THE GALILEE REPORT

Primate's Theological Commission

Contents

1. Galilee Report
2. Integrity and Sanctity
   A Consideration by the Primate's Theological Commission

Papers 3–16 will be posted on this website by the end of June, 2009.

3. The Bible, Human Sexuality, Marriage and Same-Sex Unions
   Walter Deller
4. Is There a Natural Reading of Romans 1:24-27?
   Stephen Andrews
5. Notes on the Development of Doctrine
   Lisa Wang
6. Development of Doctrine
   Stephen Andrews
7. Same-Sex Blessings: A Systematic-Theological Rationale
   Paul Jennings
8. An Argument Against
   Gary Thorne
9. Friendship: The End of Marriage
   Gary Thorne
10. The Grace of Eros
    Paul Jennings
11. Thinking Theologically about Sex and Marriage
    Jamie Howison
12. What is Holiness and What Does it Look Like?
    Victoria Matthews
13. Tradition
    Trudy Lebans
14. Pastoral Practice and Doctrine — Two Instances of Change and Some Questions They Raise
    Walter Deller
15. Anglicans and the Abolition of Salvery
    Robert Moore
16. Divorce and Remarriage in the Anglican Church of Canada
    Linda Nicholls

ONE

THE GALILEE REPORT

Primate's Theological Commission

The Role and Mandate of the Commission

1. The General Synod 2007 asked the Primate to request the Primate's Theological Commission to consult with dioceses and parishes and to report in advance of General Synod 2010 on
   a) the theological question whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine; and
   b) Scripture's witness to the integrity of every human person and the question of the sanctity of human relationships.
2. The role and mandate of the Primate's Theological Commission is to assist the church in considering and incorporating foundational theological matters and reflection into its life and decision-making. In this document, the Commission seeks to present aspects of its work over the past two years in response to the questions posed by General Synod in 2007, to clarify what we see as some of the crucial areas of tension around foundational matters, and to offer back to the church some of the papers and work that members have undertaken in the process of seeking clarification for ourselves.
3. The question of blessing same-sex unions brings out a multitude of different fears. We have fears about what will happen to the Church. Some fear whether or not they can belong to a church that seeks to bless what they do not believe to be congruent with the Gospel. Others fear whether or not they will be welcome in a church that rejects what they believe to be a Gospel mandate. Yet it is critically important that those who stand on different sides of this question should continue in dialogue, striving not to speak out of those places of fear. Is this even possible? The Commission members believe that study of this matter must be grounded in a practice of intentional prayer, hearing the Word together, and sharing in the sacraments (*cf.* The Solemn Declaration). It is only in such a setting that it might be possible to lay aside our fears. In having this conversation, we have learned that seeking to love God and love one another in this way can be painful: we are required to suspend our desire to hold onto what is comfortable for us in order to truly hear and be present to one another. We must be aware of the challenge of the Gospel and the cost of discipleship in the painfulness of this endeavour (I John 3:16–24, 4:7–21).
4. The experience of the Primate's Theological Commission has reflected, in many ways, that of the whole Church. We are not of one mind among ourselves. Deeply faithful and prayerful members, though following similar paths of enquiry, found themselves at very different conclusions. We also found ourselves in agreements that we could not have anticipated, coming to that place by different paths. We found hope together in being at the table in prayer, in Bible study, and in searching conversations of critical fundamental questions.

5. To date, we are not in a position to be able to present a single or consensus answer to the questions the church has placed before us. The papers that follow share the breadth of our discussions. We recognize that none of the questions we examined are simply a matter of finding the right information (in Scripture, in tradition, or in scientific knowledge), nor are they simply a matter of difference in how we do theology or approach the reading of Scripture or the use of scientific or other intellectual discoveries. We found it has been important to listen to and acknowledge the legitimacy and faithfulness of perspectives other than our own. For this reason the Commission recommends that all the papers be read, not just those most comfortable for the reader. This is not always easy nor without personal cost. We believe that the cost is part of what it means to participate in the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is embodied in the doctrine, sacraments, and discipline of The Anglican Church of Canada, and to share in the commitment of the framers of the 1893 Declaration that we would "transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity."

The Development of Doctrine

6. In the history of the Church, the presenting issue in the development of doctrine is usually something that we experience as a new phenomenon, or something that we come to see in a new way. This is not a random process, but neither is it often an orderly one. In the life of the Church, thinking and being often proceed together, or in response to each other, and often amid great tension.
7. The development of doctrine proceeds over different time spans and in different ways and places. We can identify certain stages in the process: the posing of a new question; the emergence of pastoral and theological responses, often in the form of innovation; a period of debate and testing involving many different parts of the Church (often over centuries); growing affirmation or doubt, accompanied by gradual reception, or at some point, a clear rejection. In Anglican understanding the Church can change its mind (The Thirty-Nine Articles, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1962, Canada, Article XXI).
8. In the present case, within various parts of the church there are among us members who are in, or believe they are called to, committed, adult, monogamous, intended lifelong, same-sex relationships that include sexual intimacy.[1] This experience has become the presenting question around which a range of theological and ecclesial questions surge.
9. The Anglican Church of Canada is part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Therefore, Anglican doctrine, is in the first instance, that teaching which is commonly shared with other Christian traditions. We count ourselves as those who have "received the same faith from the apostles and are faithfully holding to it in loyalty to the One Lord incarnate who speaks in Scripture and bestows his grace in the sacraments," as recently stated by Archbishop Rowan Williams (Archbishop's Advent Letter to Primates, December 2007).
10. Doctrine is not sterile dogma; it is not a dead tradition of the Church. Because it is drawn from the revelation of God's self to the Church, and because God the Holy Spirit continues to lead the Church deeper into truth, doctrine is constantly renewed in its relevance and application. It is ever ancient and yet ever new. The dynamic of development may be said to take the form of a conversation, where the Church reflects upon its life and teaching of the past, bringing to it the questions and insights of the present. This act of engagement transforms both the Church and its perception of doctrine. New insights are achieved regarding received truths, and fresh promptings of the Spirit pose new questions and challenges to the Church to live into new expressions of discipleship.

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1. This definition is what the Commission intends to mean every time it uses the phrase "same-sex unions."

11. It is clear to us that the doctrine of the universal Church cannot be stretched to the point where it is unrecognizable as the Church's catholic teaching. A critical question facing the Church is what defines the DNA of the Church's doctrine. In other words, what keeps a doctrine true to itself in its essential teaching?

12. In The Anglican Church of Canada consideration of doctrine and its legitimate development historically begins with the Solemn Declaration. The Solemn Declaration states:

> We declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world, as an integral portion of the one Body of Christ composed of Churches which, united under the One Divine Head and in the fellowship of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, hold the one Faith revealed in Holy Writ, and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church in the undisputed Ecumenical Councils; receive the same Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation; teach the same Word of God; partake of the same Divinely ordained Sacraments, through the ministry of the same Apostolic Orders, and worship one God and Father through the same Lord Jesus Christ by the same Holy and Divine Spirit Who is given to them that believe to guide them into all truth. And we are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in His Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same in "The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the Use of the Church of England; together with the Psalter or Psalms of David pointed as they are to be sung or said in churches; and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons;" and in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion; and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity (*The Book of Common Prayer*, 1962, Canada).

13. The theological question of whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine is being tested in the community of the Church drawing on Scripture, tradition, and reason. In dialogue with these, the Church discerns whether this is congruent with what is known of God's ways with God's creatures, with what God has revealed in all that God has done, and with what we know of what God is calling us to be. It is by considering all these that the community evaluates whether this new thing is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine.

14. The interrelation of Scripture, tradition, and reason is interwoven in all the work the Commission has shared, as are the doctrinal considerations identified in *The St. Michael Report*: salvation, incarnation, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, theological anthropology, sanctification, and holy matrimony. For this reason, some papers are referenced several times in what follows.

15. There is a vast amount written on these questions in relation to Scripture, tradition, and new psychological and scientific perspectives. Much of this material can be referenced on the national church website <http://www.anglican.ca/faith/hs/index.htm> and various diocesan websites.

Scripture

16. The Commission began its work aware of this vast body of written material from a variety of perspectives addressing what many people consider the critical scriptural texts relating to the question of same-sex relationships. [2]

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2. Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:24–27; I Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:9–11; 2 Peter 2:6–10; Jude 7

17. Members of the Commission recognize that the Church has always had different ways of reading Scripture, and that an important question has always been what range of interpretations we can live with on this, or any other topic. Different readings of Scripture can and will sometimes lead to different conclusions; those conclusions are always tested and brought into interaction in the life of the Church along with other criteria. Do they contribute to a faithful proclamation of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ? Do they tend toward holiness and goodness for individuals and communities? Do they build up the Body and enable the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of good works among us? Do they help us to remain faithful to the whole of the creeds with their affirmation of God's work in creation, redemption, and sanctification?

18. The work of the Commission includes elements of biblical reflection. How we draw on the Scriptures is not a matter of isolated Bible study. We ask questions and hear answers in Scripture in response to the various contexts in which we work.

19. The Commission identified two areas in which there seem to be important questions. One is the question of how we interpret the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments taken as a whole, and one member offers a lengthy account of his own experience and framework for reading the Scriptures and why it led him to certain ways of understanding today's question (*Paper 3,* Deller). Another member offers a carefully considered reading of Romans 1, the New Testament passage generally considered central to other aspects of the theological conversation (*Paper 4,* Andrews). Both documents, lengthy and challenging as they may be, offer valuable assistance in understanding how the whole of our Scriptures in different ways both frame and respond to doctrinal, moral, and pastoral questions in the continuing life of the Church.

Tradition

20. The tradition of the Church is not an abstraction separated from the ongoing life of the Church in its catholicity. We are always in the middle of it, shaped by it and in turn, shaping it. As an evangelizing Church we welcome others into the fellowship of Christ's Body to participate with us in shaping and passing the tradition to every new generation.

21. A critical question is how we assess the faithfulness of new developments in the tradition. Often these arise from the work of sharing the Gospel in different cultural contexts, each of which asks questions of the tradition in its own unique way. Are there criteria by which we assess the developments? We offer here a helpful paper by a member who explored three very different accounts of how doctrine develops and evolves (*Paper 5,* Wang). Some members have drawn on this work in subsequent papers as a helpful way to focus their own answers to the question of whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful and Spirit-led development of doctrine (*Paper 6,* Andrews*; Paper 7,* Jennings*; Paper 8,* Thorne). We note that these criteria are at work in various ways in most of the contributions by Commission members.

22. In *The St. Michael Report* the Commission noted that same-sex blessings are analogous to marriage. The Commission spent considerable time exploring matters related to the understanding of Christian marriage, seeking to clarify their relationship to same-sex blessings, or same-sex marriage (which Canadian law now permits). Consequently the Commission identified two critical questions about the Tradition as central to the arguments against the proposed development being faithful and Spirit-led: gender complementarity and procreation.

23. **Gender complementarity**. There is a long history of reading Genesis 1–3 and Ephesians 5 in counterpoint with one another as pointing to the essential complementarity of male and female in creation as central to the mystery of Christ and the Church. Combined with the adoption of the philosophical underpinnings of

natural law[3] in the dominant strands of the theological tradition, this has led to the understanding that gender complementarity is foundational to the created order, and therefore foundational to all rightly ordered intimate human relationships. This question of complementarity relates to fundamental tensions between modern Western culture(s) and many traditional cultures, including those of our own First Nations and Inuit Anglicans, in which the genderedness of work and social structures are important aspects of identity and survival. Gender complementarity is now a matter of considerable debate. Two papers contributed to our deeper understanding of why this is so central for many Anglicans in this conversation, especially as the question of same-sex relationships is analogous to marriage (*Paper 8,* Thorne*; Paper 6,* Andrews*; The St. Michael Report, paras 3 and 31*). Other members raise questions as to whether this understanding is indeed still a central one (*Paper 7,* Jennings*; Paper 3,* Deller).

24. **Procreation.** Connected to this is a second, but equally important question for those who hold to a traditional view. Based on Genesis 1 and again drawing on natural law understandings, procreation is understood as a divinely ordered good in intimate human relationships and as a foundational element of Christian marriage. Others, based on a different reading of the witness of the Scriptures, offer an alternative account of procreation in relation to the good news announced in Christ and his Church (*Paper 8*, Thorne*; Paper 6,* Andrews*; Paper 7,* Jennings).

25. Where there is considerable consensus among Commission members, it is in relation to the grace conveyed in Christian marriage, including the gift of children, whether naturally conceived or through adoption. Our liturgies celebrate the gift and heritage of children as one important way in which the grace of God works in and through our lives. In their own right, covenant relationships such as marriage transform our lives and hopes, and call us into greater maturity and fullness in the life of Christ (*Paper 10*, Jennings*; Paper 11,* Howison).

26. The Commission is also aware that the Gospels (and many parts of the scriptural witness) subvert conventional understandings of marriage and family, both in their original context, in contemporary Western society and for that matter, in all societies. Further we are aware that there was a strong tradition in the early Church that singleness is normative for the Christian life, and that there is a need in our own time to explore this perspective further (*Paper 3,* Deller*; Paper 9,* Thorne).

27. The Commission was also asked to address the matter of the integrity of every human person and the sanctity of human relationships. Various members have offered reflections to assist us in considering this question (*Paper 2,* Commission*; Paper 12,* Matthews*; Paper 9,* Thorne).

28. Beyond these specific matters the Commission is aware of deeper questions relating to how we draw on the tradition of the Church. How is our new experience like or unlike similar situations in Scripture and in the history of the Church? How does the very way we retell those moments in the history of God's faithful people shape the way we find answers from the tradition (*Paper 14,* Deller*; Paper 13,* Lebans*; Paper 7,* Jennings*; Paper 15,* Moore*; Paper 16,* Nicholls)? How has the community addressed similar matters in the past (*Paper 9,* Thorne)? Are there different ways in which the Church has understood the role of tradition over time (*Paper 13,* Lebans*; Paper 14,* Deller)? How do questions ever arise in which the Church is being challenged to be more faithful? How do we discern the disconnection between our contemporary doctrine or practice and the model portrayed in the Gospel narratives? Is the role of tradition principally cautionary or is it to enhance and enable life-giving teaching? Many of these questions lead us to another question; or lead us back to a deeper reconsideration of central aspects of the tradition, for example, Scripture and the creeds.

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3. That is, the way in which the observable existence of things in the world speaks to us about the purpose for which God intended them.

Reason and Discernment

29. It is clear that the change in the understanding of human sexual and intimate relations, both as a phenomenon of modern historical unfolding and scientific research (at least in European and North American culture) is one of the forces that press this question on the church. For some, it affects the credibility of the Gospel, and for others it raises questions about our faithfulness to the Gospel. The Commission understands its role as a "theological" commission to be one of assisting the church to bring to bear the resources and riches of our tradition into the conversation. So some members have offered papers which take up these shifts in knowledge in various ways (*Paper 14,* Deller*; Paper 15,* Moore*; Paper 16,* Nicholls).

30. We are also aware that both our intellectual context and our cross-cultural reality in the life of the Church in Canada and around the world means that there are genuine and different ways in which groups and individuals reason and think (*Paper 13,* Lebans). There are also deeply different ways in which genuinely faithful people imagine outcomes: for some the promise of the Gospel is the power of the Holy Spirit in all things to reshape our lives and to give us healing and wholeness through the visible transformation of fundamental drives and desires; for others the promise of the Gospel is that those very drives and desires be drawn and made whole by incorporation into the life-giving work of the Spirit in the Church.

31. At this point, the Commission can come to no shared single answer or discernment. What we do offer the church are some considered attempts to articulate what we understand to be the ways that, drawing thoughtfully on a range of resources of Scripture and Tradition, reasonable and faithful individuals reach different conclusions about the question (*Paper 7,* Jennings*; Paper 8,* Thorne*; Papers 4* and *6,* Andrews).

Conclusion

32. We offer this back to our church in hope, inviting its response and consideration. We trust that these documents in their limited way will help us all be drawn more deeply and faithfully in to the mystery of the life of Christ among us. We recognize that they will pose problems for some, answer questions for others, and raise questions for all. We hope that these questions will assist us all to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

33. "Now I know only in part, then I will know more fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (I Corinthians 13: 12–13). This is our prayer for our church as we all continue to wrestle with these questions.

TWO

INTEGRITY AND SANCTITY

A Consideration by the Primate's Theological Commission

THE PRIMATE'S THEOLOGICAL Commission has been asked to "consult with dioceses and parishes and to report in advance of General Synod 2010 on … Scripture's witness to the integrity of every human person and the question of the sanctity of human relationships" (Act 61 GS 2007).

The phrase "the integrity of every human person" is problematic if by integrity we mean any of the most common understandings of the word: complete, whole, and self-contained; structurally sound and unbroken; possessing strong moral principles and high professional standards. In this sense, it is clearly *not* the case that every human person has integrity. We must therefore understand General Synod to use the term "integrity" in another sense: not as some quality we possess in ourselves, but as a sheer gift, conferred by grace, arising from our relationship with and dependence on God.

"Scripture's witness" is that God has created every human person in the image and likeness of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26). Although the likeness of the human person to God has been lost through the wilful disobedience of humankind (Genesis 3), the image of God remains. This is what makes us long to recover our likeness with God, a likeness which is supernaturally restored in the waters of baptism. In the redeeming incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus, in his resurrection and ascension, and in the coming of his Spirit into our hearts, each person has the potential not only for integrity, but for the fullness of that humanity which is drawn into the life of God. Being incorporated into the body of Christ, the human person begins the life of the Spirit as a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The Christian life then becomes a process of growing into an ever deeper holiness of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23) — and thus a fuller degree of integrity — through a life of obedience to the Divine Word, Jesus Christ.

With regard to "the question of the sanctity of human relationships," it is likewise clearly not the case that every human relationship has "sanctity" — i.e., is holy. The "question" then must be: what gives a relationship sanctity / holiness? Again, sanctity is not a quality that our relationships possess in themselves; rather, a relationship grows into sanctity when it is given over to and taken up by God, who is holiness, and drawn into the life of God through the redeeming work of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The sanctity of human relationships is the joy of the presence of the Holy Spirit as each person, in adoration and obedience to Christ, honours Christ in the other (Ephesians 2:4–32; Philippians 2-3; Galatians 5:14–25).

This means that a relationship may have the potential for sanctity, but even a relationship that is specifically ordered toward the sanctification of its members is dependent upon whether or not they actively pursue holiness within that relationship. And since holiness consists in loving God, and loving God consists in doing God's will, a relationship will be holy only to the extent that its members are doing God's will.

In short, when we speak of the "integrity of every human person" and "the sanctity of human relationships," we are speaking not of a quality inherent in ourselves, but of the destiny for which every human person was created — to become who we were made to be in Christ, in conformity to the will of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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THREE

THE BIBLE, HUMAN SEXUALITY, MARRIAGE AND SAME-SEX UNIONS

Walter Deller

Preliminary Meditation

From *The Silver Chair,* by C.S. Lewis:

Thirdly, the pain itself made Puddleglum's head for a moment perfectly clear and he knew exactly what he really thought. There is nothing like a good shock of pain for dissolving certain kinds of magic.

'One word, Ma'am [Queen of the Underworld],' he said, coming back from the fire; limping, because of the pain. 'One word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you said. But there's one more thing to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that's a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We're just babies making up a game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. So, thanking you kindly for our supper, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving your court at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's small loss if the world's as dull a place as you say.'

1. The Canon, Past and Present and Authority in Interpreting the Scriptures

I begin by commenting on some hermeneutic issues. These would relate to two or three broad questions.

1) What is the overarching framework within which I understand and interpret various biblical texts?

2) What is the relation between interpreters of the past and interpreters in the present?

3) Is there some sort of achievable objective understanding of the biblical text?

I will then move to discuss specific issues relating to what I understand the biblical texts to point to in relation to human sexuality and marriage, and finally how that relates to the more specific question of same-sex relationships.

1) What is the overarching framework within which I understand and interpret various biblical texts?[1]

I understand the New Testament, with its invitation to all humanity to enter into the revelation and life of God through the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and by openness to and acceptance of the action of the Holy Spirit in transforming and giving life to all that is, to be inseparable in both intent and interpretation from the writings of the Old Testament. In seeking to understand the mind of Jesus Christ, therefore, I start first from reflecting on the witness of Israel in its classic Jewish form: Torah, Prophets and Writings. This does not mean, however, that I interpret these texts in as if I had to pretend to have only the mind of an early first century CE Jew. Equally, it does not mean that I imagine that Jesus Christ was simplistically preoccupied in the manner of the modern academy with matters of historical origins.

The Torah

From this perspective, I understand the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) to be of overarching importance for all other interpretation. I do not understand Torah to mean "law" in some narrow sense, but to mean "instruction" in the broadest sense. The Torah is a body of diverse types of material (narrative, law, poetry, liturgy, liturgical and communal prescriptions etc) all of which instructs us about the One God. The material itself can be construed in diverse ways as to authorship, period of origin, and organization, but I understand the entire Torah to be anchored by three critical events, which I understand to reveal the Oneness (as Jews understand the text) and the Triuneness (as Christians understand the text) of the God to which it witnesses.

Genesis—Creation, Call and Providence

At the beginning the Torah is anchored by the accounts of Genesis that assert that God created all things including humankind to be in a relationship of fellowship, communion, and fruitfulness. Then there is rupture and

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1. I would want to acknowledge the central importance of Jacques Ellul, Katharine Temple, Stanley Walters, and Emmanuel Levinas, in teaching me to read the Bible, but also in teaching me about how the Bible teaches us to read. The work of Michael Welker on the inspiration of the scriptures as "witnesses" or "testimonies" has also played an important part in my more recent thinking. Our teachers, however, are not responsible for our egregious mistakes—we are. The first draft of this was prepared for the Primate's Theological Commission in October 2007, and at their suggestion some sections were revised. Other sections were revised or rethought as a result of invitations to give lectures at St Christopher's Burlington in December 2007 and at the Trinity Divinity Associates Conference at Trinity College, Toronto, in June 2008.

alienation—between God and humans, between human and human, between humans and creatures, and between humans and the rest of the created order. There is murder; there are the beginning of human culture, pride, violence and oppression. There is divine judgement and annihilation, and there is a remnant. There is human arrogance and seeking to displace God's Holy Name with our own name; and divine scattering and dispersal. Drawing from a recognizable cross-cultural pool of legends and accounts of human origins, these texts (chapters 1–11), polished to lapidary finesse, open inexhaustible veins of reflection for theological anthropology, some mutually reinforcing and others mutually contradictory. At the level of choice and juxtaposition of words, they play on ambiguities, forcing us on careful reading to abandon pious simplicities, opening to our meditation all the dimensions of human intention, choice, motivation, drives, language, culture, and socio-economic forces as they interact with a God portrayed as totally free to the point of the erratic and unpredictable.

