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HOMOSEXUALITY AS OUTLINED IN THE DOCUMENT
OF THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION
WHAT IS MAN? A JOURNEY THROUGH BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
(PARAGRAPHS 185–195) IN THE CONTEXT
OF ECUMENICAL DIALOGUES ON THE HUMAN PERSON*

A b s t r a c t. The article seeks to present a general overview of the document *What is Man? (Ps 8:5). An Itinerary of Biblical Anthropology*, published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 2019. The author endeavours to identify any reactions from other Churches and Christian Traditions to the document. What kind of reception, if any, has there been from the Orthodox Church and from the Protestants? What can we conclude from a selection of known positions, *prior* to the 2019 document? The paper will focus on only one particular issue — homosexuality and same-sex unions — and present a comparative analysis with the aim of identifying areas of convergence, as well as areas of divergence, between different Churches on the theme.

Keywords: Pontifical Biblical Commission; biblical anthropology; male and female; homosexuality; same-sex unions; the Orthodox position; the position of the World Evangelical Alliance.

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INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

On the feast day of St Jerome, 30 September 2019, the prestigious Pontifical Biblical Commission, instituted by Pope Leo XIII in 1902, completed a very long and detailed document on biblical anthropology. The document bears the title, *What is Man? (Ps 8:5). A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology*.¹ This is a profound and ages-long question which theological anthropology, in convergence with biblical anthropology, patristic anthropology and moral anthropology, has sought to answer in several academic contexts.

It has to be stated from the outset of this article that the academic study on theological anthropology was commissioned by Pope Francis himself, five years earlier, in 2014. As already affirmed, the document is very elaborate and long, indeed much longer than previous documents of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which has had a long history of studies which dates back to 1905.

Besides the Introduction, the document consists of four long chapters which are outlined simply by enunciating their respective titles:

Chapter 1 — The Human Being Created by God (Gen 2:4–7)

Chapter 2 — The Human Being in the Garden (Gen 2:8–20)

Chapter 3 — The Human Family, i.e. The Love between Man and Woman, The Love between Parents and Children, Love of brothers and sisters (Gen 2:21–25)

Chapter 4 — The Human Being in History (Gen 2:16–17; 3:1–24).

Each of the chapters is conveniently divided into sub-themes and each is enriched by the relevant pericopes from the Old and New Testament. Among the many interesting areas which are presented, one finds the following: man, image of God; food as a gift from God; human work; humans and animals; love, family, gender and the different kinds of relationships, as well as specific issues like divorce, adultery, and homosexuality; the stewardship and care for creation; friendship and human solidarity; sin and evil in the world; and the intervention of God in Christ.

The question in the title, *What is man?* (Ps 8:5), is answered adequately by a profound analysis of the mentioned texts from Genesis, together with other texts from Scripture, hence the subtitle, namely, *A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology*. As the subtitle indicates, a veritable journey through

¹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *What is Man? A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology* (London: Darton, Logman and Todd, 2021).

Scripture is offered. This is already a challenging exercise in itself. The topic becomes even more challenging by seeking to study it in the context of ecumenical dialogues on the human person. This leads us to explore any possible paths regarding the reception of the document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission outside the Roman Catholic Church. It is well known that several Churches and Christian Traditions are blessed to have excellent biblical scholars and higher academic institutions focused on Sacred Scripture.

While writing about the document in the prestigious *La Civiltà Cattolica* (July 2020), the biblical scholar Pietro Bovati, then Secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission makes an appeal not only to Roman Catholic scholars and Faculties of Theology, but turns further afield. He stated:

Without presumption, the Pontifical Biblical Commission invites lecturers and all those who present themselves as teachers of faith in Christian communities to read and study the document with care, to embrace its elements for a deeper understanding of the biblical texts, and also to assimilate its manner of proceeding as a sacred discipline which involves thinking with belief.

In his presentation of the document, the President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, who *ex officio* is the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer, stated:

The intention of this document lies, therefore, in perceiving the beauty, as well as the complexity of Divine Revelation regarding the human being. Beauty leads to an appreciation of the work of God, and the complexity invites us to embrace a humble and continuous commitment to research, deepening and transmission.

