OVERTURE 25 from Southeast Alabama Presbytery (to SJC)
"BCO 34-1 Request to Assume Original Jurisdiction over TE Greg Johnson"

Whereas Southeast Alabama Presbytery submitted a BCO 31-2 report (see Attachment A) to Missouri Presbytery regarding Teaching Elder (TE) Greg Johnson, a member of Missouri Presbytery, in August 2019; and

Whereas Southeast Alabama Presbytery alleges that TE Johnson conflates our confessional categories of sin and misery in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that homosexual or “gay” orientation (at least some aspect of it) is non-sinful yet due to the Fall; and

Whereas Southeast Alabama Presbytery alleges that TE Johnson conflates our confessional categories of the state of sin and the state of grace in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that it is acceptable to identify as a “gay” or homosexual Christian; and

Whereas Missouri Presbytery, at its July 21, 2020 stated meeting, found no strong presumption of guilt in TE Johnson in spite of the clear doctrinal error he has been propagating which violates the Word of God as confessed in the Westminster Standards; and

Whereas BCO 34-1 states that two presbyteries may request that General Assembly take up original jurisdiction of a case originally brought before another presbytery; and

Whereas RAO 11 specifies that these presbyteries make this request by means of Overture to the General Assembly; and

Whereas RAO 15-4 and 17-2 would require such an overtured case to be referred to the Standing Judicial Commission for action;

Therefore be it resolved that Southeast Alabama Presbytery joins with Savannah River Presbytery and Central Georgia Presbytery in requesting that the General Assembly assume original jurisdiction in the case of the doctrinal error of Teaching Elder Greg Johnson per BCO 34-1.

Approved by Southeast Alabama Presbytery at its stated meeting, August 11, 2020
Attested by TE Henry Lewis Smith, stated clerk

Attachments:  A. Southeast Alabama Presbytery 2019 Report to Missouri Presbytery
           B. Open Letter from Southeast Alabama Presbytery to Missouri Presbytery
Attachment A  
(Overture 25 to 48th General Assembly)  

A Report to Missouri Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America  
To Request Investigation of Teaching Elder Greg Johnson  

In the name of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Southeast Alabama Presbytery of the PCA (in accordance with BCO 31-2) hereby requests an investigation by Missouri Presbytery into the allegations that Teaching Elder (TE) Greg Johnson understands homosexuality in a way that contradicts our confessional understanding of Scripture and is teaching this error. In this highly important and necessary process (BCO 27-3), we in Southeast Alabama Presbytery pray that God will be glorified, His Church purified, and that our brother, TE Johnson, be kept in the true faith and reclaimed from his sin (should such sin be revealed in this investigation).  

The Judicial Basis for this Request:  
BCO 31-2 reads as follows: “It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation. If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case. This prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that in a case before the Session, he may be any communing member of the same congregation with the accused.”  

Allegations Against TE Greg Johnson  
1. Allegation #1: TE Greg Johnson conflates our confessional categories of sin and misery in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that homosexual or “gay” orientation (at least some aspect of it) is non-sinful yet due to the Fall.  
2. Allegation #2: TE Greg Johnson conflates our confessional categories of the state of sin and the state of grace in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that it is acceptable to identify as a “gay” or homosexual Christian.  

Specifications  
Confessional Teaching on Sin and Misery (Regarding Allegation #1)  
1) In speaking of the estate into which the Fall has brought mankind, the Westminster Standards make a categorical distinction between “sin” and “misery” (WCF 6.6; WSC 17; WLC 23).  
• While both are aspects of the Fall, “sin” is any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God (WSC 14; 1 John 3:4) and is therefore distinct from “all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal” (WCF 6.6).  
• While ultimately due to Adam’s sin (for which we are all held guilty), the misery of “sufferings,” “tribulations,” and “trials” can be the result of our own
personal sin or the result of living in a fallen world (Rom. 8:18; John 16:33; James 1:2).

2) Examples of misery (suffering or trial) which are caused not by personal sin but simply due to living in a fallen world are fallen biology/physiology (e.g. infertility, paraplegia, or cancer) and fallen sociology/nurture (e.g. being sinned against in marriage).

- There is no sense in which infertility, paraplegia, cancer, or being sinned against are one’s sin; these conditions fit under the category of misery (they are non-sinful yet due to the Fall).

3) In contrast to those conditions, homosexuality is a violation of the seventh commandment and is always and only portrayed in Scripture as sinful (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Gen. 18:20-19:11; Lev. 18:22 & 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; WLC 139). The term homosexuality (or its cognates) is never used in Scripture or our confession to refer to a condition which is non-sinful yet due to the Fall.

- In sharp contrast to infertilitly or paraplegia or cancer (or being sinned against), homosexuality fits under the category of one’s sin rather than under the category of misery. The Bible never says “neither paraplegics nor the infertile nor the cancerous (nor those who have been sinned against) will inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you.” However, it does say neither “effeminate, nor homosexuals… will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11 NASB).

**TE Johnson on Sin and Misery (Regarding Allegation #1)**

1) In contradiction to our confessional understanding of Scripture, TE Johnson treats “gayness” or homosexuality (at least some aspect of it) as fitting in the same category as conditions such as paraplegia or infertility or cancer or being sinned against in marriage. This is a categorical error that strikes at the vitals of religion.

- In an interview, TE Johnson states:
  - That being “gay” or having a homosexual or “gay orientation” is a “condition” which is distinct from homosexual lust, is a “fallen condition,” and at least some aspect of it is not “sin.”
  - That this fallen condition of homosexual orientation (at least some aspect of it) is akin to or in the same category as “a really difficult, empty feeling marriage” (being sinned against, fallen nurture) or “when they have cancer” (fallen biology).
  - That one may identify as a “gay” Christian because there is nothing wrong with identifying as a “cancer survivor” Christian.

