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GAY CHRISTIAN? A PROGRESSIVE COVENANTAL
RESPONSE TO DAVID GUSHEE, JAMES
BROWNSON, AND MATTHEW VINES

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GAY CHRISTIAN? A PROGRESSIVE COVENANTAL
RESPONSE TO DAVID GUSHEE, JAMES
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To Elise, my “weezel.”

The heart of her husband trusts in her (Prov 31:11 ESV)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANE	Ancient Near East
BCOT	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament
BDAG	Walter Bauer, William Fredrick Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>EBC</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
[NA ²⁸]	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland [28 th ed.]
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TMSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

PREFACE

This dissertation is an attempt to rightly divide the Word of God on a matter of critical importance to the church. First, I must first thank the God who graciously saved me. The Lord rescued me out of the miry bog of sin and death, uniting me to His Son, Jesus Christ, by faith and faith alone. The kingdom of God is advancing through the local church through weak people. In that regard, this dissertation is my weak attempt at giving glory to the Lord and providing a reasonable defense for the hope that is in me. I pray the Lord would see this work as an act of worship to Him and be glorified by it.

Secondly, I am thankful for two local churches that have shaped me deeply. In particular, I am thankful for Immanuel Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, and Holy City Church in Charleston, South Carolina. I am grateful for Immanuel in more ways than I can count. I am thankful for my brother-pastors there, who remain (from 600 miles away) models of godliness for me. I am thankful for Immanuel as that congregation has consistently prayed for its church plants and church planters. I have been sustained by the prayers of the saints during the years of balancing pastoral ministry and dissertation writing. I am thankful for the elders and saints at my local church, Holy City Church, on James Island. I knew that I had endured years pursuing advanced degrees and rigorous theological training in order to honor the Lord and to serve His church. It was not until we planted Holy City Church in 2017 could I finally see the faces of those people for whom I had worked and endured difficulty. I am thankful for Pastors Mark Timmons and Drew McFarland, two men who have served as consistent encouragements to me as I have written. To the Holy City saints, this dissertation is my attempt to teach you how you ought to rightly divide the Word of God. Holy City, I pray the Lord would use it to help us shine our light, seek our home, and share our hope with the people of Charleston.

I am thankful for my time at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am deeply indebted to my professor, supervisor, mentor, and friend—Dr. Stephen Wellum. I do not exaggerate when I say that Dr. Wellum has been the single greatest influence on how I read the Bible. His work has truly helped me to read the Bible on its own terms and its own categories. After years of having sat under, taught with, and graded for Dr. Wellum, I am only now beginning to realize the tremendous effect this godly man has had on how I think, read, and formulate theology. Dr. Wellum’s greatest love is for our Triune God, and he has always pushed me to think God’s thoughts after Him in order that I might serve the church and exalt Christ. This dissertation would not have been possible apart from his godly teaching and mentoring. Dr. Peter Gentry has opened my eyes to the storyline of Scripture and helped me to trace its unfolding through the progression of the biblical covenants. Whether it was his Old Testament lectures, conversations in the seminary locker room, or email dialogues, Dr. Gentry has always been a source of encouragement and commitment to the biblical text. Dr. Gentry is zealous for God’s name, and that truth has always been clear to me through his teaching and care. Dr. Gregg Allison has helped me, more than anyone else, to think and write in a scholarly fashion. Dr. Allison has consistently been a great help in improving my writing and has shown me that rigorous scholarship and love for the local church are not mutually exclusive. I would also like to thank my external reader, Dr. David W. Jones, for providing me with helpful critiques and feedback in this process. His ethics work on family and marriage have been helpful to me as I have sought to defend the traditional view of marriage.

Aubrey Sequeira has been the closest of friends to me over the past eight years. He has proofread, offered suggestions, provided helpful critiques, and been a major source of encouragement to me since we started seminary together in August 2010. Aubrey has been a friend who has stuck closer than a brother. Andy Morris has been a dear brother who has encouraged me as a church planter and pastor over the past several

years. When I have had a problem, Andy was almost always my first phone call. Andy has shown me what Christian courage looks like as he zealously shares the good news of the gospel in any location. I am thankful for the wisdom and (loving) insults of my dear friend, Ben Hedrick. Ben has illustrated for me what it means to think theologically about church administration and leadership. Ben is a big man with a bigger (new) heart, and his church systems and structures have always been his attempt to love the bride of Christ well. Though, at present, he loves to hate on my Clemson Tigers, I look forward to the new heavens and new earth where Ben will finally experience the taste of victory. What a victory that will be! Jonny Atkinson and Jones Ndzi are two international brother-scholar-pastors who have both been great sources of encouragement to me as they balance life, ministry, and academia. I look forward to working with them in the future in a variety of ways to make the name of Jesus famous. Ryan Fullerton has been a winsome, sharp, and wise pastor to me. Ryan has the greatest preaching ability of anyone I have heard or seen, but you would not know it from Ryan's humility. I aim to imitate his life.

Daddy, Mama, Haley (and Michael), Sarah, and Noah—I love you. You have all shown me a glimpse of heavenly realities that await me in God's family. You have been sources of strength to me that cannot be adequately expressed in words. Daddy, I am thankful for your love, care, and encouragement. Mama, I am thankful for a godly mom who always took me to church. I am living and walking with the Lord today, in large part, because of your faithfulness as my mama. I love y'all. Poppa and Lainey, you have both been wonderful encouragements to me as I worked on this labor of love. When the dissertation was more labor than love, you continued to keep my eyes on the prize. I am thankful to call you "family." I love you both.

I praise the Lord for our children—Elijah, Ella Grace, Julia, Aidan, Winton, and Anna. Our six children have helped me to understand how much my Heavenly Father loves me because of how much I love them. You have been patient with me as I have been a student (again) for these last eight years—each of you is so gracious. You are joys

to parent (even at bedtime!), and I pray unceasingly that my God would cause each of you to grow into a mighty oak of righteousness for His name's sake. Oh, how I pray that the Lord would be pleased to use all of our children to make His name famous throughout the world! Each of you is a great delight to me, and so very precious in my eyes. Always remember that you are much more important than Daddy's work. I pray God would give me decades (and the grace!) to father you well.

Far above all others at the seat of greatest honor is my wife, Elise Powell. You have known me and helped me in innumerable ways. You have endured much as I have been pulled in many directions over the past eight years, but you have always been my faithful help since we began this adventure together. You have been my greatest treasure, as well as the single greatest encouragement to me throughout this dissertation process. You have helped me through parenting, depression, autoimmune disease, and the fiery trials of pastoral ministry. I cannot adequately express how deeply I love you and how grateful I am for your life and faith. Your name should be on this work alongside mine, for without you, I would not have been able to do it. Our marriage has helped me to understand Christ's great love for me. I am zealous to defend marriage in part because of the joy I have had in it with you. Please consider my dedication of this work to you as a small token of my gratitude for your life and love. My heart trusts in you, my sweet "weezel."

Brian W. Powell

Charleston, South Carolina

December 2018

CHAPTER 1

THE BATTLE FOR SEXUAL ETHICS

The normalization of same-sex behavior in United States' popular culture has been both rapid and decisive. This phenomenon should not be surprising in today's culture, particularly after the past two decades of shifting public opinion and Supreme Court rulings.¹ The US Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* in June 2015 stated that same-sex couples have the fundamental right to marry. This Supreme Court decision was not a surprise for many evangelicals, nor was the resulting celebration by many mainline Protestant and liberal denominations. Arguments for the normalization of same-sex relationships have been advanced for years in theologically-liberal denominations. Recently, however, there have been both evangelicals and non-evangelicals who contend for both a traditional view of Scripture and monogamous same-sex marriage.² Three men have exerted considerable influence in evangelical scholarship and on the North American church—David Gushee, James Brownson, and Matthew Vines.³ Each of these men addresses the six most common biblical passages that have

¹Most legal experts rightly believe that *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) and *United States v. Windsor* (2013) set the legal context for *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The 2015 *Obergefell* legal ruling was the product of several years of judicial movement towards the endorsement of same-sex marriage. See Molly Ball, "How Gay Marriage Became a Constitutional Right," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2015, accessed July 20, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/gay-marriage-supreme-court-politics-activism/397052/>.

²These scholars and prominent figures affirm the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, believing them to be the Word of God. The disagreement, they contend, is not inspiration, but rather interpretation. Hermeneutics and methodology will be addressed in greater detail in chaps. 2 and 3 of the dissertation. Recently, David Gushee wrote that he was leaving evangelicalism over the LGBT+ issue. See David P. Gushee, *Still Christian: Following Jesus Out of American Evangelicalism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017).

³See David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017); David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*,

traditionally been used to condemn homosexuality. What makes these three men unique is they also argue that the primary interpretive issue in this debate is biblical theology, particularly as it relates to same-sex attraction, homosexual behavior, and Christian ethics.⁴ Each man's conclusion is that the church should affirm "gay Christians" who enter into monogamous same-sex relationships.⁵

The effects of their works on local churches and denominations cannot be overstated. Brownson's Reformed Church in America (RCA), Vines' Presbyterian Church (PC-USA), and Gushee's Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) have all gravitated towards the revisionist position in recent years.⁶ Several popular evangelical leaders, writers, and singers have recently made an about-face on this issue, now affirming same-sex relationships in the church, including Jen Hatmaker, Jim Wallis, Trey Pearson, Jonathan Merritt, and Julie Rodgers.⁷ Revisionist ideas are beginning to

2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016); James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013); Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014). Matthew Vines is not a scholar, but as both an author and founder of the Reformation Project, he has exerted vast influence on this issue. It is outside the scope of this work to examine non-evangelical scholars on this issue, particularly because they do not ground their work in the authority of Scripture. "Gay Christian" will be defined later in this chapter.

⁴Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 5; Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 77–93; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 5–13.

⁵Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 161–62.

⁶See Matt Van Bunte, "RCA Takes Strides toward More Inclusion of Homosexuals," Michigan Live, November 19, 2011, accessed February 28, 2018, http://www.mlive.com/living/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2011/11/rca_takes_strides_toward_more.html; Melody Smith, "Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) - News & Announcements - Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Approves Marriage Amendment," Presbyterian News Service, March 17, 2015, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2015/3/17/presbyterian-church-us-approves-marriage-amendment/>; Ken Camp, "CBF Revises Hiring Policy; Lifts LGBT Ban for Some Posts," *Baptist Standard*, February 9, 2018, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/baptists/cbf-revises-hiring-policy-lifts-lgbt-ban-posts/>. The RCA General Synod has not completely endorsed homosexual monogamy, but like the other two denominations mentioned, they have urged individual congregations to stand in unity with LGBT+ Christians and/or ministers.

⁷Madeleine Buckley, "Notable Christians Who've Had a Change of Heart on LGBT Issues," Religion News Service, July 12, 2017, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2017/07/12/notable-christians-whove-had-a-change-of-heart-on-lgbt-issues/>.

permeate local churches in the United States and are exerting strong influence over millennials in the church.⁸ There are no indications that same-sex marriage will be dissipating from American popular culture or local churches for the foreseeable future. In fact, this issue may become a significant religious liberty issue for Christians and local churches in the United States, as it has begun to affect Christians employed in the wedding industry.⁹ Companies in the sports industry—including the NBA, NCAA, and ACC—have exerted influence over government policy as it relates to sexual ethics.¹⁰ This topic is not going away in American culture, and local churches need a reproducible

Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*, initially expressed in an interview willingness to marry a same-sex couple in his church, but in a later interview retracted that statement. See Jonathan Merritt, “Best-Selling Author Eugene Peterson Changes His Mind on Gay Marriage,” Religion News Service, July 12, 2017, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2017/07/12/best-selling-author-eugene-peterson-changes-his-mind-on-gay-marriage/>; Matthew Vines, “A Beloved Former Pastor Retracted His Support of Same-Sex Marriage,” *Time*, July 14, 2017, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://time.com/4859620/eugene-peterson-bible-homosexuality-gay-marriage/>.

⁸Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux, “Millennials Leave Their Churches over Science, Lesbian & Gay Issues,” PRRI, October 6, 2011, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.pri.org/spotlight/millennials-leave-their-churches-over-science-lesbian-gay-issues/>; Caryle Murphy, “Most U.S. Christian Groups Grow More Accepting of Homosexuality,” Pew Research Center, December 18, 2015, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/12/18/most-u-s-christian-groups-grow-more-accepting-of-homosexuality/>.

⁹Adam Liptak, “Justices to Hear Case on Religious Objections to Same-Sex Marriage,” *The New York Times*, sec. Politics, June 26, 2017, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/us/politics/supreme-court-wedding-cake-gay-couple-masterpiece-cakeshop.html>; Kirk Johnson, “Florist Discriminated against Gay Couple, Washington State Supreme Court Rules,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2017, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/us/florist-discrimination-gay-couple-washington-court.html>; Richard Wolf, “Supreme Court Won’t Hear Case on Gay Wedding Snub,” *USA Today*, April 7, 2014, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/04/07/supreme-court-gay-lesbian-marriage-photographer/7304157/>.

¹⁰Jon Swartz and Elizabeth Weise, “PayPal Withdraws Planned N.C. Expansion Due to Anti-Gay Law,” *USA Today*, April 5, 2016, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2016/04/05/paypal-withdraws-planned-nc-expansion-due-anti-gay-law/82649786/>; Mollie Reilly, “Businesses Are Joining the Fight against North Carolina’s Anti-LGBT Law,” *Huffington Post*, March 24, 2016, accessed July 21, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/businesses-nc-anti-lgbt-law_us_56f42b8ee4b0c3ef52184903; Mark Berman, “North Carolina Bill Banning Same-Sex Marriage Again Won’t Be Heard, House Speaker Says,” *Washington Post*, April 12, 2017, accessed July 21, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/04/12/north-carolina-bill-banning-same-sex-marriage-again-wont-be-heard-house-speaker-says/>; Andrea Adelson, “ACC Moving Neutral-Site Title Games from N.C.,” ESPN, September 15, 2016, accessed July 21, 2017, http://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/17547270.

methodology for formulating theological doctrine so that Christians may provide a loving, biblically-grounded, and current defense of God’s pattern for human sexuality and the church’s historic view of marriage. It is this reality that makes this dissertation relevant and necessary for the local church today.

Thesis and Overview

This dissertation seeks to provide a fresh examination of the biblical-theological framework of evangelical revisionists who purport a traditional view of Scripture (including inspiration, perspicuity, sufficiency, and canonical unity). Brownson, Gushee, and Vines rightly argue that biblical theology ought to be the hermeneutical lens through which this issue is understood. This dissertation will examine the revisionists’ understandings of authorial intent and how textual “meaning” is derived in order to determine if Brownson, Gushee, and Vines are constructing an interpretive framework that reflects a “thick” reading of Scripture consistent with the Bible’s own categories.¹¹

This dissertation argues that the Bible, read intratextually,¹² defines marriage as a covenantal and exclusive heterosexual union created until the end of time by the triune God for a variety of purposes, but ultimately as a created institution it is typological of Christ’s relationship to his people and thus in the new creation it reaches its fulfillment and *telos* in the Christ-church covenant relationship. I will argue that all theological formulation, and specifically the proper “doing” of Christian ethics, must

¹¹Terminology, including the terms “revisionist” and “traditionalist,” will be defined in the next section. For extensive discussion on “thick” reading, authorial intent, and text meaning, see Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

¹²“Intratextually” should be understood as one reading the Bible in light of its own presentation and on its own terms, structures, and categories. An “extratextual” reading imposes non-biblical categories, grids, systems, and/or presuppositions upon the biblical text that alter the Bible’s meaning and/or presentation.

understand the Bible's own storyline and intrasystematic categories.¹³ Theological perspectives on marriage and sexual ethics must be shaped and informed by a robust, evangelical biblical theology.¹⁴ More specifically, orthodox theological and ethical conclusions regarding homosexuality and/or same-sex marriage must be formulated in light of at least three hermeneutical lenses: (1) the biblical theme of creation-fall-redemption-new creation;¹⁵ (2) the progression of the biblical covenants; and, (3) the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of biblical interpretation.¹⁶

Gushee, Brownson, and Vines argue that the modern understanding of sexual

¹³Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). Horton rightly argues for "covenant" and "eschatology" as the Bible's intrasystematic categories. This dissertation will build upon this point.

¹⁴My overall approach to biblical theology and thus "putting together" Scripture is in line with progressive covenantalism. For this approach, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). See also Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). Wellum argues that covenant is *not* the central theme of Scripture, but rather "that the covenants form the backbone of the Bible's metanarrative and thus it is essential to 'put them together' correctly in order to discern accurately the 'whole counsel of God'" (17). Wellum describes "progressive covenantalism" as central to the Bible's storyline, and that "*progressive* underscores the unfolding of God's plan from old to new, while *covenantalism* stresses that God's unified plan unfolds *through* the covenants, ultimately terminating and culminating in Jesus and the new covenant. Our triune God has only *one* plan of redemption, yet we discover what that plan is as we trace his salvation work *through* the biblical covenants" (19). Crucial to this approach is the necessity to understand each covenant in its own immediate/textual, epochal, and canonical contexts.

¹⁵I will largely follow this theme as presented in G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

¹⁶See a fuller treatment of the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons outlined in Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993). A brief distinction between covenant progression and the three horizons of biblical interpretation is warranted. Both hermeneutical lenses are necessary for proper theological formulation. While the three horizons of biblical interpretation (textual, epochal, and canonical) are vital for examining biblical passages considering their historical context(s), examining Scripture in light of the progression of the covenants demonstrates how the biblical covenants find their fulfillment in Christ as one moves across the redemptive storyline. Understanding the epochal horizon of a biblical text is vital for understanding its context, as well as how one particular text is to be understood in light of prior biblical epochs or covenants. Reading the Bible through the lens of the progression of the biblical covenants, however, understands "covenant" to be the main structure undergirding the biblical storyline, and progressive covenantalism aims to demonstrate how all of God's commands, covenant promises, and creation framework are fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

orientation requires the church to reassess her historic position on same-sex relationships, reject the traditional, binary gender distinction between male and female, and revise both evangelical hermeneutical practice and the traditional interpretations garnered by said practice built upon the faulty, culturally-irrelevant concept of patriarchy. In response to Gushee, Brownson, and Vines, I maintain that God’s gift of the marital union is normative, grounded in creation, and serves as a typological pattern for Christ and his relationship to the church. Therefore, the argument for “gay Christians,” as defined and outlined by Gushee, Brownson, and Vines, has far-reaching (and disastrous) consequences for Christian theology and practice. The church must not affirm the romantic desires and/or actions of “gay Christians” as expressed in same-sex relationships (monogamous or otherwise) because this affirmation would skew God’s normative pattern for creation and distort the new covenant demands upon every Christian. Gushee and Brownson rightly argue that their disagreement with the church’s historic view of sexual ethics is primarily a hermeneutical one. Gushee and Brownson have confessed that the main crux of this issue is biblical theology, yet their precise understanding of biblical theology is suspect and it requires careful evaluation. Gushee, Brownson, and Vines are mistaken on the issue of same-sex relationships (and all its implications) because they fail to do justice to biblical teaching on its own terms, primarily the Bible’s redemptive-historical unfolding, and thus end in erroneous theological formulations as it pertains to the image of God, covenant and obedience, and biblical typology. This work will show that many objections from the evangelical and non-evangelical LGBT community are grounded in a misunderstanding of the relationship between the creation, old and new covenants, an improper understanding of the covenantal contexts of relevant biblical passages, and/or a non-traditional view of Scripture.¹⁷ In particular, these men fail to understand how the Bible unfolds and informs

¹⁷I will demonstrate that despite revisionist claims in holding to an evangelical doctrine of

covenantal “kinship,” the nature of the *imago Dei*, the relationship of the old covenant and the new covenant, and Christian identity.

This dissertation will show that revisionists hold to a form of postmodern theology, consistently misunderstand the intentions of the biblical authors, and often ground their understanding of a text’s meaning in *sola cultura*, not *sola Scriptura*.¹⁸ These men impose an extratextual framework upon Scripture that is inconsistent with the Bible’s own categories and assumptions.¹⁹ Poor biblical theology always exerts an influence in Christian theology and ethics, and by imposing this extratextual framework upon Scripture and grounding textual meaning in culture, Gushee has jettisoned biblical categories and fidelity on the topic of same-sex relations. Therefore, his kingdom ethics lacks biblical grounding and is hanging in mid-air. A proper biblical theology, especially represented by progressive covenantalism, does justice to the Bible’s own teaching, carefully tracing out a new covenant sexual ethics by “carefully unpacking the Bible’s story line and categories,” which is basic to a correct theological interpretation of Scripture.²⁰ In examining biblical-theological arguments related to this issue, this dissertation will also explore revisionist critiques of covenant theology, while

Scripture, they undermine the authority, inspiration, and unity of Scripture. Brownson, Gushee, and Vines often build their case upon the foundations of scholars who reject an evangelical view of Scripture (e.g., William Loader).

¹⁸David F. Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008); Kevin Vanhoozer, “Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies and the Hard Place of Systematic Theology: The State of the Evangelical (Dis)Union,” in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission*, ed. Richard Lints (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 201–25.

¹⁹This dissertation will not engage exhaustively in exegetical debates over the six common biblical passages regarding homosexuality. This work will limit itself to broadly examining the biblical theologies of Brownson, Gushee, and Vines, and how those biblical theologies wrongly influence their exegesis and theological conclusions. For a detailed, exegetical defense of the orthodox Christian position on these six biblical passages, see Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

²⁰Stephen J. Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics,” in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), 226.

demonstrating progressive covenantalism’s theological formulation and ethics to be the most consistent and faithful reflection of Scripture.²¹

Background

This dissertation seeks to contribute to several individual, overlapping fields of biblical and theological studies: biblical studies and hermeneutics on marriage and same-sex relations, Christian ethics, and the image of God. This dissertation draws from a number of sources, with Scripture being primary. This dissertation examines and cites several academic works. Due to the interconnectedness of the same-sex marriage issue across Christian disciplines, this work examines scholarly monographs, book chapters, and articles from topics ranging from biblical theology, hermeneutics, homosexuality, same-sex attraction, and marriage. Same-sex marriage is a recent phenomenon in Western culture and the church.²² Due to same-sex marriage being a recent theological issue, some popular-level works from scholars, pastors, and same-sex attracted Christians will be also be incorporated. This dissertation draws from a number of different overlapping issues within the purviews of both academic study and popular-level writing. Therefore, it is incumbent upon both traditionalists and revisionists to define terms.

Terminology

There have been several ways to distinguish the two different camps in the same-sex debate. Labels that carry largely negative connotations, including “gay” and “anti-gay,” and “promo-homosex” and “anti-homosex,” will be avoided in order that no

²¹I am not arguing that other biblical-theological systems (i.e., covenant theology and progressive dispensationalism) arrive at unbiblical conclusion, because these other views clearly affirm the conclusion that Scripture prohibits same-sex relationships and/or marriage. I will, however, argue that progressive covenantalism offers the most consistent biblical-theological argument in defending the traditionalist perspective. When I address covenant theology’s methodology for ethics in chap. 4, I will critique the basis for their theological conclusion on this issue, not the conclusion itself.

²²Joseph Chamie and Barry Mirkin, “Same-Sex Marriage: A New Social Phenomenon,” *Population and Development Review* 37, no. 3 (September 2011): 529–51.

insidious motives are attributed (intentionally or unintentionally) to either camp. The labels “evangelical” and “progressive” are not relevant to this work because all parties identify as evangelical and affirm a traditional view of Scripture. “Conservative” and “liberal” labels seem inappropriate for the current discussion because both camps profess historically-conservative, Reformed backgrounds. Vines argues that the terms “traditionalist” and “revisionist” both have significant shortcomings and opts for “affirming” and “non-affirming.”²³

This dissertation will use the terms “traditional” and “revisionist” throughout the work to describe the two opposing views on same-sex marriage. While there exists a variety of nuance within each view, this dissertation will use these terms to describe the opposing positions for two reasons: (1) Brownson and Gushee primarily use these terms both to articulate their own views, as well as distinguish scholars in the debate.²⁴ It is helpful and avoids confusion for this present work to keep the language consistent with its conversation partners. (2) The nature of marriage has not seriously been disputed throughout the history of the church until this point.²⁵ In fact, same-sex marriage advocates are making significant headway in changing public sentiment almost exclusively in Western culture, whereas Christians and non-Christians from the non-Western world reject same-sex relationships.²⁶ It seems appropriate to acknowledge,

²³Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 25; Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 23–24. It is beyond the scope of this work to examine, in detail, the baggage that each system of labels may carry. “Non-affirming” seems overly negative, possibly connoting that traditionalists do not affirm people being made in the image of God, rather than the idea that they do not affirm a specific theological position.

²⁴Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 3–4; Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 5, 17.

²⁵See Matthew D. Haste and Robert L. Plummer, *Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage from Voices of the Past* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015).

²⁶Harriet Sherwood, “Anglican Church Risks Global Schism over Homosexuality,” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2016, accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/12/anglican-church-england-global-schism-homosexuality-gay-rights>; Eleanor Ross, “The Most Unwelcoming City for LGBT People Is in China, According to a New Survey,” *Newsweek*, June 28, 2017,

through the use of “traditional” and “revisionist” labels, that advocates of same-sex marriage are seeking to change the way that Christians and non-Christians alike have historically perceived the issue. Historical context and tradition do not possess ultimate authority in arbitrating this issue, but they are still relevant, particularly in defining terms.²⁷

Terminology in the debate is also important with regard to the use of “gay Christian.” This term has been used by both traditionalists and revisionists to mean very different things in the debate. For the purpose of this dissertation, and unless noted otherwise,²⁸ the term “gay Christian” will be used to describe the views of Brownson, Gushee, and Vines. They use the term “gay Christian” (or “LGBT Christian”) to mean a person who professes faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and only Savior of sinners while also pursuing and/or engaging in a same-sex, monogamous relationship. More specifically, a “gay Christian” is someone who professes trust in the core, essential tenets of the Christian gospel, but also believes that the Bible’s teaching on marriage affirms monogamous same-sex couples.²⁹ The terms “traditional” and “revisionist” will be used throughout the dissertation to describe the two competing views on same-sex marriage. Within each view, there exists a plethora of nuance. The traditional position throughout

accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/revealed-worlds-most-unwelcoming-city-gay-people-probably-not-where-you-629597>; Anto Akkara, “Indian Supreme Court Re-Criminalizes Homosexual Activity,” *National Catholic Register*, January 3, 2014, accessed March 7, 2018, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/indian-supreme-court-re-criminalizes-homosexual-activity>.

²⁷Derek Rishmawy, “What We Mean When We Say ‘Orthodox Christianity,’” *ChristianityToday.com*, August 9, 2017, accessed October 12, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/august-web-only/orthodoxy-traditional-christianity-same-sex-marriage.html>. Rishmawy provides a helpful overview of the “orthodoxy” terminology in the same-sex marriage debate. The limitations of this paper preclude addressing this issue, but there is legitimate debate as to whether “revisionists” are outside of “orthodoxy.” In this paper, I will be using “traditional” and “revisionist” to describe the opposing sides in the same-sex marriage debate.

²⁸Chap. 5 will briefly examine the nuanced use of “gay Christian” by traditionalists as it relates to Christian identity and image of God.

²⁹Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 3.

the history of the church has been an unequivocal rejection of same-sex relations. Therefore, there is little evangelical scholarly work addressing this topic because the same-sex marriage issue is only a recent church debate. Due to the lack of scholarly writing on this issue from a biblical theology perspective, the following summary examines both scholarly and popular-level treatments of related topics under the umbrella of human sexuality and sexual ethics—including marriage, gender and identity, homosexuality, and the same-sex marriage debate. Unless otherwise noted, these sources are limited to those who identify as evangelicals and who profess a traditional view of Scripture.³⁰

Revisionists on Marriage and Same-Sex Relations

Philosophical and biblical arguments affirming same-sex relations and marriage by self-professed evangelicals are both surprising and recent. Revisionist writings include scholarly and pastoral works.

Jack Rogers. Jack Rogers is a PC-USA minister and scholar who wrote *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*.³¹ In his work, Rogers critiques Robert Gagnon’s traditionalist monograph on homosexuality. Rogers argues that the Bible has no conceptual framework for modern understandings of sexual

³⁰It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to dispute all evangelical revisionists. For more self-professing evangelical defenses of same-sex relationships, see Brandan Robertson, “I Am a Pro-Gay Evangelical Christian Fighting for Marriage Equality,” *Time*, December 17, 2014, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://time.com/3642909/pro-gay-evangelical/>; Brandan Robertson, “Evangelicals for Marriage Equality: The Story Behind Our Launch,” *Time*, September 9, 2014, accessed July 21, 2017, <http://time.com/3308983/evangelicals-for-marriage-equality-the-story-behind-our-launch/>; Wendy VanderWal-Gritter, *Generous Spaciousness: Responding to Gay Christians in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014); Justin Lee, *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate* (New York: Jericho Books, 2012).

³¹Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). Rogers would deny inerrancy (asserting it is a characteristic of fundamentalism, not evangelicalism), while affirming infallibility.

orientation.³² Rogers rejects the idea that Genesis 1–2 answers the question of homosexuality and marriage, arguing that Genesis 1–2 contains no reference to homosexuality or marriage at all. The point that Genesis 1 accomplishes is to describe “how humans are like and unlike God.” Rogers argues that, similar to Gentile-inclusion in Acts 15, the Holy Spirit provides new understandings of Scripture that lead to the expansion of the church.³³ He argues that the Reformed confessions say nothing about human sexuality.

David Myers. David Myers is a Christian psychologist who argues that theology and psychology are separate disciplines that inform one another.³⁴ In his book *What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage*, Myers provides a revisionist argument.³⁵ Myers largely draws support from modern psychological theory, but he also briefly examines relevant biblical passages. Like Rogers, he argues that same-sex relationships should be categorized similarly to the dietary laws abrogated in Acts 10. Myers argues that Scripture has very little to say about same-sex orientation, attraction, and behavior, and Jesus did not speak to the issue of homosexuality at all. Myers laments that modern English translations have muddied the waters because the traditional biblical passages understood to condemn homosexual behavior actually only condemn idolatry, lust, promiscuity, and exploitation.³⁶

Jenell Williams Paris. Jenell Williams Paris is professor of anthropology and

³²Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality*, 58.

³³Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality*, 59.

³⁴David G. Myers et al., *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views*, ed. Eric L. Johnson, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010).

³⁵David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005).

³⁶Myers and Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together?*, 84–104.

author of multiple works examining sex and sexual identity.³⁷ Paris argues in her anthropology textbook that contemporary gender roles in marriage were introduced after Genesis 2, cultic same-sex relationships possibly surrounded Old Testament Israel, and LGBTQ Christians are often judged by conservative Christians.³⁸ Paris, like other revisionists, argues that the term “homosexual” is overly simplistic and not helpful to current debate.³⁹ Paris argues that same-sex relations should be a point of freedom amongst Christians, where “repentance” primarily emphasizes care and discernment, not cure and judgment. Paris does not provide any exegesis, but largely builds her argument upon modern psychology.

Ken Wilson. Ken Wilson is pastor of Vineyard Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, who wrote *A Letter to my Congregation: An Evangelical Pastor’s Path to Embracing People Who Are Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender into the Company of Jesus*.⁴⁰ Wilson argues that the Bible clearly and only condemns temple prostitution, homosexual orgies, homosexual prostitution, non-volitional homosexual behavior, pederasty, and homosexual gang rape.⁴¹ Since these issues are agreed upon by all parties in the debate, Wilson contends that committed same-sex relationships should be treated as a Romans 14 issue in the local church.⁴²

³⁷Brian M. Howell and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Jenell Williams Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011).

³⁸Howell and Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*, 87–106.

³⁹Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity*, 74–76.

⁴⁰Ken Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation: An Evangelical Pastor’s Path to Embracing People Who Are Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender into the Company of Jesus* (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2014).

⁴¹Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation*, 79.

⁴²Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation*, 104–10.

Traditionalists on Marriage and Same-Sex Relations

Traditionalists' arguments are expansive and cover much under the broad topic of homosexuality, with many addressing the non-evangelical revisionist arguments from the 1980s. Several of the older traditionalist monographs fail to adequately address some of the more recent evangelical revisionist arguments because of their inattention to biblical theology.

John Stott. John Stott argues the church's historical position regarding same-sex partnerships in *Same-Sex Partnerships? A Christian Perspective*. He examines Genesis 1–2 as well as the four biblical categories and/or collection of passages that address homosexuality (Gen 19; Judg 19; Lev 18, 20; Rom 1; and two Pauline lists of sinners—1 Cor 6 and 1 Tim 1). Stott argues that same-sex partnerships are a deviation from the created norm and sinful, and that the church should lovingly call same-sex attracted individuals to faith and repentance.⁴³

Stanley Grenz. In 1996, Word of Life Church accused the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada of denying the power of the gospel to save and deliver homosexuals. This event served as an impetus for Stanley Grenz to address the issue of homosexuality in his 1998 book *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. Grenz engages with social constructionists who argue that an individual constructs sexual identity through interactions with others.⁴⁴ Grenz devotes some space to the exegetical debates, briefly addressing several common arguments from

⁴³John Stott, *Same-Sex Partnerships? A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1998).

⁴⁴Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), x–xi. This idea reflects contemporary understandings of gender identity, as well as postmodern philosophy of speech and language (particularly Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida). For a full treatment of social construction in homosexuality, see David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

revisionist scholars on each of the disputed biblical passages. He also examines the historical teaching of the church, characterizing the church debate between “traditionalists” and “revisionists.”⁴⁵ Like Stott, Grenz calls the church to biblical fidelity and love as it interacts with same-sex attracted individuals.

Robert Gagnon. Robert Gagnon has written the most exhaustive defense of the traditionalist view in his monograph *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. He argues that the Bible clearly defines marriage as a covenant union between male and female and unequivocally stands against the sin of same-sex intercourse; moreover, there are no valid hermeneutical arguments that override the Bible’s clear teaching and authority.⁴⁶ He meticulously works through each of the relevant biblical passages to show that same-sex intercourse is a violation of God’s creation design. Gagnon also engages elsewhere with two other scholars—one in writing, and the second in the PC-USA General Assembly. Gagnon spars with his revisionist co-author, Dan Via, in their book, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*.⁴⁷

Donald Wold. Donald Wold examines the issue of homosexuality in his monograph, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*.⁴⁸ Wold

⁴⁵For a similar argument and characterization to Grenz, see Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight & Narrow? Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995). The most important twentieth-century revisionist works were Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). These non-evangelical works will not be extensively addressed in this dissertation, though their influence permeates the works of today’s same-sex advocates.

⁴⁶Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 37.

⁴⁷Robert A. J. Gagnon and Dan O. Via, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

⁴⁸Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (San Antonio, TX: Cedar Leaf Press, 2009).

provides an in-depth examination of the original Hebrew and Greek expressions related to homosexual relations in context, as well as examines the broader context of ancient Near Eastern sources on same-gender sexual relations. Addressing John Boswell, Wold argues that the Bible speaks univocally against consensual same-gender sexual relations, and the modern idea and application of sexual orientation does not find support in the biblical texts. He argues that “order” was a significant component of ANE cultures, with the Hebrews grounding “order” in the creation account of Genesis 1–2. After surveying Hebrew, ANE, and NT-era cultures, Wold argues that marriage was confined to heterosexuals; fertility and the nuclear family were central components of culture, and the limited homosexual practices present existed within the strict confines of the religious cult or as expressions of socio-political dominance.⁴⁹

Preston Sprinkle. Preston Sprinkle offered a recent defense of the traditionalist perspective, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality is Not Just an Issue*. He is comfortable with the language of “gay Christian,” though he uses the term differently than do Vines, Gushee, and Brownson.⁵⁰ Sprinkle argues the traditionalist perspective, walking through the main biblical texts in the same-sex relations debate. He argues that Leviticus 18–20 should be seen as an entire literary unit whose commands are still binding upon Christians. In particular, every old covenant sexual law that is repeated in the New Testament is morally binding upon Christians.⁵¹ Sprinkle also addresses Brownson’s critique of the traditionalist perspective on Romans 1 in an article reviewing

⁴⁹Wold, *Out of Order*, 208–18.

⁵⁰Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*, 21–24. Sprinkle chooses to characterize the different sides in this debate as “affirming” and “nonaffirming” rather than traditionalist and revisionist, because those terms carry the least amount of baggage.

⁵¹See also Preston Sprinkle, ed., *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

Brownson's work.⁵²

Wesley Hill. Wesley Hill makes the case for celibacy for Christians who experience same-sex attraction, arguing that Scripture unequivocally affirms marriage as the union between one man and one woman. Hill, a Christian who experiences same-sex attraction, uses the term “gay Christian” intentionally and very differently from Vines, Brownson, and Gushee. He rejects the revisionist argument for “gay Christians” who affirm the gospel but live in monogamous same-sex relationships. Hill, like Sprinkle, argues that “gay” is the adjective that describes his same-sex attraction struggle, and “Christian” is the noun that describes his identity.⁵³ “Gay Christian,” Hill argues, describes the ongoing battle for same-sex attracted believers who must find their identity in Christ, deny the temptation towards homosexual behavior through faith and repentance, and look forward to the eschaton where same-sex attraction will be no more.⁵⁴ His second work continues this discussion, but emphasizes the necessity of spiritual friendship for Christians who experience same-sex attraction.⁵⁵

Mark Yarhouse. Mark Yarhouse also tackles the same-sex attraction issue

⁵²Preston Sprinkle, “Romans 1 and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of James Brownson’s Bible, Gender, Sexuality,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24, no. 4 (2014): 515–28. For a similar review, see Thomas R. Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns: Hermeneutics and Same-Sex Advocacy,” *Journal of Global Christianity* 2, no. 1 (2016): 48–63.

⁵³Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 21–22. For a similar account, see also Gregory Coles, *Single, Gay, Christian: A Personal Journey of Faith and Sexual Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017).

⁵⁴Hill, *Washed and Waiting*, 48–50. See also Ed Shaw, *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church: The Surprising Plausibility of the Celibate Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015).

⁵⁵Wesley Hill, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015). Hill outlines the Bible’s command for celibacy clearly in both works. He does not spend extensive time defending the traditionalist perspective, but rather assumes it. He affirms that creation sets the pattern for sexual relationships.

from a traditionalist perspective.⁵⁶ He has written several books on topics ranging from homosexuality to gender identity to sexual therapy.⁵⁷ Regarding same-sex attraction, he tackles the issues of sexual identity, orientation, and same-sex attraction, and like Hill, he argues for celibacy and spiritual friendship.⁵⁸ He has studied the relationship between religious thinking and sexual orientation, as well as the effects of ex-gay religious therapy.⁵⁹ Yarhouse and Stanton Jones offer a unique perspective as they address homosexuality from the field of Christian psychology.⁶⁰

Andreas Köstenberger. Andreas Köstenberger wrote a brief defense of the traditionalist perspective in *Marriage and the Family*. Köstenberger argues that marriage is rooted in the creation account in Genesis 1–2, the orientation and order of man and woman in marriage is normative, and the Bible’s stance against homosexuality is univocal.⁶¹ Köstenberger gives a helpful overview of singleness and homosexuality in the

⁵⁶Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

⁵⁷Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); Mark A. Yarhouse and Erica S. N. Tan, *Sexuality and Sex Therapy: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

⁵⁸Mark A. Yarhouse and Lori A. Burkett, *Sexual Identity: A Guide to Living in the Time Between the Times* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003); Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Pub., 2010).

⁵⁹Mark A. Yarhouse and Erica S. N. Tan, *Sexual Identity Synthesis: Attributions, Meaning-Making, and the Search for Congruence* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004); Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

⁶⁰Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church’s Moral Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000).

⁶¹Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones, *Marriage and the Family: Biblical Essentials* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 12–23. See also Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

Bible, arguing that contentment in Christ is a fundamental necessity in celibacy.⁶²

Barry Danylak. Barry Danylak presents a rigorous defense of the traditionalist perspective on marriage and, in particular, singleness in his monograph, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life*. Danylak provides a helpful overview of the typological connections between Old Testament fertility and “offspring” and its NT fulfillment in Christ. He argues that “marriage is not fundamental in the building of God’s kingdom in the new covenant” because Christian singles are able to have spiritual offspring through the new birth.⁶³ The NT emphasizes that singleness and celibacy are to be preferred for Christians in order to allow “comparatively greater investment in their spiritual family.”⁶⁴

John Tarwater. John Tarwater wrote a defense of the orthodox view of marriage in his work, “The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2.” Tarwater argues that marriage as “covenant” relationship must be biblically defined, and that the nature of marriage is grounded in Genesis 1–2 and defended as such by other biblical authors. The nature of marriage in Genesis 1–2 excludes any concept of same-sex marriage.⁶⁵

Benjamin Reaoch. Benjamin Reaoch wrote his dissertation in 2009 titled “Slavery, Women, and the Gender Debate.” While he does not directly address the issue of same-sex marriage, Reaoch does engage with the same hermeneutical commitments as

⁶²Kostenberger and Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, 103–30. Cf. Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 39–57.

⁶³Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness*, 172.

⁶⁴Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness*, 171. This dissertation will build upon this argument and these points will be expanded in the section on marriage, singleness, and typology in chap. 3.

⁶⁵John Tarwater, “The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

same-sex advocates. Reaoch rejects the redemptive movement/trajectory hermeneutic of William Webb and egalitarian advocates.⁶⁶ Reaoch's dissertation is relevant to this work because Vines, Brownson, and Gushee adopt aspects of Webb's trajectory hermeneutic in arguing for same-sex marriage.

Nathan Collins. Nathan Collins successfully defended his dissertation, "Secondary Gender Identities in 1 Cor 7 and their Jewish and Greco-Roman Background," in March 2017.⁶⁷ He defends the traditional view of marriage and same-sex relations while also exploring and incorporating modern conceptions of gender, identity, and orientation. He argues that same-sex attraction is a result of the fall and places same-sex orientation in the same category as "disability."

Denny Burk and Heath Lambert. Denny Burk and Heath Lambert defended the traditionalist perspective in their recent work, *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change*.⁶⁸ They argue that the believer's union with Christ should inform how we understand modern conceptions of sexual orientation. Like Rosaria Butterfield, they argue for distinctions between theological camps, adding "neo-traditional" to describe the works of Wesley Hill and others who argue for praiseworthy elements of same-sex orientation. Where Burk and Lambert differ from Butterfield and Sam Allberry are the issues of desire and temptation, arguing that "the

⁶⁶Benjamin Moorhead Reaoch, "Slavery, Women, and the Gender Debate" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009).

⁶⁷Nathan Charles Collins, "Secondary Gender Identities in 1 Cor. 7 and Their Jewish and Greco-Roman Background" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017). I have met with Collins and discussed his dissertation, which is in the process of being revised following his successful defense.

⁶⁸Denny Burk and Heath Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2015). See also James M. Hamilton et al., *God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines*, ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Louisville, KY: SBTS Press, 2014).

very experience of the desire becomes an occasion for repentance.”⁶⁹

Kevin DeYoung. Kevin DeYoung also gave a defense of the traditionalist perspective in his recent work *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* He rightly argues that parties in the debate will continue to talk past one another while there remains significant disagreement over the nature and practice of biblical theology.⁷⁰ DeYoung argues that biblical theology must inform the debate over Christian marriage. He does not broach the issues of orientation, desires, and temptation (contra Allberry, Butterfield, and Burk/Lambert), focusing solely on the volitional activity involved in same-sex relations. While his treatment of the issue is brief, DeYoung’s book is a helpful contribution because he argues that each of the biblical texts in the debate must be understood canonically and covenantally.

Adam Copenhaver. Adam Copenhaver defends the traditionalist perspective on Christian marriage and sexual ethics in his work, *What Is Christian Marriage? Notes for Developing a Biblical Theology of Marriage and Sexual Ethics*.⁷¹ Like Richard Lints, he maintains that a theological vision of any doctrine must incorporate the entire counsel of Scripture. Copenhaver strives to derive systematic theological conclusions from the foundation of a Reformed biblical theology. He argues that Genesis 1–2 forms the foundation for the marriage covenant and Genesis 3 explains the sinful deviations from the breakdown of marriage due to the fall.⁷²

⁶⁹Burk and Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality*, 29. See also Denny Burk, “Is Homosexual Orientation Sinful?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58, no. 1 (2015): 95–115.

⁷⁰Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 9–10.

⁷¹Adam K. Copenhaver, *What Is Christian Marriage? Notes for Developing a Biblical Theology of Marriage and Sexual Ethics* (San Bernardino, CA: CreateSpace Independent Pub., 2016).

⁷²Copenhaver, *What Is Christian Marriage?*, 9. See “covenant” as a crucial aspect of marriage in Kostenberger and Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, 73–78. See also Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of*

More recently, there have been several popular-level books published defending the traditional view. While all of these authors arrive at similar conclusions, there remains a spectrum of views within the traditionalist camp over issues of same-sex orientation, same-sex temptation and sin, and hermeneutics.

Sam Allberry. Sam Allberry, an Anglican minister who experiences same-sex attraction, has written a popular-level book, *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions about Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction*.⁷³ He argues that Christ did not abrogate the sexual ethics of the Old Testament and appeals to the distinction between Old Testament moral law and civic law to address why the portions of the Old Testament law that prohibit homosexual activity are still enforced today. Allberry argues that all of the Old Testament sexual ethics are restated in the New Testament, and thereby binding upon all people today. He also argues that while same-sex attraction is not a good thing, same-sex attraction itself is not a sin.

Rosaria Butterfield. Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, a former lesbian and English professor at Syracuse University, has written two books exploring her past and conversion, the issues of same-sex attraction and orientation, and union with Christ and sexual identity—*The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith*, and *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ*.⁷⁴ Butterfield's contributions are significant because her works explore the important issue of identity in light of the gospel, particularly union with Christ. Butterfield divides today's sexual landscape into

Marriage.

⁷³Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* (Surrey, England: The Good Book Company, 2015).

⁷⁴Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Pub., 2015); Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: Expanded Edition* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Pub., 2014).

three lenses: sexuality and identity as social construct, revisionist biblical hermeneutics, and traditional Christian sexual ethics.⁷⁵

Perspectives on Christian Ethics⁷⁶

As this dissertation addresses matters pertaining to sexual ethics, Christian ethics must be addressed. There are several Christian ethics scholars who will receive attention, with backgrounds spanning revisionist ethics, covenant theology, new covenant theology, and progressive covenantalism.

John Frame. John Frame has written a substantial ethics book from the covenant theology tradition: *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Frame argues for creation law with a triperspectival focus (God, natural world, man) and the Decalogue as a republication of the creation ordinances.⁷⁷ Frame also holds to covenant theology's tripartite division of the old covenant law and its applicability to the Christian today, arguing that the moral law includes both creation ordinances and the Decalogue.⁷⁸ Frame grounds his biblical defense of Christian sexual ethics in the seventh commandment.⁷⁹ Frame does not address the more recent, late-twentieth century "gay exegesis" because he finds it totally implausible. He does argue, however, that if sexual orientation exists and is defined as a genetic predisposition to same-sex attraction, that "genetic element in sin

⁷⁵Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 5–6.

⁷⁶Wayne Grudem wrote a Christian ethics book that was not addressed in the present work because his book was released shortly after this dissertation was completed. He addresses the same-sex marriage debate in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 843–92.

⁷⁷John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2008), 202–6.

⁷⁸Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 213–17.

⁷⁹Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 757–68.

does not excuse it.”⁸⁰

Philip Ross. Philip Ross sets out a stout defense of the tripartite division of the law, arguing that the Ten Commandments are ever-binding.⁸¹ Ross contends that the Decalogue was a distinct element within the old covenant law, an expression of the self-evident laws from creation. Since the Ten Commandments are distinct from the rest of the law, not only were they binding upon Israel, but they are also the measure of judgment for all men.⁸² In fact, the Decalogue is the law that is written on the hearts of Christians, effectively eliminating any possibility of the “gay Christian” because of the seventh commandment.⁸³

Willem VanGemerem. Willem A. VanGemerem affirms a tripartite division of the old covenant law, arguing that the ceremonial and civil laws have been abrogated and the moral law is now understood in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ He argues that Adam was responsible for staying with the moral order by obeying the creation ordinances. Though Adam sinned, these creation ordinances are “perpetually binding on all human beings.”⁸⁵ VanGemerem supports John Calvin’s modification of natural law, arguing that natural law not only reveals God’s will, but also his divine qualities. Creation ordinances, he argues, presuppose these divine qualities revealed in

⁸⁰Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 264–65.

⁸¹Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2010).

⁸²Ross, *From the Finger of God*, 104–6.

⁸³Ross, *From the Finger of God*, 350.

⁸⁴Willem A. VanGemerem, “The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 13–58.

⁸⁵VanGemerem, “The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness,” 18.

natural law.⁸⁶

Greg Bahnsen. Greg Bahnsen has some similarities with VanGemerens perspective but argues for Christian theonomy. As with other covenant theology proponents, he grounds his ethical framework in the tripartite division of the law as expressed in the Westminster confession. Bahnsen states that discontinuities between old and new covenants are not relevant to ethical validity, but rather old covenant laws need to be contextually applied.⁸⁷ Bahnsen specifically addresses homosexuality, contending that creation serves as the grounding for human sexuality, God has established fundamental differences between males and females reflected in the human body, and heterosexuality is the established normative direction for sexual desire and behavior.⁸⁸

Richard Hays. Richard Hays provides a different approach that accents a broader, canonical approach to Christian ethics. Hays addresses the issue of homosexuality through the canonical lens of community, cross, and new creation.⁸⁹ Hays argues that a singular concept or principle (e.g., love) is not adequate to ground and unite the entirety of the New Testament's moral vision.⁹⁰ He argues that the community of faith—the church—serves as an embodied metaphor, and the New Testament is read rightly only where the Word is embodied.⁹¹ While Hays argues that the biblical witness

⁸⁶VanGemerens, "The Law is the Perfection of Righteousness," 22.

⁸⁷Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Theonomic Reformed Approach to Law and Gospel," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 93–143.

⁸⁸Greg L. Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub., 1978), 28.

⁸⁹Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 379–406.

⁹⁰Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 5. This idea highlights one error in Matthew Vine's "bearing good fruit" approach to sexual ethics.

⁹¹Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 304–5.

against homosexual practice is univocal, he also posits “that claims about divinely inspired experience that contradicts the witness of Scripture should be admitted to normative status in the church only after sustained and agonizing scrutiny by a consensus of the faithful.”⁹²

John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg. John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg hold a “moderate discontinuity model” that argues Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament law and unless the New Testament has explicitly or implicitly abrogated an Old Testament law, that law is still in force for the Christian today.⁹³ Substantial space in their ethics book, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, is given to addressing the issue of homosexuality and examining the six common biblical passages in the debate.⁹⁴ They argue that sexual behavior is always subject to conscious control, even if behavior is strongly influenced by orientation.⁹⁵ Interestingly, Feinberg and Feinberg rightly argue that pro-homosexual advocates rarely address Genesis 1–2, though it should be the first passage handled in all discussions of sexuality.⁹⁶

⁹²Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 399. Hays makes this point to counteract the weight given to the authority of experience in the lives of gay Christians (e.g., Vines). It is unclear if Hays believes that homosexual behavior may one day be given normative status in the church and, if so, whether that same-sex behavior would be considered sin. He intentionally places considerable authority for determining textual meaning in the community of faith, at times reflecting a willingness to engage in reader-response hermeneutics. See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 189. For Hays, a text does not contain an unchangeable meaning “because [this] denies the necessary contribution of the reader and the reader’s community in the act of interpretation” (189). The effects of this hermeneutical commitment are seen when revisionist Ken Wilson builds his Rom 14 argument off of Hays’ work at this point. See Wilson, *A Letter to My Congregation*, 109–10.

⁹³John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Downers Grove, IL: Crossway, 2010), 44–49.

⁹⁴Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 307–85.

⁹⁵Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 310.

⁹⁶Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 356.

Michael Hill. Michael Hill also provides a different approach that accents a broader, canonical approach to Christian ethics. Hill argues for the necessity of viewing ethical issues through the biblical-theological lens of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.⁹⁷ Similar to Hill, progressive covenantalists have argued for the “creation, fall, redemption, new creation” hermeneutical lens by which to do Christian ethics.⁹⁸

Perspectives on the Image of God

No work addressing same-sex issues can overlook the doctrine of the image of God. The *imago Dei* is deeply affected by the current debate, so an examination of scholarly contributions to this doctrine is relevant.

Philip E. Hughes. Philip E. Hughes has written a monograph defending a Reformed perspective on the image of God. Hughes follows John Calvin in arguing that the image of God does not extend to the body, though God’s glory is exhibited in it. Rather, the image of God is seated in the soul of man—with its reason, intellect, and moral capacity.⁹⁹ Man was made to be actively holy by “establish[ing] his holiness by faithful performance of the Creator’s will.”¹⁰⁰ Only in faithfully pursuing holiness does man know what it means to be authentically human.

⁹⁷Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2002). Hill builds on the same biblical-theological foundations set forth in Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012); Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

⁹⁸See Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics,” 215–33; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 653–716.

⁹⁹Philip E. Hughes, *True Image: Christ as the Origin and Destiny of Man* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 10–14. Calvin rejected Andreas Osiander’s contention that God’s image extended both to the body and the soul.

¹⁰⁰Hughes, *True Image*, 60.

Anthony Hoekema. Anthony Hoekema presents a slightly altered Reformed conception of the image of God. Rejecting trichotomy and dichotomy, Hoekema argues for a psychosomatic unity between body and soul, material and immaterial. Hoekema stresses the unity of the human subject as doing full justice to the Bible’s teaching on the image of God. Hoekema combines various aspects of the substantive, functional, and relational views, arguing that full redemption is a redemption of body and soul.¹⁰¹ Hoekema rightly includes body as an aspect of the image of God, and this point will prove significant to the monogamous same-sex relations debate.

John Cooper. Like Hoekema, John Cooper argues for the human constitution existing as a “holistic dualism,” which emphasizes “the unity of human nature, its essential bodiliness, and resurrection as the final Christian hope.”¹⁰² Humans are embodied creatures, and their material and immaterial aspects should not be pitted against one another in understanding the *imago Dei*. As we will see, this point is important for the current debate because revisionists argue that there is a primacy of the immaterial desires—at the expense of the material—in same-sex attracted people.¹⁰³

Deepak Reju. Beginning with the traditionalist perspective, Deepak Reju

¹⁰¹Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 217–18.

¹⁰²John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), xv–xvi. See also, Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 155–92.

¹⁰³See also Robert P. George, “Contrasting Views of Marriage: The Need for a Defining Principle,” *The Public Discourse*, July 2014, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/07/13526/>; Robert P. George, “Gnostic Liberalism,” *First Things*, December 2016, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/12/gnostic-liberalism>. George summarizes this point well: “Our bodies are part of our personal reality as human beings, not subpersonal extrinsic instruments at the service of the conscious and desiring aspect of the self.” This dissertation will build on this argument in chap. 5. For a natural law defense of traditional marriage from Roman Catholics, see Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

argued in 2007 that biblical theology and the hermeneutical lens of creation, fall, and redemption must inform how we understand Christian identity.¹⁰⁴ Reju argues that Christian identity cannot be formed apart from a robust understanding of the redemptive storyline. He disputes the idea that Christian counselors should rely primarily upon secular psychology's theoretical framework. Reju formulates a doctrine of the image of God and builds a biblically-faithful construct of Christian identity. His work will be particularly helpful in providing a framework through which to examine and critique secular categories of same-sex orientation, behavior, and identity.

Nathan Collins. Nathan Collins, a self-professed gay Christian, also addresses the issues of identity, orientation, and behavior in his recent book, *All But Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender, and Sexuality*.¹⁰⁵ Collins traces a brief history of sexual orientation, arguing that the term sexual orientation needs to be reimagined. His suggested new term is “aesthetic orientation.” Collins envisions aesthetic orientation as the theological idea reflecting a non-sexual category of beauty, whereby gay individuals experience a greater awareness of the beauty of people who are their same sex more readily than straight individuals.¹⁰⁶ Collins, a traditionalist, is comfortable using the term “gay Christian” to describe himself as a Christian who upholds the traditional Christian sexual ethic. While he disagrees with the “gay Christian” terminology of revisionists, he does believe, for example, that a gay man

¹⁰⁴Deepak Varghese Reju, “Toward a Definition of Christian Identity: Using the Interpretive Lens of Creation, Fall, and Redemption in Christian Counseling” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007).

¹⁰⁵Nathan Collins, *All But Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender, and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017). Collins' use of “gay Christian” terminology is different from Gushee's, Brownson's, and Vines' use. Collins does not affirm same-sex marriage or relationships but uses “gay Christian” terminology in a fashion similar to Wesley Hill. See Hill, *Washed and Waiting*, 21–22.

¹⁰⁶Collins, *All But Invisible*, 149–51.

has a greater awareness to see the godly beauty present in other men, and less awareness to see that beauty in women. He completely rejects revisionist uses of “gay Christian.”

Methodology

This dissertation will dispute revisionist claims in three particular spheres of biblical scholarship: Scripture and biblical theology, theological formulation, and Christian ethics. Each succeeding sphere builds upon the previous one, with the Bible serving as the foundation for this enterprise.

Scripture and Biblical Theology

This dissertation is an exercise in exegesis, biblical theology, and theological formulation. Of course, this enterprise first assumes that an exercise in biblical theology is even possible.¹⁰⁷ There are a number of other evangelical assumptions that will be present in this dissertation, and space must be given here to briefly outline some of them to provide clarity and avoid confusion, as well as to prevent the size of this work from expanding because of frequent and unnecessary qualifications.

First, Brownson, Gushee, Vines, and I profess a shared evangelical assumption about the nature, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture. The Bible, expressed in the Protestant canon, is truly God’s Word, written by human authors under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁸ The inspired Scripture is true, of central importance to

¹⁰⁷For a range of views on biblical theology, see Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 21–38, 81–128. Wellum also provides a brief, helpful overview of the history of biblical theology. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Pub., 2011). Childs argues for a biblical theology that while committed to the Scripture’s canonical form, is grounded in the historical-critical approach and its methodological naturalism. Childs rejects the Bible’s self-attestation of authority, truthfulness, and unity across redemptive-history. Brownson, Gushee, and Vines reject those non-evangelical assumptions.

¹⁰⁸Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 2; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 13–15. Verbal-plenary inspiration will be examined in more detail in chap. 2.

the church, and the self-attesting Word of God.¹⁰⁹ Second, Brownson, Gushee, Vines, and I profess a shared commitment to grammatical-historical exegesis in a canonical context, and affirm the perspicuity of Scripture—that the Bible is sufficiently clear and that objective “meaning” in a text is derived from understanding the intention(s) of the biblical author(s).¹¹⁰ Brownson, Gushee, and Vines rightly argue for a theological unity between the Testaments.¹¹¹ This point is of particular importance because Scripture presents itself as a unified canon with one overarching story across redemptive history, making the task of biblical theology possible.

This work examines the issue of same-sex marriage in light of three biblical-theological hermeneutical lenses and demonstrate that there is no biblical basis for same-sex marriage. As mentioned previously, the same-sex marriage issue reaches across a variety of exegetical and theological issues. As a result, there will be a number of limitations for this dissertation. First, space limitations will prevent this dissertation from defending the nature of biblical theology and typology, yet both issues will be discussed where necessary in evaluating diverse viewpoints. Second, a full-scale treatment of the relationship between the Law and the new covenant is not possible, though, once again, it will surface as same-sex relationships and sexual ethics will be examined. Third, space limitations will preclude this dissertation from addressing all the objections brought forth by revisionists, but it will focus on the objections that pertain to the handling of texts, hermeneutics, and biblical theology.¹¹² For this reason, this work primarily addresses the

¹⁰⁹Brownson has served as moderator on the RCA’s Commission on Theology. The RCA affirms several historic, Reformed confessions that affirm the inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture. The Belgic confession, in particular, outlines the canonical books recognized by the Protestant church.

¹¹⁰Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 5–13.

¹¹¹Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, xix–xxi; Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 48–57; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 5–13.

¹¹²Most of the Revisionists’ arguments have been consistently and thoroughly refuted by

differences in biblical theology and theological formulation between revisionists and the traditional view as argued by the progressive covenantal approach to biblical theology and hermeneutics.

Theological Formulation

John Frame rightly argues that theology is “the application of God’s Word by persons to all areas of life.”¹¹³ At the heart of this dissertation is systematic theological formulation.¹¹⁴ Grammatical-historical exegesis and biblical theology must serve as the grounding for one’s theological method.¹¹⁵ No one approaches the biblical text in an unbiased fashion, and the hermeneutical spiral of biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and grammatical-historical exegesis must be working together as one moves closer to the text.¹¹⁶ Crucial to faithful theological formulation is proper interpretation and application of biblical texts, particularly in light of the progression of the biblical covenants.¹¹⁷ This dissertation argues that in order to arrive at proper theological conclusions, one must carefully unpack the Bible on its own terms in its immediate, covenantal, and canonical contexts. This dissertation demonstrates that in the

Christian scholars over the past sixty years.

¹¹³John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1987), 76.

¹¹⁴This point assumes that Systematic Theology is objectively possible because one can rightly determine and understand the meaning of the biblical authors. See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*

¹¹⁵Kevin Vanhoozer, “Improvising Theology According to the Scriptures: An Evangelical Account of the Development of Doctrine,” in *Building on the Foundations of Evangelical Theology: Essays in Honor of John S. Feinberg*, ed. Gregg R. Allison and Stephen J. Wellum (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 15–50. Vanhoozer rightly argues for a diachronic approach to organizing biblical theology.

¹¹⁶Scripture must shape and correct our biblical theology and systematic theology, but our biblical theology and systematic theology undeniably affect our exegetical endeavors, which is unavoidable; this does not mean that we cannot read and interpret rightly.

¹¹⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 35. Chap. 2 will discuss the nature and practice of biblical theology in detail, while chaps. 3–5 will formulate theological conclusions for relevant topics in light of the biblical-theological framework proposed by progressive covenantalism.

same-sex relations debate, different biblical-theological foundations eventually manifest themselves in radically different theological conclusions. Theological formulation must understand the moral logic of Scripture, but that moral logic must be tied to the Bible's categories and progression. This work demonstrates that our doctrine of Scripture, biblical theology, theological formulation, and exercise of Christian ethics are tightly interwoven. Critical to both theological formulation and Christian ethics, however, is a solid biblical-theological foundation. Only when this biblical-theological foundation is properly laid and theological conclusions built upon it, is the task of Christian ethics possible. The discipline of Christian ethics seeks to rightly apply proper biblical-theological conclusions to members of the new covenant community.

Christian Ethics

Christian ethics is the study and analysis of biblical morality, but Christian ethics cannot simply apply any morality found in the Bible to modern ethical situations.¹¹⁸ It is essential that Christian ethics be grounded in a faithful biblical theology, rightly understanding: (1) the progressive unfolding of redemptive history, and (2) the new covenant context today. Gushee, Brownson, and Vines incorporate various aspects of new covenant theology's framework to dispute covenant theology's tripartite division of the law and its rejection of same-sex relations. These men also incorporate aspects of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation against covenant theology in order to articulate their argument that the Bible affirms same-sex marriage. While they profess a methodology similar in parts to progressive covenantalism, it is clear that there are significant disparities grounded in different understandings of the biblical storyline. The three men approach ethics in slightly different ways. Gushee grounds his kingdom ethic

¹¹⁸Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 21. Hill rightly distinguishes between morality and ethics, arguing that while everyone has a morality, not everyone cares to justify or consistently apply their morality. This dissertation will seek to build on Hill's point in chap. 4 and argue that new covenant ethics must be grounded in a proper understanding of salvation-history.

largely, though not exclusively, in the sermon on the mount. Brownson argues for a moral logic, or underlying principle, from the biblical texts and canon that must inform Christian ethics. Vines argues for an experience-test (good fruit/bad fruit) that is also grounded in the sermon on the mount. This dissertation will not be able to provide a full treatment and defense of progressive covenantal ethics. Rather, as arguments are given I will argue that this biblical theology system best handles relevant texts on the Bible's own terms. Following is a brief preview of this dissertation.

Preview of the Argument

This dissertation first provides an overview of the competing biblical-theological systems in the same-sex marriage debate, demonstrating that differences in biblical-theological perspectives have significant influence on exegesis and theological method. Second, this dissertation examines the relevant biblical data, incorporating important commentaries and biblical-theological works as necessary. Third, it presents the progressive covenantal sexual ethic. Lastly, the dissertation formulates theological conclusions and practical implications in the local church.

So far, I have introduced the issues surrounding the same-sex marriage debate. This chapter provides a brief overview of this dissertation's main conversation partners—James Brownson, David Gushee, and Matthew Vines. I also put forward the thesis that the Bible, when read on its own terms and in its own categories, defines marriage as a created institution expressed in a covenantal and exclusive heterosexual union that finds its typological fulfillment and telos in the Christ-Church relationship. Progressive covenantalism provides the best perspective for reading the Bible intratextually and the best grounding for Christian sexual ethics. This chapter defines terms, outlines the background, and provides an overview of the methodology for the present work.

Chapter 2 examines hermeneutical issues in the current debate. The chapter first provides an overview of the exegetical and theological arguments of Brownson,

Gushee, and Vines. This chapter also argues for essential components of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, emphasizing the inerrancy and unity of the biblical canon as the grounding for biblical theology. The chapter also addresses inconsistencies in revisionists' biblical theology and errors in their underlying doctrine of Scripture. The chapter closes with the progressive covenantal argument for the progression of the biblical covenants as the best framework for biblical theology.

Chapter 3 begins by providing an exegesis of Genesis 1–2 and examining the creation account through three hermeneutical lenses. This work argues that Genesis 1–2 defines marriage and that the creation account serves as the foundation for Christian sexual ethics. The key biblical passages are briefly addressed from a biblical-theological perspective; the chapter closes with a discussion of marriage, singleness, and typology, proposing progressive covenantalism's theological method for defining the nature of marriage and human identity.

The next three chapters provide a case study for progressive covenantalism's theological method. Chapter 4 opens by briefly critiquing Gushee's arguments for sexual ethics.¹¹⁹ The chapter then addresses traditional covenant theology responses to homosexuality and same-sex marriage. If the tripartite division is a faithful representation of the biblical data, then covenant theology presents a strong argument against same-sex marriage. I argue, however, that the tripartite division is not the most accurate reflection of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, the tripartite division of the old covenant law is presented and critiqued, followed by my presentation of a more consistent and faithful methodology to Christian ethics. The chapter gives an overview of Christian ethics formulated from a progressive covenantal perspective,

¹¹⁹Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 234–87. Gushee's view of sexual ethics will be examined in particular because of his scholarly work in the field of Christian ethics.

which will be built upon the hermeneutical commitments and theological method outlined in previous chapters. The chapter demonstrates that the biblical storyline examined in light of the progressive unfolding of the biblical covenants serves as the foundation for the “doing” of Christian ethics.

Chapter 5 examines the issue of same-sex marriage while formulating a doctrine of the image of God. The common evangelical distinctions of same-sex behavior, desire and attraction, orientation, and identity are addressed and critiqued in light of progressive covenantalism. The chapter includes a progressive covenantal formulation of the image of God in light of covenant. The usefulness of “gay Christian” terminology in light of the new covenant is explored. Chapter five ends by addressing local church implications for Christians who experience same-sex attraction.

Finally, chapter 6 provides concluding remarks and summarizes the arguments put forth in this dissertation. The last chapter of this dissertation concludes by suggesting further topics of study in the realms of both Christian sexual ethics and progressive covenantalism.

CHAPTER 2

GAY CHRISTIANS AND COMPETING BIBLICAL THEOLOGIES

In this chapter, I provide a survey of James Brownson, David Gushee, and Matthew Vines, outlining their arguments for gay Christians and same-sex monogamy. In particular, I examine their biblical-theological framework, tracing out how this framework informs their exegesis and theological formulation.¹ I then turn to examine and critique their underlying doctrine of Scripture. I show that their arguments for same-sex monogamy undermine their professed commitments to the unity, authority, and nature of the Bible. Revisionists' doctrine of Scripture distorts their exegesis, biblical-theological conclusions, and ethics.

I then present a brief, evangelical doctrine of Scripture that is consistent with the Bible's self-attestation. It is imperative that the task of biblical theology be grounded in the Bible's own categories and unfolded on its own terms. Therefore, I demonstrate that the evangelical doctrine of Scripture rightly affirms the Bible's authority, inerrancy, infallibility, canonical unity, perspicuity, sufficiency, and verbal-plenary inspiration. Each of these biblical categories are necessary for the pursuit of a coherent and faithful biblical theology. The Scripture's own biblical-theological framework provides the hermeneutical lens through which gay Christianity and same-sex monogamy must be assessed. I provide an overview of progressive covenantalism, accenting aspects of this

¹This dissertation examines only the revisionist biblical theology of Brownson, Gushee, and Vines. The revisionists share the same biblical-theological framework, though there are slight nuances between them. I highlight relevant differences as needed throughout this chapter.

biblical-theological system that address the relevant issues in this debate.² It will be shown that the revisionist approach does not reflect biblical categories, but rather reflects theological liberalism, modern Western culture, and an overemphasis on human experience. In sum, the revisionist approach does not reflect a traditional or historic view of Scripture.

