below provides a graphic display of item scale score generated from

the sample. As shown in the plotted mean profile, there was wide variation in the response levels for various interview items.

Figure 5.3, Graphic Representation of Item Scale Scores

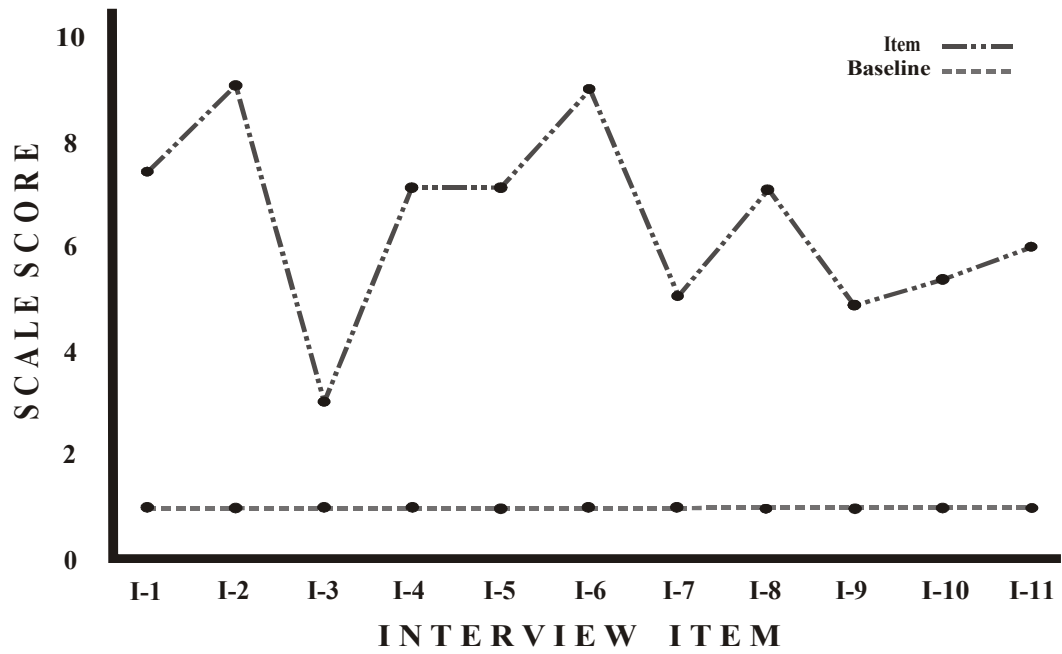


Figure 3. Graphic Representation of Item Scale Scores

Summary

A twelve-item interview schedule was presented to a sample of AA pastors heading traditional churches in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Eleven of the items were directional in nature, allowing for the development of the LGBT Acceptance Scale. Higher values on the scale reflected divergence from baseline measures generated from a non-traditional African-American pastor who headed an “affirming” church within the same locale. Analysis of the quantified data from the interview showed that most pastors in the sample maintained a traditional perspective relative to homosexual church membership. However, there was notable variation in response pattern for subjects and for certain interview items. These data do not confirm a general viewpoint, but rather suggest a range of ideals and beliefs among the sampled pastors.

CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This project used a combination of grounded theory and case study strategy as the path to interpret and analyze the data. This project is meant to be a sample representation of some AACs in the DMV. It was not possible within the scope of the research to reach all the AACs in the DMV. Therefore, the analysis of the data combined with research is being used to a representation of the problem concerning how some AAC churches in the DMV minister to LGBT.

The researcher consulted several books on analysis and data interpretation. While all the authors had prescient information relevant to the project the researcher chose only a few. The determining criteria for selection were the unique application of the authors to this project. Among the authors consulted were John Creswell. He is recommended by Bethel University. The researcher felt Creswell set the best standard for this research.

Robert Yin¹ was selected because his method inspired the path the researcher followed to analyze and interpret the data. The instruction Yin provided on procedures for data analysis, making constant comparisons and watching for negative instances were beneficial in two of categories of this project's analysis, "Motive" and "Mechanics."

¹ Yin, Robert, *Qualitative Research From Start to Finish* (New York: Guilford Press, 2016), 241-243.

Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe were chosen because of the insight they provided about the difference between summarizing the data and synthesizing the data to create a unified project that adds new information to a field of study.¹ This information was useful in all three categories. Lastly, Jamie Harding² was consulted because of the insight given about coding and the significance of word choices. This information was beneficial for Questions One and Two in the “Relationship” category. These authors provided the researcher the necessary information that was useful to the composition, flow, synthesis and recommendations for this chapter.

Data Streams

To answer these two questions three data streams were used in the compilation of the data. These data streams are the theological review, the literature review and the combination of the interviews and field notes. These three streams were then filtered through another three layers of evaluation and interpretive analysis as defined by Robert Yin and Linda Bloomberg in their respective books.

Data Stream from the Theological Review

The data stream from the theological review indicated that the early church fathers, along with famous medieval and renaissance church teachers, heavily influenced how AAC leaders understand and respond to the LGBT member. This stream indicated that AA leaders act on what they have been taught. Many of these AA leaders have been

¹ Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation. A Road Map from Beginning to End* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2016), 121-123.