It is sad to state that, to date, no formal published reactions to the Commission document on the part of other Churches and Christian Traditions have appeared. Although not in any way responding to the 2019 document by the Commission, some interesting and supportive insights on the same theme are to be found in a book by a theologian and ordained minister of the Reformed Evangelical Church in Indonesia, Billy Kristanto.² In 2020, he published the book *Human Being — Being Human: A Theological Anthropology in Biblical, Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*. Kristanto states that

² Billy Kristanto is the Academic Dean at the International Reformed Evangelical Seminary, Jakarta, Indonesia. He has been a pastor in Jakarta, Singapore, Berlin, Hamburg, München, Stockholm and Bern. Having studied harpsichord in Berlin and the Hague, he received his doctoral degrees in musicology and systematic theology from the University of Heidelberg.

“although theological anthropology has been on the rise lately, one can hardly find writings that reflect this locus in ecumenical perspective.”³

What Kristanto affirms is very true. This is supported by what was affirmed more than ten years earlier in the acclaimed work *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* by Cardinal Walter Kasper, former President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. He dedicates only less than a page on Anthropology, within a concluding sub-section on “Questions for Further Discussion.” With regard to a focus on Anthropology, after mentioning the achievement of the consensus on the doctrine of justification, Kasper affirms the following:

At this point the crucial question of theological anthropology must be faced for this is the root of Western Church divisions and is one of the most urgent issues confronting society today. Differences that have recently emerged on ethical questions — such as marriage and the family as the cradle of human society and school of its culture, or human sexuality — are a sign of this challenging situation. Just as challenging are the connected issues of social, political and environmental ethics, for as people reconciled with God we must be peacemakers and witnesses of reconciliation to the world. So the solution of these anthropological and ethical questions is a prerequisite if we are to realise our common mission in today’s world.⁴

Due to lack of material in English or Italian which are the main languages used in this research, one can only speculate on what other Churches would be inclined to affirm — in their eventual reception to the 2019 document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission — on the basis of what they have stated in the recent past on a number of thorny issues. One of these regards the issue of same-sex unions and homosexuality. Since the Commission document is comprehensive and tackles a very wide spectrum of themes, it has been deemed appropriate to focus on just one, namely the mentioned issue. In fact, this research article will focus on the just-mentioned issue only.

³ Billy Kristanto, *Human Being – Being Human. A Theological Anthropology in Biblical, Historical, and Ecumenical Perspective* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020), 9.

⁴ Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits. Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London–New York: Continuum, 2009), 203.

1. THE POSITION OF SOME PROTESTANT CHURCHES ON SAME-SEX UNIONS

It is possible that in the near future, Church of England clergy will be permitted to conduct same-sex “marriages.” At the moment, the Church of England does not allow same-sex “marriage,” and does not officially bless same-sex civil unions. At the time of writing,⁵ decisions were not yet taken with regard to this issue, because these will be taken later, during a General Synod, in 2022. Gay clergy are permitted to be in same-sex relationships, including civil partnership, as long as they are chaste. The “Living in Love and Faith” project of the Church of England has produced a collection of learning resources with the scope of helping Church members understand questions about human identity and sexuality, as well as social attitudes to Christian thinking. The project which is led by Rt Rev. Christopher Cocksworth, Bishop of Coventry, and by Rt Rev. Julian Henderson, Bishop of Blackburn and President of the Conservative Church of England Evangelical Council affirms that while discussions are always welcome, the whole issue is actually about obedience to Scripture. As one expects, there are many other opinions within the Church of England, and in parallel Churches which claim to be part of the world-wide Anglican Communion.

The 2016 *Book of Discipline* of the Methodist Church recognises the sacred worth of all persons, whatever their sexual orientation. Nonetheless, the same document states that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching and bans financial support of LGBTIQ-based groups. On a similar note, one encounters Pentecostal groupings who have historically condemned homosexuality. In the case of the Lutheran Church, one discovers a variety of contrasting positions on the matter. While the Church-wide Lutheran Assembly has not reached an agreement on the issue of marriage equality, the ongoing debate has prompted a policy that permits autonomy to individual ministers and their congregations. The Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) decided, in 2000, to support same-sex partnerships. In November 2010, the EKD approved a new right for the ordination of homosexual ministers who were living in civil unions.

⁵ The final draft of this research article was completed in mid-February 2022.

2. PARAGRAPHS 185–195 OF THE DOCUMENT *WHAT IS MAN?*

Fr Pietro Bovati, then Secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, writing in *La Civiltà Cattolica* refers — among many other references — to the great importance of formulating a correct interpretation of the sin of the people of Sodom.⁶ He does so in the context of the importance of exegetical clarifications, integrations and in-depth analyses. He states how important it is to clarify the vocabulary.