Survey of Revisionists' Views

In this section, I provide a survey of the revisionists' views. While the scope of this present work will prevent an exhaustive overview of each revisionist and his respective work(s), I examine the thesis, exegesis, and theological formulation of each man's work(s). After providing a survey of their views, I summarize and provide an overview of the revisionists' biblical-theological framework.

James Brownson

James Brownson has provided the most comprehensive defense of gay Christianity and same-sex monogamy. Brownson is a New Testament scholar at Western Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America. Brownson wrestled with his views on same-sex marriage for several years following his son's confession of being gay. Brownson affirms same-sex monogamy while attempting to maintain Reformation principles, including the authority and inspiration of the Bible. Both David Gushee and Matthew Vines borrow heavily from Brownson's work, so an overview of their works will follow in that order.

²Due to the limitations of this work, I am unable to provide a complete overview of the progressive covenantal perspective. I propose and build upon the work of Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Other biblical-theological systems, particularly covenant theology, draw similar conclusions, but I argue that progressive covenantalism provides the most consistent view of the biblical data.

Presuppositions and thesis. Brownson argues that Scripture is central and authoritative, and following the Reformers, contends that the church must always be reforming itself according to Scripture. Brownson argues that the major difference between traditionalists and revisionists is not primarily in what the Bible says, but rather what the biblical text *means* today.³ The hermeneutical debate is central, and Brownson rightly argues that faithful interpretation is impossible apart from biblical theology and a proper understanding of a text’s canonical-situatedness. He refers to this exercise as an attempt to understand the moral logic of Scripture—an action intended to discern the value system presupposed by the biblical canon.⁴ His son’s revelation that he was gay caused Brownson to “reimagine how Scripture speaks about homosexuality.”⁵ Brownson critiques the general arguments of both traditionalist and revisionist camps, offering a “new chapter” for revisionists in light of recent studies in same-sex orientation, behavior, and history.⁶

Addressing traditionalists, particularly Robert Gagnon, Brownson argues that one-flesh union in Genesis 2:24 refers, not to gender complementarity, but rather to kinship bond (i.e., covenantal bond).⁷ If the thrust of Genesis 2 is primarily kinship bond and not physical complementarity, then a monogamous same-sex couple may share a God-honoring kinship bond that faithfully reflects the biblical idea of covenant love.

³James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 5–9.

⁴Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 9. Brownson argues that this process allows the underlying moral value to be extended beyond the literal command to other, unaddressed situations, as well as in addressing unusual circumstances and exceptions not readily addressed by the literal commandment. Interpretation in light of the Bible’s moral logic does not only ask what is commanded or prohibited, but why.

⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 12–13.

⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 49–52.

⁷Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 32–34.

Therefore, appeals to biological complementarity in the creation narrative to understand Pauline or other biblical texts condemnations against same-sex relations are unwarranted and do not understand the Bible's moral logic.

Brownson also works to correct revisionist arguments over the past generation. He offers a corrective to Dan Via's argument that any same-sex actions arising out of a loving and just heart, and which do not harm others, cannot be considered sinful. While Brownson does not dispute this point in principle (he argues that those elements are necessary), he does argue that justice and love are not sufficient in themselves to formulate a Christian sexual ethic.⁸ He contends that appeals to justice and love are far too broad. The moral logic of the diverse, multicultural Scriptures must be understood in light of the progressive and unfolding nature of the canon. This interpretative framework—i.e., biblical theology—helps to “distinguish those patterns in Scripture that are *normal*, or descriptive, from those patterns that are *normative*, or prescriptive.”⁹ Brownson sets out the methodology for his argument as (1) a canonical examination of Scripture's moral logic, particularly as it relates to sexual ethics; (2) an exploration of the Bible's moral logic in light of the its cultural contexts while also examining how this moral logic transcends modern culture; (3) an exegesis of the relevant biblical passages in

⁸Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 45–46, 53. See also Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 34–39. It is important to note that Brownson does not dispute much of what Via argues, only that Via's argument for love and justice is not sufficient. Brownson would not dispute Via's classification of revisionist types: (1) the NT condemns abusive pederastic relationships, not loving, consensual adults; and, (2) there is more revelation and knowledge beyond the NT through the Spirit that helps to reinterpret faith traditions. The reinterpetative process that produced the Gospels must continue today in the Christian community.

⁹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 51. Brownson argues that cultural particularity is present in the canon's diversity, but it is the movement of revelation that reveals the moral logic that transcends culture and place. This progressive movement is rooted in the gospel, the fulfillment of God's self-revelation.

light of this moral logic; and, (4) outlining implications today for the church and committed same-sex partners in light of the Bible's moral logic.¹⁰

Biblical theology and exegesis. Although Brownson argues for a canonical reading of Scripture, his presentation of the debate centers around different categories and themes in the same-sex debate, including patriarchy, one flesh, procreation, celibacy, lust and desire, purity and impurity, honor and shame, and nature. Brownson then examines these different biblical themes in light of (at least) seven biblical passages that are relevant to the same-sex debate: Genesis 1–2, Genesis 19, Leviticus 18 and 20, Judges 19, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1. In order to discern the Bible's forms of moral logic, Brownson examines themes he believes are relevant to the debate in light of some or all of these seven passages. He begins with the concept of “patriarchy” to determine whether this biblical theme is normal or normative.¹¹ Brownson contends that creation's emphasis is on equality. Male and female are both equal image-bearers and the emphasis on Adam and Eve is one of similarity, not difference. His conclusion is that patriarchy is not grounded in creation, but rather in the curses tied to the fall in Genesis 3. Brownson sidesteps New Testament passages (e.g., 1 Tim 2) that teach some form of patriarchy by arguing that “despite these attempts of New Testament writers to find a basis for certain forms of patriarchy in the creation narratives, we must also note the remarkable egalitarian motifs that appear in the creation stories themselves.”¹² In

¹⁰Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 52.

¹¹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 57. There is debate over the usefulness of the term “patriarchy.” It is a loaded term with considerable baggage. Brownson defines patriarchy as “the cultural pattern in which males are assumed to be dominant and females are expected to be submissive.” I am unaware of a complementarian who would agree with this definition of patriarchy, nor does it seem to reflect accurately biblical teaching on male headship in the nuclear family and church body. This point will be discussed later in the chapter.

¹²Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 58. Brownson reveals that at minimum, that the ANE and first-century cultures during the time of the prophetic and apostolic writings negatively influenced the authors of Scripture with attitudes that God did not affirm. In fact, Brownson ties heterosexual marriage to

particular, Brownson argues that Jesus has supplanted these patriarchal assumptions with egalitarian structures, particularly in the context of the nuclear family.¹³ Jesus has decoupled this patriarchal structure from heterosexual marriage by eliminating any semblance of hierarchical authority. Jesus' Messianic ministry is ushering in the eschaton so that Christians are beginning to see glimpses of new creation realities in an already/not yet sense.¹⁴ Appealing to several New Testament passages (Gal 3; 1 Cor 7, 11, and 14; Eph 5; 1 Tim 2 and 6; Titus 2), Brownson contends that union with Christ is central to human identity, and God's eschatological vision for humanity now precludes gender distinctions. Male and female distinctions (i.e., gender complementarity) are being removed by the new creation, therefore gender complementarity cannot be used as an adequate defense against same-sex relations.¹⁵

Brownson tackles the issue of "one-flesh" by first addressing Genesis 1–2. He argues that Scripture does not use biological differences "as the explicit basis for differentiating roles or identities for male and female."¹⁶ Brownson contends that the

culture, not creation. Any rigid commitment solely to heterosexual marriage in today's culture is purely a societal structure, not a biblical category. These ideas elucidate Brownson's understanding of the inspiration, unity, and authority of Scripture, which will be addressed in more detail later in the present chapter.

¹³Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*. Brownson's core argument can be summarized thusly: the New Testament has solidified what the Old Testament foreshadowed—an egalitarian motif established by Jesus' ministry. Jesus overturned patriarchal assumptions during his earthly ministry by allowing women to follow him, as well as by allowing women to lead in various ministry aspects once the church was established in Acts.

¹⁴Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 65. Brownson argues that Gal 3:27–28 indicates that there is no eschatological differentiation between male and female in the new creation. He contends that along with the basic distinctions between insider and outsider, powerful and powerless, Paul is also sweeping away distinctive male and female pairings devoted to procreation. Jesus is undoing the distinctions that form the foundational structures of old order human society in order to usher in a new order/new creation structure for human society.

¹⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 81–84. It is unclear exactly what Brownson means when he states that male and female distinctions are being swept away, because he has critiqued the "spiritual" reading of that idea (i.e., God has broken down every distinction that once existed that separated people from covenant relationship with him on the basis of faith).

¹⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 85.

focus of the creation narrative is on the similarities, not differences, between male and female. In presenting Eve as a helper, the Genesis 2 author shows that Adam’s problem was not one of gender, but loneliness. Jesus affirms this point in his rejection of divorce in Matthew 19—the intimate bond in the marital kinship union is primary and central, irrespective of procreative ability.¹⁷ In fact, the mystery of the Christ-church relationship that Paul articulates in Ephesians 5 can be demonstrated in many other forms of human community beyond heterosexual marriage. What is primary in the Christ-church relationship is kinship love and covenant faithfulness, but these realities are certainly seen and experienced in all human relationships, not exclusively heterosexual marriage. Brownson claims 1 Corinthians 6 teaches the importance of human embodiment and sexuality. Humans communicate with their bodies, and sexual relations is a form of communication that must be conveyed with integrity and Christian faithfulness.¹⁸ While Scripture assumes this one-flesh bond is solely between a man and a woman, Brownson asserts that the Bible does not necessarily prohibit committed same-sex relationships because “what is *normal* in the biblical witness may not necessarily be *normative* in different cultural settings that are not envisioned by the biblical writers.”¹⁹

Brownson turns to procreation, critiquing Roman Catholicism’s official teaching that procreation is the foremost intention of marriage. Protestants, Brownson argues, rightly argue that the kinship bond in the marital union is the essence of biblical marriage. Brownson argues that the inability to produce children in marriage does not invalidate the marital union because a marriage does not require procreation in order to

¹⁷Brownson does not mention the necessity of procreation as part of God’s command to Adam in the covenant of creation.

¹⁸Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 100–103.

¹⁹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 109. Brownson argues that committed same-sex relationships fulfill the kinship bond requirement of the marital union because Scripture does not demand gender complementarity, traditional understandings of one-flesh union, procreation, or an implicit hierarchical authority structure.

be considered valid. In fact, the command to be “fruitful and multiply” in Genesis 1 is given to animals as well as humans, and this phrase is noticeably absent in Genesis 2.²⁰ Genesis 2, Song of Songs, Ephesians 5, and 1 Corinthians 7 do not even mention procreation, but rather emphasize kinship bond, intimacy, and mutual support. Procreative complementarity is normal in marriage, but not normative. Childlessness and/or the inability to have children, therefore, is not a valid reason to deny same-sex couples the right to marry.²¹

Brownson’s chapter on celibacy posits a dramatic shift from Old Testament to New Testament regarding singleness. While there was only a small number of Old Testament passages that demanded the temporary avoidance of sexual activity, the New Testament presents the Messiah as a life-long unmarried man. Paul also exhorts his single readers in 1 Corinthians 7 to imitate him by remaining celibate. Brownson argues that in Matthew 19, Jesus is not promoting sexual asceticism when he teaches that some people are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Rather, Jesus is teaching a form of celibacy for missional purposes.²² Celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7, Brownson contends, is

²⁰Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 115–16. Important to Brownson’s argument is the contention that “be fruitful and multiply” is better understood as a blessing, rather than a command. Every other context in Scripture in which this phrase is given (Gen 8:37, 9:1, 7; 35:11; Lev 26:9; Jer 23:3; Ezek 36:11) is one of divine blessing. Similarly, procreation ought to be seen as a blessing of marriage, not its essence. Also, Song of Solomon makes no mention of procreation.

²¹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 124–25. Brownson argues that same-sex couples can also provide appropriate parenting because modern parenting patterns “differ markedly in different cultures and different epochs.” Brownson cites a 2004 American Psychological Association paper to confirm the reality that same-sex couples can provide vital support and care as parents to adopted children. There is dispute, however, to the political and/or social bias of the American Psychological Association. See Myles Collier, “American Psychological Association Pushing ‘Ultra-Liberal’ Agenda, Says Former President,” *The Christian Post*, June 12, 2012, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/american-psychological-association-pushing-ultra-liberal-agenda-says-former-president-76130/>; Maria Konnikova, “Is Social Psychology Biased Against Republicans?,” *The New Yorker*, October 30, 2014, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/social-psychology-biased-republicans>.

²²Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 131–32. Interestingly, Brownson does not comment on the first category of eunuch in Matt 19:12— εἰσὶν γὰρ εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως. It is possible that same-sex attracted individuals could be included in this particular category.

both a gift and calling. The Bible does not teach Christians to repress sexual desires but rather to channel them into disciplined service to God. Therefore, Brownson contends, gay and lesbian Christians are in an exceptionally difficult position because of the rigidity of their sexual orientation. In light of the immutability of sexual orientation (in most cases), Brownson proposes that same-sex attracted people should have the opportunity to commit to monogamous same-sex relationships to be faithful to Paul's specific call to willful celibacy.²³

Brownson shifts his argument to address relevant theological themes derived from Paul's argument in Romans 1:24–27. Brownson first addresses lust and desire, arguing that Paul's contention in Romans 1 is not against same-sex attraction or behavior per se, but rather same-sex behavior that was driven by excessive and uncontrolled lust. Paul did not conceive of sexual orientation because first-century Roman or Jewish culture knew nothing of this modern idea. Paul understood this excessive sexual immorality to be only that action which was totally self-consumed and driven by “exotic and unnatural forms of stimulation in the pursuit of pleasure.”²⁴ The extreme lust in Romans 1 is self-destructive, but *ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις* used by Paul in Romans 1:24 has a wide-range of meaning and does not necessarily carry a negative term always.²⁵ Brownson asserts that the connotation of *ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις* in 1:24 could not include same-sex monogamy because Paul would have never envisioned a committed same-sex couple desiring marriage. The problem, Brownson contends, is the distinction between sexual orientation and same-sex

²³Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 143–46. Brownson denies the idea that gay Christians are called to celibacy by virtue of their unchanging sexual orientation.

²⁴Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 154–56. Brownson does not clarify what he means by “unnatural.” He argues that Paul is possibly alluding to the sexual excesses of the Roman Emperor Caligula. See also Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). The emphasis of this excessive lust is one where heterosexual persons are driven beyond their normal sexual appetites to grotesque self-indulgence, including same-sex relations.

²⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 167. Luke 22:15, Phil 1:23, and 1 Thess 2:17 are examples of neutral or positive uses of the term.

behavior. In the Romans 1 debate, you see an emphasis “on two problems: the *subjective* problem of excessive lust and the *objective* problem of behavior that is regarded as ‘contrary to nature.’”²⁶ When interpreting Romans 1, traditionalists wrongly focus on the objective disorder of same-sex relationships, while Paul emphasizes out-of-control, selfish desire. When making ethical conclusions regarding same-sex relationships, traditionalists (again) wrongly focus on the objective disorder of same-sex relationships. They should rather understand that Scripture does not have a hard stance against the subjective issue of same-sex attraction, which is itself intimately connected to the “highly resistant to change” understanding of sexual orientation. If the objective problem of same-sex behavior is itself sinful, then where does one draw the line with regard to subjective same-sex attraction? Brownson concludes by arguing that Romans 1 prohibition against excessive lust is not entirely relevant to the debate over same-sex marriage because monogamous same-sex relationships are not driven by out-of-control lust.²⁷

Brownson moves from lust to impurity, examining Paul’s use of ἀκαθαρσία in Romans 1:24. Brownson situates the concept of ἀκαθαρσία in Old Testament law, arguing that the New Testament does not present any distinction between ceremonial and moral law, and many of the Old Testament laws are no longer binding upon Gentile Christians as they were Old Testament Jews. Building upon the works of Mary Douglas and Jacob Milgrom, the moral logic of Old Testament purity laws connected the orderliness of the created world (holiness), the stewardship of life (wholeness), and separation of Israel from the nations (distinctness). Together, these three aspects of purity are then redefined in the New Testament when Jesus moves the idea of purity away from

²⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 170.

²⁷Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 175–77.

external acts toward the motives and dispositions of the heart and will.²⁸ The New Testament also sees purity move away from separateness and defensiveness to engagement and confidence—i.e., Jesus moves towards unclean sinners and Christians spouses make their unbelieving spouses holy. Finally, the New Testament envisions purity as looking forward to the new creation in light of the old creation. Paul’s emphasis on internal sins in Romans 1:29–31 seems to indicate, Brownson surmises, that impurity should also be defined as those excessive, self-indulgent lusts that are characteristic of the unrestrained, licentious sinners in Romans 1:24–27. Like lust, Paul’s emphasis is on the subjective attitudes and dispositions of the heart, and Brownson argues that a monogamous same-sex relationship can be a place where sexual desire is disciplined and sanctified.²⁹ In this same vein, Brownson deflects Gagnon’s point that same-sex relationships and incest are objectively impure based on their prohibitions in Leviticus 20:11–13. Brownson argues that Paul, when dealing with incest in 1 Corinthians 5, does not mention impurity because there was no hint of sexual excess or a lack of restraint in that situation—the objective nature of incest was enough for Paul to command church discipline. Brownson argues that while incest has many good reasons for being considered “objectively disordered,” he does not believe the same applies to same-sex intimacy because discipline and sanctification can occur in this kind of relationship.³⁰

²⁸Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 184–89. See also, Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

²⁹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 197–98. He also argues that same-sex relationships can emphasize “the restoration of clearly demarcated roles and distinctions of the original creation (to the extent these can be clearly discerned in the creation narratives)” (198). God can use sanctified homosexual marriages to draw other gay and lesbian persons into the divine love.

³⁰Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 199–202. Brownson gives no biblical support for characterizing incest as objectively disordered. Interestingly, he contends that “too much sameness” is not a sufficient reason to deny same-sex partnerships, but then goes on to dispute against incest with the same logic.

Brownson seeks to situate Paul's use of the infinitive τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι (v. 24) and the corresponding noun ἀτιμία (v. 27) into the biblical categories of honor and shame. Brownson contends that honor and shame are not absolute realities, but culturally situated and often tied to gender. Brownson disputes modern interpretations that Romans 1:26 refers to lesbian activity, contending that there was not a single discussion of lesbianism in commentaries on Romans 1:26 during the first 300 years of church history.³¹ Instead, Brownson argues, these shameless acts perpetrated by women in Romans 1 are any sexual behavior outside the context of marriage or a failure to maintain appropriate passive or submissive roles within marriage. While Paul clearly denounces male-male sexual activity, Brownson insists that male shame was relevant in Romans 1 only because a same-sex male partner (1) was forcing another male partner to adopt a passive/feminine role; (2) was himself adopting a passive/feminine role; or, (3) was exhibiting excessive, self-centered passion, which was culturally associated with femininity.³² Brownson maintains that honor-shame codes, including those codes present in Scripture, are not normative because all codes are culturally-situated. The need to honor all people is a normative moral mandate, but what is considered honorable is culturally defined. Western culture, Brownson asserts, has come to realize that traditional gender roles fail to adequately honor women and their giftings, and this realization must also inform our understanding of same-sex relationships.³³

³¹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 207–8. See also James Miller, “The Practices of Romans 1:26: Homosexual or Heterosexual?” *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995): 1–11; Jeremy Townsley, “Paul, the Goddess Religions, and Queer Sects: Romans 1:23–28,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 4 (2011): 707–28.

³²Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 211. Brownson contends that in the Old Testament and Greco-Roman context, female slaves and war captives were understood to be the property of male owners and/or captors, and it was appropriate for females to submit to this relationship. He briefly attempts to situate the treatment of female slaves or prisoners in the contexts of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, but does not situate the nature of sexual activity itself in its Jewish context. Brownson rather situates Paul's commentary on sexual activity solely in a Greco-Roman context.

³³Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 214–18. Brownson rightly contends that there is a need

The final Romans 1 category that Brownson ties to Scripture’s moral logic is nature. Brownson rightly reasons that nature is central to the debate over homosexuality, and admits that whatever is “unnatural” in Romans 1 is clearly wrong.³⁴ Paul’s use here of *παρὰ φύσιν* does not explicitly connect to the Hebrew Bible or LXX and should not be understood as inherently Jewish. In fact, Paul’s use of “exchanged” demonstrates, again, that he does not have a modern conception of sexual orientation because people with a same-sex orientation cannot exchange or give up an orientation they never possessed (i.e., heterosexual orientation).³⁵ Paul’s use of nature likely included normal social conventions and did not always indicate divine intention (see 1 Cor 11:13–14), whereas Gagnon essentially equates *φύσις* with “anatomical and procreative complementarity.”³⁶ Due to Paul’s vision of Christ as the eschatological fulfillment of God’s new creation promises, Paul’s use of nature is juxtaposed with early Jewish writers like Philo and Josephus, who see nature as synonymous with the old creation (i.e., Gen 1–2 and the Mosaic law). Therefore, Pauline theology does not consider the created order as

for good shame, but that shame is not appropriate for people who experience same-sex orientation because the vast majority of people who are same-sex orientated cannot change their orientation. Brownson contends that our shame is socially-constructed and same-sex shaming by traditionalists is ultimately grounded in their prejudices, fears, anxieties, distortions, and hatred of those around them, particularly those who are close to them (215).

³⁴Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 224.

³⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 225–32. Brownson proposes that the use of *τὴν φύσιν* likely finds its origins in Stoicism around 200 BCE. Paul’s use of nature conveys both *objective* (that which is evident all around humanity in the visible world) and *subjective* (a person’s own deepest and most natural inclinations and dispositions) aspects that Paul himself did not address or anticipate. See John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 110–12. Brownson rejects the efforts of some traditionalists who, he contends, try to downplay Paul’s ignorance of sexual orientation by interpreting Rom 1 as a corporate experience. Cf. Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 389; Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 78.

³⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 236–37. Brownson rejects the traditionalist argument of nature only in terms of procreation. I am unaware of any traditionalist who argues that heterosexual marriage is natural solely because of procreation. Cf. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 254.

necessarily normative, and creation should not be understood apart from its transformation in Christ.³⁷ Admittedly, central to Brownson's argument here is that the New Testament "does not envision the kind of committed, mutual, lifelong, loving, moderated gay and lesbian unions that are emerging today. The New Testament also does not envision the elimination of the institution of slavery, or birth control, or women as leaders in society."³⁸ Critical to understanding these new creation realities today is the Spirit-empowered interpretive community. The Holy Spirit guides Christians to collectively capture the Bible's moral vision for true biblical sexuality, and to reimagine a world unanticipated by the first-century apostles—a new order that includes committed gay and lesbian relationships.³⁹

Theological considerations. Brownson makes several theological points that require unpacking. First, Brownson's contention is that gender complementarity is not essential to the nature of marriage and traditionalists are misguided in their argument that complementarity is needed to fully represent the image of God. Second, the culture of the Scripture (patriarchy) must be rightly understood so that Christians understand what was culturally normal for the biblical authors is not necessarily normative for Christians today. Third, the new creation work of Christ allows Christians today to understand that Christ has fulfilled and abrogated the culturally-situated commands in the Old Testament that prohibit same-sex behavior. In light of new creation realities, one can now affirm same-sex marriage as a faithful depiction of the Christ-church relationship because of the

³⁷Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 249–51. Brownson contends that committed same-sex unions can find a place in the Spirit-transformed creation in the same way that women can serve in NT leadership and a eunuch can be included in the new covenant family.

³⁸Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 251–52. Brownson is borrowing from Webb's trajectory hermeneutic at this particular point. See William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

³⁹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 254–55.

emphasis on kinship and sameness, not complementarity and procreation. Fourth, and closely linked to the previous point, the Scripture provides a foundation upon which the Spirit builds through individual experience. For example, Brownson argues that his revisionist perspective of the New Testament is in the same hermeneutical stream as those Christians who fought to overturn slavery, denounced patriarchy and promoted egalitarianism, and encouraged women into leadership positions in both the church and society. This hermeneutical perspective is one that has, at its core, a commitment to the Holy Spirit giving individuals in the community of faith experiences that allow the community to reimagine the moral vision of the Bible.

Fifth, Christian experience is a powerful hermeneutical reality and helpful in understanding the *imago Dei*. Each person is fully made in the image of God, including biological realities because a person is an embodied creature. The biological impulses to be same-sex attracted is natural and God-given, and what is “natural” for the gay Christian should not be “exchanged” as Paul condemned in Romans 1. If celibacy is too difficult for a Christian who experiences same-sex attraction (1 Cor 7:6–9), he should be able to enter into a monogamous same-sex relationship. The church must reject attitudes of toxic shame and impurity towards him due to immutable sexual orientation. This reality has allowed believers today to understand the limitations of the biblical authors, particularly as it relates to their ignorance of the immutability of sexual orientation for the vast majority of same-sex attracted Christians. Finally, Christians must read, understand, and interpret Scripture canonically and culturally in order to ascertain its moral logic. For example, much of the supposed biblical prohibitions against same-sex desire and/or behavior actually condemn excessive lust, self-indulgence, and pederasty. Once the Bible’s moral logic has been discerned, one can proceed to formulate theological and ethical conclusions that accurately reflect the new creation bent of the Scriptures.

David Gushee

David Gushee is a Christian ethics professor and director of the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia. He revisited the same-sex marriage issue after many transformative encounters with gay Christians, time at his local church, and his interactions with his own sister who recently came out as a lesbian. Gushee, like Brownson, argues that biblical theology is crucial to the debate. Unlike Brownson, Gushee does not spend extensive time in exegetical debate, but as a Christian ethicist, he spends more time applying his theological and ethical conclusions on this issue to the church today.

Presuppositions and thesis. Gushee lays out his most extensive exegetical defense for the gay Christian in *Changing Our Mind*. He argues that biblical theology and personal experience have helped to adjust his views on this particular issue.⁴⁰ Similar to Brownson, Gushee argues that the church historically has not had a category for understanding sexual orientation, so biblical principles must be garnered from a canonical reading of Scripture and then applied to this present issue. To be more precise, it was not until the twentieth-century church realized a distinction should be drawn between orientation and behavior that it began to gradually accept same-sex persons into the church. Gushee argues that, while the Bible is authoritative, Christians must examine the reality of gay Christianity in light of both modern scientific fact and Jesus Christ.⁴¹ On a similar note, Gushee concludes that the two opposing sides of the same-sex debate differ over biblical theology and hermeneutics.⁴² Due to his commitment to gay Christians,

⁴⁰David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017), 5. Gushee argues that his embrace of LGBT+ Christians was a hermeneutical change, not a change in his understanding of the nature and authority of the Scriptures.

⁴¹Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 25–27. See also “Response to Critics” in the appendix, where he addresses this point in further detail.

⁴²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 49–53. Gushee rightly argues that because of sin, “there is no

among other salient issues, Gushee has recently walked away from the label “evangelical,” arguing that the term is synonymous with white American Christianity, as well as a rehashing of early twentieth-century fundamentalism.⁴³ Gushee rightly argues that God’s design for sexuality in creation (Gen 1–2) is the most significant theological issue in the debate.⁴⁴ Like Brownson, Gushee’s thesis is that gay Christians should be fully accepted into the church and that the covenantal-marital ethic ought to be expanded to include gay, lesbian and bisexual Christians who want to make a lifetime covenant with one person in keeping with Christian tradition.⁴⁵

Biblical theology and exegesis. Gushee outlines a brief overview of the traditionalist position. Like Brownson, he primarily examines seven different groups of biblical texts that traditionalists have relied upon to dispute the issues of gay Christianity and same-sex marriage (Gen 1–2, 19; Lev 18:22, 20:13; Judg 19; Matt 19:1–12/Mark 10:2–12; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9/1 Tim 1:10). He first examines Sodom (Gen 19) and Gibeah (Judg 19), arguing that in both cases the primary issues are inhospitable people, patriarchy, and gang rape. In fact, neither story has anything to do the morality of monogamous same-sex couples.⁴⁶

way for us to avoid struggles over competing truth claims and how they are authoritatively grounded” (52). Gushee probably pushes this point too far, but he does correctly state that it is not simply important to understand “what a text once meant, but what it means for the believing church today” (53). This point highlights the distinction between grammatical-historical exegesis and Christian ethics.

⁴³David P. Gushee, *Still Christian: Following Jesus Out of American Evangelicalism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 146–50.

⁴⁴Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 81.

⁴⁵Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 103–5. In fact, Gushee’s argument for same-sex marriage is clearly a secondary issue for him. His main contention is that gay Christians need to be received into the church as brothers and sisters. He then contends that although the covenantal-marital ethic has been damaged in American culture by the epidemics of casual sex and divorce, this ethic is necessary for genuine human flourishing and should be expanded to include monogamous same-sex couples.

⁴⁶Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 58–63. The Sodom story is particularly sinful, Gushee suggests, because “the men wanted to dominate, humiliate and harm the male visitors precisely *by treating them like defenseless women*. In sexist social systems, the most outrageous thing you can do to a man is to

Gushee examines the Levitical prohibitions (18:22 and 20:13), noting the relevance of same-sex acts never again being mentioned in Old Testament law. In fact, the Old Testament describes at least 111 of 117 acts as תועבה, but few Christians ever describe those other acts as “abominations.”⁴⁷ Gushee rightly demands Christians maintain consistency as they argue that Old Testament commands are applicable to the new covenant community today. He rejects the tripartite division of the law, disputes Old Testament law applicability without the corresponding punishment, and criticizes the supposed reductionism of rejecting Old Testament laws while seeking to practice their underlying principles. Gushee laments the tendency in the church (and Christian scholarship) to co-opt Old Testament law while ignoring its historic Jewish and rabbinic interpretations.

Gushee explores 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10, arguing that Paul (and/or a pseudonymous “Paul”) uses separate lists of sins with two hotly debated words— ἀρσενοκοῖται and μαλακοί.⁴⁸ Gushee surveys the scholarship, including revisionists like William Loader, as well as traditionalists like Gagnon.⁴⁹ There is little doubt that ἀρσενοκοῖται was coined by Paul with Leviticus (LXX) in mind, particularly because the word is not found elsewhere in Greek until after Paul (and in those cases, it is

treat him like a woman” (62). Lot’s angelic guests were ripe targets for violation in the minds of Sodom’s men.

⁴⁷Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 66. Gushee alleges that both Old and New Testament Jewish contexts were uneasy about non-procreative sexual acts (including same-sex) by citing Phyllis Bird’s argument that תועבה was not an ethical term but rather a term of boundary marking. See Phyllis A. Bird, “The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation Concerning Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture*, ed. David L. Balch (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 142–76. Bird argues that the community of faith possesses the authority to hold the canonical Scriptures together, and this same authority continues beyond canonical writing to the present because the story of redemption itself continues to today (144–45).

⁴⁸Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 74–75.

⁴⁹See William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012); Loader, *Sexuality in the New Testament: Understanding the Key Texts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

still listed as a vice). Gushee asserts, however, that there is so much disagreement amongst scholars as to how to translate these words into English, that to condemn homosexual persons over a disputed translation remains rather dubious. Rather than bringing clarity to the debate, Gushee maintains that these terms have caused considerable damage to the “lives of vulnerable people made in God’s image.”⁵⁰

Gushee explains that Genesis 1–2, Matthew 19 (and its parallels), and Romans 1 are all relevant to the same-sex debate because all four passages are used, in a variety of ways, to suggest the illegitimacy of same-sex relationships based upon God’s creation design for human sexuality grounded in gender complementarity. Gushee contends that Genesis 1–2 has multiple authors, with an editor weaving together the separate creation accounts (Gen 1–2:4a and 2:4b–25) during and after the Jewish exile to Babylon (587–539 BCE). Gushee argues that the normative nature of Genesis 1–2 is now being called into question because of reproductive technology attenuating the procreative exclusivity of heterosexual marriage. He also asserts that “mutual care for children, helper-partner companionship (Gen 2:18) and total self-giving, can and do occur among covenanted gay and lesbian couples.”⁵¹ The main goal of Matthew 19 was not to speak to same-sex relationships, but rather to rebuke the permissiveness of Jewish men to divorce their wives for trivial reasons, leaving families ruined and women destitute.⁵²

⁵⁰Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 80.

⁵¹Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 82–83.

⁵²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 84; David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 256–58. Gushee argues that procreation should not be used as a biblical disqualifier for same-sex relationships, but then argues that the care of children should be used as a biblical disqualifier for polygamy. Gushee contends that the biblical evidence is clear—sexual exclusivity is necessary for marriage. While the Bible does not condemn polygamous relationships, it clearly implies its subpar nature. In fact, Gushee maintains, Jesus’ teaching in Matt 19 implicitly rules out polygamy (but not same-sex relationships). Polygamy should be rejected because the Christian tradition has rejected it, “the unlikelihood of an egalitarian polygamous covenantalism as well as protecting the overall well-being of women and children.” Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 258.

In his examination of Romans 1, Gushee asserts that it is unfair to apply the “exchange” language to sexual minorities because they are not giving up what is “natural” to them, and Paul simply had no conception of sexual orientation. Also, the same-sex behavior in the Greco-Roman world was more akin to pederasty, prostitution, and master-slave sex, and was condemned by Christians and pagans alike for selfishness and domination. Like Brownson, Gushee believes Paul was probably rebuking the sexual recklessness of Gaius Caligula via his Roman imperial court audience. Gushee also asserts Paul was condemning the revolting depravity of Roman culture that authorized the use of violent sodomy against powerless young men and slaves due to their lower social class.⁵³ Gushee insists that what Paul is not referring to in Romans 1 is committed same-sex relationships. Gushee’s hermeneutical proposal is that interpreters should (1) lean towards Jesus and his new creation, rather than leaning backwards to ground theology and ethics in the primeval creation narratives; and, (2) consider how Genesis 3 has distorted our pursuit of sexual ethics, while also remembering that no one’s sexuality is innocent.⁵⁴ Gushee’s answer to Genesis 3 ethics and sexuality is the normative nature of “covenant.” He contends that the Genesis 3/covenantal-marital ethic emerges in texts like Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5.⁵⁵ Gushee insists that a person’s experience of the transformative power of the Spirit in the context of the gay Christian community will shred the traditional, destructive way of connecting the biblical dots (i.e., biblical theology).⁵⁶ This paradigm leap via a transformative encounter is what Jewish and early Gentile Christians experienced with Jesus, and Christians can experience this today as

⁵³Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 87–90. See also Sarah Ruden, *Paul among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* (New York: Image Books, 2010).

⁵⁴Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 96.

⁵⁵Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 104. Ironically, Matt 19 and Eph 5 ground the covenantal-marital sexual ethic *prior* to Gen 3.

⁵⁶Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 108–11.

they interact with gay Christians while trusting the Holy Spirit to help them rightly understand the storyline of Scripture.⁵⁷

Theological considerations. Gushee makes several theological and ethical points that deserve attention. First, Gushee contends that grammatical-historical exegesis of biblical texts is necessary while also reading those passages in their canonical, cultural, historical, and scientific contexts. Biblical authors and editors had no framework for sexual orientation, and certainly had no conception of the immutability of same-sex attraction and desire. Second, a faithful hermeneutical perspective requires an initial paradigm leap—i.e., a transformative encounter in the context of gay Christian community by the power of the Spirit so that one can rightly interpret the Bible’s teaching on gay Christians and covenantal-marital ethics. Third, fundamentalism and its theological offshoots must be utterly rejected because a rejection of gay Christians and same-sex marriage diminishes the image of God in these same people. These theological camps recapitulate the church’s ethical errors in history (e.g., slavery and women’s rights). Fourth, this issue has considerable ecclesiological implications. Gushee argues that local churches who include celibate same-sex attracted Christians while also excluding noncelibate gays from membership are incompatible with the way of Jesus and the mission of the church.⁵⁸ Fifth, like Brownson, he grounds the nature of marriage in permanence and exclusivity, not gender or sexual complementarity. Both scholars reject

⁵⁷See a similar argument for the “existential leap” in David Crump, *Encountering Jesus, Encountering Scripture: Reading the Bible Critically in Faith* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013). Crump examines and incorporates Søren Kierkegaard’s Christian existentialism in the face of the historical criticism of the Scriptures. Cf. D. A. Carson, “The Many Facets of the Current Discussion,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 8–9.

⁵⁸Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 41. This issue raises questions of consistency. Gushee argues for Christian freedom and freedom of the conscience, but he does not explain what church membership means and whether churches will be able to practice forms of “what used to be called church discipline” (58).

polygamy and incest, but do not present exegetical arguments for these rejections. Sixth, while Gushee maintains that the major issue in the debate is biblical theology and the creation narrative, he also questions if there exists an authority by which hermeneutical disagreements may be adjudicated. Since evangelical opponents who argue for competing perspectives also appeal to the authority of Scripture, Gushee seems to believe that the interpretive process is irreparably tainted, necessitating a spiritual paradigm leap. Seventh, Gushee rightly argues that Christians must be consistent with the application of biblical morality in the realm of Christian ethics. His rejection of any misapplication of the Old Testament law illuminates the necessity for a robust, consistent Christian ethic derived from the Bible's own categories and redemptive storyline. Theological formulation in light of the Bible's canonical presentation is essential for avoiding the misuse of the Scriptures. Finally, Gushee rightly situates the heart of the matter in how the Old and New Testaments understand the creation narrative in Genesis 1–3. Like Brownson, he proposes that the old creation should not be used as the primary hermeneutical lens by which one understands the work of Christ or the nature of marriage. Christians must carefully unpack how Christ has ushered new creation realities into the present world and then formulate theological and ethical conclusions about gay Christianity and same-sex marriage in light of this eschatological framework.

Matthew Vines

Matthew Vines is not a scholar, but his popular-level influence has reached far beyond that of James Brownson and David Gushee. Vines has popularized many of these two scholars' ideas, while also adding some of his own thoughts and caveats to this issue. He is founder and Executive Director of The Reformation Project, a professing Christian organization that works to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion by reforming church teaching and whose vision entails a global church that fully affirms LGBTQ+ people.

Presuppositions and thesis. Vines professes both a theologically conservative

background and a traditional view of Scripture.⁵⁹ This view of Scripture would, minimally, include divine inspiration, and Vines pushes back on those people who see Scripture as a “dated guidebook” and not as the final authority for life, faith, doctrine, and morality.⁶⁰ Though Vines is not a scholar, he aims to synthesize the work of several scholars, including Brownson, and provide insights that are relevant for the church and Western culture. His primary thesis and core argument is “not simply that some Bible passages have been misinterpreted and others have been given undue weight.”⁶¹ He continues, “My larger argument is this: *Christians who affirm the full authority of Scripture can also affirm committed, monogamous same-sex relationships.*”⁶²

Vines examines the six passages of Scripture that explicitly address same-sex behavior—Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; and, 1 Timothy 1:10. A large part of Vines’ argument and interpretation of these passages is grounded in the power of human experience. Both his experience of struggling with same-sex attraction and modern understandings of sexual orientation have informed his understandings of these particular biblical texts and the larger redemptive-historical framework of the Bible. Vines implicitly believes that biblical theology lies at the center of the debate. For example, Vines writes, “Leviticus prohibits male same-sex

⁵⁹Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 2. Vines rightly quotes 2 Tim 3:16 to affirm Scripture’s divine inspiration, while also making an insightful comment about secular and mainline Protestant society: “[The divine inspiration] view of the Bible lies at the heart of our culture’s polarization over same-sex relationships. While much of our secular society and many mainline churches have come to embrace gay relationships, the evangelical church has not. Why? Evangelicals’ beliefs are based on how they read the Bible, and most evangelicals believe the Bible condemns all same-sex relationships.” This is a different approach from that of most mainline Protestant (liberal) denominations. Cf. John Shelby Spong, *Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 94–155.

⁶⁰Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 1–2.

⁶¹Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 3.

⁶²Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 3. Vines desires to maintain his commitment to the authority of the Bible while also drawing conservative, evangelical Christians to “embrace and affirm their LGBT brothers and sisters.”

relations, but it uses similar language to prohibit the eating of shellfish. And while Paul did describe same-sex relations as ‘unnatural,’ he also wrote that for men to wear their hair long was contrary to ‘nature.’ Yet Christians no longer regard eating shellfish or men having long hair as sinful.”⁶³ Vines rightly argues that a person’s experience colors how one reads, studies, and interprets the Bible.⁶⁴ He wants to press traditionalists to consider how their interpretations have been colored by their own experience(s). In the same way that Jesus used an “experience-based test” to warn about bad trees bearing bad fruit, Vines wants readers to examine how the church’s responses to and reversals on social justice issues (e.g., Gentile inclusion in Acts 15; eighteenth and nineteenth century abolitionist movements; embrace of same-sex marriage today) occurred as results of the church’s experiences demanding reconsiderations and alterations of historic biblical interpretations.⁶⁵ Having outlined the assumptions and arguments that inform Vines’ thesis, a brief overview of his entire work is warranted.

Biblical theology and exegesis. The largest section of Vines’ book addresses the six biblical passages that explicitly address homosexual behavior. It is important to note that Vines sets the context for these passages with a brief treatment of Genesis 1–2.⁶⁶

⁶³Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 11–12.

⁶⁴One of postmodernism’s helpful corrections to modernism was the reality that no one has an unbiased approach to any text, because every person is a product of his culture, experiences, time, etc. It is beyond dispute that our interpretations are second-order and fallible, while Scripture is first-order and infallible. It is a logical fallacy, however, to “confuse the impossibility of certainty in understanding with the possibility of understanding.” See E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 17. This point is closely related to the *perspicuity* of Scripture. Vines unwittingly attacks both the *perspicuity* and *sufficiency* of the Bible.

⁶⁵Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 14–16. Vines misunderstands the context of Matt 7:15–20. He argues that the harmful effect of telling gay Christians that they are in sin is bad fruit because it is hurtful, but this misses the point of Jesus’ lesson. The emphasis in Matt 7 is covenant obedience, particularly as it has been fulfilled in Christ.

⁶⁶Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 45–47. It is telling that Vines largely neglects addressing Gen 3 and its effects on image of God, human sexuality, and the noetic effects of sin.

Vines argues the creation account does not emphasize the need for procreation, but rather the need for relationship. Like Brownson, Vines' interpretation of Genesis 2 focuses not on gender differences between Adam and Eve, but rather on their similarity as human beings. Vines rejects the differences between Adam and Eve as an acceptable basis for gender complementarity.

Vines argues that the main problem that led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 was not homosexual attraction, but rather gang rape. Non-consensual sexual encounters, as well as non-monogamous sexual relations (both heterosexual and homosexual), are judged.⁶⁷ Vines argues that although the biblical writers had a negative view of same-sex relations, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament suggested the sin in Genesis 19 “was primarily or even partly engaging in same-sex behavior.”⁶⁸ Vines argues that the interpretation of the Sodom story has changed since the time of Philo from inhospitality to same-sex behavior.⁶⁹

Commenting on the Levitical law, Vines argues that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament law. In fact, Vines rightly argues that covenant theology's traditional tripartite division of the Old Testament law is not derived from the text itself. Vines examines both Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, the two explicit Mosaic commands where consensual homosexual acts in Israel are outlawed and punished by death. He argues that homosexual acts were considered abominations because they functioned as boundary markers, similar to eating pork, shellfish, sexual relations during a woman's menstrual

⁶⁷Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 65–66. See also Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 268–69.

⁶⁸Cf. Jude 7. See Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 69. Vines writes, “The Bible never identifies same-sex behavior as the sin of Sodom, or even as a sin of Sodom. Even when Christians later came to read it that way, giving rise to the term *sodomy* in the eleventh century, their concept of same-sex behavior still differed greatly from the modern concepts of sexual orientation and gay Christians” (75). Vines assumes the immutability of homosexual orientation.

⁶⁹Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 72.

period, etc.⁷⁰ Vines then proceeds to bring the Levitical discussion back to gender complementarity (hierarchy and anatomy), arguing that the reason same-sex behavior is viewed negatively is because of the misogynistic cultures in which the biblical texts are situated. The focus of anti-homosexual Old Testament laws, Vines asserts, is not because of anatomical complementarity, but rather men degrading themselves by being treated like women.

Vines moves to Romans 1:26–27, asserting that Romans 1 is the most significant passage in the same-sex relations debate, and arguing that “this passage is not of central importance to Paul’s message in Romans . . . but in two verses (Rom 1:26–27), he described lustful same-sex relations between men, likely between women as well, and his words were starkly negative.”⁷¹ Vines admits that this passage is “indisputably negative,” but contends that it is important for readers to see that Paul makes a distinction between unbridled lust and “the intimate, committed relationships of gay Christians.” Paul’s argument is not based on the morality of anatomical complementarity, nor was he aware of sexual orientation. Therefore, Paul could not have intended to exclude monogamous, same-sex relationships. Vines comes closest to defining his understanding of sexual orientation when he states, “Gay people cannot choose to follow opposite-sex attractions, because they have no opposite-sex attractions to follow—nor can they manufacture them.”⁷² Paul, Vines asserts, is condemning *excess*, not moderation. Vines argues that Paul’s use of “nature” is more akin to “custom,” and that the honor-shame culture of Paul’s day must inform the context of Romans 1. Paul was reacting to

⁷⁰Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 84–85. Vines argues that Old Testament sexual norms do not necessarily carry over to Christians because polygamy and concubinage were not outlawed in the Old Testament, yet the Christian tradition has always rejected both. He argues, “While *abomination* is a negative word, it doesn’t necessarily correspond to Christian views of sin” (85).

⁷¹Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 96.

⁷²Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 103.

excessive sexual desire as a violation of cultural norms of the time, not same-sex monogamy.

The last passage that Vines examines is 1 Corinthians 6:9–10. He argues that the terms *μαλακοί* and *ἀρσενοκοῖται* do not prohibit active and passive same-sex partners, but rather prohibit immoderation and the economic exploitation of certain sexual relations.⁷³ Vines argues that older translations of these terms suffered because they did not “describe same-sex behavior as the expression of a sexual orientation.”⁷⁴ Vines concludes his section on the biblical passages arguing (1) church tradition is silent on gay Christians; (2) lifelong celibacy should be not forced upon gay Christians, but freely chosen; (3) the biblical authors did not have a modern understanding of sexual orientation, thus the Bible does not address this issue; (4) sexual excess was the problem in most, if not all, of the biblical passages that reference same-sex relations; and, (5) sexual complementarity is not mentioned in any of the texts. Vines closes this section of his book by arguing that God has expanded the idea of “family” to move beyond physical family (physical procreation) to spiritual family (spiritual regeneration), thereby negating the necessity of limiting marriage to heterosexual couples only. Patriarchal beliefs and relationships in the Bible are presented as passing away—similar to master-slave and

⁷³Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 119–26. There is no lexical evidence to provide warrant for this proposal. Cf. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and William F. Arndt, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009); J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1999); James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997); Robert Balz Horst and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990); Barclay M. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993).

⁷⁴Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 127. Vines argues that “sodomites” (eighteenth century) and “buggerers” (sixteenth century) “were labels applied on the basis of acts, not desires.”

Jew-Gentile relationships (Gal 3:28).⁷⁵ He rejects the limitation of one-flesh to heterosexual marriage, arguing that one-flesh points to the covenant relationship which serves as the foundation and basis for biblical marriage.⁷⁶ Ephesians 5 shows that one-flesh is two lives joined as one in covenant relationship, which does not exclude same-sex marriages.⁷⁷

Theological considerations. Vines describes the church's same-sex attraction debate today as similar to the heliocentric debate of the early seventeenth century. In the same way that scientific advancement (i.e., the telescope) helped to refine biblical interpretation, the church's interpretations of biblical passages addressing same-sex behavior also need to be refined in light of scientific advancement, specifically modern psychology.⁷⁸ Vines rejects the church's traditional understandings of gender complementarity, including arguments from both complementarian (*hierarchy*) and egalitarian (*anatomical differences*) camps.⁷⁹ Vines also argues that ancient conceptions of sexuality were significantly different from today's culture, and the main problem the Bible addresses is sexual *excess*, not same-sex orientation and monogamy. Vines believes that the act of calling some or all Christians who experience same-sex attraction to

⁷⁵Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 141–43. Vines argues, “Even if, when a man and a woman marry, they don’t have a hierarchal relationship, no one claims their marriage is invalid on that basis” (143). I am unaware of anyone who argues that an egalitarian marriage is invalid because it does not reflect biblical hierarchy. Complementarians would argue that an egalitarian marriage, while valid, certainly distorts the picture of Christ and the church. An egalitarian marriage still presents one man and one woman, even if roles are distorted.

⁷⁶Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 145; Cf. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 89.

⁷⁷Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 146. He argues that the relationship between Christ and the church doesn’t involve sexual union or anatomical difference. This passage will be addressed in chap. 3.

⁷⁸Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 21–25.

⁷⁹Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 26. For an extensive defense of “gender complementarity,” see Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*.

lifelong celibacy is not only new in the history of the church, but this act puts an unbearable burden on gay Christians.⁸⁰

A Common Doctrine of Scripture (?)

Having provided a brief survey of the revisionists' arguments, I now want to examine and critique the doctrine of Scripture which serves as an underpinning for their exegetical and biblical-theological conclusions. I demonstrate that while revisionists profess a traditional view of Scripture, their theological conclusions betray a rejection of divine inspiration, authority, perspicuity, canonical unity, and infallibility. Christians who affirm an evangelical doctrine of Scripture do not simply profess a proper understanding of the nature and authority of Scripture, but also seek to consistently and faithfully apply this doctrine in exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theological formulation. Unfortunately, Brownson, Gushee, and Vines do not consistently apply their professed doctrine of Scripture on the same-sex issue. I will now provide an overview of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture while also providing a critique of the revisionist doctrine of Scripture.

Inspiration and Authority

What is the nature of Scripture? The Bible, expressed in the Protestant canon, is truly God's Word, a result of concursive action between divine and human authors. Scripture was freely written by human authors under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In writing the Scriptures, the prophet or apostle was not simply a passive divine mouthpiece (i.e., dictation), nor did he lose his respective personality and compatibilistic freedom. Rather, the prophet or apostle was an active agent through whom God revealed himself truthfully, cognitively, and verbally to the world. At its core, an evangelical doctrine of Scripture is grounded in an orthodox doctrine of God. The Triune God is the

⁸⁰Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 39–57. Vines does not define “gay Christian.”

true, sovereign, and holy Creator who speaks, not only within the economy of Trinitarian relations, but also to his creatures through general and special revelation. God has revealed himself in Scripture by carrying men along by the Spirit to reveal his character and will, as well as his redemptive plan with its *telos* in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:16–21).⁸¹ Our Creator authoritatively grounds all truth claims, and his special, self-revelation alone is the final authority for the church (*sola Scriptura*).⁸² God’s Word, in its original autographs, is inerrant, infallible, and self-attesting because God himself is inerrant, infallible, and self-attesting.⁸³ The Bible is also a Word-Act revelation, wherein God has acted in history and then revealed his divine interpretation of those redemptive acts through human authors.⁸⁴ Therefore, rightly understanding God’s self-revelation

⁸¹John Frame, “The Spirit and the Scriptures,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 217–22; Henri A. G. Blocher, “God and the Scripture Writers: The Question of Double Authorship,” in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 501–5; and G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 274–79.

⁸²Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 112–23. Vanhoozer rightly argues against *sola scriptura* by contending that exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology are a “threefold interpretive cord” for interpreting Scripture even as Scripture alone is the final authority for theology and practice.

⁸³This is expressed in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, quoted in full in Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 4, *God Who Speaks and Shows* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979), 211–19. This doctrinal commitment is also necessary for inclusion in the Evangelical Theological Society. This truth would exclude scholars and works that assume historical-critical epistemology and practice. Brownson, Gushee, and Vines likely reject inerrancy, conflating the doctrine with fundamentalism and biblicism. It is not necessary to provide a full-fledged defense of inerrancy here with the plethora of published evangelical resources defending it. See also D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1987); Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*; Beale, “Can the Bible Be Completely Inspired by God and Yet Still Contain Errors? A Response to Some Recent ‘Evangelical’ Proposals,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (2011): 1–22. Beale provides a brief, but immensely helpful, rejoinder to McGowan’s contention that inerrancy is a logical deduction, not a biblical concept. Beale convincingly demonstrates that in Revelation, for example, John identifies both Christ’s character and John’s words in the book as “true” (2–3). In fact, John is commanded to write down the words from God and Christ and the written words will be “faithful and true” because God and Christ are “faithful and true” (Rev 11–21). Beale also argues that inerrancy also does not violate the “word/concept” distinction (similar to “trinity”).

⁸⁴Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 28. Goldsworthy rightly argues, “The quest for an

demands a faithful theological interpretation of Scripture which, minimally, includes reading a biblical text in light of the Bible's own presuppositions, correctly identifying the text's literary genre, understanding the text's grammatical-historical context, and properly situating the text within the canon.

In this brief overview, numerous doctrine of Scripture issues are revealed in revisionists' readings. Brownson, Gushee, and Vines all stipulate that relevant biblical passages, particularly Pauline texts, do not speak to the issue of committed same-sex relationships because biblical authors were unaware of modern conceptions of sexual orientation.⁸⁵ Preston Sprinkle has ably demonstrated this point to be untrue. Sprinkle engages with a variety of historical documents to demonstrate that both the biblical authors and the church's earliest interpreters were well aware of people who would be said today to have a same-sex orientation.⁸⁶

Related to the previous point, Brownson, Gushee, and Vines argue that the ANE and first century cultures which shaped the biblical witness need to be rejected, while the moral logic of the Scriptures needs to be contextually applied to our current culture.⁸⁷ Brownson, Gushee, and Vines argue that Paul was born into a patriarchal

evangelical biblical theology begins with the presupposition that the biblical literature and its historical storyline together provide the vehicle for God's revelation of himself and his purposes for creation.”

⁸⁵Not only is this point begging the question, but raises the question of how a reader determines meaning. Is meaning situated in the consciousness of the author, unavailable to the reader? Or is meaning found in the text itself? I examine these questions in the section on perspicuity and interpretation. See Kevin Vanhoozer, “Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies and the Hard Place of Systematic Theology: The State of the Evangelical (Dis)Union,” in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission*, ed. by Richard Lints (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 213. Vanhoozer rightly notes that “one need not conclude from the history of textual effects that the Bible's meaning has changed, only that communities in different times and places have searched the scriptures from their respective situations, enriching our understanding of the literal sense.”

⁸⁶See Preston Sprinkle, “Romans 1 and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of James Brownson's Bible, Gender, Sexuality,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24, no. 4 (2014): 515–628.

⁸⁷These men seem to hold to the idea that Scripture is authoritative only for matters of faith and practice, but it is not authoritative for matters of science (and possibly history). See Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 67–69.

society, and therefore, could not get beyond his own cultural biases as he wrote his New Testament epistles. Vines, in particular, argues that Leviticus rejects same-sex behavior because the author(s) clearly believed women to be inferior to men, and any sexual relationship that caused a man to be perceived as a woman was degrading.⁸⁸ This argument, however, creates serious problems for an orthodox doctrine of Scripture. The biblical authors consistently and emphatically deny all acts of same-sex behavior on the basis of creation, not ANE culture.⁸⁹ God has not changed his mind, nor is there any indication that same-sex prohibitions (and death sentences) were given as a concession to human sinfulness. Rather, Leviticus presents a consistent connection to the logic of creation, and as will be shown in the next chapter, it is Scripture's own intertextual development which forms the basis for Levitical and Pauline prohibitions against same-sex activities. How one holds to divine inspiration (or a Reformed understanding of providence) while also arguing that biblical authors were shaped by misogyny is unclear. God sovereignly chose, fully inspired, and spoke through men in these particular cultures, and any argument that proposes cultural misogyny as the basis for the Bible's same-sex prohibitions grounds itself in trajectory hermeneutics, not the biblical text. God's Word expressed through Scripture has historically been understood as theology's norming norm, even as liberal theologians have argued Scripture's silence is due to the distance between the ancient world and the present. Paul certainly had his cultural influences, but his written text is inspired and our interpretations are not.⁹⁰ A reader must be cognizant of

⁸⁸Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 88. Vines contends that the Levitical author's views on women are offensive to him. It is not clear how Vines understands the author's view on women apart from his writing, which is divinely inspired.

⁸⁹In fact, Yahweh commands Israel not to act as the Egyptians and Canaanites acted (Lev 18:1–3). Yahweh stands opposed to the sexual practices of the ANE cultures, which presumably includes same-sex sexual behavior because of its prohibition in the immediate context (Lev 18:22).

⁹⁰It is a serious charge that the inspired biblical author was so overcome by cultural bias, *not by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*, that what appears to be plain teaching in the Bible and affirmed by the church for two millennia ought now to be rejected on grounds of misogyny. Is not the Spirit the one who

his own (uninspired) preunderstandings as he approaches the biblical text, remembering that while there are a plethora of interpretations, not all interpretations are equally valid.⁹¹ When pressed further, however, this revisionist argument clearly drives a wedge between the divine and human authors of Scripture, if not entirely jettisoning divine inspiration. If God inspired all of Scripture, including these disputed texts, will Paul (or any other biblical author) be communicating something different than the intention of the divine author?⁹² An orthodox view of Scripture would answer in the negative.

Nearly all of Vines' theological arguments, including those arguments that attempt to provide some exegesis, are grounded in scholars who do not share his view of Scripture.⁹³ On this point, liberal Catholic scholar Luke Timothy Johnson rightly critiques revisionists who advance affirming positions that distort the clear teaching of the Bible. Johnson contends,

both inspires authors and illuminates readers? Revisionists overemphasize illumination at the cost of inspiration.

⁹¹Richard Lints, "To Whom Does the Text Belong? Communities of Interpretation and the Interpretation of Communities," in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 927. Lints argues, "There are better and worse culturally influenced readings. Though there is no context-independent set of criteria for determining this, this should not tempt us toward interpretive relativism." Cf. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 52.

⁹²If Paul's background is a Jewish sexual ethic that was unquestionably negative towards same-sex relations (and misogynistic, according to revisionists), how does one adjudicate between Pauline texts that are inspired versus uninspired? John 15:26–27 seems to preclude any possibility of future faith communities being led by the Spirit to say something other than the apostolic witness because the Spirit was sent specifically to the apostles to bear witness to Christ. Jesus' word here does not leave open the possibility that they would witness unfaithfully as they established the New Testament.

⁹³Vines appeals to Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*; Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*; William Loader, *Making Sense of Sex: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012). Boswell was an openly gay Catholic, Martin is an openly gay Episcopalian whose Christology is similar to that of John Dominic Crossan, and Brownson's views on same-sex relationships (which may or may not have been influenced by the experience of having an openly gay son) are clearly divorced from his Reformed roots. The emphasis on *experience* in these men's arguments is understood more clearly when one understands their context. None of these men would be considered evangelical, and while Vines critiques their mainline denominations for their revisionist views of Scripture, he grounds much of his argument in their (un)biblical presuppositions and hermeneutical commitments.

[an ecclesial hermeneutic approach] cautions us against trying to suppress the biblical texts which condemn homosexual behavior (Lev 18:22; Wis 14:26; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor. 6:9) or to make them say something other than what they say. I think it fair to conclude that early Christianity knew about homosexuality as it was practiced in Greco-Roman culture, shared Judaism’s association of it with the “abominations” of idolatry, and regarded it as incompatible with life in the kingdom of God. These *authorities* emphatically define homosexuality as a vice, and they cannot simply be dismissed.⁹⁴

Johnson, rather than trying to advance a same-sex argument that Scripture clearly rejects, argues instead for an “ecclesial hermeneutic” that gives freedom to the Christian to embrace certain issues (e.g., same-sex relations) that Scripture explicitly forbids.⁹⁵ Johnson clearly rejects the authority of Scripture, but is honest about the plain sense of the text.⁹⁶

The idea that same-sex relationships are prohibited in the Bible primarily because the inspired authors were ignorant of modern science while also trapped in misogynistic cultures betrays a sense of chronological snobbery. Vines writes, “Paul, as we saw in chapter 5, may not have endorsed fully equal roles for men and women, but his views were remarkably egalitarian within his cultural context.”⁹⁷ Owen Strachan rightly notes the hubris in this kind of statement,⁹⁸ but Vines’ application of trajectory hermeneutics undermines divine inspiration because it is not clear that he believes—as

⁹⁴Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 145. Johnson, like most scholars that Vines cites, does not attempt to ground same-sex relationships in Scripture, but rather promotes a combination of trajectory hermeneutics and reader-response interpretation in order to support homosexuality in the church. While Johnson’s hermeneutic is not biblically faithful, he does affirm the clear meaning of the texts.

⁹⁵Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment*, 144–48.

⁹⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns: Hermeneutics and Same-Sex Advocacy,” *Journal of Global Christianity* 2, no. 1 (2016): 50.

⁹⁷Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 110.

⁹⁸Owen Strachan, “Have Christians Been Wrong All Along? What Has the Church Believed and Taught?,” in *God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines*, ed. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Louisville, KY: SBTS Press, 2014), 65. Strachan quips, “I say this seems unseemly, but perhaps I am unduly swayed by Paul’s apostolicity. We are in the age of equality, after all, which means a 20-something with no formal theological credentials feels no hesitation about telling an apostle of the living Lord, a man who saw Christ with his own eyes and shed blood for the gospel, ‘Nice try, buddy.’”

Thomas Schreiner puts it—that “in the New Testament we have the final and definitive word that speaks to every practical issue for all time. The culmination of the fullness of time in Christ (Gal 4:4) means that we need no further word or instruction to understand how to apply the scriptures.”⁹⁹ Not only does Vines wrongly conflate Israel’s view of women with all other ancient Near Eastern cultures, he also ignores the fact that Moses (the author of Leviticus) presents a very *high* view of women in Genesis 1–2.¹⁰⁰

In the providence and inspiration of God, the Scriptures were written in ANE and first-century Judean contexts, not twenty-first century Western culture. It is not the timing but the nature of the biblical texts that grounds their authority—the Scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God. While the human authors themselves may not have envisioned the details of today’s cultural realities, the divine author certainly did. To borrow the words of George Tyrrell, when the revisionists look back two thousand years of (heterosexual) darkness, the Christ they see “is only a reflection of a liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.”¹⁰¹ While we must grant the considerable distance between our cultural setting and the cultural settings of the biblical canon, it remains “to be shown that the differences are so radical as to make Bible people and their writings unintelligible to us.”¹⁰² It appears that revisionists are decoupling the authoritative meaning of the biblical text from the intention of the author(s), while vesting the

⁹⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, “William J. Webb’s *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*: A Review,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 54.

¹⁰⁰For a defense of Mosaic authorship, see Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Source and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Tain, Scotland: Mentor, 2001).

¹⁰¹See George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (New York: Green and Co., 1909), 44. In context, Tyrrell was critiquing Harnack for his historical Jesus, a view which was grounded in Harnack’s commitment to the historical critical method. Interestingly, the same critique is relevant to same-sex revisionists. The Jesus they believe they see in the Scriptures ends up looking like them, and less like the Jesus of the Bible.

¹⁰²J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 331–32. I will return to this point when I address perspicuity. It is fallacious to argue that because we cannot have certainty in the meaning of a text, therefore the plain meaning of the text is incomprehensible.

authority to give a text its meaning to the Spirit-filled community of interpreters.¹⁰³ In so doing, a text's meaning and authority is no longer derived from authorial intent in the text itself, but rather the (human) biblical author serves as a springboard to capture the true and/or relevant meaning of the text today.¹⁰⁴ This view must be rejected, however, because the Spirit witnesses to the Word, not against it or in addition to it.¹⁰⁵

Spirit-filled community must apply the Bible's moral logic to same-sex relationships, Brownson argues, because the creation account is normal, not normative. The biblical authors could not envision this present culture, and it was their cultural situation that prevented them from seeing monogamous same-sex relationships fulfilling

¹⁰³Hays also seems to move towards this idea. See Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 399.

¹⁰⁴See Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 180. Seitz warns against this reality: "If the pressure for each text to speak particularly and eternally is released, or compromised, the consequences for our use of the Bible more generally are enormous. Under the acids of historicism and Western progressivism, a two-testament delivery of God's Word and character has been replaced with a different kind of economic account of God, in which (1) the work of the Holy Spirit is now said to be going on in a way fully detachable (and unsurprisingly and energetically so) from Scripture's prior testimony; and in which (2) the Old Testament cannot be said to speak of God as he is or of God in Christ, but only of a developmental phase of religion en route to a New Testament religion and then a more enlightened Holy Spirit religion." How does one adjudicate between "Spirit-filled communities" that come to different theological convictions on an important issue—whether it be the same culture, different cultures, or different periods in human history?

¹⁰⁵This doctrine of Scripture issue also produces Trinitarian problems. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and testifies to the Son (John 15:26). If the Son, who created marriage (Gen 1–2; Heb 1:2) has reaffirmed the nature of marriage in Matt 19 and Mark 10, how can the Spirit who testifies to him reveal something contrary to Jesus' teaching? See Vanhoozer, "Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies," 211–12. Since Scripture is Triune communicative discourse, Vanhoozer rightly argues, "Those who approach the Bible as Scripture must not abstract it from the Father who ultimately authors it, the Son to whom it witnesses, and the Spirit who inspired and illumines it" (212). See also Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 34–35; Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 35–40. Cf. Donald G. Bloesch, "In Defense of Biblical Authority," *The Reformed Journal* 34 (September 1984): 28–29. Revisionists seem to be arguing in a similar fashion to Bloesch when he argues that meaning is not derived from the text but given by the Spirit to the "eyes of faith." See also J. I. Packer, "Infallible Scriptures and the Role of Hermeneutics," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 330. Packer argues that Barth's hermeneutical pluralism has contributed to this problem.

the ideals of Genesis 1–2. The Scripture, however, argues the opposite—Genesis 1–2 is normative and is the pattern for creation, soteriological realities, and the eschatological new creation.¹⁰⁶ Genesis 1–3 sets the framework for the rest of the biblical narrative, establishing the Creator-Creature distinction, the reality, prevalence, and resulting curses of sin, and God’s promise of redemption. Throughout the sojourning of the patriarchs and God’s people, the promised blessings for covenant obedience are frequently presented as Eden-like. The Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers cast the eschatological hope for redemption in light of a creation renewed.¹⁰⁷ Jesus, Paul, and other biblical authors who grounded marriage and divorce, husband and wife relationships, and church leadership in the creation account were careful to ground those realities in the pre-Fall, sin-free realities of God’s “good” creation (Gen 1–2).¹⁰⁸ Revisionists need remember that the authority of Scripture always supersedes the authority of culture, not vice-versa. Gushee, Brownson, and Vines are regularly guilty of drawing Scripture into their world, rather than conforming themselves to the Scripture. Conversely, Lints rightly argues that the Word created the world we inhabit, and one must not confuse cultural norms with gospel norms because “some enculturations tame the gospel in such a fashion that the gospel loses its prophetic distance from the culture.”¹⁰⁹ Revisionists have lost their prophetic distance from the culture by reshaping

¹⁰⁶I will expand upon this point in the next chapter, but Brownson’s argument that the creation account is not normative certainly undermines the authority of Scripture, and flies in the face of Scripture’s own presentation of Christ’s work and his new creation salvation.

¹⁰⁷See Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); and G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). The resemblance of the tabernacle/temple to Eden, new covenant promises steeped in creation language (e.g., Isa 35:1–10; Ezek 47), and new covenant soteriological realities categorized in terms of Gen 1–2 (e.g., Rom 4:17; 2 Cor 5:17) all demonstrate that creation is indeed normative for earthly and heavenly realities.

¹⁰⁸Contra Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 96–98; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁹Lints, “To Whom Does the Text Belong?,” 938–39. The community of readers must be interpreted by Scripture, not the other way around. Revisionists have this idea backwards.

their views on Scripture and same-sex relationships.

Gushee accuses evangelicals of an impossible “biblicism,” arguing that a rejection of clear scientific fact and human experience denies these evangelicals the ability to see reality rightly.¹¹⁰ While evangelicals must be conscious to avoid the real problem of “solo” *Scriptura*, it is also the case that revisionists need be aware of their tendency towards “biblicide.” Revisionists will often go beyond Scripture “for the simple reason that they believe [Scripture] is an insufficient answer to the pressing needs of the day . . . this strategy is typical of modern thinkers wedded to an evolutionary view of history that subscribes to the myth of progress, and its presumption that humanity is changing for the better.”¹¹¹ Related to this issue of scientific authority, Vines and Brownson both argue that Christians have changed their biblical interpretations in light of scientific fact, and therefore, Christians must change their minds on the reality of sexual orientation and its immutability.¹¹² This critique relates to both biblical authority and interpretation. Gushee, Brownson, and Vines push (extratextual) “science” as fact, though their scientific sources, including the American Psychological Association (APA), are questionable and clearly operate outside a biblical worldview.¹¹³ If one grants that sexual

¹¹⁰See the appendix, “Response to my Critics,” in Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*.