² Jamie Harding, *Qualitative Data Analysis from Start to Finish* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, 2013), 50.

labeled homophobic because their hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible has been influenced by the ideas to which they have been exposed to in their seminaries.

Data Stream from the Literature Review

The data stream from the literature review indicated that homophobia has several sources in the AAC. These include internalized violence from centuries of slavery and racism, a veneration of the family in the AAC, misinterpretations of scripture about homosexuality similar to misinterpretations of scripture about slavery, too much a focus on genital sex instead of focus on homosexuals as people, and fear. Homophobia is maintained in the AAC by misuse of the word abomination and racial tensions between AAs and Caucasians. Also, AACs continue to debate whether gay rights are the same as civil rights. Some argue that gay rights are a logical extension of Black Liberation Theology while others disagree. This confusion is exacerbated by ongoing racism within the gay community itself that AA LGBT people must fight. Furthermore, there is disagreement among AAC leaders over whether celibacy is a viable option for LGBT members. These issues and controversies have influenced the interpretative lens of AA leaders in the DMV in the way they minister to LGBT members.

Data Stream from the Interviews and Field Notes

The interview questions were designed and tested at an earlier point in the project. Later the interviews were conducted. As Robert Yin suggests in his book, the researcher disassembled the data obtained from the interviews and probed for themes and patterns that evolved from the coding process.³ This formed the next layer of analysis through which the data streams were filtered. This data used in these processes was not done

³ Yin, 241.

sequentially. There was some overlap in some steps. The researcher worked hard not to allow the researcher's bias to skew the data. Following Yin's model, a descriptive narrative was developed from the themes that arose from the responses.⁴

The researcher noticed the questions could be grouped broadly into the three categories: "Relationships," "Motives" and "Mechanics." While some of the questions had application in more than one category, most fit nicely into one of these three main categories.

There were twelve questions asked of each pastor. The first eleven questions were designed and field tested to make certain the questions would elicit data germane to this project. There were two final questions posed simultaneously, "What do you feel is the major issue facing the church today?" and "Is there anything else you would like to add?" These questions were posed to determine if the pastors felt in their opinion homosexuality was the major issue facing the church today, and if the pastors felt there was anything that should be mentioned on the problem of homophobia in the AAC in the DMV.

Five questions fell under the "Relationships" category. There were Question One: "As a leader in the church, how do you view homosexuality?" Question Two was: "How do you interpret scripture with regard to homosexuality?" Question Nine was: "How do you respond to the accusation that the AAC in the DMV is by and large homophobic?" Question Ten was: "How do you respond to gay people who says they know God loves them, but they don't understand why His church does not?" Finally, Question Eleven

⁴ Yin, 241.

asked: “Does the rhetoric coming from the AAC add or detract from the hate crimes against gays in this country?”

Two questions fell under the “Motives” category. The first was Question Six: “What is your view on same-sex marriage?” The next was Question Seven: “How do you balance the tension between loving all people as Christ commanded and obeying the scriptures as God commands?”

The rest of the questions fell under the category of “Mechanics.” These were questions regarding the actual policies of the AA churches interviewed. These were Question Three: “How do you receive gay people in your church?” Four: “Are gays welcome to participate in all ministries at your church?” Five: “Some say gay rights is equal to civil rights, what are your thoughts on this?” Eight: “What would you say to your son or daughter if they told you they were gay? Would your church policies change?” The responses to these questions indicate how the church ministers to the LGBT.

Responses to the Relationships Category

First the researcher evaluated the relationship method as defined by Yin. This is not a relationship between the individual pastors but the patterns and themes that emerged from the questions. Here the researcher paid careful attention to Linda Bloomberg and Marie Volpe who cautioned against merely summarizing the data, but suggest synthesizing the data. As Bloomberg and Yin both advise reassembling the data allows the researcher to create an integrated whole and “build a knowledge base that extends new lines of thinking,”⁵ The researcher felt this was a good path to follow.

⁵ Bloomberg, 121.

Question One reads: “As a leader in the church, how do you view homosexuality?” The responses revealed there were no revisionists among the pastors involved in this study. The one exception was the bishop of the affirming church. This was to be expected. All the pastors of the traditional churches believe the Bible is clear that homosexuality is a sin. Even though the pastors all agreed that homosexuality is a sin, there was a range within their agreement. Case One pastor viewed “homosexuality as a challenge among many that we have as humans. I view it as a sin in the context of our own misunderstanding or perversion of human sexuality.” By contrast the pastors in Case Two and Three simply stated the Bible is clear, homosexuality is a sin. The one female pastor stated she was “evolving in her view on the subject of homosexuality.” What that entailed she did not elaborate upon, however she did use this same terminology when asked about same-sex marriage. The other pastors fell somewhere between these two poles. However, as has been mentioned none of the pastors felt homosexuality was an unpardonable sin.

Question Two: “How do you interpret scripture with regard to homosexuality?” Only one pastor used the word abomination when responding to Question Two. In this response, the word was applied to the sin of homosexuality and not the homosexual individual. Another area of agreement with the pastors was that the power of the Holy Spirit is able to transform LGBT people to enable them to deal with homosexuality.