As stated earlier, this research article will zoom in and focus only on paragraphs 185 to 195 of the Commission document, a total of only eleven paragraphs. In my opinion, they might be among the most controversial both for debates within the Catholic Church, as well as from an ecumenical point of view. Some ideas will be presented, and one will see whether they can be tackled from an ecumenical point of view.

Paragraph 185 affirms that “the institution of marriage, constituted by the stable relationship between husband and wife, is constantly presented as evident and normative in the whole biblical tradition. There are no examples of legally recognised ‘unions’ between persons of the same sex.” The document then goes on to say that this statement is not universally accepted by contemporary society because the latter is not only open to heterosexual unions, but also to homosexual unions, the latter, also, being a legitimate and worthy expression of the human being according to certain section of society. The document then goes on highlight the importance of studying the biblical texts, for example, Genesis 19 and Judges 19, as well as the legislative norms of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 which condemn homosexual relations.

Pietro Bovati states the following with regard to three of the mentioned paragraphs, from 186 to 188:

We point out, in particular, the correct interpretation of Sodom’s sin; in fact, in the biblical story the city is not blamed because of its citizens are subject to disgraceful sexual cravings, but is rather condemned for its lack of hospitality toward the stranger, with hostility and violence deserving [the appropriate] punishment.⁷

The same is true to the episode in the book of Judges, chapter 19, namely not accepting to welcome a stranger travelling from a different place. The

⁶ Pietro Bovati, “*Che cosa è l’uomo? Il nuovo Documento della Pontificia Commissione Biblica,*” *La Civiltà Cattolica* 171/4071 (1/15 febbraio 2020): 219.

⁷ Ibid.

norms of Leviticus 22:5 for the People of Israel prohibit cross-dressing which was then common among the Canaanites. The norm was rather to emphasise the clear distinction between man and woman. In Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, homosexual acts are severely condemned as being an abomination, and are inserted along with sexual deviations, such as adultery, incest and bestiality. In paragraph 190 of the document, it is stated that the legislator in Leviticus does not give the reason for the prohibition of such acts, nor the reason for the severe punishments inflicted. The document explains that the reason behind the attitude expressed in the book of Leviticus lies in the importance of sexuality as being open to procreation in conformity with the command of the Creator in Genesis 1:28 to conceive and multiply.

In paragraphs 191 and 192, the document focuses on two texts from the Pauline corpus, namely, 1 Cor 6:9–10 and 1 Tim 1:9–10. The first text refers to male homosexuality as one of ten transgressions excluding a person from the Kingdom. In the second text (from one of the Pastoral Epistles), one encounters again a list of the impure and those not observing the law of God, in opposition to the just. In both cases, Paul does not explain or justify his affirmations, implying that what he is stating is well known by his addressees and already accepted by the community. It is also possible that Paul is referring to practices which were widespread outside the Christian community. At the same time, the document reminds us, Paul could also have been basing himself on the legislation found of Leviticus, about which certain Christian communities were aware, particularly if they were not from a Gentile background.

The document of the Commission goes into substantial detail in discussing another text by St Paul, namely Romans 1:26–27, but the length constraints for this paper does not permit us to treat it. Rather, what is more important is to focus, at this point, on the concluding paragraph of this section, para. 195, before making a brief attempt at a comparative study with the position of other Churches and Traditions.

Para.195 affirms that the exegetical examination on Old and New Testament texts has shed light on aspects which are to be considered in an evaluation of homosexuality in its ethical implications. The way the biblical authors have expressed themselves and the disciplinary norms of the book of Leviticus require an intelligent interpretation which safeguards the values which the sacred text intends to promote, while avoiding a literal repetition which is accompanied by cultural traits of that time. The document by the Commission gives credit to the contribution of the human sciences, together with that provided by theologians with their respective expertise, including

moral theology. The human sciences — particularly, psychology and social care — and theology are indispensable to an adequate presentation of the topic. Individual persons are to be accompanied pastorally, as part of the service provided by the Church in the exercise of its mission.