Then there are two great narratives of call and covenant (chapters 12-36). In the first Abraham becomes a paradigm of intimacy and partnership in the divine purpose—"to become a blessing to all the nations of the earth." In the second, Jacob becomes the paradigm of struggle, denial and wrestling with the divine purpose and with other humans until "seeing his brother's face is like seeing the face of God." Sandwiched between is the black hole that is Isaac, his life scarred by the razor knife's shadow with the ambiguity of genuine human faithfulness to the divine command and the human sacrifice of terror, death and exclusion that is the hallmark of all human religion. Lied to at the crucial moment by his father, lied to at the other crucial moment by his wife and son, Isaac seeks to live with integrity despite knowing God only as loveless terror and humanity as wounding duplicity. Punctuating these narratives at every nodal point are the genealogies of the nations—what appears to be set to the margin in Genesis constantly presses back to the textual centre. Driving the turns of the narrative are the mysterious figures of the Matriarchs that the Jewish tradition considers prophetesses, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, by turns filled with insight into God's purpose, and then at other moments amplifiers of their spouses' dysfunctions.

The final part of Genesis (chapters 37-50) I understand as a prolonged meditation on providence in the form of the story of the life of Joseph. Here in the pit of disordered parental affection, overweening ambition, and sibling rivalry and violence opens into a life in which deprivation leads to wisdom, memory enables understanding, and human skill leads to the preservation of life across the known world. The Divine Actor, so present in the first two thirds of Genesis fades into the shadows. But here too the text opens up ambiguity. Reconciliation, framed as providence ("You meant it for evil; God meant it for good."), is preceded by repeated episodes of deliberate vengeful terror and manipulation. The bureaucrat with the divinely given ability to plan for the preservation of the whole world pursues an economic strategy that leads to the total enslavement of both the Egyptian and his own people.

Exodus through Numbers—Deliverance and The Liminal Learning Experience

The three central books of the Torah (Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers) have as their core God's action in liberating a people from slavery in Egypt to freedom and the Divine summons at Sinai to become a community that reflects the very life of God—both holy and just. This work of salvation, redemption and summoning to community is a work that is both cosmic and situated in history (Exodus 15)—the two are inseparable. The "getting glory over the gods of Egypt" is at one with the overthrow of "Pharaoh and his men of arms," and I understand this cosmic/historic reality to be consistently present in all the major New Testament articulations of the work and person of Jesus Christ, and to be essential to understanding his work and person. We cannot understand the work of Christ on the Cross apart from the deliverance from Egypt; the deliverance from Egypt for Christians is equally interpreted by the work of the Cross, and the texts present both Passover and Eucharist as prolepsis and anamnesis—simultaneously a proclamation in faith before the event that God does act, and a subsequent remembering in faith of the event of God's action. There can be no "salvation" that is merely individual or merely "spiritual." For it to be part of the

work of the God of the Torah and the God of Jesus Christ it must be connected to a real change in individual and communal socio-historic conditions that clearly manifests human freedom for God in all its aspects both freedom from the physical and spiritual manifestations of human slavery and oppression (power and economics, the tools of Pharaoh) and freedom from physical and spiritual manifestations of slavery to the false gods (social taboos and human sacrifice, the tools of religion).

Linked to the summoning and creation of the new community in Exodus is the narrative of a prolonged period of liminality, a period in which the community lives on the edge (both physically and in relation to all human society) in the desert.. In this period they learn the nature of the new community in things that are *spoken and heard* (laws, narratives, retellings of narratives), in things which are *shown and seen* (miraculous actions, experiences of the community), and in things which are *done and participated in* (the making of the covenant, the "picnic" before God on the mountain-top, the making of the tabernacle, the consecration of priests etc.). [2] All of these form part of the instruction as to the nature and the life of the community—revealing God's intention for the community and also the mechanisms by which the life of the faithful community may be sustained. At the heart of this prolonged and elaborated instruction is the assertion that the community must reflect the very life and inner being of the God who delivers the people from slavery into freedom. As God is both holy and just, the community of God's people cannot be holy without being just, and cannot be just without being holy.

Deuteronomy—Justice and Mercy as the Purpose of the Spirit's Work of Reinterpretation

At its conclusion the Torah is anchored by the book of Deuteronomy which looks forward to a community of justice and holiness living in the place God has appointed for them. Its unique form however is the retelling and reinterpretation not only of the "narrative" that precedes is but also of the legal tradition that precedes it. This action of Moses is both retrospective and prospective, and I understand this "representation" in Deuteronomy to point to the crucial work of the Holy Spirit in making present the life of God in "re-creating" the life of the continuing and faithful community of God's people in all times and ages. This work is always a work of reinterpretation and adaptation to new circumstances, and Deuteronomy simultaneously commands and models this process. It is present, though, throughout the Torah at its most basic in the multiple forms in which we find the Ten Commandments in all the books from Exodus through Deuteronomy.

The name Deuteronomy, from the Greek "*deuteros nomos,*" "the second law," reflects a basic reality of the book, which is a retelling and a restating of the key civil and religious legal traditions found elsewhere in the Torah, particularly in Exodus.[3] The Hebrew name for the book is *Devarim*—"Words," "Speeches," or "Things," after the first line of the text which reads "These are the Words/These are the Speeches/ these are the Things which Moses spoke to all of Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness…." Imaginatively, the book is the final address, the last will and testament, of a great leader—that's how it's framed, and at its conclusion Moses makes the lonely climb up Mount Nebo where he is allowed to see the Promised Land he will never enter because of his anger and impatience with his people over the years, and there he dies.

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2. Those familiar with the work of Victor Turner on liminality, and liminal instruction will recognize his most useful framework and insights here.

3. This is how the text presents itself to us in its plain sense. We should note that there are cogent scholarly arguments that the versions of the law in Exodus and elsewhere are reliant on the laws in Deuteronomy. See especially John van Seters. Even if these arguments are true, the canon itself presents this to us as a matter of reinterpretation of traditions inspired by new context and necessities.

If the Hebrew name draws our attention as interpreters to the texture of the book as the words or speeches of Moses to the next generation as they reach the end of their long forty years of wandering, death and despair in the desert, the Greek name draws our attention to the large collection of laws in the middle of the book, and the way in which they are identifiably a restating of legal traditions we can often find in other forms. The Hebrew name draws our attention to the way the book models a cyclical process all faith communities require—the mechanism of passing on the core of our tradition and belief, those things which give and enable life and faithfulness, to the next generation. Will our children have faith and what sort of faith do we hope it will be? The Greek name draws our attention to the historical origins of the book in a moment of crisis and collapse during the reign of King Josiah of Judah, to the action of "restating" or "rewriting" the ancient teachings and laws as a crucial intervention in the life of the community in order to galvanize and convince people of the need for change in the behaviour and values of the entire community, from top to bottom. Deuteronomy is the first great text of "reformation" in our tradition. From the movement which inspired it, Deuteronomy carries with it a destructive baggage of violence, destruction of religious objects and people, and xenophobic fear and hatred, which has been the hallmark of all religious reform since. Nevertheless, it's because Deuteronomy represents a genuine attempt by real faithful people in a moment of crisis to rearticulate their faith and to call other people back to the deepest roots and principles of that faith that it gets it so right, and simultaneously, as we can see in hindsight, get some of it so wrong. [4]

Recollection and Storytelling as Mercy and Hope for the Future

The first ten chapters of Deuteronomy take the form of a retelling of Israel's history of deliverance from slavery in Egypt, meeting and covenanting with the Lord at Sinai, and their long period of forty years wandering in the desert. What Deuteronomy models for us in opening this way is the need for each generation to retell the story it has received to the next generation so that it too knows the story. But it also models for us that the story has to be retold to each new generation in the context of the future they face, not in the context of the past we have experienced. Embedded in this narrative is the essential minimal summary of Israel's entire legal tradition, the Ten Commandments, and even these have been reframed over against the Exodus version in the light of the people's future life in the land. But the second "summary" embedded in this retelling is the "prophetic" version of Israel's great tradition, the one quoted above. This passage echoes something a century older than Deuteronomy, the words of Micah the prophet.

> With what shall I come before the Lord,
> and bow myself before God on high?
> Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
> with calves a year old?
> Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
> with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?
> Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
> the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
> He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
> and what does the Lord require of you
> but to do justice, and to love kindness,
> and to walk humbly with your God?

4. Horribly and destructively wrong, with a nuclear half-life that we still see today impacting on and destroying people in our own Anglican communion and other Christian communities, and in the residential schools crisis of our own church here in Canada.

Micah too in his great prosecuting speech frames this by remembering the Exodus and by denouncing social and economic oppression and dishonesty. For the Deuteronomists, knowing who we are in the here and now begins with remembering the story of who we were before God entered our lives, before there was community and hope and the possibility of generosity and justice, and remembering the story of how God changed all that when we were brought out of Egypt, from slavery into freedom.

Structures and Laws—Making Room for a Culture of Mercy and Generosity

It's important not to lose sight of this set of crucial opening articulations of who God is, what God does, and what God is calling us to be. They provide the interpretive lens we need to explore the fourteen chapters of legal material that make up the middle section of the book. This is the "second law." In the allusions in the historical recollection of chapters nine and ten to the second set of tablets, written after the episode of the Golden Calf and Moses' intercession for the people, we are given to understand that this is a faithful rescription of the first law given on Sinai. But what we know from comparing the two is that they are very different in many ways. This points us in a similar direction as that indicated by the use of narrative in this tradition. The "law" given by God is not some abstract unchangeable object—it has a purpose and an end, and that is to create a community that is holy in the way that God is holy.

> For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing.

What makes this God so worthy of praise and worship is precisely that this God is unlike the gods of the nations who are guarantors of royal and other forms of power and control, enforcers of social order, generators of wealth, prosperity and fertility (i.e. all the idols of the state, the economy, religion and the family). The God of the Deuteronomists also provides those things to the faithful, but they rise primarily out of the creation of the community of justice and generosity, out of care for the poor and weak, and (as these texts keep reiterating) for the stranger, for the one who is an outsider, who is different, who does not naturally belong. So the law too must be reinterpreted and reshaped in every generation to ensure that the law itself remains faithful to its purpose—the creation of this community of justice, generosity and mercy. The book echoes with this contradiction— "*not a word must be changed or altered,*" "*remember to keep all the commandments*," yet the opening of chapter 23, after legislating categories of "aliens" and outsiders reminds the hearers that they too were "aliens", a message reinforced even more dramatically in the gleaning laws at the end of chapter 24.

While we may read some of these laws and wonder how they create a community of justice and mercy, scholars have long been aware that they generally offer versions of earlier Israelite or Near Eastern legislation that are more considerate of women and slaves. But these laws also legislate about the working conditions and rights of animals, and the rights of trees.

> You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked together. (22:10)
> You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. (25:4)
> If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you? You may destroy only the trees that you know do not produce food; you may cut them down for use in building siege-works against the town that makes war with you, until it falls. (20:19-20)

These injunctions are unique to the Deuteronomic version of the law. Over and over again, however, the first lens through which we are told to interpret the law is the memory that we were once slaves in Egypt. The ordering of the groups of laws constantly refocuses our attention on the need for a just economy as the purpose and foundation of all our religious activity, our political order and our sacral order. The first laws to do with homicide are those setting up the cities of refuge—the foundational assumption is that that mercy and generosity are paramount. First the innocent must have a place of escape and protection, and secondly, homicide is most likely unintentional. Throughout, the deuteronomic legal collection presses on us the priority of structures and assumptions of generosity. Second only to the centrality of Jerusalem as a public structure of unity and worship is the regular remission of all debt. This version of the law is a response to a world where the rich and powerful controlled and could buy justice—and at its most radical point it completely re-imagines what a king should be.

> One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community. Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the Lord has said to you, "You must never return that way again." And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

No military power, no social luxury, no excess of wealth, total equality with the community, immersed in the study of this law—what a strange notion of political leadership. But we might recall that, this is being proposed in a world which has known lots of traditional Near-Eastern kingship and knows that it doesn't work.

Ritual and Proclamation—Embedding a Culture in Individual and Corporate Memory

The legal section closes with the account of the ritual of the first fruits and tithe offerings (Deuteronomy 26, the passage which forms the foundation for the traditional Jewish Passover Aggadah). It then looks ahead to the ritual the people will undertake when they enter the land in which they will set up stones at the border and write the law on them and pronounce solemn blessings and cursings from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. So Deuteronomy teaches us that a crucial element of creating and transforming culture has to do with finding and creating the rituals and processes that enable both individual members of the community and the community as a whole to rehearse and own their identity on a regular basis.

Every year the individual Israelite comes with his first fruit offerings and his family, and makes a proclamation. He tells the story of Israel, but he tells it as his own story of God's love and generosity.

Then together with the Levites and the aliens who reside around them, they celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord God has given to them. And every third year after paying the tithe required and giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill, then the Israelite makes this proclamation.

As the text models it, *first we take the actions that create a community of justice and love*, and only then do we talk about our state of holiness, and our fulfillment of religious observance. "I have not offered any of it to the dead…"—this is no simple statement about not participating in some form of foreign cult of the dead. This is a fundamental affirmation that only in caring for the Levites, the strangers and outsiders, the orphans and the widows, can we create a society that will know and experience true life, the life God desires and gives.

Beyond Proposition—Process as Revelation

As much of what goes before this would indicate, I understand the "instruction" of the Torah to be not merely propositional but *processual*. What we are to learn is not simply a matter of "laws" to be memorized and obeyed, but a story out of which all meaning emerges, and a larger sequence of texts, divided into sub-texts, in which the interrelations of the parts with the overarching whole, but also internally within the parts themselves, engage us in a dynamic process of understanding through both amplification and reiteration but also through contradiction and juxtaposition.[5] Likewise, certain details of the text, may, because of their positioning in relation to key narrative or structural nodes of the text, bear a "symbolic" or "theoretical" weight greater than the detail itself.[6]

It would be equally important to note that from this perspective, there can be no distinction between "law" and "grace." The entire instruction of the Torah is grace since it speaks of only of One God, who creates, saves and sanctifies, and that God is, from beginning to end a God of grace. God's work in creation is grace because we are given time and life and companionship—we experience grace in becoming part of the history of the creation God wills. God's work in deliverance and redemption from slavery and creation of a new community of justice and holiness is grace because we are given freedom and hope within history—we experience grace in being delivered from the domination of the powers that govern history. God's work in enabling us to reinterpret the history and law is grace because we are given new opportunities to extend the community of freedom and hope despite history—we experience grace in being entrusted with the capacity to respond in every generation to the forces that would reduce the Triune God to simply another of the gods, and the community of hope that manifests the reign of God to being simply another form of human religion.

The Prophets

The second part of the Scriptures of the Old Testament which forms a part of the hermeneutic framework is the Prophets (Joshua through 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Collection of the Twelve). I understand these

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5. To give an example, I understand the overall structure of Numbers to be symmetrical around the central chapter 19, the ritual of the red heifer, which offers the ritual healing for "death." Broadly, I understand the scope of the instruction in Numbers to have to do with the realities of the life and leadership of the community. Within this larger structural framework, I understand the seemingly disjunct ritual instructions of chapters 5 and 6 (especially the rituals of the jealous husband and the wife suspected of adultery and the nazirites), and contextually intrusive seeming regulations regarding the bindingness of women's vows in chapter 30, to be in a structural relationship that presses us to reflect on the relationship between familial disruptions and individual "behaviours" and their power to disrupt and destroy communities, and the need for appropriate mechanisms for articulating boundaries in relation to private and public. The structure forces us to read and meditate on these instructions both for similarities and differences and deeper relationships.

6. So, for instance, at the Exodus the Israelite people are commanded to borrow silver and gold from their Egyptian neighbours. Reference to the gold reappears at three crucial narrative junctures: at the moment of the departure from Egypt, at the creation of the golden calf, and at the communal free-will offering which initiates the building of the tabernacle. I understand this sequence of references to be an articulation (at the level of deeper structural meaning) of the Torah's understanding of foundational economic issues: first, that all communities must have an economy to survive and that all national economies have their ultimate root in theft/borrowing from someone else; secondly that the community's economic life is inextricably entwined with its propensity to false understandings of power and false understandings of God (idolatry); thirdly, that when economic goods in the community are freely shared there is always an excess for everyone and such just and free sharing is essential for the holiness of God (the *Shekinah*) to tabernacle with the community. It doesn't belong to us at all; it wants us to worship it instead of God; we only have power over it when we give it away.

books, both in the way they have been gathered in the Jewish canon, and in their duality of form to point to the continued witness of the community to the sustaining action of the Holy Spirit first in the very life and continuity of the community, and secondly in the Spirit's action at key moments through the life of key witnesses known as "prophets."

The Former Prophets (Joshua through Kings) present us with the extended narrative of the Israelite community's experience in the Land over a long period of about 600 years. It thus provides perspective on what communal faithfulness involves, and is an essential counterpoint at all times to the limited historical frame of the New Testament, particularly the Epistles. While the narrative as a whole unfolds within an overarching interpretive framework of divine reward for obedience and divine punishment for disobedience, at almost all critical points the diversity of the materials incorporated (however we understand origins and authorship) bring into stark juxtaposition diverse perspectives on events and choices. Joshua and Judges present opposed pictures of how the Israelites entered and settled the land. First Samuel presents starkly opposed views about the socio-political transformation of the community under royal governance. Both books of Samuel present David as the prototypical representation of the faithful "anointed one" of God, the ideal king, and both present him as a "man of blood," a murderer whose inability to deal with the disorders of his own family results in civil war. Solomon is portrayed as the epitome of the wise king and also as the greatest of idolaters. 1 and 2 Kings understand the division of the kingdom into north and south as the ultimate disaster in which the northern kingdom Israel is portrayed as the apostate party, while at the point of division it is clearly Rehoboam of Judah's failure which sparks the split. And despite the seeming rejection of the northern Kingdom Israel, the bulk of the material itself focuses mostly on God's continued presence and action in its affairs, as opposed to those of Judah to the south. The entire narrative tracks the life of God's people through social change, political change, economic change, internal upheaval and external pressures. The narrative forces us constantly to hold simultaneously to two perspectives—one that of the framework which wants us to see everything as a simple matter of obedience or disobedience, faithfulness or falling away, and the other forced on us by the ambiguities and contradictions of the narrative and the substructures of the whole, a perspective that constantly correlates faithfulness with weakness and failure, and shows even the best of human motivations and intentions to be almost the random victim of historical exigency.

This narrative portrays the Holy Spirit as acting in three distinct and crucial manifestations—but here too the narratives themselves point to critical issues. In Judges and the first part of Samuel, the Holy Spirit acts to deliver and save God's people from oppression and apostasy by working powerfully through the charisms and gifts of individual leaders. But these narratives, culminating in the tragedy of Samuel and Saul, all point to the way in which the shadow side of our human giftedness, when seized as the vehicle for the Spirit's work, is also exaggerated to destructive scope alongside our gift. In Samuel and Kings the Holy Spirit is shown at work in and through the institution of Kingship, but here too the narratives (especially that of Saul, David and Solomon) portray the way that the work of the Spirit is dependent on the adequate formation of institutional leaders. Ultimately both dynastic kingship in Judah and kingship by revolution in Israel fail because institutional leadership is over-invested in structures of power and self-preservation and construes the One God simply as the guarantor of the state and therefore the worship of God as another useful political structure (the sin of Jeroboam) or as one in a range of options in crisis and emergency (the sin of the kings of Judah). In Kings, the Holy Spirit is shown at work in and through the actions and words of the Prophets, individuals largely drawn from among the marginalized, the scandalized and the outraged, in a form of action which is essentially confrontative and disruptive. Here too, in the great juxtaposition of the Elijah and Elisha legends, we see the way in which the prophet deracinated from community (Elijah) becomes merely an angry and ultimately ineffective figure, while the prophet rooted in community (Elisha) stands at risk of becoming another collaborator with power or a political player, thus being rendered equally ineffective.

At a secondary level, the narrative of the Former Prophets understands the Holy Spirit to work through the priests and the life of the cult, but at almost every juncture the narrative portrays the priests and the cult as seduced

by the attractions of power and domination and co-opted by violence and expediency. Here again, the overarching narrative shape presents us with a paradox. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, is constantly at work and is unfailingly faithful. The human and institutional vehicles of the Spirit's action, on the other hand, must constantly be viewed with the deepest skepticism. I understand particularly the Petrine but also the Pauline traditions of the New Testament under this rubric, not simply because the Former Prophets teach us to read all texts in this fashion, but because the Petrine and Pauline texts (in the Gospels, Acts and Paul's letters) themselves bear all the same hallmarks of ambiguity about power, multiple perspectives, and human weakness, through which the Spirit works.

The second part of the Prophets is made up of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the collection known as the Twelve. The Jewish canon itself makes a clear distinction between Daniel (an apocalyptic book) and the Prophets, although almost all the prophetic books contain some fragments of proto-apocalyptic. This is a significant distinction—the Prophets are primarily concerned not with the cosmic struggle, but with the material and spiritual condition of God's people within human history. Overwhelmingly, the prophets are preoccupied with issues of perverted economic systems, with faithless political systems, with the human suffering they provoke, and with the way that religion and religious leadership is a tool of the powerful and the establishment. The prophets repeatedly attack the beauty and fervour of holiness of the cult because it functions as an anaesthetic to deaden perceptions and at the same time justifes and enforces continuing injustice (denial and rote tradition, as always, hand in hand).

Once again, the prophetic books themselves point in their forms and arrangement to diverse periods and perspectives. But two things characterize almost all the prophetic books—they are made up of oracles of judgement combined with oracles of consolation. The God to whom they witness is a God passionate for justice and holiness but also a God passionate for mercy. In speaking for this God, the latter prophets re-articulate the old laws and traditions, but they also whittle these down to three fundamental principles. The God whose Spirit moves them to speak and to act is a God for whom justice and mercy are the fundamental qualities required of the community, and a God who desires to draw all humanity into full knowledge of that Divine self of justice and mercy. The latter prophets thus provide a significant lens through which the entire Torah must be re-read—whatever its laws and prescriptions, their ultimate aim is not to sustain some religious system (e.g. Amos or Ezekiel), or some political system (Isaiah and Jeremiah), but to enable a community to live in justice, mercy and the knowledge of God's holiness and to draw all the nations of the earth into that transforming vision.