Question Nine: “How do you respond to the accusation that the AAC in the DMV is by and large homophobic?” Question Nine elicited polemic responses from the pastors. On one hand, there were pastors who flatly disagreed that the AAC in the DMV is homophobic. The pastors of Case Six and Case Two both expressed their disagreement

with the following comments: “I disagree with that. I think by and large the AAC in the DMV is not homophobic. I think that is a caricature that the enemy has portrayed while some people in the church, some preachers in the church are homophobic, that is not the church as a whole.” The pastor of Case One responded by saying he was, “Challenged by the word homophobic, because I think it [homophobia] has been used more politically than actually as it is defined. Because I don’t agree with you does not mean I am homophobic, it just means I don’t agree with your lifestyle.”

The pastor of Case Two did not believe the AAC in the DMV is homophobic at all. His response was, “I don’t know. I don’t get that. I’ve been in the AAC all my life. I don’t know where that stat comes from. I don’t see the AAC as being homophobic. So, I don’t agree with that.”

By contrast the rest of the pastors believed the AAC in the DMV is homophobic. The response of Case Four was of interest to the researcher because his comments underscore a basic premise of this project, which is the views on homosexuality of AAC leaders is the result of the inculcation of culture, training and tradition. This pastor responded, “I entered ministry as an eighteen-year-old. I entered ministry and I went to Bible college and all. I learned the scriptures, I learned all these things and I began to preach and proclaim the lifestyle that I’ve gotten in the scriptures.” While this one case is not sufficient by itself to say such exposure is the primary source for all AA pastors in the DMV, this response does serve to indicate the premise of the researcher is not without merit.

Question Ten: “How do you respond to gay people who says they know God loves them, but they don’t understand why His church does not?” The responses to

Question Ten while not polemic did vary in range. This would track as none of the pastors believed that the homosexual is an abomination nor did these pastors believe that being a homosexual is an automatic sentence to hell. At one end of the range is Case Two who responded “God loving you is an important thing. But you can’t expect people to love you have adopted a lifestyle that they feel, I mean I feel, is not according to the word of God.” At the other end of the range were pastors who believe the church fails God when the church fails to show love and compassion to all of God’s children, the LGBT being no exception. The responses from Case Seven are similar to the responses of Case Four to Question Nine. “The first thing I say to them is not only does God love you, but so do I. I don’t believe the church intends to be lacking in compassion. But again, through traditions, ignorance, fear and cliquishness, and many other things the church often times simply dismisses what it is afraid of.” It also underscores a basic premise of this project. Again, while this statement cannot be applied to all the pastors of AAC in the DMV, it does serve to indicate the premise of this project is not without merit. Pastors minister and react by what they have been taught and to what they have been exposed.

Question Eleven: “Does the rhetoric coming from the AAC add or detract from the hate crimes against gays in this country?” The responses to Question Eleven also vary among the pastors. The pastor of Case Two did not think the rhetoric preached from the AAC adds or detracts from the hate crimes against gays in this country. If anything, according to this pastor the AAC is showing love. By contrast the pastor of Case One felt the AAC is being extremely dangerous and to a degree irresponsible for some of the preaching that comes from the pulpit. The bishop of the affirming church agrees with this

assessment. He stated in his interview that the “Pastor in the pulpit on Sunday morning has enormous power. He or she must use that power wisely.”

Case Five believes the greater evangelical church in America is responsible for the rhetoric that fuels the hate crimes committed against gays in America. This pastor maintains the AAC is one of the most tangible representations of the forgiving nature of African Americans in this country. She feels this is both a “Feather in our caps and at the same time the bane of our existence that we are very quick to forgive.” To prove her point she referred to the hate crime that occurred at a church prayer meeting in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. “You could have just come into our church, shot up our members and half out ministerial staff and within the next month we are more interested in forgiving you than in condemning you. So, I don’t think that a whole lot of the hate crime problem comes from us, although I am sure there are instances where it does.” The common themes among the remaining pastors mirrors the assessment of this pastor. The AAC does to some degree preach against the homosexual, but that preaching does not promote hate crimes in America.

The researcher believes these responses provide data that show how the views of the pastors are interconnected and related. Questions nine and ten are crucial to the project as those responses speak almost directly to the problem this project investigated. The researcher believes these responses were shaped from the theological data stream.

Responses to the Motives Category

Motive is best defined by the theological and literature reviews that were compiled for this project. These two data streams provided the information that revealed how these AA pastors in the DMV minister to the LGBT in their respective churches.

Question Six: What is your view on same-sex marriage? Seven: How do you balance the tension between loving all people as Christ commanded and obeying the scriptures as God commands? The literature and theological data stream inform the responses in this category as the pastor's interpretation arise out of their exposure to these two data streams.

Per Yin the researcher should look for the motives that emerges from this process. Motives are discovered by constant analysis of the data while looking for implied or inferred ideas, concepts and statements that influence the outcome. The researcher was interested in the motives of his interviewees because they determine how the AA pastor will minister to the LGBT. These pastors are motivated by those forces to which they have been exposed. They are motivated by the things they have been taught. The researcher believes the theological data stream and the literature stream form the basis of shaping the belief system of the pastors and how these pastors minister to their LGBT members.