- It appears that TE Johnson is assuming a premise such as the following:
  - Homosexual or “gay” orientation is a category which includes homosexual lust (which is sinful and can lead to sinful actions) but is

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1 See TE Greg Johnson’s sermon “Testimony of a Unicorn” at Memorial Presbyterian Church on May 19, 2019 (http://www.memorialpca.org/mp3/2019/190519.mp3) and his speech on the floor of the 47th PCA General Assembly on June 27, 2019 in Dallas, Texas (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkWdMBQyVkc).
2 See TE Johnson’s interview with Cross Politic on July 15, 2018 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wb5yk2IdGpc).
3 Ibid.
broader than homosexual lust and includes “homosexual” biology, “homosexual” sociology, and/or other non-sinful yet fallen components of homosexuality.

• However, this premise contradicts Scripture: Homosexuality is a term that is never used in Scripture to refer to our broken, fallen biology or sociology or to any other non-sinful aspect of our condition but is always and only used to refer to sin. Even granting that one’s fallen biology and/or sociology can make one more prone or more tempted toward homosexual desire (which is sin) or homosexual behavior (which is sin), there is no biblical or confessional basis for referring to this fallen biology/sociology as itself “homosexual.”

2) Whether this or some other line of reasoning leads TE Johnson to the conclusion that homosexual orientation (at least some aspect of it) is akin to paraplegia or infertility or cancer or being sinned against (something non-sinful but due to the Fall), this is a categorical error that strikes at the vitals of religion.

3) TE Johnson’s conflation of the biblical, confessional categories of sin and misery is likely the cause (or one of the causes) of his acceptance of identifying as a homosexual Christian.⁴

• It appears that TE Johnson is assuming an argument such as the following:

  o Premise #1: Homosexual orientation is a category which includes homosexual lust (which is sinful and can lead to sinful actions) but is broader than homosexual lust and includes “homosexual” biology, “homosexual” sociology, and/or other non-sinful yet fallen components of homosexuality.

  o Premise #2: There is nothing wrong with identifying ourselves with our fallen biology (e.g. I am a cancer-surviving Christian, I am an autistic Christian) or our fallen sociology (e.g. I am a sex abuse survivor Christian).

  o Conclusion: Therefore, there is nothing wrong with saying one is a celibate “gay” Christian, assuming that by that we mean

    ▪ One is celibate (one is repentant of, fighting, and turning away from homosexual lust and behavior);

    ▪ One is “gay”/homosexual (one has a “homosexual” biology and/or sociology due to the Fall);

    ▪ One is a Christian.

• Where this argument falls apart is Premise #1 (which, as seen above, contradicts our confessional understanding of Scripture).

4) Whether this or some other line of reasoning leads TE Johnson to his acceptance of identifying as a celibate “gay” Christian, his conflation of sin and misery is a categorical error that strikes at the vitals of religion.

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Confessional Teaching on the State of Sin and the State of Grace (Regarding Allegation #2)

1) The Westminster Standards also make a categorical distinction between the “state of sin” and the “state of grace” (WCF 9.3-4). In fact, there are four different states: the state of innocency, the state of sin, the state of grace, and the state of glory (WCF 9.2-5).

- In Paradise, Adam and Eve lived in the “state of innocency” in which mankind had the ability to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God (WCF 9.2).
- Ever since the Fall, mankind is naturally in the “state of sin” in which we have lost all ability to will and to do any spiritual good and are slaves to the penalty, guilt, and power of sin (WCF 9.3). Therefore, in this state, our sin defines who we are, and we can rightly conceive of ourselves and label ourselves as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers (1 Cor. 6:9-10). In the state of sin, that is how we are to consider ourselves and identify ourselves because we are slaves to sin.
- When the Holy Spirit works faith in us, uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling, we are translated into the “state of grace” (WCF 9.4; WSC 30) and partake of the benefits of justification, adoption, and sanctification (WSC 30-32). In this state, while we do not perfectly or only will that which is good but also that which is evil (due to our remaining corruption), we are freed from bondage to sin and by grace are enabled freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good (WCF 9.4).

2) The conversion from the state of sin to the state of grace is so dramatic and the distinction between the two so vast that we no longer are to conceive of ourselves and label ourselves as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Scripture says such will not inherit the kingdom of God, “and such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In the state of grace, you no longer identify that way (e.g. as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, etc.). Why? “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Because of our union with Christ, our specific sins no longer define who we are.

- Obviously, due to remaining corruption, we can still speak of ourselves as sinners in the present tense (1 Tim. 1:12-16) as those who continue to experience and battle with the presence and pollution of sin (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14-25) and even at times feel as though we are enslaved to sin (Rom. 7:14).
- However, the truth is that we are no longer slaves to sin, having been freed from slavery to its guilt (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7), its penalty (Gal. 3:13), and its power (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rom. 6:6). For this reason, while of course we are (and can say we are) sinners (1 Tim. 1:12-16), we are no longer to identify ourselves with our specific sins. “Such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). “Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent… I received mercy… in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:13-14).
- Instead of considering ourselves as drunkards or adulterers or homosexuals, we are commanded to have a different self-conception: “You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). This does not mean that Christians do not continue to struggle with sin all their life...
long. It means that such a believer ought not consider himself a drunkard Christian or an adulterer Christian or a homosexual Christian but rather a Christian who struggles with the temptation to drunkenness, adultery, or homosexuality (and who is repentant when he succumbs to such temptations).

**TE Johnson on the State of Sin and the State of Grace (Regarding Allegation #2)**

1) In contradiction to our confessional understanding of Scripture, TE Johnson teaches that it is acceptable to identify as a (celibate) homosexual Christian. In other words, while Scripture says, “Homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you”—TE Johnson seems to say “Homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God, and such are some of you.” This is a conflation of the state of sin and the state of grace.

- One of the likely causes of this conflation is that TE Johnson appears to be more influenced by secular categories than biblical ones. For example, in the interview (referred to above), TE Johnson:
  - Resists using biblical categories (he refuses to say the Christian is no longer a drunkard/alcoholic or a homosexual or a porn addict because “such were some of you”).
  - Uses secular categories (he prefers for a Christian to refer to himself as an alcoholic Christian or a homosexual Christian or a porn addict Christian who is “sober”).
  - Insists on the use of the secular category of homosexual “orientation” (which he admits is a “problematic concept”), while being unwilling to place everything within such an “orientation” under the category of sin or the sinful nature.