¹¹¹Kevin Vanhoozer, “May We Go Beyond What Is Written After All? The Pattern of Theological Authority and the Problem of Doctrinal Development,” in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 762.

¹¹²See Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 21–25.

¹¹³Wisdom would dictate being slow to overturn what the church has historically embraced as clear teaching against same-sex relationships, particularly since the science used to justify gay Christianity is new and opposed to the plain meaning of the Bible. The APA has been repeatedly criticized for a same-sex agenda. See Rogers H. Wright and Nicholas A. Cummings, eds., *Destructive Trends in Mental Health: The Well Intentioned Path to Harm* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and Wright and Cummings, eds., *The Practice of Psychology: The Battle of Professionalism* (Phoenix: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, 2001). Keith Ablow, “Be Wary of the American Psychiatric Association,” Fox News, May 14, 2012, accessed April 8, 2018, <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2012/05/14/be-wary-american-psychiatric-association.html>; Collier, “American Psychological Association Pushing ‘Ultra-Liberal’ Agenda”; Angela Chen, “Is a Liberal Bias Hurting Social Psychology?,” Pacific Standard, October 5, 2015, accessed April 8, 2018, <https://psmag.com/social-justice/is-a-liberal-bias-hurting-social-psychology>; Konnikova, “Is Social Psychology Biased

orientation is true, the reality of certain individuals being oriented towards same-sex attraction does not undermine the traditionalist case, but rather supports it (Jas 1:13–15). It is thoroughly biblical to understand the noetic and biological effects of sin; it is yet another thing to argue that the Bible affirms the immutability of same-sex orientation and, therefore, monogamous same-sex unions are necessary for Christian faithfulness and the church’s witness.¹¹⁴ The Bible gives categories for people whom God, in his wisdom, has created unable to marry and procreate, and sinful proclivities (however “immutable”) are still subject to the power of the cross and the gospel’s demand for (and gift of) a renewed mind.

Perspicuity and Hermeneutics

Related to many of the revisionists’ charges against the traditionalist case is the clarity and interpretation of Scripture. These topics are intimately intertwined with meaning, epistemology, and hermeneutical theory. Kevin Vanhoozer has ably demonstrated elsewhere that the concept of the “author” as communicative agent, where meaning is a form of doing, is ultimately built upon the reality of God, the communicative agent in creation. Vanhoozer helpfully applies speech-act theory to understand literary acts and discourse between communicative agents. Authorship, metaphysically, is grounded in the reality of God communicating truly of himself in creation via the acts of incarnation and the *imago Dei*.¹¹⁵ God’s speech is inseparable from the Speaker and God’s written Word is inseparable from the Spirit who inspired human authors to write it, centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶ Therefore,

Against Republicans?”

¹¹⁴The immutability of sexual orientation is hotly debated amongst same-sex marriage advocates, specifically between essentialists and social constructionists.

¹¹⁵Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 26.

¹¹⁶Mark D. Thompson, “The Generous Gift of a Gracious Father: Toward a Theological

perspicuity cannot be separated from the doctrine of God. Words function as signs of things and thoughts, represented in langue (language) and parole (language in action). Christianity, fundamentally, is a logocentric belief system where our reality-depicting words and experiences are grounded in an authority and/or point outside of language.¹¹⁷ Meaning, therefore, is grounded in authorial intent as understood in and through the text. How exactly is that meaning determined? Vanhoozer and Beale apply speech-act theory to demonstrate how authorial intent and meaning is understood. In the act of biblical speech, biblical authors use locution (speaking words), illocution (what we do in speaking), and perlocution (what speech brings about) to act.¹¹⁸ Vanhoozer contends that divine authorial intention can only be understood in and through the illocutionary acts of the human author, particularly through the use of literary genre and devices.¹¹⁹

The difference between meaning and significance (application) is an important one and cannot be conflated, otherwise an interpretation becomes as authoritative in the mind of the reader as the meaning given by the original author in his context.¹²⁰ This distinction is an important one for critiquing the revisionist understanding of the

Account of the Clarity of Scripture,” in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 618.

¹¹⁷Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 53. This point is important because perspicuity becomes unhinged if God is not the Creator of language itself.

¹¹⁸G. K. Beale, “Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of the Use of the Old Testament in the New: A Rejoinder to Steve Moyise,” *Irish Biblical Studies* 21, no. 4 (November 1999): 160; Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 209.

¹¹⁹Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 209. This point naturally raises the question for revisionists: how do Brownson, Gushee, and Vines know what the divine author communicates through the text apart from receiving it through the human author? In fact, Vanhoozer argues that “the author’s authority partakes of the authority of the past, or better, of the authority of the reality of the past, which is in turn the authority of the truth. Without this basic distinction between meaning and significance, subsequent distinctions—between exegesis and eisegesis, understanding and overstanding, commentary and criticism—will be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. Without some such criterion for discriminating ‘what it meant’ to the author from ‘what it means’ to the reader, interpreters risk confusing the aim of the text with their own aims and interests” (263).

¹²⁰Beale, “Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions,” 156. Beale rightly quotes Vanhoozer: “Understanding is not the same as authoring.” See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 263.

perspicuity of Scripture, particularly as they profess an interpretation derived from the Spirit that has gone beyond the biblical authors.¹²¹ In fact, the Spirit bears witness to the Word by illuminating its meaning, not confounding its meaning by a progressive revelation outside the text, grounded in something other than God’s special revelation. Only once the Spirit has illuminated the text’s meaning can the application or significance of the text be rightly applied as the author’s original context shapes the text, not vice versa. Unfortunately, revisionists have it backwards when they argue that the APA’s twenty first-century understanding of sexual orientation must shape the divinely inspired writing of Paul, rather than Paul’s authorial meaning shaping and informing the APA’s interpretive understanding. Vanhoozer rightly argues that the most effective way of understanding authorial intent in the varied biblical witness is a “thick” reading of passages in light of canon and literary genre (illocution).¹²²

A thick reading, however, demands biblical unity and clarity (which revisionists attest), but Brownson’s claim that aspects of the creation account (e.g., the nature of one-flesh union) are normal, but not normative, undermines far more than a traditional view of marriage. In arguing that aspects of Genesis 1–2 narrative is not normative, Brownson is inadvertently displacing God’s authorial and creative authority.¹²³ Brownson is also undermining our ability to know, understand, or

¹²¹Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 421. Vanhoozer insightfully states, “Christ’s statement to the disciples at the end of John 16:13 that the Spirit will declare ‘what is yet to come’ might seem, at first glance, to substantiate the claim that the Spirit leads the reader beyond the literal sense of the text. . . . By speaking of ‘abundance’ I wish to emphasize how the original meaning continues to be meaningful today. The Spirit’s role, I will argue, is not to change the meaning but to charge it with significance. Scripture remains relevant (1) through the continuation of its illocutionary and perlocutionary effects, and (2) by relating the original content to new contexts.”

¹²²Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 27.

¹²³It was God in his perfect wisdom and sovereignty who, after seeing everything—including his creation of both male and female in his image and the marriage covenant—proclaimed as the author of creation, “it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Finding fault with the Lord and his creative authorship does not bode well (see Job 40:1–6), particularly since God ties his power to his speech (Job 40:6).

communicate anything with confidence because the normative pattern of God acting as communicative agent through human authors has been jettisoned.¹²⁴ If the creation account is only normal for some cultures, Brownson's contention is more reflective of Jacques Derrida's deconstructive quest than Brownson would perhaps care to admit. In an effort to overthrow the doctrine of creation and its corresponding logocentrism, Derrida ardently rejected reliability, determinacy, and neutrality in linguistic acts.¹²⁵ Jettisoning the normativity of creation disrupts not only marriage, but calls into question the normativity of communicative acts, epistemology, and our understanding of the incarnate Word's new creation work because each finds its source in Genesis 1–2. God spoke creation into existence through communicative acts, and it is incumbent upon his people to understand that the death of God as author leads to the death of meaning in any text and the loss of human agency.¹²⁶ Ultimately, the revisionists' rejection of the Bible's human authors is a rejection of the divine author himself. This reality is seen dimly in the revisionist who argues that the Bible is inspired and authoritative in its claims, but then rejects the Bible's various claims of human authorship (e.g., Moses as author of the Pentateuch, Paul as the author of the pastoral epistles).¹²⁷

¹²⁴Again, how does one adjudicate which aspects of creation are normal or normative? Brownson clearly contends that the concepts of covenant or kinship bond, monogamy, love, and the image of God are normative, but then argues that the traditionally understood nature of these concepts is only normal (i.e., covenant bond in light of the male and female marriage, gender complementarity, headship and submission, heterosexual expression).

¹²⁵Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 39.

¹²⁶Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 89. Vanhoozer rightly contends that “from a poststructuralist perspective, it is difficult to believe that what we say or do is really an action we have initiated, rather than an event that happens to us for reasons beyond our conscious control. The author, we may recall, is only one factor in a larger system of signifiers, ideas, and forces that can never be mastered and over which we have no control. How free (and responsible) are speakers and interpreters? If authors cannot author, can any agent act?” (89).

¹²⁷Brownson's claims that aspects of creation are not normative is not so different from the claim of the serpent in Gen 3:1—“Did God actually say?” Brownson's and Gushee's restatement of historical critical assaults on biblical authorship certainly ask the serpent's question. To this point, see Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 88. Vanhoozer astutely comments that the move towards

Aside from the clear issue of inspiration that these charges raise, they also demonstrate a revisionist presupposition relevant to the debate. How is meaning determined? Continually appealing to Paul's (unwritten and unconfessed) ignorance of same-sex orientation, for example, demonstrates a commitment to hermeneutical realism, as well as the revisionist contention that meaning is synonymous with psychology.¹²⁸ Similar to Schleiermacher, we understand the text when we get into the mind of the author (consciousness). This hermeneutical realism assumes that there is comprehensible meaning to which the reader is accountable.¹²⁹ Gushee, Brownson, and Vines show a commitment to a form of hermeneutical realism by their commitment to understanding the moral logic that the divine author has inspired in the text. At the same time, however, the revisionist argument that Paul or the authors/editors of Genesis and Leviticus only saw the world through the lens of misogynistic gender binarism and sexual complementarity expresses a form of hermeneutical relativism (or non-realism). While revisionists do concede that God gives his perspective of the world in Scripture, they implicitly argue that the Bible's human authors do not possess or promote a God's-eye view of the world because their patriarchal and complementary categories have molded, not mirrored, the real world around them.¹³⁰ Since there is no common way of understanding reality, Brownson can argue to the point that "biblical texts prohibiting

embracing anonymous and pseudonymous authors is liberating because anonymous authors can be freely and independently interpreted (with little or no context hindering reader-response interpreters).

¹²⁸Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 14–23.

¹²⁹Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 25–26. How one understands the consciousness of the author is not clear. This conjecture is grounded in modernist presuppositions, specifically one's ability to objectively know facts through reason and scientific investigation.

¹³⁰Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 48–49, 411. How revisionists determine God's view versus that of the human author is unclear. Vanhoozer rightly asks, "How can the church know what God is saying through Scripture if what God is saying fails to coincide with the verbal meaning of the text? Hauerwas appeals, of course, to the leading of the Spirit. The problem with this solution is (1) that the Spirit's leading is often difficult to discern or to distinguish from a merely human consensus, and (2) that it relocates the Word of God and divine authority from the text to the tradition of its interpretation" (411).

same-sex eroticism are based on patriarchal assumptions, the need for a cross-cultural critique of those passage must be recognized . . . these texts may be limited in their ability to speak directly to same-sex relationships today—in a context where such hierarchal assumptions no longer apply.”¹³¹ If meaning is given by God but cannot be accurately presented through the biblical authors, how does one determine meaning of the text? Revisionists want to hold to the authority and inspiration of Scripture, while simultaneously wresting the biblical text’s meaning from the human authors. How can they attempt to hold simultaneously to both hermeneutical realism and hermeneutical non-realism? Revisionists seem to ground authoritative meaning in the Spirit (realism), not in the human author’s actual words (non-realism). Brownson, Gushee, and Vines situate “meaning” in the divine author’s intention (realism), while also stipulating that discernment of this “meaning” is through the revelation of the divine author determined by the community of faith (non-realism).¹³² This revelation is “new” in the sense that no

¹³¹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 84. This point is similar to his contention that creation is not normative, only normal for that culture. Of course, it seems entirely appropriate for a Christian to want to reflect as much as possible the sinless realities of Gen 1–2 because those realities were completely unaffected by sin and death. See also Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 88; Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 107. Cf. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 49. This idea, Vanhoozer rightly argues, is a rejection of the created order. Vanhoozer’s contention is insightful in this context because revisionists do reject the normativity of the creation account.

¹³²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 37–47, 106–11; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 189–222; Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 38–41. Gushee argues that there are several ways, both inclusive and exclusive, that local churches can rightly respond to this issue, depending on their conviction on same-sex relationships. His hope is that communities of faith will experience a “transformative encounter” by the Spirit as Peter did in Acts 10 and embrace gay Christians in the local church. Brownson argues that “purity” has been redefined in the New Testament (Acts 10 and 15) through the teaching of the Spirit, so that Christians ought to move towards confidence and engagement, particularly as it relates to monogamous same-sex relationships. Regarding gay Christians, Brownson states that the church will again have to wrestle with the command of Acts 10:15: “What God has cleansed, you must not call profane.” Brownson also contends that in some cultures, same-sex relationships will not be approved because of a commitment to their understandings of honor and shame. These revisionists demonstrate that “meaning” of these various texts need to be determined by the local communities of faith across the variety of cultures. Vines argues that the church must rightly understand modern ideas of sexual orientation and then read that back onto Old Testament and Pauline texts. What all three of these men have in common is their view that the Spirit will illuminate the community of faith so that they can formulate their own theological conclusions regarding same-sex relationships. Vines is likely the most militant at this point, however, because he argues that the Spirit will give communities of faith understanding to cast off the misinformed and offensive views of Lev.

one in Christian tradition, Jewish tradition, the prophetic writings, nor the apostolic writings saw a glimpse of this meaning endorsing same-sex monogamy. In some sense, the Spirit's inspiration moves from verbal-plenary to some form of Gnostic dictation where the human author's culture, personality, and thoughts must be rejected so that the community of faith can get behind the text to receive true, divine revelation by the illumination of the Spirit.

Perspicuity, hermeneutics, and canonical unity are inextricably linked. The Scriptures clearly teach, from creation to new creation, that Christ Jesus is the culmination and fulfillment of all of God's promises to his people throughout redemptive history. The canonical witness is sufficiently clear in presenting to its readers salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Perspicuity not only speaks to the clarity of the canonical Scriptures, but also to one's ability to understand and apply it correctly. Brownson's desire to walk through the biblical storyline is commendable, but he spends little time addressing any covenant at creation, how Adam is connected to Christ, promise-fulfillment, typology, *sensus plenior*, or any other important Reformed teachings that speak to the issue of same-sex monogamy. It is unfortunate that evangelical revisionists affirm perspicuity in word, but in practice, they build their case for same-sex marriage from non-evangelical scholars who do not affirm a traditional view of Scripture nor take seriously the Bible's claims of itself. In fact, it is likely that revisionists would redefine perspicuity to mean that Scripture is sufficiently clear "for the meaning the individual or interpretive community 'finds' there, while strongly denying that there is any culture-transcending truth that is 'clear' within the text itself."¹³³ Perspicuity

All of these examples demonstrate an implicit rejection of meaning situated in authorial intent determined in the text, but rather the text serving as a springboard for Spirit-given new meaning in the context of the faith community. See a similar TIS treatment of Acts 10–15 in Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 113–27. See also trajectory hermeneutic in Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*.

¹³³Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, 192n42.

becomes clear subjectivism, which is certainly on display as it relates to the revisionist's commitments to same-sex orientation and to reinterpreting the "plain sense" of multiple biblical passages.

Brownson, Gushee, and Vines rightly argue that a person's experience colors how one reads, studies, and interprets the Bible. Unfortunately, all three men pendulum swing to make human experience *the* authoritative lens through which the Scriptures must be interpreted. They repeatedly charge Paul and the other biblical authors of ignorance with relation to sexual orientation because of cultural bias. Alongside this serious charge, these men argue that the experience of immutable sexual orientation must bear considerable weight in the hermeneutical enterprise. Inherent to the revisionist's trajectory hermeneutic is the contention that eschatological fulfillment of the *imago Dei* comes, not in the Son, but through the Spirit. The Spirit does not testify to the Son as much as the Son testifies to the Spirit. The two testaments are progressively moving from cultural primitivity to cultural enlightenment by virtue of evolutionary new understandings and meanings given by the Spirit.¹³⁴

¹³⁴Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 177–78. Seitz argues that the same-sex debate in the church has proceeded in 3 phases. Seitz has keen insight at this point and is worth quoting at length: "What has happened through these three overlapping phases is that the Bible has been turned into a book of religious development, from one Testament to the next. Once this happens, it is easy, and I would say necessary, for the arguments to end where they now do. Let me try to describe the impasse. On the one side, people argue that the Bible cannot speak a word directly into our day on the issue of same-sex behavior, because it cannot be expected to know something that lies developmentally outside its own two-testament range of religious progressing. This also allows those with such an interpretive (hermeneutical) view to maintain a residual hunch that the biblical texts in question have multiple meanings, or that their meaning is contested and cannot be delivered plainly, because serial deployments of historical-critical readings, with varying results, have confused the issue and made the very notion of a 'plain sense' nostalgic or illusory. That is, the idea of developing religious wisdom goes hand in hand with an acceptance that texts from past contexts can only with real difficulty have any kind of meaning for the present full-stop. The Bible becomes 'stories' or 'resources,' at best, and its language is evocative or imaginative; it has no legislative (halakhic), exhortative, constraining, or strictly referential sense; it has 'themes,' which resonate with intuitions or convictions already in place, and so forth. This is why proponents for change in a teaching that runs against the entire history of the Bible's reception, in church and synagogue, have still said, even if reluctantly, that what is at issue is the interpretation of Scripture. What they mean is that there is sufficient confusion about what any text means, that the only thing we can be sure of is what people report to be true in their present experience" (177–78).

Writing about the limits of human understanding regarding special revelation (and, by extension, our ability to interpret Scripture), Carl Trueman is right to emphasize that theological interpretation and practice are impossible unless God condescends to humanity.¹³⁵ Though revisionists continue to point to the experience of immutable sexual orientation as the grounds on which Paul and the rest of Scripture have been historically misunderstood, and by which a “fresh” interpretation of Scripture is required, it is clear that their contention bears great resemblance to Enlightenment natural theology. The experience of same-sex orientation (however defined) cannot serve as the grounds for interpreting ourselves, God, or Scripture because of the limitation of human knowledge and the noetic effects of sin.¹³⁶ Contrary to Gushee’s lament that the church “has inflicted a damaging and ultimately un-Christlike body of Christian tradition, amounting to what can be fairly described as a teaching of contempt, against sexual minorities,”¹³⁷ Trueman’s statement in defense of Reformed Orthodoxy is remarkably germane to the present discussion. He writes,

Epistemology is not the only area where Reformed Orthodoxy is habitually misrepresented as a prelude to being rejected. Another frequent allegation is that Reformed Orthodoxy is overly concerned with pedantic doctrinal precision and little else. This may indeed be so in certain individual case; but, to borrow a thought from the National Rifle Association, doctrines don’t kill people; people kill people. Yes, there has been much unpleasantness in the history of Reformed theology, but that is the product of the unpleasantness of theologians rather than any overly-dogmatic essence of Reformed Orthodoxy.¹³⁸

¹³⁵Carl Trueman, “Rage, Rage Against the Dying of the Light,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 10–11. This condescension must be perspicuous for it to be revelatory.

¹³⁶Trueman, “Rage, Rage Against the Dying of the Light.” Especially as we understand the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge, which precludes any possibility of natural theology.

¹³⁷Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 133.

¹³⁸Trueman, “Rage, Rage Against the Dying of the Light,” 11–12. While Trueman is not specifically addressing same-sex relationships in his article, he is addressing the postmodern rejection of Reformed Orthodoxy because it stands for orthodox Christianity and opposed to the “postmodern evangelical project” (8). This problem is broader than simply a rejection of Reformed Orthodoxy, but also includes the rejection of meaning determined by authors.

Trueman's reasoning here could also answer Gushee's criticism that traditionalists have been judgmental and spiteful in their teaching. While it is certainly true that some traditionalists (as well as many in the history of the church) have been unkind and unhelpful towards same-sex attracted people, this point does not erase the clear doctrine that the Bible clearly and authoritatively teaches.¹³⁹ The traditionalist does not contend that a same-sex attracted Christian possesses a sub-*imago Dei* (though Brownson, Gushee, and Vines accuse as much), but rather argues that the revisionist hermeneutic undermines the Bible's perspicuity and authority. Christopher Seitz insightfully comments,

If the Bible's consistently negative word about homosexual conduct is wrong, or outdated, who will then decide in what other ways the Bible is or is not to be trusted or cannot comprehend our days and its struggles, under God? Appeal to Scripture's plain sense is born of the conviction that the Bible can have something to say without other forces needing to regulate that or introduce a special hermeneutics from outside the text so we can know when and where it can speak.¹⁴⁰

Seitz's critique is a relevant one, and demonstrates the need for an orthodox view of Scripture, particularly as it relates to clarity and meaning. But how is one to understand the text's intent and meaning? Does the Spirit illuminate the community of faith to understand a new meaning in light of history or culture, or does the Spirit illuminate the intention of the author while also enabling the believing community to faithfully apply a text's meaning in their particular time and culture? These questions are exceptionally important for the same-sex debate, so we must now briefly turn to examine Scripture's sufficiency and unity.

¹³⁹Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 178. Seitz adds, "It is not so much that same-sex behavior is a particularly loathsome sin or that those claiming a gay lifestyle are special sinners—one could conclude that we in the West have been culturally desensitized to all manner of sexual conduct to such an extent that the very notion of sexual sin is almost antique and irrelevant. No, what the other side feels threatened by is the Bible's possible inability to speak in any clear or straightforward way at all."

¹⁴⁰Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 178–79.

Unity and Sufficiency

Related to clarity, inspiration, and authority, is the unity and sufficiency of the Scriptures. An evangelical commitment to the unity and sufficiency of Scripture is intimately tied to a closed canon. Brownson, Gushee, and Vines all affirm the Protestant canon, arguing that the same-sex debate centers on “connecting the biblical dots” across the redemptive storyline.¹⁴¹ Gushee contends that the Old Testament law is “sifted” by Jesus and the apostles, Acts 10 and 15 are compromises (not fulfillment), and the book of Hebrews has produced 2,000 years of problematic implications for Jewish-Christian relations. Gushee also contends Christians have co-opted the Jewish scriptures, called it “our Old Testament,” and paid no heed to 2,000 years of Jewish interpretations of those same Scriptures.¹⁴² Brownson maintains that Galatians 3:27–28 sweeps the Old Testament patriarchy away, “a radical eschatological reordering of society as a whole.”¹⁴³ Vines purports that Jesus calls us to reject this hierarchy, and that rejecting same-sex relationships is sinful because it mars the image of God.¹⁴⁴

These three men each give examples of how the New Testament (particularly Jesus) is “correcting” the patriarchal, misogynistic, and offensive writings of the Old Testament. At times, however, their views on Scripture are rather Marcion-like. They

¹⁴¹Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 49. See also Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 156–78; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 10–15.

¹⁴²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 71–72. This statement startles because it drives a wedge between God’s promises and their fulfillment in Christ. While it is certainly helpful to read extrabiblical first-century Jewish literature to better understand the New Testament context, it is yet another thing to argue that it is “scandalous” to read the Old Testament in a canonical perspective, apart from the reading of historic or modern Jewish interpretation. The Christian faith (and Jesus in the Gospels) clearly articulates that a rejection of the New Testament is grounded in unbelief and a moral rejection of Yahweh’s means of keeping his promises. Why would Christians heavily rely upon the interpretations of those people who only know half the story? For example, when critically discussing the Lord of the Rings trilogy, is it “scandalous” to only read the reviews of readers who have completed the entire trilogy, while not reading the series review of a reader who refuses to read past the first book?

¹⁴³Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 65–67.

¹⁴⁴Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 143, 159.

drive a sharp division between Old Testament and New Testament that undermines the unity of the canon and its one story of redemption. Central to the concept of canon and the exercise of biblical theology is a theological unity between the Testaments. Biblical theology that is grounded in the Bible necessitates a unified story and theology across redemptive history. If—as Brownson, Gushee, and Vines contend—the Spirit must guide the community in determining new meaning from the Scriptures, then biblical theology is not possible. Revisionists ground their connecting the dots in some form of postbiblical theology because their hermeneutical enterprise necessitates the Spirit providing new revelation beyond the canon, as well as giving texts new meaning (or correction!) beyond the original intention(s) of the human author.¹⁴⁵ This postbiblical theology seeks to provide unity between the biblical witness and the new meaning the Spirit-guided faith community gives the text. Whereas biblical theology’s constraint and arbiter is the unified canon, postbiblical theology’s constraint and arbiter is the faith community.¹⁴⁶

Biblical theology, however, contends that the Bible presents itself as a unified canon with Christ fulfilling the promised redemption guaranteed at the fall (Gen 3:15).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵The anachronism of revisionists (particularly as it relates to patriarchy and same-sex orientation) betrays a non-traditional understanding of the Bible’s conception of history. See Vanhoozer, “Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies,” 212–13. Vanhoozer writes, “There is no square inch of human history that is extrinsic to the ‘mission’ fields of Son and Spirit. The biblical authors are witnesses to a coherent series of events ultimately authored by God. This series of events involves both divine words and divine deeds and, as such, is both revelatory and redemptive.”

¹⁴⁶The faith community, it is argued, must examine science, culture, and other relevant matters that provide correction to the Bible. See Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 104–5. Modern science has demonstrated that the earth rotates around the sun, whereas “the Bible everywhere assumes the sun moves around the earth” (105). Of course, traditionalists would argue that the Bible does not assume geocentrism, but rather is misinterpreted by revisionists reading metaphorical language literalistically. A literal reading, on the other hand, would rightly read metaphor as a figure of speech to communicate an idea. If Brownson has ever used the metaphorical terms “sunrise” or “sunset,” I am sure he would hope not to be misunderstood and accused of geocentrism.

¹⁴⁷The self-attesting Scripture demands to be read as an entire canonical unit. This point, along with typology, will be further explored in chaps. 2 and 3. See Graeme Goldsworthy, “Relationship of Old Testament and New Testament,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. Brian S. Rosner et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 81–89. Goldsworthy argues this unity requires a Protestant understanding of the canon, Old Testament and New

The resurrected Jesus and the apostles certainly saw his New Testament work as a fulfillment of all of God’s Old Testament promises (Luke 24:25–27; 2 Cor 1:19–22). In light of this truth and contrary to revisionists’ criticisms (particularly of Paul and his use of the Old Testament), Beale rightly argues that canonical unity grounds the hermeneutical methodology of the apostles (i.e., the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament) and this methodology is normative for Christians today and should be replicated.¹⁴⁸ A unified canon demands that Scripture interpret Scripture, as well as for readers to understand intentional, intertextual connections between various books and human authors through the illumination of the Spirit.¹⁴⁹ As with inerrancy, authority, perspicuity, and inspiration, the unity and sufficiency of Scripture are grounded in an orthodox doctrine of God. God is the one divine author who has revealed himself by having woven a redemptive storyline together through speaking to his Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles, and to his church through his Spirit.¹⁵⁰ Scripture is a

Testament having equal status as Christian Scripture (with every text relating to Christ and the gospel), and the necessity of rightly understanding certain themes and/or hermeneutical practices (promise-fulfillment, typology, eschatological consummation, *sensus literalis* and *sensus plenior*, etc.). For fuller treatments of typology, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981). For in-depth studies of *sensus plenior* and New Testament use of the Old Testament, see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); Beale, “Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions,” 151–80; Douglas J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 175–212; Moo, “Paul’s Universalizing Hermeneutic in Romans,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 62–90.

¹⁴⁸G. K. Beale, “Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 387–404.

¹⁴⁹Vanhoozer, “Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies,” 219–20. Vanhoozer argues that biblical reasoning requires “canon sense.” He outlines three aspects of canon sense: (1) the ability to locate a passage in light of the canon and entire redemptive drama; (2) the ability to conceptually unpack the storyline of the Bible in doctrinal terms; and, (3) the ability to experience the truth, goodness, and beauty born out of Scripture’s diverse literary forms by “exploring the poetic lay of the biblical land.”

¹⁵⁰Kevin Vanhoozer, “Exegesis and Hermeneutics,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 63. Vanhoozer writes, “No other justification is adequate for reading the Old Testament and New Testament together than the theological conviction that these texts mediate the truth of the one God” (89).

unified canon because there is no division in God, nor is there another divine author. Scripture is a sufficient revelation because the Creator has created us in order that we might know him through his general and special revelation. Scripture alone is sufficient and infallible for all things to which it speaks because God is sufficient and infallible in his self-revelation.

Tied to biblical unity and authorial intent is *sensus plenior*, or “fuller sense.”¹⁵¹ Does the New Testament misuse Old Testament texts, or does the New Testament have to correct Old Testament expectations? Revisionists would say “yes” in different situations, particularly Ephesians 5. Revisionists seem to put much greater weight on newer revelation, while downplaying the significance and authority of Old Testament revelation (particularly in light of its ANE context). *Sensus plenior*, intertextuality, and typology ground a biblical type or passage’s meaning in the author, while also demonstrating that the dual authorship of Scripture produces communicative discourse that surpasses the Old Testament human author’s intent to the extent that a New Testament human author, under the inspiration of the same divine author, picks up and expands the original Old Testament passage’s meaning.¹⁵² Critical to the evangelical ideas of *sensus plenior* and intertextuality is that these Old Testament-New Testament connections and expansion(s) of the original meaning are not arbitrary, but rather

¹⁵¹*Sensus plenior* is a necessary piece of the Bible’s framework, particularly as it relates to prophecy, promise-fulfillment, and typology. Of course, canonical unity, concurrent dual authorship, inspiration, and inerrancy ground *sensus plenior*. See Beale, “Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions,” 165. Beale maintains that *sensus plenior* “presupposes the existence of God and includes God as author of particular biblical texts and of the whole canon, then specific expansions of earlier texts in later ones is part of one complex authorial act of communication.” Old Testament authors did not understand exhaustively all the implications and applications of what they wrote. Rightly, Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 85–87.

¹⁵²I will examine typology in detail in chap. 3. I do not use the term “intertextuality” in the same way used in Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Hays suggests a helpful framework for Old Testament “echoes” and allusions in the New Testament, but like the revisionists in the same-sex debate, Hays’ use of intertextuality is more “reader-oriented,” whereas I argue intertextuality is “author-oriented.”

textually grounded. In other words, intertextuality is not a New Testament allegorical or “spiritual” interpretation of an Old Testament text, but rather a New Testament theological interpretation that is consistent with the original Old Testament passage’s meaning. Intertextuality, unlike allegory, always requires textual warrant for the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament.¹⁵³ As stated earlier, however, the divine authorial intent “is always communicated and constrained by the intent of the human author, [and] is progressively developed across the canon, and is therefore accessible and exegetically discernable by contemporary readers.”¹⁵⁴

For evangelical biblical theology, however, the unity of the canon is grounded in its identity as an act of the Triune God’s communicative discourse. This divine discourse, across the canon, produces consistent meaning grounded in divine authorial intent, hence the Reformation’s call for *sola Scriptura*. Scripture, as God’s very self-revelation, is sufficient for providing all of the necessary revelation and insight into the character and work of the Creator required in redemption. In appealing to recent psychological data from the APA to demonstrate that same-sex monogamy is the new Copernican Revolution or abolitionist movement demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of the interpretive issues of the times. In these historical debates that revisionists cite as evidence for past biblical misinterpretation, it is important to note that the meaning of Scripture did not change.¹⁵⁵ Scripture is the norming norm for theological

¹⁵³Douglas J. Moo and Andrew D. Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 722–37. Moo and Naselli make an excellent distinction between typology and intertextuality. While typology is the extended meaning of things, *sensus plenior* involves the deeper meaning of words. Undergirding typology and *sensus plenior* was the biblical authors’ conviction that the God who had spoken in the Old Testament continued to speak to them and “that it was this final divine context for all of Scripture that determines the meaning of any particular text” (737). I will examine intertextuality and typology in greater detail in later chapters.

¹⁵⁴Aubrey Maria Sequeira, “The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Fulfillment in Christ: Biblical-Theological Exegesis in the Epistle to the Hebrews” (PhD diss, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 82.

¹⁵⁵See Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 21–25; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 104–5.

practice, not appeals to twenty-first century scientific theory. The sufficiency of Scripture speaks completely against the notion that the Spirit is bringing new revelation with “new information,” whether through science, experience, or culture.¹⁵⁶ Related specifically to the issue of same-sex orientation, the sufficient and unified Scriptures provide the proper boundary markers by which Christians can rightly see God, themselves, and the world.¹⁵⁷

While revisionists argue for textual meaning beyond the human author’s understanding (e.g., same-sex orientation and patriarchy), they do not ground this new meaning in the human author’s intent but rather in the divine author’s intention now revealed by the Spirit. In the revisionist framework, the Spirit illuminates the (new) meaning of the text which was either concealed from or derived by readers in spite of the intention of the human author.¹⁵⁸ Whether this interpretive enterprise is grounded in

At this point, Vines confuses the issue of biblical interpretation with his use of imprecise language. He is correct that Caccini and many in the church were wrong about the heliocentric nature of the solar system. Vines seems to confuse the issue when he states, “For centuries, Christians held to a *literal* [emphasis added] reading of such [“geocentric”] passages. . . . Today, though, you would be hard pressed to find a Christian who holds that view” (22). Like Brownson’s contention, the problem with biblical arguments for a geocentric universe is that these arguments do *not* read the Bible *literally*, but rather *literalistically*. Reading according to the intentions of the biblical authors, in light of the literary genre of the biblical literature, is necessary for proper biblical interpretation. A geocentric interpretation of the Scriptures misunderstands biblical genre (narrative) and the use of metaphorical language (e.g., “So Jesus again said to them, “I am the door” in John 10:7–9). Vines’ argument for same-sex monogamy in the church is hard-pressed because the church’s biblical interpretations related to homosexuality are neither a confusion of literary genre nor a confusion of figurative language. In this case, Vines’ telescope illustration is unhelpful. Cf. Kirsten Birkett, “Science and Scripture,” in *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*.

¹⁵⁶See John MacArthur, “The Sufficiency of Scripture,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 15, no. 2 (2004): 171. MacArthur examines Ps 19:7–14, lamenting the church’s move to secular psychology with its radically different theological and philosophical frameworks, particularly with regard to same-sex behavior.

¹⁵⁷Scripture is completely sufficient for allowing us to see God rightly, as well as seeing ourselves rightly before him. This truth serves as part of the grounding for why Scripture can make declarations about God’s saving action towards his people. For instance, when revisionists argue that the celibate/single experience is too great a weight for same-sex attracted individuals, same-sex orientation (however that may be defined) is immutable, or that APA research demands a revision of the plain sense of Scripture (plus two millennia of Spirit-filled community of faith tradition), the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture should bring us pause if we are tempted to ground the plain sense of Scripture in naturalistic assertions or theories.

¹⁵⁸Similar to the existential “leap of faith” in Crump, *Encountering Jesus, Encountering Scripture*. The hermeneutical problem of validity is the same for both Crump and same-sex revisionists.

allegory, Christian existentialism, or postmodern reader-response theory, Old Testament and New Testament connections are not primarily author-oriented. In particular, Brownson, Gushee, and Vines argue that the Genesis, Leviticus, and New Testament authors wrote solely to provide specific patterns for marriage and sexuality to their particular cultures, but now the Spirit gives the faith community normative patterns for sexuality.¹⁵⁹ While revisionists claim that the biblical authors affirmations of heterosexual marriage and prohibitions against same-sex relationships are only normal, not normative, Hirsch's use of "willed types" ably demonstrates this interpretation of Scripture to be inadequate and misinformed. Hirsch's argument is that literary genre plays a significant role in determining "whether or not the implications [beyond what the author knows] belong to the type of meaning that he wills."¹⁶⁰ Applying willed type to the revisionist's argument against the normative nature of marriage in Genesis 1–2 demonstrates that they have misunderstood the implications of the covenantal, royal court context, as well as the legal, kingly decree language present throughout the creation account.¹⁶¹ Genesis 1–2's context and language leaves the reader without a shadow of a doubt that willed type interpretation is necessary for understanding the implications and

¹⁵⁹Vines argues that the global church should embrace same-sex monogamy. It is not Gen 1–2 that provides the normative pattern for humanity, but rather the Spirit-given new meaning now becomes the normative pattern and authority for human marriage.

¹⁶⁰Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 124–25. Hirsch argues that biblical texts seem to require that meaning go beyond anything that a human and historical author could possibly have willed. For example, the literary genre of law provides broad implications for statutes. Hirsch asks the reader to imagine a civil code which determines that an offense is committed when any automobile, bike, or other wheeled vehicle does not come to a complete stop at a red light before a right turn. Suppose years later that new vehicles move completely by compressed air (without wheels) and such a vehicle is ticketed because it does not come to a complete stop at a red light before a right turn. Would it be proper for a judge to validate this interpretation, even though it was not a "wheeled" vehicle? The answer would be "yes" because the "idea of a law contains the idea of mutatis mutandis, and this generic convention was part of the meaning that I willed. The compressed-air vehicle was implied in my meaning, even though I had never conceived of a compressed-air vehicle. It belonged to the willed type" (125). See also Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions," 157–58.

¹⁶¹See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 177–208. Gen 1–2 will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

significances of the divinely-created marriage (covenant) relationship. This passage necessarily has far-reaching implications beyond what the human author could envision, excluding any hint of legitimacy of monogamous same-sex relationships. Revisionists claim that the underlying moral vision of Scripture combined with each biblical author's failure to envision same-sex monogamy now permits gay Christianity. Not only are those assertions completely contrary to the sufficiency and unity of Scripture, they undermine all attempts at evangelical biblical theology.

Biblical Theology

An evangelical understanding of biblical perspicuity, authorial intent, sufficiency, inspired dual authorship, and unity all deny revisionists' arguments that culture, experience, and/or same-sex orientation are authoritative and helpful in giving new meanings to relevant biblical passages. These aspects of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture provide the important foundational commitments for an evangelical understanding of biblical theology.¹⁶² Biblical theology is the hermeneutical discipline that seeks to read God's Word on its own terms—the progressively unfolding, unified story of God's redemptive actions in history. This storyline unfolds and progresses primarily through the biblical covenants and culminates in Jesus Christ. Individual stories and texts are understood in light of the three horizons of Scripture—textual, epochal, and canonical horizons.¹⁶³ Stephen Wellum rightly states, “Biblical theology is the attempt to think through the ‘whole counsel of God,’ and it provides the basis and underpinning for

¹⁶²I will be building upon the foundational work of Geerhardus Vos—“the father of evangelical biblical theology”—who stressed the full authority and reliability of Scripture. Vanhoozer rightly argues that biblical theology is nothing less than a theological hermeneutic. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 32–34.

¹⁶³Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 32–38.

all theologizing.”¹⁶⁴

There is significant evidence from the New Testament to demonstrate that the disciples and early church needed frequent correction and teaching to understand how the Old Testament issues of circumcision, food laws, Sabbath, Gentile inclusion, and a suffering Messiah were to be rightly carried over into the New Testament age. Even amongst evangelicals, there is a spectrum of views on the continuity and discontinuity present between the Old Testament and New Testament, as well as numerous attempts to resolve this tension.¹⁶⁵ Different continuity/discontinuity perspectives result in debates over hermeneutical issues (e.g., whether apostolic hermeneutical practices are descriptive or prescriptive) and doctrinal issues (e.g., baptism, the nature of the new covenant community, same-sex monogamy, etc.). These disagreements within hermeneutics and systematic theology stem from disparities in both exegesis and biblical-theological presuppositions—the “hermeneutical spiral.”¹⁶⁶ In spite of these differences, there have been several helpful resources that have sought to provide an overview of past and current discussions in biblical theology, as well as attempting to plot a future course in

¹⁶⁴Gentry and Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants*, 24.

¹⁶⁵For a progressive covenantal approach, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*. For a progressive dispensationalist perspective, see Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: BridgePoint Books, 2000). For a defense of covenant theology, see Michael S. Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006). There are a variety of streams within dispensationalism and covenant theology, but the latter two resources are both helpful representatives of their respective whole-Bible theologies.

¹⁶⁶See Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007). Theological presuppositions are not bad, but rather inescapable. The question, then, is how faithful are our preunderstandings to the Scriptures? Osborne helpfully writes, “The problem is that our preunderstanding too easily becomes prejudice, a set of *a priori*s that place a grid over Scripture and make it conform to these preconceived conceptions. So we need to ‘bracket’ these ideas to a degree and allow the text to deepen or at times challenge and even change those already established ideas. As readers, we want to place ourselves in front of the text (and allow it to address us) rather than behind it (and force it to go where we want). The reader’s background and ideas are important in the study of biblical truth; however, this must be used to study meaning rather than to create meaning that is not there” (29).

the discipline.¹⁶⁷ I have briefly laid a foundation for an evangelical doctrine of Scripture as it relates to the issue of same-sex monogamy. I now turn to give an overview of the relevant features of progressive covenantalism. After having laid the biblical-theological skeleton of progressive covenantalism, I will then demonstrate the validity of this framework as I exegete relevant texts, as well as interpret and trace intertextual and typological connections in chapter 3.

Progressive Covenantalism

Revisionists, particularly Brownson and his “moral vision” of the Bible, have presented a biblical theology that has drifted away from Scripture’s self-attestation and towards Marcionism. Revisionists have implicitly driven a wedge between the Old Testament and the New Testament, arguing that new creation redemptive realities brought by Christ are now shattering the misogynistic and patriarchal structures inherent to Israelite culture. They argue that while Paul may not have had a conception of sexual orientation, Christ and his apostles are replacing oppressive old creation structures and sanctifying same-sex sexual unions. Revisionists are formulating theological conclusions for same-sex marriage upon a biblical-theological foundation that does not accurately reflect the Bible’s own presentation, categories, and structures. It is important for the present discussion to understand how the Son has fulfilled God’s promises, particularly since revisionists argue that a right biblical theology sees Jesus radically transforming the

¹⁶⁷There are a number of helpful, contemporary overviews of approaches to biblical theology. These include Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Brian S. Rosner et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Present and Future of Biblical Theology,” *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (November 2012): 445–64. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and each of these authors is interacting with different elements within this particular discipline. Klink and Lockett, as well as Köstenberger, provide helpful overviews of various approaches to biblical theology. Two limitations in the work of Klink and Lockett are that they provide too broad a spectrum of biblical-theological works examined (non-evangelical and evangelical), and they neglect to examine the wide epistemological and theological gaps between those historical-critical scholars, evangelical scholars, and those who situate themselves somewhere in between those two poles.

nature of marriage to include same-sex relationships. I now turn to offer a more biblically faithful and consistent biblical theology.

The redemptive story from creation to new creation is a cohesive whole, and this point is exceptionally important as I examine marriage and the new creation. Progressive covenantalism is the biblical-theological system that sees the progression of the biblical covenants across the canon as the primary framework by which the redemptive storyline, centered in Christ Jesus, is best understood. For the sake of clarity, I will progress through the biblical covenants chronologically while connecting each of them to the larger, canonical storyline.¹⁶⁸ Revisionists have sought to redefine the new creation realities that Christ has brought through his new covenant ministry because of a sub-biblical foundation, so it is important to give a brief overview of the biblical storyline so that exegesis in the next chapter is properly understood in its canonical context. In the next chapter, I will apply several hermeneutical lenses, arguing for their necessity in proper theological formulation for the present debate while also providing a test case for the hermeneutical spiral of exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology.

The Creation and Noahic Covenants

In Genesis 1:26–28, God creates Adam and Eve (male and female) in his own image and gives them the divine command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” Adam, as the covenant head, transgresses a direct command (Gen 3:6–12; Rom 5:14), violates the covenant, and falls under the curse of God.¹⁶⁹ The curse does

¹⁶⁸This dissertation is not an exhaustive, exegetical defense of progressive covenantalism. The main thesis, methodology, and arguments are clearly and rigorously defended in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*; Gentry and Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants*; Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016); Stephen J. Wellum and Trent W. Hunter, *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018); and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, ed. Miles V. Van Pelt and Dane C. Ortlund (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

¹⁶⁹Many scholars dispute the presence of a covenant at creation because there is no language of

give a promise of hope that Adam’s offspring will eventually crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15), effectively destroying and overturning the serpent’s work. The devastating effects of sin that were introduced by Adam are propagated by his children and result in God “starting over” with Noah. Genesis 9:1–7 presents Yahweh making a covenant with Noah and commanding Noah, a seemingly “new” Adam, to subdue the earth via the same divine command given to Adam in 1:28—“be fruitful and multiply.” Noah, like the first Adam, disobeys the Lord.¹⁷⁰ As Goldsworthy has rightly argued, Genesis 1–11 serves as the foundation for the rest of salvation history, with this vital section introducing the key doctrines of creation, the fall, judgment, evil, grace, election, covenant, God’s sovereignty, and salvation history.¹⁷¹ The acts of Genesis 1–11 involve the origins of all people, expressing a universal scope to the story of redemption—a theological history.¹⁷² Though Genesis 12:1–3 informs the rest of the canon, Yahweh’s call to and covenant with Abraham have no rationale or backdrop apart from Genesis 1–11.¹⁷³ Biblical accounts of salvation are given within the framework of historical

“covenant” in the text. Gentry rightly argues that the absence of the word “covenant” does not demonstrate the absence of a covenant, and demonstrates from Isa 66:1 how biblical authors can talk about subjects (kingship in Isa 66:1) without using the exact vocabulary (“kingship” or “king”). Also, Hos 6:7 refers to Israel transgressing the covenant in similar fashion to Adam. For an argument for the existence of a creation covenant from Hos, see Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, New American Commentary, vol. 19A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 162–63.

¹⁷⁰Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 414–15. Mathews rightly points out that the parallels between Adam and Noah are clear—the language of cursing and blessing, both experience the shame of nakedness, transgression resulting in familial strife, sin with fruit of the garden/vineyard, etc. Moses intends for his readers to see Noah as a second Adam, which makes a strong (implicit) case for there being a creation covenant in Gen 1–2, even though the term “covenant” is not found.

¹⁷¹It is important to note that Gen 10 and 11 are switched chronologically in order that the author may provide us a theological interpretation of history.

¹⁷²Francis Foulkes, “The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 353. This point is critical in addressing the revisionist’s contention that the creation account is only normal for particular cultures.

¹⁷³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 224–25. Gentry rightly states, “According to the New Testament, as we read Gen 12–25, we are to view the call of Abram as a kind of ‘new creation.’ Just as the divine word in Gen 1:3 brings into existence things that are not, so in Gen 12:3 it is the divine

narrative, and Genesis has a place in history writing as it unfolds the redemptive storyline for its readers.¹⁷⁴

The Abrahamic Covenant

Genesis 12 introduces Abram, whom Moses identifies as yet another Adam.¹⁷⁵ Peter Gentry demonstrates the intentional repetition of the Adamic language of “bless,” “be fruitful,” and “multiply” in Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham to highlight the connection to creation.¹⁷⁶ Yahweh promises Abraham a great name (12:2), a great nation (12:2), an offspring (15:5), a multitude of generations (15:5), a land to possess (15:7), and peace (15:15). Yahweh will bless those who bless Abraham and judge Abraham’s enemies (12:3). Through Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed (12:3). In Genesis 15, Yahweh reasserts the promises given from Genesis 12 and guarantees them with a self-maledictory oath.¹⁷⁷ It is beyond dispute that the New Testament authors see

word that brings into existence a new order out of the chaos resulting from the confusion and curse of Babel—the condition of the world just prior to Gen 12” (225).

¹⁷⁴Contra James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999). See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 59. Goldsworthy argues, “When I say that all history is salvation history, I am, of course, introducing the theological interpretation I believe the Bible intends. It is important to see that all human history from creation to new creation belongs to God’s sovereign work and purpose.” Non-narrative Old Testament writings (i.e., wisdom literature and large portions of the Psalter), understood in their context as belonging to the nation of Israel, still constitute a part of redemptive history.

¹⁷⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 224. Gentry argues, “Here, after Adam and Noah, God is making another new start. Abram and his family constitute another Adam. Notice the parallels in the biblical narrative: Adam and Eve had three sons (besides other children who are not named in the text; Gen. 5:4). Similarly, the genealogy in Gen 5 ends with a man who also had three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth). The genealogy in Gen 11 ends in the same way: with a man who had three sons (Abram, Nahor and Haran). This parallel is a literary technique inviting the reader to compare Abram with Noah and Adam.”

¹⁷⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 226–27. Gentry shows the language of Gen 1:28 clearly present in Gen 12:2, 17:2, 6, 8, 22:16, 26:3, 26:24, 28:3, 35:11, 47:27, and 48:3—all pertaining to Abraham, Isaac, and/or Jacob.

¹⁷⁷For a different perspective on the oath, see Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 172. In his commentary, Mathews denies that Yahweh could give an self-imprecatory oath because it is difficult “to reconcile this idea of God theologically and impossible to explain how the imprecation could be carried out” (172). He

Christ as the offspring of Abraham and the man through whom the nations will be blessed (Gal 3:16).

In Genesis 22, Yahweh commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and Abraham believes by faith that God will provide a substitute for his son, who represents all the promises of the covenant (Gen 22:5, 8; Heb 11:17-19). Stephen Dempster rightly connects the ram with the Levitical sacrificial system, but it is also clear that the typological connection between the ram and Jesus is essential for understanding the new covenant ministry of Christ.¹⁷⁸ Paul's reading of the Abrahamic covenant in Romans 4:13–25 corresponds well with the picture presented by Moses of Abraham as a new Adam. First, Paul understands that God's promise to Abraham was not meant to be limited to a strip of land in Canaan, but rather was meant to include the entire world (Rom 4:13). This is important because Paul also sees Abraham as a new Adam who is meant to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." Second, Paul's language in Romans 4:17–18—κατέναντι οὗ ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ τοῦ ζῳοποιούντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα—is also meant to recall Genesis 1 creation language.¹⁷⁹ Paul's ascription of new creation language to Abraham is intended to connect to the Adam-typology established by Moses in Genesis. God, in his faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant, has sent Christ as the promised offspring who has overcome the effects of sin and Satan caused by Adam, and has begun the new creation work as the Last Adam. As the true offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ is undoing the failure of

provides no explanation for why this is an "impossibility" and, thus, his assertion falls flat. For a better explanation of this event, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 248–58.

¹⁷⁸Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 85. Heb 6:13-20 gives a commentary on Yahweh's blessing in Gen 22, arguing that God swears an oath by himself to bring about the promises of the Abrahamic covenant—namely, the promised offspring (Christ) who brings the promised land (the land promised to Abraham in Gen 15:7 is the whole world/new creation in Rom 4:13-25 and Heb 11:9-10).

¹⁷⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 631. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 102. Schreiner rightly notes that Paul's new creation language often has a soteriological bent.

Adam and the effects of sin by taking the curse of the covenant upon himself.

The Mosaic Covenant

Israel is also pictured by Moses as another Adam, with the Lord applying the same language of Adam to Israel (Gen 28:3, 35:11, 47:27, and 48:3), as well as identifying the nation of Israel as his firstborn son (Exod 4:22–23).¹⁸⁰ As promised to Abraham, Israel is delivered from the oppression of Egypt, and the Passover and exodus from Egypt become the framework by which Israel understands Yahweh’s future salvation-work. Hosea 11:1 uses Exodus language to look retrospectively at God’s past salvation, as well as forecasting a future, eschatological salvation. This typological framework finds its fulfillment in Christ in Matthew 2:15.¹⁸¹

The Mosaic covenant also graciously provided the Levitical sacrificial system by which the people could experience Yahweh’s covenant presence, despite their sin. The Levites and sacrifices, though imperfect, provided a means by which the sins of Israel

¹⁸⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 303. Gentry argues that “Exod 15:17 shows that Canaan becomes for Israel what the garden sanctuary was for Adam.”

¹⁸¹Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 221–22. Garrett poignantly writes, “Did Hosea suppose that this verse looked ahead to the Messiah? It is, of course, difficult if not impossible to show that Hosea intended readers to discern from this passage that the Messiah would come out of Egypt. This question, however, is the wrong question to ask of Hos 11:1. The real issue is not, Did Hosea intend this verse to be read messianically? but What did Hosea understand to be the nature of prophecy? In answer to this question, we must assert that Hosea, like all biblical prophets, saw prophecy not so much as the making of specific, individual predictions (which are actually quite rare among the writing prophets), but as the application of the Word of God to historical situations. In doing this the prophets brought to light certain patterns that occur repeatedly in the relationship between God and his people. These patterns or themes have repeated fulfillments or manifestations until the arrival of the final, absolute fulfillment. Thus, for example, the conquest of the land ‘fulfilled’ the promises to the patriarchs but did not fulfill those promises finally or in their ultimate form. The inheritance of the ‘new earth’ is the ultimate conclusion of this prophetic theme. All of the prophets were, to some degree, ‘like Moses’ (Deut 18:5), but the ultimate prophet like Moses can only be the Messiah. Each of the kings of the line of David was a fulfillment of the promise that God would build him a ‘house’ (2 Sam 7), but the Messiah is again the final fulfillment of this theme. Thus prophecy gives us not so much specific predictions but types or patterns by which God works in the world. We need look no further than Hos 11 to understand that Hosea, too, believed that God followed patterns in working with his people. Here the slavery in Egypt is the pattern for a second period of enslavement in an alien land (v. 5), and the exodus from Egypt is the type for a new exodus (vv. 10–11). Thus the application of typological principles to Hos 11:1 is in keeping with the nature of prophecy itself and with Hosea’s own method.”

were overlooked, and it was the anticipatory faith of the Israelite remnant that led to their sins being forgiven in the work of Jesus Christ. The Levitical priesthood, temple, and sacrificial system are essential in understanding the context of Christ's priesthood and Hebrews 5-10 presents several arguments for why Christ's offering and priesthood is better than the old covenant. Christ's sacrifice provides a better sacrifice because the blood of animals could not take away sins (Heb 10:4), Christ's representative priesthood continues forever (Heb 7:23-25), and his offering is a propitiation for the sins of his people (Heb 2:17). It is important to note that Christ's work is understood in its *covenantal* contexts.¹⁸²

Paul understands the typological framework of Adam—Israel—Christ in Romans 7:7–11. While there have been numerous interpretations of this section,¹⁸³ it appears that Paul is using language that is meant to evoke images of Adam and Israel. From the context, Paul seems to be referring to himself as he describes his experience under the law, but Schreiner correctly states, “In the last analysis the identity of the person in view is not of great importance, for even if Paul refers to himself, he mirrors the experience of Adam and Israel and exemplifies the experience of everyone who has tried to observe the law.”¹⁸⁴ This Old Testament echo of the failures of Adam and Israel in this section highlight the typological relationship that Paul makes explicit in Romans 5:12–21, and demonstrates more fully the corporate nature of Adam's failure. The disobedience of Adam spreads to all of his offspring, and Israel, as a new Adam,

¹⁸²The author of Hebrews views Christ's person and work in light of the Adamic covenant (Heb 2:5–9), the Noahic covenant (Heb 11:7, 11:39–12:2), the Abrahamic covenant (Heb 1:4, 2:14–18, 11:8–19, 11:39–12:2), the Mosaic covenant (Heb 2:1–4, 2:14–10:39), and the Davidic covenant (Heb 1:5–13, 2:5–9). It is worthy to note that his argument is one that is based upon the progression of the biblical covenants.

¹⁸³For the four most common interpretations of this section, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 423–31. The identity of ἐγὼ is hotly debated, but one particular identity is not necessary for my argument.

¹⁸⁴Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 523.

recapitulates the experience of his fallen father.¹⁸⁵ Paul's typological framework, as it relates to Adam and Israel, clearly reinforces the picture presented by Moses in the Pentateuch.

The Davidic Covenant

Yahweh's covenant with David was a gracious covenant, particularly because the Mosaic covenant stipulated that no one of Moabite ancestry might approach the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation (Deut 23:3; cf. Ruth 4). The covenant Yahweh makes with David regarding his future kingdom and offspring is outlined in 2 Samuel 7. Yahweh promises to give David a son, establish his house, and establish the son's throne forever. Goldsworthy is right to see the Davidic king as the pinnacle of Old Testament promise and expectation, and he rightly ties the wisdom literature to the Davidic king (1 Kgs 3–10).¹⁸⁶ Solomon's unfaithfulness demonstrates the need for a perfectly faithful Davidic son, who will rule forever in righteousness.¹⁸⁷ In fact, the prophetic expectation is *not* the need for a new Solomon, but rather that God's people need a *new David* (Isa 11:1). The prophetic hope cast is that the Davidic king will come with the new covenant, new temple, and enact new creation realities (Ps 110; Dan 7:9–18; Ezek 37–48).

The New Covenant

The person and work of Jesus Christ ushers in the new covenant realities

¹⁸⁵Rightly, Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 438–39. This is an implication of Paul's point in 5:14.

¹⁸⁶The wisdom literature was written in the covenantal context of the Davidic kings. The writers of the wisdom literature tie wisdom to the king, and interpret salvation history in light of the progression of God's covenants.

¹⁸⁷See Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 68. Goldsworthy admits that God was gracious in the face of David's unfaithfulness, but Goldsworthy fails to demonstrate why it is *Solomon's* unfaithfulness that divides the redemptive stages.

promised throughout the Old Testament. Before I move to New Testament fulfillment, I will briefly outline the post-Davidic, prophetic anticipation of this future new covenant.

Old Testament anticipation. In Luke 24:25–27, Jesus rebukes the disciples on the road to Emmaus because they failed to believe the new covenant promises and anticipation of the Old Testament prophets, beginning with Moses. There are several places in the Old Testament prophetic writings where the new covenant is anticipated and its realities summarized, but I will specifically address two passages. In Jeremiah 31:29–34, Yahweh is making a covenant with all the house of Israel, including those Gentiles who have put their trust in the Lord.¹⁸⁸ In verses 29-30, Jeremiah establishes a new way for Israel to relate to the Lord. Schreiner explains, “The old covenant was ‘tribal’ in that representatives—such as prophets, priests, and kings—mediated the Lord to the people (cf. 31:29-30).”¹⁸⁹ No longer would there be “tribal” representation, according to Jeremiah, because each person in the covenant community would be held accountable for his own sins and everyone would know the Lord. Jeremiah’s emphasis on individual accountability meant to indicate a change in structure in the coming new covenant, as compared to the “tribal” structure of the older covenants.

Three crucial aspects of this covenant must be addressed and then the New Testament interpretation of this passage will be examined. First, the promise of God in verse 33 is, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Jeremiah’s argument is that each individual will be held accountable to the Lord, not represented by a sinful

¹⁸⁸For an extended defense of the view that the recipients of this covenant promise were both Israel and Gentiles, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 483–530. Gentry argues that Jeremiah presents a picture of a new people of God, brought out of both physical and spiritual exile. Gentry reveals, “The Gentiles or non-Jewish nations will be established in the midst of Israel in this restored people of God. They too are the exiles who will be brought home by the fishers of men” (496). Gentry demonstrates this with exegetical examinations of Jer 4:2, 12:14-17, and 16:14-18.

¹⁸⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 362.

mediator. Second, the Lord proclaims that all will know him. The fact that all will know him is the grounding for why there will no longer be a need for old covenant priests teaching the law, for everyone will have the law internalized. Why is the internalization of the law upon the heart important? Gentry argues that this will produce faithful covenant keepers in the new covenant, whereas the old covenant age was marked by faithless people who broke the covenant.¹⁹⁰ Third, all experience the forgiveness of sins, and sins will not be remembered. This is radically different from a Levitical priesthood that reminded Israel of its sin every year on the Day of Atonement.

The promises of Ezekiel 36–37 also express prophetic anticipation that must be understood in light of covenant progression. To set the context, Gentry has argued persuasively that in Ezekiel 16 God has established his plan to extend the ethnic barriers of Israel to include the Gentiles, not on the basis of the Mosaic covenant, but on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant.¹⁹¹ The Lord is promising that he will pour out his Spirit upon the restored house of Israel, not because of their worth but for his holy name. Yahweh is going to make his people faithful, though they have been idolaters and unfaithful. How will this be accomplished? Yahweh promises that he is going to cleanse his people by sprinkling clean water on them (36:25), give them new hearts and a new spirit (36:26), remove the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh (36:26), and the Lord will

¹⁹⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 503. This law is intimately tied to God’s self-revelation and normative patterns for creation set forth in Gen 1–2. Interestingly, revisionists argue that new creation realities written on the heart of Christians are divorced from the old, former patterns of creation, but Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s new covenant promises are cast in light of Old Testament fulfillment, not abrogation. In fact, God’s promise through Jeremiah of the law written on the believer’s heart makes no sense apart from the previous Old Testament revelation. Chap. 3 will demonstrate that faithful covenant-keepers are an essential part of understanding biblical sexuality, and in particular, all forms of same-sex behavior.

¹⁹¹See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 475–81. For another helpful resource for this view, see Peter Naylor, *Ezekiel*, EP Study Commentaries (Darlington, England: EP Books, 2011). Gentry argues that Samaria and Sodom are considered “daughters” to Israel in Ezek 16:61, making them family with the covenant people. The Lord is expanding the covenant community to include Gentile nations, but he is doing this because of his promises to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant, not “on the basis of my covenant with [Israel]” (Ezek 16:61).

put his Spirit in his people, causing his people to obey his decrees (36:27). As one examines the text, it becomes clear that Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, is anticipating a change in the nature of the covenant community. For Ezekiel, the entire house of Israel (36:22) will experience regeneration of the heart and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Similar to Jeremiah 31:31–34, the law will be internalized, producing faithful covenant partners who will walk in Yahweh’s statutes and rules. This is significantly different from any covenant prior to the new. Each covenant mediator (and by extension, the covenant communities each represented) failed to produce a covenant community that was faithful to Yahweh. Ezekiel is prophesying that this problem will be overcome in the new covenant of the Spirit. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, sees a faithful new covenant people to whom Yahweh can truly say, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” (37:23).¹⁹²

New Testament fulfillment. The New Testament repeatedly demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. This point is not disputed by revisionists, but there is clear disagreement over how Christ has fulfilled these Old Testament promises. With regard to the progression of the covenants and the structure of

¹⁹²Important to the normativity of creation discussion is the description of the land and its renewal. This is very important as the progression of the story is examined. Is this meant to point merely to a geographic area of land for the ethnic people of Israel? This seems unlikely because of the eschatological language employed by Ezekiel. Everything in this land is renewed into a new Eden, but it will be greater because of the abundant increase of the people (36:37-38), the new realities of a better covenant (36:25-35), and the ingathering of the nations (36:36). Is not the nation of Israel restored to the land, however, in Ezekiel 37:15-28? Again, this seems unlikely because of the land promise being given alongside the resurrection of the Davidic house (37:24-25) and the rebuilding of the temple (37:26-28). A consistent hermeneutic would determine that Jesus Christ brings the fulfillment of the Davidic kingship, new temple, and new creation, especially if the land is being described as a new Eden. On this point, Gentry argues, “The promise concerning the renewed Israel living in the land is fulfilled in that the new Jerusalem and the new creation are coextensive. Indeed the apostle John in Rev 21-22 recognizes the new creation in Ezekiel’s description of the new temple in chapters 40-48.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 481. Also important is the Old Testament promise of resurrection in Ezekiel 37. The fact that Jesus Christ fulfills the resurrection promises of the Old Testament is beyond dispute, but it is telling that the resurrection of “Israel” in Ezekiel 37 is ultimately predicated upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. See also Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 737-1024; Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*.

storyline, one will see that the New Testament examines Jeremiah 31 multiple times, pinpointing covenantal shifts from old to new in both structure and nature. D. A. Carson indicates that Jesus clearly alludes to Jeremiah 31 in the Matthew 26 account of the Last Supper. Jesus' use of "blood of the covenant" and "for the forgiveness of sins" most certainly illuminates Jesus' understanding of covenantal shifts and his identity as the mediator of this new covenant.¹⁹³

A second passage demonstrating Old Testament fulfillment is Hebrews 8. The primary focus of the author of Hebrews in this passage is to show the obsolete nature of the old covenant as a result of the inauguration of the new covenant (Heb 8:13). William Lane notes that this passage serves to expose the "ineffectiveness of the Levitical arrangement" and demonstrate that "redemptive grace reaches its zenith in the full and final realization of this promise through Christ."¹⁹⁴ Jeremiah 31 and the New Testament commentaries on it speak to a change in structure and nature from the old covenant to the new covenant. Jeremiah's eschatology was focused on the progression of the old covenant to its fulfillment in the new covenant. Hebrews 8:10 outlines the Lord's new covenant work, as outlined in Jeremiah 31:31–34, that overcomes the faults of the Mosaic covenant. The internalization of the law is more than rote memorization, because this did not prove efficacious in producing a faithful people in Israel.¹⁹⁵ This universal

¹⁹³D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 537.

¹⁹⁴William Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 208–10. Lane comments that the use of Jer 31 in Heb 8 "serves to exhibit the imperfect and provisional character of the old covenant and its institutions (8:6-13). Corresponding to the axiological evaluation of the theme of sanctuary is the redemptive-historical evaluation of the theme of covenant. The mediation of the new covenant, in contrast to the old, has provided access to the 'heavenly sanctuary,' the 'true tabernacle,' and the 'superior priestly ministry.' The adjectives 'heavenly,' 'true,' and 'superior' speak of the perfection of the salvation mediated through Christ" (211). It is exactly this "perfection" mediated through Christ that allows (1) all to know the Lord; (2) all to have the Spirit; and (3) all sins to be forgiven.

¹⁹⁵Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 298.

internalization will eliminate the need for unfaithful mediators, particularly prophets and priests, between the covenant people and the Lord (v. 11).¹⁹⁶ This universality is set in stark contrast to the old covenant where the nation frequently lacked members who knew the Lord (Judg 2:10; Hos 4:1, 6). Beale rightly argues that this democratization is also the result of the new covenant's place in redemptive history—i.e., the fullness of God's progressive revelation has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1–2).¹⁹⁷ The author of Hebrews argues that Christ is not only the heavenly priest in the true, eschatological sanctuary, but he also ushers in a better ministry by being the mediator of a better covenant that is built upon better promises (8:6). His mediation is greater than angels and Moses because he is the divine Son (1:1–6, 8–12, 7:28), the true Davidic King (2:5–13), the true offspring of Abraham (1:2, 4; 2:14–18), and rules, intercedes, and mediates at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary (1:3, 8:1).

Does the New Testament address Ezekiel 36–48 and give a similar commentary as outlined above? Jesus appeals to Ezekiel 36 in his conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. In John 3:5, Jesus explains that unless a man is “born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” The use of Ezekiel 36:25–27 in John 3:5 is a commentary on the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.¹⁹⁸ In this passage, Jesus is reiterating the change in *nature* of the new covenant community, for everyone in the new covenant community is regenerated and Spirit-indwelt. Titus 3:4–6 also points to the new covenant realities prophesied in Ezekiel 36. Examining the use of Ezekiel in

¹⁹⁶O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 298–300.

¹⁹⁷Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 733.

¹⁹⁸Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Nashville: Baker Academic, 2004), 124. If this interpretation is correct, then entrance into the kingdom of God is predicated upon entrance into the new covenant community. Ezekiel's argument is that all within this new covenant will have the Spirit of God and be sprinkled with clean water. Jesus takes this passage and teaches that one must possess the elements of the new covenant community (regeneration and indwelling of the Spirit) if one wants to enter the kingdom of God now (which would include the new covenant community and all the faithful believers in previous dispensations).

Titus 3, Philip Towner contends that Paul is declaring that the promised Spirit is now a reality for the new covenant people of God.¹⁹⁹ Regeneration in Titus 3 is clearly connected to the new covenant work of Christ prophesied in Ezekiel 36. It is the new covenant work of the Spirit, understood in the covenantal shifts predicted in Ezekiel 36-37 that provide the framework for understanding present new covenant realities. God's promise in Ezekiel 37:24-28 is that the Davidic king in the new covenant ("covenant of peace") era will rule as king and all the people will obey God's statutes. Ezekiel 40-48 also gives an eschatological vision of new covenant/new creation realities. Ezekiel's vision and description of a new temple harkens back to the imagery of Eden at creation, while Jesus alludes to Ezekiel 47 in John 7 to teach about himself and the Spirit's relation to Christians.²⁰⁰

This brief overview of the progressive covenantal framework demonstrates the connections between Old Testament and New Testament, as well as the importance of interpreting Scripture in light of its covenantal progression across redemptive history. Chapter 3 provides a brief exegesis and theological interpretation of each of the relevant biblical passages addressing same-sex behavior, and examines the Bible's typological argument for marriage and its fulfillment in the Christ-church relationship.