Questions Six: "What is your view on same sex marriage?" Seven: "How do you balance the tension between loving all people as Christ commanded and obeying the scriptures as God commands" are driven by motives. As stated earlier there is overlap with the categories, however the researcher believes these two questions fit into this category. The motivation in this instance is the desire of the pastors to fulfill the great commission of the church.

None of the seven traditional pastors are willing to perform a same-sex wedding. However, and this is why the researcher placed these questions in this category, while these pastors are trying to maintain what they call biblical fidelity, at the same time they

are adapting to the current culture to some degree. All the pastors respect the legality of same-sex marriage within their respective jurisdictions, but they also maintain their fidelity to what they believe the Bible teaches on marriage between a man and a woman. Two of the pastors admitted they would recognize same sex couples who came to their church. One pastor left the door open about performing same-sex weddings.

Responses to the Mechanics Category

As the categories of relationship and motive shape the theology of the pastor this researcher believes the manifestation of these two categories determines the Mechanics, or precisely how the particular congregation will minister to the LGBT.

The mechanics, for this project is a combination of the field notes and some of the data obtained from the interviews. A good example of this path is the influence of theological and literature exposure that forms the praxis of ministry for these pastors.

Questions Three: How do you receive gay people in your church? Four: Are gays welcome to participate in all ministries at your church? Five: Some say gay rights is equal to civil rights, what are your thoughts on this? Eight: What would you say to your son or daughter if they told you they were gay? Would your church policies change? The responses to these questions indicate how the church ministers to the LGBT. These responses arise out of two data streams current literature and field notes. fit into this category.

All the pastors stated all people were welcome to their church whether they were gay or straight. Cases Two and Six implied that should a person later reveal themselves to be gay, then the pastor would continue to love them with the idea that through love the LGBT would change their lifestyle. Case Seven explicitly made the statement that his

expectation is that through the process of sanctification the LGBT member would be transformed to walk in obedience to the word of God. It is interesting to note that none of the pastors alluded to a don't ask don't tell policy with regard to membership.

On Question Four the issue became a bit cloudier, "Are gays welcome to participate in all ministries at your church?" The question evolved into a two-tiered question, with ordination to the diaconate and the clergy as a line of demarcation. Cases Two and Three have restrictions on certain ministries. Neither of these pastors allow persons they suspect to be LGBT to lead youth ministries. These pastors feel this may subtly promote a lifestyle they feel is contrary to the will of God. By contrast Case Five did allow a lesbian to lead the girls' ministry. The pastor candidly stated there was some discussion in the beginning, but with prayerful deliberation and pastoral oversight there were not any negative repercussions.

Question Four raises the issue of the don't ask don't tell policy that some say is present in the AAC in the DMV. Case One stated he sees a difference between a person who is struggling with the issue of homosexuality and a person who has accepted homosexuality as a lifestyle. In partial concurrence with him Case Seven said he would not allow anyone who is living a homosexual lifestyle to serve in the diaconate or clergy. However, if the individual is struggling they would be allowed to serve. Case Three said for him the issue is the agenda that an individual might promote. Is the person committed to advancing the kingdom of God or promoting his or her own agenda? As long as the individual's theology aligns with his theology, of homosexuality as a sin, then that person can serve in any ministry.

Case Seven states they have not had to deal with this issue. His church did amend the church constitution to specifically indicate their church will only marry a man and a woman. However, no prohibition was placed on anyone who is homosexual from serving in any ministry. He stated this is not something his church should nor does it screen for. Just because a person looks a certain way does not mean the church should assume the person is a certain way, according to Case Seven.

Case Two accused the AAC of being hypocritical in allowing LGBT to serve in certain ministries and not others. He specifically cited the music ministry. Horace Griffin in his book *Their Own Receive Them Not* concurs with him. This pastor and Griffin use almost the same words to describe their disapproval of this phenomenon in the AAC. Case One states the issue in this manner: “The AAC tends to be quiet and accepting of gays in areas where they [gays] enhance the ministry and benefit the ministry.”

The most pronounced overlap in questions occurred with Questions Five (“Some say gay rights is equal to civil rights?”) and Six (“What is your view on same sex marriage?”). Because Question Six is based on the motive of the AA pastor, the researcher assigned this question to that category. Nevertheless, they overlap because Question Five was generated or stimulated by the issue of same-sex marriage.

Cases One, Three, Four, Six and Seven agreed that no person should be denied civil rights due to sexual orientation. With varying degrees, they felt that civil rights are different from gay rights because they believed a person has a choice over his or her sexuality, but not the color of their skin. Case One made this statement: “My sexual orientation for the most part in my estimation is a private behavior and or decision.” By

contrast and in agreement with Cases Three, Four, Six and Seven a person does not have a choice over the color of his or her skin.

Cases Two, Five and Seven drew a parallel between gay rights and same-sex marriage. These pastors hold the opinion that if the government is going to sanction the right of people to marry whomever they choose, the government also has the obligation to protect the rights of all its citizens regardless of their sexuality.