The work of the Spirit in the prophets takes place through their proclamation of the Word of the Lord (whether of judgement or of hope), through their doing of sign-actions, and through their own being and presence. All three of the great latter prophets experience in their own bodies the force of the suffering and unfaithfulness of their people. To carry and make present the work of the Holy Spirit does not lift the prophet out of reality into some ideal plane, but rather plunges him or her ever more deeply into the life of the historical community and its context. The Holy Spirit does not speak "objectively" into a vacuum, but always through a person who embedded in a concrete historical situation, and therefore directly to that concrete historical situation. For this reason, at times the prophets seem almost to be "relativists." At the same time, the shaping of the whole tradition of the Latter Prophets elevates their words and actions beyond the merely historical through a process of gathering and reflection by later generations, in which process the presence, words and actions of the prophets in a particular historical circumstance becomes correlated with the cosmic and ultimate day of the Lord, and the prophets' narrowing of the focus onto the essential elements of justice, mercy and knowledge of God in the here and now is a manifestation of the reality of God's ultimate judgement on and reception of all human work and societies.[7]

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7. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham says to the rich man who asks that someone be sent back from the dead to warn his relatives, "They have Moses and the Prophets, what good will it be if someone comes back from the dead?"

The Jesus tradition of the New Testament is modeled on this prophetic tradition. Jesus is the fullness of the presence of God's Spirit incarnate in Human Being and manifests this in his proclamation of the kingdom, in his reiteration of the core tradition of justice and mercy, and in his signs and actions—being tempted, his baptism, healing, miracles, casting out the spiritual powers, eating with the poor, meeting and touching those excluded by religious systems and taboos, and ultimately in the Last Supper, the Cross and the Resurrection. In all these sign actions the being and proclamation of Jesus are inseparable—he is revealed as a Prophet and as more than a Prophet. To depoliticize the Cross and turn it into another religious symbol is fundamentally to deny that the Holy Spirit is present in Jesus Christ, since it is a denial of the entire prophetic tradition and its witness to the work of the Spirit. The sending of the Spirit on the Church enables all followers of Jesus to share in that unity of being and proclamation, and whatever may be said about the life of the church based on the New Testament writings must fulfil this basic requirement—that it is fully consonant with the Prophetic tradition and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

It is important to note that the Former Prophets are not merely a historical narrative of how the Holy Spirit was at work in the life of Israel, or an account that gives background to the emergence of prophetism as a force in ancient Israel, or a narrative in which we see God's judgment and mercy being worked out. In terming these narratives as Prophets, along with the Latter Prophets, whose words confront us much more bluntly with the demand for change in our ways, the canon invites us into a much more complex and nuanced understanding of prophecy. It is easy to see how an oracle of woe or comfort summons us to meet the God of justice or consolation. A "story" or narrative forces us to contemplate all the layers of social and historical exigency, and the ambiguities of human character and role, confronting us the with reality of God's possible judgement on our choices and offering us the hope that if we unpack the story more carefully we will ourselves be enabled to make better and wiser choices. [8]

The Writings

The third body of literature on the Old Testament, known as the Writings, consists of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah (an alternative account of the history of Israel narrated through the perspective of the centrality of the Temple and its rebuilding and restoration in the life of community), the Psalms, the Wisdom books of Proverbs and Job, Daniel (a collection dominated by apocalyptic vision), and the Five Scrolls for special feasts and fasts (Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes or Qohelet, Lamentations). All of these books press us again with the need for alternate ways of "knowing" and understanding. In Chronicles we have an account that forces us to consider that the history

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8. For example, in the text of 1 Samuel, God rebukes Samuel for his emotional inability to let go of Saul. But the text does not present us this judgement on Samuel in isolation; it presses us to reflect on the entire complex of stories, to explore Samuel's inability to mentor a leader for a task and future different than his own (king as compared to judge and prophet), Samuel's inability to accept and negotiate social and political change. And we begin to contemplate how the judgement extends beyond Samuel's failure, because it becomes the shadow that warps Saul's life (his inability to control his emotions and manage the distinction between the "Spirit" required of a king and the "Spirit" required of a mantic prophet), and Israel's life—social disorder and civil war during the long Saulide decline. But the larger perspective also reminds us that all social groups moving through major periods of change and transition in political and social forms experience ambiguity, tension, and outright failure. So we are invited to reflect on our own role and responsibility in forming leaders for a future we haven't experienced and may not ever know. We are taught to have a larger perspective of mercy in times of change. We are challenged to ask ourselves how we are responding and interacting with social changes we may be living through, and if our choice are giving life or casting the shadow of death over the lives of other people and our community? For the full ambiguity of this consider 1 Sam 13 and 1 Sam 15 in relation to all these questions.

we have accepted as "normative" and true in Joshua through Kings, may be narrated and understood in a different way, and even through a different understanding of what is central to God's will for the community. Ezra and Nehemiah force us to re-read all the traditions of the deportation period not as final catastrophe but as prelude to a new action of God, and they also confront us with the continued complexity of the life of the faithful community in a world of disruption, anomie, and colonialism.

On the most critical issues of community life and cohesion in Ezra and Nehemiah (exclusion of foreigners), Ruth (whatever its dating) offers a blunt contradiction and draws her story into the liturgical tradition as the paradigm of faithfulness and its capacity to transform the life of the community. In an even more acute way than the Joseph narrative of Genesis, Esther forces us to admit the invisibility and hiddenness of God in history and our own responsibility for choosing to participate in providence through loyalty, integrity, fidelity, and our own wits. Lamentations and the complaint psalms insist that doxology is not adequate for telling the truth about God and our own suffering—even pressing us to accept that God may abandon us so that we no longer in the depths know for sure the validity of any claims about God's fidelity and willingness to act. Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, the last books to be accepted into the canon, press us to alternate ways of knowing beyond any other books in the tradition. Song of Songs insists that human sexual love and physical passion are goods beyond the confines of social institutionalization, and that such human sexual love is the only adequate theological language for understanding God's love and passion for the body of the faithful. Ecclesiastes insists that the only path to God is through doubt, skepticism and deconstruction of all accepted rationalizations of existence into orderly propositions. Many of these texts press us with alternate ways of understanding and knowing in other ways by forcing to listen more clearly to women's voices and experience as paradigms of faithfulness (Ruth, Esther, Song, Lamentations).

The literature of oppression in Daniel pushes us beyond the tradition of narrative paradigms of faithfulness, beyond the liturgical tradition of prayer, and beyond the visionary parameters of the prophetic into the world of apocalyptic vision—forcing us to learn new conventions for reading and understanding a language of images and symbols, and forcing us to confront the dangers of projecting our own psyche into the cosmic dimension of God's purpose and activity. Daniel teaches us to distrust ourselves as readers and interpreters, to grapple with the duality of words and images in their specificity and vagueness, but also to appreciate once again the capacity of the visionary, of symbols and images, to tear the veil from the arrogance of human power and propaganda that seek to interject themselves in the place of the One God of heaven and earth.

In giving us a language to speak to God the Psalms place our human journey and our human choices, our suffering, oppression and our joy and deliverance, in the framework of our desire to know God's way, the hope for the reign of God in the age of the anointed one, the faithfulness of God's past and present action in creation and salvation, and the knowledge of God's commandments and instruction as the Spirit's guide on our journey to justice and holiness.

More than any other of the writings the two great books of the Wisdom tradition, Proverbs and Job (and with them Ecclesiastes) press us to recognize that there is another significant mode of revelation of God's purpose and will, one which is shared beyond the immediate community of faith with other communities of culture and faith. This is the revelation learned through our own human experience of life and death, of the ordering and patternedness of life, of the consequences embodied in human choices and habits. Proverbs insists that all human experience is a revelation of the Wisdom of God, and that Wisdom is open to everyone who enters its invitation to a path of dialogic and paradoxic interaction with the commonplace. Job reveals to us the decisions of the secret heavenly domain that influence our experience of suffering, allows us to argue all our best religious explanations for human suffering, appals us with Job's belligerent insistence on maintaining his own total righteousness before God, and finally, having been rebuked in our piety and religiosity by God for not having spoken the truth as did Job, forces us shamefacedly to beg him to pray for us.

The New Testament is also incomprehensible without the Writings. Jesus the Teacher of beatitudes and parables (literally *mashals*, or proverbs) is not only the fulfillment of the Prophetic tradition but the incarnation and living being of Divine Wisdom. And Jesus is also the Anointed One who brings in the reign of God, the *mashiah* or Messiah of the Psalms—in him we recognize the fullness of all the prayers of faithful Israel, in the Lord's prayer we learn the interconnexion of doxology, hope, justice and mercy, and in his crying out of the complaint psalms on the cross Jesus reveals our loneliness, suffering and abandonment as the True Word at the very heart of the Holy Trinity. The structure of Daniel teaches us to distinguish between narratives of the earthly reality of oppression, fortitude and faithful witness and the imaginative visionary symbolic representation of the cosmic and heavenly struggle that lies behind the arrogant opposition of the earthly powers to the One God. Without Daniel we would stand at risk of reading the Revelation to John and confusing realities.

Notes on this hermeneutic framework

1) Very little that is articulated in this framework is dependent on theories of the dating or origins of the texts, or of elaborate historical-critical analyses of sources. In the same vein, it is not necessarily inimical to elaboration in relation to such historical information. It does seek to see a historical form of canon as having implications for reading the whole and the parts.

2) The framework articulates a "Trinitarian" shape in aspects of the canon, necessary in my view to clarify the essential coherence of the Christian Bible. But in some sense it also insists on an inversion of many typical Christian readings. The Old Testament is not "made true" because of Jesus; Jesus is recognizably the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity because he is fully coherent with the testimony of the canon of the Scriptures (Torah, Prophets and Writings) to what the community has experienced and attests to be true about the God of Israel who creates, saves and speaks the Word of judgement and hope.

3) In other contexts I would want to elaborate particular themes, ideas, or motifs. Among these would be: the notion(s) of covenant(s); the centrality of the theme of the redemption of the firstborn as the repayment of the price for freedom; the complex understandings of divine judgement in the prophets particularly in relation to the outworkings of human choices in history; the significance of the face of God and the face of the Other Person; the sustained critique of violence and force and particularly of the powerful attraction violence and force have for religion and religious leaders.

4) It is clear that in some sense I see the entire canon as constantly deconstructing itself. In describing this framework I have tried to give some shape to how I see this happening. I understand this process of deconstructing as fundamental to the way the canon in its entirety seeks to teach us to read and understand the world. I also understand this as the way the canon seeks to help us respect its origins as both "Spirit-breathed" and as the work of "human writers"—I experience the canon as richly aware of its own hermeneutic problems.[9] Fundamentally the canon seeks to teach us that all forms of human production are not trustworthy; there is only One

9. This also points to why a preoccupation with historical origins, authorship, and original/authorial meaning, are of limited interest to the canonical books themselves—they (and their earliest redactors) are already aware of the contingency of everything human. But although it comes close at one or two points, the canon never doubts God.

who is trustworthy, God. God is unknowable and our human testimonies to what we know and experience of God are always fallible and limited by our contingent nature. But for the canon ultimately there is one thing that cannot be deconstructed: the justice and mercy of God.[10]

5) This framework seeks to articulate both some overarching shape and concerns that frame interpretation of the scriptures, and also to place particular parts of the canon and then particular books of the canon and their unique function within that larger framework. It is obvious that at some level in the scriptures everything is in everything, but that is quite useless, if not downright paralyzing in enabling us to interpret and speak the Word of God faithfully into our own situation and time. It is as paralyzing as the extreme form of understanding the text as deconstructing itself totally—in that world of interpreting the text can say nothing because it contradicts itself constantly. In the world of interpreting where all distinctions are lost, the scriptures simply yield a bland pious pap of generalities and "Judaeo-Christian morality"—the world of praise chorus theology and morality. In the world of the biblical text the God we experience in Esther is distinctly a different character from that we experience in Genesis 12-25. The Holy Spirit in Judges manifests its activity differently from the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 40-45. The Letter to the Hebrews presents the saving work of Christ in a distinctly different way from Mark's gospel. Yet the canon also asserts that it is always and everywhere the same God and the same Jesus Christ and the same Holy Spirit.[11]

2) What is the relation between interpreters of the past and interpreters in the present?

Effectively then, I have proposed a paradox. If the canon proposes a mode of reading that constantly deconstructs itself, there can be no normative reading. At the same time the very notion and structure of the canon proposes that there must forms of normative reading. This paradoxical issue also extends to the question of normative interpretation, and the interrelation of past and present in interpretation. If past interpretations of the Bible are declared indelibly normative, then effectively the Holy Spirit can no longer speak through the Scriptures, since it contradicts the very principle articulated as normative by the Scriptures, that the scriptures must be reinterpreted for ever generation and that God's Spirit is free to speak as it needs to in every new historical situation or context.

I understand Moses' discourse in Deuteronomy 4 to be about precisely this paradox of interpretation:

- the allusion to the Baal of Peor (which evokes the whole ambiguity and problematic of the Balaam episodes [Num. 22-25] in relation to prophecy, the equally ambiguous problematic of the relation between sexuality and

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10. The philosopher Jacques Derrida is reputed to have rebuked a graduate student who proclaimed that everything can be deconstructed, by insisting that there was one thing which could not be deconstructed—namely justice. Several of the writings from the final decade of his life deal with two themes—justice and hospitality, which I understand to be his mode of reflection on the ultimate nature of the God of the Bible, hospitality being the most fundamental human practice of mercy.

11. I owe this fundamental perception to the work of Jacques Ellul who puts it a bit more pungently than I in several places. But it also holds a significant place in the work of the theologian Michael Welker, who articulates a version of this issue in his introduction to *What Happens in Holy Communion?* Again, none of this is particularly dependent on a particular understanding of authorship or dating or historical setting. Knowledge of such matters can raise awareness of the uniqueness of the message of each part of the canon and alert us to aspects of historical setting that may give our interpretation more focus and clarity, and it can also contribute to blandness in interpretation. It not an accident that the major insights of most post-eighteenth century commentaries and critical books are: a) few eggs for such big baskets and b) often completely unrelated to the intense methodological activity that preoccupies their writers (e.g. the work of Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza).

religion, the fall into religion from worship of the One God, and the seduction of violence as a means of social and religious control, which violence is also one of the reasons Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land);

- the repeated insistence that the people must not change a word of the commands given to them;
- the repeated warning to "take care and watch yourselves closely;"
- the repeated emphasis on there having been no "form" only a "voice" from within the "fire" on Sinai;
- the evocation of the two tablets which God wrote and Moses' violence destroyed (there is no form of text, only the word to be remembered and interpreted);
- the repeated emphasis on the danger of idolatry (the desire for the security of the form of fertility and power over anxiety and ambiguity of the empty space between the cherubim in which dwells the Presence);
- and the closure of the chapter with the appointment of cities of refuge (the primal human situation in which our interpretation of what we see and hear is fundamentally flawed—what we think is deliberate murder is in fact accidental killing.)

But set against all this is the equal insistence that the people sustain and exercise the capacity to remember faithfully all they have seen and heard, and to make all of this known to their posterity. [12]

We are obliged by Deuteronomy to remember and interpret to the next generation with all the faithfulness we can muster. We are obliged by Deuteronomy to respect and honour our forbears in the past because they sought to remember and interpret with all the faithfulness they could muster. We are obliged to listen, hear and speak the word the Spirit will give us faithfully into our present. But we aren't obliged to assume that the past interpreted correctly or infallibly, any more than we can assume that we are interpreting correctly or infallibly, or that generations to come will interpret correctly or infallibly. Idols and religions interpret correctly and infallibly. We worship a God who has no Form, who speaks the Word in Human Form, and who surrounds us and can burn us with the Spirit's Fire.[13]

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12. I understand all discourse about idolatry in the OT (but see also the concluding verse of 1 John) to be essentially about "religion," or more particularly the constant temptation in ancient Israel but also in the Church to turn the worship of the One Triune God into a religion. Fundamentally the Bible is very clear that idols are just sticks and stone and bits of fabricated metal and are essentially powerless. The passion about idolatry therefore represents a much deeper concern. But almost everywhere in the Bible "religion" and "religious leadership" is shown to be essentially violent and expedient—"It is best that one man should die for the people." This is not an insight unique to Rene Girard, but already present and evoked repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. From a purely historical and evolutionary perspective, the Deuteronomistic movement, with its brilliant insight into the need to draw together, reinterpret and rearticulate the essential elements of the old Mosaic traditions, also represents the real moment of the formation of what comes to be represented across the canon as Israel's true faith in the One God, and as such, itself falls into "religion" as manifested in its shadow side of xenophobia, iconoclasm, and violent murder and desecration of human beings and their remains (2 Kings). Nor should we be complacent—our own failure in the interpretation led to the Deuteronomic ideology (idolatry?) becoming a dominant tradition in evangelism, and as noted earlier, we see the afterlife of this dark side of "Deuteronomic religion" in aspects of our own Anglican treatment of First Nations peoples in Canada.

13. The rabbis liken interpretation of the Scriptures to the ecstasy and danger of drawing too near to the fire on Sinai—it can inspire us with Holy Fire and give us insight and life, or it can burn us, as Isaiah also knew.

Thus the interpretive Tradition is always obligated to make itself intelligible to the present—the present owes it no obligation of allegiance, since without making itself intelligible to the present, the Tradition is simply another form without voice, another idol with mouth that does not speak, "eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear…and all those who trust in [it] are like [it]." The present, however, bears the obligation of respecting the tradition for its faithfulness. We may disagree with it, we may find it has nothing useful to say to our situation, but we cannot dismiss it because it, like us, is seeking to be a faithful witness, and in its own time the Spirit spoke through it and kindled fire on earth. But this is precisely why the tradition is so essential and so valuable to us. It is only when we are not bound by it, not caught in the delusion that it is the truth for all time, and open to disagree with it and contradict it, that we are free to learn from it. We don't learn from the witnesses of the past because they are right; we learn because they are faithful.[14]

The Gospel narratives portray Jesus as an interpreter of the Torah and the other Scriptures, and in this regard some parts of the gospel tradition indicate he was called and understood as a "Rabbi," a distinguished teacher. In these narratives Jesus consistently models several things for interpreters of the tradition. First, he almost always begins by questioning the seeker for advice on the commandments, and inviting them to state for themselves how they interpret the commandments for their own life and situation. The primary interpreter of the Torah's teaching is the individual seeking to live faithfully in their own unique situation. Further interpretation by Jesus is always the result of further questioning by the interlocutor and almost always concludes by inviting the questioner to make the final decision about the meaning of the commandments.. Secondly, Jesus is portrayed as disputing with other teachers about varying interpretations of the law.[15] Here Jesus evokes other biblical passages or principles as the basis for interpretation—but this is in the context of communal debate and discernment. The secondary interpreter of the law is a community of discernment, but here interpretation must be made coherent and accountable in the context of that community and in relation to the larger context of the scriptures. Further elaborating this are the situations where Jesus actually articulates principles for interpretation. These are invariably aimed at making obedience to the commandments of God possible for the most ordinary faithful, and often allude back the either the foundational form of the prophetic tradition, or to the tradition that summarizes the entire teaching of the Torah in two precepts: love of God and love of neighbour. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practised without neglecting the others." (Mt. 23:23) "Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them." (Lk. 11:46) But we also note that in these and other cases, Jesus articulates the principles of interpretation in the form of prophetic judgments. The purpose of interpretation is to make the teachings of Scripture a vehicle for justice, mercy and knowledge of God, and for those who seek to create elaborate structures and convert the Torah into the burdens of human religion, the judgement of God and of the Human One, the Word Incarnate, is already upon them.

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14. I could put this another way and say we pay attention to the tradition because it is the voice of the Communion of Saints and they are not dead but continue to live—but with God. If God had wanted St Augustine to live in our age, God would have willed it so. God did not, and has willed us to live in our age, so God did not intend St Augustine to speak the Word faithfully to the 21st century but instead, gave that responsibility to us. What St Augustine has to offer may or may not be of use in that task, and that's for us to figure out and decide, because it's to us, and not to St Augustine, that God has entrusted the present.

15. It is a commonplace of Christian commentary and preaching to speak about how Jesus "breaks" the "law." Anyone who has spent much time in Christian-Jewish dialogue or with Jewish rabbis or scholars will discover very quickly that the supposed infringements of the "law" all relate to aspects of Pharisaic debate about the best ways to keep the commandments that only much later in the first or even the second century became part of the normative Jewish tradition.

All reading and interpretation of the Bible is of necessity filtered through the preoccupations of the reader's period. There are many values to reading and reflecting on the tradition.

1) **It teaches us about the complex dynamic of speaking the Word faithfully (or perhaps failing to speak the whole Word faithfully) into a particular situation**—the dual task of nurturing and sustaining a community in faith, love and hope, and of giving an account to the world of the faith that is in the community in a language (philosophical, pedagogical, literary, political, social, behavioural) that makes faith coherent and credible to the world. It presses us to understand the imagination and flexibility with which the interpreter must interact with human reality.

2) **The interpretive tradition of the past, filtered as it is through preoccupations of its period, enables us to examine the dynamic interaction of all the forces that shape human life and culture in a situation for which we do not bear anxiety (as we do for the present).** We learn to see things about our present situation that may be hidden from us, or to which we may be blind.[16] This is not the same thing as imagining that the present could simply be returned to the past and everything would be fixed.

3) **The interpretive tradition of the past, filtered as it is through the preoccupations of its period, teaches us about the process of engagement with the scriptures themselves.** Interpretation may be contingent, but it is not random and can never be purely deconstructive. We became more aware of the way the certain questions drive us to certain passages (e.g. questions of theological anthropology, about human purpose and being in creation, always drive us back to Genesis 1-3). We see the process of purposive sifting to find the best scriptural exemplars or responses. We see the necessity and process of creating forms of meta-narrative, and we see how much of scripture all meta-narratives falsify.[17] We see how tendencies, theologies or ideologies of certain parts of scripture can come to dominate a discourse in a particular period because they are a response to the propensities or necessities of the period, until the discourse becomes twisted and overbalanced, and how that overbalance leads to lameness or paralysis for future generations of the faithful. We see how certain threads or veins of thought come to form the warp and woof of a fabric or the lifeblood of a body of interpretive thought that has come to be identified as normative.

4) **The interpretive tradition of the past, filtered as it is through the preoccupations and presuppositions of its period, teaches about the fallibility and limitations of all interpretive work, including our own.** Among the greatest interpreters, this level of reflective self-consciousness is eminently present.[18] Until modern fundamentalism all serious interpreters have been aware of issues of textual variants and criticism, aware of confusions and contradictions within and among the texts,[19] and aware of the need for and serious limitations of their historical

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16. For example, reading Clement of Alexandria, a brilliant teacher with an uncanny sense of how to integrate Christian thought and articulate it in the context of contemporary philosophical language and concerns, also confronts one with a man who had a prurient fixation on sexuality. Then one contemplates the life of his even more brilliant student Origen and the forces that warped Origen's own understanding of his body, and ultimately brought his writings into question.