¹⁹⁹Philip H. Towner, "1-2 Timothy and Titus," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 917.

²⁰⁰Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 335-54.

CHAPTER 3

HERMENEUTICS, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND MARRIAGE

The preceding chapters have given an overview of the same-sex issue in present Western culture, examined and critiqued the revisionist’s underlying doctrine of Scripture and biblical theology, presented an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, and presented a brief overview of progressive covenantalism’s understanding of the biblical storyline. In this chapter, I exegete each of the “homosexual” biblical passages in the debate in light of Genesis 1–3. I first examine relevant passages in light of (1) the progression of the biblical covenants; (2) the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of interpretation; and, (3) the biblical theme of creation-fall-redemption-new creation. I then conclude the chapter with an examination of marriage in light of the Bible’s typological structures.

James Brownson and David Gushee correctly identify the creation account as the major point of contention for traditionalists in the debate.¹ Brownson argues that the creation account is not normative, patriarchal structures are introduced after the fall, and gender complementarity is not emphasized in Genesis 1–2. Rather, kinship (i.e., covenant) bond forms the normative pattern for marriage. Gushee contends that all human sexuality has been distorted by Genesis 3, and covenant commitment is the determining factor for biblical fidelity in any sexual relationship, irrespective of sexual orientation. Matthew Vines asserts that denying same-sex relationships is itself the

¹James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2013), 17–18; David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017), 81–82.

consequence of sin and further mars the image of God in same-sex couples. These charges are serious and demand a careful examination of the creation account. I contend that progressive covenantalism provides a consistent, robust biblical defense of the traditionalist’s position, as well as a decisive response to revisionists’ charges. The creation account will be outlined in light of the three horizons of biblical interpretation—textual, epochal, and canonical horizons. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate that revisionists misunderstand the reality that “the divine-human relationship is *essentially* and *fundamentally* covenantal.”²

The Creation Account

Genesis 1–3 informs the rest of the biblical canon.³ God is established as sovereign Creator of the universe, the one who speaks and “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4:17). The early acts of Genesis involve the origins of all people, expressing a universal scope to the story of redemption—a theological history.⁴ Biblical accounts of salvation, Graeme Goldsworthy asserts, are given within the framework of

²Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 164. All of mankind is subject to the covenant stipulations outlined and demanded by the Lord God. As I demonstrate, Scripture clearly teaches that God makes the promises and demands in every biblical covenant, and revisionists lack the authority to bend, change, and/or redefine the God-given stipulations present in the biblical covenants.

³G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 23. Beale rightly contends that biblical themes (including image of God) are “controlled to a significant degree by perceiving that these are topics that are prominent facets of Gen. 1–3 and are prominent in the final vision of the consummated regaining of Eden and the eschatological new-creational kingdom in Rev. 21–22.” This idea is set in stark contrast to Vines’ presentation of Gen 1–2. Gen 1–3 and Rev 21–22 forming a canonical *inclusio* effectively prohibits any trajectory hermeneutic that Vines may present.

⁴Francis Foulkes, “The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 353.

historical narrative, and Genesis has a place in history writing.⁵ The history of salvation can be summarized by following the story of Scripture, beginning with Genesis 1–3.

The Textual Horizon

Genesis 1:1–2:3 provides the global perspective of God’s creation story, with 2:4–3:24 providing a recursive focus on the creation of man.⁶ Israel’s monotheistic cosmology is set in stark contrast to the nations around it, and Elohim demonstrates his total sovereignty and lordship through his speech as his creation is *ex nihilo*.⁷ God establishes creation at the beginning, but the author’s use of בְּרֵאשִׁית has commenced a history that has its consummation at the last days.⁸ God is a law-giver who commands every aspect of creation, and creatures will flourish as they adhere to the divine

⁵Contra James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999). See Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 59. Goldsworthy argues, “When I say that all history is salvation history, I am, of course, introducing the theological interpretation I believe the Bible intends. It is important to see that all human history from creation to new creation belongs to God’s sovereign work and purpose.”

⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 183. Gushee and Brownson are incorrect in their contention that there are multiple authors/editors of Gen 1–2 with different purposes and/or agendas. Gen 1:26–28 finds its theological interpretation in Gen 2:4–25 with the author using the common Hebrew literary technique of resumption.

⁷Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 3–4. Schreiner rightly posits that God has no rivals and all of creation is under his jurisdiction. Ps 96:5 demonstrates the superiority of Yahweh over all the false gods of the surrounding nations. See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 9–10.

⁸John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 20–21. Sailhamer writes, “The growing focus within the biblical canon on the ‘times of the end’ was an appropriate extension to the ‘end’ already anticipated in the ‘beginning’ of Gen 1:1. The fundamental principle reflected in Gen 1:1 and the prophetic vision of the times of the end in the rest of Scripture is that the ‘last things will be like the first things.’ The allusions to Gen 1 and 2 in Rev 22 illustrate the role these early chapters of Genesis played in shaping the form and content of the scriptural vision of the future.” This point is important for understanding the normativity of creation and canonical unity, particularly as God’s salvation is unfolded in Edenic terms across redemptive history.

command.⁹ The poetic repetitions and symmetry of Genesis 1 serve to reinforce the order of creation and reflect the orderliness of the Creator who commands by simple speech.¹⁰ Within the creation account, the climatic crown of God’s creative work is shown to be the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26–28.¹¹ The *imago Dei* established in Genesis in 1–3 is grounded in two important covenant realities—sonship (before God) and servant kingship (before the earth). These realities incorporate aspects of ontology, function, and relation as part of the *imago Dei*.¹² Man as the divine image cannot be understood apart from covenant obedience to Yahweh, and Adam is presented as a priest-king who enjoys God’s covenant presence and serves as God’s vice-regent over creation.¹³

Genesis 1–2. Genesis 1 opens with God creating the heavens and the earth through communicative acts. God creates everything *ex nihilo*, subduing chaos and installing order. Not only does God create everything himself, the nature of his created

⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 38. Wenham rightly notes that Gen, as the narrative introduction of the Pentateuch, teaches as much about ethics and theology as Old Testament laws and sermons.

¹⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 38.

¹¹Rightly Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 181–84; Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 160. Gentry’s exegesis demonstrates that the creation narrative is broken into seven different paragraphs with each paragraph tied to the day of creation that it describes (Day 6 is described from 1:24–31). The significant shift in structure for the sixth day’s paragraph communicates that the contents of this paragraph are very important. In the literary structure of the Genesis creation sequence, day 6 is the climax of God’s work. Not only does God speak personally to humanity (unlike the rest of creation), but the day of their creation is “very good.” God speaking to them personally hints at the covenant relationship that is then highlighted in 2:4.

¹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192–202. See also Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 167–71; Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1994).

¹³See William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2013); G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); David Stephen Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ’s Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 56–65.

order remains normative throughout creation history, even after the fall.¹⁴ Brownson rightly rejects the image of God being defined as the duality of human gender, and is correct to note that the command to “be fruitful and multiply” is given to both animals and humanity, indicating that procreation does not ground the essence of human marriage.¹⁵ His attempts, however, to divorce procreation and gender complementarity from the marital relationship while also emphasizing the similarity of male and female is an overreach. When one examines the ANE context, as well as the grammatical and literary features of Genesis 1:27–28, it becomes clear that Brownson’s position is without exegetical merit. ANE kings were considered to be images of the gods of that nation or culture, and these kings subdued and ruled on behalf of these gods. These kings often erected statutes of themselves throughout their kingdoms in order that their sovereign presence and rule was communicated to the people.¹⁶ Understood in light of its ANE

¹⁴While Adam certainly subjected creation to futility because of sin, it is clear that the heavens, earth, light, darkness, day, night, seas, dry land, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, living creatures, bird, fish, and mankind still exist and operate according to their created nature. Sin has corrupted, but not destroyed, the nature of the created order. While sin attempts to dethrone God, the Creator remains the Creator. Mankind is still made in the image of God. Humanity is born male and female. Even with genetic abnormalities effecting the sex/gender of some because of sin, the vast majority of mankind continue the pattern of Gen 1–2. These exceptions do not become the rule of created order. Men and women still marry, children are still born, and mankind exercises dominion over the earth. The debate over the nature of marriage is yet another indication of sin’s corrupting impact and a recapitulation of the serpent’s question “Did God actually say . . . ?”

¹⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 115–16. The promise of blessing in v. 28, however, is not detached from five direct imperatives (be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion). Brownson neglects the imperatives in this passage. While procreation is not the essence of marriage, it is central to the obedience of the creation covenant.

¹⁶Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 30–32. Beale demonstrates this concept from the writings of both Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings. This reality speaks strongly, though not exclusively, to the functional aspect of the image of God in Gen 1–2. The ontological aspect of the *imago Dei* certainly informs the function of humanity, in particular Adam and Eve. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192–202. Gentry writes that the context of fifteenth-century ANE cultures understood the king as the image of God (as a son of god, with the relationship of king over the world). He rightly argues that unless the biblical text clearly departs from that pattern, then ANE culture should inform a Christian understanding of *imago Dei*. The image of God consists of obedience in both vertical and horizontal relationships. See also J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 121–45.

context, Genesis 1:27–28 democratizes the image of God beyond mere national kings and teaches that the totality of mankind (both male and female) functions as a royal ambassador, ruling on behalf of the divine sovereign. Graven images of Israel’s God, therefore, are rightly outlawed and rejected because they deny the reality that Yahweh already has image-bearers, living beings who rule and serve on his behalf. G. K. Beale rightly contends that Adam’s covenant obedience in Eden reflects and images the God who created everything out of nothing and has subdued, ordered, and ruled over the chaos in 1:1–25.¹⁷

Peter Gentry outlines the three clauses of 1:27–28, highlighting that while the first clause (“and God created man in his image”) has a normal pattern of verb-subject-object, the next two clauses (“in the image of God he created him” and “male and female he created them”) follow a different pattern: modifier-verb-object. He rightly argues that the author is not advancing the narrative, but rather providing theological commentary that accents two key aspects of the creation of man: (1) the creation of mankind entails male and female; and, (2) mankind resembles God.¹⁸ Gentry’s outline of the chiasmic structure in 1:27–28 makes this point clear:

	God created mankind in his image
	according to his likeness:
A	in the image of God he created him
B	male and female he created them
B’	be fruitful and increase in number
	and fill the earth
A’	and subdue it
	and rule over the fish/birds/animals ¹⁹

The created distinction of male and female is pronounced and intended for mankind, as

¹⁷Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 32–33.

¹⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 183. This resemblance to God is to be understood as covenant sonship and servant kingship.

¹⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 189.

God's vice-regents, to multiply and fill the earth as visible reminders of God's sovereign presence and rule. Critical to the advancement of God's kingdom through covenant obedience was procreation. Gordon Wenham confirms this point, arguing that the author emphasizes the sexual distinctions in the terms "male" and "female" in order to highlight the blessing of fertility in verse 28. Contrary to Brownson's assertion that the blessing of human procreation is not critical to marriage, Wenham writes,

whereas v. 22 simply gives a command, [v. 28] adds "and God said to them," thus drawing attention to the personal relationship between God and man. Furthermore, man is told to "subdue and rule" the earth and its animal inhabitants, thereby fulfilling his role as God's image-bearers on earth (cf. v. 26). But the focus in Genesis is on the fulfillment of the blessing of fruitfulness. This command, like others in Scripture, carries with it an implicit promise that God will enable man to fulfill it.²⁰

The personal communication in verse 28 reflects the nature of God's covenantal union with mankind, in contrast to the rest of creation. It is significant that Genesis 1–2 ties covenant obedience (1:27–28, 2:15–17) explicitly to heterosexual marriage (with procreation connected intimately to dominion).²¹ Faithfulness as God's vice-regents

²⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33. See Gen 5, 9, 11, 25, 36, 46, and 47:27. Jacob confirms the fulfillment of this divine promise in Gen 48:4. I examine the purpose of procreation in more detail in the canonical horizon section. See Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 45–47; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 29–38. Vines argues, "But the account of Eve's creation doesn't emphasize Adam's need to procreate. It emphasizes instead his need for relationship. . . . what's remarkable about Genesis 2 is that, despite the need for procreation, the text doesn't focus on the gender differences between Adam and Eve. Rather, it focuses on their *similarity* as human beings" (45–46). Two points are necessary: (1) Vines argues that the creation of Eve does not emphasize the need to procreate, but then he acknowledges on the very next page that Adam had a need to procreate. Which is it? Vines produces a false dichotomy, asserting that procreation and relationship in Gen 1–2 are set against one another; and, (2) Vines and Brownson are not reading Gen 1–2 in light of Moses' presentation. It is simply unfaithful to the text to argue that Gen 2 does not focus on the necessity of procreation when Gen 1–2 is following the normal resumptive technique of Hebrew narrative. Vines rightly notes that a fundamental component of the *imago Dei* is exercising dominion over the earth, but what he fails to recognize is that this dominion over the earth is intimately tied to Adam's covenant obedience (i.e., heterosexual marriage and procreation).

²¹Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 172–73. Mathews maintains, "The inner elements of the chiasmic lines (v. 27) identify the focus of the poetic verse: the divine image. The third colon specifies that 'ādām ('man'), created in the image of God, refers to both male and female human life. By the occurrence of 'them,' clearly referring to two distinct sexual persons, after the singular 'him,' the old misconception of an original androgynous (bisexual) man is unfounded. 'Them' also is found in 1:28, where procreation is its primary interest, obviously assuming the sexual differentiation of two persons, male and female. *Hebrew*

entailed obedience to God's revealed will and directives. It is clear from Genesis 1:27–28 that obedience to the covenant at creation necessitates a heterosexual marriage.²² It is significant, particularly for the present debate, that there is no other kind of human sexual relationship shown in God's pre-fall, uncorrupted kingdom. God creates heterosexual marriage for both kinship and so that mankind might obey his covenant commands. Genesis 1:29–30 sets a stark contrast between Israel's cosmology and the cosmologies of the surrounding nations. Whereas Mesopotamian gods created humanity in order that mankind might supply them with food, Yahweh creates humanity and supplies their every need.²³ As Genesis 1 closes, the author's use of the definite article in "the sixth day" and God's declaration that the sixth day was "very good" highlights God's particular love for humanity, as well as "God's enthusiasm as he contemplated his handiwork."²⁴ God's enthusiasm over his creation here includes the binary distinction of gender in mankind and his command for male and female to procreate and subdue the earth as his image-bearers.

Does Genesis 2 provide a similar picture of the image of God and marriage?

Relevant to this section of Genesis 2 is Brownson's rejection of patriarchy and

*terms for "male" (zākār) and "female" (nēqēbā), as opposed to man and woman, particularly express human sexuality [emphasis added] (and animals; e.g., Gen 5:2; 6:19; 7:3, 9, 16). Absence of any reference to the sexual distinction in land animals is probably so as not to detract from the privileged role of human life whereby procreation contributes to humanity's dominion over the lower animals. Male and female human members are image-bearers who both are responsible for governing the world" (172-73). Also see Thomas R. Schreiner, "New Trajectories and Old Patterns: Hermeneutics and Same-Sex Advocacy," *Journal of Global Christianity* 2, no. 1 (2016): 53–54; Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 58–61. Vines and Brownson both argue that "procreation" is nowhere present in Gen 2. This assertion falls flat on two counts: (1) this entails reading Gen 2 apart from Gen 1:27–28; and, (2) Gen 2:24 presupposes procreation because of the reference to "father" and "mother."*

²²Rightly Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 37. The multiplication of offspring through God's gift of covenant marriage was *the* means by which Adam and Eve and their children would expand God's glory throughout all of creation.

²³Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33. This truth is supplemented by Gen 2:25.

²⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 34.

complementarity, as well as his rejection of Scripture's clearest statement on the nature of marriage in Genesis 2:24. He argues that the emphasis in Genesis 2 is on similarity between Adam and Eve, not complementarity; and secondly, that non-egalitarian hierarchy and patriarchal structures in marriage were introduced only after the fall. I will show that Brownson's exegesis is, once again, unpersuasive.

Genesis 2:1–3 presents *rest*—namely, rest in God's presence through covenant obedience and worship—as the consummation of God's creation (cf. Heb 4) and God's desired end for humanity's covenant obedience. The transition to the use of God's covenantal name, יהוה, in 2:4 highlights his particular love for the man and woman, but this covenant love is predicated upon obedience to God's commands and created order.²⁵ Adam is formed first (Gen 2:7; cf. 1 Tim 2:13), placed in a garden-home to enjoy the unhindered presence of God (Gen 2:8), given priest-king work (Gen 2:15), given every tree except one from which he could eat (Gen 2:16–17; 1 Tim 2:14), and given authority over every beast and bird (Gen 2:19–20). Adam is clearly presented as a man who is alone and lacks a suitable helper amongst the created order, so Eve is made from and for Adam (Gen 2:18–20; cf. 1 Cor 11:8–9).²⁶ Adam names her (Gen 2:23; cf. 2:19), and the author states the normative truth that a man leaves his parents in order to begin a new family by joining to his wife in a covenant-binding marital union (2:24).²⁷

²⁵Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 7–8. Schreiner rightly notes that the man and woman are not autonomous rulers, but rather are continually subject to God's will as his representatives on earth.

²⁶Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, and Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), s.v. "Man and Woman." Ortlund argues that the phrase "helper fit for him" suggests two simultaneous realities: (1) "helper" means Eve is in the garden as Adam's supporter (cf. Ps 20:2); and (2) "fit for him" affirms her complementarity with Adam. Vines and Brownson wrongly contend that complementarity is tied to an oppressive patriarchy that Christ has now undone, but complementarity is created *before* the fall.

²⁷Eve's creation as a result of Adam's solitude negates all grounding for bestiality. This point is important for the present discussion because same-sex, bestial, and polygamous/polyamorous relationships are all sinful *not* because they violate an explicit creation command, but rather because they violate the explicit creation order established by God. It is the *normative* nature of creation that dictates the sinfulness of particular sexual relationships.

The Genesis 2 text clues the reader in to several normative creation realities that are relevant to the present debate. The text demonstrates that men and women are interdependent and possess different marital roles before sin's corrupting work takes effect (Gen 2:23–24; cf. 1 Cor 11:11–12). A husband's authority is God-given and normative prior to the fall. Adam demonstrates this authority by naming Eve before sin enters the world.²⁸ Adam's authority and Eve's submission to his authority in marriage does not negate or minimize the image of God in women (Gen 1:27; 2:25).²⁹ Adam fully enjoys the divine presence, functioning as mankind's covenant head, priest-King, and a type of Christ (Gen 2:7–20; cf. Rom 5:12–21).³⁰

Brownson and Vines reject gender complementarity as a defining feature for marriage and unsuccessfully attempt to decouple it from the first marriage. Adam and Eve are certainly similar—only Eve was fit for him in creation. Despite Vines' contentions, gender complementarity and “sameness” are not mutually exclusive.³¹ While Brownson contends that Genesis does not emphasize differences between Adam and Eve,

²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 70.

²⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71–72. The first married couple respond to Adam's role as head and Eve's role as helper with contentment (“they were unashamed”). God had provided everything good for them in the garden, including their marital roles. This contentment and innocence are set in stark contrast with Gen 3, after Adam and Eve sin and are ashamed of their nakedness.

³⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 215–16; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 35–36; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 64–68. Wenham rightly notes that the use of ויקשטרה in 2:15 intentionally connects Adam's “keeping/guarding” of Eden with the Levitical priests “keeping/guarding” the tabernacle. The connection between Eden and the tabernacle/temple will be examined in the epochal horizon section. Procreation will be examined in the epochal and canonical sections.

³¹Contra Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 45–47. Vines argues that it was sameness, not gender differences, that made Eve a suitable partner for Adam. Unfortunately, Vines is divorcing Eve's creation for Adam from its covenantal context. Adam had an unhindered, perfect relationship with the Creator. It was “not good” for him to be alone, in part, because his loneliness precluded his obedience to the covenant that God made with him to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and exercise dominion over it. God gave humanity five imperatives, and Adam, as mankind's covenant head, needed a similar creature (not from low creation) that complemented him so that he could obey God's creation covenant. Vines and Brownson emphasize the (horizontal) relational aspect of the image of God to the extent that it becomes central to human identity.

Sprinkle has persuasively shown that כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (“like opposite him”) highlights the distinctiveness of Eve being female.³² Brownson and Vines overemphasize the similarity of Adam and Eve to the point of distorting the text of Genesis 1–2. The “sameness” in the Genesis text does not emphasize the sameness of gender, but rather sameness of kind (i.e., humanity). Brownson’s attempt to tie same-sex relationships to this “sameness” reflects both poor exegesis of Genesis 2 and a confusion of categories. Obedience to this creation covenant entailed a permanent, heterosexual marriage which could produce children who would fill and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Not only is complementarity necessary to obediently (and successfully) procreate, but God creates a “help,” not a same, for Adam. A same-sex “helper” not only undermines the creation covenant in 1:27–28, it eliminates any possibility of an offspring to bring salvation from the curse of the fall.³³

Revisionists contend that the essence of marriage is kinship bond, which includes both heterosexual or homosexual monogamous relationships. While kinship is certainly important, it must be understood in terms of biblical covenant. Genesis 2 gives a vision of the nature of the covenant bond and its entailments. First and foremost, mankind has covenant obligations to its Creator, and this creation covenant also informs the horizontal relationships across humanity. In Genesis 2, Adam is given a wife by his

³²Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*, 31–34. See also Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68. Wenham writes, “The compound prepositional phrase ‘matching him,’ כְּנֶגְדּוֹ, literally, ‘like opposite him’ is found only here. It seems to express the notion of complementarity rather than identity.” Contrary to Brownson, Eve being a “helper” does not primarily aim to identify her (i.e., similarity), but rather to highlight her distinction from Adam for his good (i.e., complementarity). See also Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *God’s Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 19.

³³Contra Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 29–31. Brownson’s contention that Gen 1–2 does not explore gender differences at all is unfaithful to the text. The normative nature of marriage in Gen 1–2 provides the opportunity for a redemptive offspring in Gen 3, the promised offspring of Abraham through whom the nations will be blessed in Gen 12 and 15, the promise of Israel to Isaac in Gen 26, a deliverer born to bring Israel salvation from slavery to Egypt in Exod 1, and the Davidic king who will rule forever in 2 Sam 7. Procreation is not *the* essence of marriage but it has been an instrumental part of God’s redemptive plan, without which there would be no salvation and no people.

covenant Lord because God has given them specific covenant commands which include particular covenant blessings. As mentioned previously, five imperatives are given in Genesis 1:27–28, as well as the blessing that comes from obedience to that covenant. God has made mankind to be fruitful and to be capable of subduing the earth and exercising dominion. In Genesis 2:20–22, the text indicates that Adam does not act to acquire his own marriage partner, but rather it is the Creator who provides for Adam. Genesis 2:21–25 presents a picture of the first marriage after the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib. On this point, Beale insightfully states,

The fact that the woman was part of Adam’s body is part of the basis for saying that “a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” That is, since Adam and Eve were one, all subsequent marriages should accomplish the same unity. Such subsequent marriages should take the unity of Adam and Eve as their model and strive for that same kind of unity.³⁴

God creates male and female to be unified in marriage so that he might bless them as his vice-regents. Simultaneously, Adam, as humanity’s federal head, must obey this creation covenant so that he and the rest of mankind may continue to enjoy God’s covenant presence and blessings. Adam’s response to a female partner in Genesis 2:23 is celebratory song and poetry, demonstrating that this perfect man has now been given a perfect spouse.³⁵

The marital union of Adam and Eve forms the basis of all future marriages by virtue of the narrator’s theological commentary in 2:24.³⁶ While this one-flesh union does not denote merely the sexual union, it is also not less than sexual union, and in the

³⁴Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 881. It is significant to the story, therefore, that Eve was taken out of Adam’s body, because this informs how one ought to understand “one flesh.” The man’s missing rib, in one sense, is returned to him in the one-flesh covenant union with his woman, and that picture is the pattern in all subsequent marriages. This pattern is only imaged properly in a marriage between one man and one woman.

³⁵Not only will Adam no longer be alone, but now he has been given everything necessary to obey God’s creation covenant and enjoy God’s covenant blessings. This reality calls for celebratory song!

³⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 70–71. See also Ortlund, *God’s Unfaithful Wife*, 20.

context of Genesis 1:28, it is clear that heterosexual sexual expression forms an integral part of the marital one-flesh union. The use of עֶלְיֶן is not explanatory, but rather “describes the consequence of God’s charge for the human family to propagate and rule. Marriage and family are the divine means for carrying out the creation mandate.”³⁷ A son leaving his father and mother presupposes a heterosexual union from which the son is produced, and this same man himself is then united to his own wife, continuing the pattern of God’s pre-sin creation.³⁸ Wenham rightly argues that passion (i.e., sexual) characterizes this permanent one-flesh union between husband and wife.³⁹ Genesis 2:22–25’s presentation of the heterosexual one-flesh union as the only God-given relationship for sexual expression in the pre-fall created order, coupled with the author’s theological commentary in 2:24, eliminates all forms of non-heterosexual, non-covenantal, and non-monogamous expressions of human sexuality. Genesis 2:24 also provides a retrospective theological commentary to a post-fall audience in a post-fall world, making Gushee’s contention for Genesis 3 as the basis for sexual ethics unpersuasive.⁴⁰ Mathews rightly argues, “Mosaic instruction shows considerable efforts to safeguard this [one-flesh] ideal against its dissolution by clarifying what is ‘family.’ Sexuality was instrumental in defining what a household was in Israel; abrogation of sexual boundaries threatened the

³⁷Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 222. In Matt 19 and Mark 10, Jesus grounds marriage in Gen 2:24. See also Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. “Marriage.”

³⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71. Wenham notes “one flesh” does not merely denote sexual union, procreation, and powerful bonding, but also that marriage creates a kinship reality such that a husband and wife are now as related as brothers, sisters, and parents. See Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 86–88. Brownson rightly notes that “one flesh” does not primarily mean sexual union and procreation, but it is certainly not less than the two realities. He overemphasizes the unitive essence of “one flesh,” while divorcing it from its covenantal and canonical meanings. The creation covenant demanded the “one flesh” union for God’s blessing to live as his vice-regents, and this “one flesh” union is fulfilled in Christ as mankind’s image of God and covenant obedience are restored by Christ’s work.

³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

⁴⁰Rightly, Ortlund, “Marriage.” Ortlund insightfully comments, “Profound as [one flesh union] is, marriage is still less than ultimate, for mortal “flesh” (v. 24 has post-fall people in view) falls short of the divine (cf. Ps. 78:39).”

identity of this core social institution.”⁴¹ It is important to note for the present debate that the heterosexual marital union provides the only context from which the promised redeemer could come. All forms of sexual expression outside of heterosexual expression are presented as aberrations and distortions of the one-flesh union grounded in the sinless, pre-fall created order. Genesis 2:25 notes that Adam and Eve were not ashamed in their nakedness because there was no guilt associated with their one-flesh sexual union.⁴²

Genesis 3. As the narrative moves to Genesis 3, the reader sees a clear distortion of God’s commands by the serpent (3:1) and an inversion of the created marital roles (3:2–6).⁴³ The serpent’s twisting of God’s command is clearly evident, but the serpent’s use of אֱלֹהִים rather than the covenant name, יְהוָה, immediately indicates the serpent’s intention to undermine the covenant relationship between the Lord and mankind.⁴⁴ The woman’s answer is slightly incorrect, not only failing to characterize God’s generosity towards them, but possibly characterizing the Lord God as slightly repressive and harsh.⁴⁵ Trusting the lies of the serpent, the man and woman eat the fruit,

⁴¹Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 224.

⁴²Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 225. Mathews rightly argues that shame should not be understood here primarily as an emotional response to guilt, but rather knowledge of sin. The fact that Adam and Eve had no knowledge of sin, including any aberration or distortion of this one-flesh sexual union, provides additional support for a rejection of same-sex sexual relationships. Not only is there no indication of same-sex sexual relationships existing prior to the fall, the knowledge of same-sex sexual relationships was present only after the entrance of sin and death into the world.

⁴³Ortlund, “Man and Woman.” The man listened to the voice of his wife rather than the Lord God (2:16–17; cf. 3:17), and the woman led her husband, failing to follow and help Adam (3:6; cf. 3:16). Revisionists often contend that Gen 3:16 highlights the wickedness of patriarchy, but they fail to understand that the language in 3:16 is also used in 4:7. The woman’s curse reveals her fallen desire to rule over her husband (similar to sin’s intention to rule over Cain, as God warns), and her husband’s “rule” reflects the man’s domineering, harsh rule over her (similar to God’s command for Cain to dominate sin). Neither of these extremes accurately reflect the loving leadership and gracious submission that typified the marriage prior to the fall.

⁴⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 73. The term used also suggests the serpent’s relational distance from God.

⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 73.

believing their covenant Lord has withheld good from them.⁴⁶ Adam and his wife were already “like God” in Genesis 1:27, but Adam’s disobedience and his wife’s fall by deception create the opposite effect they anticipate. Wrong desire and sin have now brought shame, blame-shifting, and unbelief into the world.

The author shows the regular order of creation and Adam’s function as the covenant head (and the normative head of the family) when Yahweh goes first to him for questioning (Gen 3:9–14).⁴⁷ Due to Adam’s function as the covenant head of humanity, the distortion and brokenness of mankind’s covenant relationship with the Lord (and one another) has universal effects, distorting mankind’s relationship to its covenant Lord.⁴⁸ It is the universal nature of sin disrupting mankind’s vertical relationship and horizontal relationships, as well as God’s promise of redemption that underscores the normative (not normal, contra Brownson) nature of the creation account. The normative nature of the old creation is paramount for understanding the rest of the canon—including, future “Adams,” the *imago Dei*, marriage and offspring. All future biblical covenants are subsets of the creation covenant, and the normative nature of creation must be upheld.⁴⁹

Immediately following Adam’s disobedience, there is shameful guilt (Gen 3:7–13), as well as curses that affect marriage and family (Gen 3:16–19). It is in this context that same-sex relationships (and every other form of sexual immorality) are best explained: results of Adam’s “exercise of absolute moral autonomy” and his rejection of

⁴⁶This distrust in the covenant-keeping God sets the pattern for humanity throughout the rest of the canon. The Scriptures continually point to the necessity for a Savior to come who obediently trusts God’s promises.

⁴⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 76.

⁴⁸Also relevant to this point is the characteristics of both royal grant and suzerain-vassal treaties in the creation covenant. Creation’s legal demands, curses, and royal blessings are universal in their scope by the nature of Adam’s covenant headship (cf. Rom 5:12–21) See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 134–36. It is overly simplistic to argue that each covenant is either “conditional” or “unconditional,” when every biblical covenant has aspects of both.

⁴⁹Rightly, Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 616–28.

the Lord as his covenant God.⁵⁰ It takes little time for sin to distort the normative nature of marriage in the biblical narrative, for Lamech takes two wives and kills a man in Genesis 4:19–24 (while Adam and Eve still live). Lamech, in himself, embodies the curse of Genesis 3:16—harsh domination and a rejection of God’s design for marriage. While polygamy is not explicitly outlawed, Scripture clearly rejects polygamy as disordered, never casting it in a favorable light.⁵¹

Gushee is correct to argue that Genesis 3 has distorted human sexuality, but it is fallacious to then purport that Genesis 1–2 no longer has relevancy or applicability to authoritatively speak to the nature of human sexuality today. While he attempts to seat sexual ethics in the context of covenant, his appeal to covenantal monogamy is not grounded in Genesis 3, but in Genesis 2.⁵² Genesis 3 clearly presents the fall of mankind into sin, but contrary to Gushee’s argument, it also reaffirms marital roles and creation

⁵⁰W. M. Clark, “A Legal Background to the Yahwist’s Use of ‘Good and Evil’ in Genesis 2–3,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 266–78; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 216–17.

⁵¹Ortlund, “Marriage.” One need only look at the bitterness, rivalry, deception, lust, and other terrible consequences of sin clearly present in the Old Testament’s polygamous marriages. Lamech, Abraham, Israel, David, and Solomon are just a few (disastrous) examples. While biblical narrative does not always include explicit imperatives and commands to its readers, the narratives themselves frequently serve as both instruction and warning to God’s (future) people to obey (cf. Acts 7:2–53; Rom 4:1–25, 11:1–24; 1 Cor 11:23–26; Heb 3:7–4:13). The biblical narrative explicitly condemns polygamy in Gen 2:24, and implicitly condemns polygamy in clearly portraying all of its disastrous effects in the lives of biblical characters. The reality is no different for same-sex relationships, bestiality, pedophilia, etc.

⁵²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 97–98. He argues, “If we live in a Gen 3 world, and not a Gen 1–2 world, this undoubtedly means that everyone’s sexuality is sinful, broken, and disordered, just like everything else about us. Nobody has Gen 1–2 sexuality . . . our task, if we are Christians, is to attempt to order the sexuality we have in as responsible a manner as we can. We can’t get back to Gen 1–2, a primal sinless world. But we can do the best we can with the Gen 3 sexuality we have” (97–98). Gushee goes on to argue that “covenant” is the norm for Gen 3 sexuality, but he contradicts himself by appealing to an institution (“covenant”) grounded in Gen 1–2. His statement begs the question—If we are to attempt to order the sexuality we have in as responsible a manner as we can, what is the Gen 3 standard for a “responsible manner”? Gushee’s argument unintentionally opens the door for all kinds of sexual perversion today simply because everyone lives in a post-fall world and is sexually broken. Are we also to use this framework for issues not involving sexuality? Is Gen 3 the acceptable standard for violence? What about relating to God and one another? This statement reflects a poor understanding of the biblical-theological framework of Scripture.

norms (Gen 3:16–5:3). Adam’s obedience to the covenant would have continued God’s blessings, but Adam’s disobedience has merited the promised covenant curse (Gen 2:17). All human brokenness and sin, exhibited towards God and other people, find their root in Genesis 3. The fall cannot be interpreted, however, apart from God’s promise of redemption through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). It is crucial to understand that even in the curses of the fall, it is the offspring of heterosexual marriage that provides redemption for God’s people. Put simply, even God’s post-fall curses presuppose heterosexual marriage for the human race. Mankind has been exiled from the presence of God in the garden, and the image of God in humanity has been distorted, but not lost. In spite of Adam’s sin, the Lord is still promising redemption through the line of Adam so that the original command (Gen 1:28) will be fulfilled.

Noah. The devastating effects of sin that were introduced by Adam and then propagated by his children result in God “starting over” with Noah, a descendent of Seth.⁵³ Genesis 9:1–7 presents Yahweh making the Noachic covenant and commanding Noah, a seemingly “new” Adam, to subdue the earth via the same divine command given to Adam in 1:28—“be fruitful and multiply.”⁵⁴ Wenham has pointed out that Noah as a new Adam is not only reflected by use of the same language (Gen 1:28; cf. 9:1), but also by the literary structure:

9:2	“the fear of you...upon everything”	//	1:28	“rule...every living creature.”
9:3	“...yours to eat: as I gave you the green vegetation”	//	1:29	“I have given you... for food”
9:5–6a	“your blood...his brother’s life.”	//	4:8–24	
9:6b	“in the image of God he	//	1:27	“God created man in

⁵³Gen 6:19–7:16 details God’s command to Noah to bring male and female of every animal and bird on the ark “to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth” (Gen 7:3 ESV). God continues to demonstrate his commitment to the normative patterns of creation in Gen 1.

⁵⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 162–65.

made man”

his image” (cf 5:1).⁵⁵

God gives a confirmation, through the sign of the rainbow, of his intention and ability to keep both ends of the covenant.⁵⁶ Noah, like the first Adam, disobeys the Lord, demonstrating his inability to keep the covenant.⁵⁷ Important to our present discussion is that there is no evidence that the Noahic covenant has been superseded or annulled.⁵⁸ In fact, the universal command for marriage (implicit in the creation covenant) is reaffirmed in the Noahic covenant, despite the fall and sin’s devastating effects. “Be fruitful and multiply” is presented as a blessing and command for the third time (Gen 1:28, 5:2) in Genesis 9:1, indicating that heterosexual marriage remains a universal command for all humanity under Noah, a new “Adam.”

Despite Gushee’s contentions, God’s reaffirmation of the created order and creation commands through the Noahic covenant demonstrate that none of the structures given in Genesis 1–2 have changed or been abrogated. Despite the presence of sin and its effects, Scripture reveals that heterosexual marriage remains the normative pattern for humanity and God has repeated the universal command for offspring through heterosexual marriage. Monogamy, heterosexual one-flesh union, and covenant

⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 192. See also Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 383–407. Mathews sees 8:1–9:2 as an intentional renewal of creation, patterned after Gen 1. The literary structure of the Noahic covenant is meant to reinforce the idea that Noah is serving as a new Adam to fulfill the original covenant commands—to be God’s vice-regents over all the earth.

⁵⁶Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 169–70. The possessive pronoun “my” is used half of the time that “covenant” is used in this section. Gentry contends that God is obligating himself to keep the covenants in spite of human failure. On this point, see also Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 26–27. This idea is clearly seen in Gen 15:7–21, where God takes upon himself the consequences for Abraham’s failure to keep the covenant.

⁵⁷Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 414–15. Mathews rightly points out that the parallels between Adam and Noah are clear—the language of cursing and blessing, both experience the shame of nakedness, transgression resulting in familial strife, sin with fruit of the garden/vineyard, etc. Moses intends for his readers to see Noah as a second Adam, which makes a strong (implicit) case for there being a covenant with Adam in Gen 1–2, even though the term “covenant” is not found.

⁵⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 171. The creation and Noahic covenants must be rightly understood in terms of the canonical story so that the theological implications for same-sex relationships can be properly applied to our context today.

faithfulness remain as markers for human marriage in this “new creation” under Noah. Despite the fall, the post-flood spread of the nations all over the earth (Gen 10:32) demonstrates that Noah and his new humanity are working to fulfill the original creation command by virtue of the unchanging creation structures given in Genesis 1–2. The assumption implicit in the universality of God’s Noahic covenant promises (Gen 9:12) is that heterosexual marriage will continue as the normative pattern for humanity so that future generations will actually exist so as to see the rainbow and remember God’s covenant promises.⁵⁹ There is no hint in Genesis 9’s universal, post-fall reaffirmation of the created order that heterosexual marriage has been redefined or abrogated. The Noahic covenant presupposes Genesis 1–2 structures despite life in a post-fall, sin-tainted world.

Abraham. Astute readers of Genesis 10 and 11 understand that the two chapters are not in chronological order, but are swapped so that the covenant disobedience at the tower of Babel is set in stark contrast to the faith of Abram in Genesis 12. The wicked of Babel explicitly disobey the Lord’s command to “fill the earth,” and like Adam before them, desire to be morally autonomous gods (11:4).⁶⁰ Readers are then introduced to a new “Adam” in Genesis 12, and Abram is commanded by God to be fruitful and to be a blessing to the world.⁶¹ Gentry highlights the repetition of the Adamic

⁵⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 195. Wenham notes that Moses writes in Gen 9:12, “‘for farthest generations’: literally ‘for generations of eternity.’” This phrase would entail heterosexual marriage existing as the normative pattern for family and offspring until the new creation. This point will be reaffirmed by Jesus in Mark 10:5–12 and 12:24–25.

⁶⁰Like Babel, same-sex relationships reflect an unwillingness to “fill the earth.”

⁶¹Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 17; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 224. Gentry insightfully argues, “Here, after Adam and Noah, God is making another new start. Abram and his family constitute another Adam. Notice the parallels in the biblical narrative: Adam and Eve had three sons (besides other children who are not named in the text; Gen. 5:4). Similarly, the genealogy in Genesis 5 ends with a man who also had three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth). The genealogy in Genesis 11 ends in the same way: with a man who had three sons (Abram, Nahor and Haran). This parallel is a literary technique inviting the reader to compare Abram with Noah and Adam.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 224.

language of “bless,” “be fruitful,” and “multiply” in Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham.⁶² In his covenant with Abraham, the Lord takes upon himself the obligations of both parties, demonstrating that he alone will bring about its fulfillment.⁶³ While God guarantees the fulfillment of the covenant promises (an offspring), Abraham must trust God by faith, and later, be circumcised as a confirmation of the covenant (Gen 17). The Lord demands his covenant relationship with Abraham, like Adam and Noah before him, to be defined by walking with/before the Lord in blameless obedience (Gen 17:1–2; cf. Gen 3:8–13).

Genesis 19 is one of the contested biblical texts in the same-sex debate, but what is its immediate context communicating to the reader? Up to this point in the Abrahamic story, we see God pleased by the faith of Abraham, despite Abraham’s sinful failures. God is committed to seeing his creation command/blessing from Genesis 1:27–28 fulfilled, so he promises to provide Abraham an offspring through whom the nations will be blessed. As seen in Genesis 1–2, the normative pattern by which God’s creation command (and redemption) is fulfilled is through monogamous heterosexual marriage. The image of God and the creation command in Genesis 1–2, however, are roundly rejected by the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. In fact, the passage demonstrates the absolute rejection of the created order on a number of levels.⁶⁴

⁶²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 226–27. Gentry shows that the language of Gen 1:28 is clearly present in Gen 12:2, 17:2, 6, 8, 22:16, 26:3, 26:24, 28:3, 35:11, 47:27, and 48:3—all pertaining to Abraham, Isaac, and/or Jacob.

⁶³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 251–56. Yahweh, who has brought Israel out of Egypt in the exodus, reveals himself to Abraham in the same manner as he does to Abraham’s descendants—fire and smoke/cloud. Moses is identifying the God of Abraham as the same God who has set the Israelites free and who demands their covenant obedience. See also Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 18–19.

⁶⁴See Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones, *Marriage and the Family: Biblical Essentials* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 118–19. Köstenberger rightly notes that it was not *exclusively* gang rape, but rather homosexual gang rape. Vines asserts that the rape of a man in the ancient world was the ultimate degradation, and this act was primarily what the Sodomites were seeking to accomplish (as an act of aggression and dominance). Of course, this degrading act would require that the men of Sodom *desired* to

Disobedience to God, pride, homosexual lust, desire for gang rape, inhospitality, and Lot offering his daughters to the Sodomites are all indications that sin's effects in Genesis 3 are pervasive. The events of Genesis 19 certainly highlight the lack of hospitality in Sodom, but the narrator also uses subtle means to indicate the sexual perversion of the city.⁶⁵ While homosexual behavior is not the only sin in Genesis 19, it is certainly present in Sodom and condemned by the Lord. After Sodom's destruction, Genesis 19:30–38 chronicles the incestuous story of Lot's daughters getting Lot drunk in order that they might have children by him. This incestuous experience provides a clear contrast between Lot and Abraham. It highlights God's faithfulness to Abraham (and his extended family), as well as God's discipline of Lot as he has steadily moved away from the Lord and Abraham because of his sin.⁶⁶ Like the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative, the author is presenting humanity's wholesale rejection of God's created order and God's imminent judgment against them.

Vines and Brownson argue that *only* gang rape, not same-sex sexual relations, is the major issue while Gushee attempts to tie Sodom's sin to patriarchy. Both

have same-sex relations (whether it was consensual or not). The fact that the men of Sodom refused to rape Lot's two daughters sheds further light on the fact that they desired *same-sex* gang rape. Understood canonically, Vines' argument falls flat in light of Jude 6–8. Jude's argument that the men of Sodom pursued "unnatural desires" cannot be angelic flesh because they were not aware that Lot's visitors were angels. Jude is condemning Sodom for sexual immorality—more specifically, same-sex sexual behavior.

⁶⁵Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 231–38. Mathews writes, "Verse 1 begins the description of the angels' visit with the term 'entered' ('arrived'), which translates *bô*', a word that also can mean sexual relations (e.g., 6:4; 16:2, 4). It appears repeatedly (vv. 3, 5, 8, 9, 10) and perhaps is a double entendre, contributing to the sexual content of the story. Additional terms used for sexual relations appear: 'lie down' (*šākab*, v. 4, 'gone to bed,' NIV), 'to know' (*yāda*, vv. 5, 7, 8, 'have sex,' NIV) and possibly 'draw near' (*nāgaš*, v. 9[2×], 'get out' and 'moved forward,' NIV; cf. Exod 19:15)" (233). See also C. D. Pohl, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. "Hospitality."

⁶⁶Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 159; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 283–85. Gentry argues, "Lot is successful by the standards of the time, but he is unaware that by his choices he is destined for destruction. Such 'blessings' are empty without a covenant relationship with God." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 285. Disobedience to God's covenant places Lot in the path of the destructive actions of same-sex behavior and incestuous acts—both being disordered acts in defiance of Gen 1–2 norms.

arguments are unpersuasive and unfaithful to the Genesis narrative.⁶⁷ Gushee argues that Genesis 19 has “nothing to do with the morality of loving, covenantal same-sex relationships,” but this argument begs the question.⁶⁸ Gushee’s contention for monogamous, loving relationship lacks any foundation apart from the biblical standards of love, sexuality, and monogamy grounded in Genesis 1–2. In the flow of the Genesis narrative, Vine’s assertion that Sodom’s sins are only inhospitality and gang rape is detached from the biblical norms of love, human sexuality, and monogamy expressed in Genesis 1–2. Genesis 19, by itself, is certainly not an open and shut case against same-sex monogamy. When the Sodom narrative is read in the context of the rest of the biblical canon, however, its account of same-sex sexual behavior highlights the depths of the Sodomite rejection of God’s created order.⁶⁹

Israel. Genesis continues to follow the offspring of Abraham, culminating in the calling of Jacob, who is renamed Israel (Gen 35:10–13). Israel, like Noah and Abraham before him, is presented as a new “Adam,” through whom God will bless the nations and cause his glory to extend to the ends of the earth.⁷⁰ Repeatedly throughout Genesis, the Lord begins a new creation with a new Adam after the first Adam’s ejection from the garden of Eden. The Lord is redeeming his people, but the repeated failures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel indicate a problem with the nature of the human

⁶⁷Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 61–63. Gushee disputes traditional readings of Jude 6–8 and 2 Pet 2:6–7, which reference sexual perversion (i.e., same-sex sexual behavior). Instead, Gushee argues that the primary sexual sin which Jude and Peter condemn is desiring angelic flesh (“other flesh”). While this reading is possible, there is no indication that the people in Gen 19 knew the men in Lot’s house were really angels. In fact, the only indication that we have is that the Sodomites believed the angels were actually men (see Gen 19:5).

⁶⁸Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 63.

⁶⁹Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns,” 62.

⁷⁰Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 291–99. Adam and Israel are also both presented as “God’s son” (Exod 4:23; cf. Luke 3:38).

party in the covenant. These men are unfaithful to God's commands, but God has guaranteed his promises will be fulfilled in spite of their failures. God continues to progressively reveal himself to his people with the intention that a redeemer will come who will undo sin's effects, crush the head of the serpent, and fulfill God's creation command given to the first Adam—to spread God's glory to the ends of the earth as his vice-regent.

In summary, the book of Genesis presents the pre-fall creation and Edenic garden as the ideal and normative environment for humanity. The Lord God created male and female in order that they might image him by living as his vice-regents, in obedience to the commands of his creation covenant. Covenant love and kinship bond are defined by creation norms and man was created to walk with God as an image-bearer in an unhindered and intimate relationship. This divine kinship/covenant bond (vertical) informed the kinship/covenant bond between image-bearers (horizontal), particularly male and female in marriage. Male and female are given to one another in marriage so that mankind can obey the Lord's command to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and exercise dominion over it as God's representatives. After Adam's moral rebellion in the fall, sin distorts the image of God, severs man's unhindered relationship with God, causes all people to distort or reject the creation norms, and makes people unable and unwilling to obey God's covenant commands. It is only *after* the fall that one sees distortions of human sexuality—including, strife between husband and wife (3:16), pain in child-bearing (Gen 3:16), polygamy (Gen 4:19), unequal yoking (Gen 6:1–6), homosexuality/same-sex relations (Gen 19:5), rape (Gen 19:5), bestiality (Exod 22:19), incest (Gen 19:31–38), concubinage (Gen 12:15), adultery (Exod 20:14), prostitution (Gen 38:15–18), and infertility (Gen 15:3). All of these sinful sexual acts are presented as aberrations of the one-flesh union grounded in Genesis 1–2, reaffirmed in the post-fall Noahic covenant, and contrary to God's purposes of fruitful image-bearers spreading his glory to the ends of the earth. God promises a redeemer to undo the effects of sin and this

redeemer will come through the creation norms of marriage and procreation.

Genesis demonstrates that God is repeatedly working to bring redemption and a new creation through new Adams to the world. In fact, these new Adams and the future redeemer come only through obedience to God's command of heterosexual marriage and the one-flesh union. The covenant commands to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel are the same and reflect the original command to Adam—be fruitful and multiply. These faith-filled men present a shadowy picture of the future humanity that God is working to create in this new creation. At the end of Genesis, however, the author demonstrates that no one is capable of imaging God rightly and everyone needs redemption. In redeeming his people, the Lord has guaranteed to keep his covenant promises so that, one day, his creation command will be obeyed and image-bearers will function as they ought by spreading God's glory over all the earth. God's progressively unfolding plan to return his people to pre-fall creation norms through a new creation redemption has yet to take full effect.

Up to this point, Genesis does not support any idea of a monogamous same-sex relationship. A monogamous same-sex relationship is excluded from the narrative itself, does not accurately reflect the male/female distinctions in the *imago Dei*, does not possess both the similarity and dissimilarity necessary for true marital kinship (complementarity), and is completely incapable of fulfilling God's creation commands in Genesis 1:27–28. The redemptive plan that God unfolds through his covenants in Genesis is not at odds with the original creation, but rather find its shape and form in Genesis 1–2. No part of the Genesis narrative lends its support to same-sex monogamy, but I will now turn to the epochal horizon—the Pentateuch and Old Testament—to demonstrate how Genesis 1–2, marriage, and same-sex monogamy should be understood in its covenantal context.

The Epochal Horizon

Stephen Dempster rightly states, “The first chapter of Genesis introduces not only the text of Genesis but the Text of the Tanakh.”⁷¹ Reading the Pentateuch as one literary unit informs how one ought to read Genesis 1–3, Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, and Judges 19.

The Pentateuch. As Exodus opens, the nation of Israel is enslaved to Egypt, but Yahweh demonstrates his covenant faithfulness by leading the people out of slavery to Egypt and begins to lead them into land promised to Abraham (Exod 3:6–8). Yahweh makes a covenant with Israel on Sinai, with Moses serving as Israel’s mediator (Exod 19–24). The Mosaic covenant is expansive and rules every aspect of the lives and worship of the nation of Israel. Gentry rightly argues that Exodus follows the structure of Genesis 1–2: “divine rule via covenant, followed by the priority of worship in sanctuary.”⁷² Israel is also pictured by Moses as another (corporate) Adam, with the Lord applying the same language of Adam to Israel (Gen 28:3, 35:11, 47:27, and 48:3), as well as identifying the nation of Israel as his firstborn son (Exod 4:22–23).⁷³ The connections between Genesis 1–2 and the rest of the Pentateuch are striking, so several brief points are necessary before I examine Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, as well as Judges 19.

The promised land into which Yahweh leads Israel is repeatedly described as a “land flowing with milk and honey” with great fruit, intentionally pointing back to the Edenic paradise. Israel, like the Adamic imperative in Eden, is called to extend the

⁷¹Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 55.

⁷²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 307.

⁷³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 303. Gentry argues, “Ex 15:17 shows that Canaan becomes for Israel what the garden sanctuary was for Adam.”

borders of the promised land wherein the covenantal divine presence dwelt.⁷⁴ As Adam functioned as a priest in the presence of God, Israel functions as a kingdom of priests who are to represent Yahweh and spread his glory throughout the world (Isa 49:6). The tabernacle/temple itself is patterned after the original creation in Genesis 1–2 by (1) being the place of Yahweh’s presence and rest; (2) its presence of priests; (3) the cherubim guarding the location; (4) the arboreal lampstands; (5) the rivers flowing from the center; (6) precious stones which are present; (7) the place of the first mountain; (8) its eastern-facing entrance; and, (9) the divine spirit overseeing the creative work in both.⁷⁵ The land promised to Abraham and Israel finds its origin in Genesis 1–2.⁷⁶ In the Mosaic covenant, Yahweh is continuing to establish his kingdom as he did in Genesis 1–2 “through covenant relationship between himself and man and between man and the creation.”⁷⁷ Genesis 1–2 continues to set the pattern for Israel’s worship of Yahweh, as well as their relationships with one another. Israel’s royal priesthood is intended to reflect and fulfill the Adamic command in Genesis 1:27–28. The nation is to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth as Yahweh’s vice-regents, mediating the divine presence (land) to the ends of the earth so that all may know Yahweh as covenant Lord (priesthood). Yahweh’s covenant with Israel, like Genesis 1–2, demands faith-filled obedience to the covenant, including submission to the command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 35:11; cf. Gen

⁷⁴Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 752.

⁷⁵Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66–107; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 213–16.

⁷⁶Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 751–55. Rom 4:13 confirms this understanding of the land promise to the patriarchs.

⁷⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 321–22. Gentry continues, “Since Israel is settled at the navel of the world, the nations of the world will see displayed a right relationship to God, social justice in human interaction, and good stewardship of the earth’s resources. . . . We see then, that Israel, the last Adam, will belong to God as a people under his rule, and will exercise royal rule by spending time in the worship of God so necessary for display of the divine rule in one’s thoughts, words, and ways.”

1:27–28). Heterosexual, monogamous marriage is commanded so that Israel’s offspring may serve as faithful image-bearers in Yahweh’s promised land.

Located squarely in the midst of the Mosaic covenant, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 explicitly outlaw all aberrations of the one-flesh union for God’s people, including same-sex sexual relations. Donald Wold’s study of Leviticus 18’s literary structure reveals that this passage is composed as a single unit treaty, similar to other ANE covenant or suzerainty treaties.⁷⁸ Leviticus 18, unlike other ANE treaties, has Yahweh’s self-identification at the beginning and end of the unit (18:1–2, 18:30), reminding the reader by use of *inclusio* that God’s holiness is the basis for sexual conduct.⁷⁹ Same-sex sexual behavior is condemned as תּוֹעֵבָה, indicating that it is “literally something detestable and hated by God.”⁸⁰ The prohibition against homosexual behavior in 18:22 is situated between prohibitions against the murder of children in idol worship and bestiality, reflecting the author’s emphasis on the creation norms of Genesis 1–2. All three acts—murder, same-sex sexual behavior, and bestiality—completely distort what it means to be human because all three acts reject core facets of the *imago Dei*.⁸¹ The action

⁷⁸Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (San Antonio, TX: Cedar Leaf Press, 2009), 91–100.

⁷⁹Wold, *Out of Order*, 97–100. Wold comments, “In the biblical writer’s perspective, the quality of one’s conduct is not measured by the relative or subjective standards of the moment; the rule is rather the eternal, immutable will of Yahweh as expressed in the law” (99–100). This point reinforces the reality of Gen 1–2: faithful image-bearers accurately reflect their covenant Lord through obedience to his revealed will. God’s holiness, revealed in creation, continues as the standard for sexual conduct in Israel, the new Adam.

⁸⁰Important for our purposes is the reality that Lev 18 and 20 are both recorded as direct divine discourse to Moses. Whereas Vines, Brownson, and Gushee will argue that the biblical authors are affected by their misogynistic culture or ignorant of modern concepts of “orientation,” these two passages clearly communicate that Yahweh himself considers same-sex behavior to be an abomination. See Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1979), 259; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Dallas: World, 1992), 297; R. Laird Harris, *Leviticus*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 601.

⁸¹Idolatry is intimately connected to sexual perversion, and both idolatry and sexual immorality are a rejection of the created order in Gen 1–2 (cf. Rom 1:18–28). Murder of an image-bearer is

is particularly serious as Leviticus 20:13 demands the death penalty for both the active and passive partner in same-sex sexual relationships. Again, Leviticus 20 situates the prohibition against same-sex behavior next to the prohibition against bestiality because each act expresses a total rejection of Genesis 1–2 norms, making them reprehensible to Yahweh and incurring the death penalty. This reality is consistent with Yahweh’s stand against mankind’s disobedience and rejection of his Lordship over creation. As with Adam, Noah, and Abraham, Yahweh requires faithful obedience and submission from his covenant partner, Israel, on his terms. Christians are not ethnic Israel and not under the Mosaic covenant as a covenant, but Leviticus 18 and 20 still provide yet another account of God’s commitment to his creation design in Genesis 1–2.⁸² The original creation order still forms the basis for God’s moral demands from his covenant community, and it shapes and informs the new creation salvation that God’s promised redeemer will bring in the eschaton.

Revisionists agree that the Levitical law is univocal in its condemnation of same-sex sexual relationships, but they attempt to blunt the force of these texts in various ways. Gushee laments the church’s emphasis on homosexuality being an “abomination” when 111 of the 117 uses of “abomination” in Old Testament law are used to describe other acts.⁸³ Vines’ section on Levitical law confuses covenant fulfillment in Christ and accuses the author of the Pentateuch (Moses) of sharing the misogynistic worldviews of the surrounding pagan nations.⁸⁴ There is no evidence, however, that the Levitical law

an attack on God himself (Gen 1:27; 9:5–6). Same-sex sexual behavior is a total rejection of the creation command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28, 9:1, 7). Bestiality is a total rejection of the creation command to be fruitful and multiply, as well as a refusal to rightly distinguish between God’s image-bearers and lower forms of creation (Gen 1:24–31, 9:1–7).

⁸²I explore the Christian’s relation to the Old Testament law in greater depth in chap. 4.

⁸³Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 66. Of course, an act need only be deemed an “abomination” by God one time to provide a sufficient basis for humanity avoiding said act (much less six times for same-sex relationships).

⁸⁴As mentioned previously, this charge reflects a serious issue in Vines’ doctrine of Scripture.

has misogynistic intent or that gender complementarity creates a culture of devaluing women and hating gay people.⁸⁵ Vines conflates the authorial intention of Moses with Jewish interpretations nearly 1500 years later. On the contrary, Moses presents both man and woman as *equal* image bearers (Gen 1:27–28), and never presents women as having less value or worth. Women are presented in the Old Testament narrative as having less value or worth only when men act contrary to Yahweh’s normative commands in Genesis 1–2. No biblical author ever commands misogyny because every word (πᾶσα γραφή) written is inspired by the Spirit for our good (2 Tim 3:16–17).⁸⁶ Contrary to Brownson, there is no evidence that links the Levitical prohibitions to unbiblical patriarchy, nor is same-sex sexual behavior prohibited only in circumstances related to idol worship.⁸⁷ In fact, Moses commands Israel to stand against the surrounding nations by not imitating their idolatry and sexual immorality (which are tightly connected). The Mosaic covenant’s rejection of all deviances of creation’s one-flesh sexual union demonstrated that “without proper limits ‘family’ ceased, and the consequence was the undoing of

He asserts that either the Lord (who gave the law) and/or Moses (who received and wrote the law) had misogynistic values that were reflected in the law itself. This view of the law has set Vines against Moses (Deut 30:15–20), David (Ps 19:7–8), Jesus (Matt 5:17–20), and Paul (Rom 7:12).

⁸⁵Vines simply begs the question. See Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 93. Vines attempts to categorize the Levitical law as “God working within flawed institutions.” There are two problems with this idea. First, even if the Bible presents an ungodly form of patriarchy in the Old Testament law (it does not), this does not entail that ungodly patriarchy was present in Gen 1–2, nor does it mean that same-sex relations (presented nowhere positively in Scripture) are now acceptable. Second, Vines’ appeal to Mark 10:5 undermines his own argument. Jesus argues that the Old Testament law did, in some ways, regulate sinful institutions. But what does Jesus appeal to when he demonstrates that the institution mentioned by the Pharisees (divorce) was actually sinful? Jesus appeals to Gen 1–2 to demonstrate that divorce, which the Old Testament law regulated, was not present in the creation account. If Vines wants to be consistent, he needs to interpret Lev 18 and 20 in light of Gen 1–2, which he does not.

⁸⁶“What then shall we say? Is the law sin? By no means!” (Rom 7:7 ESV). There is a significant difference between Mosaic law *regulating* forms of sin in Israel’s society and *commanding* forms of sin in Israel’s society. For example, the Bible does not command polygamy or divorce, but rather provides allowances for them as a concession to Israel’s hard-heartedness (cf. Matt 19:1–12).

⁸⁷See Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns,” 62; Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*, 108–15.

Israel as a nation, the same fate suffered by their predecessors (Lev 18:24–30).”⁸⁸ God commands Israel to reject same-sex sexual behavior because it is a distortion of his created order and it is one of many sexual perversions which typified the surrounding pagan nations from which Israel was called to be distinct and holy.⁸⁹ Despite revisionist claims, Israel’s rejection of same-sex sexual behavior was not grounded in cultural misogyny or patriarchy, but rather in God’s command to be distinct from the surrounding cultures which embraced same-sex sexual behavior.⁹⁰ Revisionists contend that a rejection of same-sex sexual behavior reflects ungodly cultural influence when the Levitical texts clearly teach the opposite—participation in same-sex sexual behavior reflects ungodly cultural influence and a rejection of God’s creation structures.

The Judges. The context of the Mosaic covenant, particularly the commands in Leviticus 18 and 20, informs the narrative of Judges 19. In a story that intentionally parallels Genesis 19 hundreds of years later, Judges 19–20 demonstrates that Israel had become as corrupt as Sodom, despite their covenant relationship with Yahweh and his command through the Mosaic covenant to be distinct from the homosexual-practicing nations around them. As with Genesis 19, inhospitality and sexual perversion are the central focus of the narrative. A Levite gives up his concubine to be gang-raped by a crowd in Gibeah in order that he himself might be spared from their threats of same-sex rape.⁹¹ Daniel Block rightly notes that the worthless men have rejected the fundamental

⁸⁸Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 224.

⁸⁹Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 260.

⁹⁰Hartley, *Leviticus*, 298. Hartley rightly contends that Israel’s sexual perversions, including same-sex sexual behavior, would make the land so nauseated that it must vomit the sexually deviant out in order to heal.

⁹¹The fact that the man is a Levite, a priest-leader in Israel, and he has a concubine, who is seen as lower than a first wife, spells trouble from the beginning of the narrative. Already, Israel, now in the promised land, has distorted creation norms. The host’s use of אֶל-תִּרְעַע indicates that the men are clearly violating sexual norms. See Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, New American Commentary, vol. 6 (Nashville:

order of Genesis 1–2 by pursuing sexual relations outside marriage and with those of the same sex.⁹² The men’s desire for the Levite also serves to demonstrate the horrific degree of their sexual perversion, reflecting a hatred for the priesthood, as well as for the God for whom Israel’s priests mediated.⁹³ As with the destruction of Sodom, homosexuality is not the only sin in the narrative, but it is certainly one of many evil acts that clearly demonstrate the degree to which God’s people had fallen from the original blessings and order present in Genesis 1–2.

Wisdom literature. Israel’s Wisdom literature provides an implicit reflection of creation structures. Proverbs recounts a father’s wisdom and instruction in God’s law being unfolded for his son. In Proverbs 5, the son is warned against participating in any and all aberrations of the created one-flesh union, which is implied as solely heterosexual (“the lips of a forbidden woman” in Prov 5:3). In Proverbs 5:3, the author affirms the normativity of heterosexual marriage while also rejecting sexual deviancy from the created order because “the ‘adulteress’ of v. 3 is literally the ‘other woman,’ that is, someone other than the man’s wife.”⁹⁴ Rather, the father wisely instructs his son to be satisfied in the bride of his youth (Prov 5:18–20) and to be sexually faithful to her alone (Prov 5:15) because a lack of sexual discipline will ultimately kill him (Prov 5:23). The author implicitly argues for gender (sexual) complementarity in marriage through the use of complementary metaphors for the husband (“flowing water”) and wife (“cistern”) in Proverbs 5:15–16.⁹⁵ While there is debate over the marital status of the forbidden woman

Broadman & Holman, 1999), 521–24.

⁹²Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 536.

⁹³Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 537–40. The narrator’s emphasis on darkness versus light serves to underscore Israel’s moral depravity.

⁹⁴Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 91.

⁹⁵Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 93. Garrett contends, “The best interpretation

in Proverbs 5, the woman to be avoided in Proverbs 6 is clearly an adulteress.⁹⁶ The father's appeal is for the son to keep his "commands" to avoid the adulteress woman. Garrett persuasively argues that the word "commands" here is "the same word that is often used of God's commands. The authority of God in the covenant and the authority of the parent as a teacher of wisdom are joined. In addition, the son should write the instruction on his heart, much as God will write the new covenant on the hearts of his people. The teaching should be internal."⁹⁷ Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly are presented in Proverbs 9 as a clear contrast between God's created order and human idolatry. The adulteress Lady Folly not only rejects the nature of Genesis 2's one-flesh union by her fornication, but her prostitution is also linked to adultery and greedy theft.⁹⁸ Throughout the Proverbs, culminating in the Proverbs 31 wife, the father's wisdom is tied to God's wisdom and reflects the pre-fall structures of Genesis 1–2—particularly marriage—that are then reaffirmed through the Noahic covenant in Genesis 9, and amplified in the Mosaic law given to Israel after the Exodus. Throughout Proverbs, heterosexual marriage is both assumed and encouraged, while all aberrations of heterosexual marriage are rejected.⁹⁹

is that 'springs' and 'streams of water' refer to the husband's sexual affections as the 'cistern' refers to the affections of his wife. The man should not take his love and desire to anyone else by going out into the street. The analogy implies that husband and wife fill and refresh each other, the one like a flowing stream and the other like a peaceful well."

⁹⁶The prohibitions of Prov 5–6 would certainly include fornication and adultery, but also same-sex sexual relationships because of the Gen 1–2 foundation upon which the author builds his teaching.

⁹⁷Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 102. The father's desire that his son be a faithful covenant-keeper from the heart mirrors Yahweh's desire for his people to be faithful covenant-keepers through faith-filled obedience. These hints of new covenant realities are tied to the wisdom of Israel's king and his typological fulfillment in Christ. In Christ, the bride and husband will both be faithful covenant-keepers through their one-flesh union.

⁹⁸Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 116.

⁹⁹Proverbs does not explicitly prohibit same-sex sexual relationships, but this point would be unnecessary because of the old covenant context of Proverbs which, as has been demonstrated, clearly rejected same-sex sexual behavior.

Song of Songs clearly presents the love and sexual expression intrinsic to the marital one-flesh union. In Song of Songs 4:16–5:1, the one-flesh sexual is revealed to be the consummation of the couple’s marriage. The husband and wife delight in one another physically and emotionally, with the author’s poetry “conveying the joy of sexual love without vulgarity; at the same time, the meaning is quite clear . . . he has partaken of her pleasures to the full.”¹⁰⁰ The wife emphasizes the sexual monogamy of their marital one-flesh union, demonstrating the couple’s intentional separation from others and commitment to being bound exclusively to one another (Song 6:1–3, 13; cf. Gen 2:24).¹⁰¹ The author implicitly connects the couple’s covenant commitment (passion) to the Lord’s passion for his people, as well as holding up sexual exclusivity and virginity until marital consummation (Song 8:6–9).¹⁰² Throughout Song of Songs, sexual fulfillment is cast solely in terms of the monogamous, covenantal, and heterosexual one-flesh marital union. This union hints at the Lord’s devotion to his people and reflects the God-given structures of creation, but there is no indication that marriage is being expanded or redefined in any form so as to include same-sex sexual relationships. Rather, the joyful (and sexual) love of heterosexual marriage is extolled as God-given, good, and desirable.

The prophets. The Mosaic covenant has not produced an obedient covenant people, so the Lord promises a new covenant through the Old Testament prophets. This new covenant would be radically different from the old, but is cast as both a looking forward and glancing backward in salvation-history. The new covenant is depicted as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and a re-making of Eden to bring redemption through a new creation (Isa 51:1–6). Yahweh would make his covenant partners faithful

¹⁰⁰Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 407.

¹⁰¹Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 415–16.

¹⁰²Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 426–28.

and obedient by giving them new hearts and minds, putting his law on their hearts, and forgiving their sins completely (Jer 31:31–34; cf. Heb 8:6–13). Yahweh would save and cleanse his new covenant people himself and pour out his Spirit on the entire community so that they would all obey him (Ezek 35:11–16; 36:22–32). New covenant redemption is frequently described in terms of the Davidic king ruling over a renewed Eden (2 Sam 7:8–16; Ps 110; Isa 51–56:8; Ezek 36:33–38, Ezek 40–48). In Jeremiah 31:35–37, Yahweh declares the surety of his new covenant redemption by appealing to the normative pattern of his creation in Genesis 1, and the passage is worth quoting in its entirety:

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord of hosts is his name: “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.” Thus says the Lord: “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord.” (Jer 31:35–37 ESV)

Yahweh’s (new creation) salvation for his people is as fixed and binding as his original creation. There is no indication in the Old Testament canon that any aspect of Genesis 1–2 is normal, not normative.¹⁰³ If the prophets appeal to the unchanging nature of creation in Genesis 1–2 to ground new creation promises, it seems very unlikely that the nature of marriage would change, particularly when Scripture univocally denounces same-sex sexual behavior.