Question Eight (“What would you say if your son or daughter told you they were gay? Would your church policies change?”) revealed much commonality among the pastors. None of the pastors would change their church policy if their child told them they were gay. Two of the pastors, Cases Three and Five, did not have children, yet they too indicated they did not think if presented with this situation they would be inclined to change their church policy. One of the pastors has a child who is gay, and that pastor has not changed views on homosexuality nor is that pastor inclined to in the future. Neither has that church changed the church policy. For the sake of confidentiality that case was not singled out.

Cases One, Two, Four, Six and Seven agreed they would not change their church policy, but neither would they stop loving their child. They would communicate their displeasure at their child’s chosen lifestyle but continue to love their child. Case Two stated he, “would not attend the same sex marriage, but he would go over to their house for dinner.” In other words, the pastor indicates he will not cut off the relationship with his child, even if he disagrees with the lifestyle.

The researcher mentions the pastor of Case Seven as the researcher felt this pastor’s response is in line with the agape love of God, the Heavenly Father. Case Seven

says, “I would say to my children what my father said to me. My love for you is unconditional. I am going to love you no matter what. No matter what it is, you are mine, you can always come home.”

To the question of what is the biggest issue facing the church today, none of the pastors stated homosexuality as the largest issue. They all welcomed studies like this and expressed gratitude for being a part of the project. None of the pastors had anything else to add to the interview questions beyond a desire for dialogue like this to expand to all AACs in the country.

The Affirming Church

As stated in Chapter Five the pastor of the affirming church was pivotal in providing a baseline for analyzing the data for this project. This pastor is a good example of how two people can look at the same Bible and come away with different interpretations. The pastor is a revisionist. He believes that the Bible has been taken out of context and needs to be reinterpreted considering the current culture. What follows is a summary of his responses to the questions posed to the other pastors in the same categorical order.

Relationships

As a revisionist, this pastor believes the Bible has been interpreted incorrectly by separating spirituality and sexuality. According to him, all forms of sexuality are to be regarded as a gift from God. To use both in balance is to appropriately use that gift from God. This pastor believes the story of Sodom and Gomorrah text does not apply to homosexuality. He believes that passage is about homosexual rape and was not intended

to prohibit two people of the same sex from having consensual sex or from forming a committed relationship.

This pastor believes the AAC in the DMV is, as he puts it, “absolutely homophobic.” Here this pastor echoes the sentiments expressed earlier that the AAC models itself after white church in an effort to be perceived as respectable. Thus, as the wider church culture vilified the LGBT, the AAC did likewise. This pastor contends that the theology of the AAC does not match how the church lives out the commission of the church. He believes AAs in the DMV must find churches that embrace a God of unconditional love, rather than a church that paints a picture of a God who loves with conditions. Only then can the LGBT find their true selves.

Motives

As would be expected gays are welcome to participate in all ministries in the church at the affirming church. This pastor did have one caveat. He will not allow anyone who has not resolved his or her sexuality, gay or straight, to serve in a ministerial capacity. A person can be straight or gay and serve in ministry, but he or she cannot be in the closet and serve.

Mechanics

This pastor does not see any distinction between gay rights and civil rights. He believes that discrimination in any form is unjust. Thus, the government has an obligation to defend the rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or color of their skin. Likewise, he believes that people should have the right to marry whomever they choose. This pastor asserts that in a culture where fifty percent of marriages fail, the

emphasis should be more on establishing healthy relationships as opposed to the gender of marriage partners.

Though this pastor and the researcher do not agree on the biblical interpretation about homosexuality, they do agree that the AAC stands to lose an entire generation if the AAC does not minister to the LGBT in a loving and authentic manner. Richard Cone said, “The church must come down on the right side of history on the issue of homosexuality.”⁶ While that statement is not without merit, this researcher believes the church has a greater obligation to come down on the right side of God.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Robert Yin pointed out one weakness that the researcher must keep in mind constantly, when he or she is engaged in qualitative mixed method analysis is the researchers’ bias or preconceived notions influencing the outcome.⁷ This researcher made every effort to remain as objective as possible. This objectivity was crucial during the interview process. As all but one of the pastors interviewed for the project were known to the researcher, this was a challenge. However, the researcher felt he was able to maintain his objectivity.

This speaks to one of the strengths of the project, the careful development and testing of the interview guide. Using this guide the researcher made every effort to ask the questions in the same manner every time. Allowing for the external environment, the researcher was able to ask the questions in the same format. The only exception was the interview with the affirming pastor. As that interview was conducted at a very busy

⁶ Cone,127.

⁷ Yin, 127.

restaurant the researcher wanted to make sure the bishop did not feel rushed to complete the interview. This did not seem to be a concern as the bishop selected a restaurant he was familiar with and known by the staff. Thus, the interview was conducted, allowing for background noise at the same pace as the other interviews.

This project is not without its strengths and weaknesses. One weakness is the limited number of churches involved in the study. It was not possible to include a larger number of churches due to time constraints, scheduling and financial resources. However, one strength of this project echoed by several of the pastors interviewed was the fact that a project like this was being done. This researcher hopes that as a result of this project more work will be done on the issue of homosexuality and the church, not just in the DMV, but in this nation.