In the context of this particular topic, it is appropriate to refer again to Billy Kristanto, the Reformed Evangelical theologian and minister from Indonesia. In his book, *Human Being — Being Human*, he affirms that “the biblical approach serves as a mediating point between various theological traditions [...] The plurality or sometimes even the apparent tensions among theological traditions are shown to be within the limits of God’s word alone.”⁸

3. THE POSITION OF THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

With regard to the theme which is being studied, the position of the Evangelical Alliance in its *Report on Biblical and Pastoral Responses to Homosexuality*, published in 2012, has been consulted.⁹ While acknowledging that various Evangelical groups may apply certain points in a variety of ways, the document states that taking the document comprehensively, its position reflects the mainstream evangelical response to homosexuality and to same-sex partnerships. One observes that there are several points of convergence with the document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. The following affirmations from the Evangelical document are highlighted:

We affirm that marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship for life. Marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations and homoerotic sexual practice is incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture. We do not accept that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic (n. 3).

We encourage evangelical congregations to be communities of grace in which those who experience same-sex attraction and seek to live faithfully in accordance with biblical teaching are welcomed and affirmed. Such Christians need churches which are safe spaces where they are able to share and explore their stories with fellow believers for mutual encouragement and support as we help each other grow together into maturity in Christ (n. 4).

⁸ Kristanto, *Human Being — Being Human*, 9.

⁹ See <https://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality> (accessed 15.10.2021).

We welcome and support the work of those individuals and organisations who responsibly seek to help Christians who experience same-sex attraction as in conflict with their commitment to live in accordance with biblical teaching. This help will involve counsel and pastoral support to live a chaste life and, as part of this process, some may seek and experience changes in the strength or direction of their same-sex attractions (n. 8).¹⁰

The same document by the Evangelical Alliance offers not only a balanced presentation on the subject, but is also very clear. Although the Evangelical document does not enter into the detail and exegetical technicalities afforded by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, what it states is unequivocal. The Evangelical document highlights that Jesus Christ's love, truth and grace should characterise the Christian response to all discussions on homosexuality (n. 1). The dignity of homosexual persons, as, after all, the dignity of all other persons, whatever their sexual orientation, is to be respected. The document expresses the regret shown by many Christians for all the hurt and discrimination suffered by homosexuals at the hands of Christians over the ages (n. 2).

The Evangelical document is crystal-clear in affirming, without any hint of doubt, its opposition to any moves within certain Churches and Christian Traditions which strive to condone sexually active same-sex partnerships as some kind of Christian relationship, similar to marriage. Furthermore, the document expresses its opposition to the ordination to ministry of persons who have entered into the mentioned sexual relationships. The Evangelical Alliance underlines its spiritual support of all those who in such churches, while basing themselves on Scripture, are doing their best to oppose such moves (n. 5).

One observes a clear convergence between the explanation of the biblical data in paragraphs 185–195 of the Pontifical Biblical Commission document and paragraph 6 of the Evangelical document, in asserting that gay and lesbian relationships are unbiblical. The latter document clearly affirms that any redefinition of marriage to include same-sex relationships has no biblical foundation (n. 6). The Evangelical document supports those who undergo same-sex attraction, who in a context of personal self-integration, exercise self-control by embracing a chaste life-style. Such individuals are not to be barred from ordination to ministry and leadership roles in a variety of ecclesial contexts. Moreover, these persons can bear witness to precious insights within the context of pastoral ministry in the Churches (n. 7).

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Evangelical document criticises regular homoerotic sexual activity and the public promotion of such a lifestyle as being inconsistent with what it calls faithful Church membership (n. 9). The document offers an inclusive approach vis-à-vis homosexual persons who are called to do their utmost to live in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. A pastoral attitude of accompaniment (n. 10) is encouraged vis-à-vis homosexuals in whatever stage they happen to be in the process of the self-integration of their sexuality.

From what has been outlined above, it is evident that there is a striking convergence with the position of the Roman Catholic Church, as expressed in the Pontifical Biblical Commission document, as well as in other documents by the Holy See on the same theme, such as *Persona humana* (December 29, 1975) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (October 1, 1986) by the same Congregation, *Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on Non-discrimination of Homosexual Persons*, also by the same Congregation (July 23, 1992), and *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders* (November 4, 2005) by the Congregation for Catholic Education.