The epochal context has made it clear that monogamous, heterosexual marriage is normative and grounded in the creation account. The prophets continue the pattern of the Pentateuch: Genesis 1–2 serves as the normative reality for the created order, divine-human relationships, and human-human relationships, as well as the

¹⁰³Contra Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 85–109. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 515–16; Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 323. This point is crucial to the present debate. While Brownson may contend that aspects of creation are normal and not normative, there is no biblical data that presents creation in any other way than fixed and unchanging—i.e., normative. The nature of marriage is as fixed as the sun, stars, and moon in the present creation.

archetype of Yahweh's future redemption and salvation through his new covenant. Ideas of rest, covenant relationship and presence with God, holiness and faithfulness, marriage, offspring, and covenant obedience in the Old Testament are progressively constructed upon the foundation of creation. Marriage is critical to the redemptive story. Beginning in the creation covenant and moving through the Davidic covenant, the people of God anticipate the promised offspring through whom new creation salvation will be realized and Genesis 3's effects will be undone. Up to this point, it has been shown that revisionists have no Old Testament basis for affirming same-sex relationships. As a result, Brownson, Vines, and Gushee attempt to shift the debate from the texts themselves to ANE cultural practices, authorial ignorance, or authorial misogyny (resulting in a non-evangelical doctrine of Scripture, as we saw in the previous chapter). The Old Testament is clear in its teaching regarding marriage and same-sex behavior: same-sex relationships are unequivocally denounced by the Lord and the biblical authors precisely because they violate God's original, fixed order. Not only is creation normative for human marriage (thereby excluding same-sex relationships), but as mentioned previously, creation also sets the pattern of Yahweh's promised, eschatological redemption and new creation.¹⁰⁴

The Canonical Horizon

In this section, I will address Genesis 1–2 from a canonical perspective, examining relevant New Testament texts that (1) specifically address the institution of marriage; and (2) have been raised by revisionists as relevant to the debate. I will not yet unfold a canonical, theological interpretation of marriage. I will examine the typological nature of marriage in the next section.

The Gospels. The New Testament opens with post-exilic Israel anticipating

¹⁰⁴For an excellent Old Testament survey of human sexuality, see Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 2007).

the awaited Redeemer—the seed of the woman, offspring of Abraham, tribesman of Judah, and son of David—to deliver them from their enemies. Israel has repeatedly failed, like the first Adam, to obey the covenant stipulations, so Yahweh, as he did with the first Adam, has vomited Israel out of the promised land which imaged Eden. Israel awaits the promised Davidic king while they are subjugated to Roman rule, unaware that the primary enemies the Messiah must first address are sin and the serpent (Gen 3:15). This context is the one into which God sends his Son, demonstrating his commitment to keep his covenant promises to Abraham and David.

It is important as I briefly examine the Gospel accounts to first acknowledge that Jesus was born into the Old Testament culture and submitted to the Mosaic law.¹⁰⁵ Jesus did not come to abolish the Old Testament law, but to fulfill it while uprooting the uninspired, extrabiblical laws of the religious leaders (Matt 5:17–18; Mark 7:1–13). Contrary to Vines’ contentions that the Levitical code was influenced heavily by misogynistic culture and that Jesus came to demolish ungodly patriarchy, Jesus argues that the Mosaic covenant is τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ (Mark 7:13) and the means εἰς τὴν ζωὴν εἰσελθεῖν (Matt 19:17; cf. Gen 2:16–17). Related to this debate, Matthew 19:1–12 and Mark 10:1–12 present similar accounts of Jesus teaching on marriage and divorce, with one detail that is relevant to the present discussion.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, Brownson, Vines, and Gushee do not give much treatment to either text, though the implications for the current debate are considerable.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵This point seems to be lost on some revisionists as they contend that Jesus is radically transforming the morality presented in the Old Testament law. Jesus obeyed the law as a man because the law was “holy” and the commandments were “holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12 ESV). The law and all the prophets pointed to him, and in him, find their fulfillment (Luke 24:25–27).

¹⁰⁶While Jesus’ primary aim in these accounts is to correct wrong views of marriage and divorce, his grounding the nature and essence of marriage in Gen 1–2 speaks directly to the present debate. The main distinction that I will address here between these two sections is Matthew’s inclusion of Jesus’ teaching on eunuchs.

¹⁰⁷Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 90–97. Brownson comes the closest to giving a full

Dale Allison rightly argues that the Gospel of Matthew appeals numerous times to the Genesis narrative, including three times in Matthew 19:1–12 (Gen 1:27, 2:24, and 5:1).¹⁰⁸ The first likely echo of Genesis 1 is in Matthew’s use of ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, but if there was any doubt that Jesus was appealing to Genesis 1, Matthew’s direct quotation of Genesis 1:27 from the LXX—ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς—erases all doubt.¹⁰⁹ Jesus grounds the nature of marriage and the disorder of divorce in the creation account by use of the common Jewish exegetical principle, “the more original, the weightier.”¹¹⁰ Unlike Mark’s account, Jesus’ emphatic appeal to creation in Matthew’s Gospel highlights that it was God who said marriage was male and female (Matt 19:5) and it was God who joined husband and wife as one flesh (Matt 19:6).¹¹¹ In appealing to creation and not the Mosaic covenant, Matthew presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the temporal

treatment, but surprisingly, he addresses only Matthew’s quote of Gen 2:24, and not Gen 1:27, in his argument for same-sex marriage. Both references are critical to Jesus’ defense of traditional marriage. See also Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 91–98; David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2016), 264–69. Neither Vines nor Gushee addresses Matt 19 or Mark 10 in any detail, though Gushee admits that Gen 1–2, Matt 19, and Rom 1 are the strongest arguments for traditionalists.

¹⁰⁸Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 71. Matt 19 is the first occurrence of Matthew appealing to a creation ordinance. See also Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 59.

¹⁰⁹John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 771. The LXX translation is itself a very close rendering of the MT. Jesus’ emphatic use of ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (vv. 4 and 8) serves to reinforce his argument that marriage is defined by creation norms.

¹¹⁰D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 412; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1992), 481.

¹¹¹Carson, *Matthew*, 412. See also Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 771. The use of καὶ εἶπεν is very significant. Jesus attributes the Gen 2:24 theological commentary to God himself. Gushee, Brownson, and Vines may assert that the biblical authors did not foresee a time where same-sex relationships were holy, but this flies directly in the face of Jesus’ statement in Matt 19:4–5. God’s speech can be understood in two distinct, but compatible, ways in Gen 1–2: (1) speech as action—he spoke in order that creation would be actualized and become reality; and, (2) speech as commentary—he spoke to give his (theological) interpretation of his created order. While revisionists may attempt to drive a wedge between the human and biblical authors, Jesus clearly affirms both without reservation.

Mosaic covenant who ushers in the new age.¹¹² Jesus' argument from creation entails that all attempts to alter the nature of the marriage relationship are unnatural and reflect moral rebellion against God. John Nolland rightly notes that Jesus does not give new meaning here: God establishes male and female (Gen 1:27; cf. Matt 19:4) ἔνεκα τούτου that they might be united in marriage. Jesus' use of ἔνεκα τούτου functions here as a marker of purpose ("for this reason").¹¹³ Carson agrees: "The implication is that the two sexes should be united in marriage. But lest the implication be missed, the Creator then said that, 'for this reason' (v. 5)—because God made them so—a man will leave father and mother, be united to his wife, and become one flesh."¹¹⁴ God serving as the subject of συνέθετο affirms this point. It is divine purpose expressing itself in divine action that "yokes" a male and female together in marriage. These realities reinforce one truth that has been consistently demonstrated throughout the redemptive storyline up to this point—God, not man, defines the nature and parameters of marriage and God, not man, unites male and female in marriage.

Unique to Matthew's account is Jesus' address to his disciples outlining three different kinds of eunuchs, reflecting categories of abstinence (from marriage and procreation) in the world (Matt 19:10–12). The first two categories of eunuch were well-known in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman context. The first category was traditionally understood as men who suffered congenital defects or who were otherwise impotent from birth, while the second category consisted of men who had been physically castrated by other men (i.e., eunuchs to serve in a royal harem or court—see Esth 2:3 and Acts

¹¹²R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 193–97.

¹¹³Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 771.

¹¹⁴Carson, *Matthew*, 412. Sprinkle makes the same point in Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*, 35–36.

8:27).¹¹⁵ It is possible that the first category of eunuch could include people born with a same-sex sexual disposition who will not ever desire heterosexual marriage, though this interpretation is unlikely.¹¹⁶ The third category of eunuch that Jesus introduces is unique: self-imposed eunuchs for God's kingdom.¹¹⁷ Jesus again uses metaphorical language to make a strong point (cf. Matt 18:7–9), this time regarding marriage.¹¹⁸ He argues that there will be Christians who embrace celibacy and forego natural procreation in order to

¹¹⁵See Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 294; Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 485; William Hendricksen, *Gospel of Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 718; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 777; Carson, *Matthew*, 419.

¹¹⁶This interpretation does not seem to comport with early Jewish and Greco-Roman understandings of eunuch. See also William Loader, "Same-Sex Relationships: A 1st-Century Perspective," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 3. If this interpretation is correct, it would provide biblical grounding for God creating certain individuals who will be celibate *from birth* (i.e., same-sex attracted people).

¹¹⁷For an excellent biblical-theological treatment of this passage, see Barry Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 153–63. Danylak rightly notes that the new covenant work of Christ has fulfilled the offspring promise in Gen 3. In Christ, God's creation command/blessing of procreation is being broadened to include covenant-keeping celibates who produce sons and daughters in the faith (140–41).

¹¹⁸Jesus does not mean there should exist a category of men who castrate themselves for the sake of the kingdom. Also, his comment is regarding marriage, not gender identity. Contra Kapyra Kaoma, "Beyond Adam and Eve: Jesus, Sexual Minorities and Sexual Politics in the Church in Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 153 (2015): 7–28; J. David Hester, "Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus: Matthew 19.12 and Transgressive Sexualities," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 1 (2005): 13–40. Hester argues that this eunuch "as both a physical body and social identity radically undermines the foundational assumptions used to reinforce the conservative heterosexist reading of the Bible, precisely because this body and this social identity threatens the sacred boundaries between male and female. The kingdom of heaven resides in between, even outside this dichotomy in the ultimate ancient figure of sex-gender transgression." Hester, "Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus," 37. Hester argues that the distinction between Isa 56 and Matt 19:12 is that Isa sees a salvation where the eunuch is incorporated back into the patriarchal society from which he is rejected, with heteronormative rewards, while Jesus teaches that the transgressive body of the eunuch symbolizes the kingdom. First, Hester misses that Yahweh's promise to eunuchs in Isa 56 is something "more than sons and daughters," namely his eternal covenant presence. Second, Hester conflates purpose with ontology. Nowhere in Matt 19 does Jesus teach that the kingdom is identical to the body of the third group of eunuchs (all groups of eunuchs are still male or female, regardless of their ability to procreate). In fact, Jesus teaches in the next periscope (Matt 19:13–15) that (engendered) children constitute the kingdom. Third, he also confuses categories, for the one who becomes a eunuch does so "not for the sake of attaining [the kingdom] but because of its claims and interests." Carson, *Matthew*, 419.

devote themselves more fully to the advancement of the kingdom.¹¹⁹ The idea of self-imposed celibacy was not only uncommon in Judaism, it was largely avoided and/or rejected because of the nation's commitment to Genesis 1:28.¹²⁰ In fact, the Torah outlawed eunuchs, foreigners, and Ammonite or Moabite descendants (to the tenth generation) from entering the temple (Deut 23:1–3).¹²¹

There are indications, however, in the progression of the canon that Yahweh has intentionally broadened his redeemed community to include those people previously prohibited from his presence, particularly as it relates to celibacy and offspring. Isaiah 56:1–8 speaks of a future day where, though the eunuch is unable to have physical children and has formerly been unable to enter God's presence (v. 3), Yahweh will write the celibate man's name in his temple and give him an inheritance better than physical children (v. 5). Yahweh will do good to the eunuch because the eunuch is faithful and keeps Yahweh's covenant (vv. 1–2, 4).¹²² Jeremiah himself provides an example of one such eunuch—faithful and whole-heartedly devoted to advancing God's kingdom (Jer 11:19–23, 16:1–2; cf. 17:7–8). This typological fulfillment demonstrates that marriage, beginning in Genesis 1–2, was intended to point to something greater and beyond itself—namely, the new creation relationship between God and his people. There is no textual evidence in Isaiah, however, supporting revisionist claims that the new covenant era will

¹¹⁹Jesus does not state that this particular group of self-imposed celibates are more holy than married believers. Like the other two groups of eunuchs, the implication here is that this group will be small compared to the people who choose marriage. Rightly, Blomberg, *Matthew*, 294. Celibacy for the sake of the kingdom is possible only because Christ has fulfilled the creation command. In Christ, new covenant members enjoy the Christ-church marriage and can remain celibate in order to give themselves more fully to kingdom work, making many sons and daughters by the new birth.

¹²⁰Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 779–80.

¹²¹Were it not for God's purposes for Israel's kingship, as well as the Davidic and new covenants, this prohibition would have barred King David from entrance to the temple because of his Moabite lineage (Ruth).

¹²²I will examine the covenantal shifts implicit to this passage in the section on typology.

abrogate, redefine, or eliminate the heterosexual structure of marriage. Rather, the prophets indicate that marriage's fulfillment in the future new covenant era will allow for celibacy to be a legitimate expression of covenant faithfulness, not a basis for redefining the institution of marriage. Jesus and Paul provide New Testament examples of men who voluntarily chose singleness in order that they might be wholly-devoted to God's kingdom (1 Cor 7:6–9).¹²³

In fact, Jesus and Paul are the best New Testament examples of God fulfilling his promise that the eunuch would enjoy fruitfulness in the new covenant era. The *imago Dei*, understood in light of its fulfillment in Christ, does not demand sexual expression because marriage was given in order to point to salvific realities beyond itself—namely, new creation realities. In Christ, the new creation is breaking into the present so that marriage is now understood in light of its prophetic function. In light of Christ's person and work, marriage is ultimately understood in light of the saints' covenant faithfulness to Christ. Throughout the Old Testament, God demanded covenant faithfulness from his

¹²³Paul's admonition to some to get married rather than to burn with passion is written in his Jewish context, which unequivocally condemned same-sex sexual relationships. In spite of this reality, Vines, Brownson, and Gushee all argue that many who are same-sex attracted do not have the gift of celibacy and therefore Matt 19:12 and 1 Cor 7:9 indicate same-sex attracted people ought to be able to marry in a homosexual union. While I am sympathetic to the struggle of same-sex attracted people, (1) the presence of internal desires which the Bible teaches are evil is no excuse for acting upon those evil desires, regardless of the sin (Jas 1:12–15). (2) Paul's exhortation means that same-sex attracted people are still free to commit themselves to heterosexual marital unions in order that they might express themselves sexually in this divinely-prescribed relationship. While many same-sex attracted people may be uninterested, unwilling, or unable to enter into this marriage relationship, their experience does not necessitate (or demand) a change in the nature of this God-given institution. (3) While revisionists may claim it is cruel and unfair for same-sex attracted people to be prevented from entering marriage, Matt 19:12 clearly teaches that God prevents some people from expressing themselves sexually. The involuntary nature of "eunuch from birth" communicates that our sexual expression is ultimately subject to the providential wisdom and decree of the Lord. (4) The revisionist claim that the prohibition of same-sex sexual behavior is unfair does not accord with Jesus' call of discipleship which demands taking up a cross (an instrument of painful torture and death). The celibate Jesus, the perfectly humble and understanding mediator, promises greater eschatological joy for celibate Christians than any sexual expression could offer. (5) The image of God does not demand sexual expression, though revisionists seem to argue this point. It is interesting that Vines argues that procreation is not the essence of marriage (which would undercut his argument), but he does argue that denying same-sex sexual expression in marriage mars the image of God. Revisionists ground human identity in sexuality and its manifest expressions. See Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 140–41, 159.

people (particularly Israel), but no covenant partners were faithful. Now that Christ has come as the faithful covenant-keeper, marriage is now understood in its fullness. It is in the one-flesh covenant union of Christ and his church that God has achieved his purposes in making faithful covenant-keepers. While human marriage prophetically points to something greater than itself (i.e., Christ-church relationship), its prophetic and anticipatory function does not alter its ontology. Marriage is proof that the new creation is dawning (Eph 5:31–33). The in-breaking of God’s kingdom in Christ has not distorted the marital union, but rather sharpened and illumined its eschatological *telos*. In light of this reality, celibacy is now seen as a gift from the Lord in order to free a Christian up to serve God’s kingdom wholly-devoted because the celibate Christian will still enjoy the ultimate aim and terminus of human marriage: covenant union with Jesus Christ. Revisionist contentions that celibacy somehow demonstrates a change in the ontological nature of marriage underscore their failure to rightly understand the institution of marriage and its prophetic function. Celibacy’s demonstration that marriage’s prophetic aim has been unfolded in light of Christ’s new covenant work does not entail celibacy redefining the marriage relationship. Celibacy demonstrates that human identity is grounded in more than simply a sexual impulse because our longing for covenant faithfulness and love finds its new creation fulfillment in the Christ-church marriage.

Turning to a similar account in Mark 10, Jesus argues that the old covenant’s divorce provision stands opposed to the true nature of marriage. The permission for divorce was given as a testimony against the wickedness of Israel who had distorted Genesis 1–2 norms through casual divorce.¹²⁴ Contrary to Gushee’s contention, Jesus’

¹²⁴William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1974), 355. Lane continues, “Jesus’ judgment against hard-heartedness presupposes the abiding validity and obligation of the original divine institution of marriage, and the force of his pronouncement here, and in the following verses, is to obliterate the Mosaic tolerance. In this abrogation . . . there is applied a stringency which raises jurisprudence to the level of the intrinsic requirement of the Law of God.”

use of ἀρχῆς κτίσεως in Mark 10:6 grounds marriage ethics in pre-fall creation, not Genesis 3.¹²⁵ Marriage ethics, Jesus teaches, are rightly understood when Genesis 1:27 serves as the basis for interpreting Genesis 2:24.¹²⁶ France rightly summarizes Jesus’ theological interpretation of Scripture when he argues that 1:27 forms the “necessary basis for the second quotation [2:24]. When God designed humanity as ἄρσεν και θήλυ it was with a view to the sexual union which Gen 2:24 spells out. The threefold pattern of Gen 2:24, leaving parents, union with wife, and man and woman becoming σάρκα μίαν, provides the essential basis for marriage.”¹²⁷ Brownson disputes the contention that one flesh means gender complementarity, arguing instead that one flesh primarily means “kinship bond.” This kinship bond cannot, however, be understood apart from God’s creation design for marriage and his particular demands for covenant obedience from both parties.¹²⁸ Even if one does not assume that one flesh primarily means sexual intimacy in 2:24 (it does not mean less), there is no textual basis for understanding Jesus’ teaching to mean anything other than the creation norm—monogamous, heterosexual marriage.¹²⁹

¹²⁵R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 392. See also Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 355–56. Lane contends that the citation of Gen 1:27 and 2:24 are not arbitrary, but “appeals over against legislation based upon fallen history to the true nature of human existence as it was revealed from the beginning of the creation.” Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 355–56. Gen 1:27 presents male and female created separately in order to be unified in marriage.

¹²⁶Cf. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 82–83; Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 116. Gushee and Brownson seem to encourage interpreting Gen 1 and Gen 2 apart from one another. This may be, at least for Gushee, because he argues that these were two separate accounts put together by an editor.

¹²⁷France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 392. France’s contention that marriage is not a mere contract and cannot be separated because of its “ontological status” is a helpful picture of the Gen 2 marriage covenant that Brownson denies existed in ANE cultures, as well as in the mind of the author of Genesis. See Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 94–96.

¹²⁸Rightly, Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 356.

¹²⁹See Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 104–9. Brownson would agree with this conclusion, but argue that readers have to go beyond the text (and authorial intent) to understand the moral logic in terms of science and modern conceptions of “sexual orientation” because creation is normal, not

The New Testament epistles. Traditionalists and revisionists have typically sparred over three passages from the New Testament epistles that require attention. This brief section will not engage extensively in the linguistic and historical debates, but rather provide a canonical understanding of these passages as they are tied to the creation account.¹³⁰ Turning first to Romans 1, Vines' argument that Romans 1:26–27 is not of central importance to Paul's message stands in stark contrast to Paul's vivid illustration demonstrating the results of God's wrath on mankind for its idolatrous rebellion.¹³¹ Paul

normative. Brownson gives the “Copernican revolution” as an explicative example. At least three errors are present in Brownson's point: (1) the Bible did not assume that the sun moves around the earth, despite Brownson's contention (105). Brownson confuses literal language with literalistic language. To interpret the biblical author literally, the reader must read in light of authorial intent, the author's use of literary devices (in this example, metaphor), and the literary genre being used to accurately interpret and ascertain true meaning. The biblical authors are simply expressing natural phenomena in metaphorical terms as people do today (e.g., sunset, sunrise, etc.) I assume that when I write “I devoured Brownson's book” that he does not believe that I ate it (cf. Jer 15:16; Ezek 3:3; Rev 10:9–10), because that would not be reading my words literally (according to my intentions). (2) While Brownson critiques the hermeneutical process of those who hold anti-Copernican views, he commits the same error by not reading the biblical storyline in light of its own categories and framework. Brownson does not comment on Jesus' appealing to Gen 1:27 to understand marriage in 2:24, which is enlightening. Matt 19 and Mark 10 gives us insight into how the one who created marriage in the beginning (Heb 1:2) understands his own framework (Gen 1:27, 2:24). Brownson has it backwards—in order to rightly interpret reality (and science), you must rightly interpret God's creation framework and revelation. (3) Brownson argues that the creation account is normal, not normative, but fails to provide how one adjudicates those aspects of Gen 1–2 that are not normative. Why is it normative for marriage to be limited to solely between humans, and not bestiality? Bestiality is not condemned in the New Testament, and the same Levitical law that outlaws same-sex marriage is the only place where Scripture condemns bestiality. Why is monogamy normative, and not simply normal? Polygamy has a much stronger biblical case than same-sex marriage, as does incest. Why is kinship normative for marriage if covenant was not an aspect of ANE culture or of Genesis? Why not marriage between adults and children?

¹³⁰Much ink has been spilled on these passages, particularly Rom 1. See Preston Sprinkle, “Romans 1 and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of James Brownson's Bible, Gender, Sexuality,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24, no. 4 (2014): 515–28; Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns”; Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002); Robert A. J. Gagnon and Dan O. Via, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996); Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998); Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*; Loader, “Same-Sex Relationships”; William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2012); Loader, *Sexuality in the New Testament: Understanding the Key Texts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

¹³¹Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 96.

clearly describes various manifestations of covenant disobedience in Romans 1 after teaching that God’s righteousness is revealed through the gospel and that his people will live by faith (Hab 2:4; cf. Gen 2:16–17).

In Romans 1:18–25, Paul outlines God’s revelation of himself and humanity’s response to this general revelation. Whereas God has revealed himself as eternal, omnipotent, and divine since the creation (Rom 1:20), humanity has revealed itself as sinful—dishonorable, ungrateful, futile in thought, and foolish in heart (Rom 1:21–22). Humanity’s ungodliness is a suppression of God’s revealed truth about himself and his creation (Rom 1:18–20).¹³² Following Adam in Genesis 3, humanity rejects God’s wisdom in pursuit of its own, becoming fools.¹³³ In writing that all mankind “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images,” Paul intentionally echoes Psalm 106:20 and Jeremiah 2:11 to indicate that Israel and the Gentiles stand equally condemned as unfaithful covenant partners.¹³⁴ Paul then argues that God has expressed his wrath

¹³²Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996), 103–4. God’s wrath is upon sinful humanity because humanity, both Jew and Gentile, has suppressed the truth God has revealed in creation. For Jews, this knowledge of Yahweh comes primarily through his revelation in the Mosaic covenant (including Lev 18/20). Gentiles, however, are the primary audience of Paul’s writing here because his argument in Rom 1:18–32 is tied explicitly to what God has revealed in the natural world as he created it. This truth is relevant for the present debate because Paul’s contention in Rom 1:26–27 is grounded in humanity’s rejection of created norms (particularly sexuality) manifested by God himself in Gen 1–2. In fact, Paul’s argument is not whether the created order is seen clearly or misunderstood, but rather that people understand it and then oppose God’s created order (Rom 1:20). Paul later ties this rejection to Adam’s sin in Gen 3 (Rom 5:12–21).

¹³³There is a strong case for Paul echoing Gen 1–3 here, and if true, it makes it very likely that Paul’s use of “nature” in Rom 1:26–27 is grounded in Gen 1–2. See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 374n38; Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 73–84. I find Moo unpersuasive in his denial of a connection between Rom 1 and Gen 1–3, particularly since Paul clearly connects his readers to Gen 1–3 repeatedly throughout his epistle (e.g., Rom 4:17, 5:12–21, Rom 7:7–12), as well as to Gen 15, 17, 18, 21, and 25. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 109. Moo does note four pieces of evidence for a connection between Rom 1 and Gen 1–3: (1) the threefold description of animal kingdom (similar to Gen 1:20, 24 in LXX); (2) the use of ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνας echoes Gen 1:26; (3) the use of the aorist to indicate past events; and, (4) the use of θανάτου in v. 32 to echo Gen 2:17.

¹³⁴They were unfaithful in Adam (and more specifically for Israel, their rejection of the Mosaic covenant). See Mark Seifrid, *Romans*, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament

towards man by giving humanity over to its sin. Moo argues that Paul’s use of διὸ plus παρέδωκεν is to be understood as God’s decisive and active wrath. God did not simply let people go, but rather he gave them a firm push in that direction.¹³⁵

In verses 23–24 and again in verses 25–27, Paul argues that God gave humanity up to ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις (Rom 1:24) and πάθη ἀτιμίας (Rom 1:26) because humanity exchanged the glory and truth of God for idols. Paul addresses the connection between impurity in motives (ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν) and impurity in behavior (τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν). Contrary to Brownson’s contention that new creation purity is not seated externally but firmly in the heart and will, Paul does not divorce desire from action. In fact, Paul affirms the biblical reality present in creation: a right relationship with God produces obedient desires and behaviors.¹³⁶ Revisionists who contend that Paul had no conception of same-sex orientation fail to understand Paul’s contention that desire and behavior cannot be separated.¹³⁷

(Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 611; Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 370–75. In spite of the Mosaic covenant and their role as the corporate Adam, Israel failed as bad as pagan Gentiles (cf. Exod 32). Like Adam before them, the “glory” that Israel exchanged was covenant presence with the Lord. Jer 2:7 argues that God gave Israel a land like Eden, but Israel’s response was worse than the nations around them—they “changed its gods.” Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 372. Adam and all of his children have rejected the God who created them through sin.

¹³⁵Rightly, Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 110–11. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *Romans*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974). Dodd sees “wrath” as the impersonal cause and effect of the universe, reflecting deism and not biblical truth.

¹³⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 189–93. Brownson is very confused at this point. His reference to the Pharisees only undermines his point. The Pharisees were hypocrites who professed faith but lived in disobedience. Impurity is not defined by humanity, but by God. Purity is not simply whatever someone feels in their heart, but rather the transformation of their heart by God to Christ-likeness, who is himself the faithful and obedient Adam. Brownson’s appeal to ceremonial foods and to the Sabbath conflates the creation and the Mosaic covenants. The Sabbath, though grounded in creation, is not commanded in Gen 2, but rather in Exod 16. Impure foods are also commanded in the Mosaic covenant. Christians still find rest, but we do not observe the Sabbath, because Christ has fulfilled the Mosaic covenant, not done away with creation (Gen 2). Christians may eat any food because Christ has fulfilled the Mosaic covenant, not done away with the Noachic covenant (Gen 9). This confusion reflects Brownson’s poor biblical-theological framework and his confusion of covenants and covenantal categories.

¹³⁷In 1:26–27, Paul emphasizes this point specifically with same-sex sexual relationships. Evil

Paul then moves even more explicitly towards sexual behavior as he transitions to Romans 1:26–27. Paul judges both male and female homosexuality as τὴν παρὰ φύσιν. Brownson attempts to sidestep the issue by arguing that Paul’s use of “nature” must mean “what comes naturally,” and therefore, Paul is not consciously prohibiting same-sex sexual relationships for those with a same-sex orientation because Paul had no awareness of sexual orientation or monogamous same-sex couples. Therefore, Romans 1:26–27 does not speak to same-sex persons because they are acting on their natural desires in the pursuit of same-sex relationships. Paul is rebuking, Brownson and Vines contend, non-monogamous and “excessive” lust in 1:26–27.¹³⁸ Revisionist appeals to “excessive” lust and Paul’s ignorance of monogamous same-sex unions are both attempts at special pleading and have been soundly refuted elsewhere.¹³⁹ It is important to note, however, that Paul is not providing sketches of individuals, but rather indicting fallen (corporate) mankind.¹⁴⁰ Brownson’s exegesis of Romans 1:24–27, therefore, misses Paul’s argument

desire is inextricably connected to behavior. Men and women are given to dishonorable passions, so they exchange natural relations for same-sex relations.

¹³⁸Paul’s strong language to describe the homosexual activity serves to emphasize the depth of humanity’s moral rebellion to God. Paul is not solely rebuking “self-centered desire,” but rather arguing that God’s wrath drives hardened sinners to even greater wickedness because of their idolatry.

¹³⁹Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 380–92; Sprinkle, “Romans 1 and Homosexuality: A Critical Review of James Brownson’s Bible, Gender, Sexuality”; Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*; Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns,” 57–61. Sprinkle ably shows Brownson’s contention of Paul’s ignorance to be historically unfounded.

¹⁴⁰Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 248–55. Brownson argues that Rom 1:26–27 pictures heterosexual individuals who are given to excessive lust as they pursue homosexual behavior. Cf. Richard B. Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to J. Boswell’s Exegesis of Rom 1,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 1 (1986): 200. Brownson misinterprets Paul, in part, because Paul’s emphasis is corporate, not individual, in Rom 1. Hays ably demonstrates Brownson’s point is without merit. He writes, “This ‘exchange’ continues to find universal manifestation in the moral failings which beset human society, as exemplified by the illustrations given in 1:26–32. In the same way, the charge that these fallen humans have ‘exchanged natural relations for unnatural’ means nothing more nor less than that human beings, created for heterosexual companionship as the Gen story bears witness, have distorted even so basic a truth as their sexual identity by rejecting the male and female roles which are ‘naturally’ theirs in God’s created order. The charge is a corporate indictment of pagan society, not a narrative about the ‘rake’s progress’ of particular individuals.” Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural,” 200. See also Greg L. Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub., 1978), 30. Bahnsen rejects Brownson’s logic, arguing that homosexuality is a perversion, and by definition, there cannot be “natural homosexuality.”

entirely:

God gave people over to sexual sin (v. 24),
because they abandoned the true God and worshipped idols (v. 25).
Therefore, God gave people over to homosexual desires (vv. 26–27).¹⁴¹

Paul’s argument follows the flow of Genesis 1–3: man’s idolatrous desire to replace God’s rule with his own moral autonomy leads to transgression (Gen 3:5–6). God’s wrath is expressed by giving people over even more to their sin, and therefore, Romans 1:18–27 teaches that same-sex sexual behavior is actually an expression of God’s wrath against humanity.¹⁴² Contrary to revisionist claims, same-sex behavior is an expression of divine judgment on mankind’s idolatrous rebellion against their Creator, not the outworking of an individual’s same-sex φύσιν.¹⁴³ Romans 1:26–27 gives a general prohibition against all forms of homosexuality, and the fact that Paul condemns lesbianism eliminates the idea that Paul is referring to pederasty.¹⁴⁴ As Paul outlines his case, the point is clear: humanity has rejected every imperative of the creation covenant, failed to worship and

¹⁴¹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 90. Schreiner rightly notes, “Sin does not consist first and foremost in acts that transgress God’s law, although verses 24–32 indicate that sin is the transgression of the law. These particular acts are all rooted in a rejection of God as God, a failure to give him honor and glory” (88). Brownson implicitly grounds the new creation salvation in Gen 3, not Gen 1–2.

¹⁴²Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural,” 189–91. Hays argues, “The illustration [of homosexual behavior] is one which both Paul and his readers would have regarded as particularly vivid. Rebellion against this Creator who may be ‘clearly seen in the things that have been made’ is made palpable in the flouting of sexual distinctions that are fundamental to God’s creative design” (191).

¹⁴³Contra Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 96–98. Cf. Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural,” 194. Hays says, “Though he offers no explicit reflection on the concept of ‘nature,’ it is clear that in this passage Paul identifies ‘nature’ with the created order. The understanding of ‘nature’ in this conventional language does not rest on empirical observation of what actually exists; instead, it appeals to an intuitive conception of what ought to be, of the world as designed by God. Those who indulge in sexual practices *para physin* are defying the creator and demonstrating their own alienation from him.” Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural,” 194.

¹⁴⁴Schreiner, *Romans*, 95–96. Brownson’s appeal to female “unnatural” acts being non-procreative heterosexual intercourse remains unpersuasive, particularly with regard to Paul’s use of ὁμοίως to tie female acts to male same-sex sexual acts. Also, Brownson and Vines arguing for pederasty here ignores Paul’s emphasis on the mutuality of male desire by the use of ὁρέξει and εἰς ἀλλήλους. See David E. Garland, *I Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 213.

obey the Lord, and inherited God's curse. Rather than subdue the earth and have dominion over the creatures (Gen 1:28), humanity has worshipped them (Rom 1:23). Rather than male and female enjoying marriage without the shame of sin (Gen 2:24–25), males commit sinful, shameless acts with one another (Rom 1:27). Rather than be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28), mankind has pursued homosexual sexual relationships that do not produce more image bearers (Rom 1:26–27). Rather than being blessed by God (Gen 1:28), humanity is now under God's wrath (Rom 1:18). Like Adam, mankind has rejected the intimate, covenant relationship offered by the Lord who created them and embraced idolatry and same-sex sexual behavior, inverting the created order.

To eliminate any doubt regarding the tight connection between homosexuality and idolatry, Beale convincingly shows that Romans 12:1–2 serves as an intentional antithesis to Romans 1:18–28.¹⁴⁵ Whereas fallen humanity give their bodies to dishonorable use (Rom 1:24), Christians are called to present their bodies as holy sacrifices (Rom 12:1). Fallen humanity worshipped and served idols (Rom 1:25), but Christians use their bodies in worshipful service to the Creator God (Rom 12:1). Same-sex sexual partners would not approve (ἐδοκίμασαν) God in their fallen and idolatrous knowledge (Rom 1:28), but Christians must approve (δοκιμάζειν) God's will as their minds have been transformed and renewed (Rom 12:2). Beale highlights three key aspects relevant to this discussion: (1) same-sex sexual relationships are a participation in idolatrous liturgy; (2) same-sex sexual relationships are expressions of worldly thinking and antithetical to, not evidences of, new creation thinking; and, (3) same-sex sexual activity is itself evidence of a rejection of God's thinking and acceptable worship.¹⁴⁶ Michael Thompson rightly argues that Paul's use of language here is “a call to participate

¹⁴⁵G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 216–22.

¹⁴⁶Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 217.

in a reversal of Romans 1 in the Second Adam.”¹⁴⁷ Following the example of Christ, Christians are called to volunteer their bodies humbly and sacrificially for others, in stark contrast to the pride and selfish actions of fallen humanity that harms others (typified by same-sex sexual behavior).¹⁴⁸ Thompson and Beale rightly conclude that the renewing of the mind in Romans 12:2 (cf. Rom 1:28) is the equivalent of Romans 8:29—
συμμόρφους τῆς εικόνας τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. In Romans, εἰκόνας only appears in Romans 1:23 and 8:29, strengthening this intertextual connection. Building on this point, Beale argues that “this suggests that the image of God’s Son to which Christians are becoming conformed in Romans 8 is the antithesis to the ‘image’ that unbelieving humanity had exchanged in place of God’s glory in Romans 1.”¹⁴⁹ Devotion to same-sex behavior reflects a devotion to the world, not Christ. As one carefully assesses Romans 1 in light of its canonical context, it is clear that Paul’s prohibitions are grounded in the creation account.¹⁵⁰ Having confirmed that Paul’s rejection of same-sex sexual relationships in Romans 1 is grounded Genesis 1–2, I now briefly turn to two other Pauline letters: 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10.

¹⁴⁷Michael B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12:1–15:13* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 83.

¹⁴⁸Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 84.

¹⁴⁹Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 218. Rom 8 builds the antithesis of Rom 1 that is then fully developed in Rom 12:2. Same-sex sexual behavior is an expression of non-conformity to the image of God’s Son. Contrary to Brownson’s claim that same-sex marriage portrays new creation realities, Paul argues that same-sex sexual activity is a reflection of the old idolatrous age of the post-Gen 3 world.

¹⁵⁰Schreiner, *Romans*, 94–95. Schreiner maintains, “At least two pieces of evidence, however, indicate that an argument from the created order is constructed in Rom. 1:26–27. First, Paul selected the unusual words θῆλυς (female) and ἄρσεν (male) rather than γύνῃ (woman) and ἀνὴρ (man), respectively. In doing so he drew on the creation account of Genesis, which uses the same words (Gen. 1:27 LXX; cf. Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). These words emphasize the sexual distinctiveness of male and female, suggesting that sexual relations with the same sex violate the distinctions that God intended in the creation of man and woman. Second, the phrase ‘contrary to nature’ (παρὰ φύσιν) is rooted in Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish traditions that saw homosexual relations as violations of the created order.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 94–95. See also Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns,” 60–61. Paul’s appeal to the creation account in Rom 1:18–32 suggests that every term in his argument (e.g., nature) should be understood in terms of Gen 1–2.

Paul explicitly condemns unrepentant same-sex sexual relations, including active and passive partners, in 1 Corinthians 6. Paul has just rebuked the Corinthian church for not disciplining a man who was engaged in unrepentant sexual immorality with his father's wife (1 Cor 5:1–5), as well as for reports of members having illicit sex with prostitutes (1 Cor 6:15–16; cf. Gen 2:24).¹⁵¹ As in Romans 1, Paul's framework is built upon the foundation of creation, and he condemns all expressions of disordered sexual behavior in Corinth, not just same-sex acts (*μαλακοὶ* and *ἀρσενοκοῖται*).¹⁵² Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner persuasively argue that Paul's echoes of Daniel 7:22, Exodus 18, and Deuteronomy 1 in 1 Corinthians 6:1–8 form the broader context of Paul's use of *θεοῦ βασιλείαν* in 6:9.¹⁵³ Paul now connects the church with this eschatological kingdom of God that was given to the son of man (Dan 7:13–14; cf. Gen 1:28; Mark 1:15) and then to his saints (1 Cor 6:9–10; cf. Dan 7:18, 22). The kingdom of God, understood in its canonical context, is intimately tied to the holy character of God revealed in creation (1 Cor 6:9–11; cf. Heb 12:28–29). The *θεοῦ βασιλείαν* in Christ entails both a present and future reality, and understanding its covenantal context is paramount for rightly interpreting Paul.¹⁵⁴ The church, Paul argues, must reflect God's holiness as

¹⁵¹See Brian S. Rosner, "Temple Prostitution in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20," *Novum Testamentum* 40, no. 4 (1998): 336–51. Rosner argues that Paul's citation of Gen 2:24 serves to underscore the exclusive union Christians share with Christ, as well as to connect sexual immorality generally with temple idolatry. Sexual immorality, including same-sex sexual behavior, is a form of idolatry because it violates God's created standards for human sexuality and distorts the image of the Christ-church union.

¹⁵²See C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 10–17. Dodd argues that Paul's ethics are inherited from the Old Testament which inform his Christian identity.

¹⁵³Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 711–12. They write, "Paul's conviction in 6:2 that the saints will judge the world derives from the Jewish hope that God's people will participate in the judgment of the last days expressed in Dan 7:22." Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 711. See also Peter J. Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 113–15. Gentry also connects Gen 1 to Dan 7. The beasts and waters of chaos function as an anti-creation account as the beasts work in rebellion against Yahweh. Gentry rightly argues that the son of man is the Davidic king from Dan 2—the tiny stone that shatters the image and becomes a great mountain.

¹⁵⁴Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek

representatives of this kingdom and, therefore, the church must reject any distortion of God’s gift of sexuality (Gen 1–2, *not* Gen 3).¹⁵⁵

Paul uses the terms *μαλακοί* and *ἀρσενοκοῖται* in 1 Corinthians 6:9. The term *ἀρσενοκοῖται* was likely coined by Paul and rooted in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, not having been used previously in Greek literature. Brownson, however, dismisses this point as “speculative and lack[ing] external evidence.”¹⁵⁶ Paul’s multiple echoes of Mosaic covenant stipulations including his prohibition of incest (1 Cor 5:1–5; cf. Lev 18:8; 20:11), use of *ἀδικεῖτε* (1 Cor 6:8; cf. Lev 19:13),¹⁵⁷ list of ten vices (1 Cor 6:9; cf. Exod 20:1–17), and use of *βασιλείαν* (1 Cor 6:9; cf. Exod 19:6), as well as his quotation of Genesis 2:24 against sexuality immorality (1 Cor 6:16) indicate that Paul rooted *ἀρσενοκοῖται* in the Pentateuch, specifically Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.¹⁵⁸ Thiselton

Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2000), 445. This point is important for understanding how same-sex attracted people are to be welcomed into local church membership. Gushee once encouraged traditionalists to allow “gay Christians” into church membership while still holding to their traditionalist convictions. This recommendation, however, failed to rightly understand that the local church body is a foretaste of new creation realities and its qualifications for entry are the same as that of the heavenly kingdom. Local churches should welcome but not extend local membership to unrepentant gay couples until there is genuine faith and repentance, including a rejection of homosexual desire and acts, for the church’s purity (Matt 18:17–18; 1 Cor 5:1–5; cf. Dan 7:18, 22). Gushee now contends that a church either accepts gay Christians as full members or they practice bigotry. See David Gushee, “On LGBT Equality, Middle Ground Is Disappearing,” *Religion News Service*, August 22, 2016, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2016/08/22/on-lgbt-equality-middle-ground-is-disappearing/>.

¹⁵⁵The church is not to be equated with the kingdom, but is rather a subset of the kingdom. The church, however, holds the keys of the kingdom in this age of redemptive history (Matt 18). See Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 7. The righteousness of the kingdom is defined by the righteousness of the king, who has revealed his holiness through the progression of the storyline. Revisionists who argue for gay Christianity do not understand Christ’s fulfillment of the creation commands, nor do they understand the necessity of reflecting God’s holiness revealed in creation and throughout the canon.

¹⁵⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 271. This dismissive assertion fails to understand the contention that Paul created this particular word. Naturally, there would be no external Hellenistic reference by which to confirm it, other than the LXX.

¹⁵⁷Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 712. Paul likely had Matt 5:39–42 and Lev 19:13a in mind.

¹⁵⁸See Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 444–53; Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 712–13; Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 306–32; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 212–13.

denies Brownson's and Vines' contentions that Paul's writing was more influenced by his Greco-Roman context, with Paul writing against "sexual excess" and being unaware of the idea of "sexual orientation."¹⁵⁹ Vines focuses almost exclusively on Paul's Greco-Roman culture to the point of losing Paul's Jewish, covenantal background.¹⁶⁰ There is insufficient evidence to support the contention that Paul was only prohibiting same-sex sexual relations where there was economic exploitation. In fact, Robert Gagnon rightly argues that use of the terms *μαλακοί* and *ἀρσενικοῖται* are applied to "every conceivable type of same-sex intercourse."¹⁶¹

The traditionalist case is also confirmed by the final passage, 1 Timothy 1:10. As in Romans 13 and 1 Corinthians 6, Paul's list of lawless deeds is generally guided by his reflection on the Decalogue.¹⁶² Brownson's contention that Paul's use of *ἀρσενικοῖται* in 1 Timothy 1:10 refers to slave dealers who pimp out boy prostitutes to pederastic men is unpersuasive for at least three reasons: (1) Paul's intertextual echo of the Decalogue in his vice list makes the Greco-Roman pederasty connection unlikely. Paul is applying Old Testament texts in light of Christ to Greco-Roman issues, so his ethical framework is grounded in Old Testament theology. His appeal to slave traders is likely connected to the Decalogue's prohibition of theft, not sexual immorality,¹⁶³ (2)

¹⁵⁹Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 446–47. Thiselton rightly argues that Paul everywhere addresses both desire and behavior.

¹⁶⁰Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 450. Rightly, Thiselton argues, "The issue [of translating *ἀρσενικοῖται*] does not turn in fact on whether a link can be traced between Lev 18:22 (and 20:13) and 1 Cor 6:9–10, but on whether Paul sees the Old Testament origins entirely through the lenses of hellenistic Jewish recontextualizations in terms of Graeco-Roman society, or whether he interprets the Old Testament as Christian scripture offering direct paradigms for the habituated lifestyle and ethics of God's holy people as a corporate identity" (450).

¹⁶¹Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 330.

¹⁶²George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1992), 81–92.

¹⁶³Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2006), 128.

Paul could have used the common παιδεραστής to make his point about pederasty; and, (3) Sprinkle has demonstrated that ἀρσενokoῖται more closely means “men who have sex with *males*,” broadening the prohibition to include all male same-sex behavior, not just consenting adults.¹⁶⁴ When one connects 1 Timothy 1:10 with Romans 1:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, it is clear that Paul’s careful use of vocabulary unequivocally denounces all forms of same-sex sexual relationships.¹⁶⁵ Paul’s intertextual appeal to Genesis 2 in 1 Timothy 2:13 demonstrates again Paul’s establishment of marital roles (and roles in the church) upon the normative foundation of creation. Paul’s appeal to Genesis 3 in 1 Timothy 2:14–15 shows the error of distorting Genesis 1–2, while also highlighting God’s grace and exhorting covenant faithfulness from his people in the midst of a fallen world.¹⁶⁶

Marriage and Typology

In the same-sex marriage debate, one way in which traditionalists and revisionists often talk past one another is by appealing to “proof texts” without interpreting them in light of the Bible’s typological structures. In this section, I examine the typological structure of marriage in the creation account and how it ought to inform interpretation for the present debate. Before I examine the topic of marriage, a brief introduction and working definition of typology is warranted.

The Definition and Nature of Typology

Beale provides a helpful definition of biblical typology as “the study of

¹⁶⁴Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved*, 108–20. Sprinkle rightly notes that, אֲרֻסֵי-אֲרָמִים, the Hebrew equivalent of ἀρσενokoῖται, was used in Jewish contexts during Paul’s time.

¹⁶⁵I will not belabor this point. See Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns,” 62; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 85–86.

¹⁶⁶Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 142–49. God’s call for his people to be faithful covenant-keepers has been the same call since Gen 1. Paul’s exhortation in 1 Tim 2:15 likely refers to the fulfillment of the protoevangelium through the birth of Christ (146).

analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God’s special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning.”¹⁶⁷

Beale’s definition articulates five aspects pertinent to type-antitypes: (1) analogical correspondence; (2) historicity; (3) retrospective in identifying persons, events, institutions, and other things as types; (4) prophetic in nature (forward pointing); and, (5) escalation. Following Wellum, Peter Gentry, and David Schrock, I want to sharpen Beale’s definition of typology by arguing that a biblical τύπος structure should be understood in its covenantal (epochal) context.¹⁶⁸

Typology is not simply highlighting allusions or parallels, nor should it be oversimplified as predictive prophecy. Typology is not allegorical interpretation because it is grounded in textual meaning and authorial intent, making intertextual connections across the canon. Biblical typology is grounded in history and the text. Since typology is both predictive and prophetic, it presupposes the total sovereignty and providence of God over history, divine inspiration of all Scripture, and “meaning” understood in light of authorial intent in the text, not reader-response interpretation.¹⁶⁹ “Covenant and

¹⁶⁷G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 14. For an excellent overview of typology, see Brent Evan Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 20–94.

¹⁶⁸Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 39–43. See also, David Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type? A Christotelic, Covenantal Proposal,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 5, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 5–6. Schrock, outlining criterion for properly understanding Christological types, rightly argues, “As covenantal, the type must not only arise within redemptive history in some generic fashion; rather, the interpreter must show from the text how the type corresponds to its covenantal context. In other words, types fill out the details of the covenants, and the covenants, in turn, provide each type—I am thinking primarily in terms of persons here—the parameters in which they live, move, and have their being.”

¹⁶⁹Gentry and Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants*, 102–3.

eschatology” (to quote Michael Horton)¹⁷⁰ serve as the guardrails and framework for faithful discerning the Bible’s intertextual connections as all of God’s covenant promises find their ‘yes’ in Christ. It is in this typological context where marriage’s *christotelic* significance is rightly perceived and understood through the progression of the biblical covenants.¹⁷¹ Reading the biblical story diachronically and intertextually through covenant progression helps tether readers to the biblical texts, encouraging understanding in light of all three horizons of interpretation (textual, epochal, and canonical).¹⁷² It is important to see that all of Scripture, including God’s creation pattern in marriage, ultimately points to Christ as its τέλος and must be interpreted correctly in light of his person and work.¹⁷³

I have highlighted numerous places in the Old Testament and New Testament where biblical authors have made Adamic connections, but Paul solidifies the argument for this typological connection between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12–21. Paul’s use of the term τύπος in Romans 5:14 is not incidental, but is intended to demonstrate Adam “as a divinely designed predictive prefiguration of Christ.”¹⁷⁴ How is this typological

¹⁷⁰See Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

¹⁷¹Schrock, “What Designates a Valid Type?,” 23. Schrock rightly argues for a *via media* between typological maximalists (e.g., Goldsworthy) and minimalists (e.g., Paul Feinberg) by arguing for a *christotelic* understanding of typology, rather than a *christocentric* model. Beale confirms Schrock’s point. See G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 86. Beale writes, “I like this term *christotelic* better than *christocentric*, since it refers more explicitly to approaching Old Testament texts without attempting to read Christ into every passage—something which some wrongly construe to be a *christocentric* reading. The goal of the whole Old Testament is to point to the eschatological coming of Christ.” Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*, 86.

¹⁷²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 606–7.

¹⁷³This intertextual approach is more faithful to the storyline of Scripture and to the concept of divine authorship than Brownson’s “moral vision” proposal. Brownson’s categories seem ill-defined and arbitrary, which likely reflects his extratextual framework.

¹⁷⁴Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 311. For an excellent, in-depth study of τύπος

relationship to be understood? Paul’s use of Old Testament historical persons, events, and institutions in the New Testament demonstrates that Paul saw these Old Testament typological realities as predictive and intentional on the part of the Old Testament authors. Therefore, typology must be understood as literal interpretation, understood in light of both authorial intent and the consistent redemptive patterns across Scripture.¹⁷⁵ Paul’s typological connection between Adam and Christ in Romans 5 serves to underscore that all Old Testament typological patterns find their fulfillment in Christ. This point is important when examining the typological structure of marriage that Paul unveils in Ephesians 5.

The Marriage τύπος Structure

I have briefly touched on the typological structures between Adam and Christ, Eden and temple, and old creation and new creation, but I will now examine marriage typology as it is progressively unfolded across the biblical canon. This intentional typological connection is important for our discussion because Brownson has argued that “nowhere does Scripture say—or even suggest—that ‘too much sameness’ is the reason

structures in Scripture, see also Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald Madvig (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1982). Goppelt defines typology as follows: “Only historical facts—persons, actions, events, and institutions—are material for typological interpretation; words and narratives can be utilized only insofar as they deal with such matters. These things are to be interpreted typologically only if they are considered to be divinely ordained representations or types of future realities that will be even greater and more complete. If the antitype does not represent a heightening of the type, if it is merely a repetition of the type, then it can be called typology only in certain instances and in a limited way.” Goppelt, *Typos*, 17–18. For a brief overview of typology in biblical scholarship, see Karl-Heinrich Ostmeier, *Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, Religion Past and Present (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2012), s.v. “Typology, Scriptural.” Ostmeier argues, “The τύπος is always something that points to something else or is intended to make it visible.” It does not seem from Ostmeier’s definition that he is excluding escalation as one moves from type to antitype, but it is clear that his definition does not require escalation.

¹⁷⁵Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 2. Frei argues, “Typology was a natural extension of literal interpretation. It was literalism at the level of the whole biblical story and thus of the depiction of the whole of historical reality.”

one should avoid same-sex eroticism.”¹⁷⁶ I have already demonstrated, as have others, that Brownson’s bold contention is without exegetical warrant, but his statement also clearly reflects Brownson’s hermeneutical confusion. Scripture does not only speak in propositions.¹⁷⁷ In many cases, biblical authors formulate and teach doctrinal truths based upon typological structures present in Old Testament narrative and prophetic writings.¹⁷⁸

The Pentateuch. As outlined above, the author of Genesis presents the first husband and wife in a pre-fall condition, outlining God’s intentions for marriage and husband-wife relationships in the original creation account—permanent, heterosexual, and monogamous/covenantal. Adam served as the representative head of humanity and exercised headship and authority over Eve in sinless creation. Eve shared in the image of God in this heterosexual union, but also served as a distinct complement (“like opposite him”) to Adam to help him fulfill and obey Yahweh’s covenant commands (Gen 1:27–28; 2:15–17). This similar, but distinct, wife of Adam provided Adam covenant companionship and love that he previously lacked. Adam and Eve, similar in image and humanity yet distinct in gender and role, shared the one flesh union of marriage that all future marriages enjoy—“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23–24). The

¹⁷⁶Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 200.

¹⁷⁷See Gentry’s fair critique of the church misinterpreting the Old Testament by reading it like the book of Romans in Gentry, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets*, 11–14. Scripture can clearly condemn an act as sinful without an explicit prohibition to its readers (see Acts 5:1–11, 12:20–24). Brownson seems to have fallen captive to this hermeneutical error in his assessment of same-sex sexual relationships. He has no problem, however, condemning incest without explicit biblical commands in Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 199–200. Brownson misquotes Gen 2:24 when he condemns incest because 2:24 “speaks of a *person’s* [emphasis added] leaving father and mother and clinging to one’s spouse.” Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 200. Gen 2:24 speaks of a *man* leaving *his* father and *his* mother and holding fast to *his wife* [emphasis added]. Brownson is changing the text to affirm his shift to same-sex monogamy.

¹⁷⁸For example, the author of Hebrews grounds the nature of Christ’s priesthood in the typological connections between Melchizedek, the Levitical priesthood, and the sacrificial system. Paul grounds the universal scope of sin and the universal scope of redemption (covenantally defined) in Adam-Christ typology. The Gospel writers (particularly Matt and Mark) cast Christ’s work as a typological fulfillment of the exodus to teach on the nature of sin and the ministry work of Jesus.

fall created rifts in the relationships between Yahweh and his image bearers, as well as in the interpersonal relationships in creation. Yahweh promises a redemptive offspring, however, through their marital union (Gen 3:15) The curses of covenant disobedience had immediate and profound effects on humanity, leading to clear distortions of marriage and rebellion against the created order immediately after the fall (Gen 4:19; 6:1–4). Corrupt mankind is almost completely destroyed by flood, but floodwaters cannot take away man’s sin nature. This point is demonstrated in man’s idolatrous desire at Babel in Genesis 11. Their idolatry is closely tied to their refusal to spread over the earth in obedience to God’s universal command to Noah (Gen 9:1, 7). Their attempt to make a name for themselves in Genesis 11 is antithetical to God’s commitment to make Abraham’s name great (Gen 12:2; cf. 2 Sam 7:9).¹⁷⁹ After the flood, man is still naturally bent towards idolatry and self-exaltation.

Noah, Abraham, and Israel are presented as new, post-fall Adams with the same covenant blessing/command—“be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 9:1–17, 17:6–7, Gen 35:9–12). Unfortunately, the results are the same. Like the first Adam, each of the men is sinful and breaks the covenant, but Yahweh’s redemptive commitment to his covenant partners, however, is evident even in his judgment against their covenant disobedience. He promises to crush their enemy, reaffirms his image bearers and covenant blessings, promises to bear their covenant curses, and swears an oath by himself that his promises will come true (Gen 3:15, 9:6–7, 15:8–21, 22:15–18). As the biblical narrative progresses, the command “be fruitful and multiply” begins to take more shape, and the shadowy picture of an offspring begins to take greater shape. Not only will this promised seed defeat the serpent, but through him the nations will be blessed (Gen 22:18). This Abrahamic blessing is Yahweh’s gracious reward of Abraham’s faith and obedience (Gen

¹⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 239–40. Wenham notes the irony of fallen man’s attempt to disobey God by congregating together results in their being dispersed by divine edict (240).

12:4; 15:6).

Israel inherits the Adamic command of marriage and offspring, as well as the Abrahamic blessings. The Edenic land of Canaan promised to Abraham is now promised to Israel (Gen 35:12). As Adam, Noah, and Abraham before him, Israel functions as a priest-king (Gen 35:11–14, 47:7–10). Like Abraham before him, Israel is promised to have kings as offspring (Gen 17:6; cf. 35:11). The book of Genesis closes with Israel blessing a particular son: “the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Gen 49:10 ESV). The image of God in mankind has been distorted by sin, but God has promised yet another Adam: an obedient son who will exercise dominion over the earth as a faithful vice-regent. Genesis closes and Exodus opens with God keeping his promise to bless, make fruitful, and multiply his covenant people so that they will obey the covenant commands and accomplish the covenant blessings.

Yahweh raises up a new priest-king, Moses, to lead Israel out of slavery to Egypt (Exod 2:14). The Lord is bringing his promised son back into his promised land for his promised rest (Exod 2:15–17, 4:23). Yahweh presents the tabernacle and the land as pictures of a New Eden which Israel is commanded to protect and guard. Whereas Yahweh had previously had individuals functioning as priests (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel), he now promises to make Israel a holy nation of priests (Exod 19:6), if they will obey his voice and keep his covenant. Yahweh makes a covenant with the nation on Sinai, but shortly after giving his covenant commands, Israel rebels against him by worshipping and extolling a golden calf as their redeemer (Exod 32).¹⁸⁰ As Adam before them, Israel rejects the Lord’s covenant and quickly proves to be an unfaithful covenant partner. Yahweh, however, affirms his promises and covenant faithfulness to Abraham

¹⁸⁰Moses grinds שָׁרַף the golden calf into powder (Exod 32:20). This verb is the same verb used in Gen 3:15 to describe the seed of the woman’s action to the serpent’s head.

after Moses' intercession (Exod 33:12–34:16).

In his covenant renewal of Exodus 34, Yahweh begins to discuss covenant unfaithfulness and disobedience in marital terms. Yahweh's name is יְהוָה and he is jealous for his own name (cf. Exod 20:5).¹⁸¹ The Creator Lord will not share his glory with anyone else, much less an idol fashioned after created things. God's covenant name in Genesis 2 is the same covenant name given to Israel in Exodus 34. Yahweh is jealous for his glory, has proven his faithfulness repeatedly, and demands faithfulness from his covenant partners. Like heterosexual marriage, Yahweh's relationship to his people exhibits both similarities and differences. Israel is both similar to Yahweh (*imago Dei*) and distinct from him (Exod 20:3; cf. Gen 3:22). Yahweh demands that Israel make no covenant with the morally rebellious and idolatrous people of Canaan (Exod 34:15; cf. Gen 2:24; 15:16). Israel already has a covenant partner and Yahweh's demand is a faithful, monogamous relationship with his covenant people grounded in their obedience. Yahweh states that Israel breaking the covenant, expressing moral autonomy, and turning to their own lusts are the same as being a harlot or playing the whore.¹⁸² It is not a coincidence that sexual immorality is inextricably linked to idolatry and unfaithfulness to Yahweh (Exod 34:16–17; Lev 18:19–23). Yahweh warns against interfaith marriage, equating it with idolatry because, since the beginning, Yahweh's intentions for marriage was to unite a covenant-keeping male with a covenant-keeping female in a one-flesh union. Israel's temptation, however, will be to sinfully unite themselves to those outside

¹⁸¹Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 724. Stuart comments that Yahweh is committed to guarding his name which testifies to his faithfulness, character, nature, and uniqueness as the only God and Creator. See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 2000), 888; R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 802. The central meaning of קָנָה and its other roots relates to jealousy in the marriage relationship. Yahweh is beginning to reveal himself as Israel's husband.

¹⁸²Stuart, *Exodus*, 725.

the covenant community, leading them away from their covenant God (Lev 26:12; cf. 2 Cor 6:14–18).

Numbers 15:37–41 also hints at the idea of a marital covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Israel is to wear violet tassels on the corner of their garments in order to remember that they must be obedient covenant-keepers. The royal color of the tassels, the location where they were to be attached, and the reminder not to follow their own eyes and hearts are all significant to Israel’s identity and reflect aspects of Genesis 1–3.¹⁸³ The author’s use of *נָּוּ* echoes God’s warning in Exodus 34:15 against Israel’s “marital” unfaithfulness to Yahweh. R. Dennis Cole argues that the chiasmic structure of Numbers 15:37–41 accentuates Yahweh’s warning against Israel’s temptation towards prostitution by disobeying covenant commands.¹⁸⁴

Numbers 25:1–13 shows the link between sexual immorality and idolatry in the introduction of Baal. Zimri openly takes a Midianite woman, Cozbi, into his tent before Moses and the people of Israel as they weep and repent in Yahweh’s presence at the tent of meeting.¹⁸⁵ Phineas the priest, who was of royal bloodline (Exod 6:25), acts as

¹⁸³Iain M. Duguid, *Numbers: God’s Presence in the Wilderness*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 195–96. Israel was commanded to not imitate Adam in following the lust of their eyes (cf. Gen 3:6–7). The violet color in the tassel indicated royalty (Esth 8:15). Israel as a nation of royal priests was intended to function as Yahweh’s vice-regents, as the priest-king Adam before them. In some ANE cultures, a man could divorce his wife by cutting off the hem of her robe (195). The hem of a robe functioned as an extension of the person (cf. 1 Sam 24:4–6), so Yahweh was reminding Israel that they belonged to him. See Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Pub. Society, 2003), 410. Attaching the tassels at the hems of the robe reinforced the reality of Yahweh’s Lordship and reminded Israel to be faithful to the covenant. See R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, New American Commentary, vol. 3B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 257–58. The color would also be associated with the tabernacle and veil, reinforcing the nation’s call to holiness.

¹⁸⁴Cole, *Numbers*, 256.

¹⁸⁵Cole, *Numbers*, 441. Cole is insightful on this point: “Either way the Israelite man in conjoining himself with the worship of Baal was challenging the cult of Yahweh by committing such an act of political and religious treason in close proximity to the place that symbolized God’s presence, power, and personhood. According to the outlay of the tribes in camping around the sanctuary, the Simeonites were supposed to be camped on the South side of the Tent of Meeting along with the Reubenites and Gadites, so their activities would have had to have been outwardly flagrant for them to have been seen from the tabernacle entrance. At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting revelation took place, anointment rituals

a true priest-king and faithful covenant keeper by immediately killing Zimri and Cozbi, likely while the two are in the act of cultic sexual immorality (Num 25:8).¹⁸⁶ Phineas' zealous, קָנַא (cf. Exod 34:14), act of covenant faithfulness immediately halts the plague against idolatrous Israel by propitiating יְיָ־כַפֵּר Yahweh, saving most of the nation. Phineas' actions echo the zeal of the Levites when they zealously guarded the holiness of the Lord when Israel worshipped the golden calf (Exod 32:25–29). Using language similar to the Abrahamic covenant, Yahweh makes a covenant of peace for a perpetual priesthood with Phineas יִלְזָרְעוּ because of his zeal for faithfulness and holiness.¹⁸⁷ When Yahweh's covenant people marry and practice sexual faithfulness as prescribed by Yahweh, they display covenant faithfulness to Yahweh himself. In fact, Numbers 31:16 indicates that the false prophet Balaam used sexual immorality as the means to seduce Israel into idolatry. Despite Balak's request, Balaam could not invoke Yahweh to curse Israel, but could only serve to reaffirm Yahweh's covenant faithfulness to his people and his promise to fulfill his plans for them.¹⁸⁸ Balaam could, however, use sexual immorality to lead the people away from the Lord and into idolatry.

Judges. As he did with Adam, Yahweh gives Israel an Edenic land, commanding them to work the promised land and keep it through obedience to him. Mirroring Adam's failure to keep the garden in Genesis 3:15, Judges 1:27–36 demonstrates Israel's failure to keep the land as Yahweh promised. Unfortunately, as

commenced, and atonement processes began" (441).

¹⁸⁶Cole, *Numbers*, 441.

¹⁸⁷Ronald B. Allen, *Numbers*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 922. Allen writes, "[Phineas] was priest by divine right, being descended from the right family in an immediate line. He showed himself to be the rightful priest by his interest in divine righteousness. He is now confirmed priest by the rite of divine covenant. As in the Lord's covenant with Abram, this covenant is God's doing; it involved his 'seed,' and it is lasting" (922).

¹⁸⁸Balaam's prophecy of a יִשְׂרָאֵל rising out of Israel clearly connects with Yahweh's blessing to Judah through Israel (Gen 49:10). See Cole, *Numbers*, 426.

soon as faithful Joshua dies, Israel disobeys Exodus 34 and Numbers 15 by whoring after the gods of the people in Canaan. Despite their unfaithfulness, Yahweh raises up judges to save them from their enemies, but Israel does not listen to the judges and repeatedly forsakes Yahweh (Judg 2:17, 10:13–14). Some of the judges themselves whore after other gods (Judg 8:27), and Samson disobeys Exodus 34:15–16 and Numbers 15:39 by following the lust of his eyes and pursuing a marriage with an idolatrous Philistine (Judg 14:2–3). As previously discussed in Judges 19, Israel’s unfaithfulness to Yahweh has not only distorted their views of marriage and the *imago Dei*, but disobedience nearly destroys one of the tribes of Israel (Judg 20–21).

The prophets. The Davidic covenant further clarifies God’s promise of a seed of the woman who will be victorious (Gen 3:15), God’s promise of land and an offspring through whom the nations will be blessed (Gen 15:18, 22:16–18), and Yahweh’s promise to Israel of a royal offspring (Gen 35:11). Each of these promises are connected to God’s creation command-blessing: “be fruitful and multiply.” Israel, God’s son, is a kingdom of priests meant to display God’s holiness as a light to the nations (Exod 19:6; cf. Isa 49:3–7). What the Pentateuch and History books hinted at regarding Yahweh’s covenant relationship to Israel, is now made explicit through King David and the prophets.

Yahweh has sharpened and escalated the picture of marriage and offspring in a number of ways. Yahweh promises to choose a faithful king for Israel who will (1) be a man from the covenant community, not an idolatrous foreigner (Deut 17:15); (2) put his hope in Yahweh’s power, not his own military might or alliance with Israel’s former slave-master, Egypt (Deut 17:16); (3) not have many wives who will turn his heart away nor acquire excessive wealth (Deut 17:17; cf. Exod 34:16); and, (4) be a king who copies, reads, and keeps the law of God as a faithful covenant-keeper and obedient representative

of God's people.¹⁸⁹ As king, he will be the true and obedient Israel, as well as a true and obedient Adam.

Yahweh's covenant to David includes a permanent king who rules God's kingdom on earth, enjoys sonship and exercises dominion (Gen 1:27–28), inherits a great name (Gen 12:2), and leads God's people into God's place to enjoy God's rest. This Davidic king must obey, but Yahweh's covenant love will never depart from him (2 Sam 7:14–15). Yahweh promises to build him a sure kingdom and house (2 Sam 7:16). This king will keep, read, and obey the covenant commands, so he will function for the people as a faithful priest-king. David teaches his son, Solomon, these promises and commands Solomon's faithfulness to the Law of Moses so that he and the nation may prosper (1 Kgs 2:1–4). Solomon begins his kingdom with great promise and wisdom, and the Lord blesses his faithful obedience. Problems arise, however, in 1 Kings 10–11 because of Solomon's failure to obey God's covenant commands. Solomon explicitly rejects Deuteronomy 17 by (1) amassing excessive wealth and horses from Egypt (1 Kgs 11:14–29); (2) marrying many foreign, idolatrous wives (1 Kgs 11:1–8; Gen 2:24; Exod 34:16); and, (3) rejecting God's covenant commands (1 Kgs 11:4–11). As Adam's idolatrous wife helped lead him into sin, so also Solomon's idolatrous foreign wives help lead him into sin. In spite of this sin, Yahweh, for the sake of his covenant promises to Abraham, Israel, and David, allows the Davidic sons to continue to rule Judah.

The Old Testament prophets paint a picture of idolatry that mirrors the books of Moses and history, particularly Genesis 3. In Ezekiel 28:1–19, the idolatry of the prince of Tyre is cast in terms of Adam's disobedience, intimating that all sin is rooted in idolatry.¹⁹⁰ Beale rightly argues that Ezekiel 28's intertextual interpretation of Genesis 3

¹⁸⁹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 398–99.