17. Augustine's *City of God* is the classic example of this in its greatest strength (simply consider its historical impact) and its greatest weakness (simply look at how much of the Bible he omits).

18. For instance Origen's comments on Matthew 18:21.

19. The ancient rabbis, for instance, discuss the fact that events are recounted out of their temporal order in the texts of the Torah. Where a John Spong assumes this is the result of stupidity and error, the Rabbis assume it is the result of clever insight and intentional pedagogy.

knowledge about the text and its cultural and social background.[20] Sometimes ancient interpreters can produce in us startling moments of cognitive dissonance on territory where we feel most secure.[21]

It is about the minutiae of cultural and group conduct that the most elaborate discussions and disputes frequently emerge, largely because these aspects of culture are the most easily assumed. They involve the everyday, our most typical social interactions, and are trained and socialized into our patterns of thought from birth by inculcation, ritual, religion, and embodiment in conventions and taboos of law and behaviour. But these are also the areas where cultural difference, ethnic difference, and temporal distance, frequently make us most aware of the shortcomings of past interpreters. They are also areas where easily trusting interpreters of the past will most betray us. The most fundamental of these minutiae are those relating to the forms and structures of family life, marriage and sexual behaviour. But two other issues also grip us here. These are also the areas in which we have the most difficulty escaping our own parontocentrism, our preoccupation with our own present as normative for all time [being no different than most of our precursors in this regard]. They are also the areas where our first instinct when we move away from our parontocentrism and begin to become critical of our own time is to latch onto some idealized moment of the interpretive past when everything was "normal" or some projected "ideal" that usually refers to itself as "biblical morality." Thus it is in this area most that past readings and interpretations of the scriptures may be of value but cannot be accepted as authoritative.[22]

3) Is there some sort of achievable objective understanding of the biblical text?

What I have indicated about my hermeneutic framework to this point would indicate that I do not think there is an achievable "objective" understanding of the biblical text. What then is the Church's authority in interpretation? This is what I understand to be the focus of the question and response in the Supplementary Instruction (BCP 1959). "*Question*. Where then is the Word of God to be found in all its fulness? *Answer*. In Jesus Christ, his only Son, who was made man for us and for our salvation." There is only one authoritative Word of the Triune God, and it has been

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20. One of the best expositions of the complete range of knowledge required for interpretation is in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*. But in *On Christian Doctrine* Augustine ends with a set of questions that seems almost post-modern, albeit articulated in the frame of the criteria for authentic and authoritative teaching and preaching in the Church—namely the issue of the person and being of the interpreter and their moral and ethical formation in relation to their credibility. Feminist and post-colonial thought, criticism and interpretation simply push the same questions well beyond where Augustine might have taken them into the public realm of the entire history of human thought and production. But Augustine also knew something about being one of the colonized and about the delusions of high culture on objectivity and univocality.

21. Again, Origen. Where a modern interpreter (schooled by the refined techniques of careful historical exegesis) assumes a level of historicity to the accounts of the entry of Jerusalem, Origen commences by pointing out that the story simply cannot have any plausible basis in historical fact, and proceeds to understand it as an allegory.

22. One has only, however to look in the Recognitions of Clement 9:19ff at the long refutation of astrology with its detailed laying out of social, marital, and sexual customs across a wide range of countries and ethnic groups, to realize that some ancient Christians were considerably more aware and non-anxious about sexual and gender custom divergence than many contemporary well-educated Anglicans. And all prefaced by, "There are, in every country or kingdom, laws imposed by men, enduring either by writing or through custom, which no one easily transgresses." This material and its parallels includes awareness that there are cultures where same-sex marriages are expected, normal, and required for social honour.

spoken in Jesus Christ. In interpreting the scriptures we can seek to testify faithfully and truthfully to that Word, and the faithful may indeed do so in their generation. It is this faithful and truthful witness to the Word spoken in Jesus Christ that constitutes that Church speaking and interpreting with authority.[23] But when the Church speaks about and interprets the scriptures at any moment claiming to speak with authority for all time, it increasingly runs the risk of ceasing to witness faithfully to the Word of God spoken in Jesus Christ, because it has abandoned Jesus Christ and the way of the Cross for the way of power. The Church has ceased to witness to Jesus Christ, the one True Word and become simply another religion. "*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.*" In Matthew 20 even two blind men by the side of the road witness more faithfully to Jesus than James and John, his disciples who seek to sit in the place of power and authority, and their fellow disciples who then resent and dispute with them.

To say that there is not and can be no objective interpretation of the scriptures is not to say that the faithful can never find any common ground or agreement, or shared understanding of the meaning of the scriptures. The Instruction also poses two other questions: "*Question*. Why ought you to read God's holy Word, the Bible? *Answer*. Because it tells how God has made himself known to man; and how we may come to know him, and find salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of his Church. *Question*. What does the Church teach about the Bible? *Answer*. The Bible records the Word of God as it was given to Israel, and to his Church, at sundry times and in divers manners; and nothing may be taught in the Church as necessary to man's salvation unless it be concluded or proved therefrom." While it is attractive to imagine the whole notion of "proving" offers a finality and authority about interpretation, in fact it evokes precisely the issue of the contingency of all interpretation. The notion of "proving" summons both the resources of the tradition (the dialogue among the faithful over the generations, and what can and cannot be agreed from that dialogue), but it also summons the failure of the tradition (all that may have been considered to be agreed and proven that has come to be seen over time as misguided or false), and with Deuteronomy it presses the responsibility of the Tradition to articulate itself clearly in new times and circumstances, not to past standards of proof, but to the standards of the present.[24] Just because the faithful of the past may have

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23. Thus within limits I can assent to the comments of the Archbishop of Canterbury in his Advent letter of 2007: "The common acknowledgment that we stand under the authority of Scripture as 'the rule and ultimate standard of faith,' in the words of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral; as the gift shaped by the Holy Spirit which decisively interprets God to the community of believers and the community of believers to itself and opens our hearts to the living and eternal Word that is Christ. Our obedience to the call of Christ the Word Incarnate is drawn out first and foremost by our listening to the Bible and conforming our lives to what God both offers and requires of us through the words and narratives of the Bible. We recognise each other in one fellowship when we see one another 'standing under' the word of Scripture. Because of this recognition, we are able to consult and reflect together on the interpretation of Scripture and to learn in that process. Understanding the Bible is not a private process or something to be undertaken in isolation by one part of the family. Radical change in the way we read cannot be determined by one group or tradition alone." This statement represents a modest and healthy shift away from the Windsor Report, although it still seems to me slightly problematic in that it highlights the "book" more than the person of Jesus Christ as the one whom we follow and under whose authority we stand.

24. I understand this to be the import of Richard Hooker's insistence that even positive commands of scripture may be set aside if times and circumstances alter, or the fulfilling of a positive command can be seen in another set of circumstances to be doing harm or injury (Lawes III.10). But other aspects of this discussion also underlie the tremendous weight he places on the narrative of Acts 15, to which he returns at several points. It is precisely in Acts 15 that the issues of the contingency of interpretation, a body of agreed understandings, and the need of the Church to speak faithfully into its new situation come to a nexus.

agreed does not mean the faithful of the present have to agree with them. Both the scriptures and the tradition do not lose their capacity to teach us simply because we think they are wrong or we disagree with them. The bush that burns with the fire that burnt on Sinai and at Pentecost burns without being consumed. But if, out of a desire to accede to their authority or in passive obedience, we agree with the scriptures or the tradition when in fact we disagree, then we are a city divided in ourselves, and we cease to be faithful witnesses to the Word of God, because we have allied ourselves with the diabolos (the confuser), who loves authority and power because it is the illusion of the real work of the Word (Luke 4).

The question posed in the Instruction is not: "Why ought you at all times to agree with God's holy Word, the Bible?" The question is (correctly): "Why ought you to read God's holy Word, the Bible? *Answer.* Because it tells how God has made himself known to man; and how we may come to know him, and find salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of his Church."

2. Human Sexuality—Alternative Perspectives on Genesis 1 and 2 as a Foundational Framework

I now come directly to the broad issue of human sexuality and the interpretation of the scriptures. Several matters relate this question: foundational questions of scriptural anthropology; the place of the "fall" in understanding the scriptures and sexuality; the problem of patriarchy and the scriptures; the portrayal of marriage in the Bible; marriage as a changing social institution in the Bible; same-sex relations in the Bible; principles relating to human sexual intimacy.

Genesis 1 and 2: Alternative Perspectives on Foundational Theological Anthropology[25]

Many classic approaches make the opening chapters of Genesis foundational to an understanding of an understanding of the purpose of human beings within creation. Commentators have seen them as contributing to an understanding of work (for example, in recent Catholic teaching), language, sin and violence, the relative roles of men and women in society and family (compare Promise Keepers and Phyllis Trible), and of sexuality and marriage. In particular many would appeal to Genesis as setting forth a sort of "natural law" that male-female relationships in marriage are foundational to all created and social order. I think, however, it is possible to read and apply these chapters somewhat differently in exploring foundational issues as they relate to gender and sexuality.

25. This is a version of an article which appeared in *Encountering God*, Volume 3 in the Primate's Theological Commission Workbook series published in 2004. Much of the material was presented first to a National Church Consultation on Sexuality in January 2001, and I want to thank those who offered suggestions and feedback both at that event, in subsequent discussions with the Primate's Theological Commission, and then when this material was presented as a lecture at Christ Church, Edmonton in March 2005. In particular I want to acknowledge Dr Hanna Kassis of Vancouver, who offered helpful (and valid) critical comment on an earlier draft relating to my handling of an item of Hebrew vocabulary, and whose vigorous disagreement with my conclusions clarified for me a range of hermeneutic issues. I re-present this material here because I see it as essential framework which cannot be treated simply by allusion.

The first two chapters of Genesis present us texts that stand in a dialogical relationship that presents to us a tension in our understanding of human beings and their purpose. The dialogue and tension appears in both form and details of language and theme. Contemporary German theologian Michael Welker emphasizes the importance for theology of living with and holding on to such tensions and diversities of scriptural witnesses, without smoothing differences over or arguing them away. The precise **differences** in the testimonies of faith from the past are fully a part of revelation.

Liturgy, Inevitability and Fundamental Human Drives

Genesis 1 is a ritual text. The world comes into being through a series of repeated word actions, matched by the shape of the text—it is a song or a dance punctuated by a series of refrains. (Genesis 1 is danced in some Jewish synagogues on the festival Simhat Torah.) The world arises from the *tohu wabohu*, the primordial chaos, through a series of recurrent commands uttered by God—"Let there be…." By the end of Genesis 1, the entire universe has come into being, ordered, fertile, reproducing itself in an endless chain of being, a marked series of complexities. What is presented here is the world of nature that replenishes itself in the same ritual, cyclical, mechanistic manner—birth, death, the recurrent seasons, the laws of physics.

The creation of human beings in 1:26-28 appears as climax of the ritual; in Hebrew style what comes latest is usually marked as superior to what comes first. The creation of humans is not, however, the true climax of Genesis 1, but rather the creation of the Sabbath. Nonetheless, the human beings, created in the divine likeness, are one culminating work of creation. In Genesis 1 they are created as sexually differentiated, *zakar unqebâ*, male and female (literally, "grooved"). God blesses them with a blessing that on superficial reading seems innocent and in line with previous blessings in the sequence. "Be fruitful, and multiply and fill the earth, and subjugate it, and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, and over all living things that creep on the earth" (1:28). God goes on to say, "See, I give you the seed-bearing plants upon all the earth and fruit trees with seed-bearing trees for food. And for all living things of the earth, and for all birds of the skies, and for everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is the breath of life, theirs are the green plants for food" (1:29).

Beneath this lies a more disturbing picture, however, of the place of humans in relation to creation. The Hebrew root *KBŠ*, rendered here as "subjugate," carries in virtually all instances of its use the sense of the seizing by violence and force of land or people for physical and economic subjugation and slavery. So too, the verbal root *RDH*, usually rendered as "rule over" has the more pointed sense of "*to dominate*." Thus in Genesis 1 humans are created in the image of "gods" with uncontrolled power to dominate and forcibly overpower the creation. So too, all the fruits of the trees and plants are for human consumption. And the sole purpose of humans is presented as reproduction—repeated with three different synonyms culminating in "fill the earth."

I understand this opening account of the creation with its liturgical shaping and these initial blessings/commands to be opening up for our reflection a fundamental biblical and theological understanding about human drives and needs, around which, I would argue, the totality of the remainder of the Bible unfolds in a sort of critical dialectic. Humans have a fundamental drive, or a need, for power. Humans have a fundamental drive to survive physically, a need to eat and consume. And thirdly, humans have a fundamental drive to self-transcend, to out-exist time and mortality, expressed primarily as a need to reproduce, to procreate. Genesis 1 sets these foundational premises up by drawing in particular on at least one piece of language, this root *KBŠ*, that emanates from its encounter with Babylonian cosmology and theology.

Despite God's seeing of it all and judging it "very good" (1:31), I think Genesis 1 should rightly give us pause. If it were our only biblical creation story, we would have a theology in which humans function as copulation machines,

consuming all the green on the surface of the earth, and driven by the will for power, to control at whatever cost of violence. And, I would suggest, on the Sabbath as God rests, it gives the Holy One pause as well, because Genesis 2 picks up and presents a radically different understanding of what it means to be human part of God's purpose in creation.

Narrative, Unpredictability, and the Mystery of Identity and Relationship

Genesis 2 presents us a totally different type of text in form and details. Genesis 1 was predictable and repetitive, a liturgical and poetic celebration of the power of the "word" to unleash, differentiate and order the universe. Genesis 2 is "story," a narrative in which the Lord God appears as a potter or a sculptor, and finally as a designer and builder. The story unfolds in action and conversation. Where in Genesis 1 the divine "words" are hurled out into the emptiness of a black-hole universe, in Genesis 2 there is negative judgment, doubt, questioning, command, error, exploration, and recognition. Initiative passes from player to player in the story, and like all stories there are moments of crisis that demand ingenuity, and lead to new narrative possibilities.

In Genesis 2 God sculpts (Hebrew root YŞR, "to form, shape as a potter") the *'adam* or "earth-creature" from dirt or mud (*'adamâ*). Phyllis Trible and many others (including some ancient rabbis) have noted that the creature is not, in the earliest stages of the story, gender defined. In this the narrative stands immediately in contrast with the creation of humans in Genesis 1. The "mudling" becomes alive through the intimate in-pouring of divine breath—the sharing of the divine nature here is not "image" or "likeness" here, but fragility and interdependence.

Then the Lord God creates a garden, and places the "mudling" in it for a purpose—to till and to tend it. These Hebrew roots, *ᶜBD* and *ŠMR*, have more common meanings of "to serve" and "to guard." This, from the outset Genesis 2, presents the purpose of the human being, the "earth creature," in relation to the world in a very different way from Genesis 1. Serving is the opposite of ruling or dominating, and guarding is something very different from violating or exploiting. So too, in the whole realm of food and consumption. In Genesis 2 the Lord God lays a command on the human, "You may eat of every tree of the garden, and/but from the tree of knowledge, good and evil, you shall not eat from it…" (2:16). Genesis 1 presents a world in which all plants and green things are available for untrammeled consumption; here in Genesis 2, there is a limit to what the human may consume.

Limit as Foundational to Biblical Ethics

This notion of limit is foundational in understanding biblical ethics and law. If in Genesis 2 the first thing that characterizes the fullness of humanity is its *responsibility and obligation* toward the rest of creation, the second thing indicated in this moment of commandment is that the fullness of our human nature is realized in our willingness to choose to *limit* ourselves. The ambiguous sense of the *waw* conjunction in the commandment points us to both aspects of the meaning of this limit. Typically, Genesis 2:16 is rendered oppositionally: "You may eat of every tree of the garden, **but** from the tree of knowledge, good and evil, you shall not eat from it…." The passage can also be read with the more usual simple meaning of waw as continuative: "You may eat of every tree of the garden, **and** from the tree of knowledge, good and evil, you shall not eat from it…." The one points us to limit as a divine setting apart by command to be obeyed. The second reading points us to the possibility of human initiative in taking on limit. But this possibility of human initiative in taking on limit is to let go of **one's own** power and possibility for the continued existence and potentiality of **the other**—be it the trees in creation, be it knowledge, or the possibility of life against death for the other. The fullness of our humanity is thus recognized not in achieving our own strength

or potential but in weakness and self-emptying, whether we do this in response to divine command, or whether we choose on our own to take on limits to make room for the rest of creation.[26] Having limned the reality of being fully human as *responsibility, obligation and willingness to self-limit*, the text now takes us to a new place and brings us to a startling juncture. In the next episode, the emergent purpose or measure of our full humanity becomes *partnership* and *relationship*.

Partnership and Relationship

The Lord God makes the first negative judgment on the creation—a judgment all the more striking because it stands in radical contrast with Genesis 1's reiteration of "It was good…." "The Lord God said, 'Not-good—the earth creature being alone; I will make for it an *ʿezer kenegdo*'" (2:18). This is a crucial moment for our understanding of the purpose of human beings, and for the construction of any theological anthropology. First, it is *being alone* that the Lord God judges to be the "not-good" in creation as it stands. Thus the emergent purpose of humans is *partnership* and *relationship*. Furthermore, the divine intention is that humans will have a partner who is an *ʿezer kenegdo*, a "helper who is like its *neged*." *Neged* in Hebrew has shades of meaning. The helper could be "like its opposite" or "as someone who will oppose it" or "as someone who will be over against it." Within that range of meanings, however, sex or gender is not a consideration—*the ʿezer kenegdo is any helper who could fulfil the role of oppositional partnership.* This reading is sustained, in my view, by the rest of the narrative in Genesis 2 where sexuality and procreation never appear as a purpose for the earth creature and its eventual partner. This stands in stark contrast to Genesis 1:28 where it is presented as the first and (almost) sole purpose of the humans.

In the unfolding of the narrative from this point onward the following details and dynamics should be emphasized. First the responsibility for identifying the partner rests with the *ʾadam*, with the individual human being itself. The divine assumes that the human will choose the creature that is its *ʿezer kenegdo*. For the Lord God of this narrative it is not a matter of predestination or predetermination but one of genuine surprise and curiosity—"Then the Lord God sculpted from the dirt each living thing of the field, and each bird of the skies [all attempts to produce a suitable *ʿezer kenegdo*], and brought it to the earth creature to see: [and then in the form of a question] What will he call it?" (2:19). Here too, we see the contrast between Genesis 1's portrayal of humans in the role of "dominator" of creation, and, in Genesis 2, human beings as "namer" of creation—to name is to enter into relation, not as an act of objectification, but of seeking the genuine identity and subjectivity within each new thing the Lord God shapes and leads forth. These are themes identified and discussed elsewhere in the history of interpretation, but I note them again in this context as significant elements of contrast between these opening chapters of Genesis and the divergent anthropologies they project.

This leads to a surprise for the Lord God—none of the creatures to date is recognized as the *ʿezer kenegdo*. What then takes place is, in the ordering of the entirety of these two narratives, the final and culminating act of creation—no new creature follows this last mysterious act. The Lord God, having cast a spell-like sleep upon the earth creature, must remove a portion of its physical body, and engage in a new mode of activity. The Hebrew verbs now used derive from the root BNH, "to build," thus reflecting the shift in level of complexity, skill, and ingenuity

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26. Again, it is essential to note that it is not the imposing of limits on *other* people so that they meet our expectations or conform to our desires to restrict them that represents this full humanity in the taking on of limit, but *our own* willingness to take on limits vis à vis humans and the natural order. At its most extreme see Matthew 7, Luke 6, John 8, Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 10, James 2, on humans judging others.

demanded by the task of producing the *ᶜezer kenegdo*. The Lord God constructs a woman (*'iššâ*, the standard word for woman). Thus (and some ancient Jewish rabbis read this way), the culminating and most complex act of creation is that of creating "woman." When the earth creature awakes, the Lord God brings the new creature before it. The earth creature breaks into poetry:

> Here at last! Bone from my bone; flesh from my flesh,
> This one will be called *'iššâ*, because out of *'iyš* this one was taken (2:23).

Only in the final verse do common terms for "man" and "woman" appear. Even the wordplay is open to another reading. In the Hebrew language, *'iššâ* (woman) is not derived or taken from *'iyš* (man) at all. They come from different roots, and insofar as there were understood structures of grammar and language in ancient Israel, this would have been known. The wordplay is of another order, that of sound. *'Iyš* and *'iššâ* differ only by the small sound the jaw makes when it drops with a gasp of recognition and surprise. And so to it is not the gender or sex of the partner that is fundamentally at stake, but the moment of finding, recognizing and knowing the one with whom one can be in relationship. [27]

Thus Genesis 2 turns to gendered language but also word play at its conclusion—fundamentally we are told the name of the cezer kenegdo is *'issha*—the name the human gives itself differentiated by only one short gasp of discovery and joy. That these are also gendered terms points no longer first to reproduction, but to the social and relational roles of human differentiation. Even more extremely the text insists that this process of finding the *ᶜezer kenegdo* is not about marriage and the family, but about the opposite—the text states that its fundamental purpose is the destruction of marriage and the family—"for this reason an *'ish* abandons father and mother to cleave to its *'issha* and the two become one flesh." Family and clan are not ultimate goods, but rather the ultimate good is entering into relationship with the unique other that creates the possibility of true human community and fruitfulness. Genesis 2 points already to the hope of Revelation and the affirmation of Jesus in the gospels—at the Lamb's wedding banquet there is no marrying or giving in marriage, only the feast at which all peoples, languages and tongues rest in an eternal Sabbath of justice and peace and all creation is bound forever in love with the God who created it, saves it, and enlivens and enlightens it.

Furthermore, the text nowhere sets up structures of hierarchy as normative in the created order. All these are features of the order described in Genesis 4, the disordered and confused world following the eating from the tree in the middle of the garden. It is in the "fallen" world that the emphasis of the text focuses increasingly on patterns and structures of hierarchical, rigidly fixed heterosexual interactions.

The Relationship between Genesis 1 and 2—Alternative Ways of Reading

Finally, a comment on the two narratives taken together. I have identified the way in which Genesis 1 conceals a mechanistic world of constant reproduction, consumption and uncontrolled violence and power—associated with the drives and control and ordering which we might term the order of necessity. I think Genesis 2 can be read in three ways.