4. THE POSITION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES

In the final section of this article, the Orthodox position on the same issue will be highlighted. The Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church are in agreement regarding their position vis-à-vis homosexuality and same-sex unions.¹¹ In 2021, the Russian Orthodox Church backed the February 2021 document by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, barring the blessing of same-sex unions.¹² "We cannot in any way or under

¹¹ In my opinion, an excellent article which comprehensively outlines the position of the Orthodox Church is the following: Ciprian Iulian Toroczkai, "Homosexuality from a Contemporary Orthodox Perspective," *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 8/3 (2016): 401–22.

¹² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Explanatory Note accompanying the *Responsum* to a *dubium* regarding the blessing of the unions of persons of the same sex (February 22, 2021). See https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20210222_responsum-dubium-unioni_en.html (accessed 14.02.2022).

any form accept same-sex cohabitation as a marriage union. Accordingly, no wedding or blessing can be performed.” This was the statement made by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, the Chairman of the Department of External Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow. “People of homosexual orientation also come to our Orthodox churches, and if they go to the priest to receive a blessing, the priest cannot deny this. But if such a person says, ‘Father, bless me for my same-sex cohabitation,’ then of course the priest will refuse.”¹³

In a research he carried out, George Morelli, a priest belonging to the Antiochene Orthodox Church, presents the Orthodox position on the issue of homosexuality. Furthermore, Morelli is also a licensed clinical psychologist and marriage and family therapist, besides also being the Religious Coordinator of the Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology and Religion.¹⁴ These qualifications add weight to his explanation.

For Orthodox Christians, it is clear that any discussion about sex whether it is autoerotic, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or any other form of sexual behaviour, has to be envisaged within the wider picture of an Orthodox theology of sexuality. One observes that in agreement with the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, all expressions of sexuality and sexual behaviour are rooted in divine love which indeed is a love that transcends any human feeling, empathy, or ethical standards, and even approaches the essence of God himself.

Morelli reminds us that this love is also given to human beings to experience and apply in relationships with their fellow brothers and sisters. This is clear in what we read in the New Testament about the Incarnation of the Son of God; this love is actualised in the life of the baptised through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, because human love has its source and origin in God who is love, it can only be appropriated and put into practice in accordance to God’s will, in other words in accordance to the commandments of God. Morelli refers to Archimandrite Sophrony (1999) who, in turn quoted St Silouan the Athonite on this neces-

¹³ Jonathan Luxmoore, “Russian Church backs Vatican on same-sex blessings,” in *The Tablet* (April 2, 2021). See <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/14011/russian-church-backs-vatican-on-same-sex-blessings> (accessed 19.02.2022).

¹⁴ George Morelli, “Understanding Homosexuality: An Orthodox Christian Perspective,” http://religiousinstitute.org/denom_statements/understanding-homosexuality-an-orthodox-christian-perspective (accessed 20.10.2021). An early draft of Morelli’s paper was presented at the Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology and Religion (OCAMPR) conference on “Sex, Intimacy and Love” at Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, November 3–5, 2006.

sary synergy: “Both Christ’s commandments of love towards God and love toward neighbour make up a single life.”¹⁵

The Church Fathers often speak about the interrelationships of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father, the Son and Holy Spirit are in perfect communion among themselves in a perichoresis of love. This love lies at the very foundation of the divine act of creation. Moreover, this love is extended to all creation. From what we read in the accounts of Genesis 1 and 2, divine love is showered upon Adam whom God created to commune with him. This undying stream of love is present in God’s salvific activity after the Fall of the first human beings who in their rebellion against God ruptured his communion with them through sin.

God’s love is mirrored in the marvellous anthropological ordering of creation. The first two chapters of the book of Genesis reveal that with the creation of Adam and Eve, man was created with two modes of being: male and female. This is clearly elucidated and elaborated in the document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission: “So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). The theology which underlies the biblical texts is focused on the fact that male and female were created for communion with each other, thereby reflecting the perfect communion of the Persons of the Trinity.

Judaeo-Christian anthropology appropriately presents the male as the fitting complement of the female, and the female as the fitting complement of the male. This fundamental truth includes the moral boundaries of the sexual dimension of male and female at the climax of their mutual intimacy. In fact, the biblical text underlines that “[...] a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). This is the first reference to what is indeed a biblically-ordered sexuality. These limitations are further elaborated below and include the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox positions against adultery and homosexuality.