2) Regardless of the cause, this conflation of the state of sin (when we could say we are fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, swindlers, etc.) and the state of grace (those who no longer view ourselves that way but as washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God) strikes at the vitals of religion.

**The Remedy for the Allegations Against TE Johnson**

We request an investigation into the aforementioned allegations against TE Johnson. If the investigation raises a strong presumption of guilt, Missouri Presbytery is obligated to institute judicial process against TE Johnson in accordance with BCO 31-2. This request is made with the conviction that this teaching error of TE Johnson strikes against the peace, unity and purity of the Church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.

We request that when Missouri Presbytery concludes its investigation that it inform Southeast Alabama Presbytery of its disposition and outcome.

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5 See TE Johnson’s interview with Cross Politic on July 15, 2018; his sermon entitled “Testimony of a Unicorn” at Memorial Presbyterian Church on May 19, 2019; his article published by Christianity Today entitled “I Used to Hide My Shame: Now I Take Shelter Under the Gospel” dated May 20, 2019; and his speech on the floor of the 47th PCA General Assembly on June 27, 2019 in Dallas, Texas.
6 See TE Johnson’s interview with Cross Politic on July 15, 2018.
Attachment B
(Overture 25 to 48th General Assembly)

To Our Fathers and Brothers of Missouri Presbytery,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are thankful for you in Him, and we are filled with grateful joy that because of the redemptive work of His life, death, and resurrection, hell-deserving sinners like us have been saved, forgiven, and declared righteous in the sight of Almighty God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

In your letter to us, you stated: “We are thankful for both your concern for and commitment to protecting the peace and purity of the church by sharing concerns in a way that honors the relationship between us as fathers and brothers in Christ.” We wholeheartedly agree with you that this should be our goal, and likewise we are thankful to you for communicating with us in that manner as well. Speaking of the relationship of Missouri Presbytery (MOP) to Southeast Alabama Presbytery (SEAL) and other courts of the church, you have said: “We believe we need each other, and so we invite our brothers in these courts to work with us as we continue to think, pray, and reason together. We all need to do it with mutual trust…” We heartily agree with you on this, brothers. We love you. We need you. And we want to continue to think, pray, and reason together with you.

In that spirit, SEAL would like to respond to MOP’s communication to SEAL. To make it clear for those who may not know, in August 2019, SEAL sent a Report to MOP entitled, “A Report to Missouri Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America to Request Investigation of Teaching Elder Greg Johnson” (SEAL’s Report may be found in the Appendix to this letter). The reason for SEAL’s Report was to express its concern over the teaching of Pastor Greg Johnson, a teaching elder (TE) who is a member of MOP. In response to SEAL’s request, MOP has completed an investigation of TE Johnson and has found no strong presumption of guilt. Again, for those who may not know, according to the PCA Book of Church Order, this was not a trial. This was an investigation by MOP to determine whether or not it would institute process and undertake a trial. MOP has decided not to do so and has written to SEAL (as well as to three other courts who also sent letters requesting investigation). MOP’s response to SEAL is entitled, “Missouri Presbytery Ad Hoc Committee to Respond to Memorial Presbyterian Church: Report of Its BCO 31-2 Investigation of TE Greg Johnson.”

We know that MOP will join with SEAL in affirming that not all conflict among believers is inappropriate. In fact, faithfulness will sometimes require godly conflict. If a Christian observes teaching that is false, dangerous, and injurious to the peace and purity of the church, he has an obligation to speak up. Though some will undoubtedly misinterpret his intentions or disagree with him—and though this will bring him into a conflict of sorts—he has this responsibility nonetheless. This is true even when it means contradicting a dear brother in

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8 MOP Report, 90.
Christ with whom one would love to enjoy time of fellowship and breaking bread together. TE Johnson is a dear brother in Christ—in fact, because he is such—we believe we have an obligation to speak up for the peace and purity of the church.

Though we have sought to have this discussion privately between SEAL and MOP as presbyteries, given that MOP is publishing its response to SEAL online, SEAL has decided to make this an open letter.9

**Allegation #1: On Identifying as a “Gay” or Homosexual Christian or as a Homosexual**

In its Report to SEAL, MOP summarizes our first allegation in this way: “By Self-identifying as a Same-Sex-Attracted Man TE Johnson Compromises and Dishonors His Identity in Christ.”10 However, SEAL’s allegation was and is actually different than as interpreted by MOP. As we stated in our Report: “TE Greg Johnson conflates our confessional categories of the state of sin and the state of grace in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that it is acceptable to identify as a “gay” or homosexual Christian.” The point is simple: We believe it is unbiblical and contrary to our confession for a believer to conceive of himself as a “gay” or homosexual Christian or as a homosexual.

MOP does not dispute that TE Johnson does teach and preach that this is acceptable for believers to do. What MOP disputes is that this teaching is unbiblical and unconfessional. Therefore, in response to this allegation, MOP goes into extensive discussion about how SEAL seems to assume that “identity” must be used in an “aspirational” sense to represent the kind of person one aspires to be—and that that must be why we are against believers thinking of themselves as homosexuals.11 MOP states: “they [SEAL] see it as having only an aspirational sense (i.e., as naming what am I aiming to be and who I love most, etc.).”12 However, SEAL does not argue along these lines. Where does SEAL say that those who think of themselves as homosexuals are doing so because they aspire to be that kind of person? We do not hold that position.

Furthermore, MOP says: “we do not believe that [the aspirational sense of ‘identity’] is how the term ‘identity’ is always used in our time.”13 MOP continues: “Great care should be taken not to lay down precise rules for how the abstract English word ‘identity’ must be used and must not be used by Christians…” (emphasis original).14 However, SEAL’s argument is not based on how the term “identity” is used in our time. We do not make appeals to “abstract” notions of identity. Rather, our argument is based upon the concrete, clear teaching of Scripture about how believers are to conceive of themselves and identify themselves.