In a first approach, the second creation story can be read as *complementary* to the first. Seen in this way, Genesis 2 builds on the presuppositions of Genesis 1, nuancing and reshaping them. This is a mode of reading which would

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27. The conventional reading (Trible too notes this shift) is to see this as the beginning of "genderedness" in the text. I press on this issue of wordplay, because I think the conventional reading is too simplistic. The very fact that the text plays a word joke tells us that it intends to press us beyond the conventional frame within which we use and understand words and ideas. Jokes by their nature defamiliarize, open the doorway to the impossible or the improbable and momentarily make us see them as reality—and we laugh. *'Iyš* and *'iššâ*—who knows what their names really were? Pete and Pat? Abe and Abbie? Jean and Gene? Franky and Frankie? Michael and Michal? Or Adam and Steve as some fundamentalists like to suggest?

have been very much part of the tradition up to the nineteenth century. In this mode of reading, Genesis 2, although it doesn't speak about sexuality, is building on a sexually differentiated normative world laid out in Genesis 1. I think this type of complementary reading as a foundational anthropology underlies the presuppositions of many more conservative Christians, and for that matter, of most of the Christian tradition, when applied to our understandings about human sexuality, marriage and human relationships. To read in this way involves, however, a blurring, or reading over, of the strong differences and distinctions between the two chapters of text.

Secondly, we can construe Genesis 2 as a *critique* of Genesis 1. In this critique:

- the domination and forcible subjugation of the earth is challenged by a creation story in which the purpose of humans from the outset is to serve and guard the rest of the creation;
- the right of humans to unlimited consumption of the green things of the earth is challenged by a creation story in which divine command sets a limit on what can be consumed;
- the purpose of human beings as purely sexually beings meant only for reproducing and filling the earth is challenged by a story which virtually omits sexuality and gender as a category, and focuses on the need for suitable partnership and relationship, not as designated by God but as recognized and named for the self by the human individual, as the primary purpose of being human.

To be completely human is to find the one other human who can make us speak in poetry and puns, whose nakedness makes us know innocence and naivety and shamelessness. But fundamentally, the corrective of this creation story is to insist that entering into relationship (with the earth, with our own greed and desire, with other creatures, and with other humans) is the overwhelming end and purpose of human beings.

There is a third way of reading the chapters in relation to one another which builds on the second. I noted above the principal of Hebrew narrative that what comes later is more important than, or more climactic or significant that what comes earlier. On this reading, Genesis 2 is not merely a challenge to, or critique of, Genesis 1. Because it comes after the account of Genesis 1, its deliberate emphasis on *relationship* as the primary category of human meaning and purpose, *supercedes* that of Genesis 1, not merely qualifying it, but overriding it. In this theological anthropology the purpose and meaning of human person is not circumscribed by the necessity of male-female sexuality and the necessity for procreation. Our purpose is to live in relationship with our own unique *ʿezer kenegdo*. God trusts us to know and recognize that person, whomever s/he may be.

3. Human Sexuality—Re-reading Disordered Creation in Genesis 3 and 4 and its Implications

Genesis 3 and 4—Disordered Creation

We now come to the texts that limn in narrative form the event which has come to be known in theological terms as the "fall." Unquestionably the texts intend to portray a growing situation of disorder and rupture—but this is frequently portrayed as a much less complex matter than close reading of the texts themselves allows. There is also a significant difference in the way Jewish and Christian tradition read these events. For Judaism they are certainly serious and mark a huge rupture with the Holy One, but the narrative is more often seen as illustrative of the reality of the "good inclination" and the "bad inclination" in all human beings, and the responsibility required to exercise the freedom of choice God has given humanity. Christian thought is deeply invested in extreme interpretations of the

"fall" since the more cataclysmic the "fall" can be portrayed as the easier it is to see the Incarnation as some necessary sort of extreme Divine mopping-up job.

The more closely one reads the narratives of Genesis 3, the more difficult it is to identify with any precision a single moment which is the "fall."

The Error of Sexual Complementarity as Constitutive to the Fall

The narrative begins with another word play. Genesis 2 ends with the *'adam* and the *ʿezer kenegdo* recognizing one another as *'ish* and *'issah*. Genesis 2:25 tells us they were a pair, *ʿarumim* together and not mutually embarrassed or shamed. This term means "naked" but its root is a homonym with another with the meanings "innocent" or "naïve," moving into another range of meaning completely as "subtle." The very next verse shifts our attention to the creature called the *nahaš*, "the snake" which it describes as *ʿarum* beyond all the creatures of the field. The same adjective is applied to humans and snake, and we are clearly again in the world of deliberate word play intended to create ambiguity. The dominant translation traditions ride over this moment of identity between humans and snake, and make the humans naked, innocent or naïve and the snake crafty or subtle.[28] But this assertion of identity in *ʿarum*-ness between humans and snake is narratively significant for the story because it points from the outset to a mistake in categories which underlies all that follows. Why does the *'issha* enter into a conversation with the snake at all? Why does the snake suppose the *'issha* is an appropriate conversation partner? The narrative is more logical than the translators and theologians—it sees the need for genuine logical necessity. "Nakedness" appears to be the commonality that permits relationship. But when we read this detail of the text, we realize then that it also calls into question a fundamental assumption that we, the snake and the *'issha* share. What is "obvious"—that the physical bits correspond, and that that they are somehow matching or complementary to the eye or to our first perception, is not necessarily the correct measure for entering into relationship, for assessing the appropriateness of the one to be *ʿezer kenegdo*. Is this initial error in categories the actual moment of the "fall"? If so, and because it centres around the question of nakedness which also in some way points to our creation as sexual beings, then it opens up for question all theories that seek to correlate notions of the "obvious" or "normal" and relational appropriateness. Relationship requires more than sexual complementarity to be appropriate—after all, the snake is naked and seems like a phallus. If simple complementarity isn't the measure, then "normal" may be a much wider range of possibilities than we originally contemplated. But at the same time, the error in categories also opens up the issue of the "inappropriate" in relationships—they require more *ʿarum*-ness (in all its senses) than simply checking out the attractions of the other's *ʿarum*.[29]

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28. There are two genuinely different roots at play, but the forms generated from them are homonyms. The differentiated reading based on the traditions of vocalization has a long and genuine history, but the sounded text still points us back to the fundamental multi-vocal sense of the text.

29. This is not all some post-modern fantasy on my part. There is a long interpretive tradition that understands the snake to have had sexual relations with the *'issah*. I simply seek here to press some of the issues involved in the implicit and often under-read sexual implications of the story. At several levels Genesis 3 and 4 are clearly concerned with the "fall" and human sexuality as one of the aspects of our nature that is affected. Readings that stop at the notion that the story is simply about some "taboo" on snake religions or against women having sex with snakes are less astute than Balaam's ass. Perhaps the greatest representation of this scene is that of Gislebertus at Autun (available at the Web gallery of Art http://www.wga.hu/). Unlike most representation Gislebert captures the sheer sensuality involved. The woman is portrayed in horizontal position rather than the usual vertical; the snake is implied but not clearly distinguishable from the vegetation and the woman seems almost entangled with the natural world and with the snake. On the one side her delicate fingers (echoing the amazing needlelike finger of the angel waking the sleeping wise men elsewhere at Autun) touch her lips as if to signal the incipient fall of language, on the other hand she langorously grasps the fruit of the tree—the other tree, not the one in the middle that now bisects her life and her physical being. Unlike the wise men, Eve's eyes are open.

The range of meanings of *ʿarum* also opens up considerable ambiguity about all that happens subsequently. If all the players are simply "innocent" or "naïve," then is this just a story about children at play that has led to disastrous consequences? In this light the terrible weight of guilt laden upon our forbears by the tradition seems unrealistic if not unjust. If we are to understand that all three characters are "subtle" or "shrewd," then we move somewhere into the realm of imagining them as already, even at the moment of their creation, as in some way "depraved" and "flawed." But how then can they be responsible if, after all, there was only an evil inclination and no real possibility of choice?

Language and Theology as a Constitutive Element in the Fall

The snake then engages the *'issah* in a theological discussion. It poses a question relating to the interpretation of what God has said regarding eating and the trees in the garden? Some might see the moment of the "fall"'as this—it is wrong ever to ask questions or attempt to clarify the meaning of what God has said. But equally, one might see the "fall" as resting in the snake's interference in what is appropriately only the woman's business—namely how she chooses to interpret the divine directive.[30] Some would see it as resting on a shrewd restating of the first part of the original Divine command, "From every tree of the garden you shall eat, yes, eat, but from…" in the question forms as "Did the Lord God command, 'You shall not eat from every tree of the garden?'" On this view, the fall is manifest first in language—its capacity for ambiguity, the way in which it creates aporia of uncertainly and the need for further interpretation, the way the Word of g\Grace is so easily twisted by the innocent, the naïve and the shrewd into a path to destruction.

There is an overwhelming tendency in the tradition to read this text from a misogynistic perspective. In this conventional reading, the snake speaks to the *'issah* because she is weaker and more easily led astray than the *'adam*. But there is a very strong minority tradition, especially among the Rabbis, that reads this in a very different way. In Hebrew narrative, what is enumerated or recounted last is understood to be the most significant, most important, or crowning event.[31] In this view, the final act of creation is the creation of the *'issah* to be the *ʿezer kenegdo* for the *'adam*—thus the *'issah* is the pinnacle of creation and the most superior being in it. The *'issah* is therefore the most obvious and only truly suitable party to be engaged in a theological discussion, and taking the larger cosmological view that the purpose of the "Evil One" in the discussion is to disrupt the whole of creation, that disruption will only be effective if brought about through drawing the best theologian into error.

The original divine command runs: "From every tree of the garden you shall eat, yes, eat; and/but from the tree of knowing good and evil, you shall not eat from it, for on the day you eat from it you shall die, yes die." The difficulty is that when Genesis 2:9 tells us about the creation of the trees in the garden, we are told that there are "the trees beautiful for looking at and good for food, and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, *and/that is* the tree of knowing good and evil." Are there two trees in the middle of the garden (one of life and one of knowing) or one tree in the middle of the garden that is both of life and knowing, or is there the tree of life in the middle of the

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30. One thinks of Jesus responding to a questioner, "Why do you ask me? There is no one good but God. You know what the commandments are—how do you interpret them?"

31. Quite legitimately, my feminist friends might say that this is simply another version of the male projection of woman as goddess or whore, and they are right. Within the tradition though, this is a voice that I think seeks to read woman as an equal partner and one of immense dignity, and it makes more sense within the conventions of the narrative than the misogynist projection. This voice in the tradition represents a serious attempt to read the *'issah* from a pre-fall perspective, rather than from the post-fall perspective which has to be misogynistic because it participates unrepentantly in the fall.

garden, and then another tree somewhere else in the garden that is the prohibited tree of knowing? These ambiguities are present in the text of Genesis 2, and now begin to influence this story.[32] The *'issah* replies, "From the fruit of the garden-trees, we may eat. And/but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, the Lord God said, 'You shall not eat from it and you shall not touch it, lest you die.'" First we note that the *'issah* has over-interpreted (in fact made a hedge around the law in good rabbinic fashion). The command to the *'adam* was not to eat from the fruit of the "tree of knowing good and evil;" the *'issah* includes the additional restriction that to "touch it" is also prohibited and will lead to death. Secondly, like a good theologian the *'issah* quashes the ambiguity about the trees by referring to the prohibited tree not functionally but positionally.

The narrative, as it unrolls through chapters two and three also opens the question of whether the *'issah* ever actually knew the divine command correctly? Nowhere does the text tell us that the *'adam* told her the command or in what form it was relayed. And now, the snake responds to the *'issah*, "You will not die, yes not die." It seems like a bold-faced lie, until we realize that the *'issah* has stipulated the tree in the middle of the garden, which is in the first description of the garden stipulated to be the tree of life. What the snake says first is factually true—there is no evidence even in the divine command that the tree of life is prohibited. Then the snake says, "Because God is constantly aware on the day you eat from it then your eyes will be opened and you will become like God/gods constantly aware of good and evil." So which tree is *it*—the tree of life in the middle of the garden? The tree of knowing good and evil?

Part of the problem is that every verse, every word, adds to the layers of confusion and ambiguity—the text is itself a sort of *mise-en-abyme* of disruption. Now suddenly before even touching or eating the fruit of any tree, we hear that the *'issah* "sees"—her eyes are already opened to the fact that the tree was good for eating, was attractive to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable for causing understanding (Which tree? The suffix could indicate either one).[33] The *'issah* takes from its fruit (which tree?), and eats, and gives it also to her *'ish* with her' [but note that the phrase now sounds almost identical in Hebrew to the phrase "to her woman with her"—the wordplay and ambiguity around *'ish* and *'isshah* continues.]. And he eats.

Now we revert to the last verse of Genesis 2. "And the eyes of the pair were opened, and they knew that they were *ʿarumim*, and they sowed together fig-leaves and made for themselves girdles." It's easy to read that *ʿarum* now means simply nakedness, but in alluding back to the end of the previous chapter and the beginning of this episode, we are asked to read more richly. They knew they were naked (and needed clothes)? They knew they were innocent (and in over their heads)? They knew they were naïve (and had been taken in)? They realized they were subtle and shrewd (and were indeed like God/gods)? In fact the term *hagorot* usually refers to something more like a work-belt or a simple cincture than a loincloth for covering the genitals.

Has there been a fall? I press this reading out of the ambiguities because it clarifies how deeply invested we are in certain habitual modes of reading that do not necessarily have a clear basis in the text. At this point there is still no real evidence that they know "good and evil"—they simply know themselves differently. So is the "fall" simply a descent into self-awareness from blithe stumbling about in oblivion? There is also no real clarity about which tree

32. The artistic tradition represents this ambiguity—sometimes there are clearly two trees, sometimes there is only one tree. This is place where the text, read carefully, very clearly deconstructs all attempts to create unitizing interpretations. Because classical readings must exonerate God, the ambiguities are always ignored or clouded over.

33. Another common element in artists' representations of this scene is the portrayal of the woman with eyes wide open and the man with eyes shut or barely open. The woman is also often represented as filled with movement and vitality, and the man almost as an immobile or wooden block.

they ate from—the proscribed tree of knowing good and evil or the tree of life in the middle of the garden. Or is the "fall" in fact in the next episode, in the humans' behaviour in the encounter with God?

Or one can read asking counter-factual questions? Why does God/the text set up the confusion about the trees in the first place? Where is God while all this is going on—why the Divine absence? Where is the *'ish* during the conversation and why does the *'ish* not intervene? What if the *'issah* had simply asked God for a clarification? What if the *'issah* had told the snake to mind its own business? What if the *'issah* had not shared the fruit with the partner? What if the *'ish* had not accepted and eaten the fruit of the tree? What if the *'issah* had not eaten the fruit for herself first, but had shared first with the partner? If the story cannot be imagined with any other choices and outcomes, then we abandon the reality of choice at work for a model of inevitable, mechanistic fate.

I press these readings for another reason. There is no question that the tradition overwhelmingly sees this as a story of disaster, but frequently presents the disaster in a very simplistic way—often reducing it to a matter of obvious obedience, disobedience and punishment. I think pressing on the ambiguities helps us clarify the multiple rich layers of meaning. The "fall" even in its narration represents the totality of the rupture. Language, clarity, categories, intimacy, dialogue, intention—the text represents over and over again how they have become somehow internally divided within their once [never?] whole selves. The notion of the "fall," the validity of the reading, is still present even if obedience and disobedience are not part of our assumptive world. Only by contemplating how indistinctly we can identify or represent the cause and effect, occasion and implication, reality and illusion within the narrative can we begin to contemplate the totality of our own fallenness. We can't even get right the story about how it all went wrong. Nor, because we cannot pinpoint the instant of error, the sheer moment of rupture, can we figure out what might have been done to make it right.[34]

The Lie of Human Religion as Constitutive to the Fall

Wound up, the narrative now unwinds. Hearing the Lord God promenading in the garden in the breezy part of the day the humans hide themselves from the divine face/presence. Thus the first use in the scriptures of the metaphor of the Divine face already reflects a state of rupture. Is this the moment of the fall—the choice to be not present to God's face? Or is it a moment earlier, when they hear the *qol*, the sound or also the "voice" of God? Is this the moment of turning away and fracture? And the Lord God calls out to the *'adam* and says, "Where are you?" And the *'adam* responds, "Your voice/your sound—I heard it in the garden, and I was afraid—how naked I am—and I hid myself." The text makes resonate with irony the sapiential maxim: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. Is this the moment of the fall—when the relationship between God and creation ceases to be one of love and trust and becomes one of fear? In this we see the beginning of human religion—the lie that to fear God is to be in right relation.

"Who revealed to you how naked you are? Is it from the tree I commanded you not to eat from that you ate?" The use of the verb *ngd* (here in the form meaning "to reveal") resonates backward and forward. It draws us back by allusion to the purpose of the partner—to be the *ʿezer kenegdo*, to one who will confront and disagree and hold one accountable to the truth by always being present. And it takes us forward to the language of the prophetic and liturgical tradition where what is set forth and revealed (*higgid*) are the mysterious intentions and the glorious

34. And how much of the complexity and ambiguity of Genesis 3 is captured in Philippians 2:1-15—basically a counterfactual version of our story.

actions of God. In this single allusion we see the internal rupture of the purpose of the *ʿezer kenegdo*, the great work of grace for the aloneness of the human, the rupture of human partnership, and its parallel in the rupture within human religion itself, where the language and mechanisms of revelation intended for the most intimate sharing of God's purposes and works are debased to the language and mechanisms of shame and guilt and manipulation. Religion can do nothing but reveal human nakedness, in the fall, religion's power to speak of God and humanity has been stripped clean. All human religion is a naked void.[35]

The Collapse of Human Mutual Responsibility as Constitutive to the Fall

What then unfolds is the sequence of non-acceptance of responsibility and blame in which again every statement is ambiguous with relation to the truth: "The *'issah* you gave me for togetherness/partnership—she gave me from the tree and I ate." (Accusation and abandonment of self-differentiation—the purpose of the *ʿezer kenegdo* was to help through mutual confronting and challenging, not through abandonment to de-selfing.) "The snake deceived/enticed me and I ate." (Accusation and self-deception—did the snake ever speak what was not true? Who saw the fruit of the tree?) Is this the real moment of the "fall?"

The Lord God now speaks in turn to the snake, the *'issah* and the *'adam*. In turn we see delineated the consequences of the rupture within creation: the natural order of creatures set against itself; humans set against the order of creatures; human awareness of pain and suffering in procreation and in daily labour; humans set against their own progeny; the breakdown of the partnership with the *ʿezer kenegdo* into one in which partners are co-dependent victims of their own drives and longing; mutuality replaced by male power and domination (humans were to rule over the creation not over one another); human alienation from their own labour; human alienation from the stuff of their bodies (the *'adamah*, the soil, is cursed—not simply a change in the economic relationship to the soil but in the relationship to the foundational element of which the human self is made); human alienation from eternity as *telos* into time as cyclic dissolution into death and dust.

The Failure to Confess the Word of God as Constitutive to the Fall

We can point to two or three other crucial issues in these divine judgements. In speaking to the *'adam* God says: "Because you listened to the voice of your *'issah* and you ate from the tree about which I commanded you…" While many traditional reading might see this as pointing somehow to the inferiority of the woman (e.g the old saw that women should not teach etc.), these divine words draw us back into one of the ambiguities of the narrative itself. In the narrative, only the *'adam* was given the command. One of the real questions of the narrative is whether the *'issah* actually knew the divine command. This opens a new dimension, again relating to religion. The consequences for all humanity (represented in the text's continuation of the term *'adam* rather than the term ʻ*ish*) rise out of the *'adam*'s failure to share and communicate the Word of God faithfully to the partner.

35. So a crucial metaphor for the restoration of right relationship between God and humanity is not the establishment of a new religion, but the affirmation of the restoration of the possibility of human partnership that participates in genuine intimacy and in the reality of the "marriage"/partnership between Christ and Israel and Christ and the Church.

The Error of Natural Law and Natural Religion as Constitutive to the Fall

The woman is correct in asserting that she was beguiled and deceived—because in this context the snake stands not for "snake religion" but for all natural religion in which the natural order is taken "to speak" accurately for and about God, in which the natural order is taken to reflect the divine command and therefore to be an adequate foundation for human religion, social ordering, economic ordering and moral ordering. [36] I understand this to be the foundational critique not only of natural religion, but of all forms of natural law—this is why the snake's speech is **both true and deceiving**. Where religion founds itself on conceptions of natural law it can only speak like the snake, and such religion can only lead to the relationships articulated in the Divine judgement on the snake—relationships of exclusion and marginalization ("cursed more than all other beasts"); relationships of humiliation and economic deprivation ("on your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all your life"); relations of resentment, conflict, and oppression ("enmity between you and the woman, your seed and her seed, it shall bruise your head, you shall bruise its heel"). This world of exclusion, marginalization, humiliation, economic deprivation, resentment, conflict and oppression is the best and only thing natural law and natural religion have to offer human beings and nature.

We should note here what others have noted, that the words of divine judgement need to be read in their full ambiguity as both descriptive and prescriptive. These words describe for us the world as we know and experience it—but this world is the world after the fall in which we live. They point us to a fundamental reality of divine judgement throughout the scriptures: God's judgement and "curse" is simply the reality of humans living with the consequences of their actions and choices. To take these words, as some do, prescriptively of God's will for creation is to deny the reality of the fall. God's will for creation was spoken in the Words of grace, fecundity, limit and consolation in Genesis 1 and 2. In and after the fall we see power, procreation and consumption (the gifts of the first blessing in Genesis 1) increasingly entangled into the web of oppressive structures manifested in marriage, family, society, and the political order—the words of judgement are prescriptive in the sense that they direct us to this inevitably increasing entanglement even in the very institutions we think are delivering us from our abjection and confusion. I understand the scriptures to be a complex and multi-valent critique of this fallen state through which God's judgement and grace are at work (but not always transparently or obviously). I understand the New Testament to offer through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ "God's presence, and very self and essence all-divine" in three cures: the Self-Emptying (*kenosis*) and Cross, the community of Baptized followers of Jesus, and the Eucharist. (See chart on following page.) But this Word and Presence was also and already there in the garden. If being "a new creation in Christ" means in some way that we are released to be free for God as God intended us in creating all things, then that means being free to be in relationship as intended in the pre-fallen world.

So humankind depart from the garden, and death becomes, in Wesley's phrase, the "seal" on God's endless mercies, since were we able to reach out and eat from the Tree of Life without knowing the way of the Cross, the community of the risen Lord, and the Table of Thanksgiving, we would know eternal life, but only as "heirs to endless woe."

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36. This is ultimately one of the reasons why the Wisdom literature is not placed in the Torah or Prophets, but in the Writings—but it functions there as a valid critique/balance lest we misconstrue the intense focus on revelation elsewhere in the canon. Creation/the natural order is also a work of God and therefore, reflected on rightly in its place, offers us wisdom, insight, understanding into the will and purpose of God—and that form of Divine revelation is available throughout the created order to all humans (Psalm 19). The mistake is always to turn that understanding of the natural order into a foundation for religion.