It is clear from the biblical text as well as from Christian Tradition that sexual union is ordained by God and is thus deemed as good. This includes all those aspects that make this union possible including sexual desire. Nonetheless, like all human desire, sexual desire must be channelled into appropriate expressions. In very recent decades, many efforts have been made in several countries to create a moral parity between heterosexuality and homosexuality. According to Morelli,

¹⁵ Ibid.

sanctioning homosexual marriage would go a long way in removing the moral prohibitions against homosexual behaviour. Gay marriage advocates borrow the moral teachings and assert they apply equally to homosexual. In other words, just as heterosexual activity is to be relegated to heterosexual marriage, so too should homosexual activity be relegated to homosexual marriage.¹⁶

How is the Christian to understand the appeal for homosexual “marriage”? Within the Orthodox Tradition, persons with a homosexual orientation are invited to use their struggle as a means towards holiness. In the texts of Scripture, homosexual behaviour is not blessed by God and specifically prohibited: in fact, we read: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (Lev 18:22); and: “[...] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonourable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men [...]” (Rom 1:25–27). In this text, it is clear that the focus is on the behaviour, not the person.

On account of the fact that the sexual dimension of male and female intimacy has a physical component, Morelli explains that

the male and female sexual organs are also part of God's creativity and thus subject to a higher understanding of the nature and purpose of man outlined in Genesis. The sexual organs of the male and female function complementarily, although the term “function” here means more than an anatomical symmetry. From the Orthodox Christian perspective, the term has a moral dimension that elevates the anatomical function to the higher purposes of God. Pleasure is certainly an important and blessed part of sexual union. Yet, sexual union exists for more than pleasure. Other aspects exist including the procreation of the human race, greater knowledge of and commitment towards the spouse, and others.¹⁷

It is evident from this brief overview of the Orthodox position that there is a great convergence with the Roman Catholic position as outlined in the document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion of this article, it is fitting to reiterate Billy Kristanto's important affirmation, already highlighted earlier: "The biblical approach serves as a mediating point between various theological traditions [...] The plurality or sometimes even the apparent tensions among theological traditions are shown to be within the limits of God's word alone."¹⁸

It is hoped that the document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission may serve as a bridge with other Christian Churches and Traditions, especially in the very sensitive areas of morality outlined in this article. Due to the limitations of time and space, this research has only focused on the sensitive and much-debated area of homosexuality, presented in paragraphs 185-195 of the document by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. As Pietro Bovati states, it is important to carry out scholarly exegetical clarifications, integrations and an in-depth analysis of the texts, as the examples outlined amply illustrate. The document *What is Man? (Ps 8:5). A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology*¹⁹ is another step — out of many — in the right direction, not only in providing the strong foundations for the proper teaching of Theological Anthropology, but also in building ecumenical bridges which bear much fruit which Christians will eagerly wait to mature and eventually to harvest.

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¹⁸ Kristanto, *Human Being — Being Human*, 9.

¹⁹ See Bovati, "Che cosa è l'uomo? Il nuovo Documento della Pontificia Commissione Biblica," 209–20.

HOMOSEKSUALIZM NAKREŚLONY W DOKUMENCIE PAPIESKIEJ KOMISJI BIBLIJNEJ
CZYM JEST CZŁOWIEK. ZARYS ANTROPOLOGII BIBLIJNEJ (PAR. 185-195)
W KONTEKŚCIE DIALOGU EKUMENICZNEGO O OSOBIE LUDZKIEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie ogólnego spojrzenia dokumentu *Czym jest człowiek. Zarys antropologii biblijnej*, opublikowanego przez Papieską Komisję Biblijną w 2019 r. Zamierzeniem autora jest zaprezentowanie reakcji na ten dokument innych Kościołów i tradycji chrześcijańskich. Jaka była, jeżeli w ogóle, recepcja Kościoła prawosławnego i protestantów? Jakie wnioski możemy wyciągnąć z lektury wybranych pozycji, opublikowanych jeszcze przed omawianym dokumentem? Artykuł będzie koncentrował się na jednym specyficznym zagadnieniu – homoseksualizmu i związków osób tej samej płci – i przedstawi analizę porównawczą, która będzie zmierzać do wydobycia zbieżności, jak i rozbieżności istniejących między Kościołami w odniesieniu do tego zagadnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: Papieska Komisja Biblijna; antropologia biblijna; mężczyzna i kobieta; homoseksualizm; związki osób tej samej płci; podejście prawosławne; podejście Światowego Aliansu Ewangelikalnego.