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9 SEAL privately sent its Report to MOP in August 2019, purposely making sure not to publish it online to give MOP time to read and respond to SEAL’s Report. Now, basically one year later (August 2020), MOP is responding to SEAL—but not in a similarly private way. Given that MOP has made its response public, SEAL is making this letter public.
10 MOP Report, 20.
11 MOP Report, 21.
12 MOP Report, 60.
13 MOP Report, 22.
14 MOP Report, 22.
As TE Johnson himself recognizes, there is a distinction between “building one’s identity on” something and “identifying as” something. He says: “In numerous reports making their way back to us, however, we are hearing a confusion of two different (but similar sounding) concepts. Building your identity on something is different from identifying with something.

Many Revoice presenters identify as same-sex-attracted. They are not building their identity on same-sex attraction.” Like TE Johnson, we would make this distinction. The difference is that whereas he believes building one’s identity on homosexuality is not acceptable and the identifying as a homosexual is acceptable, SEAL’s argument is that both are unacceptable.

One of TE Johnson’s recurring arguments for such a position is that people do the same with the sin of drunkenness. He says: “Even though drunkenness is a sin, a Christian who is 18 years sober may still identify as an alcoholic, but his sobriety tells you he is not building his identity on alcohol or drunkenness. Quite the opposite. Alcoholism is just a label he uses for a weakness he experiences.” That is not the way Scripture speaks. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (NASB).

Whereas TE Johnson says the believer who has not had a sip of alcohol for 18 years is a drunkard (what secular culture calls an “alcoholic”), the Bible says the Christian who has abstained all of those years (or even the believer who has struggled and given into temptation multiple times and has repented and borne fruit of repentance) was a drunkard. “Such were some of you.” For the Christian, that is not who you are anymore. While TE Johnson may appeal to the language of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in this regard, we are appealing to the language of Scripture. And we urge him to be biblical in his theological description of those who struggle with drunkenness but also of those who struggle with homosexuality.

MOP seems to agree with SEAL in one respect: that 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (quoted above) is indeed about how Christians are to conceive of themselves. Explaining this text, MOP says that Paul is proclaiming to believers “their new status” and is saying the Christian “is to think of himself” that way. If one recognizes that is what Paul is teaching, then one should also recognize—given the contrast in the text—that he is telling us no longer to think of ourselves and conceive of ourselves as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, etc. Drunkards and homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God, “and such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:11). It is clear in the text that we are not only to think of ourselves according to our new status (in Christ) but we also are to think of ourselves as no longer holding our old status (adulterers, drunkards, homosexuals, thieves, etc.). MOP admits this passage is speaking about what our self-conception should
be; but it is clear that it also tells us what our self-conception should not be. SEAL is simply pointing out that Christians need to be consistent on this point. A believer must not have a self-conception as a homosexual; he is to have a self-conception as one who is in Christ.

To the question of why a believer would self-identify or think of himself as a homosexual Christian, MOP states: “In the interest of transparency. And transparency to what end? To the end of being known in their weakness and not having to live secretively within the body of Christ; but even more importantly, perhaps, to live transparently for the sake of others…”

We want to be clear that SEAL’s objection most certainly is not to Christians going public with their struggles or openly sharing their sins with others. We agree that it is good to be known in one’s weakness and to not have to live secretively within the body of Christ. Our contention is simply that we must be biblical and confessional in our theological description of our struggles. Our objection is not to a believer sharing that struggle with homosexuality but to a Christian identifying as a homosexual (or as a homosexual Christian).

In defense of his view, TE Johnson says: “Many a drunkard had found great freedom by taking that first step and saying, ‘I’m an alcoholic.’” Most everyone knows where the world teaches this (AA); but where does Scripture teach this? The apostle Paul seems to say the opposite. The way forward is not to say, “I am a drunkard,” but to repent and trust in Christ and realize ever more deeply: “I was a drunkard, but I was washed, I was sanctified, I was justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. This sin need not have dominion over me anymore, since I am not under law but under grace!”

MOP is very interested in restricting the application of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 only to outward actions and not to inward sins. With reference to this passage, MOP says: “the context clearly points to bad behavior [emphasis original]. Those who are ‘unrighteous’ are not simply those who are feeling the pull of their sinful flesh, the immoral bent of their own soul, but people who are misbehaving in one way or another, as the list of nouns that follows demonstrates (‘adulterers’ = those people who commit adultery) [emphasis original].”

SEAL has no objection to consideration of this text as primarily about actions. However, a few responses are in order. First, what about “the covetous” (1 Cor. 6:10)? While this certainly could refer to those who engage in greedy behavior (and we have no problem with that interpretation), is that absolutely clear from the text? Is it not also possible “the covetous” refers to the internal sin of coveting or greed? Understanding this text to be speaking primarily of behaviors is fine, but we do question why one should be so insistent that it must be.

Second, SEAL does not deny the technical meaning (of most if not all) of the words used for the sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 does refer to bad behaviors: Fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, drunkenness, etc. Technically, the word “drunkard” means someone who engaged in the behavior of being habitually drunk; the word “effeminate” means the passive partner in a homosexual act; the word “homosexual” means the active

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18 MOP Report, 28.
19 MOP Report, 27.
20 MOP Report, 53.
partner in a homosexual act. But this raises a question for TE Johnson’s position. He holds:
(1) that a Christian who does not engage in the behavior of drunkenness is a drunkard
(alcoholic) and (2) that a believer who does not engage in homosexual behavior can conceive
of himself as a homosexual. But if we are going only with the most technical meaning and
these words are exclusively about the act, how can who one has never engaged in such
behavior (or is not currently engaging in such behavior) call himself those things? That
Christian is not a drunkard or a homosexual or a thief or an adulterer or an idolater (because
he is not engaging in the act, he only has the inward temptation or inner sin).