¹⁹⁰This point was confirmed earlier in the exegesis of Rom 1. See Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 136–38; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 555.

conceives of sin to be the rearranging of existence around the self, with the result that it comes to be its own creator, healer and sustainer. Consequently, all sin includes idolatry. The worship of idols likely often involves not only the usurpation of divine prerogatives but self-worship, since people would worship various gods in the ancient world in order to ensure their own physical, economic and spiritual welfare.¹⁹¹

If marital unfaithfulness to Yahweh (i.e., idolatry) is understood as people pursuing themselves in self-worship, this reality has tremendous implications for the same-sex marriage debate. Israel's idolatry is frequently connected to sexual immorality, whether it is cultic prostitution, unlawful interfaith marriage, polygamy, or adultery. Yahweh's exclusive, covenant love is rewarded by Israel frequently playing the harlot and Yahweh judges Israel as a faithless bride in spite of his gracious redemptive acts, unwavering kindness, and covenant love (Ezek 16). Israel's unrepentant covenant disobedience leads to Yahweh declaring that Israel is not his wife (Hos 2:2), while sending her away into exile with a decree of divorce (Jer 3:8). Israel's marital unfaithfulness has warranted Yahweh rejecting her as a royal priesthood (Hos 4:4–6), as well as cutting her off from his Edenic land and God's rest, leaving her naked and ashamed (Hos 2:3–13; Gen 3:7–10). Yahweh declares that Israel is a covenant people *only* because of God's covenant relationship with them, which they have repeatedly broken through consistent moral rebellion.¹⁹² Exile, like the flood, proves powerless to change the heart of God's unfaithful bride.

There are indications as early as David's reign, however, that Yahweh will bring a greater Davidic king who will establish a better priesthood for his people and rule over all his enemies (Ps 110). Israel's Old Testament prophets paint an even clearer picture of a new covenant that will be unlike Yahweh's old covenant (Jer 31:32). Though

¹⁹¹Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 138–40. Beale astutely points out several ways in which this description of idolatry interprets Gen 3. The king's idolatrous attempt to make himself great only increased the greatness of his sin and God's judgment (Ezek 28:18). Beale argues that the Bible often depicts ungodly or proud kings as either statues or huge trees overshadowing the earth to convey their pride. In every case, God destroys them.

¹⁹²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 218, 354.

Yahweh was their husband, Israel was unfaithful by nature and action. Yahweh's love for Israel was exclusive and permanent, though Israel did not reciprocate despite their pledge of monogamy to Yahweh (Jer 2–3). Israel has run after numerous lovers and shown herself to be a lustful harlot, but Yahweh will establish an everlasting covenant that will change Israel from the inside out by his Spirit (Ezek 16:59–63, 36:22–37:28).¹⁹³ Yahweh will reunite with his people in the wilderness of exile where he will provide a new Exodus salvation for his restored bride (Isa 54:4–8; Hos 2:14–15).¹⁹⁴ His love for his bride is as sure as his covenant promise in the Noahic covenant (Isa 54:9–10). Yahweh will change the names of his people, as well as their identity, by changing the nature of the people so that they are covenant-keepers (Hos 2:16–23). In this new covenant, Yahweh's bride will have a new nature in a new creation under a new king so that they will extend God's glory to the nations, echoing the lives and calling of Adam and Eve in Gen 2 (Isa 55:1–5).¹⁹⁵ Isaiah uses new creation language again in Isaiah 62 to describe Yahweh's new covenant marriage to his people. The Lord will reverse the effects of Israel's (and Adam's) disobedience through the ministry of the Servant of the Lord. The Servant Israel (Isa 49:3) will save Israel, Judah, and the rest of the nations (Isa 49:5–6). Ezekiel's vision of an eschatological temple is strongly linked back to Eden, as well as to the future Davidic king who will obey faithfully and rule justly over God's covenant people (Ezek 37:24–28; 40–48).

¹⁹³Gentry rightly argues that “everlasting covenant” is a reference to the new covenant. See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 475–76. Yahweh's repeated commands and judgments against his people's lusts of their eyes and hearts seems to indicate what Beale is addressing—people turn to idols in order to get what they want (i.e., they turn to idols that feed their impulses and give them their desires so these idols are actually reflections of them).

¹⁹⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 638. Wellum rightly argues that the Passover and new exodus language is picked up by Hosea to describe Yahweh's marriage to his people. Yahweh will not only remain married to his covenant bride, but he will free them from their sin as he once freed Israel from Egypt. In this new exodus, God will begin to make a new creation similar to Eden where sin is no more (Hos 2:16–23). Hosea's redemption of his wife serves as a picture of this future salvation.

¹⁹⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 435–45.

While procreation and offspring are still frequently mentioned and tied to God's blessing throughout the Old Testament, these themes begin to take greater shape as the storyline moves from Adam to Abraham to Israel to David. As the covenants progress, the offspring begins as the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) who is then identified as the offspring of Abraham (Gen 22:17–18). Now through the line of Abraham, Israel identifies the offspring as a son of Judah who will rule as Adam once ruled (Gen 49:10).¹⁹⁶ Within the line of Judah, Yahweh anoints David as king of his unfaithful people, promising David a son who will rule forever, usher in the new creation, and bring a new covenant with a new priesthood (2 Sam 7:9–16; Ps 110; Isa 11:1–16; Mic 5:2–4). Isaiah 53:10 answers the question posed by Israel during its new covenant restoration in Isaiah 49:21: “Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these?” The Servant of the Lord (strongly associated with Adam, Abraham, Israel, and David) has produced offspring by virtue of his redemptive work.¹⁹⁷ Yahweh promises faithful, permanent marriage with his bride, Israel, as a result of the Lord's new covenant of peace (Isa 54:5–10).¹⁹⁸ Isaiah 56:1–8 and Jeremiah 16:1–2 (cf. Jer 11:18–23) give indications that covenant-keeping eunuchs and faithful covenant members will have an inheritance better than children and their enemies will not be able to “destroy the tree with its fruit” (Jer 11:19 ESV). How can this reality be? Barry Danylak rightly notes that the Isaiah 61 vision of the new covenant people is one where they are “not a people blessed by the Lord in *having* offspring but in *being* his

¹⁹⁶See Stephen G. Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker), 128-78.

¹⁹⁷J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 440. Motyer writes, “We stray as sheep, we return as children.”

¹⁹⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 442–43. God's redemption of this marriage is not dependent upon his people, but dependent upon God himself. See also Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 446–49. Yahweh is his people's kinsman redeemer, and the Lord's covenant of peace is built upon the sacrificial death of the Servant.

offspring.”¹⁹⁹

Old Testament summary. The biblical authors develop a typological pattern for marriage across the Old Testament canon—begun in Genesis 2, reaffirmed in the Noahic covenant, assumed in the Wisdom literature, and continued through the prophetic writings to its *telos* in Christ. Marriage was understood as a divinely-created institution, uniting a male and female together in a new family unit in order that mankind might fulfill the creation commands and blessing of Yahweh. Both prior to and following the fall, marriage was marked by permanence, covenant faithfulness, and a one-flesh union between heterosexual partners who share both similarities and differences. Heterosexual marriage is the sole context in which the universal commands of the creation and Noahic covenants are to be obeyed, as well as the sole means through which God provides a redeemer for his people. Yahweh chooses Israel for himself and calls them out of slavery to be yoked to him; and there are intertextual clues across the Pentateuch that indicate marriage is designed to serve a purpose beyond simply that of a human institution. In the wilderness and upon entering the promised land, Yahweh often speaks to Israel in marital terms—covenant love and faithfulness. In spite of Yahweh’s perfect faithfulness as a husband, Israel proves, like every other covenant mediator before her, her inability to faithfully and lovingly keep covenant. Israel regularly pursues idolatry, which is frequently tied to sexual immorality. The Old Testament clearly indicates that rejections of God’s creation design for marriage and sexuality is inextricably linked to Israel’s whoring after other gods. Where Israel’s covenant commitment should have been

¹⁹⁹Danylak, *Redeeming Singleness*, 108. Danylak notes that Isaiah’s use of “offspring” in Isa 57–66 does not necessarily entail *physical* offspring. Isaiah’s description of the offspring in Isa 59 is one of faithful covenant-keepers who know and proclaim God’s word. The emphasis in Isa 44:3 is Spirit-endowed offspring, not necessarily physical offspring (cf. Isa 54:3). Motyer confirms this point. See Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 492–93. Motyer argues that Isaiah’s new covenant does not rest upon human wish but on diviner determination (cf. Gen 3:15; 15:17–21). The use of “seed” in Isa 59:21 is meant to point back to Isa 53:10 and be seen as the fulfillment of Adamic and Abrahamic promises (Gen 3:15; 22:18).

permanent, it was regularly broken. Where Israel should have been faithful to obey God's covenant commands, she frequently rejected them. Where Israel should have submitted to Yahweh's authority, Israel pursued idols made in her image. Israel is unfaithful because of Genesis 3, and needs to be made faithful by God's power through a new nature under a new covenant.

The Old Testament prophets explicitly connect marriage to the relationship between Yahweh and his covenant people. Like human marriage, God's marriage to Israel is a permanent, monogamous, and covenantal relationship between two similar (yet distinct) parties. Yahweh's marriage to Israel has not replaced or altered human marriage, but rather the marriage union in Genesis 2:24 informs how the Old Testament prophets see God's relationship to his people. They teach Yahweh's unfailing commitment to his unfaithful bride, Israel. They remind Israel of her idolatrous whoring, showing the reader that idolatry was strongly linked to self-worship. The prophets do, however, envision a new covenant where God will undo the effects of Genesis 3, bring about a new creation patterned after Eden, and produce faithful offspring who have the Spirit and know God's Word. Up to this point, the Old Testament pattern for marriage features all five aspects of Beale's definition of typology: (1) analogical correspondence; (2) historicity; (3) retrospective in identifying persons, events, institutions, and other things as types; (4) prophetic in nature (forward pointing); and, (5) escalation.

New Testament summary. The Gospel of John presents John the Baptist, as the new Elijah (cf. Mal 4:5–6), preparing the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 3, John recognizes his ministry as that of a φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου. Denying that he is the Christ, John teaches that the Messiah is (νυμφίος) ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην ἐστίν. John links Jesus Christ with the bridegroom who has the bride, and John's time to decrease has come (John 3:29–30). Matthew's Gospel also makes this connection, describing how Christ answered the disciples of John the Baptist on fasting (Matt 9:14). Christ, ὁ νυμφίος, is

present so it is inappropriate for his disciples to mourn and fast. There will be a day, Jesus teaches, where ὁ νυμφίος will be taken away from the disciples and they will then fast (Matt 9:15; cf. Mark 2:19–20).²⁰⁰

Matthew 19:1–12 and Mark 10:1–12 have already been examined, but both indicate Jesus reaffirms the normative pattern of marriage in Genesis 2, while also grounding it in the complementary nature of male and female (Gen 1:27–28). The New Testament provides greater insight into the agency of creation, which sheds light on the creation of the marriage institution and the image of God. The Son of God, Hebrews 1:2 argues, is the one δι’ οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας (cf. Col 1:16). The Son of God was the one who created marriage, and the incarnate Son affirms the normativity of creation in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 by grounding marriage in Genesis 1–2, which is then reaffirmed post-fall in the Noahic covenant as God’s universal standard. Jesus’ use of parable reinforces the reality that Jesus saw himself as the bridegroom who was preparing for his wedding feast with his bride (Matt 22:1–14; Rev 19:6–9). In Mark 11:25, Jesus teaches that the permanence of human marriage does not extend to the new creation, demonstrating that Christ in the new creation is the *telos* of human marriage.

Paul continues God’s Old Testament pattern of warning against interfaith marriage (2 Cor 6:14–18). Paul’s warning here is different than Old Testament warnings because of the nature of the new covenant community. The Christian enjoys union with Christ and has been made the temple of God, so how can what is holy be yoked to that which is unholy? This idea was present in Old Testament warnings (cf. Lev 26:12), but most Israelites were unregenerate because (1) of the law’s effectiveness in exposing sin (Rom 3:20); (2) the law’s ineffectiveness to produce righteousness (Rom 7:5); and, (3)

²⁰⁰Jesus intends to communicate two points regarding identity here: (1) in identifying himself as the groom, he is identifying himself as Yahweh who was Israel’s husband; and, (2) he is identifying his people, new covenant community, as his bride. Jesus is sharpening the biblical vision of marriage by speaking to both creation norms and his plans for redemption.

Israel lacked faith (Rom 4:16). In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul identifies the church in Corinth as Christ’s bride when he writes ἡρμοσάμην ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ παρθένον ἀγνήν παραστῆσαι τῷ Χριστῷ. Echoing Exodus 34:11, Paul uses the causal γὰρ to explain why: ζηλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς θεοῦ ζηλω. The Corinthian church is flirting with false teaching, and Paul uses Yahweh’s language towards Israel (warning them against sexual immorality and interfaith marriage) to warn the Corinthians against idolatry and false teaching.²⁰¹ Paul’s list of qualifications for elder and male deacon include μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, accenting God’s intention for one-flesh unions in marriage and reflecting the structure of his original creation (reaffirmed post-fall in Gen 9). Faithfulness in the one-flesh marital union forms a vital part of each man’s qualification for leadership in the Lord’s church, as well as effectively judging all sexual relationships contrary to said union, including same-sex sexual behavior and polygamy, as deviant and dishonorable.

The Apostle John is given a vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19:6–10. The bride is presented as a holy wife, clothed in fine linen, bright, and pure (cf. Eph 5:27). The righteous deeds of the bride clothe her, reinforcing the Bible’s presentation that the Lord has made his covenant people faithful by virtue of Christ’s new covenant work. John also describes the new heavens and new earth in Edenic terms as he describes the covenant people of God being presented as a bride for

²⁰¹Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 734–35. Harris is on point when he argues, “For its part the genitive θεοῦ has been seen as subjective (‘with a jealousy God inspires [in me]’), qualitative (‘a divine jealousy’), or possessive (‘God’s own jealousy,’ or ‘a jealousy which God has’). However, Paul is not simply indicating the source of his ζηλος although God is undoubtedly its ultimate origin, nor is he merely affirming that it is supernaturally strong (one possible sense of ‘divine’). He is claiming to have a jealousy such as God himself has, or a jealousy that has the characteristics of God’s jealousy (a ‘godly’ or ‘divine’ jealousy). The Old Testament depicts Yahweh not simply as a jealous God (Deut 4:24), one consumed with holy zeal for his name, but as a God whose very name is Jealous (Exod 34:14). His jealous anger burns against sin (Exod 20:5; Ezek 23:25), especially idolatry (Deut 6:15; Josh 24:19–20; Nah 1:2), yet his jealous care protects his people (Ps 17:7–8; Prov 18:10; Isa 41:10). As the verse goes on to show, Paul’s godly jealousy for his spiritual daughter (the Corinthian congregation) is evidenced in his passionate concern to protect her purity from being violated by potential paramours in the period between her betrothal and her wedding day. No rivals to her one husband, Christ, would be tolerated. If she were caused to fall, he would burn with jealous anger (cf. 11:29).”

her covenant husband, the Lord (Rev 21:2–3).²⁰² This new creation picture cements the teaching of Christ in Mark 11—marriage is given as a permanent old creation structure in order to picture its new creation fulfillment and consummation. In John’s new creation vision, it is instructive that God’s revelation to him only serves to reinforce marriage as a monogamous, heterosexual, and permanent union that is fulfilled in the new creation by the Lord’s marriage to his people. Brownson, Vines, and Gushee may contend that misogyny or ignorance also plagued the Apostle John, but his vision was eschatological (Rev 1:1), was presented by Christ himself (Rev 1:17–19), and contained severe judgments against anyone who sought to alter its message (Rev 22:18–19). The unchanging nature and meaning of marriage is confirmed by its location in the canonical inclusio of Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22. Creation, unhindered fellowship with Yahweh, Edenic paradise, and sinless marriage were the mark of Genesis 1–2, while new creation, unhindered fellowship with the triune God, new Edenic paradise, and permanent marriage to Christ are the mark of Revelation 21–22. As bookends, Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22 mirror one another and provide commentary on all the biblical material between them, with a strong emphasis on God’s faithfulness as a husband to his covenant people.

This canonical inclusio informs the final New Testament text to be examined in understanding marriage typology: Ephesians 5:22–33. Ephesians 5 presents the sharpest picture of the ultimate divine intention in creating the institution of marriage. The divinely-inspired Paul argues that marriage and marital roles find their *telos* in the Christ-church relationship. In order to understand 5:22–34, I want to first examine the literary structure and context of Paul’s teaching to husbands and wives.²⁰³ Paul’s section

²⁰²Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 502. Gentry rightly notes the covenant formula in Rev 21:3: “The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

²⁰³For an excellent exegesis of Eph 5 from a Roman Catholic perspective, see Stephen Francis

from Ephesians 4:1–6:20 is composed of four parts, using both chiasm and parallelism to echo the Decalogue and covenant instruction in Exodus 19:1–23:33. Gentry rightly argues that 4:17–5:14 is the key section, outlining the covenant stipulations for the new covenant community.²⁰⁴ Beginning with the primary teaching in 4:17–5:14 for the entire corporate body of believers, Paul then transitions to commanding and exhorting individuals from 5:15–6:20. Paul commands individuals (5:15–6:20) as an extension and application of the covenant stipulations in 4:17–5:14.²⁰⁵ He exhorts Christians in Ephesus to be filled with the Spirit, rather than drunk with wine, so that they may be conformed into the image of Christ.²⁰⁶ The Spirit is the means, Paul argues, by which we are filled with the law of Christ—the teaching of our King (cf. Col 3:16).²⁰⁷ Paul then uses a hinge statement in 5:21 to transition to household relationships. A common interpretation of ὑποτασσόμενοι is *mutual* submission and many argue that this mutuality eliminates hierarchy.²⁰⁸ O’Brien has shown this interpretation to be very unlikely, particularly when

Miletic, “*One Flesh*”: *Eph. 5.22–24, 5.31 Marriage and the New Creation* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988).

²⁰⁴Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 567–68.

²⁰⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 568–69.

²⁰⁶Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999), 391. The Lord is restoring the image of God distorted in Gen 3 by the new humanity imitating the true image of God and Last Adam, Christ Jesus (Col 1:15). Right living as image bearers is grounded in being filled with the covenant law and covenant faithfulness working itself out in community (vertically and horizontally). See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 569.

²⁰⁷Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 569.

²⁰⁸Brownson and Vines attempt this argument, not by appealing to Eph 5:21, but by appealing to Gal 3:28. God has erased all distinctions in the new creation and now the new covenant community experiences those realities in part. Because Christ has erased distinctions between male and female (Gal 3:28; cf. Gen 1:27), gender complementarity has been erased and same-sex couples are able to properly image the Christ-church relationship in marriage. Not only is this poor exegesis of Gal 3:28, but this argument lacks biblical-theological support. See Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 248–56. Moo argues that Christ did not abolish distinctions between male and female so that there is only androgyny, nor does Jew and Gentile being on equal footing mean that they work out their Christian faith in the exact same ways (Rom 14). Paul also continues to recognize the social status of slavery (Moo, *Galatians*, 254–55). In Paul’s argument, he demonstrates that the Abrahamic promise can be enjoyed by all peoples in Christ by faith. As mentioned

read canonically. Ὑποτασσόμενοι should be read in its middle, not passive, form communicating the usual lexical meaning of “arrange under.” Paul is giving an exhortation to Spirit-filled believers to submit (5:21) and the manifestations of submission are then worked out in the various spheres of normal life (5:22–6:9). Furthermore, ἀλλήλοις does not always entail reciprocity (cf. Gal 6:2; Rev 6:4), but is determined by context. Finally, 5:22 lacks a verb, but Paul assumes the reader will understand ὑποτασσόμενοι in 5:21 to inform 5:22—a wife’s action towards her husband—because of proximity and the flow of the argument.²⁰⁹

Ephesians 5:22–6:9 works out this submission in the daily household relationships, and Paul’s commands in this section mirror his commands in Colossians 3:18–4:1. In 5:22–24, Paul commands wives to submit (ὑποτασσόμενοι from v. 21) to their own husbands ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ. A wife’s godly submission to her husband is one of the primary means by which she demonstrates her submission to Christ himself.²¹⁰ Paul grounds (ὅτι) a wife’s submission to her husband in the order of creation in Genesis 2 (cf. 1 Cor 11:3–12; 1 Tim 2:11–13) and in Christ’s role as κεφαλὴ of the church.²¹¹ As the

previously, this point is tied to faith in Abraham through the Suffering Servant. The seed of Abraham are those who profess God’s Word and live in light of it (Isa 53:10, 61:6–11; cf. Isa 49:21). Contrasting this passage with Rom 8:14–17, Moo argues that Gal 3 emphasizes the current inheritance benefits that Christians enjoy as sons, as opposed to sons who are still waiting for their eschatological inheritance.

²⁰⁹O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 399–404. O’Brien concludes that the semantics, syntax, and argument flow support the interpretation that “the apostle is not speaking of mutual submission in the sense of a reciprocal subordination, but submission to those who are in authority over them” (404).

²¹⁰Brownson’s contention that functional ὑποτασσόμενοι, in the context of gender complementarity, is grounded in misogynistic patriarchal or hierarchal structures does not accurately or adequately reflect the Son’s functional subjection (ὑποταγήσεται) to the Father (1 Cor 15:28). Functional subordination, biblically understood, does not entail loss of worth, dignity, or honor. See Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 77–84.

²¹¹O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 413–15. The use of κεφαλὴ is the third time in the letter that the word has been used, with the first two uses referring solely to Christ. Paul’s emphasis in this section is on *order*, particularly God’s order revealed in creation and redemption. Not only is Paul grounding marital roles in Gen 2, he’s also grounding marital roles in light of the Redeemer. The Head of the church is also the Savior of the church, and his love and headship should be imaged by husbands towards their wives. This reality undercuts Brownson’s contention that Christ’s new creation redemption is bringing something so radically new that it now includes same-sex marriage.

church ὑποτάσσεται to Christ, so also wives must submit to their husbands. The correspondence is clear: wives are to live and submit to their own husbands as the church lives and submits to her Savior, Christ Jesus.

In transitioning to husbands in 5:25–27, Paul repeats his pattern of giving a command that is grounded in creation and redemption. Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved his church. Christ loved and died for his church so that he might conform her more fully to God’s image and present her holy unto himself. Paul does not mention headship again, but rather exhorts husbands to exercise that headship properly by loving their wives as Christ loves the church.²¹² The *telos* of marriage to Christ is the church’s holiness, reflecting Yahweh’s desire for Israel to be holy in her covenant relationship to him. Paul then additionally grounds the command for husbands to love their wives in 5:28 with an implicit echo to the “one-flesh” union in Genesis 2:24, as well as a possible allusion to Leviticus 19:18.²¹³ Paul’s exhortation from Christ’s work and example in 5:25–27 becomes an explicit biblical obligation with the use of ὀφείλουσιν (“owe, ought”).²¹⁴ Christ has given himself up for his bride so that he might make her holy, not sexually immoral or idolatrous (5:26). A husband’s care is grounded in his own self-care/love (versus “self-hate”), as well as Christ’s compassionate care for

²¹²O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 420. O’Brien rightly captures the canonical imagery here: “If they heed this apostolic injunction, husbands will not behave in an overbearing manner. All areas of married life will be characterized by this self-giving love and forgiveness. The original order of the Creator, which was troubled by the rule of sin and self-centeredness, and which ended in the tyranny of eros and the slavery of sex, can be lived in love and forgiveness . . . the imagery from the Old Testament about God’s relationship to Israel stands behind this use of the marriage analogy. In particular, the background to Eph 5:26–27 is probably Ezek 16:1–14, which describes God as caring for, washing, marrying, and adorning his people with splendor.”

²¹³Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 387–88. The use of ἐαυτῶν here (and in 5:33) may allude to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Contra Brownson, Vines, and Gushee, Paul’s vision of new creation redemption in Christ was patterned after and grounded in both Gen 1–2 and God’s character revealed in Old Testament law. See also William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 254.

²¹⁴O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 426.

all the members of his body, the church (5:29).

In 5:31, Paul cites Genesis 2:24 (LXX) as the climatic conclusion of his argument. He reasons that Genesis 2:24 is built upon the foundation of Christ's union with his church.²¹⁵ He argues that τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο is great and Paul's use of μυστήριον should be understood typologically, not simply analogical (contra Brownson), because of Paul's use of μυστήριον in his letter. In Ephesians 1:9, 3:2–9, and 6:19, Paul's use of μυστήριον refers to eschatological fulfillment: (1) of God's will in Christ for creation redemption; (2) of Gentile inclusion in Christ; and, (3) of the gospel. Each of these uses refers to typological connections that are grounded in Old Testament promises which find their fulfillment in Christ. These intertextual developments across the canon find their *telos* in Christ's ministry in the Gospels. The mystery, Paul argues, is not that these themes and promises were absent from the Old Testament, but rather that the promises would be fulfilled *in Christ* (Eph 1:9, 3:6, 5:32).²¹⁶ Paul's teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5 continues his pattern of typological development, demonstrating that Paul understands his interpretation of Genesis 2:24 to be both consistent with authorial intent and eschatological. Marriage, therefore, Paul argues, was given in Genesis 2 in order to demonstrate Christ's one flesh union with his church. The pattern of marriage in Genesis 2 is meant to picture Christ's self-giving, sacrificial, and redemptive love for his bride.

Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, has obeyed the covenant commands of the Lord and his new covenant people share in the blessings of his obedience through covenant

²¹⁵Thielman, *Ephesians*, 389. Thielman argues that both Christ's union with the church and a husband's union with his wife are in view here as fitting with the use of ἀντὶ τούτου, but Christ's union with the church is primary. See also O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 429–30. O'Brien argues that the force of Paul's argument is in the typological connection between Gen 2 marriage and its *telos* in the Christ-church relationship. Thielman and O'Brien are both right, with the primary weight being on the typological fulfillment of Gen 2:24 in Christ, but not to the extent that the immediate context of marital relationships in the Ephesian church is lost.

²¹⁶See a helpful overview of “mystery” in Ephesians in G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 147–97.

(one-flesh) union with him. Now, Christians who are infertile or impotent can fulfill the original creation command in Christ as they produce spiritual “seed” through their faithful proclamation of the gospel. In Christ, Paul could now call himself a father to those who believed his gospel witness though he was a single man (Isa 53:10, 56:3–5; cf. Gal 4:19; Phlm 1:10). The growth of the early church is cast in light of Genesis 1:27 language (cf. Acts 6:7, 12:24) but “multiplication” is now tied to ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in the new covenant (cf. Isa 59:21). The New Testament authors’ repeated echoes of Genesis 1–2 and the Decalogue underscore that God’s vision of marriage has not changed. Paul’s household commands, however, clearly indicate that marriage has not been abolished or redefined in these eschatological last days. Fulfillment has not altered the normative nature of marriage, only its universal demand upon all covenant members. Marriage will reach its consummation in the new creation. While male and female will not be married to one another, Yahweh’s bride will enjoy a permanent, monogamous marriage to their husband and Savior, Jesus Christ.

These biblical realities produce obvious theological and ethical conclusions which will be explored in following chapters. When marriage is understood in terms of its canonical horizon and intertextual developments, it is clear that the exclusive, permanent, and heterosexual nature of the original marital union was intended to image the exclusive, permanent, and complementary nature of the eschatological covenant union between Christ and his church. Despite sin’s effects, God is producing a faithful covenant-keeper (the church) through the work of Christ. Paul’s argument for the Christ-church relationship fulfilling Genesis 2:24 naturally rejects all forms of sexual immorality because of the created order and typological connections. Since Christ shares the same human nature as mankind and is the true image of God, bestiality is prohibited because it is disordered and does not accurately reflect the Christ-church marriage. Since Christ is completely faithful, possesses one bride, and also makes her faithful covenant-keeper by his redemptive work, polygamy, prostitution, adultery, bisexuality, and

fornication are disordered and illegitimate expressions of the one-flesh union because they do not image the Christ-church relationship.

The New Testament development of marriage has not only sharpened the picture of this institution considerably but unfolded God's redemptive and prophetic intentions through the one-flesh union of husband and wife. The fullness of God's progressive revelation has demonstrated that marriage is being fulfilled, not altered, by Christ's new creation work. The *telos* of marriage is not same-sex kinship or celibacy, but the new covenant one-flesh union between Christ and the church. The anticipatory function does not redefine human marriage, nor does it demonstrate that in Christ's first coming human marriage is now to be understood as something other than the structure given in Genesis 1–2 and then reaffirmed after the post-fall in Genesis 9. Marriage has reached its *telos* in Christ, but the new creation has only been inaugurated, not consummated. Until the consummation of the new creation at Christ's return, heterosexual marriage will continue to function as the normative pattern for humanity, as well as the typological and anticipatory sign of Christ's love and oneness with his bride, the church (Mark 12:25; Eph 5:31–33; Rev 21:1–7). A consistent inaugurated eschatology must rightly balance the reality of Christ fulfilling the marriage union in his person and work, while also recognizing that Christians will not see marriage's new creation fulfillment in its totality until Christ returns, the dead are raised, and the new creation is established completely.

The Bible has presented a progressive and escalating unfolding of marriage (1) as, presumably, only a human institution; to (2) Yahweh being a faithful husband to his unfaithful bride, Israel, and promising that he will bring a new covenant to make his bride a faithful covenant-keeper; to (3) Christ, the Son of God incarnate, being a faithful husband to his bride, the church, whom he has made obedient covenant-keepers by their faith union with him. In Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul teaches that marriage was primarily given in order to give a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church. It is a

significant point that this typological relationship is given only in terms of the husband-wife one-flesh union grounded in Genesis 2:24. This image in Ephesians 5 is repeated in Revelation 21:2, indicating that marriage is meant to picture eternal, new creation realities. Therefore, Christ's relationship to his church is meant to point backward to Genesis 1–2 (creation) and forward to Revelation 21 (new creation). As a result, earthly marriages will continue until the full establishment of the new creation because they continue to point forward to the greater reality—namely, Christ and his church.²¹⁷

Contrary to Brownson's claims, typological structures demonstrate that the Bible has a problem with too much "sameness." Though Christ and his church share a one-flesh union, the two parties in this marriage are not identical. Christ shares our human nature and is like us in every way (Heb 2:17), but he is also unlike us because he is the divine Son (Heb 1:2–3). One spouse is the Redeemer and the other spouse is the redeemed. One spouse is the head and the other spouse submits to the head in everything. Same-sex monogamy not only violates the creation order, but it does not accurately reflect the complementarity (similarity/dissimilarity) of the Christ-church relationship. The church is not married to itself because that would be similar to the idolatrous practices that Yahweh condemned in the Old Testament. The church pursuing a marriage partner identical to herself would be reflective of the idolatrous behavior of fallen humanity in Romans 1. Christ came, not for himself, but for his bride (Luke 19:10), and any distortion of marriage ultimately reflects some form of human idolatry. Beale makes this insightful connection between marriage and idolatry:

The Old Testament view of marriage requires strict sexual faithfulness between the wife and husband. Illicit involvement in sex by either mate is a twisting of the marriage ideal and exposes the fractured nature of fallen humanity. Just as Scripture indicates that human marriage points beyond itself to the eschatological marriage between God and his people in the Old Testament, and Christ and believers in the New Testament, so also literal adultery and harlotry are used by biblical writers to

²¹⁷Paul clearly teaches the normative pattern of marriage by virtue of his commands for households in Eph 5 and Col 3.

explain the unfaithfulness of God's people to him as their husband. This background for idolatry enforces the notion already argued that what we are committed to we are joined to and share in its nature in some significant way. This accounts for why people who are committed to the living God reflect his living image and why people committed to the world's dead idols reflect the lifeless nature of those idols.²¹⁸

Same-sex relationships do not reflect the faithful covenant obedience that God has wrought in his people by the Last Adam's new covenant work. Same-sex behavior, monogamous or otherwise, reflects a clear perversion of God's created order, a rejection of the clear commands of Scripture across the biblical covenants, and a distortion of the typological picture that marriage presents of a faithful God and his faithful covenant people. A reader-response understanding of meaning or an appeal to a trajectory hermeneutic not grounded in the biblical text are the only possible means revisionists have to justify same-sex sexual relationships. These hermeneutical commitments, however, are contrary to the Bible's own presentation and categories. As I have shown previously, if one holds to the authority, inspiration, and unity of Scripture, same-sex relationships are consistently and explicitly rejected. Understanding the canon from a biblical-theological perspective allows one to clearly see that same-sex relationships do not accurately depict the normative creation pattern nor do these relationships image Christ and his marriage to the church.

Conclusion

Is the creation account normal or normative? Brownson argues "not necessarily," but many of his arguments for same-sex monogamy assume creation norms. He argues that monogamy, kinship bond, and covenant relationship with God are all normative, but rejects male-female complementarity, procreation, and one-flesh unions as normative. Brownson's selectiveness with regard to the normative attributes of marriage are more reflective of his extratextual commitments than they are of faithful exegesis and biblical theology. Does the Bible speak against too much "sameness"? As I have shown

²¹⁸Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 238–39. See also Ortlund, *God's Unfaithful Wife*.

with the pattern of idolatry and God's marriage to his people, the answer is a resounding "yes."

The normativity of Genesis 1–2 has been clearly outlined in this section as I have examined its textual, epochal, and canonical horizons. The creation account establishes God as the sole Creator of the universe and the autonomous ruler and judge of all reality. God intentionally created male and female with sexual distinctions in order that together, as equal image-bearers, they would fulfill God's command to fill and subdue the earth as his vice-regents. The universality and normativity of marriage is reaffirmed after the fall in the Noahic covenant. Heterosexual marriage is the context in which humanity obeys the creation covenant and Noahic covenant commands, as well as the means through which the promised offspring and redeemer comes. The Old Testament and New Testament demonstrate Adam's particular role as covenant head, representative of all humanity, and *τύπος* of Christ, illustrating again the normative nature of creation structures (including heterosexual marriage). All people everywhere are born "in Adam," possessing his sin nature and receiving the imputation of his guilt as a result of his disobedience (Rom 5:12). The work of Jesus Christ, however, has undone the effects of Adam and made his bride a faithful covenant partner, demonstrating the *telos* of the one-flesh marriage relationship. The one-flesh union possesses a present function (heterosexual marriage and family) and an anticipatory/prophetic function (Christ-church relationship in the new creation). Humanity now lives in the "already/not yet" where the typological function of marriage is understood, but has not yet been fully realized. The prophetic function of marriage has not redefined the institution, but demonstrated new creation realities and how this new creation is breaking into the present world.

In the next chapter, I provide an overview and critique of Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics*, and also offer helpful correctives to covenant theology's tripartite division approach to Christian ethics. I then build upon this chapter's exegetical and biblical-

theological foundation to formulate Christian ethics from a progressive covenantal perspective.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A CONSISTENT SEXUAL ETHIC

Chapters 1 and 2 provided overview of the same-sex marriage debate in present Western culture, critiqued the revisionist's underlying doctrine of Scripture and biblical theology, and presented an evangelical doctrine of Scripture with an overview of progressive covenantalism's understanding of the biblical storyline. Chapter 3 examined Genesis 1–2, as well as the passages common to the same-sex debate in light of the progression of the biblical covenants, the theme of creation-fall-redemption-new creation, and the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of interpretation. The typological (i.e., *christotelic*) nature of marriage was also traced. Exegesis and typology both confirmed that marriage exists as an exclusive, heterosexual, and permanent covenant relationship existing until the new creation. An evangelical doctrine of Scripture, grammatical-historical exegesis, and biblical theology resolutely prohibit same-sex relationships. In this chapter, I examine and critique David Gushee's kingdom ethics. Revisionists consistently criticize covenant theology's use of the tripartite division of the Mosaic law in its rejection of same-sex marriage. I also offer (what I hope will be) a helpful corrective to covenant theology's Christian ethics methodology as it relates to the relationship of the Old Testament law to the Christian. I then outline a progressive covenantal approach to ethics and same-sex marriage. All Scripture, including Old Testament law, must be rightly understood in terms of the Bible's created order, categories, and covenantal structures, as well as how Scripture progressively unfolds and finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Christ. The faithful and consistent work of

Christian ethics is possible only when biblical structures and Scripture's *christotelic* aim are properly understood.

Gushee's Kingdom Ethics

Gushee seeks to ground Christian ethics in Scripture, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. The kingdom of God serves as the starting point for theology and ethics, and Jesus grounds his kingdom vision primarily in the book of Isaiah.¹

Methodology

Gushee outlines twelve "key method elements" (KME) by which Christian ethics are to be identified. These elements, which serve as core components in his methodology, include (1) thinking in concrete terms; (2) reading Jesus from the underside of history; (3) character as a lens for ethics; (4) sources of authority for Christian ethics; (5) four levels and three modes of moral norms; (6) making the Sermon on the Mount central; (7) transforming initiatives; (8) love as a cardinal ethical norm; (9) justice as a cardinal ethical norm; (10) sacredness as cardinal ethical norm; (11) four-box diagram of dimensions of moral agency (analytical); and, (12) four-box diagram (prescriptive).² The characteristics of the kingdom of God are deliverance/salvation, justice, peace, healing, restoration/rebuilding of community, joy, and the experience of God's presence.³ These characteristics, not the timing of the kingdom, are what matter for the doing of Christian ethics.⁴ Gushee argues that ethical decisions should be made based on whatever position

¹David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2016), 4.

²Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 190–91.

³Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 10.

⁴Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 12. It is unclear why Gushee seems to believe that kingdom characteristics and kingdom timing are mutually exclusive. The timing of kingdom inauguration is very important to the discussion of marriage and its typological fulfillment. I will return to this point later in the chap.

enables the greatest participation in the advance of God's kingly reign. Christian ethics must also understand the historical context of Jesus and his ministry in Israel under Roman occupation in order to advance justice for those under unjust power structures. True kingdom realities move a society from authoritarian, patriarchal, monarchical, and hierarchical structures to egalitarian, democratic, and nonsexist ones.⁵ Christian ethics is interested in both being (ontology) and doing (function). Participative (christomorphic) grace and the virtues of the Beatitudes are both necessary components for character formation in Christians. A person should, therefore, pursue the ethical posture that forms and expresses the character prescribed by the Beatitudes, and which best enables participation in the grace of Christ.⁶

Jesus clearly grounded his claims and message in the Old Testament, rejecting those aspects of religious tradition that refused to submit to or clearly contravened Scripture. Gushee surveys other sources of authority in Christian tradition, noting three modern trends: (1) the growing importance of scientific findings in shaping Christian morality; (2) an emphasis on human experience (particularly for LGBT+ persons); and, (3) the focus on character ethics emphasizing the whole person (emotions and embodiment) and recognizing the interpretive authority of the whole faith community (not the individual or church officials).⁷ Gushee has shifted from the Bible being the center around which other sources of authority orbit to Jesus himself being the center around which other sources of authority orbit. This shift occurred, in part, "because Jesus is primarily (though not exclusively) known to us from Scripture."⁸ Gushee argues that

⁵Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 16–20.

⁶Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 21–41.

⁷Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 52–53.

⁸Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 54. Christ is the norm for biblical interpretation at a canonical level, and everything about his person and work serves as the key to interpreting human history and reality.

Scripture must be read and interpreted as Jesus did: prophetically, not merely casuistically, legalistically, or ritualistically. Jesus, like the Old Testament prophets, emphasized love, mercy, and justice, not adherence to cult and law as a substitute for moral integrity. This emphasis was, in part, because Jesus interpreted the old covenant as a gracious covenant, not as “law” and oppressive burden.⁹ The ethical hermeneutic must work in the following order: (1) look first to Jesus in his person and work; (2) read all Scripture prophetically as Jesus read; and, (3) look to other sources of moral authority for help in this prophetic grid, understanding that Jesus is still alive and continues to instruct the church through the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Like Matthew Vines, Gushee argues that Christians who rightly interpret Jesus will be known by their fruit.

Moral norms are understood and applied by attention to deontological (just and fair), teleological (effective), and characterological (virtuous) means. In a particular ethical situation, these three models are examined from four levels: situationist, rule-oriented, principlist, and basic convictions. Sin and brokenness have certainly affected and complicated ethical decisions, necessitating continual reflection, reformation, and repentance in our ethical judgments.¹¹ The Sermon on the Mount is the central lens through which Christian ethics must be derived and applied. Matthew’s Gospel, Gushee argues, gives a threefold pattern for the Sermon’s transformative effect on the believer: (1) transforming the person who is in sin; (2) transforming the relationship between involved parties; and, (3) transforming enemies into friends.¹² Matthew presents Jesus

⁹Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 55–58. Gushee appeals to a Jewish scholar, Geza Vermes, who argues that personal piety, the heart, and “root causes” were the focus of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ disposition towards the cultic aspects of the old covenant were largely negative, and “he criticized temple practices as strongly as the prophets had done.” Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 56.

¹⁰Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 61.

¹¹Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 77–85.

¹²Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 96.

addressing traditional righteousness (whether it was Old Testament law or tradition), examining the sin pattern, and commanding the transformative initiative. Gushee rightly argues that Jesus calls Christians to grace which transforms the person, delivers the person from sin, and characterizes the inauguration of God’s reign on earth through Christ.¹³

Love, justice, and sacredness are the norms of Christian ethics, and Christ’s love presented in the Sermon on the Mount is defined by compassionately meeting people in bondage, working towards their deliverance, inviting them into a free, just, and responsible community, and confronting those who exclude others. Gushee argues that Matthew 5:48 cannot be teaching that Christians are to be as morally perfect as God, because that is an impossibility. Instead, Christians are called to be as inclusive and loving towards their enemies as the Heavenly Father is inclusive and loving. Therefore, Gushee rejects translating τέλειος in Matthew 5:48 (“ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν”) as “perfect,” but rather “complete or all-inclusive” (his translation: “be completely all-embracing, as your heavenly Father is completely all-embracing”).¹⁴ He argues that biblical love invites people into community, and “love” that excludes clearly violates Christ’s teaching and is antithetical to the love of God shown in the cross, the supreme manifestation of Christ’s love for his enemies.¹⁵

¹³Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 104.

¹⁴Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 122. Gushee cites Allison on this point, but it does not appear that Allison would affirm his translation or agree with his contention. See Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 127–28. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 160–61; R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 210–12.

¹⁵Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 122–24. Interestingly, Gushee argues that all of the classical atonement theories have biblical meaning in the cross, including penal substitution, and proposes his own incarnational atonement theology. His description of the human problem and God’s response at the cross are very similar to J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011); and, N. T. Wright, “The Cross and the Caricatures: A Response to Robert Jenson, Jeffrey John, and a New Volume Entitled Pierced for Our Transgressions,” April 2007, accessed May 25,

Closely tied to this idea of inclusive love is Gushee's argument for justice. Justice cannot be reduced simply to retributive justice, but rather understood prophetically. Jesus speaks against the temple system because it served both as a front for political power and oppression, as well as a false hope in the midst of injustice.¹⁶ Sacredness of human life is also centered in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The *imago Dei* was marred, but not lost, in the fall. It finds its fulfillment, repair, and restoration in the *imago Christi*. Gushee argues, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that the incarnation has restored the image of God in all of humanity, regardless of their faith or unbelief. Any attack on a person is now an attack on Christ himself.¹⁷ The church and the world have the full image of God, but it is the church alone who gazes at the unveiled Christ, while the world's gaze at Christ leads to its destruction. Gushee states, "The church is instead that community that goes ahead of the rest of humanity in *seeing realities that others do not yet see, and behaving accordingly*."¹⁸

The final two elements of Gushee's methodology involve the four dimensions of moral agency (i.e., the four-box diagram). He acknowledges the dangers of postmodern deconstruction and poststructuralism, but contends that postmodernism has been helpful in giving voices to the oppressed and marginalized. Gushee argues that postmodernism has rightly pushed back on the West's overemphasis on individualism and preferences, often expressed in churches in racial and cultural homogeneity. This complex problem of homogeneity often leads to self-deception, distrust of authority, and

2018, <http://www.virtueonline.org/cross-and-caricatures-tom-wright>, accessed 5/25/18. From Gushee's brief section, it does not appear that he believes that God is both the subject and object of the atonement.

¹⁶Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 128–30.

¹⁷Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 165; See also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 4:285. This idea is confused because Gushee has argued that humanity did not lose the *imago Dei*. Bonhoeffer argues it was completely lost, but then completely regained by Christ.

¹⁸Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 166. By so doing, Gushee contends, the church will change the world.

subjective relativism. Desiring to model the ethical process of Jesus, Gushee proposes ethics as an incarnational discipleship that is holistic in its approach to moral agency. This holistic approach includes a four-box diagram which proposes ethical dilemmas to be passed through four dimensions: (1) way of seeing; (2) way of reasoning; (3) embodied context; and, (4) basic convictions.¹⁹ Reasoning must be understood as a function of the embodied person. Basic convictions are formed from proper views of the natures of God and man, forgiveness and discipleship, Christlikeness and justice, and the mission of the church. The embodied context is the right application of passions, mimetic virtue, community, and ultimate loyalties. In order to do ethics, one must see the (moral) world rightly. Perception of powers, threats, social change, and truthfulness are all crucial in how people perceive an ethical issue or action. This four-box diagram helps to counteract an overemphasis, in this sinful (and postmodern) world, on possessing *the* biblical or Christian worldview for Christian ethics. The new creation is a future hope, and until then, this four-dimensional project helps to live ethically and realistically in the present world.

The Ethics of Same-Sex Marriage

Gushee applies this Christian ethics methodology to the issues of gender and same-sex marriage. Gushee conflates complementarity and patriarchy, arguing that patriarchy “places women in an inferior, subordinate, or supplementary role to men.”²⁰ Not only are male and female social roles culturally-constructed (thereby making them malleable), but recent sociological and psychological studies have cast suspicion on the nature of the male/female binary gender distinction itself. Religious communities who communicate their own norms (both cultural and divine) will make the lives of non-

¹⁹Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 173.

²⁰Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 236.

binary persons miserable. Therefore, Gushee contends that societies that allow greater freedom in gender identity and self-expression will lead to less suffering for gender- and sexual-non-conformists, which seems good for those minorities who follow Jesus (KME 4). Most churches angrily demand order, grounding this order in nature or divine command. The early church's inclusion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, however, follows the example of Jesus who offered a place in God's kingdom for the previously excluded and oppressed. Gushee exhorts the church to move compassionately to and stand with those who are marginalized and different.²¹ Gushee addresses gender, patriarchy, and complementarity issues first to lay the groundwork for marriage and same-sex relationships.

Gushee notes the dramatic shift in public opinion in the United States towards LGBT people and same-sex relationships. He argues, along with James Brownson and Vines, that the ancient Christian tradition did not appear to have had a moral category for homosexual persons (i.e., same-sex orientation), nor did it have a category for sexual identity.²² Gushee argues that traditionalists have derived doctrine "from a small number of passages in the Bible," to condemn same-sex sexual acts as a rejection of God's creation design. Gushee admits that many revisionists are not satisfied with moderate traditionalists who argue for the inclusion of LGBT people in churches but reject same-sex relationships. These revisionists (e.g., Vines) argue that church membership, ordination, marital blessing, and the exercise of spiritual gifts should be extended in their fullness to monogamous same-sex couples and gay Christians.

²¹Gushee is not clear on how the local church ought to perform this act. He does not mention faith and repentance, nor does he mention church membership. Unfortunately, he has not defined compassion or solidarity in biblical/covenantal terms. In his example of Acts 8, Gushee does not mention the gospel, nor does he address the stark differences between a eunuch and a sexual non-conformist.

²²Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 265.

Gushee argues that gay Christians are being excluded from kingdom community (KME 1), feel oppressed (KME 2), and are treated unjustly (KME 9). Gay Christians are not persuaded that they are being loved when they are treated differently (KME 8), nor do they feel valued without full recognition (KME 10). Gay Christians argue that straight privilege naturally prohibits straight Christians from seeing the situation rightly or with empathy (KME 11–12). All forms of traditionalist theology excludes, bullies, rejects, and causes other negative results for same-sex Christians (KME 6). This activity hurts gay Christians and traditionalists (KME 3). Revisionists contend that wholeness and life for gay Christians can only come through full acceptance of the revisionist stance (KME 7). Jesus would give them a full embrace (KME 4), not second-class friendship.²³ Gushee examines the traditionalist side, and admits that several of his KME are also affected if traditionalists are rejected. Calling this issue a “titanic clash of perspectives,” Gushee does not propose a clear solution for his readers. Elsewhere, Gushee contends that same-sex marriage is not primarily an issue of Christian sexual ethics, but primarily an issue of human suffering. Gushee ties same-sex monogamy to unjust suffering, similar to the historic suffering of Jews during the Holocaust and African-Americans during the civil rights movement. He argues that the debate has distracted traditionalists from the primary command of Jesus—love, particularly towards the vulnerable.²⁴ He argues that he believes that same-sex sexual relationships are permissible only in the context of covenant because of (1) evidence in the lives of LGBT people (i.e., experience); and, (2) research and mental health advancements (i.e., modern

²³Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 267.

²⁴David P. Gushee, “I’m an Evangelical Minister. I Now Support the LGBT Community — and the Church Should, Too,” *Washington Post*, November 4, 2014, accessed July 2, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/11/04/im-an-evangelical-minister-i-now-support-the-lgbt-community-and-the-church-should-too/>.

science).²⁵ Gushee has previously asserted that traditionalists who only receive celibate gays, and not gay couples, into membership are “in the difficult position of enforcing [this view]—across the entire life of the congregation, if they are to be consistent.”²⁶ While Gushee once believed there were many options on this issue for churches,²⁷ it now appears that he believes there is no neutrality on the issue—you are either for the full rights of LGBT people or your discriminatory views will be left behind.²⁸

Critique of Kingdom Ethics

Gushee rightly argues that the Old and New Testaments must be understood in light of the person and work of Christ. He astutely notes the grace inherent to the covenant with Israel and rejects an oversimplified law/grace distinction between the old and new covenants. He is also correct to read Christ’s work in light of the inauguration of God’s kingdom. Gushee’s work is even-handed, gracious, and rightly zeroes in on understanding Genesis 1–2 and biblical theology to be the most important interpretive components in the same-sex marriage debate. Gushee’s kingdom ethics, however, remains unpersuasive for several reasons.

Gushee’s extratextual grid. First and foremost, while Gushee attempts to ground his kingdom ethics in Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, his ethical framework and conclusions fail to properly situate Christ’s person and work in light of the Bible’s own covenantal structures and categories. Gushee is correct to appeal to the Sermon on the

²⁵David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017), 43.

²⁶Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 42. Gushee does not clearly or explicitly state why this enforcement would be difficult in the life of a congregation.

²⁷Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 37–42.

²⁸David Gushee, “On LGBT Equality, Middle Ground Is Disappearing,” *Religion News Service*, August 22, 2016, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://religionnews.com/2016/08/22/on-lgbt-equality-middle-ground-is-disappearing/>.

Mount as part of the process for formulating ethical conclusions, but the Gospel of Matthew does not present Christ's teaching and instruction in the Sermon on the Mount in a redemptive or covenantal vacuum. Rather, Matthew consistently presents Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament patterns, promises, structures, and offices.²⁹ By removing the Sermon on the Mount from the categories, structures, and storyline of Scripture, Gushee tries to discuss how Christ is the fulfillment of the covenant promises. But in doing so, he distorts the biblical concepts of love and justice because his discussion is unhinged from the Bible's own presentation and teaching. Christ's fulfillment of Old Testament sexual laws does not entail that his obedience to the created order and Old Testament law negates their relevance or applicability to Christians today because Jesus argues that he has not come to abolish Old Testament law, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17–20). Rather, Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament does mean that Christians must now understand how God's good created order and Old Testament law are carried over into the new covenant age in light of the person and work of Christ.

Implicit to Gushee's contention that misogyny and patriarchy undergird much of the Old Testament (including the old covenant law) is the idea(s) that the Son of God's redemptive work is sufficiently disconnected from this patriarchal old creation and/or it seeks to undo these sinful aspects of old covenant law (cf. Rom 7:7–12). Since Gushee's ethical framework assumes the abrogation of the normative created order and Old Testament law (i.e., sexual laws) rather than carefully unpacking how they find their redemptive *telos* in Jesus Christ, Gushee must apply an extratextual grid to the Sermon on the Mount. His extratextual framework, however, divorces "justice" and "love" from their covenantal contexts by importing definitions of "justice" and "love" consistent with twenty-first century Western progressivism.

²⁹France, *Matthew*, 193–97. These categories would include the Last Adam, New Exodus, True Israel, and many others.

For example, Gushee argues that Christ’s inclusive love and justice led him to speak against the temple system and its oppressive powers. This assertion is misplaced, however, because Christ came to fulfill temple and priesthood promises, not condemn them. Gushee confuses the abusive practices of false teachers and leaders with the temple itself. Christ’s judgment against unfaithful covenant-keepers in the temple (Mark 11:15–19) mirrors Jeremiah’s judgement against unfaithful covenant-keepers in Israel who trusted that the temple would keep them free from the covenant curses that their unrepentant disobedience warranted.³⁰ Christ came as the true and better temple and sacrifice, but his typological fulfillment of these systems only serves to heighten the demand of faithfulness required from his new covenant people. Christ as the true temple does not now excuse sexual immorality, but rather increases the demand for purity (cf. Matt 5:8, 27–30, 48). In fact, Jesus strongly rebukes the history of Israel’s false teachers who have led God’s covenant people away from sexual purity, justice for orphans and widows, and faith-filled love for Yahweh (Mark 12:1–12; cf. Isa 3:13–15, 5:1–7). Gushee’s confusion turns the Sermon on the Mount on its head and undermines his entire argument. It is revisionists, not traditionalists, who are being judged by Christ’s Old Testament-dependent teaching because Christ himself is the terminus of its supposed “patriarchal” teaching. Those who engage in same-sex sexual relationships while proclaiming trust in the “all-inclusive love” of Jesus bear significant resemblance to the unbelieving Israelites who trusted in the temple building while simultaneously rebelling

³⁰Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 471. See also R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 446. France notes the parallelism between Mark 11 and Jer 7, including predictions of temple destruction from both prophets. Israel believed that they could live in defiance of the covenant requirements and God would still protect them because of the temple’s presence. The problem in both passages (which Gushee partially misinterprets) is not the temple system but the people themselves. Jer 7:9–10 lists idolatry and sexual immorality as reasons for Israel suffering the curse. Yahweh uses the same word *הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת* (“abominations”) to describe Israel’s sexual sin and idolatry in Jer 7:10 as he did in describing the prohibited homosexual acts in Lev 18:22 and 20:13.

against God’s covenant commands. Idolatry and its corresponding acts, including same-sex sexual behavior, merit God’s curse. Revisionists are professing trust in the new temple, Christ, to redeem them while also commending and actively participating in that behavior which God has unequivocally condemned throughout Scripture. The clear biblical evidence is that God’s love in and for the church is exclusive, not some form of universalism or inclusivism (Matt 18:17–20; Eph 5:25–32; Rev 19–21).³¹ Gushee’s distorted interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount rejects its biblical context, and as a result, concludes with sexual ethics that are the polar opposite of Jesus’ actual teachings.

Gushee is certainly correct to argue for love, justice, and sacredness as important aspects in Christian ethics, but his definitions of those terms are completely disconnected from biblical categories as well as the progression of the storyline through the biblical covenants.³² Gushee fails to understand “love” and “justice” because he fails to properly situate those terms in their canonical context. Love and justice must first be understood in light of the creation covenant and fall, as well as rightly traced across the unfolding Old Testament covenants so that one can understand the true and biblically-consistent prophetic nature of Christ’s work. In other words, terms like love, justice, and sacredness must be biblically defined and covenantally understood, particularly in light of Christ’s fulfillment of the creation command as the obedient Adam and promised Redeemer. As the Last Adam, Christ is undoing the effects of sin and calling his people back to covenant faithfulness to God, including in their expression of human sexuality.

Jesus consistently and prophetically called God’s people to be faithful to their covenant (Mark 1:14–15). Christ’s new covenant work made his people’s covenant

³¹Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 470–71.

³²Why those three qualities are paramount for KME, while other qualities are not, is not immediately clear. Gushee’s list seems arbitrary, particularly when those terms are not understood in terms of covenantal contexts. Holiness, faith, purity, obedience, etc. are not considered cardinal elements for Gushee’s KME list.

faithfulness possible, it did not call them to celebrate unrepentant sin in their midst. Jesus certainly loved sinners, sought to free the oppressed, and liberate captives, but while Gushee rightly contends that Jesus must be understood in light of the prophetic tradition, this prophetic tradition, however, is consistently presented as calling people back to obedience to God's covenant commands, including the sexual laws. Therefore, social justice must always be understood in terms of obedience to God's revealed will in the covenant relationship and structure being examined.³³ Christ's work of the new exodus and atonement, like his gospel call, is first and foremost a call to repentance and faith. A call to repent of same-sex sexual behavior, rightly understood, is not an act of oppression, but rather an offer of liberation (Gal 5:1). It does not follow that calling people in sexually immoral relationships to repent is a form of oppression. Instead, Scripture calls all people everywhere to repent of immoral heterosexual relationships, same-sex sexual relationships, polygamous relationships, incestuous relationships, bestial relationships, pedophilia, or any other form of sexual immorality in order that they might have life and experience true sexuality through the means of God's ordained marriage relationship. True freedom is cast in terms of being a slave to obedience and righteousness (Rom 6:17–18), sexual purity (1 Cor 6:9–20), and holiness (Matt 5:48).³⁴ LGBT claims of insult and injury may be warranted in many local cases in recent church history, but oppression and discrimination are not the same as interpretive disagreements. Revisionist claims of

³³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 433–34.

³⁴Gushee argues that moral perfection is not in view here, but rather inclusive love. Gushee misses Matthew's intertextual reference here to Lev 19:2 ("You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy"). See Carson, *Matthew*, 160–61. τέλειός in Matt 5:48 should be understood in terms of "perfection" and "completion" (cf. Deut 18:13, rendered "blameless"), not all-inclusive love that knowingly invites and endorses sexual immorality. Carson rightly states, "In the light of the preceding verses (17–47), Jesus is not saying that the true direction in which the law has always pointed is not toward mere judicial restraints, concessions arising out of the hardness of men's hearts, still less casuistical perversions, nor even to the 'law of love.' No, it pointed rather to all the perfection of God, exemplified by the authoritative interpretation of the law bound up in the preceding antitheses. This perfection Jesus' disciples must emulate if they are truly followers of him who fulfills the Law and the Prophets (v. 17)." Carson, *Matthew*, 161. New covenant union with Christ is the means by which this verse must be understood and obeyed.

oppression and Christ's liberation must be understood and unpacked in terms of the Bible's own categories, not twenty-first century American social and political terms. Christ's exhortations in the Sermon on the Mount did not lower the sexual standards of Israel's law, but rather intensified and escalated them so that new covenant believers who live under God's rule would be clearly distinct from the surrounding world (Matt 5:27–30; 1 Pet 2:9–12; cf. Lev 18:24–30).³⁵ The Sermon on the Mount does not simply outline standards for discipleship, but also demonstrates how Christ himself is the τέλος of Scripture.³⁶

A canon within a canon. Gushee also argues that the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, must be the hermeneutical lens through which all other biblical passages are understood. This idea, while appearing correct at first glance, actually produces a “canon with a canon” that skews biblical interpretation. Gushee regularly casts the passages in this same-sex debate in light of the misogyny and patriarchal structures present in the cultures of the Old and New Testament authors, implying the inability of authors to get beyond their cultural biases and downplaying the text's force for the current debate. D. A. Carson has warned elsewhere against this interpretive practice, arguing that a scholar (i.e., Gushee) who rejects parts of the canon as “unworthy, historically inaccurate, mutually contradictory or the like, and adopt[s] only certain parts of the Scripture . . . reduces in one way or another to the question of the truthfulness and authority of Scripture.”³⁷ It is only the all-inclusive, loving Jesus of the Gospels who is able to liberate those people who are oppressed by patriarchy and the

³⁵France, *Matthew*, 164.

³⁶France, *Matthew*, 165–205.

³⁷D. A. Carson, “A Sketch of the Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate in Cross-Cultural Contexts,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 21.

temple system of the first century. Gushee consistently fails to do justice to the Sermon on the Mount's canonical context. He casts the prophetic work of Christ in social-progressive terms which are completely foreign to the Old Testament categories of justice and righteousness tied to covenant faithfulness. Gushee argues that the Sermon on the Mount must be the lens through which ethical situations are adjudicated, but his overemphasis here leads to a tunnel vision that distorts the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as to the other relevant biblical passages in the same-sex marriage debate. Taking this point one step further, however, demonstrates a more serious underlying issue. Gushee's treatment of the Sermon on the Mount as a canon within a canon magnifies his errors in ethical formulation because his canonically-divorced interpretation of Jesus' teaching is the only foundation upon which he makes theological conclusions about marriage. In other words, Gushee makes his wrong view of the Sermon on the Mount the sole lens through which he reads and interprets the rest of the canon. Gushee's tremendous error at this point unfolds as his faulty biblical-theological framework produces a faulty (and myopic) hermeneutic lens which then leads to disastrous theological and ethical conclusions.

The authority of experience and science. Gushee's redefinition of biblical terms (e.g., love, justice) is distorted by his overemphasis on human experience and modern psychology because he has defined these concepts apart from biblical teaching and categories. Gushee does not define love and justice by examining the character of God, understanding covenant faithfulness and obedience, and making distinctions between God's love for the world and the elect. In fact, Gushee does not spend much time at all defining God's holiness, just wrath against sin, or the implications for humanity. He does not mention that Scripture defines "the word pair 'justice-righteousness' both as an *expression* for social justice and as a *summary* of the

covenant/Torah.”³⁸ Gushee’s emphasis on the love of God, understood largely through the lens of LGBT experience, does not adequately balance the biblical truths that “God is love” (1 John 4:8 ESV) and “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29 ESV). In fact, both statements of God’s character are intimately tied to obedience to God’s commands, acceptable and reverent worship, and a rejection of sexual immorality and idolatry. Rather, Gushee examines love and justice in light of LGBT experience and the APA’s research on sexual orientation. His contention that Christ’s call for social justice was primarily against the domination and cruelty of political and temple structures more faithfully reflects the naturalistic views of Bultmann, not Christ’s work in redemptive history.³⁹ While experience and science are certainly important and bear some authority, both must be interpreted in light of the plain sense of Scripture, with careful attention to authorial intent, literary devices, and genre (cf. Gal 1:8). As Carson has warned, any presupposition that “comes to mean something like ‘immutable non-negotiables,’ a function of an entire world view at odds with Scripture, then Scripture can never enjoy the right to call such ‘pre-understanding’ into question.”⁴⁰ The conclusion that sexual orientation is immutable (i.e., the only possible solution for a same-sex attracted person is same-sex monogamy) downplays the suffering Jesus promised to his disciples (Mark 8:34–38, 9:42–50; Luke 18:26–30) and is clearly opposed by Paul (Rom 6; 1 Cor 6:9–20). The superiority of the new covenant is manifest precisely at this point: God makes everyone in the new covenant community faithful covenant-keepers by virtue of the

³⁸Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 578.

³⁹Carson, “Sketch of Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate,” 14. See also Peter T. O’Brien, “Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, 110–50.

⁴⁰Carson, “Sketch of Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate,” 13. This “pre-understanding” is different from mental baggage that every person brings to the text, and which the text can correct in the humble reader. The pre-understanding of sexual orientation that Gushee proposes “leads to epistemological solipsism and a complete inability to hear any word from God with which we cannot agree. It becomes a way of denying, through the back door as it were, the authority of Scripture over our lives.”

forgiveness, new hearts, and new minds won by Christ (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 7:22–8:13), which stands in stark contrast to revisionist claims that same-sex sexual attraction is God’s gift or is beyond the scope of God’s redemptive power.

An overemphasis on transformative encounters. Gushee’s argument for an existential leap is both erroneous and problematic. This idea is compounded by his contention that the biblical authors were ignorant of sexual orientation, and therefore, Christ brought a transformative encounter by the Spirit through a new paradigm leap. Carson rightly criticizes misappropriations of biblical themes to make theological points without also examining their intra-canonical relationships and covenant shifts.⁴¹ Gushee’s appropriation of Webb’s trajectory hermeneutic to make this point from Acts 10 is unpersuasive and unfaithful to the canonical context of Acts 10.⁴² What is the biblical basis for inclusion into the people of God today? God’s plan since creation was for his presence and glory to spread to the ends of the earth through Adam’s offspring (Gen 1:27–28, 3:15). After the fall, the basis for inclusion into God’s people has always been faith in Yahweh, repentance, and submission to covenant stipulations (Exod 12:49; Isa 56:6–7; Matt 28:18–20; Rom 4). Gentile inclusion in Acts 10 was not a transformative paradigm leap divorced from authorial intent, but rather a fulfillment of Old Testament promises given repeatedly in the prophets and consistent with the biblical pattern (e.g., Gen 22:17–18; Isa 49:1–7, 56:1–8). Peter was not presenting a new reading of Scripture, but a *right* reading of Scripture’s promises in light of Christ. The basis for Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples in Luke 24:25–27 was their failure to read the Scriptures rightly in light of Christ as its τέλος. Gushee’s appeal to an existential leap by the Spirit actually undermines a hermeneutical submission to the closed biblical canon.

⁴¹Carson, “Sketch of Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate,” 24–27.

⁴²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 106–11.

Covenant Theology

Covenant theology and its ethical framework will be briefly examined because Vines, Brownson, and Gushee all level critiques against covenant theology's use of old covenant law to prohibit same-sex sexual relationships. In particular, revisionists critique traditionalists who appeal to Old Testament law (i.e., Lev 18 and 20) as a grounding for new covenant ethics. Revisionists also reject any division in the old covenant between moral, civil, and ceremonial elements, arguing that this division is an imposition on the text. Those critiques rightly expose a weakness in covenant theology's biblical-theological framework that needs to be addressed in the present debate. There is no question that covenant theology comes to the right conclusion in the same-sex marriage debate, but the consistency in how covenant theology gets to that correct conclusion is disputed. While covenant theology and progressive covenantalism share many similarities, the methodological differences between them highlight underlying differences in biblical theology understanding that affect the process of theological and ethical formulation.

Methodology

Covenant theology's tripartite division of the law distinguishes between moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects of the old covenant law. This threefold division has an extensive history in church tradition, at least to Thomas Aquinas.⁴³ As a system, it rightly seeks to make faithful distinctions within the Mosaic law (Matt 23:23). Philip Ross labors

⁴³See Philip S. Ross, *From the Finger of God: The Biblical and Theological Basis for the Threefold Division of the Law* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2010), 1–50. See also D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and the New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 429n108. On dating the tripartite division to Aquinas, Carson writes, "This is not to deny that one can find the tripartite distinction in Origen, Jerome, and others. But Thomas was the one who fleshed out the tripartite structure as the fundamental basis for establishing the lines of continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments." D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment," 429n108.

to demonstrate that the Decalogue was not a new law, but the principles were present in Genesis and self-understood. John Frame argues that the Decalogue may be seen as a republication of the creation ordinances, now contextually applied to the nation of Israel.⁴⁴ The Ten Commandments reflected God's eternal, ever-binding moral law.⁴⁵ The Decalogue's prominence as the preface to the old covenant and its coherent framework for understanding the rest of the complex law covenant lend themselves to seeing the Ten Commandments as a summary of God's will.⁴⁶ While the Decalogue informed the rest of the covenant law, discriminations between "pattern" law and "statutes and ordinances" were transparent in the Pentateuch itself, demonstrating the law's division into parts.⁴⁷ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* states that the ceremonial law is related to the Levitical priesthood, sacrificial system, and clean/purity laws, and that the civil law adjudicates crimes in Israel that necessitated punishment by or penalties from the state.⁴⁸ The Decalogue, as God's eternal moral law, is binding upon Christians today, while the civil and ceremonial aspects of the law have been abrogated. While the Decalogue is ever-binding, the law must nonetheless be interpreted in light of today's context. The application of the Decalogue may be different today but it will be analogous, and the obligations of the law must be kept however contextually applied.⁴⁹ Significant continuity

⁴⁴John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2008), 203.

⁴⁵Ross, *From the Finger of God*, 51–119; Willem A. VanGemeren, "Response to Douglas Moo," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 378–79.

⁴⁶VanGemeren, "Response to Moo," 379.

⁴⁷Ross, *From the Finger of God*, 92–115.

⁴⁸Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 213–14. Frame is not entirely satisfied with this outline, arguing that law in the new covenant must first be examined for its normativity. If normative and not abrogated, the law is deemed moral, not ceremonial.

⁴⁹Frame, 204–5. Theonomy, on the other hand, sees Old Testament civil law as the perfect model for civil governments for all cultures. There is debate in covenant theology over the extent of the civil law's applicability to nations today. For a theonomic approach, see Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Theonomic

between the old and new covenants is due to the one covenant of grace across redemptive history.