Another weakness of the project is the scarcity of material available on the issue of homophobia specific to the AAC in the DMV. Horace Griffin, in his book, *Their Own Received Them Not*, makes the same lament about the paucity of literature about this topic for the AAC as a whole.⁸

Griffin's insights did provide a strength for this project by way of reinforcing one of the summaries this researcher reached from the literature data stream, which was the influence Augustine had and has on the theological philosophical formation of the AA pastor.⁹ Even though the researcher is a traditionalist and Griffin a revisionist, the researcher believes this validates his premise that AA pastors have been influenced by what they have been taught and by what they have been exposed to.

⁸ Griffin, 5.

⁹ Griffin, 37.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To the question of the some AACs being homophobic, this researcher believes that is not indicated based on the data gathered for this project. By “homophobic,” the researcher means in the sense that these AACs act in a manner that is harmful to the LGBT or in which they seek to condemn the person and not the sin. While it cannot be said of all AACs in the DMV, this data indicates that these pastors are open to dialogue about homosexuality. Not only that these pastors welcome research like this and are looking forward to the outcome of this project as a tool to use in ministering to the LGBT member. The researcher does believe these pastors’ views have been shaped and molded by what they have been taught and exposed to in ministry.

For those pastors who would read this project looking for another tool to assist them in ministering to the LGBT member in their church, the researcher offers the following fourteen recommendations as a tool for AA pastors in the DMV tool to assist them in ministering to LGBT members in their respective congregations. All the scholarship and research of the previous five Chapters points to these fourteen recommendations as critical for the AAC to use in its conversations about ministering to the LGBT membership.

As mentioned in Chapter Four some of the steps in this project were not done in sequence. This was the case with the recommendations. The recommendations for the most part were derived from the third data stream field notes and interviews. One assumption of this project is the AA pastor’s views in the DMV has been influenced by what they have been taught or exposed to. Thus, the first two data streams theological and literature are subjective. The researcher is not able to discern how these two data

streams have influenced the pastors, all he could note was there is a complexity and contrasting views about homosexuality. The goal of this project is to provide the AA pastor with another tool to assist them in ministering to the LGBT. This is the intent for these recommendations.

These recommendations are not exhaustive, they are a starting point to begin dialogue between the AA pastor and the LGBT member. Most of the recommendations have been linked to at least two case studies. While all the questions were not directly linked to a recommendation the data gleaned from the interview questions were useful in forming the recommendations.

Recommendation One

The first recommendation is that AA churches should adopt the stance: “We say to you that all sin is sin to God.” This recommendation was linked to interview Question One. The pastors in Cases Number One, Two, Three and Five provided insight for this recommendation. None of the pastors interviewed for this project were revisionists, thus all of them agree that homosexuality is a sin. These pastors were mentioned because of the manner in which they expressed themselves on the issue. For instance, the pastor in Case Number Two, gave a one word answer: “No.” He gave the impression the matter is not up for discussion.

Recommendation Two

Second, the researcher recommends that churches hold to the differences in the sexes as God created male and female and that AA churches appropriate that model to conform to the command of God to love all His children. This recommendation was

linked to Questions Seven and Eight. The pastors in Cases Number Three, Six, and Seven provided insight.

Recommendation Three

The researcher suggests that AA churches do nothing to cause LGBT members to transfer their fight with sin to a fight with God by any action on the part of the church. In other words, the churches ought to do nothing that appears to belittle LGBT members as children of God for the unique and beautiful way God created them. This recommendation was linked to Questions Nine, Ten and Eleven. The pastors in Cases Number Two and Five provided the insight.

Recommendation Four

Recommendation Four is that churches communicate sin is not in the temptation but in giving in to the temptation. This recommendation was linked to Question Four. The pastors in Cases Number One, Three and Seven provided insight.

Recommendation Five

Fifth, the researcher recommends that churches welcome all of God's children, regardless of their sexual orientation. This recommendation was linked to Questions Three and Four. While all the pastors welcomed LGBT individuals, the pastors in Cases Two and Three placed a restriction on allowing these persons to serve in youth ministry. The issue was worry over the influence of LGBT members and any subtle promotion of their lifestyle, not any fear of sexual abuse.

Recommendation Six

The sixth recommendation is that churches would implore LGBT people to come to God just as they are—but no one ought to expect to remain the same. This

recommendation was linked to Question Ten. The pastors of Cases Numbers One, Two and Six provided insight for this. Each pastor made mention of either the transformative power God, or the redemption that is available through repentance.

Recommendation Seven

The researcher encourages churches to make every effort to acclimate all sinners who come to God in repentance. But at the same time churches need to communicate that they will be faithful in adhering to the biblical model of sexuality and marriage between one man and one woman. This recommendation was linked to Questions One and Six. The pastors in Cases Number Two, Five and Six provided insight for this recommendation.

Recommendation Eight

The eighth recommendation is that AAC churches apologize for the hurt inflicted, unknowingly and sometimes intentionally, upon the LGBT community. This recommendation is linked to Question Ten. The pastor of Case Four provided the most insight for this recommendation as he and several other pastors sat on a panel with LBGT in the DMV and did offer an apology.

Recommendation Nine

For Recommendation Nine the researcher suggests that the church will no longer ascribe to the world's view of masculinity or femininity. This recommendation was not linked to any question. The insight for this came from the interview with the pastor in Case Four where he related an incident at his church that dealt with this issue.