Third, we must make a distinction between speaking purely in terms of God’s Law (apart from
Christ) and speaking as a Christian (in Christ). Speaking purely in terms of God’s Law, if one
has ever committed the act of murder or adultery or homosexuality or blasphemy or theft or
has ever lied—even once—then he is a murderer, an adulterer, a homosexual, a blasphemer,
a thief, or a liar. Speaking purely in terms of God’s Law, even if one has not committed the
act but has ever committed the sin in his heart (even once)—or if he simply experiences
unchosen desires to do so—before the Law of God, strictly speaking, that person too is a
murderer, an adulterer, a homosexual, a blasphemer, a thief, or a liar. This of course means
that speaking purely in terms of God’s Law (apart from Christ), everyone is condemned either
as a murderer, a liar, a blasphemer, an adulterer, a homosexual, a thief, or so on and so forth.
But there is a difference between speaking purely in terms of God’s Law and speaking as a
Christian (as someone who is in Christ). And that is what Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians 6:9-
11. He makes “the turn” to speak about who one is as a Christian, as someone who is in
Christ. He is no longer to consider himself as a murderer, a liar, an adulterer, a homosexual,
a thief, or a blasphemer. He is no longer to consider himself purely in terms of God’s Law
apart from Christ. “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified,
but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

MOP says of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “The conclusion seems clear to us: Those things Paul lists
here, things which will disqualify a person from inheriting the Kingdom of God when it comes
in its fullness, are what the WCF VI.5 calls ‘actual sins,’ sinful external acts animated by the
decision to give in to the inner impulses of what the Apostle Paul calls the sinful flesh
(Galatians 5:13-26), or what the WCF VI.5 calls the (inner) ‘motions’ or dispositions of our
‘corrupted nature’ (WCF VI.3, 5)” (emphasis ours).21 Though they recognize that inner sins
earn us damnation as well, MOP claims in this passage that Paul is teaching exclusively that
sinful behaviors are what disqualify people from inheriting the kingdom. This seems to be a
strained reading of the text. Making such a sharp distinction (to the degree that there is
absolutely no application to the internal) does not appear to be Paul’s primary point.

MOP states: “it is arbitrary to claim that Christians can only self-identify as sinners in general
and not in a way that names any particular inclination toward sin.”22 Obviously, all sides
agree that believers should name their particular inclinations toward sin. What MOP is
referring to as “arbitrary” is our statement in SEAL’s Report: “For this reason, while of course
we are (and can say we are) sinners (1 Tim. 1:12-16), we are no longer to identify ourselves

21 MOP Report, 53.
22 MOP Report, 62.
with our specific sins. ‘Such were some of you’ (1 Cor. 6:9-11). ‘Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent… I received mercy… in Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 1:13-14).”

Why is this arbitrary? If SEAL were randomly, haphazardly deciding how to conceive of ourselves, that would be arbitrary. But we do not believe that we get to decide our self-conception based on our own personal preferences or on what the culture says but rather based on what Scripture says (which is why we explicitly based everything we said on the Bible). What seems arbitrary to us is an unwillingness to recognize that two things can be true at one time: (1) The Bible clearly speaks of the legitimacy of believers self-identifying as chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:12-16); (2) the Bible just as clearly speaks of the illegitimacy of Christians having a self-conception as drunkards, homosexuals, thieves, etc. It seems clear to us that while we are (and can say we are) sinners, we are no longer to identify ourselves with our specific sins. SEAL does not believe one can pick and choose which passages he wants to follow; we must heed them all.

We are puzzled by exactly whom MOP is arguing against when they say: “Any suggestion that the past tense [in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11] implies that the desires, inclinations, and impulses that spawned the sinful behaviors they had abandoned were taken away by the Spirit of God upon their conversion is without grounds [emphasis original].” Who is making that suggestion? SEAL does not believe that and has nowhere said that. MOP says one’s conversion long ago “does not imply at all that the Lord had delivered” that person “from their homosexual inclinations; such a conclusion is being read into the text, not out of it” (emphasis original).

Who is reading that into the text? SEAL does not claim that Christians are incapable of struggling with homosexual inclinations (or even the behavior for that matter).

But MOP goes on like this: “Galatians chapter 5 is proof positive that apostolic teaching acknowledged that the inclination toward sin (which Paul personifies as ‘the flesh’), that influence on us of our sin-infected, ‘corrupted nature’ (to use the language of our confessional Standards), remains with us till we die.” Who is denying that? SEAL does not. MOP continues: “we do not see how Paul’s admonition [in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11] would forbid a justified, cleansed Christian from confessing as his own his struggles and inclinations, his warfare with sinful desires—that remain even now, on this side of conversion” (emphasis original). Who is MOP arguing against here? Again, along these lines, MOP states: “Note the realism in what the Westminster Standards” says when it refers to how we are “wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body”—and “Consider the realism in the Larger Catechism” when it says “The imperfection of sanctification in believers ariseth from the remnants of sin abiding in every part of them.” Who is not affirming that?

We will simply close out this section by restating our first allegation and giving an extended quotation from our Report to MOP. The allegation is that TE Johnson conflates our

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24 MOP Report, 54.
25 MOP Report, 54.
26 MOP Report, 54.
27 MOP Report, 55.
28 MOP Report, 60-61.
confessional categories of the *state of sin* and the *state of grace* in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that it is acceptable to identify as a “gay” or homosexual Christian.

The Westminster Standards also make a categorical distinction between the “state of sin” and the “state of grace” (*WCF* 9.3-4)… Ever since the Fall, mankind is naturally in the “state of sin” in which we have lost all ability to will and to do any spiritual good and are slaves to the penalty, guilt, and power of sin (*WCF* 9.3). Therefore, in this state, our sin defines who we are, and we can rightly conceive of ourselves and label ourselves as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers (1 Cor. 6:9-10). In the state of sin, that is how we are to consider ourselves and identify ourselves because we are slaves to sin.