Same-Sex Ethics

Covenant theology's general approach to same-sex relationships is straightforward. Same-sex behavior, as has been mentioned already, is universally condemned throughout Scripture. Covenant theology sees the primary problem of same-sex sexual relationships in its violation of the seventh commandment—"You shall not commit adultery" (Exod 20:14 ESV).⁵⁰ The Ten Commandments are still valid today and Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 serve as precise interpretations of the moral foundational requirements present in the seventh commandment.⁵¹ Attempts to identify these prohibitions as ceremonial law and no longer applicable for Christians today misunderstand the anticipatory element in the ceremonial law.⁵² Sexual differentiation is clearly found in Genesis 1:27, presented as an aspect of the image of God, and necessary for marriage and obedience to the creation command (Gen 1:28).⁵³ The marriage covenant is an image of the divine covenant and God commands human sexuality to be expressed solely in the marriage relationship. A same-sex sexual relationship is adulterous if one or both parties are married, and if not married, it is a clear violation of the created order. Also, same-sex relationships do not image the relationship between

Reformed Approach to Law and Gospel," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, 93–143.

⁵⁰Greg L. Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub., 1978), 36; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 757.

⁵¹Bahnsen, *Homosexuality*, 36.

⁵²Bahnsen, *Homosexuality*, 38–41. Bahnsen contends that same-sex relationships do not possess any eschatological anticipation for the person and work of Christ. Moreover, Bahnsen contends that the death penalty places this sin in the moral category of the law.

⁵³Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 748.

Christ and the church because there is no distinction between the partners.⁵⁴ Same-sex sexual relationships, covenant theologians contend, are totally outside the bounds of biblical teaching.

Revisionist Critiques

Revisionist offer a few substantial critiques of covenant theology's approach to ethics. First, Gushee and Vines both argue that the Old Testament itself does not distinguish between moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects of the law; rather, covenant theology's tripartite division serves as an extratextual grid imposed on Scripture.⁵⁵ The Israelites viewed all of the old covenant as moral law, including mixed fabric in clothing.⁵⁶ Brownson contends that Paul and the New Testament rarely distinguished between aspects of the law, but rather viewed the law as a unified whole (cf. Rom 3:19, 6:14). The continuity and categorization of the Sabbath, which is grounded in the Decalogue itself, is disputed.⁵⁷ Second, and related to the first, Vines disputes the consistency of covenant theology's framework in designating certain laws as moral, civil, and ceremonial, arguing instead that one should affirm or abrogate all Old Testament

⁵⁴Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 759.

⁵⁵Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 70. Gushee argues "Any differentiation of authority in terms of categories of Old Testament legal materials is foreign to the materials themselves. And no clear delineation along these lines is offered in the New Testament." Gushee builds his case from the exegetical work of Martin Noth, *Leviticus*, Old Testament Library, trans. J. E. Anderson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 16.

⁵⁶Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 82.

⁵⁷James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2013), 182–83. Brownson points out that since Israel did not believe the Sabbath command applied to Gentiles, this conviction raises the question of the Sabbath's status as moral law. Also, Paul seems to abrogate the Sabbath command in Rom 14:7, though there are several possible interpretations. See Ross, *From the Finger of God*; D. A. Carson, "The Tripartite Division of the Law: A Review of Philip Ross, *The Finger of God*," in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 2013), 223–36.

sexual laws as a unified whole, particularly since Leviticus 18–20 is presented as one literary unit. Vines contends that Levitical sexual laws are not different in nature from other old covenant laws that have been abrogated, but Christians who prohibit same-sex sexual relationships do not regard the law’s prohibition of sex during a wife’s menstrual period as sinful (Lev 18:19).⁵⁸ If certain Old Testament moral laws are binding, Gushee asks, why is the application of their penalties not binding also?⁵⁹ Revisionists argue that there is a lack of consistency in this framework, and this inconsistency has contributed to the church’s discriminatory attitudes toward gay Christians. Third, the unified law-covenant, Brownson argues, “no longer fundamentally determines the relationship to God of those who are ‘in Christ.’”⁶⁰ Christians do not relate to God via the old covenant, but the old covenant is now understood in light of its Christocentric purposes.⁶¹ The center of Brownson’s contention seems to be a rejection of the unifying covenant of grace that provides significant continuity between the old and new covenants.

Progressive Covenantalism

Having outlined and critiqued Gushee’s *Kingdom Ethics*, given a general overview of covenant theology’s approach to ethics, and summarized revisionist critiques to the tripartite division of the law, I will now outline the progressive covenantal approach to Christians ethics. There are several overlaps between covenant theology and progressive covenantalism, and as stated previously, both systems come to the same conclusions regarding same-sex relationships and the nature of marriage. I have given an overview of progressive covenantalism’s biblical framework and applied this framework,

⁵⁸Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 83.

⁵⁹Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 70.

⁶⁰Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 182.

⁶¹Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 43–61.

along with two other hermeneutical lenses, to the relevant biblical passages in the present debate. I will now put forth a progressive covenantal approach to Christian sexual ethics, critiquing revisionists while also examining their three critiques to covenant theology's methodology. In so doing, my aims are to refute revisionist allowances for same-sex marriage, as well as to provide helpful correctives to covenant theology's approach to Christian ethics.

Methodology

Progressive covenantalism contends that Scripture does not present a three-fold division within the old covenant as the basis for determining what is morally binding on Christians today.⁶² Rather, progressive covenantalism argues that all of Scripture, understood in light of God's nature and his *christotelic* progressive revelation, serves as the basis for determining what is morally binding on Christians today (i.e., the law of Christ). First, covenant theologians argue that the tripartite division is derived from an *a posteriori* examination of the biblical text, but their theological conclusions often demonstrate an *a priori* grid applied to the canon.⁶³ The issue of the Sabbath is a common example of this extratextual grid.⁶⁴ An example relevant to Christian sexual ethics is the prohibition against sex during a woman's menstrual period (Lev 18:19). Covenant theologians have traditionally understood this command to be a part of the abrogated

⁶²This methodology is clearly outlined in Stephen J. Wellum, "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," in *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016), 215–33. I will not revisit every point in detail that Wellum makes in his chap. I will, however, seek to apply his methodology to the same-sex marriage debate.

⁶³See Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment," 429; Wellum, "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," 225.

⁶⁴Douglas J. Moo, "Response to Willem A. VanGemeren," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, 88. For a detailed defense of a progressive covenantal perspective on the Sabbath, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Good-Bye and Hello: The Sabbath Command for New Covenant Believers," in *Progressive Covenantalism*, 159–88. See also D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000).

ceremonial aspect of the law, though Vines rightly notes that Leviticus 20:18 demanded the guilty parties to be “cut off from among their people” (ESV).⁶⁵ Since this prohibition is mentioned twice alongside serious sexual offenses (Lev 18:19; 20:18) and its punishment is severe, the context seems to connote that this particular offense had a strong moral bent. Therefore, covenant theology’s ceremonial designation is inappropriate here. If it is a part of the moral law, are Christians therefore forbidden from sexual intercourse during a wife’s menstrual period? Preston Sprinkle believes so, but his argument is not compelling.⁶⁶ The extratextual grid of the tripartite division produces hermeneutical and ethical problems for Christians today, particularly in the same-sex marriage debate.

Second, the old covenant was presented as a unified and temporary covenant given to Israel which found its τέλος in Christ.⁶⁷ Consequently, the Decalogue, when

⁶⁵Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 83. Vines’ critique is a fair one and the inconsistency is clear. For the usage of “cut off,” see Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1979), 285–86. Wenham argues that Lev 20:18 likely refers to God’s direct punishment for guilty parties, usually in the form of premature death.

⁶⁶Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 51–52. He argues that there is no evidence that this command has been abrogated for Christians. This ethical methodology is insufficient, however, because it creates divisions within the old covenant law that do not arise from the text itself. I address this point in greater detail later in this chap.

⁶⁷See an extended defense of this point in Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*. Rightly, Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 398–436. Carson is worth quoting at length here: “Paul relativizes [the law] by paying strict attention to the actual story-line in the Books of Moses. At the risk of deploying anachronistic categories, instead of allowing the law-covenant to gain controlling force in a massive systematic theology, he reads the texts in a biblical-theological fashion, in salvation-historical sequence. Suddenly the law-covenant is no longer the high point, the culmination and control of all that is meant by true religion. Instead, it has almost become a parenthesis (Gal 3:15–4:7). The promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed antedates Moses and the giving of the law by centuries, and that promise cannot be annulled by the giving of the law (3:17), regardless of how much space is given over to the law in the sacred text, or how large a role it played in the history of Israel . . . intrinsic to its significance is its function in preparation for the coming of Christ ‘when the set time had fully come’ (Gal 4:4), which is itself the fulfillment of the promise.” Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 411–12. A faithful understanding of biblical theology and salvation history is crucial for the doing of Christian ethics.

viewed as one part of the unified Mosaic covenant (Gal 5:3; Jas 2:8–13), should not be viewed in isolation as the ever-binding law of God upon all people throughout history.⁶⁸ Douglas Moo rightly states that there is no evidence that Jesus extricated the Decalogue from its old covenant context in order to establish its permanence.⁶⁹ Rather, all of the old covenant commandments “are not *directly* applicable to us, but only as they are passed on to us by Christ. He is the ‘filter’ through which the whole must go.”⁷⁰ Carson, building off Stephen Westerholm’s work, sharpens Moo’s language by showing that new covenant members, in Christ, fulfill the law descriptively (Gal 5:16) and prescriptively (Rom 13:8).⁷¹ The law’s eschatological purpose was “witnessing, predicting, anticipating” the one to whom it pointed and in whom it is understood, fulfilled, and obeyed.⁷² Jesus teaches that the law was christological in its authority, function, and aim (Matt 5:17–20), and the Gospel authors demonstrate that Christ fulfilled all of the Old Testament, not just the law covenant (Matt 2:15, 4:13–16, 12:17–21, 13:35, 21:4–11, Luke 3:23–38; cf. Gen 3:15, 2 Sam 7:12–16).⁷³ Gushee misses the mark here when he distorts and conflates

⁶⁸See Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 26–44. Jason Meyer addresses this issue from a progressive covenantal perspective in Jason Meyer, “The Mosaic Law, Theological Systems, and the Glory of Christ,” in *Progressive Covenantalism*, 69–99.

⁶⁹Moo, “Response to VanGemeren,” 87–89.

⁷⁰Moo, “Response to VanGemeren,” 88.

⁷¹Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 428–29. He builds upon Westerholm’s nine theses from Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003), 408–39.

⁷²Carson, “Mystery and Fulfillment,” 430. Paul consistently saw the old covenant through the progressive unfolding of salvation-history. There is significant continuity and discontinuity as the Old Testament bears witness to Christ.

⁷³France, *Matthew*, 191–97; Carson, *Matthew*, 141–47. Both scholars highlight Matthew’s emphasis: the question is the Law’s relation to Jesus, not Jesus’ relation to the Law. Jesus is the eschatological goal of the Old Testament law, promises, institutions, and events.

Christ's prophetic fulfillment with prophetic attack on political institutions.⁷⁴ Paul contrasts the old covenant's impotence and transience with the effectual and permanent nature of the new covenant (2 Cor 3; Gal 3–4).⁷⁵ The good and holy law (Rom 7:12) functioned as a prophetic pointer to the necessity of the righteousness of God through faith (Rom 3:21). As new covenant members, we first examine the Old Testament as it finds its completion in Christ, and then formulate doctrine and ethics today in light of his new covenant work.

Third, and closely related to the previous point, progressive covenantalism maintains a distinction between submitting to the Old Testament as covenant and obeying the Old Testament as Scripture. Stephen Wellum ably outlines this point elsewhere, so only two points are worth noting here.⁷⁶ First, Paul clearly teaches that all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for Christians (2 Tim 3:16–17). There is no dispute over the nature of the Old Testament or its authoritative status as Scripture. Progressive covenantalists reject any Marcion-like propositions which undermine canonical unity, as well as any tendencies toward antinomianism.⁷⁷ The *basis* for ethics methodology is the focus of the debate, not biblical authority, unity, or inspiration. Revisionist claims of misogyny in old covenant law is unwarranted and reflective of a non-evangelical view of Scripture's authority and unity. Contrary to Gushee's claim, Christians do not need a

⁷⁴See Carson, "Sketch of Factors Determining Current Hermeneutical Debate," 26. Carson rightly asks what the basis for this kind of reading is as opposed to "the prophetic insistence that the oppressed people of God do not rebel against Nebuchadnezzar?" Carson contends that Gushee's paradigm is methodologically bankrupt.

⁷⁵Rightly, Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 115–76.

⁷⁶Wellum, "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," 220–26.

⁷⁷Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, 367. With Moo, progressive covenantalists argue that Christians are free from the Mosaic law, not the authority and applicability of all law. This kind of contention stands solidly against 1 Cor 9:21.

Spirit-given transformative encounter with gay people in order to rightly read and obey the plain sense of Scripture. Second, Christians are now under the new covenant law of Christ, not under any other covenant.⁷⁸ Paul defends his missiological methodology by arguing that Christians are no longer ὑπὸ νόμον because they are ἔννομος Χριστοῦ (1 Cor 9:20–21; cf. Gal 5:16–6:2). Covenant theologians who explain 1 Corinthians 9 by appeals to ceremonial distinctions or legalistic tendencies are unpersuasive and do not adequately apply Paul’s redemptive-historical approach to the old covenant found elsewhere (Rom 5–8; Gal 3–4).⁷⁹ Wellum rightly notes that Paul does not conflate the ἄνομος θεοῦ with old covenant νόμον.⁸⁰ This reality is supported by the author of Hebrews. *Auctor* argues that the Old Testament clearly spoke of its own temporary and obsolete nature (Heb 7:15–22, 8:13).⁸¹ The Old Testament anticipated a new covenant, and Christ’s priesthood

⁷⁸Paul also makes this point clear in Rom 5:12–21. We are no longer “in Adam,” but “in Christ.”

⁷⁹Rosner, *Paul and the Law*, 47–59. Rosner makes the incisive point that while Paul’s distinction here may highlight his willingness “to live under the *direction* of the law as marking out the historic people of God from the nations for the sake of the progress of the gospel (in 1 Cor), he is not willing to live under the *dominion* of the law as law-covenant or legal code” (59). See also Moo, “Law of Christ as Fulfillment of Law of Moses,” 366–70. Moo confirms this point and rightly ties “the law of Christ” to love and the activity of the Holy Spirit which brings about the new covenant promise of an internalized law upon the Christian’s renewed heart and mind.

⁸⁰Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics,” 220.

⁸¹Heb 8:13 concludes the chap. and provides a commentary on Jer 31:31–34. The old covenant had become obsolete, not at the inauguration of the new covenant, but at Jeremiah’s prophecy that indicated the need for a new covenant. See Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1977), 302. Hughes rightly contends, “The utterance of the prophecy is sufficient proof that the first covenant can be regarded only as *becoming obsolete and growing old*, and therefore as *ready to vanish away* when in due course the new and eternal covenant of grace is established.” Hughes, *Commentary on Epistle to Hebrews*, 302. This is the same exegetical argument that the author of Heb makes in Heb 7 concerning Christ’s priesthood. The Psalter indicated the obsolescence of the old covenant by indicating a change in the priesthood in Ps 110:4 and Hebrews argues where there is a change in priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the covenant/law as well (7:12). Thus, Heb 8:13 is likely giving Jeremiah’s perspective on the passing old covenant. Rightly, Richard B. Hays, “‘Here We Have No Lasting City’: New Covenantalism in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2009), 160–61. Hays states that the old covenant becoming old is significant because “it indicates that the change of covenant hinges upon an act of God, an eschatological declaration that brings a new situation into being.” Hays, “‘Here We Have No Lasting City,’” 161.

instituted this new covenant. A change in the priesthood necessarily brought a change in the entire covenant, not just specific aspects of it (Heb 7:11–12).⁸² Now that the old covenant is obsolete, Christians now relate to God through the priestly mediation of the new covenant head, Jesus Christ.

Fourth, a change in covenant mediation necessitates a change in how believers relate to God and obey him. The New Testament gives repeated examples of Christians reading and obeying the Old Testament as Scripture, but not submitting to it as their covenant stipulations given by Yahweh. Christians read the outline of the Levitical presentation of the old covenant sacrificial system as Scripture, but obey it in light of its new covenant fulfillment in Christ (Heb 10). Christians read the Sabbath commands as Scripture (Exod 16, 20:8–11), but obey the commands for rest in light of Christ’s new covenant work (Heb 3:7–4:13).⁸³ An example relevant to the present debate is Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce (Matt 19:1–12; Mark 10:1–12). In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus initially asks the Pharisees to explicate the Mosaic command, but because of their hardened hearts, he then directs them to creation, not the Decalogue, to ground marriage and adultery.⁸⁴ It is the one-flesh union in Genesis 2:24 that serves as the authoritative foundation of marriage until the new creation, not the Decalogue. While Paul does cite the Decalogue’s prohibition of adultery to believers (Rom 13:9), the authoritative grounding is creation (Eph 5:31–33). The New Testament demonstrates that the

⁸²Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics,” 219.

⁸³It is telling that *auctor* grounds rest in creation, not Exod 16. In fact, Ps 95’s contention is that God forbade Israel entry into his rest prior to giving the Sabbath command in Exod 20. This example demonstrates how *all* of the old covenant, not just the Decalogue, functions as law, anticipation, and reflection of God’s moral will. The biblical view of rest is defined in creation, heightened in the Sabbath covenant command, and sharpened in the Psalter through the connection to the people’s wayward hearts. Rest, *auctor* argues, finds its *telos* in Christ who brings new creation rest, as well as salvation apart from works of the law.

⁸⁴The account of this event in Matt does not have Jesus referencing the law of Moses at all, but rather immediately directing the Pharisees to what Yahweh created and commanded in Gen 1–2.

Decalogue certainly expresses God’s moral will, but it is only a partial expression built upon the ideal of creation, progressively revealed over the Old Testament, and given full clarity in Christ through his apostles.⁸⁵ Jesus himself did not view the Mosaic law as a perfect reflection of God’s moral law (Matt 19:8–9; Mark 7:14–23).⁸⁶ In fact, both the demands and punishments of the new covenant are considerably higher than the demands of the old covenant (Matt 5; Heb 1:1–2:4). The promise of the new covenant, however, is that Christians will keep the commandments in Christ through the Spirit as faith works itself out through love (Rom 7:6; 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6).

In summary, progressive covenantalism argues that the entire biblical canon, understood in light of God’s nature and his *christotelic* progressive revelation, serves as the basis for determining what is morally binding on Christians today, not a tripartite division of the old covenant law. Distinctions between aspects of the old covenant law (civil, clean/unclean, ceremonial, etc.), while seeming to bear some usefulness for understanding “the weightier matters of the law” (Matt 23:23), are not inherent to the old covenant package itself and cannot serve as the basis for Christian ethics. Rather, the old covenant must be understood in light of the created order and the *christotelic* progression of the redemptive storyline through the biblical covenants. Revisionist critiques of covenant theology’s tripartite division are fair and need to be addressed in light of a faithful biblical-theological framework.

⁸⁵Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2002), 74. It appears, at times, that covenant theologians fail to read the Old Testament progressively and diachronically. Rather than reading Sabbath in light of creation, a Sabbatarian reads creation in light of the Sabbath. While the Sabbath certainly sheds light on creation rest, the typological development requires a forward-looking progression built on the foundation of creation, not Exod 16. Arguments for the priority of the Decalogue occur in a similar fashion. Creation is understood in light of the Decalogue, rather than the Decalogue read and understood in light of creation. The moral character of God is first revealed in the creation and fall (Gen 1–3), heightened in the Decalogue and old covenant (Exod 20), sharpened by the rebukes and promises of the prophets (Jer 31; Ezek 36–37; Hos 1–2), and then revealed in its fullness in Christ (Matt 5–7; Mark 9:2–13)

⁸⁶Moo, “Law of Christ as Fulfillment of Law of Moses,” 356.

In rejecting a tripartite division of the old covenant law, it does not follow that other suggested patterns for Christian ethics are therefore legitimate. Sprinkle's suggestion that unless the New Testament abrogates a specific command, the command is still in force today, fails to do justice to the unity of the old covenant law package. Moo's suggestion that Christians are only bound to Old Testament teachings repeated in the New Testament also falls short as exemplified by the New Testament's silence on bestiality.⁸⁷ Both suggestions ultimately fail to adequately incorporate a whole-Bible theology as it pertains to theological formulation and drawing ethical conclusions. In contrast, progressive covenantalism contends that creation forms the basis for understanding both God's plan and the world, as well as the ethical standard for determining that which is morally good.⁸⁸ When Scripture is understood in light of its own categories and structures, the biblical canon teaches that Christ's new covenant both replaces and fulfills Old Testament teaching.⁸⁹ Progressive covenantalism examines Scripture in light of the redemptive storyline's progressive unfolding through the biblical covenants in order to determine how Old Testament teaching has been carried over and fulfilled in light of Christ. All Scripture is necessary in determining Christian ethics, but all Scripture must be carefully examined in light of a passage's hermeneutical horizon, covenantal context, and the biblical structure of creation-fall-redemption-new creation. Gushee fails to read and interpret Scripture in light of its own presentation. He, therefore, forces an extratextual grid upon biblical texts (particularly the Sermon on the Mount) which proves devastating in his theological formulation and ethical conclusions. Progressive covenantalism, however, demands that Christian ethics be formulated in light of the Bible's own *christotelic* biblical-theological framework.

⁸⁷Moo, "Law of Christ as Fulfillment of Law of Moses," 376.

⁸⁸Wellum, "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," 226–27.

⁸⁹Wellum, "Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics," 223–25.

Same-Sex Ethics

The biblical and typological exegesis of passages relevant to the same-sex marriage debate were outlined in detail in the previous chapter and clearly demonstrate that Scripture prohibits same-sex sexual relationships. Gushee contends that everyone's sexuality in a Genesis 3-world is broken and needs to be ordered. Is he correct to argue that no one can have a Genesis 1–2 sexuality and, therefore, we must see “covenant” as the norm for sexuality in fallen world?

The created order. Gushee relativizes ethics by jettisoning Genesis 1–2 as the foundational starting point for marriage and insisting that sexual ethics be grounded in Genesis 3. It is correct that “covenant” must be the context for human sexuality, but it is erroneous to argue that no one can express Genesis 1–2 sexuality because of sin's effects. Jesus and Paul both appeal to Genesis 1–2 to ground their arguments for how marriage and human sexuality ought to be expressed (Matt 19:4–9; 1 Cor 6:15–20; Eph 5:22–33). In fact, Gushee's argument for covenant as the norm for marriage is not grounded in Genesis 3, but rather in Genesis 1–2. He unwittingly appeals to Genesis 1–2 in order to demonstrate that we cannot have Genesis 1–2 as a standard for human sexuality. There is no reason to deny the expression of any form of sexual expression if “covenant” is the means by which that sexual expression can be redeemed. Gushee argues that a marriage covenant orders and disciplines broken human sexuality, and he is partially right. Gushee, however, does not explain the standard of “order” by which he adjudicates permissible sexual relationships. Is incest permissible in covenant marriage? Is bestiality permissible in covenant marriage? Is pedophilia or a child-bride permissible in covenant marriage?⁹⁰

⁹⁰Revisionists typically deflect or dismiss this idea without engagement. There have been recent medical, philosophical, psychological, and legal arguments presented today for pedophilia as a sexual orientation. If the created order is rejected, sexual ethics becomes subjective and relativized based on time and culture. See Dorothy Cummings McLean, “TEDx Speaker: ‘Pedophilia Is an Unchangeable Sexual Orientation,’ ‘Anyone’ Could Be Born That Way,” LifeSiteNews, accessed July 18, 2018, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/ted-speaker-pedophilia-is-an-unchangeable-sexual-orientation-anyone->

Again, Gushee has restricted appeals to Genesis 1–2 as the basis for prohibiting these relationships because everyone’s sexuality is broken. Gushee cannot appeal to the old covenant to prohibit these covenant relationships because he argues the old covenant has been completely fulfilled by Christ. Gushee’s rejection of the created order as the basis for human marriage and sexuality has relativized human sexuality and eliminated any chance of rejecting perversions of the marriage covenant.

Related to the previous point, it is simply fallacious to argue that since sin has entered the world and distorted human sexuality, there can be no true understanding of Genesis 1–2 marriage. Gushee is distorting the biblical categories and theme of creation-fall-redemption-new creation. Sin has certainly affected human sexual relationships, but sin has not distorted human sexuality so much that Genesis 1–2 cannot be perceived at all. By that logic, no one can understand the *imago Dei*, marriage, or human sexuality because it has all been broken. In fact, it would seem that Paul’s presentation of the Christ-church marriage is either grounded in the wrong text and/or the Christ-church relationship cannot be understood since no one enjoys a Genesis 1–2 sexuality with which to compare it. Gushee argues that everyone’s sexuality is broken (which is correct!), but it does not follow that since everyone’s sexuality is broken, the *institution or nature* of marriage itself is broken and needs to be redefined. Heterosexual marriage (non-Christian and Christian, alike) can accurately image Genesis 1–2 because it is the nature of *humanity*, not the ontological nature of marriage that has been broken. It is precisely because Genesis 1–2 establishes the normative standard for sexuality and marriage that we can know what is biblically permissible. As Wellum rightly notes, “All misuses of our sexuality—fornication, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, bestiality, and

could-b; Stephen Kershner, *Pedophilia and Adult–Child Sex: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015); American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Pub., 2013), 697–98; Fred S. Berlin, “Pedophilia and DSM-5: The Importance of Clearly Defining the Nature of a Pedophilic Disorder,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 42, no. 4 (December 1, 2014): 404–7.

even polygamy—are distortions viewed against the backdrop of God’s creation intent for us.”⁹¹ Gushee’s allowance for covenant-based same-sex monogamy grounded in Genesis 3 actually reflects the stipulations given in the old covenant for hard-hearted people. Polygamy and divorce were allowed and constrained under the old covenant due to Israel’s hardness of heart, not their faithfulness to Genesis 1–2 (Mark 10:1–12). Likewise, Gushee’s allowances for various forms of broken human sexuality in order to satisfy Genesis 3 desires is a concession Jesus rejected due to hardness of heart, not due to God’s design for marriage in Genesis 1–2 (Matt 19:4–12).⁹²

Genesis 1:27–28 clearly highlights the sexual differentiation between male and female, the ontological equality of the *imago dei*, and the marital union as crucial to the fulfillment of the creation command. Sexuality and procreation in this ideal world of sinless creation is clearly expressed solely between “like-kinds,” thereby prohibiting bestiality (Gen 2:18–25). Human sexuality, in particular, is expressed solely in the one flesh union between male and female in the context of covenant marriage through which a new and distinct family unit is created (Gen 2:24).

The prophets, old covenant, and Christians today. Are there changes in the old covenant understanding of marriage and sexuality? The short answer is no. The Old Testament narrative and old covenant prohibitions clearly reaffirm the nature of marriage as presented in Genesis 1–2. While Yahweh does give concessions in the old covenant for polygamy and divorce, the concessions are given because of sin and hardened hearts and not intended to register a change in the nature of marriage. Since Gushee does not faithfully follow the Bible’s storyline and interpret it in light of its own categories, he

⁹¹Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics,” 228–29.

⁹²Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 97–98.

misconstrues the purpose of the Old Testament law and distorts the nature of God's prophetic office.

During his examination of Jesus as prophet, Gushee argues that Jesus' love confronts those who exclude. That is certainly true on one level, particularly as Jesus rebukes the religious leaders for excluding repentant sinners (e.g., tax collectors, prostitutes, etc.). Gushee's overly simplistic and covenantally-detached reading leads him to redefine confrontation and outcasts. It is too simplistic to say that Jesus merely confronted those who excluded people, for Jesus himself called for some people to be excluded from the local church (Matt 18:15–18; Mark 8:11–13). This exclusion, however, is commanded in light of continued, unrepentant covenant disobedience. The prophets, and ultimately Jesus, certainly present Yahweh as one who readily receives contrite and repentant outcasts, but they also rightly teach that Yahweh consumes those people who profess covenant love for him while also continuing in unrepentant moral rebellion against him (Mark 12:9–11; Heb 12:25–29). True biblical prophets consistently called people back to faithful obedience to God's covenant, but they also taught that God would bring a new covenant so that his people would be made faithful covenant-keepers by virtue of new hearts and minds, being Spirit-indwelt, and having the law written on their hearts. Jesus' prophetic work accomplished these promises. Christ, as the great Prophet, did not call his new covenant people to unquestioningly and uncritically accept unrepentant sinners into the church. Christ's prophet proclamation of the gospel was a stumbling block to Jew and Greek because it rejected both self-righteous, works-based empty religion and lofty, pagan wisdom because neither demonstrated humble faith in the Lord nor cultivated true repentance of sin. Revisionists contend for the acceptance and/or celebration of unrepentant same-sex sexual immorality in the new covenant community. In calling Christians to imitate the wickedness of the nations by embracing sexual immorality, revisionists imitate the false shepherds of Israel against whom the biblical prophets spoke (Jer 32:31–35; Ezek 34:1–10). In redefining the prophetic office, Gushee

has created a Jesus who excludes those people who have sought to humbly repent, trust God, and faithfully keep the new covenant while calling others to repentance, but includes those unrepentant people who are exceedingly unfaithful and follow after the abominations of the nations (2 Chr 36:12–16). In calling same-sex sexual behavior good and rebuking traditionalists for defending marriage as solely heterosexual, revisionists have called evil good, and good evil. The prophets clearly condemned this inversion of biblical ethics (Isa 5:20).

What about the prohibition of a man sleeping with a woman who is menstruating (Lev 20:18)? To answer Vines' (and Sprinkle's) question, Christians do not simply throw out the old covenant, obey Old Testament laws not expressly abrogated in the New Testament, nor do they obey laws only if they are repeated in the New Testament. Rather, Christian ethics seeks to understand how particular commands have reached their *telos* in Christ and how these commands are relevant to Christians today. Leviticus 20:18 does teach us about human sexuality, so it requires brief attention. Leviticus 12:2 designates a woman who is in the time of her menstrual period to be unclean under Mosaic law. Leviticus 15:19–24 outlines the duration of her uncleanness before the Lord and gives instruction in the event that a menstrual period begins during sexual intercourse (Lev 15:24). This uncleanness of blood was a reminder to the people of their sin and death before the holiness of God.⁹³ It is important to recognize the lack of intentionality in the act of the man and woman in Leviticus 15:24. The man becomes unclean when, in having intercourse with his wife, she begins to menstruate. Leviticus 18–20 is one literary unit with a unified meaning and this point makes the context of Leviticus 18:19 and 20:18 important. In these two passages, the sexual intercourse occurs knowingly and intentionally during the woman's menstrual period. The woman does not start menstruating during intercourse (Lev 15:24), but rather, the couple have sexual

⁹³Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 188.

intercourse in spite of her uncleanness before God, thereby willingly making themselves unclean before God and unable to participate in temple practice. Leviticus 18:19 and 20:18, therefore, outlaw the intentional pursuit of unclean sexual intercourse that clearly violates the God's covenant law, and either makes the tabernacle/temple unclean by the guilty couple's unauthorized entrance into it or cuts the guilty couple off from Yahweh's presence. Guilty parties demonstrated their ultimate desire was for unholy and illicit sexual intercourse, not the intimate, covenant presence of Yahweh.⁹⁴ The remainder of the sexual prohibitions in this unit, including Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13, reaffirm and teach this same principle. Israelites who knowingly pursued sexual intercourse which made them unclean before the Lord were demonstrating their hardened hearts and idolatrous desire for sexual immorality.

Gushee and Vines reject the Bible's structures and categories so they fail to properly situate these menstrual laws (as well as other sexual laws) in light of their textual, epochal, and canonical horizons. It is clear from Christ's new covenant work that these temporary clean and unclean laws of the Mosaic covenant have been fulfilled by Christ (Mark 1:40–45, 5:25–34, 7:1–23). The nature of marriage as heterosexual, monogamous, and permanent, however, is present in the created order of Genesis 1–2, thus binding on all humanity because of the universal scope of the creation covenant (and post-fall Noahic covenant). The created order in Genesis 1–2 has established the foundation and guidelines for human sexuality, so there is no need for covenant theology's tripartite division to interpret menstrual laws or laws condemning same-sex sexual behavior. Rather, all of Scripture comes to bear on ethical decisions, and conclusions must be drawn on the basis of all of Scripture understood in light of its own categories and structures, and finding its fulfillment in Christ's person and new covenant work.

⁹⁴Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 186–87.

As one moves to the New Testament, they see that Jesus Christ makes unclean people clean, including a woman who had a continuous bloody discharge (Mark 5:25–34). Morna Hooker rightly argues that Jesus’ “power is greater than the contaminating force of the woman’s impurity.”⁹⁵ This principle is observed elsewhere when Jesus heals a leprous man (Mark 1:40–45) and when he teaches that uncleanness and defilement before God occur because of an evil heart, not food or bodily expulsions (Mark 7:14–23). The Levitical law gave a picture of the human condition before God, and the need for God’s covenant people to be cleansed from sin. The distinction between intentional and unintentional uncleanness (and their corresponding consequences) reflects the principle that Jesus teaches repeatedly—evil hearts intentionally rebel against God and cause people to be unclean, not bloody discharges, food, or unclean hands. In the epistles, Paul’s admonition to husbands and wives is to abstain from sex briefly and intentionally, with no qualifications for menstrual periods (1 Cor 7:5). A Christian couple, therefore, is permitted to have sexual intercourse when the wife is menstruating because they are not under the old covenant, but under the new. Yahweh’s prohibition in Leviticus, which the New Testament affirms, is against all acts where someone intentionally seeks unholy and illicit sexual intercourse which defiles them before God (Matt 19:4–9; cf. 1 Cor 6:12–20). This prohibition, canonically understood, would extend to all forms of sexual activity outside the covenant of marriage, including same-sex sexual relationships, pornography, fornication, adultery, unbiblical remarriage, bestiality, polygamy, and incest. Reading and interpreting these passages from a canonical perspective makes the point clear that sex during a wife’s menstrual period is not sin under the new covenant, nor does it cause uncleanness before God. The allowance (or prohibition) of sexual intercourse during a

⁹⁵Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 149.

wife's menstrual period certainly does not alter the normative nature of marriage, despite Vines' radical suggestion.⁹⁶

Typology, covenant progression, and ethics. The typological unfolding of marriage informs ethical formulation and confirms the traditionalist case for marriage, serving as a biblical-theological lens through which marriage passages are understood. As Christ's priesthood and atonement cannot be understood apart from the typological unfolding of the Levitical system (Heb 4:14–10:39), so also the Christ-church relationship cannot be understood apart from the typological unfolding of marriage across the canon. Exegesis and biblical theology tied to the progression of the biblical covenants across redemptive history inform the nature and biblical understanding of marriage, not trajectory hermeneutics following some kind of redemptive-Spirit hermeneutic, "Spirit-given" reader-response theory, or transformative encounter.⁹⁷

Marriage in Genesis 1–2 demonstrates considerable "likeness" and "similarity" between Adam and Eve (Gen 2:21–23). They are the same in nature and are equal image-bearers. Marriage is a joining of two "similar" beings, but revisionists push this idea too far when arguing that same-sex couples picture the Christ-church relationship. Vines argues that same-sex couples are sufficiently different in "personality, passions, careers, goals, and needs" to require the self-sacrifice that Paul says reflects the picture in Ephesians 5:22–33.⁹⁸ These qualifications, however, are not grounded in biblical text or

⁹⁶Depending upon the covenant theologian, there may be differences in opinion on this particular point. Some scholars may state that intercourse during a menstrual period remains unlawful, while others may state that this particular command is abrogated because of its ceremonial nature. Covenant theologians would rightly appeal to the created order to dispute revisionist claims, but regardless of which perspective above one may take, the charge of inconsistency from revisionists with regard to old covenant law remains inescapable, revealing an underlying error in understanding the *christotelic* nature of the law.

⁹⁷Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 187–88.

⁹⁸Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 146–47. See also Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 97–101.

typology, nor would they prohibit covenant incest or child brides. Vines and Brownson unsuccessfully attempt to jettison gender complementarity from Ephesians 5 to make this argument, but Jesus not only explicitly affirms gender complementary in marriage through his use of “male and female” (Matt 19:4; cf. Gen 1:27), but his typological pattern for marriage demands it. The church’s relationship to Christ is not simply a difference in personality or passions, but ontology (Creator-creature distinction), authority, and roles. Same-sex partners who have different passions or careers do not faithfully depict the old covenant’s demand for Israel’s submission to Yahweh, nor do they image the church’s submission to the Lordship of Christ. Same-sex sexual relationships, rather, reflect the idolatrous desires of moral autonomy and union with created sameness (cf. Ps 115:8; Rom 1:21–28).

Important to Vines and Brownson is the idea that Ephesians 5:22–33 is simply *analogous*, not typological. Unfortunately, neither of them address typology in their works and Gushee does not address Ephesians 5 in his argument for same-sex marriage. The typological argument that I laid out in the last chapter, however, demonstrates that marriage was created primarily to image the Christ-church relationship and this picture is intentionally grounded in and progressively revealed through *the biblical text*. While Vines and Brownson treat Paul’s use of marriage as an analogous picture of the Christ-church relationship as mere rhetorical device, Scripture’s typological pattern grounds the unchangeable nature of marriage in divine authorial intent progressively revealed across the canon. In sum, Paul is not using marriage as a helpful illustration to describe the Christ-church relationship, but rather teaching marriage’s prophetic, anticipatory, and eschatological aim fulfilled in Christ. Even if one granted that same-sex couples were sufficiently “other” to picture the Christ-church relationship (which they are not), the textually-grounded typological progression is unpacking the one-flesh antitype between man and wife in Genesis 2:24. Nowhere in Scripture is this union expanded beyond male-female, which means that heterosexual one-flesh marital unions are still normative for

this typological pattern. The biblical debate over Ephesians 5 may continue between complementarians and egalitarians, but revisionists simply do not have a seat at the table. Revisionists do not have any biblical warrant—exegetical, biblical-theological, or typological—to redefine marriage or alter Christian ethics to include same-sex monogamy.

The typological unfolding of marriage highlights redemptive-historical shifts when read in light of creation-fall-redemption-new creation. Genesis 1–2 clearly outlines God’s normative pattern for human sexuality in the context of heterosexual marriage. Genesis 2:24 not only defines the nature of heterosexual marriage’s one-flesh union, but it lays the foundation upon which the rest of the biblical canon unfolds and escalates the prophetic and anticipatory intention of marriage. Marriage points forward to Christ, revealing the nature of his eschatological, one-flesh covenant union to his bride, the Church. The nature of marriage has not changed, but the nature of humanity has changed because of the fall. The Old Testament depiction of hard-hearted people distorting or perverting the marriage covenant was itself a microcosm of the unfaithfulness of Old Testament people in their covenant with Yahweh. It should not come as a surprise that when people reject God, marriage itself is also distorted because marriage was given in order to picture God’s relationship to his people. The new covenant work of Christ, however, brings the prophetic promises to reality: new hearts and faithful, obedient people indwelt by the Spirit sharing a covenant union with the Son. Since the Son is the mediator of the new covenant and his work is completely effectual, the moral demands are greater for Christians to live both according to the pattern of God’s creation design and in light of its new creation fulfillment.⁹⁹ God himself has now made his people faithful by their new covenant union with Christ, so the true picture marriage was

⁹⁹Wellum, “Progressive Covenantalism and the Doing of Ethics,” 229.

intended to prophetically depict in Genesis 2 is now perceived in new creation realities and will be fully revealed and consummated at Christ's return.

The typological revelation of marriage's true aim—i.e., the church's covenant union with Christ—does not eliminate marriage as an institution today, nor does it redefine marriage to be something other than heterosexual, monogamous, and permanent. Since the new creation has been inaugurated by Christ's work, Christians, as new creation people, now have a new nature to truly reflect creation ideals in marriage as they anticipate the new creation fullness of their marriage to Christ. As a result of marriage being ultimately fulfilled in Christ, there are some anticipatory changes that have taken effect in the new covenant age. Celibacy is now a gift in the new covenant age that can be received by virtue of Christ's fulfillment of the marriage command in order that a Christian can be wholly devoted to Kingdom work without the worldly concerns of human marriage. Also, human family is now being expanded and transformed as it is understood in light of Christ. Celibate Christians can have spiritual children in the faith by virtue of conversion and Christian discipleship, while Christians are brothers and sisters in the Lord despite not sharing the same blood. These creation order realities are being transformed in light of Christ as they wait and anticipate their eschatological fulfillment in the new creation. At the same time, however, Christ's new covenant work does not abrogate marriage or human family (revisionists argue for the continuation of both!). Now that Christ has come, the typological and new creation realities to which these institutions point are now being rightly perceived in light of Jesus establishing his new creation through the church. While human marriage will cease in the resurrection (Matt 22:29–30), the true, eschatological marriage will remain forever (Rev 19:6–9, 21–22).

What are the appropriate expressions of human sexuality for those with same-sex sexual attraction? As I have demonstrated, the Bible clearly rejects same-sex sexual desire expressing itself in same-sex behavior. The Bible gives two options: heterosexual

marriage or celibacy. I am sympathetic to Christians who battle same-sex sexual desire, who are not attracted to the opposite sex, and who do not want to remain celibate. In the providence of God, many Christians are born with predispositions or desires that consistently tempt them towards sinful behavior (e.g., depression and anxiety, alcoholism). The presence and strength of these dispositions affirm the reality of the fall and the presence of evil desires in our fallen flesh (Jas 1:14–15), but their presence does not give permission for sin. If one were to grant the immutability of same-sex orientation, the experience and corresponding (strong) desires do not entail disobedience to the plain teaching of Scripture.¹⁰⁰ The metaphorical pictures given to describe general Christian discipleship and obedience are quite radical and include taking up and carrying an execution device to your execution (Mark 8:34), losing your life (Mark 8:35), cutting off or tearing out body parts (Mark 9:43–47), leaving family and homes (Mark 10:29–31), hating family and your own life (Luke 14:26), being hated (Matt 10:22), being slandered (1 Pet 3:16), being disciplined (Heb 12:3–17), suffering persecution (2 Tim 3:12), and beating and enslaving your own body (1 Cor 9:27). If same-sex sexually attracted Christians do not want to participate in sexual intercourse in the context of a heterosexual marriage, they must commit themselves to celibacy, being willing to suffer loss in order to gain Christ (Phil 3:8). While revisionists argue that imposed celibacy is unloving, this definition of “love” is situated in an unbiblical worldview that equates personal identity with sexual expression, divorcing the nature of love from its biblical context.¹⁰¹ Conversely, Scripture teaches it is pride, not love, that motivates Christians to avoid judging sexual immorality in the local church (1 Cor 5:1–13). Christians must work simultaneously to defend the nature of marriage as presented in the biblical canon, while

¹⁰⁰I examine sexual orientation and the image of God in more detail in the next chap.

¹⁰¹Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 201–5. This worldview is grounded in postmodern deconstruction.

also lovingly and graciously calling all sinners, including same-sex couples, to repent and believe the gospel.

Conclusion

This chapter has given outlines and critiques of both Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics* and covenant theology's emphases on the Decalogue and tripartite division of the law. Gushee employs a twenty-first century Western progressive extratextual grid on the Sermon on the Mount, divorces Christ's teaching from its covenantal context, and distorts the Sermon to the point of inverting its true meaning. Though covenant theology has right conclusions as it relates to same-sex sexual behavior, revisionists have presented fair critiques of covenant theology's ethical framework, demonstrating that covenant theology's tripartite division of the old covenant is not the most faithful and consistent presentation of Scripture's binding moral demands upon members of the new covenant community.

I outlined a progressive covenantal approach to Christian ethics, demonstrating that one must read and understand all of Scripture in light of Christ as its *telos* in order to determine what teaching is morally binding upon Christians. This *christotelic* reading of the Old and New Testaments will demonstrate that marriage was given in Genesis 1–2 solely as an exclusive, heterosexual, and permanent covenant union that finds its terminus in the Christ-church relationship. This definition of marriage has been confirmed through both exegesis and biblical theology, and I have shown that any sexual behavior or expression outside the boundaries of heterosexual marriage is sinful, thereby prohibiting same-sex monogamy. The inauguration of the new creation in Christ's first coming, however, does not abrogate marriage as a human institution today, but rather illuminates marriage's anticipatory, prophetic, and typological meaning fulfilled in the Christ-church one-flesh union. Heterosexual marriage, therefore, continues as a creation ordinance until the consummation of the new creation at the return of Christ.

In the next chapter, I turn to formulate theological conclusions on the image of God, sexual orientation and human identity, and the idea of gay Christians in the new covenant community.

CHAPTER 5

GAY CHRISTIANS AND THE NEW COVENANT

The preceding chapters have addressed the exegetical, biblical-theological, and ethical conclusions relevant to the same-sex marriage debate. In chapters 2 through 4, I demonstrated that Matthew Vine’s use of “gay Christian” is incompatible with the plain teaching of Scripture. In this chapter, I examine the *imago Dei* and its implications for orientation and identity, and interact with traditionalists who identify as “gay (or non-straight) Christians.” I briefly explore the usefulness of this terminology and examine the ecclesiological implications of this debate, addressing some pastoral concerns for local churches and Christians who experience same-sex sexual attraction.

Image of God and Covenant

The doctrine of the image of God often takes center stage in the same-sex marriage debate, and for good reason. The revisionist appeal to immutable sexual orientation, rejection of celibacy as a biblical alternative to same-sex marriage, misunderstanding of “covenant,” and overemphasis on the immaterial aspects of the human person all reflect a deficient image of God. I will briefly summarize and critique revisionist conclusions on the *imago Dei* and “covenant,” demonstrating that revisionists implicitly affirm an unbiblical division between the material (body) and immaterial (soul) aspects of the human person. I then present a progressive covenantal perspective on the image of God and “covenant,” as well as provide a response to a number of charges levelled against traditionalists by Vines.

Revisionist Anthropology

Vines, David Gushee, and James Brownson affirm that the image of God was not lost in the fall, but distorted.¹ Vines is the most explicit and detailed in his presentation of the *imago Dei* in the same-sex debate and he makes several points worth noting. Vines contends that there are at least two essential elements for a right understanding of the image of God in humanity: function and relationship. First, Vines argues that heterosexual union and procreation do not form the basis for the *imago Dei* because humanity and animals both produce offspring. Male and female image God through exercising dominion over the earth, not through heterosexual union, because procreation is not unique to humanity. In fact, since Jesus himself is the image of God, his celibacy clearly demonstrates that heterosexual union is not an essential component of the image of God. Secondly, Vines points out that humanity reflects the relational nature of the Triune God. Humans have been created for relationships which are expressed in various ways: community, friends, family, and romantic love. This relational need for community and love can be expressed and fulfilled in same-sex monogamous unions, according to Vines.²

Sexual expression, Vines writes, is not necessary to live fully as an image-bearer, but our sexuality is a core component of our identity. While sexual expression is not unique to humanity, what is unique is “our potential to discipline and sanctify our

¹See Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (New York: Convergent Books, 2014), 159–61; David P. Gushee, *Changing Our Mind*, 3rd ed. (Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Books, 2017), 96–105; David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2016), 163–64; James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2013), 30–32. These three revisionists do not explicitly affirm or deny a dichotomous division between body and soul in man, but they seem to assume a holistic dichotomy throughout their writings.

²Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 150–56.

sexual desires through a covenantal bond.”³ Heterosexual and homosexual marital bonds, grounded in covenant, can image the relational, covenant-keeping Triune God of Scripture. Vines contends that same-sex orientation is not disordered desire, with orientation involving more than simply same-sex sexual attraction. Sexual orientation includes the ability for gay and straight people to channel their sexual attraction into a monogamous, covenant relationship. Like heterosexual orientation, same-sex orientation “contains the potential for self-giving, covenantal love [that is] consistent with the image of God in us.”⁴ Vines’ major question for traditionalists is if it is acceptable to deny same-sex couples the chance to sanctify their desires through the covenant bond of marriage. Vines goes on to argue that same-sex relationships bear the image of God and for someone to tell gay Christians that “their *every* desire for intimate, sexual bonding is shameful and disordered, we encourage them to hate a core part of who they were created to be. And if we reject the desires of gay Christians to express their sexuality within a lifelong covenant, we separate them from our covenantal God, and we tarnish their ability to bear his image.”⁵ The proper response by the church, revisionists contend, is to allow same-sex couples to enter into covenant marriage which is exclusive and permanent, providing the appropriate context for kinship, love, and sexual fulfillment to be

³Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 155. As mentioned previously, Vines rejects procreation as an essential aspect of marriage (and the *imago Dei*) because animals also procreate. It is unclear, then, why sexuality itself is a core component of our identity as image-bearers (demanding a redefinition of marriage in this debate) simply because human sexuality has the potential for monogamy. The potential for sexual monogamy is also evident in animals. See “10 Amorous Animals That Mate for Life,” National Geographic, February 12, 2016, accessed July 12, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/photo-ark/pictures/monogamous-animals/>.

⁴Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 156. Vines makes a distinction between sexual orientation and sexual preference, arguing that same-sex orientation makes one incapable of being attracted to the opposite sex (33–34). Vines points to the failure of the ex-gay movement as evidence of the immutability of same-sex orientation, though it is unclear what Vines believes about those people who were exclusively oriented towards same-sex sexual attraction but who were also helped by reparative therapy or other ex-gay ministry efforts. One would assume that Vines would beg the question by arguing that those people who were helped did not possess a same-sex orientation.

⁵Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 158.

expressed. This marriage covenant, revisionists contend, mirrors God’s covenant with his people.⁶ Traditionalists, Vines asserts, are sinning and marring the image of God in people by rejecting same-sex monogamous relationships.⁷ Brownson supports this point by arguing that same-sex sexual attraction is a recurring minority experience that is natural and God-given. Harnessing and directing same-sex sexual attraction into monogamous unions is one of the primary means by which gay Christians experience the new creation presently—i.e., the intimacy, fruitfulness, love, and communion that is experienced now is a foretaste of eschatological new creation blessings.⁸ Same-sex marriage satisfies the human (horizontal) relational component of the *imago Dei* and provides a context for covenant obedience to God (vertical relational component of the *imago Dei*).⁹

Progressive Covenantalism and the Divine Image

The argument that the image of God must be understood in at least relationship (covenant) and function (dominion) terms is correct, but incomplete. Also, while revisionists seem to profess a theological anthropology grounded in a body-soul dualism, I demonstrate that their arguments for same-sex behavior undermines the Bible’s presentation of man’s psychosomatic unity.¹⁰ The nature of covenant relationship and the

⁶Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 156.

⁷Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 162.

⁸Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 253–54.

⁹Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 276–77.

¹⁰There is insufficient space to defend anthropological dualism in the present work. For a robust defense of this holistic dualism, see John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2000). While revisionists do not explicitly state this idea in these terms, they clearly communicate holistic dualism as they seek to ground same-sex “nature” in both biological impulses (material) and kinship/relational desires (immaterial). See also Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1994), 217–18.

reality of human embodiment are important aspects of this debate that revisionists have failed to adequately address.

Anthony Hoekema rightly contends that mankind images God in both structure and function but Hoekema's structure/function distinction would incorporate dominion, relationship, and ontology.¹¹ When Genesis 1:26–28 is understood in both its historical and covenantal contexts, Hoekema's composite view bears great resemblance to the ANE categories of sonship and rule.¹² Mankind images God by rightly relating to God and others by covenant relationship (sonship) and rightly relating to the earth (servant kingship). Progressive covenantalism affirms the traditional view that the image of God was distorted in the fall, but not lost (Gen 1:26–28; cf. Gen 9:6).¹³ Adam was placed in Eden in order to lovingly relate to God by obeying his covenant commands, while also stewarding the creation God had entrusted to him as an image-bearer. Adam's moral rebellion against God (vertical) in Genesis 3 was a failure to image God, by obeying the covenant, and to rightly represent him to the rest of creation. Adam's moral rebellion also was a failure to live in right relationship with Eve (horizontal), causing nakedness, shame, and strife in the first marriage—a problem that has continued to the present (Gen 3:6–16). Adam's relationship to creation as a servant king was distorted as a result of his sin and God's curse (Gen 3:17–19). All aspects of the image of God were distorted by sin and moral rebellion against God's covenant commands.

¹¹Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 68–101.

¹²Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 190–202. Unlike Egypt, Genesis taught that it was all people, not just the human king, who imaged God.

¹³Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201. God's kingdom being established through God's covenant informs the biblical truth that man is the divine image. Gentry argues that the image of God is clarified by recognizing that “the human rebellion described in Gen 3 violated the love, loyalty, obedience, and trust at the heart of the covenant.” Gentry rightly contends that the composite view of structure and function (sonship and dominion) informs how the Mosaic covenant will implement this reality in and through Abraham's family.

The image of God, however, was restored in the person and covenant-keeping work of Christ. In fact, the *imago Dei* was fulfilled in the Last Adam, incarnate Son, who is himself the true image of God (Col 1:15). To be truly human and to be like God is to be like Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, who was perfectly faithful in relating to God and neighbor, as well as rightly ruling over creation.¹⁴ In Christ, believers are being progressively transformed and the divine image is being restored because Christ's new covenant redemption has been inaugurated by his new creation work. This divine image, given in creation and distorted in the fall, will be fully revealed and restored at the consummation of the new creation—i.e., the resurrection in the new heavens and earth. Thus, Gentry rightly argues that Christ's proclamation of the kingdom (Mark 1:14–15) “is nothing less than the message we already find in Genesis 1:26–27.”¹⁵

As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, the New Testament emphasizes the renewal of the divine image through the application of Christ's work in reconciling man to God. Gentry corrects the substantive view of the divine image by contending that the qualities of man—for example, spirituality, rationality, our ethical disposition, etc.—are not isolated elements of the image, but rather covenantal terms describing mankind's (vertical) covenant relationship to God that Christ has renewed through his new covenant work. Progressive covenantalism, therefore, rightly finds value in the ontological, functional, and relational views of the divine image, but contends that a proper definition of the *imago Dei* must be grounded in exegesis and biblical theology, particularly the progression of the biblical covenants. Critical to the discussion of the divine image in the present debate, therefore, is defining terms (i.e., covenant, relationship, love) in light of the Bible's own presentation and categories, not trajectory hermeneutics. That being said, I will now offer a critique of and rejoinder to revisionist

¹⁴Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 85–91.

¹⁵Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201.

anthropology before examining the concepts of orientation and identity, and then closing with an examination of the ecclesiological implications in this debate.

Imago Dei and covenant. There are several problems inherent to the theological anthropology espoused by revisionists. First, Vines overemphasizes orientation to the point of collapsing the horizontal aspect of covenant love solely to the marriage relationship, as well as conflating categories, specifically the divine image with the typological picture of human marriage. Vines argues that “covenant-keeping capacity is essential to who we are as creatures made in God’s image.”¹⁶ Forbidding covenant love between same-sex individuals or encouraging celibacy denies them opportunity for sanctification and corrodes “the core sense of worth they should have as people created in God’s image.”¹⁷ This perspective, however, does not align with the biblical truth that the image of God flourishes only in the context of covenant faithfulness to God and humanity, which entails sexual fidelity on the Bible’s terms. The horizontal aspect of covenant love is predicated on a right relationship and love expressed to God by covenant faithfulness and obedience. Vines seems committed to finding the core of human identity primarily in sexual expression rather than in terms of the Bible’s understanding of covenant sonship.¹⁸ Up to this point, however, Vines has forcefully argued that heterosexual marriage is not necessary for a male and female to image God. Why, then, is heterosexual marriage unnecessary for heterosexual persons to rightly image God, but same-sex marriage appears necessary for same-sex individuals to rightly image God? Scripture forbidding a certain kind of relationship is not the same as Scripture forbidding

¹⁶Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 156.

¹⁷Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 156.

¹⁸I will explore this idea further in the next section, but for now, it seems that Vines’ understanding of the relational component of the *imago Dei* is primarily, if not exclusively, centered in sexual relationships. This idea may explain Vines’ vociferous rejection of gay celibacy.

relationships entirely. More specifically, Scripture forbidding same-sex marriage relationships is not the same as Scripture forbidding intimate relationships between people of the same sex (1 Sam 18:1–5), nor is it the same as forbidding same-sex sexually attracted people the opportunity to express sexual desire in the context of heterosexual marriage.¹⁹ The opportunity for intimate relationship (horizontal aspect of the *imago Dei*) still exists for those people who experience same-sex attraction though they may not express said intimacy through same-sex sexual desire and behavior. Unless Vines wants to argue that sexual behavior is necessary for imaging God (he denies this point elsewhere), his argument falls flat.²⁰ Conversely, as a married man, I can still image God rightly by relating to women other than my wife, even though I may not express that relational intimacy with these women through sexual desire and behavior. On this point, Vines seems to confuse imaging God with imaging the relationship between Christ and the church. Heterosexual marriage exclusively and necessarily images the one-flesh relationship between Christ and the church, but heterosexual marriage is not necessary for male and female to equally image God. As Hoekema has rightly argued, “Jesus

¹⁹Same-sex attracted Christians may not possess the sexual desire for heterosexual marriage, but a lack of desire does not equate to a lack of opportunity for expressing sexuality in the context of God’s prescribed means. An objection to this point is that same-sex attracted people find heterosexual marriage as repulsive as heterosexual people find homosexual behavior. This argument only demonstrates the extent of the noetic effects of sin, not a need for redefining the marriage relationship or contravening the plain sense of Scripture.

²⁰Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, 153. Vines rightly argues that Jesus is the clearest picture of someone imaging God fully apart from marriage and sexual expression. Cf. James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Pub., 2000), 14–15; Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 58. DeYoung and Gagnon both press sexual complementarity too far, with DeYoung arguing that it is impossible for male to reflect the image of God apart from female. See Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 77. Hoekema, like Vines, points to Jesus to disprove DeYoung’s assertion. Hoekema argues that marriage certainly “reveals and illustrates more fully than any other human institution the polarity and interdependence of the man-woman relationship. But it does not do so in an exclusive sense.” Hoekema rightly contends for a broader relational component in the divine image—i.e., man and woman were made as relational beings and no one can be truly human apart from relationships with other people, including, but not limited to, marriage. I would push this point further to argue that the complementarity of male and female, while not the essence of the divine image, is necessary to properly image the Christ-church relationship.

himself, the ideal man, was never married. And in the life to come, when humanity will be totally perfected, there will be no marriage (Matt 22:30).”²¹

Likewise, Vines’ use of “covenant” clearly distorts both aspects of covenant love and obedience inherent to the *imago Dei*. As has been demonstrated by the examination of the biblical data in previous chapters, the *imago Dei* and “covenant” are intimately related. God created mankind as his image bearers in a covenant relationship that expressed itself in a vertical aspect (obedience and faithful love towards Yahweh) and a horizontal aspect (love towards neighbor). Vines rightly argues that we must relate to one another covenantally, but he does not define this covenant relationship in biblical terms and categories, possibly because of his commitment to social construction via poststructuralism. While revisionists argue that same-sex monogamous love expresses this horizontal aspect of covenant love (while also reflecting the vertical aspect), previous chapters have made the point clear that covenant love, holiness, righteousness, and justice are expressed solely in terms of obedience to God’s revelation, specifically his Word. In Scripture, vertical aspects of this covenant love are expressed in terms of a man’s faithful commitment to God’s law and his faithful reflection of God’s character towards others. Revisionists consistently attempt to undermine Scripture with claims of misogyny and patriarchy, as well as appeals to the authority of gay experience in modern culture. Old and New Testament commands, however, consistently ground sexual purity in Genesis 1–2 as the normative pattern for sexual ethics (e.g., Lev 18:21–23; 1 Cor 6:16–18). Genesis 1–2 also grounds the commands prohibiting God’s covenant people from engaging in the perverse sexual behavior present in the surrounding cultures (e.g., Lev

²¹Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 77. I would slightly alter Hoekema’s statement to “and in the life to come . . . there will *only exist the marriage between Christ and his people*.” His point, however, remains the same. Imaging God does not entail sexual expression or marriage, nor do (God-given) limitations on certain human relationships tarnish the image of God in people. The image of God is not tarnished in someone when he is precluded from any and all forms of illicit sexual desire and behavior (e.g., fornication, adultery, incest, bestiality, pedophilia, etc.). The divine image is tarnished, rather, when someone gives himself to illicit sexual desire and behavior, including same-sex relationships.

18:1–3, 22–30; Deut 12:29–32; 1 Cor 5:9–13; 1 John 2:1–17). Heterosexual marriage, though not necessary to image God, functioned prophetically to image the covenant love between God and his people. Same-sex marriage fails to adequately demonstrate the horizontal aspect of the *imago Dei*, and it undermines the picture of the covenant love inherent to the vertical aspect of the *imago Dei*.

The close connection between Genesis 1–2 sexual ethics and covenant fidelity to Yahweh intimate that no person can seriously claim genuine love for God and neighbor if they are actively participating in sexual behavior contrary to God’s creation design. Contrary to revisionist claims, same-sex monogamy cannot reflect covenant love towards God or neighbor because God has defined covenant love and has revealed that the appropriate (covenantal) contexts for godly romantic love and sexual expression is heterosexual marriage. In the same way that Vines and Brownson contend (without biblical evidence) that incest does not faithfully reflect covenant love because it is a distortion of canonical sexual ethics, so also same-sex relationships do not faithfully reflect covenant love because they are distortions of the creation and canonical witnesses. Rather than imaging a church lovingly submitted to Christ, same-sex relationships image mankind committed to its own self-interests, which is not love, but rather idolatry.

Jesus Christ is the true image of God because Jesus alone gives a picture of faithful, perfect sonship. Christ’s work reflects the covenant righteousness of God that leads to life, unlike Adam’s covenant disobedience which led to death (Rom 5:18–21). Jesus Christ as the obedient Last Adam, Abrahamic offspring, true Israel, and Davidic son encapsulates the superiority of the Son who has perfectly obeyed the covenant commands, fulfilled the covenant blessings, and endured the covenant curses on behalf of his people. Though he was celibate during his earthly ministry, Jesus enjoys a permanent, monogamous, and complementary marriage with his church which defines the context for true covenant love in the marital union. When the progression of the biblical covenants are properly understood in light of their *christotelic* function, it is clear that “covenant”

must be defined in terms of biblical revelation, not social construction.²² Christ does not redefine covenant terms, but rather reunites God and his covenant people and reestablishes “the immediate and personal communion with his people that Adam and Eve enjoyed with him in the garden of Eden.”²³

Gnostic duality. Revisionists assume a defective anthropological dualism when pressing the church on the legitimacy of same-sex marriage. Brownson, Vines, and Gushee implicitly argue for some form of Platonic or Gnostic duality where the essential self is identified with the immaterial aspects of the person (i.e., same-sex orientation or desire). This revisionist presupposition has been astutely recognized by Robert P. George and Nancy Pearcey.²⁴ Gnostic duality degrades the body and identifies the person exclusively with the “spirit or mind or psyche. The self is a spiritual or mental substance; the body, its merely material vehicle. You and I, as persons, are identified entirely with the spirit or mind or psyche, and not at all (or in only the most highly attenuated sense) with the body that we occupy (or are somehow ‘associated with’) and use.”²⁵ George rightly recognizes that this form of Gnosticism undergirds revisionist views of marriage. Gnostic duality argues that since the immaterial aspect of man is the true self, the spirit drives the corporeal vehicle of the human person. Therefore, gay sexual activity reflects the superiority and priority of same-sex sexual desire and its demands upon a human

²²Revisionists have deconstructed the concept of “covenant,” and reconstructed the term in light of modern sexual identity. Poststructuralism and social construction will be addressed in the next section on sexual orientation and identity. Covenant, like marriage, is defined by the Creator, not creation.

²³Nathan Collins, *All but Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender, and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 214.

²⁴See Robert P. George, “Contrasting Views of Marriage: The Need for a Defining Principle,” *The Public Discourse*, July 2014, accessed April 10, 2018, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/07/13526/>; Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 155–92.

²⁵Robert P. George, “Gnostic Liberalism,” *First Things*, December 2016, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2016/12/gnostic-liberalism>.

body not created to act out same-sex behavior. This Gnostic duality, however, is set in stark contrast to the biblical depiction of genuine personhood tied to a holistic dualism (Rom 1:28; cf. 1 Cor 6:13).²⁶

The material aspect (physical body) of the person is an essential part of human identity (*imago Dei*), a point clearly demonstrated in Genesis 1–2 and fulfilled in the incarnation of the Son.²⁷ As George states, “If a man ruins your car, he vandalizes your property, but if he slices your leg, he injures *you*.”²⁸ When Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus, he states, “Go your way; your faith has made *you* well [emphasis added]” (Mark 10:52 ESV). Paul affirms this point when he teaches the Corinthians that if the bodily resurrection is not true, then “not even Christ has been raised” (1 Cor 15:16). The human body is not simply a mechanical vehicle created for the expression of the human mind, will, intellect, or soul.²⁹ If Christ’s body has not been raised from the dead, Paul warns, then the person of Christ has not been raised. The human body is an essential component of the human person, providing an explanation for why the intermediate state between Christ’s first and second coming is not Christ’s eschatological aim. The consummation of

²⁶Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 37.

²⁷Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 559–60. Bavinck notes, “Just as God, though he is spirit, is nevertheless the Creator of a material world that may be termed his revelation and manifestation, with this revelation coming to its climax in the incarnation, so also the spirit of man is designed for the body as its manifestation. The incarnation of God is proof that human beings and not angels are created in the image of God, and that the human body is an essential component of that image” (560). It is also relevant that individuals in gay unions cannot image God’s power to create through biological procreation.

²⁸Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 24.

²⁹The human body as a mechanical vehicle is gaining traction in the modern world with the rise of sex robots. If the human body is simply a mechanism for sexual behavior, what would prevent someone expressing themselves sexually through another mechanical vehicle? See George Harrison, “Sex Robot Makers Claim Lonely Customers are Marrying their Dolls,” *New York Post*, August 6, 2017, accessed July 12, 2018, <https://nypost.com/2017/08/06/sex-robot-makers-claim-lonely-customers-are-marrying-their-dolls/>.

human embodiment in Christ is the new creation with the redeemed people of God enjoying their fully-glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:35–49).

How is this point relevant to the same-sex marriage debate? The normative pattern for the human person is that he or she exists as a sexed individual with a male or female reproductive system with its corresponding organs.³⁰ Revisionists contend that the same-sex oriented person's immaterial will, with its corresponding same-sex sexual desires, takes preeminence over the physical body God has given to this same person. The embodied same-sex oriented person must subject their physical body to participate in same-sex sexual activity which does not reflect the divine design for the human body. For example, male same-sex behavior places an unnatural and unhealthy demand upon unrelated, non-complementary human body parts (e.g., penile penetration of the anus in male-male sex), while female same-sex behavior requires artificial tool(s) to simulate male penetration of the vagina due to the absence of male genitalia. The penis and anus, in particular, were clearly not designed for commingling because the sole function of male sperm is to travel through the vaginal canal, cervix, uterus, and fallopian tube for the fertilization of the female's egg. The anus, rectum, and colon, on the other hand, were divinely intended to function as critical components of the human digestive system, not a receptacle for sperm. The anus, rectum, and colon were created to work together to expel bodily waste (stool) from the human body after digestion, not be penetrated by male genitalia.³¹ Same-sex sexual desire, when working itself out in sexual behavior, compels

³⁰There are certainly individuals who, by virtue of the fall, suffer from genetic conditions that distort the created (binary) sexual characteristics (e.g., intersex, gonadal dysgenesis, etc.). In the same way that the (non-moral) condition/disability of blindness does not serve as the rule for normal human sight, these distorted (genetic) sexed exceptions to God's creation do not serve as the normative rule for human sexuality and anatomical complementarity. The sexual exception does not become the sexual rule. A theology of sexual ethics must be grounded upon the normative pattern set by God in creation, understood in light of the effects of the fall and redemption, and the anticipatory of new creation realities.

³¹Not only is anal sex contrary to natural, biological organ functions, it is "the riskiest sexual behavior for getting and transmitting HIV for men and women." See "HIV Risk Behaviors," Center for Disease Control, June 2014, accessed June 27, 2018,

the human body to function in ways contrary to divine intention (i.e., nature), creating and/or reflecting an unbiblical (and harmful) anthropological dualism. As mentioned in the third chapter's exegesis of Romans 1, Brownson's contention that Romans 1 does not refer to those people who have a "natural" same-sex orientation fails to adequately exegete Paul's text in light of the Bible's own categories, including its theological anthropology.