Genesis 1	Genesis 2	Genesis 3–4 **(AFTER THE FALL)**	The New **TESTAMENT**
		The desires now become punishments, but this is not the way God intended the world to be—*Phyllis Trible notes curses are* ***descriptive of reality as experienced*** *not prescriptive of reality as it should be.*	
Desire/need for power Dominate the earth	**Desire/need for power** Till the earth and serve it—collaboration with creation	**Desire/need for power** Enmity between creatures and humans, and enmity between humans and the soil "it shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel…." Patriarchy and family dysfunction rather than equality in relationship	**Desire/need for power** The **Incarnation** as the model for all human relationships, and the **Cross** and the work of human reconciliation
Desire/need for perpetuity/eternity Be fruitful and multiply	**Desire/need for perpetuity/eternity** It is not good for the '*adam* to be alone—the search for the '*ezer kenegdo*—the one who can be equal in relationship Leading to social institution of "marriage"	**Desire/need for perpetuity/eternity** Pain and suffering in childbearing Family, clan and nation as primary social goods—the stranger as enemy Fratricide	**Desire/need for perpetuity/eternity** Replacement of marriage, family, clan and nation with the inclusive community of **Baptism** (disciples of Jesus drawn from all nations and peoples)
Desire/need for survival—to consume To you I have given all green things for food	**Desire/need for survival—to consume** Of the tree in the middle of the garden you may not eat—limit	**Desire/need for survival—to consume** Struggle to make the earth yield food—thorns and thistles economy as competition for scarce goods	**Desire/need for survival—to consume** The **Eucharist** as the model of distributive economy in which all receive what they need that is also paradoxically the same as what everyone else receives.

4. Foundations of the Biblical Critique of Patriarchy

Genesis 3 and the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 open what I understand to be a deep and subtle underlying critique of patriarchy that runs throughout the scriptures. I understand it to be a critique because its appears embedded in the texts at major nodal moments (the "fall," the first murder, the patriarchal/matriarchal cycles, the Exodus, the David cycle, the Elijah-Elisha cycle, certain prophetic books) where other key critical themes are also present. This internal biblical critique is essential in understanding anything else we may perceive to be said or indicated in the texts about questions such as marriage and sexuality, holding superficial conclusions constantly under questioning and judgement. This critique is foundational—beginning as it does in Genesis 3 and 4 it points to patriarchy as one of the most profound and problematic forms of disordered and fallen creation.

It has become a commonplace to say that the biblical text is "patriarchal." This can mean at least two different things. For some, it means that the Bible presents patriarchy as the correct and divinely ordained ordering and norm of creation. What usually flows from this are forms of reading of the text that see institutions and structures of patriarchy as they are described or manifested in the texts as prescriptive of normative ordering in all human societies. For others, to say the biblical text is "patriarchal" is to say that it originates within a literary and social matrix in which patriarchy is the norm, and it reflects those assumptions in its portrayal of human and other relations. What usually flows from this is either an argument that the text is thus "committed" as part of a web of such oppressive texts to press, through its assumed religious authority, the acceptance of patriarchy as normative (*cui bono*? and thus untrustworthy), or that the text is thus "flawed" through its human error in acceptance of patriarchy (developmentally naïve, and thus untrustworthy).

I understand the biblical texts to be "patriarchal" in the following sense only. The texts as a body are "patriarchal" in that they emerge from and portray patriarchal patterns and relationships in the same way that they portray political relationships of kingship, empire, and colonialization, or economic relationships of peasant villages, nomadic herders, slavery, urban-rural imbalance, military defence expansion, centralizing luxury economies, or mid-first century Corinth. To write a text out of the assumptions and realities of a particular context does not make it instantly a naïve projection of that context as normative, as morally desirable, or as divinely ordained. [37]

The biblical texts portray patriarchy as a web or network of familial, social, religious, economic, and political behaviours, assumptions, institutions, and normalizations, that install and sustain male power, authority, and desire at all levels of human relationship and functioning.[38] This network of interlocking and dynamic forces is understood to be a part of human reality and experience. At key nodal points within the text aspects of this network are exposed for reflection, portrayed as disrupted, and deconstructed both symbolically and in the narratives' account of reality, often through specific instances of divine or divinely ordained activity.

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37. Consider the complex critique Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* offers of Napoleonic-war period slave economy in England. Or, to stay with Austen, the complex way in which all her novels offer a critique of the institution of marriage as it was socially constructed in the classes with which she is concerned—not simply in its impact on women, but also in its perverse impact on men.

38. Feminist theory may understand and describe patriarchy differently. This is simply an attempt to describe what are the strands and dynamics that the biblical texts lay open to our attention.

Patriarchy as Constitutive of the Fallen World

The first and most significant of these moments, outlined above, is in the rupture of the fall, when the mutuality of relationship implied in all aspects of the narrative of Genesis 2, becomes, after the fall, disordered relationships of desire and power. These portrayed disorders include: male domination of the woman in the intimate relationship; female as subservient not only to the male but to her own desire and passions for the male; separation of men and women into gendered social functions; and social and religious structures (as outlined above) in which by implication (3:17) women's speech and intellectual activity will be treated as inferior and flawed.

The Conflict of Brothers and Patriarchy

The second focal moment of this critique is in the important Cain and Abel narrative in Genesis 4:1-16. This text is critically nodal because it also presents the first moment in another prolonged biblical critique, the critique of power and violence. It is a narrative about murder by which murder is denoted as a foundational aspect of the fallen world. In this text murder and violence cannot be understood apart from an analysis of socio-economic structures, differences, and tensions (one is a herder, the other is an agriculturalist). Murder and violence are intimately linked to religion (the murder rises out of a religious event in which two forms of sacrifice are set in competition). Murder and violence are intimately liked to movements within the human psyche ("why is your face fallen?") and human perceptions of acceptance or exclusion ("if you do well, you will be accepted"). Murder and violence are linked to the disordering and proper ordering of human choice ("sin is crouching at the door 'desiring' you, yet you can master it" — parallel precisely in language to the disordering of male-female intimacy in Genesis 3:16). Murder and violence release an unending cycle of responsive violence, either in the structures of individual revenge or at the level of societal revenge ("see, whoever finds me will kill me," and the poem of Lamech).

But the text is also about an older brother who kills a younger brother. Superficially, then the text points us to sibling rivalry (murder and violence cannot be understood from the dynamics of family formation and interactions). But in this the text links us to a central pattern in the Genesis narratives—the narratives in which the older brother is set aside for the younger brother. In the narrative of Cain and Abel the older brother forcibly sets aside the younger brother. Throughout the rest of Genesis, God sets aside older brothers in favour of the younger. This setting aside functions constantly to symbolize the Divine rejection and reordering of a much larger set of social and familial structures—the domination of the younger male by the older is the normal power orientation of the patriarchal family. The domination represents the normative economic patterning within the patriarchal familial and social structure, and at the broadest level the domination of older males over younger represents the normative ordering of the entire communal and social structure of patriarchy. The Cain and Abel narrative thus points us the inextricable link between male power in patriarchy and the violence required at all times to sustain it. Wherever there is patriarchy there will be murder. Cain's name is associated by wordplay with his power to "create" progeny—the preoccupations of patriarchy are power over progeny, and power over weaker men and over women (e.g. the poem of Cain's geometrically murderous son Lamech: "Ada and Zillah, listen to me…"). But Abel's name, "Breath," points correspondingly to the assumption within patriarchy that the weak are open to the disposition of the strong.

The Fathers and Mothers and the Endless Web of Patriarchy

It is within the Genesis cycle of patriarchal/ matriarchal narratives that we see at every crucial node the setting aside of older for younger males (Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Reuben for Joseph and Judah). The pattern persists elsewhere (Aaron and Moses, the older brothers for David, Absalom and the other siblings for Solomon). The

reading of this pattern within the Christian tradition as a simple trope for the temporal succession of Israel and the Church has perpetuated a superficial interpretation of what is at stake in these narratives. The Jacob/Esau episodes in particular clearly articulate the issues of birthright as economic power, paternal favour for the older brother as a right, and paternal blessing as both economic and spiritual power. In the setting aside of Reuben the issue is the assumed right of the firstborn to dominate and sexually possess the women of the weakening older father. But the critique extends to Simeon and Levi who adopt violence to revenge the rape of their sister Dinah, whom they see as a commodity of the family to be protected. This text in Genesis 34 is set in specific structural relationship to Genesis 17 within the whole book as the two chapters extensively preoccupied with circumcision. Genesis 34 also represents, in the debasing of the sign of circumcision, the manner in which patriarchy warps and defiles even the most intimate marks of grace. The association with Levi (pointing to all the subsequent issues in Exodus through Numbers involving the Levites, Moses, Aaron and violence) points to the patriarchal co-opting of even the most sacred forms of religious ritual and expression to sustain its rhetoric and power (evoked in Genesis 34 and again in Jacob's prophetic vision in Genesis 49). In the closing chapters of Genesis, Joseph, the younger brother who has supplanted his older siblings both within the family and within his domination of the hierarchical power structures of Egypt, exercises deliberate psychological violence (in repeated episodes) both to reinforce his power over his brothers, and as a mode of revenge.

The text understands these settings aside of older for younger to be God's choice and action. But this action in several of the texts is mediated through the figures of the prophetic women, especially Sarah and Rebecca. At the crucial junctures, both Sarah and Rebecca articulate the divine insight regarding the re-ordering of power among the siblings. But the Sarah and Rebecca texts also open up aspect of the dynamics by which women become co-opted in patriarchal societies—both in the reiterated wife-sister stories, in the dynamics of the Hagar episodes, and in the great deception exercised upon Isaac. Lest we imagine these text somehow point only at the women, it's important to note that it is the motivations and assumptions of the men that the narratives lay open in the dialogue (about competition with other men for women, the conventions of, and confusions of, partnership and property, of fear that other men will sexually seize the women one views as property, etc). In dealing with their sons, Abraham and Isaac (the latter both symbolically and really) have their vision of the divine will occluded and blinded.

This pattern is inverted in the Jacob-Laban cycle of narratives, in which the notion that patriarchy can be changed by social or economic negotiation opens up to scrutiny. Jacob negotiates and works seven years for Rachel whom he loves. At the marriage he discovers the father-in-law has substituted Leah, the older sister whom he does not love. "This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn," responds Laban to Jacob's outrage. At a certain level, the entire narrative of Jacob's family represents the interwoven dysfunctions of patriarchal familial and social ordering, including the dynamics of economic possession, the dispossession of older men, competition among spouses and siblings, the symbolic and real devotion to fertility in all its forms, the linkage between the maintenance of the taboo/fear of women's menstrual blood and idolatry. Symbolically, the tension between Jacob and Laban in this gigantic patriarchal battle represents and is represented by their origin and final location. Laban remains an Aramean; Jacob dissociates himself ultimately from the way of his forefathers (Laban is his mother's sibling) and returns to Canaan, the land of the promise and the covenant. Jacob does not cease to be a patriarch—but he is changed by his wrestling with humans and with God. The text marks this by two episodes of name change. The second of these is linked textually to the burial of the household and fertility gods stolen from her father and brought by Rachel at the time of the departure from Syria.

I understand these settings aside of older for younger by God to be a primary articulation of the divine rejection and judgement on patriarchy. The texts open up its dynamics for our understanding, but they also repeatedly enact the rejection of patriarchy in both real and symbolic fashion. But in the same way the prophet Nahum articulates the divine overthrow of all empires of force, yet empires continue to be, these repeated momentary rejections of

patriarchy do not replace patriarchy—like the fall of Nineveh, the displacement of Esau by Jacob is also a figure of the hope and restoration of all humanity yet to come.[39]

Exodus, Redemption, and Patriarchy

I understand the confrontation between God and Pharaoh/God and Egypt in the Exodus to be the single point that exposes to our scrutiny the entire depravity of the mechanisms of power and hierarchy which are the embodiment both of the human revolt against God and of the cosmic revolt of the powers against God. I understand Luke's unique use of the term *exodos* in his version of the Transfiguration as pointing us back to the Exodus to understand that what happens in Jerusalem to Jesus (the Cross and the resurrection) is the other single point at which the entirety of the mechanism is exposed to our scrutiny.

Exodus 11 through 13 tightly draws together a series of disparate strands which point in both real and symbolic ways to the meaning of the Exodus, the cost of human freedom, and the powers which are overthrown.

First we have the theme of the borrowing of gold and silver to which I have alluded earlier, and understand as the representation of an understanding of the economic foundations of human society, both in their real form and in their twisted form as idolatry. Then we have the announcement of the final plague in which all the firstborn of Egypt will be killed, human and animal. This omnipresence of death crossing all living orders of creation points us back to Genesis 3 and 4 and the fundamental mechanisms of violence by which power and hierarchy are mediated and maintained in the fallen order. This will be laid open for all to see, and the distinction between Egypt and Israel will be precisely that the community of God will be a place of life, not death. Then we have the announcement of the disjunction of time—this will be the beginning of months. In this new creation time is marked by the rituals of freedom (Passover), not by the cycles of nature (the middle-eastern new year) or by the cycles of the economy (the third, or economic, new year common to societies centred on commerce).

There follow the directions for the Passover lamb, and the marking of lintels with blood, linked here with a reiteration of the proclamation of death of the firstborn, but now also linked to the execution of judgement on all the gods of Egypt. The action of the shared meal on earth marks the releasing of an action which is cosmic in scope—an event marked by creation of egalitarian economic community, nurturing and preparation for action, and safety and divine protection. This action is prospective; it looks forward. Then follow the commands regarding the festival of unleavened bread, the purpose of which is retrospective, that is, to look backward in recollection. The ritual life of this community takes it shape from the memory and marking of God's action in deliverance from Egypt. The directives about the Passover lamb and the blood are reiterated, this time both in prospective form and specifically as a retrospective commemoration of deliverance from death for the future. The people do this, and the plague of death unfolds.

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39. We might also note the repeated episode of the Zelophehad sisters, first in Numbers 27 and 36, and reiterated in Joshua 17. In this episode the principle of inviolability the divine gift of the land to the families and clans is shown to override the patriarchal principle of male inheritance. In the first two episodes the setting aside of the patriarchal principle is modeled in two elaborate social negotiations which look forward to the community's future life in the land of Canaan. In the repetition of the material in Joshua it is seen as a significant episode of interpretation embodying the principle to be repeated from the perspective of the actual moment of dividing the land. The upending of patriarchy is not merely some imaginary value of the community expressed in nice legal principles, but must be embodied in real social arrangements involving control of land and economy.

The people leave Egypt, with the silver and gold jewelry, and with their unbaked bread. Then follow more regulations regarding the eating of the passover lamb—this time in relation to who may eat it. It is a meal for those who are free and who wish to join and take on the marks of the community of freedom. Then comes the crucial injunction—hitherto all the firstborn of humans and animals must be consecrated to God. Now the festival of unleavened bread is redescribed from the perspective not simply of memorial action for deliverance, but as a re-articulation of the events of the Exodus and the action of God for human freedom and community **in the promised land**, identified by its association with the peoples who possess it. The ritual action is not simply a memory of God's action on behalf of the community, but the proclamation of the values of the community and the promise of God's action wherever the people will go. Then follows a further more detailed rearticulation of the requirement to sacrifice the first-born, again from the prospective of the land of Canaan, where this too becomes a perpetual witness to the cost of freedom.

I have laid out this sequence (Exodus 11-13) at length because the constant recombination of ritual regulation and narrative in several different variants press us for reflection. The authors/redactors could have presented this material in a much more simple fashion if it were simply a matter of laying out several different rituals and their meanings. It is again precisely in the combination of narrative and the folding in of ritual direction and interpretation that the meanings lie.

The Cost of Freedom in Exodus and the Scandal of Patriarchy

The pivotal theme of the Exodus is the deliverance of the Hebrew people from bondage into freedom.[40] That freedom, however, has a tremendous cost. In the narrative as it is presented, the forces that enslave the people (as represented by the hardened heart of Pharaoh and his state apparatus) can only be overthrown by a divine act of death-dealing. We may find this "distasteful," and generations of Jewish and Christian interpreters have explored the dilemmas this poses for our understanding of God, but it remains the basic assertion of the text about how God acts to free the enslaved. The cost of life and freedom for the Israelites is death for someone else. I believe the text asserts that there is no escape from this cost; it is a paradigmatic reality of life.[41]

The Israelites go free from bondage in Egypt: the cost of this freedom is the death of the firstborn of human and beast throughout Egypt. This has implications at several levels. First of all, as we have traced above, primogeniture, the right of the firstborn to power in clan and society is a foundational aspect of social order in many societies. It is connected to hierarchy as a mechanism for decision-making within the larger social order. Thus by implication, the cost of freedom is the death of the right of primogeniture. In these texts we see God actively overthrowing the basic principle by which social order is structured and maintained. Now this total overthrow of the basis of the power to enslave (fundamental to hierarchies of all sorts–somebody's got to be on the bottom for everyone else above to bleed dry) is enacted most vividly on Egypt. But the text goes further by inscribing, as a fundamental aspect of Israelite life and culture, the sacrifice of every firstborn human or animal as a permanent memorial of the price of freedom.

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40. Portions of the next section were first given as a Lenten parish education session at St Cuthbert's, Leaside, in the late 1990's and then published in the Toronto *Catholic Worker*.

41. There is a famous midrash, or interpretive story, from the rabbis in the Jewish tradition, which tells how when the Israelites had crossed the sea and were safe on the other side, and Pharaoh's charioteers were struggling and drowning in the torrents of mud and water, the angels in heaven begin to sing and applaud and rejoice and dance. God silences them and asks why they are celebrating like this. "Because your people are free and the Egyptians who oppressed them are dying" comes the response. And God says, "How can you sing and rejoice when any of my creatures are dying?"

So every firstborn son must be redeemed. The very right of the firstborn to exist is permitted only as an act of grace, at a cost to the family of a valuable economic asset—an animal in impeccable physical shape and vigour.

Thus, in the divinely commanded order of the Exodus, to be firstborn is not a position of privilege and power, but a permanent position of obligation to those born later, to the weaker members of the family, clan or community. While in most societies and religions the right of the firstborn (and their socio-economic equivalents) to power and wealth is normative, in God's chosen community and all communities (such as the Church) that follow from it, this right is merely permissive.

The implications of this extend further. The text indicates that is sons who must be redeemed, not daughters. A simplistic historicist reading might say this is because this society considered females inferior to males. The text is, I suggest, significantly more radical than that. For this text, the price of freedom is not only the overthrow of primogeniture, but also the overthrow of the assumption of natural privilege of the male (which, in most societies over the past three millennia or more has been another of the normative foundations of social order). The text calls into question any society which assumes as normative the superiority of males. The very right of the male to power is at best for these Exodus texts a permissive right, purchased at a cost to the family and community. Thus males may not lord it over the family or the community, since their very existence has been purchased by the family and the community from their birth. It is in allusion to this aspect of the Exodus that Paul says when writing to the Corinthians about family life and social order, "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves to human masters."

This sacrifice of the firstborn recurs in legal form, in ritual form, and in social form across the Torah. In Numbers, the Levites become corporately the "redemption" of all the firstborn in Israel for all time. But Numbers also makes clear that Levites also lose the right to share in a portion of the land with the other tribes. Thus, the various threads of the ritual requirements of the firstborn, in the very acts and forms of remembering, inscribe in Israel's foundation as a community at the Exodus, this encoded overturning and rejection of patriarchy and hierarchy in all its forms. The rituals of redemption are interlocked with **all** the forms of power and social ordering—economic, ritual, social, political and religious class structures and power systems, gender distinctions, and familial power systems.

The Crucified and Risen One as Firstborn of All Creation—Jesus Christ's Death and Resurrection as God's Judgement on Patriarchy

More significantly, the language of the requirement to sacrifice the firstborn, even the use of the term, appears in a wide range of New Testament texts as one of the dominant ways of describing Jesus Christ, and his death on the cross. This work of "redemption" is not some superficial "purchasing back" of humanity from the Devil, as it is often portrayed. The "redemption" to which these texts refer is precisely the accomplishment by the "Firstborn of all creation" of the sacrifice required as the price for the Exodus of all creation from bondage. This bondage is not merely some notional spiritual state of slavery to sin, but is also the physical state of bondage to which the exercise of power and violence, empire and domination, the family order and patriarchy, continue to subject humanity, endlessly perpetuating its misery.

The work of the Cross is not an imaginary death; the powers that oppress humanity are not "ideas." The human body of Jesus did not undergo some imaginary form of suffering, any more than the billions of women, children and other men who have suffered rape, violation, torture, dismemberment, and death under the domination of the patriarchal and hierarchical order maintained by human states and religions (including Christian faith when it becomes a religion) have suffered imaginary suffering.

So too, the risen body of Jesus Christ, the "firstborn from the dead" is not an "imaginary body"—it is a real Body and presence, and like the Exodus, it marks a real (not merely a theoretical) change in the material conditions

of the whole of humanity. The "redeemed community" which shares in the risen body rejects every means of force, power, authority and domination; the "redeemed community" in all its rituals and with all its memory exposes the lies of patriarchy and hierarchy and their espousal of the normalizing death-dealing mechanisms of social life that inscribe their power and demands. And the primary place where the "redeemed community" does this is at the Eucharistic table. At once this Table is both prolepsis and analepsis, the revelation of the true divine economy of justice and equity, of the true community of all humanity as one Body, the Passover feast of the Lamb and the feast of Unleavened Bread. At this Table we eat the shared meal which once again releases God's action of deliverance in and through Christ's Body wherever men and women are enslaved in Egypt, and we consume the shared meal of memory that gives glory for the overthrow of the gods of Egypt in the new creation, that gives glory for the deliverance and redemption for humanity, that gives glory for the wind of the Spirit that blows back the waters that seek to overwhelm us as the armies of Pharaoh and Egypt seek to pursue us still, that gives glory for the fire that burns on Sinai and continues to burn in our hearts.

5. The Biblical Critique of Patriarchy in the Struggle with the Ba^{c}als, in the Wisdom literature, and in Ephesians

The Genesis episodes of displacement of elder sons, and the texts relating to the Exodus, lay out, in my view, this fundamental biblical critique of patriarchy. Again, I would note, this does not mean that suddenly there are no more biblical narratives in which there is patriarchy, or that there are no laws that seem to be patriarchal in function. The Torah is even more emphatic in its rejection of slavery, yet there are laws permitting and regulating forms of slavery. By the same token, I understand this critique of patriarchy to be a genuine foundational critique—linked to the biblical understanding and critique of all the other forces that warp and destroy humanity.