Recommendation Ten

Tenth, the researcher recommends that churches ought to communicate to their LGBT congregants that following Jesus is not about walking in denial of desire, but walking with the aid of the Holy Spirit in repentance. This recommendation is linked to Questions One, Six and Seven. The pastors of Cases Number One, Three and Six provided this insight. These pastors echoed a common theme of recognizing the struggle some people have with homosexuality. One pastor mentioned there is a person on the ministerial staff who has SSA but is not acting on his desire.

Recommendation Eleven

AA churches should make it their goal to offer LGBT members the love of Jesus Christ and with this the experience of the transforming power of God's love. The goal is not to condemn same sex attraction or deny the validity of that attraction. This recommendation was linked to Question One. The pastors in Cases Number One, Four and Six provided insight.

Recommendation Twelve

The Twelfth recommendation is that AA churches communicate in ways that help LGBT people grow to a place of peaceful understanding in which they accept that their fight is against ungodly desires and not against God. This recommendation arose out of the interview with the pastors of Cases Number One and Four. These pastors view SSA as an issue with which a person can struggle. They minister to the LGBT in their church in this manner.

Recommendation Thirteen

The researcher encourages churches to communicate, “In this life you may not find not understanding, for God did not promise understanding. But you will find the peace that surpasses understanding. That is the promise of God (Phil. 4:6-8).” This recommendation was linked to Question Number Ten. All the pastors provided insight for this recommendation. There was a common theme of the peace God will provide to those who earnestly seek to submit to God’s will for their lives.

Recommendation Fourteen

Finally, the researcher recommends that in the end the AA church obey God. Obedience means to love all of His children. This recommendation was linked to Question Ten. None of the pastors interviewed expressed anything but love and compassion for the LGBT, even if they did not agree with the LGBT lifestyle.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Discoveries

This doctoral program is about Transformational Leadership. Therefore researchers at the end of the project should be transformed themselves and they should provide information that can be transformative to other leaders. The researcher believes the curriculum for this cohort was structured to accomplish that process.

This has been a long journey that has brought this researcher to this point. This path has not been without its challenges. There have been high moments and low moments along this path. One of the lowest moments came at the beginning of this project with the loss of the researchers' sister. She was an integral part of his life and ministry and the researcher is assured she is in heaven and among the cloud of witnesses cheering him on. Even then, the researcher was able use that low moment to develop the leaders in his church as part of this program.

There were several high moments along this journey. Among them were the fellowship the researcher enjoyed with the members of his cohort and the opportunity to have close fellowship with Dr. Douglas Fombelle. Dr. Fombelle is not just a professor but he is a pastor. The cohort was and is blessed for the encouragement and instruction he poured into our lives.

Unlike many courses students take toward matriculation that seem to have very little meaning or relevance to life, the courses in this Transformational Leadership cohort were relevant to the development and completion of this project. The researcher believes

the course taught by Dr. Green was quite relevant to this program. This was a course on the spiritual, psychological and mental health of the student researcher. Before one can be transformed or provide stimulus to bring about transformation, one must be healthy or at least aware of areas in their lives that are in need of attention. Just as the relational, motivational and mechanical influences impact the AA pastor in ministering to the LGBT, the same is true of the student researcher.

As a result of taking this doctoral program, this researcher was made aware of an underlying motive that was driving the mechanics of his life and subsequently his ministry. The researcher now understands that the relationships, not just in terms of association with others, but how environment, education, encouragement or lack thereof had affected his life. Even though the issue is still being resolved, at least the researcher is now self-aware. Thus, from this position this researcher has been transformed and believes he can be useful in spurring others on to transformation. As the Apostle Paul states, “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:1). The researcher believes this project can provide another leader with a tool that can assist in the mind renewal process—a process that can lead to transformation.

Three Data Streams

The AA pastor in the DMV relies upon the Bible as the primary reference for ministry. The theological review revealed to this researcher the polarization that exists in theological circles. The traditionalist, who affirms the biblical prohibition of homosexuality is at one end of the spectrum. At the other end of the spectrum is the revisionist who argues the Bible must be updated to reflect historical and current revelations that have taken place since the Bible was written. Between these two poles

lay what this researcher labels the divine dilemma. That is the challenge facing AA pastors in the DMV to minister to the LGBT and to remain faithful to the Word of God. The researcher believes that this project provides AA pastors with some insight on the impact biblical teaching formally or informally has had on shaping their theology.

The literature review revealed the impact of current issues facing the AAC today. Those issues are social, political and economic. Among them are the issues of gay rights verses civil rights, same-sex marriage and the attitude of don't ask don't tell. To effectively wrestle with these issues the researcher believes AA pastors in the DMV must be aware of how their philosophy has been shaped with regard to these challenges and others.

The researcher is aware that the literature and theological reviews conducted during this project are by no means comprehensive in that these two data streams cannot provide all the information the AA pastors need. However, this project is at least a starting point. This information is another tool the AA pastor can use in ministering to the LGBT in their congregations.

