



# On Being Human: Sexual Orientation and the Image of God

*C. Norman Kraus*

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Synopsis: Too often the biblical passages governing sexual morality are interpreted in simplistic, proof-texting ways that take no account of the cultural gap between ancient Israel and the modern world. And too often the official positions of churches are determined by opinion polls and majority votes rather than a sober theological and ethical assessment of the issues involved. A third way is called for that avoids the errors of both naive fundamentalism and the Bible-dismissing zeitgeist--a way that puts theological reflection at the forefront. This little book aims to provide a theologically informed, biblical approach to help Christians find a new way forward in their dialogue over questions surrounding homosexuality. It deconstructs the Augustinian theological tradition that has defined, evaluated, and regulated sexual behavior in the western Christian traditions. Kraus maintains that the doctrine of the creation (rather than the doctrine of sin) must be the framework for understanding sexuality and sexual desire. He argues that the basic justification for erotic physical intimacy is the fulfillment of God's original intention for human community (shalom). Beginning with the definition of "the image of God" as a social symbol that mirrors the Trinity, Kraus calls the church to reflect that trinitarian image as it is seen in Christ. He argues that this stance at the very least calls the church to empathetic inclusion of the GLBTQ community in its ongoing discernment conversation, which, of course, means full participation in its life. Endorsements: "The relevance of this book reaches far beyond Mennonite circles. My brother and sister chaplains and Christians in the armed services, especially those troubled by the revocation of the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, will find challenge and wisdom from the biblical and theological reflections of Professor Kraus. In fact, this is a book for anyone struggling with same-sex issues in the real world." -Kermit D. Johnson Chaplain (Major General), United States Army (Retired) "In this era of increasing agreement that sexual orientation is a natural disposition, yet also of vigorous disagreement over how we should live with our sexuality, Norman Kraus gracefully guides us through pertinent church history, biblical wisdom, and theological understanding. Given how readily we interpret Scripture to justify what we feel, Kraus's crisp scholarship, and the pastoral reflections upon it, are timely." -David G. Myers coauthor of *What God Has Joined Together: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage* "The church's dialogue on issues of sexual orientation has focused on biblical interpretation. Frequently neglected has been the broader theological overview that gives shape to that interpretation. In this timely contribution, C. Norman Kraus addresses that oversight by providing a thoughtful and concise theological reflection on sexual orientation, especially as it relates to humanity created in the 'Image of God.' *On Being Human* is a must-read for church leaders looking for fresh ways to engage their congregations in this vital dialogue." -Vic Thiessen Mennonite Church Canada "Here is a useful and refreshing contribution to the church's discernment about sexuality--mainly because what shines through is the author's profound Anabaptist commitment to Scripture. But it is not a simple or conventional approach; rather, Kraus welcomes Scripture as a lively partner in discernment, trusting that engagement with the deep core of the biblical tradition along with critical examination of science and culture will yield the wisdom so desperately needed in today's church." -Marlene Kropf Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary Author Biography: C. Norman Kraus is Professor emeritus at Goshen College in Indiana. He is the author and editor of numerous books and articles.

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