Already in the Old Testament, this same "already and not yet" exists that is present in the gospel accounts of the kingdom, and more generally in the New Testament's presentation of the work of Jesus Christ and the nature of the Church. In this regard, the texts seek constantly to help us distinguish our own temptation to imagine the forms of the "not yet" as the ultimate reality of which we have seen only the glimpse of the "already." In the scriptures the primary and constant ally of all the most depraved forms of the powers that dominate and twist the existence of human beings is religion. The texts are full of polemical and other discourse about forms of human religions. But the biblical texts go much further than this—they constantly open up for our scrutiny the ways in which Israel's own worship of God abandons its first love and becomes twisted into yet another form of religion. We see this laid out in diverse forms in Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Our tendency is simply to consider this as a merely theoretical or ideational change—they abandoned the worship of the One God and turned to idol worship (to use a classic biblical summary of a much more complex process). But as I noted earlier, the scriptures are very clear that idols are nothing but material objects and have no power whatsoever.[42] If worshipping idols were all that were at issue, the texts would not convey the genuine level

42. See Psalm 115 and extended passages in Isaiah 40-55 for classic theological statements of this. But in narrative form the Ark in Gaza narrative of 1 Samuel represents a much earlier form of the same transparent debunking of idols as such. It is not an accident that the humour in the story centres around haemorrhoids.

of passion and hysteria they do.[43] I understand the biblical discourse to lay out for our contemplation not only the historical and social processes by which we constantly fall into "religion" and the forms of "false worship" that constitute the heart of all religion, but also to lay out certain dominant themes that infuse all forms of religion across time so that we recognize them and can avoid their seductions and entanglements. Across Israel's history the greatest temptation was the confusion of its own God with what are referred to as *Baᶜal* and the '*baᶜals*' (even this divergent terminology signals fundamental aspects of the reality to which it refers). Nor is this simply a geographical matter of proximity—the major centres of *Baᶜal* worship were certainly in northern Israel and Phoenicia, but Israel was equally in proximity to other forms of religion with which it seems to have become much less entangled.

The language of the "idol" functions to point us to the need to understand the "power" the idol represents. This "power" is the named "god" whose image the idol purports to represent. The image may in itself communicate aspects of the power associated with the "god." Each "god" and its "name" represents a differentiated cluster of themes, values, and powers—there are so many of them in human history, not because they are all the same, but precisely because each one represents a different concatenation of forces, nuclear values, or influences. Because a "god" represents a collection of themes, values, nodal ideas, and forces, the "religion" of the god takes its own unique form. But more than this is true—humans worship gods because the particular concatenation of values and forces around the god fulfils a specific sets of needs for social or economic or political or familial security, flourishing, or order. So a god and its religion also stands for, and guarantees and sustains, a social order which embodies in its totality the entirety of the system of forces, values, ideas, powers, and themes associated with the god. The Bible is very aware of the process as well by which "gods" accrete to themselves wider and wider systems of influence by "absorbing;" as it were, other "gods." [44] Because these powers manifest themselves in social and economic orders and interactions

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43. This is, of course, the other side of the Deuteronomic dilemma. From a purely historical perspective it is clear that the Deuteronomic ideology is the response to the century of heightened anxiety in Judah following the Assyrian destruction and deportation of Samaria in the 720's, and leading up to the eventual collapse of Judah in 587 at the hands of the rising Babylonian empire. At the most extreme some would argue based on physical and cultural remains that there was never really a monotheistic Judah before the Deuteronomic movement. Whatever the earlier degree of religious variety in Judah, all the texts. even discounting the level of polemic behind them, would indicate that public policy was at such a high level of anxiety that almost any religious system that promised security and safety was given a place to flourish. So first of all, the Deuteronomic movement is a serious attempt to create and articulate some sort of religious system that would have the force of unifying an anxious public (going about in gangs and smashing up and killing designated enemies has a long history of success in creating public unity), but at the same time articulate a set of socio-economic and religious values that could also unify a broad spectrum of the population. This is a sociological description of what seems to me to be going on. The ambiguity in the Deuteronomic movement lies precisely in the way that it draws together the best elements from the ancient tradition: monotheism; the egalitarian generous legal tradition (scholars have always noted its reframing of laws regarding woman and slaves); the sense of the place of the cam ha'ares (the folk of the land) as the true inheritors of the land from God; the fundamental necessity of the prophetic tradition and the suspicion of the royal system; and the critique of the hierarchy, the economic oppression, and the patriarchy (Joshua 2) that was at the heart of the Canaanite city states and the gods that maintained those systems. The Deuteronomists rave on about and hate idols not because they have some irrational fear of statues and altars, but because they genuinely saw into the socio-economic evil and depravity that these "gods" were guarantors of. The irony is that the Deuteronomic movement in its turn became the most fallen form of the Israelite religion, and we continue to see the nuclear half-life of its late seventh century BCE explosion present in almost every violent and oppressive element and form of Christianity that has existed.

44. The third word of Genesis 1 is the biblical deconstruction of this entire process of "accretion" among the "gods." 'Elohim, the biblical name for the One God, literally means "gods." But the texts also accrete to Israel's divine name for the One God [YHWH] the imagery and epithets of diverse other gods over a long period of time. The most obvious example is the storm-imagery traditionally associated with Bacal, the north-west semitic thunder and storm god. But see Mitchell Dahood's commentary on the Psalms for a thorough working through of this premise based on cross-cultural poetic parallels.

(often in more obvious and permanent ways than in religious rituals), the texts and narratives themselves expose to view the crucial aspects of the system.

Ba^{c}al and Patriarchy

The key body of texts relating to the crisis of Ba^{c}alism appears in the accounts particularly of Elijah's confrontation of it in northern Israel.[45] In 1 Kings 16:29-33, immediately preceding the first appearance of Elijah on the scene, Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, marries a Phoenician princess, Jezebel. In doing so he accepts the role of patron of her god *Ba^{c}al*. Superficially, it is easy to see the crisis here as conflict over who is the true god—the God of Israel, or *Ba^{c}al*, god of the Phoenicians. Indeed, this is the question Elijah poses to the Israelites, but not as a mere question of consumption (do you prefer corn flakes or rice krispies), but because he understands that *Ba^{c}al* and YHWH are fundamentally two different divinities embodying two totally different sets of communal, economic, religious and social values. Alternatively, the issue is often presented as one of syncretism—the attempt to reconcile and synthesize diverse religious practices and beliefs. I think the complete collection of texts makes clear that in the crisis lies a much more profound confusion.

The very word '*Ba^{c}al*' could not be uttered without automatically conveying several meanings:

1) *Ba^{c}al* was an alternate name for the thunder and storm god Hadad, associated in the northwest semitic mythological pantheon with the coming of the rains and the renewal of the agricultural cycle. *Ba^{c}al* was also a dying and rising god, representing the cyclic inevitability of nature. Thus *Ba^{c}al* religion was bound up in a theology that sacralized the natural and that viewed the natural pattern and order of things as inviolable truth, controlling and determining a corresponding set of right and proper relations and patterns for humans and human society.

2) *Ba^{c}al* also had two other ordinary and interconnected everyday meanings. It was one of the common terms for "husband." It was also a common term for an "owner" or a "proprietor." Thus *ba^{c}al* as a term for husband also conveys a social ideology of marriage and partnership that implies male control, ownership, and domination. *Ba^{c}al* is the great biblical god of patriarchy (though there are others).

Elijah's Critique of *Ba^{c}alist* Patriarchy

The great achievement of the Omride dynasty that ruled Israel was its having built the immensely successful city Samaria and having brought in a period of economic prosperity. This involved a major change in Israelite society from a subsistence farming mode of life to an urban import-export focus combined with the development of a large military establishment. This change had been achieved through alliance with the seacoast cities of Phoenicia, an alliance that took both a religio-cultural and an economic form. The king's marriage to Jezebel is the symbol of, and actual effecting of, this alliance; she represents the triumph of the new over the old values, not only in religion but in social and economic matters as well. In the episode of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21), Jezebel masterminds the manipulation of the citizens of Samaria to scapegoat Naboth, in order to alienate and seize his legitimate tribal inheritance. The stolen vineyard is symbolic of the overturning of traditional economic order, and also of the effective

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45. Another version of some of the material that follows appears in "Prophecy, Leadership, and Communities in Crisis" in *Living Together in the Church: Including our Differences*, ed. Greig Dunn and Chris Ambidge, pp. 178-199 (ABC Publishing, 2004).

subversion of the power of the traditional structures of law and justice. The shift of property and wealth away from traditional familial and clan ownership to an urban elite led to resentment and political upheaval as witnessed by repeated dynastic coups and increased rural poverty (1 Kings 17:10-12, 1 Kings 21).

Elijah criticizes the new socio-economic structures from the perspective of the older, more egalitarian Israelite religion and tradition. He intervenes in the episode of Naboth's vineyard, which classically represents the transfer of socio-economic power. What inflames Elijah more is the conjunction of the socio-economic upward mobility and dominance of the Omride party with the mechanisms and ideologies and practices of *Ba^cal* religion. The new religious system undergirds an unjust economic system with an ideology of power and ownership rooted in the inviolability of the natural order.

Furthermore, its cultic foci divert attention away from what is actually taking place. The ideology of *Ba^calism* involved, among other things, a powerful emphasis on male-female sexuality and on male potency. (*Ba^cal's* symbolic visual form was a bull.) Whether sexual intercourse (with other humans or with objects) formed part of the cultic ritual is increasingly a matter of debate.[46] I would argue that whatever view we take of the "practice," the faith crisis in northern Israel is the adoption of a religious ideology founded on male-female sexual congress as essential for upholding the stability of the natural order, with a social ideology of male domination and possession in sexuality and society. In marriage (and, if it existed, in the practices of cultic prostitution), the man was conceived as "owner," the '*ba^cal*', of the woman, just as he might own land. The theology diverted attention from the suffering that resulted from the economic displacements and provided justification for powerful men possessing whatever they could get. The cultic practices and symbols reaffirmed the theology.

The Critique of *Ba^calist* Patriarchy in Hosea

It is for this reason that I understand the book of Hosea (almost a century later than Elijah but also focused on the situation of the northern kingdom, Israel), to be part of this critique of patriarchy in its most seductive form, *Bacalism*. First of all, Hosea makes us aware of the long-lasting power of social and familial ideology when combined with religion, as it almost always is in human culture. Secondly, the fundamental ambiguity in Hosea makes us aware of how pernicious patriarchy is, particularly in its effects on language and the metaphors we choose for God.

Superficially the book seems to be about the metaphor of God marrying/taking back Israel who has been an unfaithful spouse. In the book the Lord commands Hosea to undertake the prophetic sign action of taking a wife who has been partner to many men, marrying her, and remaining faithful to her and having children by her. The children receive names signifying paternal rejection and disfavour (modelling a fundamental preoccupation of patriarchy with control of paternity and authenticity of offspring that functions as a means of social control).[47] On

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46. See most Bible dictionaries for a traditional view that sexual congress with multiple partners was an element of the Baal cult; some of biblical texts are understood to suggest that there were passive male sacred prostitutes as well. One supposition is that this was a form of "sympathetic" activity—humans having sex encouraged the earth to renew its fertility. More recent scholarship argues that cultic prostitution was nonexistent in the ancient Near East (see Jacob Milgrom's on Leviticus 19:29 for a concise review of the recent literature and the questions involved. *Anchor Bible 3A. Leviticus 17-22*.)

47. But see the episode of Saul's rage at Jonathan for his intimate friendship with David for an even more blatant example of this. Saul impugns Jonathan by calling him the "son of a perverse rebellious woman"—but the phrase could be either a projectile language demeaning the son by accusation against the mother, or, given that *ben* also can signify "belonging to the class of," it could be a projectile epithet implying Jonathan's "womanliness" in his relationship with David by accusing him of being "a perverse rebellious woman." All forms of domination and oppression, including patriarchy, have their own unique forms of linguistic abuse and control.

this reading, Hosea's patient suffering of her unfaithfulness and his willingness to take her back after her episodes with other men, even though she has become "tainted goods," is an image of God's suffering and patience with the dalliances of Israel with other gods (for political or other reasons), especially the *baʿals*.

What complicates the book is the language of the divine oracles where God speaks to Israel. These oracles portray the Lord as a God who thinks of a spouse as a possession, who thinks it appropriate to beat and strip and humiliate women, and who makes up for the violence by promising new clothes and rich food and kind treatment. Correspondingly, the oracles portray Israel as speaking like an abused wife who keeps going back to the abuser because he's going to treat her better next time. If we are to read these oracles at this straightforward level, then they would seem to argue that Israel's God is the great guarantor and model for patriarchy—indeed here Israel's God is and behaves like a patriarch. This certainly would represent a dominant stream of conventional readings. [48]

But there is one extended passage which, as I understand it, overturns and dismantles all the other language of the book and shows all of that other language to be infected with the tainted language and ideology of *Baʿalism* so deeply embedded into all Israel's social, familial and political structures that it has come to dominate and twist the very metaphors by which Israel imagines God. In the middle of chapter 2 there is a sudden shift in tone (but is this just the deceit of the abuser?), and there is a conscious return to all the language and imagery associated with the Exodus, that also takes us back to the crucial issues of Genesis 2 and 3—the language and imagery of human partnership before and after the fall.

Therefore, I will now persuade her,
 and bring her into the wilderness,
 and speak tenderly to her.
From there I will give her her vineyards,
 and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.
There she shall respond as in the days of her youth,
 as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.
On that day, says the Lord, you will call me, 'My husband,' [*'ishi, the language of Genesis*]
and no longer will you call me, 'My *Baʿal*'. *[my patriarchal husband /my dominator].*
For I will remove the names of the *bacals [the gods/the patriarchal husbands/the sacred words of the patriarchal system]* from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more.
I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; *[the undoing of the alienation of Genesis 3]*
and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. *[the undoing of the violence that undergirds and characterizes patriarchy and all systems hierarchy and domination.]*
And I will take you for my wife for ever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord. *[the undoing of the norms of relationship after the fall and the return to the mutuality of Genesis 2]*

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48. As evidenced in the response, at an academic conference of biblical scholars, by a Canadian Anglican female academic from an evangelical parish in a large multicultural Canadian city, who rose in great distress during a discussion of the abusive language toward women (projected as divine language) in Ezekiel, to explain to the group of scholars that to be critical of such language missed the point that Israel was so wicked and faithless that it had to be punished by God. Because Israel was God's wife and "He" loved her, it was necessary that Israel be beaten as an disobedient wife should be. Sometimes, she said, this was necessary for the wife's own good. Again, I note, this was a professional academic at a public conference of academics in the 1990's from an Anglican background.

On that day I will answer, says the Lord,
I will answer the heavens
and they shall answer the earth;
and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, *[the return to the original order of creation and the undoing of the infertility of the land after the fall.]*
and they shall answer Jezreel; *[alludes to the violent murder by Jehu of Jezebel and the offspring of the house of Ahab, In 2 Kings Jehu represents the YHWH-alone party of the north, but his dynastic house continues and depends on the confusion between the surface illusion of faithful YHWH-worship, and the social, political and familial values of the Baʿal cult.]*
and I will sow him for myself in the land.
And I will have pity on Lo-ruhamah,
and I will say to Lo-ammi, 'You are my people;'
and he shall say, 'You are my God.' *[the reversal of the names of Hosea's children, implying both the reversal of patriarchal behaviours and evoking Exodus 19ff. at Sinai, and elsewhere.]*

Clearly, despite this startling juxtaposition, the remainder of the text of Hosea does not indicate some immediate transformation of language or metaphorical conceptions of God. I understand this as pointing critically and prophetically to the difficulty of disentangling patriarchy from the language used about God once our worship of God has fallen into this form of "religion." The judgement on us is the persistent confusion of our language about God (often despite our best efforts), which in turn leads us to growing confusion about what is justice and what is mercy. The three great areas where the scriptures consistently portray our faithfulness as most readily deceived and falling into forms of religion are in relation to economic security and productivity, to power, and to sexuality and models of sexual "normality."[49] The significance of the struggle with Bacalism is that. more than any other of the idolatries that tempted ancient Israel, Bacalism is the place where, because of the centrality of patriarchy, all three of these forces were most entangled and confused.

Wisdom and Patriarchy

While we can note the misogynist grumblings of Qohelet (but then he tells us not to take at face value anything we are told, so why would we take his grumblings any differently?), the Wisdom text that seems most clearly to portray and normalize patriarchal values is Proverbs. One of the aspects of the form of the proverb collections themselves, with their pairings of subtly differentiated, and sometimes contradictory, proverbs, is to induct us into a mode of reading/knowing that constantly questions and explores anything that purports to be a totalizing statement. The canonical book, however, frames these collections with discourses that set the entirety in a theological framework, and in recent years there has been considerable exploration of the opening framework (chapters 1-9) in particular because of the interest in the broader intercultural connections of the notion of Wisdom or Sophia.

49. Some trenchant observations by One who suffered no such confusions: "Foxes have hole and birds have nests, but the Human One has nowhere to lay his head." "If any want to become my disciples, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me." "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

The problem Proverbs poses is that its opening discourse is framed as an address from a father to a son. The first part of the discourse unfolds along a set of developmental anxieties from adolescence to old age, setting against each stage various critical forms of wisdom or resources of wisdom necessary for success. The evolving picture portrays Wisdom primarily as a type of positive or negative "idealized female"—the ideal bride rejected in adolescent foolishness; the adulterous older woman who seeks out virile young men for partnership; the wealthy heiress etc. Increasingly, the typology turns to a projection of "whore" or "goddess" as female hypostatizations of anti-wisdom and wisdom. Again we see a particular aspect of the patriarchal use of language and imaging of women (and children) at work. I would argue, however, that the book (given its predilection for projecting wisdom as "female") deconstructs this simple patriarchal model.

The framework of Proverbs is not just the opening nine chapters. At its conclusion there are a series of other poems that set up another book-end for the internal royal collections of proverbial sayings. The most important, and last, of these poems is about what it calls the *'eshet-hayil*—literally the "woman-virile," "the woman-hero," the "power-woman." The poem is a description of the ideal partner/ideal wife. But when we reads the poem, while it certainly understands the woman as mother of a family, far more of the poem is given to portraying her as an individual of agency in her own right—economic agency, managing and decision-making agency, agency as a doer of justice and mercy, a partner who enables the other partner to be wise and effective. This "woman-man" is portrayed and acknowledged not as a fantasy projection but as a real person in their own right.

I understand this poem about the "woman-man" once again as taking apart the naïve and patriarchal projections about women and wisdom in the opening frame of the book. These earlier images are simply that—projections or images. The person in the poem at the end is an incarnation of wisdom. One purpose of the poem is to root us in reality, as the wisdom tradition always seeks to do. We [men] recognize fragments or all of the incarnation of Wisdom to be our own mothers, grandmothers, daughters, friends and wives.[50] But the other purpose of the poem is to take us back to the purpose of the partnership in Genesis 2. This individual is the *ᶜezer kenegdo* God desires for the human being (the*'adam*, not the male), not the debased form of relationship between woman and man we see in Genesis 3, nor the destructive amalgam of power, economic anxiety and familial control that is the model propounded by "religion" ancient and modern, nor the idealized projection of international patriarchal imagination. And oddly enough, Proverbs gives it an unique and unusual hyphenated name—"the Woman-Man."

Ephesians and Greco-Roman Patriarchy.

Finally, I want to explore my understanding of Ephesians in relation to this larger question of patriarchy. Ephesians is one of a number of New Testament texts that use or reshape the devices of the Greco-Roman patriarchal order, in particular the socio-literary device sometimes called "house-tables." Such "house-tables" function culturally to lay out household hierarchies of domination and control emanating from the headship of the entitled male Roman citizen to the lowest slave. The three pillars of Greco-Roman empire were the sanctity and inviolability of the marital household, the extension of power through an elaborate network of patronage and military force that both defined social layers and bridged them in controlled ways, and the slave economy. The house-tables thus represent epitomes of normalizing discourse across the diversity of the empire, and it is not surprising that they appear in so many early Christian letters, as the Church attempts to interpret the socio-economics of the gospel across cultural distances.

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50. I note that the "we" who are readers of the text (at least for myself) must be identified as men, and there would be some who would argue that the idealized readers of the text were always "men." Women may indeed make something very different of this poem, but I would assume that some women might recognize themselves or their own mothers or grandmothers as the *'eshet-hayil* of the text. The proverbs text reminded one friend, who had known Dorothy Day, a founder of the Catholic Worker movement, of Dorothy.

Again it would be important to note that the conventional mode of reading these has been to assume that they project for Christians the correct form of social, familial and relational ordering. On this typical reading they tell us that the Church supports hierarchy and sees patriarchy as the salvific ordering of society.[51] I think this is a mistaken view because it takes these *Haustafeln* out of their context within the letters, treating them as if they were any Greco-Roman set of household rules, reflecting Greco-Roman values, rather than Greco-Roman forms which have been co-opted into a the context of Christian discourse with deliberate counter-cultural irony.

Ephesians is an early Christian letter addressed to people in a city in Asia Minor, to the Christian community in Ephesus, a city which was the fourth largest urban centre after Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, in the first century Roman empire. Ephesus was an ancient centre of civilization; for three centuries it had been home to one of the most beautiful religious buildings anywhere in the Mediterranean world. It sat on a harbour, it oversaw immense trade, and it had recently been reconfirmed with legal rights to tax and control the whole region of Asia Minor, what is now Turkey. With the coming of Augustus' peace and the solidification of the Roman empire in first century of the Christian era, Ephesus was the centre of a population and building boom. Some estimates place the population of Ephesus by the late first century at 400,000-500,000 people, about half the size of Rome, the capital of the empire.

In the fifty years before our letter was written, seven or eight major public facilities including a centre for coordinating all religious activity, a civic centre, several public baths, gymnasia, and a huge theatre had been built. This typical Roman amphitheatre, situated on the main street running up the slope of the mountain from the harbour, seated over 24,000 people. When one sat in the theatre, one looked out under the hot sun to see the blue sky and the harbour and the brilliant turquoise Meditaerranean water, and the slaves hauling goods up the harbour street into the city, daily increasing its wealth and influence—one experienced civic pride and shared the resentment that even though Ephesus was a more ancient city than Rome, its wealth and power were being bled away on a daily basis to that distant city across the sea.

This civic building boom was an essential element in the creation of an ideology of civic pride, cohesion and unity. Like all such massive projects, it had engendered civic disputes and divisions. Ephesus was dominated by ruling cliques, entrenched civic and charitable associations, membership in which played a part in determining the flow of wealth and power and influence. Ephesus was an economic driver, but not the centre of the empire's power, so Ephesus was also a place of resentment at fates in the hands of decision-makers in cities half a continent away.