When the Holy Spirit works faith in us, uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling, we are translated into the “state of grace” (*WCF* 9.4; *WSC* 30) and partake of the benefits of justification, adoption, and sanctification (*WSC* 30-32). In this state, while we do not perfectly or only will that which is good but also that which is evil (due to our remaining corruption), we are freed from bondage to sin and by grace are enabled freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good (*WCF* 9.4).

The conversion from the state of sin to the state of grace is so dramatic and the distinction between the two so vast that we no longer are to conceive of ourselves and label ourselves as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Scripture says such will not inherit the kingdom of God, “and such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In the state of grace, you no longer identify that way (e.g. as a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, etc.). Why? “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Because of our union with Christ, our specific sins no longer define who we are.

Obviously, due to remaining corruption, we can still speak of ourselves as sinners in the present tense (1 Tim. 1:12-16) as those who continue to experience and battle with the presence and pollution of sin (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14-25) and even at times feel as though we are enslaved to sin (Rom. 7:14). However, the truth is that we are no longer slaves to sin, having been freed from slavery to its guilt (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7), its penalty (Gal. 3:13), and its power (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rom. 6:6). For this reason, while of course we are (and can say we are) sinners (1 Tim. 1:12-16), we are no longer to identify ourselves with our specific sins. “Such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11). “Though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent… I received mercy… in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:13-14).
Instead of considering ourselves as drunkards or adulterers or homosexuals, we are commanded to have a different self-conception: “You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). This does not mean that Christians do not continue to struggle with sin all their life long. It means that such a believer ought not consider himself a drunkard Christian or an adulterer Christian or a homosexual Christian but rather a Christian who struggles with the temptation to drunkenness, adultery, or homosexuality (and who is repentant when he succumbs to such temptations).

In contradiction to our confessional understanding of Scripture, TE Johnson teaches that it is acceptable to identify as a (celibate) homosexual Christian. In other words, while Scripture says, “Homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you”—TE Johnson seems to say “Homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God, and such are some of you.” This is a conflation of the state of sin and the state of grace…this conflation of the state of sin (when we could say we are fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, swindlers, etc.) and the state of grace (those who no longer view ourselves that way but as washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God) strikes at the vitals of religion.

Allegation #2: On the Idea That at Least Some Aspect of “Gay” or Homosexual Orientation Is Non-sinful (Yet Due to the Fall)

MOP summarizes our second allegation in this way: “TE Johnson Denies That Same-Sex Attraction Is Sinful.” For the record, this is most certainly not SEAL’s position. In another place, MOP summarizes our allegation by saying that SEAL has “alleged” that TE Johnson reject[s] the claim that the fallen condition of living with homoerotic desire is ‘sin,’ again, this is most emphatically not what SEAL is saying. Moreover, MOP says that SEAL claims TE Johnson denies that “the condition of living with enduring patterns of same-sex desire” is sinful. That is not our position. In the addendum to this letter, one can read our Report to MOP and will see that nowhere does SEAL claim that TE Johnson says same-sex attraction or homosexual desire or enduring patterns of homosexual desire is non-sinful. We are not at all surprised that MOP rejected that allegation because SEAL rejects it as well! However, that was not our allegation.

So what was and is our claim? It is not about homosexual desire or lust being non-sinful (we recognize TE Johnson affirms those are sinful); rather, it is about there being at least some aspect of homosexual orientation which is non-sinful. One can distinguish between homosexual desire and homosexual orientation—the latter being broader than the former. TE Johnson is fine with conceiving of homosexual orientation as inclusive of homosexual desire.

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29 SEAL Report, 3-5.
30 MOP Report, 8.
31 MOP Report, 10.
32 MOP Report, 9.
(which we recognize he affirms is sinful) but also as inclusive of “fallen biology” which, of course, is non-sinful yet due to the Fall. That is the problem we are pointing out in this second allegation.

SEAL has no issue recognizing—as TE Johnson says—that “fallen nature” (which he also refers to as “fallen biology”) and “fallen nurture” can make one more tempted toward certain sins. It may be that this is the case with homosexuality (or as TE Johnson puts it, “homosexual orientation”). The problem comes when TE Johnson speaks of fallen biology not just as a hardship that creates temptations to homosexuality or homosexual orientation but as an aspect of homosexual orientation. TE Johnson believes it is legitimate to conceive of such “fallen biology” as a “partial aspect” of homosexual orientation. According to TE Johnson, there may be “compelling evidence that partial aspects of orientation may be proved to be genetic and/or physiological.” In this vein, he has publicly written that though he does not believe he was “born gay,” “homosexual orientation” can consist of a biological aspect: “According to twin studies, an inborn factor accounts at most 31-39% of homosexual orientation” (emphasis original). It is our understanding that TE Johnson believes the following three points: (1) “Inborn”/ biological characteristics are non-sinful. (2) Such fallen biological characteristics can legitimately be considered an “aspect” of “homosexual orientation.” (3) Therefore, it can be said there is something non-sinful (yet fallen) about homosexual orientation.

#1 is absolutely true: Fallen inborn or biological or genetic characteristics are not sinful. As TE Johnson puts it, fallen biology is “morally neutral, like a birth defect.” But #2 is unbiblical. If true, it would mean there is something non-sinful yet fallen about homosexual orientation or homosexuality, but this violates Scripture and our confession. As we stated in our Report:

> It appears that TE Johnson is assuming a premise such as the following: *Homosexual or “gay” orientation is a category which includes homosexual lust (which is sinful and can lead to sinful actions) but is broader than homosexual lust and includes “homosexual” biology, “homosexual” sociology, and/or other non-sinful yet fallen components of homosexuality.*

However, this premise contradicts Scripture: Homosexuality is a term that is never used in Scripture to refer to our broken, fallen biology or sociology or to any other non-sinful aspect of our condition but is always and only used to refer to sin. Even granting that one’s fallen biology and/or sociology can make one more prone or more tempted toward homosexual desire (which is sin) or

33 MOP Report, 50.
34 MOP Report, 50.
35 MOP Report, 50.
36 MOP Report, 50.
38 MOP Report, 50.
homosexual behavior (which is sin), there is no biblical or confessional basis for referring to this fallen biology/sociology as itself “homosexual.”

