

I will never forget my first thought on June 26, 2016 – the day I learned of the Supreme Court decision guaranteeing same-sex couples the right to marry under the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. *How does this decision align with the tenets of Catholic faith?* As a student at a Catholic university, I had previously found it difficult to reconcile media viewpoints, religious beliefs, and my own personal ideas on same-sex relations. The *Obergefell v. Hodges* case only augmented this personal struggle. Therefore, a few months later, when my Theology professor assigned a semester research project on our preference of Biblical topic, my choice was simple: Catholic arguments against homosexuality.

Because of the sheer magnitude of this subject, I knew I should narrow my focus, so I chose the two most prominent religious condemnations of homosexuality, found in the book of Leviticus. “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22). “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, they have committed an abomination; the two of them shall be put to death; their bloodguilt is upon them” (Leviticus 20:13). Although my prior knowledge on the subject was limited, I was still aware of the significant debate that existed on both sides of this topic. Creating a truly objective argument demanded that this previous exposure and my own personal beliefs did not affect my research and critical analysis. To achieve this goal, I carefully ensured throughout the entire process that no personal bias tainted my work.

I began my research by focusing on literary commentaries on the book of Leviticus, in order to build a solid foundation for my project. However, these resources provided an overwhelming amount of information that became difficult to process and organize. To help consolidate this material, I turned to the Hesburgh Library’s online research tool, OneSearch. This search engine allowed me to limit results to specific criteria of my choosing. One key

resource that I found using this system was Jacob Milgrom's *Leviticus 17-22*, which tied together the crucial points from many other sources into a comprehensive commentary on the book. In particular, it provided a thorough description of the distinct P and H sources making up Leviticus— the presence of which would come to serve as a substantial basis for my argument. Milgrom's work proved obscure and difficult to access, but I was able to find it in the Hesburgh Library Reference Collection, where it could be viewed but not checked out. As I was unfamiliar with this particular section of the library, I turned to the Hesburgh Library staff for directions. They were eager not only to introduce me to the Reference Collection, but also to provide advice on how to best use Milgrom's commentary to structure my paper.

The information found in *Leviticus 17-22* soon became an integral part of my work, and so I spent many hours in the Reference Collection, reading this source and combining it with other information as well. Many of these other written sources turned out to be quite dated, approaching nearly twenty or thirty years old. Because of the time period in which they were written, these critiques did not fully address the topic of homosexuality in Leviticus, and I realized that I needed more recent research to fully analyze this subject. I once again turned to the OneSearch engine, which introduced me to various journal articles and other electronic sources relevant to my research. The Hesburgh Library System provides Notre Dame students with access to such academic works through online databases such as Academic Search Premier and JSTOR, permitting me to obtain and peruse these references for free.

Through this research, I was presented with a large amount of information about Leviticus. However, most of the sources I encountered were very one-sided; I could not find a source fully addressing the homosexuality laws of the book. Although this absence emphasized the uniqueness of my focus, it frustrated me and left me wondering how to proceed with my

argument. In order to make sure I was not missing a key source, I went to the circulation desk at the library and spoke with a research librarian there. After searching the Hesburgh Libraries catalog, she assured me that I had indeed fully explored the subject and encouraged me to begin analyzing the information and drawing my own conclusions. With this support, and using the research I performed through the library, I was able to produce my argument and form an objective essay on Leviticus.

By the end of my project, I had directly referenced twenty sources and spent time consulting at least ten more. My critical analysis of these works led me to draw a conclusion contradictory to the typical Catholic viewpoint against homosexuality – a bold move in an Introductory Theology course. However, my thorough research served as solid and unquestionable support for this stance, proving that any other conclusion would have been flawed. The subject of homosexuality still proves to be a controversial and polarizing force, especially on Notre Dame campus. I know that one research project will not solve this issue, but I am grateful for the opportunity it afforded me for exploring the topic. My research investigation and subsequent analysis forced me to think far outside of my comfort zone, which allowed me to form and substantiate a truly objective position on homosexuality in Leviticus.