The interviews and field observations revealed to this researcher that perhaps there is a need to redefine the word homophobia. Homosexuality and the Bible seem to automatically generate controversy. The theological review revealed the polarization that is present with this issue. Homophobia as defined by Thatcher and Griffin has a pejorative connotation. The interviews and field notes conducted by this researcher did not reflect the attitude normally associated with the word homophobia. While it must be stated that one weakness of the project is its limited scope and, it must also be stated that for these pastors interviewed the underlying motive for ministry is two-fold. One is a

desire to serve God by loving all of His children, the LGBT included. The second is a commitment to remain faithful to the Word of God. Does this mean homophobia does not exist in the AAC in the DMV? No, it does indeed exist. Does this mean that the AA pastor in the DMV wants and desires another tool to deal with this issue? This researcher believes it does.

The Future from Here

One unstated goal in this project, but one that the researcher was ultimately led to by God, was not to change minds as much as to inspire, challenge and influence the hearts and minds of my fellow pastors who like me wrestle with this issue. One reason for tackling this issue is to open the minds and hearts of AA leaders to deal with this issue, not from a posture of fear, but from a posture of love predicated by faith in a God who will never fail to love us. For that reason alone, we pastors' have an obligation and duty not to fail to love His children whatever label the world uses to define them.

Gagnon also concludes that the church should not hold out false hope to the LGBT members that the Bible contains anything that will affirm a homosexual lifestyle. Gagnon believes the act should be condemned and not the person. To those in the LGBT movement who would label him and AA pastors as homophobic, Gagnon states, "A denunciation should not be construed as an indictment."¹ The only way a statement like this will be understood is through healthy and open dialogue.

The AA pastor in the DMV cannot ignore the LGBT any more than the LGBT can label the AAC and its leadership as homophobic just because the church is saying something the LGBT does not want to accept. Just as this course was helpful in making

¹ Gagnon, 31.

the researcher self-aware of issues he was not aware of and thus not able to deal with or solve, the researcher feels this project can do the same for the AA pastor in the DMV.

The AA researcher believes that the AA pastors in this project do love the sinner but hate the sin. However, if the AAC in the DMV simply condemns the LGBT without offering any place of dialogue, or if they fail to offer any invitation to community in the church, then the AAC in the DMV is giving reasons for the LGBT to go elsewhere. The researcher believes that this project is but one tool that will facilitate healthy and open dialogue for pastors and church leaders to use as they move forward ministering to the LGBT in their congregations.

APPENDIX A
LGBT ACCEPTANCE SCALE

Appendix A: Summary of *LGBT Acceptance Scale* data by item and subject

Item No.	Subject							Item	
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Su	Mean
Item 1	10	03	09	05	05	10	10	52	7.43
Item 2	10	09	10	07	09	10	10	65	9.29
Item 3	02	01	05	02	04	04	04	22	3.14
Item 4	09	07	08	04	06	08	09	51	7.29
Item 5	09	02	10	10	09	08	03	51	7.29
Item 6	10	07	09	08	10	10	10	64	9.14
Item 7	06	03	02	08	05	05	07	36	5.14
Item 8	10	03	09	08	02	08	10	50	7.14
Item 9	09	01	07	02	02	03	10	34	4.86
Item 10	04	05	06	05	02	07	09	38	5.43
Item 11	06	07	05	04	04	07	09	42	6.00
Subject								Overall	
Sum	85	48	80	63	58	80	91	505	
Mean	7.7	4.36	7.27	5.73	5.27	7.27	8.27	6.56	

This table contains a summary of the interview data regarding the LGBT Acceptance Scale for the entire research sample. Rating scores and summary statistics are presented in the table for each subject and each item. Columns included under the “Subject” heading contain scale score for the subject, with the bottom two rows consisting of score sums and means (i.e., averages). The mean scores for each subject may be interpreted as their relative position on the LGBT Acceptance Scale, where higher scores indicated more traditional values and lower acceptance of homosexual membership in their respective churches. In total, the sample attained a general scale score of 6.56, reflecting

a more distal perspective relative to the baseline pastor on homosexual membership. However, this general scale score is some average and somewhat masks differing views among the subjects. As shown in Table 3, subject S2 attained a mean score of 4.26 that reflected more revisionist leanings on the LGBT Acceptance Scale. Subject S5 also showed a revisionist leaning with a scale score of 5.27. The most divergent scale scores were found for subjects S7 and S1, attaining respective values of 8.27 and 7.73.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The problem this project will investigate is the manner in which the African American Church in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area deals with the issue of homosexuality. The problem has underlying issues, among them gay rights verses civil rights, don't ask don't tell, and less than full membership.

1. As a leader in the church how do you view homosexuality?
2. How do you interpret the scriptures with regard to homosexuality?
3. How do you receive gay people in your church?
4. Are gays welcome to participate in ALL ministries at your church?
5. Some say that on gay rights is equal to civil rights, what are your thoughts on this?
6. What is your view on same sex marriage?
7. How do you balance the tension between loving all people as Christ commanded and obeying the scriptures as God commands?
8. What would you say to your son or daughter if they told you they were gay? Would your church policies change?
9. How do you respond to the accusation that the African American Church in the DC Metro area by and large is homophobic?
10. How do you respond to the gay person who says they know God loves them, but they don't understand why His church does not?
11. Does the rhetoric coming from the AAC add or detract from hate crimes against gays in this country?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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