Given that TE Johnson believes it is okay to conceive of homosexual orientation as inclusive of fallen biology (something non-sinful yet due to the Fall), it is not surprising that he would compare identifying as “gay” or as a homosexual with calling oneself a paraplegic or infertile or a cancer survivor. Those are examples of fallen biology (something non-sinful yet due to the Fall). That is not to say we know this was a factor that affected TE Johnson’s willingness to compare homosexual orientation to paraplegia, infertility, or cancer, but that is not the point. The fact is: Given his view, one would be absolutely free to say those are in the same category. Unless, of course, his view is wrong (as we contend).

Furthermore, if—as TE Johnson believes—it is okay to conceive of homosexual orientation as inclusive of fallen biology, then one cannot simply make a blanket statement that people should repent of homosexual orientation. They can repent of aspects of homosexual orientation (such as same-sex attraction or homosexual desire or homosexual lust), but one cannot say wholesale that people must repent of homosexual orientation.

This brings us to TE Johnson’s CrossPolitic interview: In an interview which was specifically about Christians who struggle with “same-sex attraction,” “homosexuality,” being “gay,” and “gay” or homosexual “orientation,” the interviewers kept referring to those who fight such battles as struggling with sin. TE Johnson pushes back on precisely this point, saying: “One thing—you keep saying sins. Now, you’re talking about—when you’re talking about somebody who struggles with same-sex attraction... They have a condition. Same-sex attraction is not the same as then actively lusting with their mind. It’s not the same obviously as acting it out either... And the question for the Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction is what term for non-straight are they allowed to use?—because that’s what they’re talking about. They’re not talking about sin, they’re talking about fallleness.”

Later in the interview, TE Johnson made other statements along these lines, saying: “Yea, I’m just flabbergasted that somebody would actually say that the fallen condition itself is a sin.” “When you tell somebody, when you tell them that they should be feeling, you know, massive guilt and shame over their orientation and they need to repent of that—how do you repent of an orientation?... Now, if it is fallen for you to find other women sexually attractive—okay, I understand how you repent of lusting after them, I don’t understand how you repent of being attracted to women other than your wife... what I’m hearing is you judging brothers for not repenting of something that can’t be repented of. You can resist it. You can flee it.”

41 CrossPolitic interview, 19:00-23:12.
42 CrossPolitic interview, 19:00-23:12.
At one point, the interviewer asks TE Johnson, “Let me ask you this way. You said you’re asking us to repent of something, or asking them to repent of something, that they can’t repent of. What is that? What is that?”—and “What can’t they repent of?”—to which TE Johnson responds: “An attraction. You can repent of a lust, because that’s a choice, but can you repent of an attraction?”

When the interviewer says that the Revoice Conference “is not clearly identifying this sin as an abomination, a perversion, a vile affection, degrading passion, it’s not identifying the shame of it clearly” and says that those at the Revoice Conference are wanting to be identified with this sin, TE Johnson responds: “Because they’re distinguishing. They’re making distinctions that you’re not making though. You know, when somebody talks about same-sex attraction, they’re distinguishing that from a choice to lust… Well, they’re trying to separate the act from the orientation.”

While TE Johnson should be very understanding toward those who come away from this interview thinking that he does believe same-sex attraction is non-sinful, that is not the position of SEAL. That is not what our Report to MOP says. But how does TE Johnson explain what he said in the interview? Well, the Westminster Confession of Faith makes a distinction between original sin and actual sin (WCF 6.4). The Confession also makes a distinction between general repentance and particular repentance (WCF 15.5). How does TE Johnson account for what he said in the interview? He says that he was pointing out that same-sex attraction is not “a sin” (i.e. it is not actual sin) but it is “sin” (i.e. it is original sin or indwelling sin). Furthermore, TE Johnson says he was pointing out that because homosexual desire is not “a sin,” one cannot engage in “particular repentance” for it, but given that it is “sin” one can engage in “general repentance” for it.

SEAL absolutely believes TE Johnson’s explanation that that is what he meant to say. In the heat of the moment, any of us can misspeak. Unfortunately, what is described above is not what TE Johnson said in the interview. Instead, he simply stated: It “can’t be repented of” and “They’re not talking about sin, they’re talking about fallenness.” Though no one could

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46 One can even distinguish this further as TE Johnson does into original sin, indwelling sin, and actual sin. According to the Confession, original sin is an “original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil” (WCF 6.4). Actual sins are all those “actual transgressions” which “proceed” from original sin (WCF 6.4). The Confession also states: “This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin” (WCF 6.5). TE Johnson refers to “the motions thereof” as indwelling sin. On page 11 of the MOP Report, TE Johnson states: “By desire, do we mean the potential within my heart to notice a good looking man and feel myself sexually attracted to him? That’s what WCF calls ‘original corruption’ (6.4).” “By desire, do we mean the internal temptation I feel to lust? My best understanding is that that’s what WCF 6 calls ‘the motions of’ our ‘corrupted nature’ (which is also sometimes called indwelling sin)—we might call it inner temptation.” “By desire, do we mean actually lusting, coveting or pining after someone, or storing their image in our minds for later retrieval? In other words, is this something volitional or intentional? These are what WCF 6.6 calls ‘actual’ sins.”
47 MOP Report, 10.
48 MOP Report, 15.
come away from that interview thinking TE Johnson believes same-sex attraction (or as MOP puts it, homosexual desire) is sinful and can be repented of, SEAL is completely willing to grant that what he meant was it is sin (original or indwelling), not just falleness—and you can repent of it (in terms of general repentance).

