

Fathers and Brothers of North Florida Presbytery,

A matter of public controversy arose when a member of Nashville Presbytery, TE Scott Sauls, held a conference in April of 2015 on same-sex attraction at his church, Christ Presbyterian Church, and invited a student from Covenant Seminary, Stephen Moss, as one of the speakers. This student refers to himself as a “same-sex attracted Christian,”¹ “a gay Christian man,”² using the hashtag “#gayinchrist”³ on his Twitter account. He has written on his blog, “I’d begun to understand that while my [homosexual] orientation is a tragic result of the fall, my attractions themselves are not the sinful part.”⁴ At the conference in question he said, “My [homosexual tendencies] are one of the ways my sexuality is broken. But, at the same time, the fact that I am attracted to another guy, that is not in and of itself a sin. In the same way that my friend, who is not same-sex attracted, for him to simply be attracted to a woman is not a sin.”⁵ TE Sauls seems to promote the same position, asserting that being born with homosexual orientation is equivalent to being born a eunuch for the Kingdom or being born blind.⁶ These matters came before the Nashville Presbytery when a PCA presbyter filed charges against TE Sauls.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that Nashville Presbytery Committee on Judicial Business investigated these charges, and reported back to the presbytery on April 12, 2016. The committee considered whether the “Scriptures or Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) doctrinal standards identify homosexual attractions (same-sex attractions) as sin along with homosexual immorality and homosexuality?”⁷ To which the committee replied in the negative, stating, “No. The Scriptures speak clearly condemning homosexual immorality, homosexual behavior and homosexual lust. The Scriptures do not condemn temptations as sin. James 1:13-15 speaks of the relationship between temptation, desire, sin and death. Lustful desires of any sort are sin. Attractions and propensities are temptations and not sin.”⁸

Motion: In light of the decision of Nashville Presbytery, I move that the moderator appoint an ad hoc committee to study the biblical, theological, historical, and pastoral issues relating to same-sex attraction, with particular attention to the following questions:

¹ Stephen Moss, “We Must Do Better,” <http://www.stephenrross.com/2014/06/we-must-do-better.html>

² Ibid, “Loving Myself as a Celebrate Gay Christian (Part 1),” <http://www.stephenrross.com/2016/09/loving-myself-as-celebrate-gay-christian.html>

³ Ibid, <https://twitter.com/stephenrross/status/770392015183892480>

⁴ Ibid, “Lord, Have Mercy...” <http://www.stephenrross.com/2014/03/lord-have-mercy.html>

⁵ Ibid, “What I Wish I Had Heard--Same-Sex Attraction Forum,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBaWEj-SXCg&index=5&list=PLsu0fwAqXRuRE_tXuEQ2L45UdqW-5aEkW

⁶ Scott Sauls, “Redeeming Sexuality,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49x4YBKcMqE>

⁷ Nashville Presbytery Committee on Judicial Business Report Concerning Complaint of TE Chuck Williams vs. TE Scott Sauls

⁸ Ibid.

1. While all human sexual attraction is marred by sin, heterosexual attraction is God's natural design for humanity; homosexual attraction is not. Humans "exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature" after they "exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (Romans 1:25-27). Are heterosexual orientation and homosexual orientation morally equivalent?
2. What is the relationship between the words "tempted," "lured," "enticed," and "sin" in James 1:14-15?
3. Should same-sex attraction be considered a "motion" of the fallen nature and thus, "truly and properly sin" according to WCF 6:5?
4. If the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment are "adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts" (WLC 139), does same-sex attraction qualify as an "unnatural lust"?
5. How has the church historically handled issues pertaining to homosexual desires?
6. What is the benefit of encouraging or allowing an individual to identify as a "gay Christian"?
7. In our cultural context, 'attraction' possesses a wide range of meaning, but typically includes romantic and sexual connotations. What is the relationship between 'attraction' and 'sexual lust'?
8. Does the Word of God call believers who experience same-sex attraction to strive, in reliance upon the Holy Spirit, to confess, repent of, and mortify those attractions?

The study committee is to report its progress to the Presbytery at the January meeting.

Your Servant in Christ,
Jim McCarthy