Anatomical complementarity. The Bible, however, stands opposed to this Gnostic duality by teaching that male and female sexual organs were created by God as anatomically complementary for the express purposes of fulfilling the one-flesh union (Gen 2:24) and the creation and Noahic commands (Gen 1:28; 9:1) via procreation, marital intimacy, and spousal enjoyment and pleasure. Not only has God revealed his divine will for human sexuality through special revelation, he has also clearly revealed his divine intentions for human sexuality through general revelation (i.e., the human body—Rom 1:26–28). Pearcey rightly argues that same-sex marriage advocates have created an unbiblical dichotomy between biology and personhood, severing the connection between biological sex, gender, and desire.³² Non-Christian queer theorists have rejected the body-mind unity as a necessity for genuine personhood, but revisionists cannot assume this atheistic framework. Revisionists, due to their professed commitment to biblical authority, need to formulate their view of true personhood and mankind's

<http://content.wkhealth.com/linkback/openurl?sid=WKPTLP:landingpage&an=00002030-201406190-00014>. It is not solely gay anal sex that is particularly dangerous, but also all forms anal sex, including heterosexual. See "The Consequences of Heterosexual Anal Sex for Women," Medical Institute for Sexual Health, accessed June 27, 2018, <https://www.medinstitute.org/2016/08/the-consequences-of-heterosexual-anal-sex-for-women/>, <https://www.medinstitute.org/2016/08/the-consequences-of-heterosexual-anal-sex-for-women/>. The Medical Institute staff write, "The information provided shows receptive anal intercourse to be a very high-risk sexual activity for women as well as men: fecal incontinence, anal cancer, HIV infection, etc. Awareness of these substantial health risks can enable women of all ages to emphatically say no to anal intercourse."

³²Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 159–60.

psychosomatic unity in light of God’s revelation, particularly creation.³³ Revisionists are attempting, however, to unite postmodern poststructuralism (i.e., social construction for sexuality) and biblical revelation—two worldviews completely antithetical to one another with competing foundations of authority (i.e., human autonomy vs. theonomy).³⁴

Anatomical complementarity is a core component of the one-flesh union and clearly demonstrated in God’s command for Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). Revisionists do not deny the contention that God created the world, including the anatomy of the human body, to function in particular ways. Brownson denies that procreative and anatomical complementarity form any basis for rejecting same-sex relationships, arguing that anatomical complementarity “is really a modern concept rather than a category that actually shaped ethical thought about sex in the ancient world.”³⁵ Gagnon, however, has ably demonstrated anatomical complementarity was important in understanding “natural” sexual relations in ancient cultures, particularly Judaism.³⁶ Genesis 2:24 teaches that marriage is a one-flesh union between husband and wife that involves nothing less than the sexual and anatomical union of two embodied persons. This embodiment entails and assumes anatomical complementarity because of the creation commands (Gen 1:28). This biological and sexual union is grounded in the normative pattern of Genesis 1–2.

³³See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Donna J. Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

³⁴I am using “theonomy” in its general sense—God ruling over creation.

³⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 243. Brownson begs the question with this assertion and certainly does not demonstrate that anatomical complementarity is a recent concept. It seems that if anatomical complementarity were explicitly present in the ancient texts Brownson addresses, he would relegate this category to ANE misogyny as he has readily done with gender complementarity and patriarchy.

³⁶Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 169–76.

Procreation, while not the essence of marriage, is certainly normal and indicative of the divine design for male and female sexual organs for use in the context of heterosexual marriage.³⁷ When human reproductive systems, unencumbered by the sinful effects of the fall, act according to their nature, these systems function normally (and primarily) to reproduce image-bearers in accordance with the divine blessing/command of Genesis 1:28.³⁸ While sexual intercourse serves a variety of purposes, including mutual pleasure, kinship, and one-flesh sexual union, it is clear that the reproductive systems in male and female were divinely fashioned to function according to procreative purposes. While gay sex, in all its variations, may be pleasurable to its participants, none of the God-given reproductive systems of same-sex couples can ever reach their *telos* in procreation.³⁹ In short, gay sex is completely unnatural and thus will always lack the capacity of procreation.

While procreation in heterosexual marriage is now only a normal outcome because of sin's effects (e.g., infertility), this normalcy does not alter the normative nature and function of the reproductive organs themselves. As argued previously, the reproductive organs are a vital part of the physical body, and the physical body constitutes an equal part of the human person (coupled with the soul).⁴⁰ A male born

³⁷Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, 24–28.

³⁸Collins, *All but Invisible*, 214–15.

³⁹This *telos* should be understood in terms of both biology and typology. Gay unions cannot reach their biological *telos* in procreation, nor can gay unions reach their typological *telos* in imaging the Christ-church relationship. Same-sex marriages cannot produce children (1 Cor 7:14; Eph 6:1–2), nor can unrepentant same-sex couples produce spiritual offspring through the new birth (1 Cor 6:9; 1 John 3:4–10).

⁴⁰Revisionists may object to this point by (wrongly) arguing that this traditionalist argument entails that a man with a missing body part is less of an image-bearer than a man who has all of his fully-functioning body parts. This rebuttal, however, would only demonstrate that revisionists see the value intrinsic to the *imago Dei* solely in light of its corporeal or functional aspects, rather than holistically. There is no doubt, however, that Scripture teaches that the *imago Dei* will be fully restored and consummated in the new creation. This reality entails whole, glorified resurrection bodies. Part of the reason why it is horrific to see loss of limbs from war, accidents, genetics, etc. is because image-bearers know that the reality of missing limbs reflects a world that has gone wrong, and is in need of redemption (Rom 8:18–25).

without genitalia does not alter the nature or function of male genitalia, but rather reflects the nature of sin and its destructive results over everything in creation, including human biology.⁴¹ Similarly, infertile couples do not alter the nature or function of procreation, but in their sexual fidelity and longing for children, they clearly reflect the divine (procreative) intention of creation. There *would be* physical offspring from this marital union (in accordance with the creation covenant) had the fall not occurred. Revisionists do not debate the context for sexual behavior (i.e., covenant marriage), but they do debate the purpose and nature of the reproductive organs necessary for this sexual behavior. Same-sex couples always fail to procreate because every same-sex sexual relationship divorces the human body's reproductive system from its normative function: reproduction. Put simply, the penis (reproduction) was not intended to penetrate the anus (digestion).⁴² Despite the distortions and evil brought by sin, the nature of sexual reproduction clearly reflects divine design so that mankind is morally culpable when rejecting or redefining sexual expression (Rom 1:18–28). The revisionist contention for same-sex sexual activity is clearly a result of the fall, not the created order, because it fails to properly image the Christ-church relationship, fails to fulfill the creation command of marital procreation, fails to accurately reflect and fulfill the divine intentions for the human body, and grounds human sexuality solely in the self-serving pursuit of pleasure. In fact, the redemptive work of God in Christ Jesus has been made possible because God brought the promised offspring solely through the natural means of

⁴¹This reality could be considered natural evil (compared to moral evil). A man born without a penis is no less a male and no less an image-bearer. One must not confuse ontology and function at this point. A man without a penis is still valuable as a male in God's eyes, though the hope of the resurrection presupposes that there are fallen realities (including this missing body part) that need to be eschatologically addressed.

⁴²The anus does not have multiple purposes (digestion) unlike the penis (reproduction and waste expulsion). Similarly, the vagina has one purpose (reproduction). A likely revisionist rebuttal at this point would question the legitimacy of oral sex in heterosexual marriage. Scripture, however, contends that the human mouth is an instrumental part of sexual intercourse (Song 1:2), including heterosexual oral sex (Song 2:3, 4:11–5:1).

heterosexual procreation (Gen 3:15, 15:4–6, 2 Sam 7:12–13). If procreation is jettisoned as one of the intended functions of marriage, this unbiblical contention would undermine the importance God has placed on heterosexual marriage and procreation throughout the progression of the redemptive storyline.

Typological structures. Brownson unsuccessfully attempts to jettison procreation almost entirely from the act of marital sexual intercourse in order to legitimize same-sex relationships which can never, in any context, produce children through same-sex intercourse.⁴³ He points to eunuchs and infertile heterosexual couples as examples of people who are unable to produce children. These examples are not an argument for the legitimacy of same-sex relationships, but rather examples of how Christ has fulfilled and escalated the command of procreation via the new birth in the new covenant. Brownson's rebuttals ultimately underscore his misunderstandings of biblical theology and typology (particularly regarding marriage and offspring).⁴⁴ As was

⁴³Gay and lesbian couples have the opportunity to adopt or attempt in vitro fertilization (IVF), but neither of these options can be accomplished through same-sex sexual intercourse in the context of a same-sex relationship. Gay and lesbian couples can adopt and/or attempt IVF solely through heterosexual means. Donors must be involved to make offspring possible for a same-sex couple. In short, there is no natural, divinely-designed means of same-sex couples having children apart from the divinely-designed means of heterosexual anatomical complementarity. Revisionists often point to infertile heterosexual couples as a rebuttal to this particular point, but this objection falls flat. Infertile heterosexual couples, when engaging in sexual intercourse in the context of marriage, are acting according to their biological and anatomical complementarity. In the same way that a person is not morally culpable for congenital heart disease though the condition is present only because of the fall, there is no culpability on the part of an infertile couple if sinful fallenness has contorted the reproductive system(s) so that though the married couple regularly engages in intercourse, no pregnancy occurs. In this situation, IVF can serve to correct or repair this infertility by taking sperm from the husband and an egg from the wife. This possibility is not present in same-sex couples. Had sin not entered the world, infertility would not be an issue for heterosexual marriages. Had sin not entered the world, there would still be no possible means by which same-sex couples could produce children from their sexual relationship (of course, same-sex couples would not exist if sin had not entered the world!).

⁴⁴Foreigners and eunuchs will enjoy realities better than physical offspring (Isa 56:1–8) because these covenant-keeping people will gain spiritual offspring through the new birth, have a lasting new covenant inheritance sealed by the Spirit, and they will now be allowed into the holy presence of God through the new temple, Christ. Brownson misunderstands the typological connections and new covenant fulfillment of these Old Testament promises.

demonstrated in previous chapters, “offspring” has reached its typological fulfillment in Christ and Christians experience the new birth by virtue of Christ’s new covenant work. If marriage and offspring are understood typologically, not only do same-sex relationships not image the Christ-church union (due to sameness and a failure to properly “unite”), but same-sex relationships can never image the new birth of Christian “offspring” because of the impossibility of their producing natural children. Same-sex relationships are contrary to the nature of old creation and their typological depictions are contrary to the nature of the eschatological new creation. While the bent of procreation is ultimately *christotelic*, natural procreation continues to image the new birth of the new creation because earthly things image heavenly realities (John 3:1–15). In the same way, the earthly “family” is not abrogated or redefined simply because Scripture teaches how family finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ and God’s redeemed family.⁴⁵ Human families (and marriage) still exist today though they will not exist in the same way in the new creation. Similarly, offspring and marriage have not been abrogated or redefined by the work of Christ, but continue as typological pictures until their terminus in the new heavens and new earth.⁴⁶ Procreation reaching its typological *telos* in Christ does not nullify or redefine biological procreation in the present creation, but rather prophetically unveils the new creation realities to which earthly offspring point.

⁴⁵How else will there be “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev 7:9 ESV) unless procreation continues as a normative reality until the new creation?

⁴⁶The same point could be made with understanding the typological fulfillment of “kingship” in Christ. From Adam to David, God was progressively unfolding OT typological connections that find their NT fulfillment in Christ. The divine intention for kingship is properly understood in light of Christ, but while Christ is King, his kingship has not redefined or revoked the existence of human kings today (e.g., King Philippe of Belgium or King Salman of Saudi Arabia). Christians today rightly understand true kingship by realizing that current human kings depict the eschatological rule of Christ and their authority is ultimately subsumed under the ultimate authority of King Jesus. These realities, however, do not eliminate the existence of kings nor have they somehow redefined kingship. Marriage and procreation finding their typological fulfillment in Christ does not rescind their God-given creation purposes today.

As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, gender, anatomical, and procreative complementarity are essential to the biblical storyline, necessary for humanity's obedience to God's command to be "fruitful and multiply" in the creation and Noahic covenants, Abraham's pursuit of the promised offspring in the Abrahamic covenant, Israel's obedience to God's command to be "fruitful and multiply" (Gen 35:11, cf. Exod 1:7), and the promise of a son in the Davidic covenant. Non-Christians are "in Adam" (Rom 5:12–21), condemned under the demands of the creation covenant, and under God's judgment because of sin. Christians are no longer guilty before God by virtue of their new covenant union with Christ. Christ's new covenant has superseded the previous biblical covenants by Christ fulfilling them as the perfectly obedient Last Adam, true Israel, and Son of David. Christ's work, however, does not redefine marriage (Gen 2:24), but rather fulfills it through the complementarity of the Christ-church marriage (Eph 5:31–32).

Sexual Orientation and Identity

The introduction of categories of sexual orientation and sexual identity is a recent historical phenomenon.⁴⁷ Revisionists contend that cultures during the premodern period emphasized sexual behavior to the exclusion of sexual orientation, primarily because premodern people had no framework for understanding sexual orientation and identity.⁴⁸ In this section, I demonstrate that revisionists have overemphasized sexual desire to the point of grounding it in the essence of human identity, while also excusing

⁴⁷Collins, *All but Invisible*, 133–41. Collins gives a brief, helpful overview of these ideas, tracing sexual philosophy through the pre-modern, Enlightenment, sexual revolution, and postmodern periods.

⁴⁸This contention is false, as I have demonstrated in previous chaps. Also, see Preston Sprinkle, "Romans 1 and Homosexuality," a review of *Bible, Gender, Sexuality* by James Brownson, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24, no. 4 (2014): 515–28; Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality is Not Just an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

same-sex sexual behavior despite the plain teaching of Scripture and its unanimous condemnation throughout Jewish and Christian history.

Vines assumes the immutability of same-sex sexual orientation, and though Gushee and Brownson remain silent on the issue, their works seem to communicate this same point. Is sexual orientation helpful as an identifier for Christians in this debate, and does this modern concept accurately reflect the biblical realities and truths that evangelical revisionists profess? Many evangelical traditionalists do not believe so, though a few have found some aspects of the terminology helpful.⁴⁹ If one assumes the APA definition, today's concept of sexual orientation is not compatible with the Christian faith.⁵⁰

A Progressive Covenantal Critique

There are at least two problems with the idea of same-sex orientation and its implications: (1) it sees sexual desire and expression as essential parts of human personhood and identity; and, (2) it assumes that same-sex desire and behavior are natural (i.e., God-given) and unchanging. I will address both points individually, demonstrating

⁴⁹Butterfield rejects the use of sexual orientation. See Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Pub., 2015); Denny Burk and Heath Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2015). Cf. Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013). See also Collins, *All but Invisible*. Collins attempts to strike a middle ground by "reimagining orientation" and contending that personhood should be understood as oriented towards beauty, not sexuality.

⁵⁰The APA definition of sexual orientation encapsulates modern culture's views on sexual identity. See American Psychological Association, "Answers to Your Questions For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality," accessed July 3, 2018, <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.aspx>. The APA writes, "Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors and membership in a community of others who share those attractions." The APA argues that sexual orientation exists along a spectrum and heavily implies that whatever your orientation, it is immutable.

that each fails to properly reflect biblical categories and each undermines the new covenant salvation inaugurated in the person and work of Christ.

Personhood, identity, and social construction. Revisionists contend that same-sex sexual orientation is an essential part of human personhood and identity. Orientation has become so central to human identity that it is now discriminatory and harmful in many circles to call gay people to repent of desires which are completely natural to them. As I have already demonstrated, however, this contention assumes an unbiblical duality that diminishes human embodiment by making the body a vehicle for the true person. Revisionists implicitly reject physical embodiment as an essential aspect of the *imago Dei* because same-sex sexual desire works contrary to the divinely-crafted human body, along with several of its particular functions. The incarnation, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus Christ clearly demonstrate the *christotelic* significance of embodiment to the *image Dei* first outlined in Genesis 1:26–28.⁵¹ Pearcey and Collins both convincingly demonstrate that sexual orientation or sexual identity as an essential part of the divine image is grounded in philosophical ideas pre-dating the Enlightenment.⁵² Pearcey rightly argues that modern claims of sexual identity are grounded in the transcendental idealism of Immanuel Kant.⁵³ Kant’s distinction between phenomena (the appearance of things in our experience) and noumena (the things in

⁵¹Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 194–95. Cortez rightly argues that the embodiment of Jesus was central to his incarnation and his maleness was not normative for humanity.

⁵²See Collins, *All But Invisible*, 203–69; Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 130–227.

⁵³Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 162–66. Pearcey rightly recognizes that Kant’s philosophy built upon the foundation of René Descartes. Descartes’ “turn to the subject” (i.e., *cogito, ergo sum*) unseated divine revelation as the grounding for epistemology and vested this authority in human (autonomous) reason. See also John M. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2015), 251–70. Frame rightly argues that Kant’s philosophy consistently applies Descartes’ reason to the degree that divine revelation is subject to autonomous rationality. Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 265.

themselves, i.e., “objective world independent of our interpretation”) subjectivized knowledge and taught that the human mind conforms objects and actively constructs knowledge. Frame rightly argues that Kant’s nature-freedom scheme “replaces the grace of God with its virtual opposite, the freedom of autonomous man. In Kant’s religion, it is the freedom of man, not the grace of God, that saves us. For Kant, man replaces God: in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and religion.”⁵⁴

Building upon Kant’s framework (as well as Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud),⁵⁵ deconstructionists (e.g., Jacques Derrida) have rejected objective truth and reduced “all human knowledge to mental constructions,” particularly as it relates to sexuality.⁵⁶ Michel Foucault notes that before the nineteenth century, sodomy was considered purely in terms of criminal sexual behavior, but now the sodomizer has been transformed from a “juridicial subject” to “a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.”⁵⁷ Central to Foucault’s observation is the contention that sexual patterns and human identities are socially constructed, and society has the power to deconstruct these patterns and identities, particularly through language. Over

⁵⁴Frame, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 269. Frame notes that Kant’s nature-freedom scheme replaced Scripture’s scheme of creation-fall-redemption-new creation.

⁵⁵Collins, *All but Invisible*, 135–36. Collins notes that Freud tied personhood to sexuality and it was shortly after Freud’s influence that sexual orientation became an identity marker (135). See also Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 93–112. Butterfield traces the philosophical stream that influenced Freud, particularly German Romanticism and its emphasis on individual experience as an epistemological foundation.

⁵⁶Deconstructionists rejected Kant’s deistic commitments. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 164. Pearcey perceptively argues, “Today postmodernism takes Kant’s divide to its logical conclusion. It treats the material world—including the body—largely as a construction of the human mind. There is no created order that we are morally obligated to honor or respect. . . . A person involved in same-sex relations may not consciously accept postmodern ethics. But our actions can logically imply ideas we have not clearly thought through. Same-sex practice entails the postmodern view that our identity is defined by our feelings and desires; that we may use our bodies in ways that contradict our biological structure” (165).

⁵⁷Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978), 43. See also Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 97–98.

several hundred years in Western culture, divine revelation was jettisoned as the basis for epistemology, and as a logical conclusion, sexual ethics and human identity began to morph. In its place, human reason and experience replaced divine revelation as the determiner of reality, personhood and identity, and sexual ethics. The implications for the present day are tremendous.

Revisionists contend for a perspective of sexual orientation and identity that is grounded entirely in a worldview radically opposed to divine revelation. Revisionists contend, along with Foucault, that prior to modern times there was no knowledge or understanding of sexual orientation as a category of identity. The problem inherent to this assertion is that Foucault, along with other postmodern theorists, contend that sexuality and human identity are socially constructed and deconstructed, not God-given and divinely ordained. This idea is clearly perceived in modern culture, particularly in the LGBT community. For example, the gay community now identifies by the acronym LGBTQIA+ and gay activists at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee have a list of 52 transgender pronouns for English use, depending upon how an individual transgendered person self-identifies.⁵⁸

Denny Burk and Rosaria Butterfield rightly argue that Scripture teaches that all desire, including sexual desire, is teleological “and its moral character is determined by

⁵⁸See “LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center,” UC-Davis Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center, accessed July 4, 2018, <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary.html>. LGBTQIA+ includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and the myriad of other sexual communities that fall under this sexual identification umbrella. See also “Gender Pronouns | LGBT Resource Center,” UW-Milwaukee Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center, accessed July 4, 2018, <https://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/support/gender-pronouns/>. More than seven sexual identity groups and 52 pronouns for a self-identified transgendered person clearly indicates that revisionists have rejected the binary, God-given “male” and “female” distinction of Gen 1. The fact that these sexual identity groups and pronoun lists are growing numerically serves to demonstrate that LGBT communities, including revisionists, have rejected divine revelation as the basis for human identity and personhood. Revisionists have implicitly attempted to unseat God as Creator in order to make others (or themselves) in their own sexual image, which is another form of idolatry. Social construction logically extends to every individual, entailing that the ways of constructing identity and reality for 8 billion people are nearly limitless.

its object.”⁵⁹ Butterfield rightly contends that Foucault was instrumental in creating this fictional identity of “sexual orientation” by rejecting the divine image and making sexuality the “organizing frame, the basic building block of selfhood.”⁶⁰ While Scripture describes desire as always teleological, the APA’s definition of sexual orientation has proven expansive by including nonsexual affection as a part of sexual identity and continuing the shift of defining human identity in terms of social construction, not divine revelation.⁶¹ Butterfield reflects upon her own experiences during the 1990s as a lesbian poststructuralist, ably demonstrating how deconstructionism, when applied to sexual orientation, is self-refuting.⁶²

Revisionists are attempting to build their argument for same-sex orientation (e.g., Paul was unaware of sexual orientation) upon an epistemological foundation which completely rejects the truth, authority, and ethical claims of Scripture. Contrary to revisionists and postmodern philosophers, human identity and personhood is found exclusively in covenant relationship with God and mankind, with man existing as God’s servant kings and faithful covenant-keepers. Butterfield rightly contends, “If we privilege

⁵⁹Denny Burk and Rosaria Butterfield, “Learning to Hate Our Sin without Hating Ourselves,” Public Discourse blog, July 7, 2018, accessed July 5, 2018, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/07/22066/>. This reality would entail that same-sex sexual desire itself is evil because its object (same-sex sexual behavior) is evil.

⁶⁰Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 97–98.

⁶¹Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2002), 182. Hill rightly argues that their deconstructionist framework demands sexual orientation include bestiality because orientation is a matter of personal preference, and the object of sexual desire and affection cannot be limited by the nature of that object.

⁶²Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 108–10. Butterfield’s LGBT community saw immutable sexual orientation as patronizing because of their commitment to understanding sexuality as a social construct. See also Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631–60. Butterfield was initially influenced by the late feminist, Adrienne Rich, who argued that all women exist on a lesbian continuum. This lesbian continuum destroyed any notion of sexual orientation, God-ordained gender, and sexual essentialism. Interestingly, when Vines argues for same-sex orientation (a postmodern construct), the only grounding he has is the Bible’s sexual essentialism that poststructuralism rejects! Same-sex revisionists are left without an epistemological foundation, suspended in mid-air.

secular categories of personhood over and against God's, we are doubting the Bible's ability to understand humanity, and we are denying to ourselves our Maker's instruction Categories we use to represent image bearers of a holy God matter."⁶³ As has been demonstrated previously, divine intention and authority, not social construction, forms the basis for Genesis 1:26–28.

Male and female created in God's image in covenant relationship to God and one another is the context for pre-fall humanity. Adam and Eve do not construct their own view of sexuality, but rather God gives his unalterable marriage construct to them—a monogamous, heterosexual union—so that mankind would fulfill the creation covenant commands and typologically depict the one-flesh union that Christ shares with his new covenant people. Social construction and deconstruction of sexuality certainly (and only) occurs after the fall (Gen 4:19, 6:1–5), but God renews this covenant command of heterosexual marriage, procreation, and dominion after the fall through the Noachic covenant in Genesis 9:1–17. Marriage (and thus, sexuality) must be rightly understood solely in the context of pre-fall creation so as to understand the Creator's intentions for his institution. Unlike modern sexual theory, the Bible's inaugurated eschatology grounds man's identity in light of his covenant relationship with God (*imago Dei*). More specifically, Christian identity is understood exclusively in light of new covenant union with Christ. True human identity is grounded in the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ who, though being a sexual virgin, was the true image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Thus, Scripture clearly teaches that while marriage and sexuality continue unchanged until the consummation of the new creation, they have reached their anticipatory and prophetic *telos* in Christ.

Nature and immutable orientation. Revisionists contend that same-sex

⁶³Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 96.

sexual desire and behavior are natural and immutable. Not only have I have demonstrated in previous chapters the exegesis of the revisionist case to be found wanting, their assertions are built upon the unbiblical presupposition outlined in the previous point—namely, socially constructed sexual identity. Michael Hill rightly argues that deconstructionism should be understood in the categories of nature and purpose, and that in life “there is no given nature, and no fixed purpose for humans. Rather, humans are beings with free will who can create their own natures and decide upon their own purposes.”⁶⁴ Revisionist ideology reflects this contention, grounding the “nature” of gay sexual desire in God’s creation, arguing that our understanding of the natural order is “subject to change, deepening, and growth over time.”⁶⁵

Thomas Schreiner rightly states, however, that the New Testament writers, as well as their Jewish context, always grounded “nature” in the created order of Genesis 1–2, not in some modern conception of sexual evolution.⁶⁶ The persistent experience of

⁶⁴Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 178. This “nature and purpose” unfolds in similar fashion to Kant’s “nature and freedom.”

⁶⁵Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 247. Brownson uses nearly the exact kind of language as deconstructionists as he continues to describe “nature”: “Other Christians may be more ready to acknowledge that, throughout the natural order, same-sex attraction is a naturally recurring ‘minority’ experience. These Christians may celebrate the way in which, by the providence of God, such ‘queer’ folk can naturally deconstruct the pervasive tendencies of majority voices to become oppressive and exclusionary. In this vision, the inclusion of committed gay and lesbian unions represents, not an accommodation to a sexually broken world, but rather an offbeat redemptive purpose in the new creation. That purpose can destabilize the assumed exclusivity of the heterosexual majority, challenging all of God’s people to discover more deeply the richness of interpersonal communion, beyond socially constructed roles and responsibilities shaped by a heterosexual majority that is too often oblivious to the ways it can oppress minority voices” (253). Brownson’s argument is steeped, not in biblical categories, but in poststructuralist sexual ethics.

⁶⁶Thomas R. Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns: Hermeneutics and Same-Sex Advocacy,” *Journal of Global Christianity* 2, no. 1 (2016): 60–61. It is worth quoting Schreiner at length on this point: “In the Jewish tradition, the word ‘nature,’ when same-sex relations are in view, designates what God intended for males and females. For instance, Josephus (Ag. Ap. 2.24 §199) declares that the marriage of a man and woman is ‘according to nature’ (*kata physin*), and proceeds to say that the Old Testament law demands the death penalty for intercourse between males. Both Philo (Spec. Laws 3.7 §38; cf. Abr. 26 §§133–36) and Josephus (Ag. Ap. 2.37 §273) specifically criticize homosexual relations as ‘contrary to nature’ (*para physin*). The author of the Testament of Naphtali (3.3–4) sees homosexuality as a departure ‘from the order of nature,’ and his appeal to creation in verse 3 reveals that he understands this in

same-sex sexual desire, despite revisionist claims, does not prove that same-sex sexual desire is natural in either the terms of original creation or new creation. If one holds to a biblically-faithful holistic dualism, same-sex sexual desire and behavior prove to be antithetical. The physical body does not simply serve as a conduit for gay sexual desire because there exists no biological, physiological, and anatomical correspondence between same-sex partners.⁶⁷ “Nature” must be understood biblically, particularly in light of creation, covenant relationship, and true image-bearing. Revisionists appeal to experience as the grounding for the immutability of same-sex sexual orientation without addressing the noetic effects of sin, and their sole solution (same-sex monogamy) is presented at the expense of distorting Scripture’s clear teaching on sexual ethics and soteriology.⁶⁸

Scripture, however, presents Jesus as the last Adam, the obedient and true *imago Dei* (Luke 3:23–38; Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:45; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). Christ completely overcomes the disastrous effects of the first Adam’s disobedience, ushering in a new humanity, distinct and separate from the humanity under Adam.⁶⁹ In this way, Christ’s identification as the true image of God reinforces the covenant obedience that undergirds the *imago Dei* present in Genesis 1–2. This distinct humanity that Christ redeems is the first taste of new creation realities, and these soteriological realities have

term of God’s created intention. We read in Psuedo-Phocylides, ‘Do not transgress with unlawful sex the limits set by nature. For even animals are not pleased by intercourse of male with male. And let women not imitate the sexual role of men’ (Psuedo-Phocylides 190–92; cf. 3, 210–14). Nature in Paul and in the Jewish tradition designates God’s intention in creation regarding homosexuality.” Schreiner, “New Trajectories and Old Patterns,” 61.

⁶⁷Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 160.

⁶⁸Vines arguing that same-sex orientation is immutable, to the extent that same-sex monogamy is the only solution, underscores a sub-biblical view of Christ’s power to redeem and sanctify desire.

⁶⁹For an exegesis of Rom 5:12–21, see Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1996), 334–43; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans 1–8*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1959), 195–203.

great bearing on “nature” and “immutability.” Christ’s obedient work has secured new creation redemption for his new covenant community to the extent that Christians are no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness (Rom 6:16–18). The reality that Christians are no longer sold under sin forms the basis for church discipline related to all forms of sexual immorality in the local church (Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:1–5) and the expectation of fruit-bearing repentance in life of each believer (1 John 1:5–2:6, 5:18–21).

Gay desire and attraction.⁷⁰ There have been recent attempts on the traditionalist side, however, to nuance the terminology of the debate that require brief attention. These traditionalists (or “neo-traditionalists”)⁷¹ are redefining terms in order to provide a more robust defense of traditional sexual ethics, as well as to engage LGBT people in ways that are both pastorally-sensitive and more missiologically-effective. Neo-traditionalist scholars, both Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, have begun to press the traditionalist camp for greater precision in terminology and more biblically-consistent ways to minister to Christians who experience same-sex sexual attraction.⁷² Wesley Hill, Nathan Collins, and Ron Belgau have pushed back on Butterfield situating sexual orientation in the flesh.⁷³ These neo-traditionalists affirm the church’s historic

⁷⁰Since this dissertation is primarily addressing revisionist arguments for the normalization of monogamous same-sex behavior, as well as a redefinition of marriage, it is beyond the scope of this work to give an extensive defense of traditional views of desire and attraction. A full-scope examination of these areas would be excellent topics for further research.

⁷¹“Neo-traditionalists” is a term used by Burk to describe Wesley Hill, the Spiritual Friendship group, Nathan Collins, and the Revoice Conference. See Burk and Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality*.

⁷²See Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity*, 26–27. Yarhouse seems to open the door for this debate by his definitions of sexual identity and sexual orientation, which he argues are interconnected but different ideas. Yarhouse defines sexual identity as the “act of ‘labeling’ oneself based on one’s sexual attractions or orientation” (26). Orientation refers to the strength and persistence of attractions for a particular person, but these attractions are not exclusively sexual.

⁷³Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 107. Contrary to Vines’ contention that same-sex monogamy affords a context where same-sex sexual desire can be sanctified, Butterfield argues that sexual orientation “cannot be sanctified, because sanctification would indeed cause its eradication, as sanctification obliterates all pretenses of the staying power of natural virtue or vice over and against the

view of marriage and sexual ethics, but they also see value in articulating how God redeems or affirms certain aspects of being “gay.” Hill, Collins, and Belgau, among others, affirm the term “gay (or non-straight) Christian” to communicate a person’s (1) struggle with same-sex sexual attraction; (2) identity with Christ; and, (3) non-sexual orientation. While there are nuances to each particular view, Collins has given the most extensive defense in his recent book and is also the founder and president of the Revoice Conference, so I will now turn to provide a brief outline and critique of his argument presented in his written work.

Collins identifies as a “gay Christian,” affirms traditional sexual ethics and a biblical view of marriage, is covenanted to his wife in a heterosexual marriage, and resists his temptations towards same-sex sexual attraction. Collins laments the use of the term “sexual orientation” because of its Freudian baggage and nearly exclusive connotation of sexual desire. Collins argues that the gay experience is far more complex and rich than simply equating it with same-sex sexual desire and behavior. Collins rightly argues that Freud and postmodern philosophy have informed the debate and modern categories are, in many cases, antithetical to Scripture. Unless a gay Christian is a member of a mixed-orientation marriage, the only permissible option for sexual expression is celibacy.⁷⁴ Collins argues, however, that sexual desire can still be expressed in a non-physical way by the gay celibate person through sublimation.⁷⁵ Sublimation is

power of the gospel. And while you must repent of sexual sin, you cannot repent of sexual orientation, since sexual orientation is an artificial category built on a faulty premise.”

⁷⁴Collins, *All but Invisible*, 89–98.

⁷⁵Collins, *All but Invisible*, 89–92. Sublimation involves the rechanneling of sexual desire by understanding this sexual desire in light of the work of Christ. Unlike married couples or celibate straight people, gay individuals “will *never* [emphasis added] experience physical sexual fulfillment in the way that God intends” (91). Collins argues that since sexuality is grounded in the relationality of the *imago Dei* (patterned after the Trinity), the sexual drive of gay people can be understood ultimately as a desire for God. While gay Christians cannot express their sexuality physically, they can fulfill their sexuality with their hearts through life-giving and emotionally intimate same-sex friendships. It is troubling, however, to read Collins’ statement because it reflects a problematic view of sanctification and/or grounds gay desire in divine intent. For more reading on sublimation, see also Eve Tushnet, *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My*

often expressed in intense same-sex friendships.⁷⁶

Rather than using the terminology of sexual orientation and sexual identity, which are often conflated with same-sex sexual behavior, Collins suggests the category of “aesthetic orientation” to describe an individual’s orientation towards beauty. A non-straight aesthetic orientation entails that a male more readily sees the beauty inherent to maleness than he does to femaleness. On the other hand, a straight aesthetic orientation entails that a male more readily sees the beauty in femaleness than he does in maleness. Collins writes, “These general patterns that we discern in the way people experience the beauty of others are now the basis for distinguishing between straight and non-straight orientations, rather than an impulse toward sexual activity.”⁷⁷ Aesthetic orientation certainly informs sexual desire and behavior, but should not be equated with sexual identity. In this regard, a Christian can identify as “gay” (via aesthetic orientation) without the unnecessary entailment that he is also given to unrepentant sexual behavior.⁷⁸ Aesthetic orientation should also be considered a secondary gender identity in order to encapsulate one distinction within the larger gender identities of male and female.⁷⁹

Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2014).

⁷⁶This idea is very similar to “spiritual friendship” proposed by Wesley Hill, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015). Hill seems to be using the idea of sublimation when he writes, “I don’t imagine I would have invested half as much effort in loving my male friends, and making sacrifices of time, energy, and even money on their behalf, if I weren’t gay. *My sexuality, my basic erotic orientation to the world, is inescapably intertwined with how I go about finding and keeping friends* [emphasis added]. . . . My sexuality, fallen and easily misused though I take it to be, may lead, nonetheless, to an invitation. Rather than interpreting my sexuality as a license to go to bed with someone or even to form a monogamous sexual partnership with him, I can harness and guide its energies in the direction of sexually abstinent, yet intimate, friendship” (81).

⁷⁷Collins, *All but Invisible*, 150.

⁷⁸Collins disputes Burk’s contention that desire is always teleological. Collins considers Burk’s approach to be pastorally insensitive and unconvincing because Collins believes there are situations where one may have a good object of desire, but desire the object for the wrong reasons.

⁷⁹See also Nathan Collins, “Ethnosexual Particularity and Secondary Gender Identities,” *The Great Tradition*, November 17, 2014, accessed July 7, 2018, <http://nccollins.com/ethnosexual-particularity-secondary-gender-identities/>. Collins gives an insightful and in-depth look at postmodern gender theories while seeking to construct a theology of sex and gender.

Collins contends that gayness, properly defined, should be understood in the same category as “disability” or “impairment” (e.g., blindness).⁸⁰ Gayness, understood as a first-creation identity, has now been transformed in the life of the Christian by union with Christ so that this gayness is no longer the same as it was prior to the Spirit’s regenerative work.⁸¹ Gay Christians have a particular gift to give the church by being able to empathize with minorities and the oppressed, and the (Western) church would do well to repent of past homophobia and mistreatment of gay people.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an extensive review and treatment of Collins’ work, as well as engage the work of traditionalists who share his use of the terminology of “gay (or non-straight) Christian.” Several articles have been written addressing the issues of sublimation versus repentance, the teleological nature of desire, and the wisdom of specific terminology and language used by those speakers participating in the Revoice Conference.⁸² I will, however, raise several concerns with these neo-traditionalists and their works.

Aesthetic orientation? First, despite Collins’ efforts to detach sexual identity and desire from orientation, it does not seem likely that this proposition works (or is helpful) for several reasons. While Western culture has certainly been influenced by Freudian psychology, I believe Collins overemphasizes this reality to the point of

⁸⁰Collins, *All but Invisible*, 190–97.

⁸¹Collins, *All but Invisible*, 299.

⁸²Burk and Butterfield, “Learning to Hate Our Sin without Hating Ourselves”; Steven Wedgworth, “Is Concupiscence Sin? Gay Christianity, Desire, and Orientation,” *The Calvinist International*, June 28, 2018, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://calvinistinternational.com/2018/06/28/concupiscence-sin-gay-christianity-desire-orientation/>; Steven Wedgworth, “More Thoughts on Spiritual Friendship/Gay Christianity: Unpacking Some Basic Confusion,” *The Calvinist International*, June 25, 2018, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://calvinistinternational.com/2018/06/25/more-thoughts-on-spiritual-friendship-gay-christianity-unpacking-basic-confusion/>; Colin Smothers, “Revoice in Their Own Voice,” *Anchored blog*, June 19, 2018, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://colinsmothers.wordpress.com/2018/06/18/revoice-in-their-own-voice/>.

minimizing the intimate connection between human sexuality and the created order, particularly as it relates to the universal commands of the creation and Noahic covenants to “be fruitful and multiply.” At the same time, it is not clear how Collins would characterize persons as “straight oriented” or “non-straight oriented” apart from sexual desire and identity. Is it the case that all non-straight aesthetically oriented people experience sexual attraction to the same sex? If so, what precisely is the benefit of using aesthetic orientation as a replacement for sexual orientation (or “same-sex attracted”)? If aesthetic orientation has been completely divorced from sexual desire and identity, why is it the case that a person may only be aesthetically oriented in one particular way? It does not appear that Collins’ argument for valuing beauty via a particular aesthetic orientation is any more than simply the general command of Scripture for Christians to see other persons as genuine image-bearers. At the very least, Collins’ dichotomy between these orientations to beauty is subjective and unclear.

Collins’ contention that gayness is a form of non-moral disability and secondary gender identity simply does not comport with the Bible’s own presentation of creation and the fall. Though blindness is clearly a result of the fall, there is nothing inherent to blindness (or deafness, mental retardation, etc.) that would give a blind person proclivities towards particular sin(s). On the other hand, Collins acknowledges the real temptations that non-straight oriented people have as a result of their particular “givenness.” Without belaboring this point, it has been pointed out by others that “gay Christian” traditionalists often speak of same-sex friendships in categories that are reserved solely for marriage.⁸³ The idea of sublimation is particularly troubling because it

⁸³See Burk and Butterfield, “Learning to Hate Our Sin without Hating Ourselves”; Wedgeworth, “More Thoughts on Spiritual Friendship.” Cf. Wesley Hill, “Love, Again,” *Comment Magazine*, Summer 2018, accessed July 8, 2018, <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/love-again/>; Cf. Ron Belgau, “What Does ‘Sexual Orientation’ Orient?,” *Spiritual Friendship* blog, September 27, 2013, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://spiritualfriendship.org/2013/09/27/what-does-sexual-orientation-orient/>. Ron Belgau, in describing his desired same-sex friendship, is worth quoting at length to illustrate this point: “I wanted a man who understood the long loneliness I had experienced growing up gay, and who I could talk

seeks to spiritualize the physical components of the one-flesh union, rather than rightly understanding how this one-flesh union has been “spiritualized” by being fulfilled typologically in Christ and appropriately applied to the life of the believer in the present. Collins’ sublimation errs in both object and timing: the desire to have sexual fulfillment fulfilled in intimate, but also purely platonic, same-sex relationships (wrong object) via sublimation prior to the consummation of the new creation reflects an over-realized eschatology (wrong timing).

At times, it seems that Collins overemphasizes a heterosexual man’s relationship to his wife to the point of downplaying other intimate and life-giving relationships, as if these relationships are mutually exclusive. Collins unfairly dismisses Butterfield’s contention that “there is no sin in homosociality—an abiding preference to find your closest and most meaningful friendships with members of your own gender. Nor is homosociality ‘gay.’”⁸⁴ What warrant does Collins have for downplaying the

to when I faced prejudice and misunderstanding. But I hoped the world was getting better, and that our relationship would gain greater acceptance as people came to understand gays and lesbians better. I wanted to be able to take him home to meet my parents, and introduce him as the one whom I loved more than anyone else in the world, and have him welcomed into the family. I wanted him to introduce me to his parents as the one he loved more than anyone else in the world, and be part of his family. I wanted to exchange vows in front of our friends, family, and church, and celebrate our vows by dancing together at the reception. I wanted to buy a house and make a home together. I wanted to go to garage sales and second-hand shops together, and pick out furniture and decorations for our home. I wanted him to be there when I came home at the end of the day. I wanted to find a Tiffany lamp to hang over our dining room table, and I wanted to cook romantic Italian meals that we could share by candlelight. I wanted us to adopt children together—I thought four children would be a good family size—and change diapers and go to little league games and graduation. (I suppose we might have had to argue over which one of us got to escort our daughters down the aisle when they got married, but that seems like a minor obstacle in the larger scheme of things.) I wanted to worship God together and share with each other the insights we gained into our faith along the way. I wanted a church that would welcome our family the way they welcomed every other family. I wanted to be able to walk down the street holding his hand and kiss him goodbye at the airport without having to worry about stares and comments I believe that gay sex is sinful, and that the desire for gay sex, though not itself sinful, is a temptation that cannot be regarded as morally neutral. But what I have just described is a desire that is much more complex than simply a desire for gay sex.” Belgau, “What Does ‘Sexual Orientation’ Orient?” The blending here of *phileo* and *eros* conceptions of love (that commingle only in the context of marriage) is cause for serious concern and betrays, at best, a naïve understanding of “same-sex friendship.”

⁸⁴Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered*, 121.

significance of intimate same-sex friendships in the lives of non-gay individuals?⁸⁵ Also, Collins seems to take the “givenness” of a man’s (uni-)aesthetic orientation towards his wife and project that man’s “givenness” as an orientation towards all women generally. In a Christian marriage, however, this situation is an unlikely reality because a married man’s closest and most intimate friends (other than his spouse) will most likely be men. It remains to be seen if there actually exists a category other than sexual desire to determine “gayness,” even when defined as aesthetic orientation. If Collins is able to make a clear and legitimate distinction between straight and non-straight orientations that does not involve sexual desire or considerable subjectivity, the wisdom of re-appropriating modern culture’s terminology remains, at best, suspect. Unfortunately, it has been often the case that these neo-traditionalists are required to defend their commitment to orthodoxy and traditional sexual ethics because of the confusion that their terminology often creates. Using the term “gay Christian” in a culture where “gay” is universally understood to refer to same-sex sexual desire and behavior is unhelpful, particularly when coupled with “Christian.”⁸⁶ Placing a modifier before “Christian” may be helpful when referring to ethnic groups (also a secondary gender identity) because ethnicity is

⁸⁵A common thread in the writings of “gay” traditionalists is the charge that non-gay individuals are unaware or unable to understand the gay experience and the longing for same-sex spiritual friendships. Of course, this charge can go both ways because the overemphasis on “gay givenness” seems to preclude men like Collins and Hill from being able to understand “non-gay givenness,” at least as with regard to the intimacy of homosocial friendships. If aesthetic orientation is individually labeled and self-identified, what warrant does Collins have to deny a heterosexual man from claiming a “non-straight orientation” for himself?

⁸⁶Is it relevant and/or appropriate to consider oneself a “depressed Christian” to accentuate the aspects of sorrow that God has redeemed and will use to minister to those people who are anxious, suicidal, and/or heavy-laden? See Deepak Varghese Reju, “Toward a Definition of Christian Identity: Using the Interpretive Lens of Creation, Fall, and Redemption in Christian Counseling” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological, 2007), 206. At this point, Deepak Reju gives a helpful category for the neo-traditionalist’s use of “non-straight Christian.” Reju argues for a category of Christian identity called “false fallen identity formation,” which refers to “the ways that sin corrupts the identity formation process, resulting in a Christian’s ownership of false fallen self-representations. It includes a variety of self-centered, self-exalting ways that sin shapes Christian identity. Indwelling sin diverts Christians away from godly self-conceptions and encourages them to own false self-representations.”

God-given and non-moral, but it is quite another thing to self-identify in terms which Scripture plainly rejects as evil and sinful desire (e.g., “effeminacy” *μαλακοί* in 1 Cor 6:9).⁸⁷

Gay Christians and the New Covenant Community

Covenantal shifts and covenant union are important realities to understand in light of the present debate. The question of “gay Christian” identity must be examined in light of the salvific realities given to each new covenant member by the Spirit, and one biblical passage will help shed light on this particular issue. When one examines the book of Hebrews, Hebrews 8 demonstrates the obsolete nature of the old covenant as a result of the inauguration of the new covenant (Heb 8:13). William Lane notes that this passage serves to expose the “ineffectiveness of the Levitical arrangement” and demonstrate that “redemptive grace reaches its zenith in the full and final realization of this promise through Christ.”⁸⁸ Jeremiah 31 and its New Testament commentaries speak to a change in structure and nature from the old covenant to the new covenant.⁸⁹ The covenantal shifts

⁸⁷See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2000), 452. Thiselton persuasively argues, “Whether principles of differentiation between gender-roles belong merely to ancient worldviews or form part of God’s design for his holy covenant people must be judged in the light of patient exegesis and theological reflection. What is clear from the connection between 1 Cor 6:9 and Rom 1:26–29 and their Old Testament backgrounds is Paul’s endorsement of the view that idolatry, i.e., placing human autonomy to construct one’s values above covenant commitments to God, leads to a collapse of moral values in a kind of domino effect. As writers as different from each other in stance as Kenneth Bailey and Dale Martin agree, 1 Corinthians strongly affirms that the body and its practices occupies a place of paramount importance for those who are united with Christ.”

⁸⁸William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 208–10. Lane comments that the use of Jer 31 in Heb 8 “serves to exhibit the imperfect and provisional character of the old covenant and its institutions (Heb 8:6-13). Corresponding to the axiological evaluation of the theme of sanctuary is the redemptive-historical evaluation of the theme of covenant. The mediation of the new covenant, in contrast to the old, has provided access to the ‘heavenly sanctuary,’ the ‘true tabernacle,’ and the ‘superior priestly ministry.’ The adjectives ‘heavenly,’ ‘true,’ and ‘superior’ speak of the perfection of the salvation mediated through Christ” (211). It is exactly this “perfection” mediated through Christ that allows (1) all to know the Lord; (2) all to have the Spirit; and (3) all sins to be forgiven.

⁸⁹Structural changes in the new covenant entails a transition from Old Testament tribal

in structure and nature have profound effects on the make-up of the new covenant community and inform the question of gay Christians in the church. Hebrews demonstrates that it is crucial to the nature and structure of the new covenant community that (1) the new covenant mediator is perfectly faithful to the Lord (2:14-18, 7:18-28); (2) he is able to offer full forgiveness of sins (8:12, 9:13-15, 10:10, 17-18, 13:12); (3) he is able to satisfy the wrath of God on behalf of covenant violators (9:24-28); (4) he is able to secure the promises and blessings of God on behalf of the covenant people (5:9-10, 6:17-20, 8:6); and, (5) he is able to keep the covenant people faithful (8:8-11, 10:14, 38-39, 12:5-11). Every mediator before Christ failed, and he is the only one who could perfectly mediate on behalf of his covenant people. As a result of his obedience, all those whom he represents inherit his blessings by virtue of their covenant union with him. Hebrews, particularly chapters 7-10, clearly demonstrates that Jesus accomplishes all of these requirements for the new covenant community. There is no category in Hebrews (or the New Testament) for a person to be united to Christ and *not* receive the benefits of the covenant that Christ mediates. Nor does *auctor* present a new covenant member who receives fewer covenant promises and blessings than another member. In fact, Christ is presented as the heir of the Abrahamic promises (6:13-20) and *auctor* then argues that those who are in Christ will receive the “promised eternal inheritance” (9:15)—a clear reference to the Abrahamic covenant.⁹⁰ *Auctor* is clearly demonstrating that the Abrahamic covenant has found its fulfillment in Christ and those who are in covenant union with him share in the same inheritance. Because it is a spiritual union,⁹¹ not

representation to individual responsibility. Changes in nature entails a change in the hearts and minds of the covenant people so that they are faithful to the covenant stipulations.

⁹⁰Dana Harris, “The Eternal Inheritance in Hebrews: The Appropriation of the Old Testament Inheritance Motif by the Author of Hebrews” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2009), 205.

⁹¹While the book of Heb is largely silent on *how* the blessings of covenant membership are applied to the new covenant community, the rest of the New Testament canon is clear that this is through the work of the Holy Spirit. The *auctor* makes mention of the Holy Spirit multiple times in his epistle, but almost every time it is in the context of the Spirit communicating Old Testament Scripture to the reader.

physical, there are no longer covenantal distinctions within the new covenant community. *Auctor* commands his readers to live lives marked by faith and obedience because this feat is now possible since they have experienced the internalization of the law upon their hearts and minds (8:10). In other words, *auctor* does not command his readers to an impossible task, but rather exhorts them to live in light of the salvation they have received through the better new covenant (6:9-12; 10:39). The revisionist rejection of celibacy and their demand for same-sex monogamy as a means of sanctifying these desires stands in stark contrast to the new creation realities wrought in each Christian by the obedient work of Christ. Like other clear cases of unrepentant sexual immorality in the local church (1 Cor 5), a professing Christian who engages in same-sex sexual behavior comes under the discipline of the church body with the hope and intention that the erring member would be won back to holiness, sexual purity, and repentance by the congregation (Matt 18:15–20).⁹²

Revisionists use the terminology “gay Christian” to describe professing Christians who are involved in monogamous same-sex relationships. This term, however, is diametrically opposed to the soteriological realities for members of the new covenant community outlined in Hebrews 8. While same-sex sexual desire and behavior are presented by Paul as a clear instance of idolatry and moral rebellion against God, the primary problem for same-sex attracted non-Christians is unbelief, not gayness.⁹³ In

Two passages (both being warning passages) that indicate the activity of the Spirit in personal redemption are Heb 6:4 and 10:29. Believers “share” in the Holy Spirit and can “outrage” the Spirit of grace. It is clear that *auctor* is not interested in explaining the *mechanism* of union with Christ as much as he is interested in explaining the *realities* of union with Christ for the new covenant member.

⁹²For an excellent overview of the responsibilities of church membership and discipline from a Baptist perspective, see Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010).

⁹³Gay sexual desire and behavior is certainly evidence of fallenness and unbelief, but gay unbelievers need not first become heterosexual to be saved, but rather trust God’s promises in the gospel of Jesus Christ and repent. Gay sexuality is a symptom of a deeper problem—unbelief. Butterfield has rightly stated that Christians should not presume that the worst sin in your gay neighbor is sexuality. Rather, their worst sin is unbelief. Rosaria Butterfield, “‘We Are All Messy’: On Loving Our Gay and Lesbian Friends,”

Christ, however, men and women who were formerly slaves to sin (Rom 6:16) are now slaves to righteousness because of the obedience of Christ (Rom 6:17–18). Christians enjoy covenant union with Christ, and are now able to obey in any situation because they have been regenerated and possess the promised Holy Spirit (Eph 1:12–13).⁹⁴ God also provides a way to escape sin in all situations of temptation (1 Cor 10:13). A Christian who experiences same-sex sexual attraction is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), and is able to overcome temptation to this evil desire and form of sexual immorality through the power of God in Christ by the Spirit. A Christian who experiences same-sex sexual attraction may never have a desire to enter into heterosexual marriage, but Christianity does not now demand marriage for covenant members, but rather sexual fidelity in light of the created order in Genesis 1–2.⁹⁵ Christ has redefined “family” such that new covenant “family” is defined by covenant union to him. Those who are celibate (for whatever reason) may, like Jesus and Paul before them, have spiritual sons and daughters in the Lord.

It is this new covenant community, made righteous by the work of Christ and pursuing holiness in the strength of the Spirit, that provides the necessary community where same-sex attracted people may truly flourish. Contrary to the contentions of revisionists, accepting people into the membership of the local church who profess faith

The Gospel Coalition, February 17, 2015, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/we-are-all-messy-rosaria-butterfield-on-loving-our-gay-and-lesbian-friends/>.

⁹⁴Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *Anthropology*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 9–10. Vos’ explanation of physical and spiritual creation provides a helpful rebuttal to Brownson’s attempts to spiritualize the new creation’s understanding of marriage.

⁹⁵Vines argues that celibacy is simply too hard for people who desire monogamous same-sex relations. I am sympathetic to those who encounter significant difficulties in fighting against the various expressions of this particular sin. The church ought to be a place where it is safe for believers to fight for holiness and spur one another on towards greater repentance. But Vines’ assertion has several problems: (1) it denies the transformative power of the Spirit in the life of the believer; (2) it argues that there is at least one sin that is immutable and this particular sin’s power cannot be broken, even by the work of Christ; (3) it belittles or denies the reality of suffering in the life of the believer; and, (4) it underemphasizes the covenant relationship between the individual and God (while overemphasizing the relationship between two individuals).

in Christ but also live in unrepentant same-sex sexual behavior undermines the ontological orientation of the church—namely, its purity, holiness, and witness of the local church as the holy city on a hill (Matt 5:13–16).⁹⁶ The local church functions as an outpost of the kingdom of God, a tangible picture of the inaugurated reality of the kingdom of God in the present world that is awaiting its consummation in the new creation.⁹⁷ The purity and holiness of the church are paramount, with church discipline being the means by which Christians are kept in the faith and won to covenant obedience, particularly as it relates to sexual ethics.⁹⁸

Revisionists and same-sex traditionalists alike frequently argue the same point—loneliness is a real struggle for those people who desire to love Christ and his church. The church is the community in whom the new creation has been inaugurated and through whom gay and straight sinners will hear and believe the good news of the gospel. Revisionists want to satisfy that loneliness with further disordered desire and relationships that only invite present brokenness and eschatological wrath. Traditionalists, on the other hand, must humbly approach and befriend gay unbelievers with the gospel, remembering that they themselves were once lost but now live by grace in light of their Christ-wrought identities: as God’s treasured possession, the heavenly Husband’s purified bride, and the Chief Shepherd’s needy flock. Same-sex attracted people, particularly those who will commit to celibacy in order to honor God with their bodies, must know and experience the realities of this new covenant salvation—namely, the message which boldly and graciously proclaims, “Jesus is the Son of God, every

⁹⁶Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 51. Allison gives a helpful overview of “ontological ecclesiology” that defines the church in terms of its attributes. In this sense, the local church must continually call people in same-sex sexual relationships to repentance and faith because of the nature of the new covenant community, grounded in the person and work of Christ.

⁹⁷See Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 61–102.

⁹⁸Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 179–204.

Christian is an adoptive son or daughter, and the church is the family of God, a people adopted as sons and daughters through union with Jesus Christ.”⁹⁹

Conclusion

I have examined the theological implications of the revisionist argument as it relates to the doctrinal loci of the *imago Dei* and embodiment, covenant, and the nature of the new covenant community. I have demonstrated that embodiment and holistic dualism are essential aspects of the *imago Dei* that demonstrate divine intent for human sexuality, marriage, and the procreative commands of the creation and Noahic covenants. I have also examined the terminology of sexual orientation and identity, demonstrating that the origins of this terminology are a worldview which stands opposed to divine revelation and the authority of Scripture. I examined the terminology of neo-traditionalists who affirm the sinfulness of gay sexual desire and behavior but (unhelpfully) attempt to redefine what it means to be a “gay Christian.” Gay Christianity, as revisionists put forth, was shown to be incompatible with the nature and structure of the new covenant community, particularly as one rightly understands the soteriological realities grounded in the believer’s new covenant union with Christ.

In the final chapter, I will briefly restate my thesis, summarize arguments put forth in this dissertation, and provide concluding remarks in light of the entire body of work. I will also examine and suggest several areas of study in the realms of both Christian sexual ethics and progressive covenantalism.

⁹⁹Stephen Wellum and Trent Hunter, *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 236.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation argues that the Bible, read intratextually, defines marriage as a covenantal and exclusive heterosexual union created until the end of time by the triune God for a variety of purposes, but ultimately as a created institution it is typological of Christ's relationship to his people; thus, in the new creation it reaches its fulfillment and *telos* in the Christ-church covenant relationship. More specifically, this dissertation has argued that theological and ethical conclusions must be formulated in light of the Bible's own categories, necessitating the use of at least three hermeneutical lenses: (1) the biblical theme of creation-fall-redemption-new creation; (2) the progression of the biblical covenants; and, (3) the textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of biblical interpretation.

Same-sex marriage revisionists, specifically David Gushee, James Brownson, and Matthew Vines, have argued that the modern understanding of sexual orientation demands the church revise her historic position on same-sex relationships. They have rejected the traditional, binary gender distinction between male and female and argue that both evangelical hermeneutical practice and the traditional interpretations garnered by said practice have been built upon misogynistic patriarchy. This dissertation has demonstrated that while revisionists profess an "evangelical" doctrine of Scripture, they consistently distort, minimize, or reject biblical authority, inerrancy, infallibility, unity, clarity, and sufficiency because of a presupposed commitment to postmodern hermeneutics and theology. Therefore, revisionists have forced an extratextual framework upon Scripture that has led to erroneous theological and ethical conclusions. This dissertation has demonstrated, however, that when Scripture is read in light of a

consistent biblical theology, it is clear that God’s gift of the heterosexual marital union is normative, grounded in creation, and serves as a typological pattern for Christ and his relationship to the church.

Summary

Chapter 1 stated the thesis and rationale for the dissertation. I provided a brief background of the Western cultural environment as it pertains to same-sex marriage, both inside and outside the church. I defined important terms in the debate, particularly “revisionist,” “traditionalist,” and the revisionist’s use of “gay Christian.” I surveyed evangelical revisionist and traditional scholars, as well as popular-level authors on the topics of marriage, Christian ethics, and the image of God. I closed chapter 1 with an overview of the methodology of my argument, paying careful attention to the loci of Scripture and biblical theology, theological formulation, and Christian ethics.

Chapter 2 surveyed the revisionist arguments of James Brownson, David Gushee, and Matthew Vines. I gave an overview of each of their particular presuppositions and theses, examined their exegesis of relevant passages, outlined each of their underlying biblical-theological commitments, and presented their theological conclusions for marriage, same-sex relationships, and hermeneutics. I then demonstrated that while revisionists profess a traditional view of Scripture, their arguments reveal that they do not hold to evangelical commitments of biblical inspiration and authority, perspicuity, unity, and sufficiency. Their non-traditional view of Scripture adversely affects both their exegesis and biblical-theological formulation. I then gave a brief overview of the progressive covenantal perspective, demonstrating that it consistently reflects the biblical data and affirms the Bible’s self-attestation and biblical-theological presentation.

Chapter 3 examined the biblical data, examining Genesis 1–3 in light of its textual, epochal, and canonical horizons of interpretation. I argued that creation sets the

normative pattern for marriage and forms the foundation for understanding the rest of the canon, particularly with regard to sexual ethics and typology. I examined each of the “gay passages” in light of creation-fall-redemption-new creation, the progression of the biblical covenants, and the three horizons of interpretation. The exegesis of relevant biblical passages clearly affirmed the traditionalist case for marriage. Additionally, I examined marriage and “one-flesh” from a typological (canonical) perspective, articulating that same-sex marriage cannot image the Christ-church union, but rather portrays a clear image of the idolatry that Scripture expressly forbids. I contended that while Christ has fulfilled the creation covenant for new covenant members (“be fruitful and multiply”) thus allowing (and blessing) a kingdom-minded commitment to celibacy, Christ’s fulfillment did not abrogate the normative nature of marriage, but rather its universal demand upon all covenant members.

Chapter 4 examined Gushee’s methodology for Christian ethics, showing that Gushee’s overemphasis on the Sermon on the Mount leads to a “canon within a canon.” Gushee divorces Christ’s prophetic ministry from its Old Testament context and redefines marriage in light of a faulty view of “covenant.” I gave a brief overview of covenant theology’s proponents and their arguments for the tripartite division of the law for the purpose of doing ethics and theological formulation. I demonstrated that the old covenant, including the Decalogue, is presented as a single unit/covenant package and attempts to divide aspects of the Mosaic law produces inconsistencies in the application of Christian ethics. Covenant theology affirms the same conclusions as progressive covenantalism with regard to marriage, but revisionists have presented fair critiques of covenant theology’s tripartite division in order to advance arguments for same-sex marriage. I offered what I hope are helpful critiques for covenant theology and demonstrated how progressive covenantalism provides the most consistent biblical-theological framework for theological and ethical formulation.

Chapter 5 examined particular theological doctrines that have been distorted in

the same-sex marriage debate. Revisionists propose a sub-biblical view of the human person and his psychosomatic unity. Revisionists implicitly argue for a Gnostic duality where a man's body serves as a vehicle for his immaterial desires. I showed that the human body is an essential part of the human person and humanity's anatomical complementarity serves as a blueprint for God's intentions for sexuality and human flourishing. The Lord has clearly prohibited same-sex sexual relationships both in his special (Scripture) and general revelation (specifically embodiment in the *imago Dei*), and these kinds of sexual relationships clearly violate the Bible's teaching on the relational aspects of covenant (including divine, neighbor, and marital). I showed how the categories of sexual orientation and identity are not only unhelpful, but ultimately grounded in unbiblical, philosophical commitments, particularly poststructuralism and deconstruction. I also briefly addressed recent attempts by some traditionalists to co-opt revisionist language by divorcing sexual desire and behavior from the term "gay" (or "non-straight/queer"). Nathan Collins, a neo-traditionalist who rejects same-sex behavior, has opted to use "gay (or non-straight) Christian" by emphasizing a person's orientation towards beauty, irrespective of sexual desire. I argued that this terminology is confusing in this debate; it unnecessarily reflects postmodern philosophical commitments, and implicitly distorts Christian identity. The focus of this particular chapter was narrow and the dissertation's thesis aim was to address revisionist arguments—so a thorough examination of the neo-traditionalist argument fell outside the scope of this dissertation. Chapter 5 closed with an examination of new covenant identity from Hebrews 8, as well as an address of ecclesiological implications for same-sex attracted Christians and the need for pastoral sensitivity and congregational love for people being converted out of same-sex relationships without sacrificing a biblical commitment to corporate and individual holiness.

Further Research

Unfortunately, same-sex marriage is not an issue that will be fading into the background of Western culture anytime soon. In the midst of cultural change, the church has much to say because Scripture is supra-cultural, unchanging, and always relevant to the human condition. A number of areas of research are possible and would be gladly welcomed by evangelical scholarship. One area of need is more research done in the field of theological anthropology, with issues related to *imago Dei* and same-sex sexual desire. This topic is hotly debated, even amongst traditionalists, and several questions arose in the course of this dissertation that fell outside the scope of my thesis. Denny Burk and Heath Lambert have the most conservative view of sexual desire and same-sex inclinations, arguing in their works that the very presence of same-sex sexual desire necessitates repentance. Rosaria Butterfield and Sam Allberry argue that the existence of evil same-sex sexual desire is due to man's fallen nature but desire itself is only temptation and not sinful in itself, if it is put to death like other sin. This question is still debated: is the existence of same-sex sexual desire itself sin?

Often parties from both sides of this particular debate point to Jesus being tempted to prove their point (Heb 2:17–18, 4:15–16). It is true that the supremacy of Christ's priestly mediation is, in part, because he was tempted in every way, yet without sin. Was Jesus, however, tempted with same-sex sexual desire?¹ More fundamentally, was it necessary that Jesus be tempted with same-sex sexual desire in order to be a faithful high priest for individuals saved out of same-sex sexual lifestyles? These questions clearly have implications for Christology and theological anthropology, including the debate over Christ's nature (impeccability versus peccability).² What is the

¹This question could also be extended to every form of unnatural sexual immorality. Was Jesus tempted to bestiality? Was he tempted to pedophilia? Incest? Polygamy? Unfortunately, these questions have become relevant in modern culture and need to be addressed by Christian scholarship and the church.

²See Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL:

nature of temptation itself? Does the existence of evil desires in us merely point to the reality of the flesh, or to the need for repentance when we become cognizant of those evil desires?

Neo-traditionalists, as mentioned in the last chapter, argue for same-sex aesthetic orientation (i.e., the recognition of same-sex beauty is, in fact, good and redemptive) and the idea of gay orientation being a form of non-moral disability. Is gayness (defined as aesthetic orientation) redeemable and worthy of celebration? Is effeminacy sinful (1 Cor 6:9), and if so, how does this reality comport with neo-traditionalist arguments for “gay Christians”? Nathan Collins, as well as other neo-traditionalists, has incorporated much postmodern gender theory, intersectionality, feminism, and queer theory into his research and formulation of “secondary gender identities.” He has raised legitimate questions, particularly as it relates to gender roles and the influence of culture. What characteristics of male and female persons express themselves in all cultures and how ought these gender identity markers inform complementarianism and theological anthropology? An entire dissertation could be written interacting with Collins’ work on aesthetic orientation, sublimation, and gender identity. For example, Collins himself is unsure, based on his view of gay (aesthetic) orientation, if people will be “gay” in the new creation.³

The ideas of personhood, gender and sex, and complementarianism are being re-examined in light of new developments in philosophy, linguistics, and postmodernism. Transgenderism is more prevalent today, and in some cases, actively encouraged as normal by national media and tax-funded organizations.⁴ The link between

Crossway, 2016), 459–65 for a helpful overview of the peccability/impeccability debate.

³Nathan Collins, *All but Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender, and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 303–4.

⁴See Rod Dreher, “Identity Politics Totalitarianism,” *The American Conservative*, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/identity-politics-totalitarianism-transgender/>; Jessi Cruickshank, “Talking to Kids about Pride Month,” CBC Life, YouTube video,

poststructuralism and gender identity needs further research, particularly as it relates to hermeneutics and the image of God. More work needs to be written on Christian identity, ecclesiological implications, and ministry efforts to same-sex attracted individuals, transgender, and other sexual minorities.

At the same time, there remains a variety of opportunities for addressing issues related to biblical theology, theological formulation, and Christian ethics from a progressive covenantal perspective. This dissertation examined the narrow scope of progressive covenantal ethics as it is applied to same-sex marriage and behavior. More research needs to be completed in formulating anthropological conclusions from a progressive covenantal perspective.

Conclusion

My hope is that this dissertation will serve as an example for pastors and church members on how to read the Bible and “do theology” in the context of the local church. My prayer is that this dissertation will be a helpful addition to the defense of traditional marriage and sexual ethics. Marriage must be upheld in honor because our husband, Christ, is lovingly jealous for his bride, the church.

accessed July 10, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IMKpe5bmaw>; “Jessi Cruickshank bio,” CBC Media Centre, accessed July 10, 2018, <http://cbc.ca//www.cbc.ca/mediacentre/bio/jessi-cruickshank>.

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ABSTRACT

GAY CHRISTIAN? A PROGRESSIVE COVENANTAL RESPONSE TO DAVID GUSHEE, JAMES BROWNSON, AND MATTHEW VINES

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
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This dissertation addresses the debate over the Bible's prohibition of same-sex monogamy from a progressive covenantalist approach. This dissertation examines the work of three men who affirm same-sex relationships—David Gushee, James Brownson, and Matthew Vines—arguing that the Bible, when read on its own terms and in its own categories, defines marriage as a created institution expressed in a covenantal and exclusive heterosexual union that finds its typological fulfillment and *telos* in the Christ-church relationship. Progressive covenantalism provides the best perspective for reading the Bible intratextually and the best grounding for Christian sexual ethics.

Chapter 1 introduces the issues surrounding the same-sex marriage debate. The chapter provides a brief overview of this dissertation's main conversation partners—Brownson, Gushee, and Vines. This chapter provides a brief survey of evangelical responses to the issue of gay Christianity.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the exegetical and theological arguments of Brownson, Gushee, and Vines. The chapter also addresses inconsistencies in their doctrine of Scripture, and presents an overview of the biblical storyline from progressive covenantalism.

Chapter 3 examines key biblical passages, particularly Genesis 1–2, from a biblical-theological perspective. The chapter closes with a discussion of marriage,

singleness, and typology, proposing progressive covenantalism's theological method for defining the nature of marriage and human identity.

Chapter 4 briefly critiques both Gushee's and covenant theology's methodology in sexual ethics. The chapter gives an overview of Christian ethics formulated from a progressive covenantal perspective.

Chapter 5 examines the issue of same-sex marriage while formulating a doctrine of the image of God. The common evangelical distinctions of same-sex behavior, desire and attraction, orientation, and identity are addressed and critiqued in light of progressive covenantalism. The chapter also addresses local church implications for Christians who experience same-sex attraction.

Chapter 6 provides concluding remarks and summarizes the arguments put forth in this dissertation. The chapter and dissertation conclude by suggesting further topics of study in the realms of both Christian ethics and progressive covenantalism.

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