The problem that remains is that TE Johnson did not speak merely of same-sex attraction or homosexual desire (which we know from above he views as sinful in one way or another); he also spoke of homosexual orientation (which we know from above he believes can be inclusive of fallen biology). On the view of one such as TE Johnson who thinks it is legitimate to conceive of at least some aspect (e.g. fallen biology) of homosexual orientation as non-sinful yet fallen, what would be wrong about what he said in that interview? In that case, it would be perfectly legitimate to say: “When you tell somebody, when you tell them that they should be feeling, you know, massive guilt and shame over their orientation and they need to repent of that—how do you repent of an orientation?”—or, “They’re not talking about sin, they’re talking about falleness.” If homosexual orientation is inclusive of fallen biology: (1) One is free to speak of one’s “gay” orientation as fallen yet non-sinful (if one is referring to the biological aspect of his orientation). (2) One is free to say he cannot repent of his homosexual orientation (if one is referring to the biological aspect of his orientation)—either with particular or general repentance. That is not to claim we know this was a factor that affected TE Johnson’s way of expressing himself in the interview, but that is not the point. The fact is: Given his view, one would be absolutely free to make such statements. Unless, of course, his view is wrong (as we contend).

We will simply close out this section by restating our second allegation and giving an extended quotation from our Report to MOP. The allegation is that TE Johnson conflates our confessional categories of sin and misery in a way that contradicts our confession by teaching that homosexual or “gay” orientation (at least some aspect of it) is non-sinful yet due to the Fall.

In speaking of the estate into which the Fall has brought mankind, the Westminster Standards make a categorical distinction between “sin” and “misery” (WCF 6.6; WSC 17; WLC 23). While both are aspects of the Fall, “sin” is any lack of conformity to or transgression of the law of God (WSC 14; 1 John 3:4) and is therefore distinct from “all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal” (WCF 6.6). While ultimately due to Adam’s sin (for which we are all held guilty), the misery of “sufferings,” “tribulations,” and “trials” can be the result of our own personal sin or the result of living in a fallen world (Rom. 8:18; John 16:33; James 1:2).

Examples of misery (suffering or trial) which are caused not by personal sin but simply due to living in a fallen world are fallen biology/physiology (e.g. infertility, paraplegia, or cancer) and fallen sociology/nurture (e.g. being sinned against in marriage). There is no sense in which infertility, paraplegia, cancer, or being sinned against are one’s sin; these conditions fit under the category of misery (they are non-sinful yet due to the Fall).
In contrast to those conditions, homosexuality is a violation of the seventh commandment and is always and only portrayed in Scripture as sinful (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Gen. 18:20-19:11; Lev. 18:22 & 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; WLC 139). The term homosexuality (or its cognates) is never used in Scripture or our confession to refer to a condition which is non-sinful yet due to the Fall.

In sharp contrast to infertility or paraplegia or cancer (or being sinned against), homosexuality fits under the category of one’s sin rather than under the category of misery. The Bible never says “neither paraplegics nor the infertile nor the cancerous (nor those who have been sinned against) will inherit the kingdom of God, and such were some of you.” However, it does say neither “effeminate, nor homosexuals… will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:9-11 NASB).

In contradiction to our confessional understanding of Scripture, TE Johnson treats “gayness” or homosexuality (at least some aspect of it) as fitting in the same category as conditions such as paraplegia or infertility or cancer or being sinned against in marriage. This is a categorical error that strikes at the vitals of religion.

In an interview, TE Johnson states: [1] That being “gay” or having a homosexual or “gay orientation” is a “condition” which is distinct from homosexual lust, is a “fallen condition,” and at least some aspect of it is not “sin.” [2] That this fallen condition of homosexual orientation (at least some aspect of it) is akin to or in the same category as “a really difficult, empty feeling marriage” (being sinned against, fallen nurture) or “when they have cancer” (fallen biology). [3] That one may identify as a “gay” Christian because there is nothing wrong with identifying as a “cancer survivor” Christian.

It appears that TE Johnson is assuming a premise such as the following: *Homosexual or “gay” orientation is a category which includes homosexual lust (which is sinful and can lead to sinful actions) but is broader than homosexual lust and includes “homosexual” biology, “homosexual” sociology, and/or other non-sinful yet fallen components of homosexuality.*

However, this premise contradicts Scripture: Homosexuality is a term that is never used in Scripture to refer to our broken, fallen biology or sociology or to any other non-sinful aspect of our condition but is always and only used to refer to sin. Even granting that one’s fallen biology and/or sociology can make one more prone or more tempted toward homosexual desire (which is sin) or homosexual behavior (which is sin), there is no biblical or confessional basis for referring to this fallen biology/sociology as itself “homosexual”… his conflation of sin and misery is a categorical error that strikes at the vitals of religion.  

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49 SEAL Report, 1-3.
Fathers and brothers of MOP, SEAL does not take any pleasure in disagreeing with our dear brother TE Johnson. Nevertheless, because we believe these two teachings of TE Johnson contradict God’s Word as confessed in the Westminster Standards and are injurious to the peace and purity of the church, we must speak up. Indeed, if you believe that someone is in that kind of error Scripturally speaking, it would be unloving if you did not point it out. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy” (Proverbs 27:6).

We do not write to you out of any sense of superiority or any sense that we have “arrived” or any sense that we are better than you. We know that you believe the same thing about yourself when you have moments that you have to speak up. We are foul, wretched, rotten, evil sinners who are redeemed by the blood of Christ. And so we close as we opened reaffirming that we need each other. We invite you to work with us, to pray with us, and to reason together. We call upon you, in brotherly love, to reconsider the teaching of TE Johnson as unbiblical and unconfessional on the two specific points we have mentioned. We plead with you to not allow TE Johnson to propagate these teachings and to urge him to change his views. Fathers and brothers, we reach out to you because we are not your enemies; we are your friends. And real friends speak the truth in love. As imperfect and defiled by sin as we are, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:14). We rejoice that in spite of our differences as family in Christ, we share this aim with you and we look forward to fellowshipping you. May God grant His lavish blessing to Missouri Presbytery, to the Presbyterian Church in America, and to His broader church in this world.

In the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord,
Southeast Alabama Presbytery