Adjacent to the great amphitheatre, was an extended edifice of newly constructed public latrines and baths. Ephesus was an advanced Greco-Roman city where sanitation and cleanliness of body were important civic values. In this complex were a series of huge public brothels decorated with delicate paintings of the most beautiful prostitutes. Ephesus was a merchant city where you could purchase anything you wanted, and there were the facilities to accommodate every need of the thousands of sailors, business travelers, and bored citizens. Men in Ephesus were raised to understand that the control of their social and economic inferiors—slaves, prostitutes, younger men, and especially their wives was an absolute right which could not be challenged or questioned. It was a deeply patriarchal society; women, children and slaves had an absolute duty to obey the paterfamilias without questioning and to accept their place as inferior, in fact, as possessions.

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51. It was a conversation with a group of Cree elders concerned about young women being out of the control of their husbands that led me to rethink the meaning and function of the house-table in Ephesians (and the wider NT house-table tradition) in relation to the socio-religious setting of Ephesus.

The heart of the public city was Curetes Street, named after the ancient religious functionaries who cared for the great Temple of Diana or Artemis. Along this street was a series of new public buildings built by the Romans to assist in making the religious life of Ephesus a unity. In first century Ephesus not only was the traditional Roman cult of Jupiter being established in the name of the Emperor, but in order to unify the city and its place in the empire, the two ancient traditions of Diana and Artemis were also being brought together. The great statue of Artemis at Ephesus had reputedly fallen from heaven, bringing with it order, morality and religion. In the traditional Ephesian version of the Artemis cult, fertility was at its core—with an emphasis on the priority and stability of family values, and notion that the domination of the home and community by men was ordered by the gods. But for nearly two centuries the traditional Artemis cult in Ephesus had been overlaid by the Greek version of the worship of the same goddess—Diana, the godess of the hunt, the protector of animals, but also the goddess of absolute chastity. By the Roman period this value on chastity expressed itself in combination with patriarchy in a tightening of control over particularly the lives of young women, who were viewed as possessions of their family to be kept pure so that they could be bartered for power and influence among the various social circles of the city in desirable marriages.

Diana/Artemis was also a sky power, the goddess of the moon in two forms—first in its visible form as a goddess of changeability and fate in human lives, and secondly in the moon's invisible form as Hecate, the goddess of darkness and the dark powers which enable human beings to control and manipulate the lives of others. Diana/Artemis was also the goddess of vengeance—the public assertion of the right of one who had been injured or harmed to claim punishment and do equal harm to the one who had injured them. Along Curetes Street stood statues of another important power of the air, the flying Goddess Nike.[52] Nike personified the values of triumph and victory, the social value that affirmed the right of those with strength to render the weak fodder for their own and society's use.

The wealthy and the civic leaders of Ephesus were also its key religious functionaries, roles they took in turn clan by clan. The key to the ordering of Ephesus' religion was hierarchy, symbolized not only in rigidity of social classes, but in the very construction of the public spaces so that the most important people were elevated in public view on higher platforms and pedestals. To get ahead in Ephesus one had to be part of the elaborate religious system of patronage—to contribute to the civic and religious projects one's patron contributed to, and to show up and be present to support them showing everyone else how influential the patron really was. To get ahead in Ephesus one had to buy into the public values of family patriarchy, of male domination of the family and community, of chastity as a way of keeping women under control, the public values of triumph, victory, and the right to vengeance. One had to accept that life and fate were controlled by unpredictable forces, or that they might fall under the control of the dark power of a manipulator. To get ahead in Ephesus one had to be religious—one had to accept the power of religious leaders to set the rules, the right of the wealthiest men to establish the pecking order in every hierarchy and to expect cooperation and conformity in right behaviour and correct religious practice—because what was most important in Ephesus was civic and religious **unity**.

In the face of all that, the letter to the Ephesians takes up several key Pauline themes. There is a mystery in the universe—but it is not the random control of heavenly powers, it is not the rule of vengeance, triumph and victory. Rather the mystery which rules our fates and rules the universe is the fact that our lives are in God's hand, and that God's will is for mercy. God's is a plan for generosity to the entire human race from before all time, expressed through Jesus Christ whose purpose is to bring all things together into a different kind of unity, a unity not of the great thundering shout as one man killed another in the great public games in a gesture of triumph, but the unity of mutual love, of forbearance, of respect and care.

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52. After whom the running shoes were named.

Ephesians speaks of a unity and reconciliation which come about because our attention is not given to the distractions of being religious and doing religious things in order to fit in to society, to be respected, to be seen as moral and upstanding, and to bring respect to one's particular social group. Rather, in Ephesians our attention is focused on Christ. Christ is mentioned by name in over half the 23 verses of the first chapter of this letter, and is referred to indirectly in almost every other verse of the opening chapter. Our attention is focused on Christ because Christ becomes the pattern for our lives, not the requirements of religious and moral propriety, which can gain us nothing. It is purely by God's graciousness and generosity that we have been delivered, made alive, and raised up to heavenly places with Christ—"For by grace you have been saved by faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast." Along with a few passages in Romans and Corinthians, the entire book of Ephesians is the New Testament's great gospel confrontation with "religion"—a continuation of the great Pauline assertion that to be in Christ is to be freed forever for God and to be freed forever from all the bonds of human religion that measures acceptableness to God through checklists, moral standards, and performance of religious duties.[53]

To be in Christ for the letter to the Ephesians is not to be under the sway of mysterious heavenly powers controlling our lives we know not how, it is not be to a good cog in the socio-economic structure of a large, wealthy, powerful and hierarchical community, it is not to share the resentments of the community against outsiders and strangers, it is not to buy into the norms of traditional family structures. On the contrary, to be in Christ for Ephesians is to be constantly again at the moment of the world's creation—"To be what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

To be in Christ is to have left death behind, and to have left behind a past in which we were caught in death. In that great ancient city of Ephesus, to be in Christ was to have left behind the "course of this world," to have left behind following the "powers of the air"—the fear of fate, the belief in vengeance as the only mechanism for justice, the belief that the triumph of the strong over the weak is the law of the universe. We know from other early Christian writings that the community in Ephesus was constantly drawn back into the values of the surrounding community. We know that it became a place of criticism and judgment of other Christians;[54] and that while they were experts at discerning the "truly faithful" from the "doctrinally erring," the community had lost its original love—love for one another and love for Jesus Christ. It is easy to assume that the term "the disobedient" early in the book refers to wicked non-believers still caught in sin. We can also read this passage as suggesting that already when the letter is being written, Christians in Ephesus are turning the glorious freedom faith in Christ Jesus that can do more than we can ask or imagine into a new religion—one which will be more acceptable to the values and morality of the Greco-Roman community rather than confronting it with a truly different way. Ephesians also reminds us that the freedom God has given us in Christ is not the freedom of the brothels or of the marketplace or of the amphitheatre—it is not the freedom to "follow the desires of flesh and senses." The Ephesian Christians were once part of that city, once lived in that city on its terms, and like everyone else, were caught up in its power—they were children of wrath, children of anger, children of vengeance, victims and wielders of the powers of fear and darkness, buyers and sellers in the marketplace of desire and greed and patronage and social conformity. But something has changed all that—they can look forward to good works, the works that God prepared beforehand to be their new way of life.

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53. Ephesians is as frightening a letter for Anglicans today to read as it was for the first century Ephesians who first received it, because it calls into question so many things we take for granted, including the common assumption in many Anglican circles that Christianity is simply another religion intended to unify society through teaching values and morality.

54. Legend recounts that at the end of his life St John could think of nothing more necessary to tell the Christians in Ephesus than that they needed to learn to love one another.

Ephesians articulates the mystery of the Ascension of Christ. God is rich in mercy, and God loved us out of an endless outpouring of great love—even when we were dead through our wrongdoing. God has made us alive together with Christ and has raised us with Christ and seated us in Christ in the heavenly places, so that God may continue to show us in all times and ages the immeasurable riches of grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. But this is the exact inversion of the life of Ephesus where the goddess comes down to earth in the form of a rigid inflexible statue to impose a merciless law, a fixed social structure and rigid moral order promising to ensure the stability and success of society.

So it is in the latter part of Ephesians we find the most forceful attack anywhere in the New Testament on the values of patriarchy—it is clear from the repeated address to the *paterfamilias* in the house-table that it is the assumptions of men that they have the total right to control the lives of their wives, children and slaves that the writer is rebuking over and over again in this passage. You cannot have the family values of Artemis and Diana if you are part of the Community, Body, and Family of which Christ is the true head. Not only is the patriarchal power of the *paterfamilias* displaced by being set under Christ, but the entire house-table is framed with the principle of mutuality in relationship: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." Again we find a return not to the illusion of the fallen world of Genesis 3 as the proper ordering of creation, but to the priority of mutual interrelation of the *ʿezer kenegdo* partnership of Genesis 2.

6. Marriage in the Bible

This much broader framework (it could be extended considerably) of how I understand the biblical texts to articulate a foundational critique and rejection of patriarchy and its links to the fallenness of human religion, lead to some further reflection on how I understand the biblical presentation of marriage and more broadly, sexuality and sexual desire. It will be clear from what I have said already about *Baʿalism*, in particular, that "marriage" as a socio-economic and socio-religious reality is intimately linked to everything that is depraved in this most complex form of "religion" which the prophets denounce.

The Institution of Marriage

I understand the biblical text to view marriage as one of an immense range of institutions that exists in human society—among them cities, kingship, law, elders, various forms of prophetic or critique movements, priesthoods, sanctuaries, temples, particular forms of worship such as sacrifice, armies etc. While in the biblical texts we can find occasional statements in some way articulating some sort of divine "authority" for their existence, over the broad range of texts they are much more frequently portrayed as failures, as causes of evil, and under judgement. As much as any institution may be at some moment a manifestation of God's grace and providence, the texts are clear that all institutions sooner or later become allied and incorporated into the Fall. Because of their fundamental nature as manifestations of social continuity, they become the places in which, in our rejection and abandonment of God, we place our faith, hope and trust. In this, I understand the scriptures to articulate a perspective that no institution is of the '*esse*' of grace.[55] In this, marriage is no different.

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55. In fact, I understand this to be an essential part of the import of the letters to the seven churches in the Apocalypse of John. Even the Church is not of the esse of grace: it too, as soon as it comes into existence, becomes subject to all the temptations of religion and at risk of falling away from Jesus Christ. This is even more clearly reinforced in virtually every Petrine passage in the New Testament—Peter is named by Jesus as the rock on which the church will be built, not as the "head" who will rule the church. Peter and Jesus are the subjects of the only two killing miracles in the synoptic tradition. Jesus appears to cause the death of a fig tree that does not bear fruit. Peter causes the death of two humans, Ananias and Sapphira: this

In this light, I understand the etiological statement of Genesis 2:24 to point to the human institution of marriage but only in the most general way as the manifestation of God's intention in creation that the human being should not be lonely but have an *ᶜezer kenegdo*. What God intended was human partnership, not some particular form of social institution. The text speaks of the *'ish* leaving parents and cleaving to his *'issah* and the two becoming one flesh, nothing more. The text does not denote marriage, but in the light of what precedes it, it does denote that when the relationship that is the *ᶜezer kenegdo* is found, that the relationship involves a **severing** of fundamental relations of authority, subjection, affection, and economic power. It also appropriately involves entry into a sexual relationship, denoted first by the verb *DBQ*, "to cleave," conveying not only essentiality of connection like skin to bone but intimacy of relationship, and then by the term *baśar*, "flesh," which implies not merely physical flesh but the familial intimacy of "blood-flesh." It is here that we can see an intimation of something that might point to a social institution—in most societies, the creation of new kinship bonds have specific social and institutional forms and manifestations. Marriage is obviously only one; adoption is another created form of kinship which we should note as one of Paul's preferred metaphors for the salvific work wrought in us through Jesus Christ.[56] But Genesis 2:24 simply asserts that it is the drive to find the *ᶜezer kenegdo* which results in the severing of one set of relationships and entry into a new relationship of intimacy and partnership as a fundamental pattern of human behaviour.[57]

We encounter narratives portraying marriages throughout the Bible—they form substantive portions of Genesis, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, to a lesser extent 1 and 2 Kings. What we cannot escape is that no account of a specific marriage relationship in the major strands of the narrative tradition portrays marriage in a positive light: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob with Rachel and Leah, and later, Elkanah with Hannah and Peninah, Abigail and Nabal, or all the marriages of David. Though there are momentary flashes that might be construed as "affection" (e.g. Elkanah saying to Hannah, "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" and missing the point completely), for the most part all the narratives lay open the depth of the problematic of patriarchy when it infects this basic social institution. Where Tolstoy observes, "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," the biblical version of the comment might simply read "Each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

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story, with its focus on the economic power of the emergent Church, that conveys the ambiguity and attraction of power and money and their ability to pervert. From the historical perspective of the formation of the canon I understand the entire Petrine critique as part of the larger early Christian critique of the emergent pretensions of Rome to authority over the Church and also as resistance to the Ignatian and other preoccupations with episcopacy and authority in the late first century.

56. One of the most important books on this in the Western European and English social and religious tradition is Alan Bray's study *The Friend*, which outlines the social and religious patterns and rituals under which kinship relations parallel or equivalent to marriage were constructed between the eleventh and mid-eighteenth century. The study is significant not only for illuminating shifting views of such relationships across time, as well as their persistence, but for his substantive re-reading of the significance of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* in the light of the physical and textual remains from all periods showing how these relationships were understood to point in a crucial and theologically illuminating way to central aspects of the saving work of Christ.

57. Clearly then, I consider the address in the *Book of Common Prayer*'s "Order for the Solemnization of Matrimony" to go considerably beyond the text of Genesis, not in asserting that marriage is an "honourable estate" (our text actually confirms that partnership is at the heart of God's creative purpose for the human being), but in asserting that "marriage" was "instituted by God in the time of [man's] innocency."

I understand these texts then to offer a persistent critique of any normalization or idealization of a mode of marriage as being the "biblical ideal"—there is only the biblical reality which is consistently dysfunctionality, rivalry, deceit, manipulation, violence, suspicion and acquisition. But this gives rise to several crucial observations:

1. In the biblical texts, despite the overwhelming portrayal of marriage (because it's the central institution of the patriarchal order) as the heart of human brokenness and dysfunction, these marriages are also places and moments out of which grace and hope for deliverance arise. But the texts make clear over and over again that this is **not** the result of human acceptance and use of the accepted cultural or societal "norms" of marriage, but precisely through God's action to disrupt those assumptions. Abraham and Sarah become the father and mother of **nations** because they adopt the cultural practice of impregnating the wife's slave-maid, but they become the father and mother of the people of the **covenant** because God speaks the Word in the home of their hospitality. All generations will sing of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, as Deborah summons her hearers to do; Jael is "blessed beyond all women in tents" because she abandons the conventions of patriarchal hospitality and murders Sisera, the general of the oppressing Canaanites, in her husband's tent.[58] Abigail (with equal parts of opportunism and foresight) abandons her abusive husband Nabal to ally herself and then to marry with David, but in doing so preserves him from incurring even more blood-guilt. The adulterous relationship between David and Bathsheba founded in spousal murder leads to judgement, death of the innocent, and pain, but it also leads to Solomon. The greatest single deliverance in Israel's history, under the threat of total genocide rising from the hatred of Hamaan, stems from the choices of Esther—an orphan with no "normal" family, the royal "special" in a large harem of sexual partners for a Persian emperor. These patterns are not limited to these narratives. At least one gospel narrative describes Joseph as continuing his relationship with Mary his betrothed only as a matter of reconsidered judgement and abandonment of the norms to which he was accustomed. At its best, marriage is ambiguously "bad" and "good" throughout the texts, a place of darkness and despair, and a place where God releases hope and possibility.
2. The narrative texts nowhere presuppose our modern (post nineteenth century) notions about marriage. Marriage is shown clearly to be linked to varied conceptions of property (both wives and children as property [e.g. Genesis 20, Genesis 31:43]and the acquisition and the exchange of property [e.g. the Jacob cycle]); to conceptions of political and social power (see especially 2 Samuel 3 but also more generally 1 and 2 Samuel); to the exercise of economic power (e.g. 1 Kings 21); to religious obligation and affiliation (again the Ahab cycle, but also 1 Kings 11); to matters of sexual control, "purity," and punishment (again 2 Samuel 3, and also 2 Samuel 20). If we were to articulate a biblical "norm" of marriage it would have to include these things. [59]

While the legal material in the Torah regulates various aspects of marriage within the framework of patriarchal assumptions about its structure as an institution, there is one unique portion of legal-ritual material. The book of Numbers articulates what we might see as several elaborate and arcane rituals—among these the *sotah* for cases of

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58. And lest we not understand, Deborah goes on to portray Sisera's mother and her handmaids waiting at their latticed windows, locked into the assumptions their men have inculcated, waiting dutifully for the men to come home with the spoil seized from the oppressed (Judges 5-28-30).

59. The texts also make us aware of the degree to which contemporary illusions and conceptions of marriage simply mask these same dynamics and exchanges of social, economic and political power. It is precisely in this area that contemporary Christian discourse about marriage is so trivial and naïve—the Bible tells us much more honestly than the introduction to the marriage ceremony in our prayer books what we are really talking about when we talk about "marriage."

adultery and jealousy; the Nazirite vow and sacrificial ritual for withdrawal from communal life; the cities of refuge for accidental killings. What these share in common is a concern for establishing bounds to the breakdown of communal life, to ritualize and limit the illimitable, and to bound the chaotic and destructive forces of communal disruption.

Numbers 5 recounts in detail the ritual of the *sotah*, used when a man becomes jealous and convinced (with or without evidence) that his wife has been adulterous. The *sotah* ritual takes place because the woman **may** be living out a lack of differentiation and boundaries—sleeping with any man. But equally it reflects her husband's lack of differentiation in being overcome with jealousy, a term the text reiterates verse after verse. He's lost track of the boundary between himself and his wife and imagines she is simply his object. Both need to be bounded to avoid societal breakdown. Critical to understanding this ritual is that the job of the priestly leader is to discern what the issue really is—it's the priest who in the end mixes the drink and thus determines the outcome of the test. I understand this text again as a critique of the normative understandings of marriage projected by patriarchy. The reiterated insistence of the text on the husband's jealousy in balance with the supposition of the woman's looseness again hold up to scrutiny the partriarchal construction of marriage. In doing so, marriage is exposed as fundamentally a place where male proprietary rage must be brought under control and given societal boundaries, and where male neurotic suspicion of the spouse must be revealed as exactly that, suspicion and false accusation. Despite what it appears superficially to be, this is in fact a ritual for the protection of women in abusive and dysfunctional marriages.

David, and Marriage as Tool for Male Socialization

This process is most explicit in the series of texts which unfold between 1 Samuel 16 and 2 Samuel 5—the prolonged narrative of David's extended liminal formation to be king between his secret anointing by Samuel and his final aggregation as king at Hebron.[60] This series of narratives provokes the problematic of patriarchal marriage at its most intense, because the very first "marriage" David contracts is with a male, namely Jonathan, the son of Saul (then king, and ultimately David's enemy). The relationship is portrayed as a marriage in a variety of ways: there is explicit use of covenanting and kinship language at various points; the relationship is of a significance that one partner is willing to abandon his birthright as oldest son of Saul for the relationship; and David himself abides by the covenanted obligations to Jonathan's offspring at all crucial moments in the ensuing narrative. In whatever way we would wish to understand David's motivations in entering this "marriage" (constructed kinship relationship), his own last word on the relationship epitomizes Jonathan's love as something "wonderful, beyond the love of women." It is precisely

60. The academic foundations for this reading were first given as the paper *Sex in the Messianic Age: David's Relationships as Fore Play* at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies in 1992. I have reframed the matter in crucial ways in this context. Robert A. J. Gagnon takes up this material in 1 Samuel and other recent comment on it in his *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001). Generally I find Gagnon's work flawed in several ways. First he starts with a conclusion which he then proceeds to find in every text he takes up. Secondly, many of his readings are superficial and decontextualize passages from their canonical framework (as in his reading of the David and Jonathan material), beginning with some outright misreadings of general ancient near-eastern texts. Thirdly, he is generally dismissive of most feminist or other commentary on the texts, and seemingly not able to grasp the complexity of the positions they lay out—thus this material does not figure adequately into his narrative or other hermeneutics. Fourthly, his model is excessively historicist (but in the very limited sense of history that permeates so much historical criticism) and he often treats texts as if they are transparent windows to meaning. But it is a good exemplar of the contemporary modern entanglement of sexuality with "religion."

the retention of the poem in 1 Samuel 1 that problematizes our understanding of this relationship—what is going on between David and Jonathan cannot simply be dismissed as "good buddies," or "strategic allies."

The text takes this problematizing further, because it shows Saul, who has adopted David into his household for a variety of reasons, as deeply disturbed by the relationship (e.g. the instance of abuse of Jonathan identified earlier, the language of which moves beyond simple dynastic anxiety). Saul's solution is to set up an "appropriate" marriage for David—namely with Michal, Saul's daughter. This marriage epitomizes all the assumptions of patriarchy about socializing young males into appropriate forms of relationship, about dislocation of clan and familial loyalty through marriage, and about he use of women as objects in social exchanges of power and loyalty. The text then exposes the dirty underbelly of these dynamics as the narrative portrays Michal as abandoning loyalty to her paternal clan for David, then her being taken back by Saul and used again as exchange item in a new alliance (he marries Michal to another man), and finally her being humiliated as David forces her second husband to give her up in a public display of power. The climax of the narrative occurs at the point where David brings the Ark to Jerusalem. In this episode the text points to the establishment of formalized religion at the same time as points to the utter dysfunctionality of this form of marriage—both in Michal's mockery of the husband who has accepted, used, and humiliated her as an object of exchanges of power (she points out that by dancing naked he exposes what should be reserved for the marital bed to the servant girls), and in David's further exercise of power by excluding her from intimacy and progeny which he justifies by the claim the God has authorized him to have power.

As the narrative unfolds David's marriages function repeatedly as strategic alliances—but part of the ambiguity of the text is that David himself manifests total detachment. The texts do not portray David as an emotionless figure—of all biblical characters, David is the most fully drawn both in his own responses and in the responses he elicits from others. While the canonical shaping of the texts implies that we are to understand David as the prototype or the archetype of the *mashiah*, the Anointed One to come, and the texts suggest a wide range of ways in which we are construe them as such—political, religious, social, economic, and even David's own private devotion to and acceptance of God's will and judgements, the texts also show David and his family as deeply flawed and dysfunctional.[61]

A crucial moment in this narrative is the words spoken to David at Hebron when all the tribes come together to (re)anoint David king. This moment marks the end of the long liminal journey of socialization into kingship for David, and the people say "Look we are your bone and flesh…" This echoing of the words of the *'adam* in Genesis 2 I understand to be deliberate—David is the appropriate *ʿezer kenegdo* for the whole people of Israel, people and king are like man and woman in relationship. But this allusion also points us to another aspect of these texts. The long narrative of liminality draws our attention to the process of socialization into appropriate intimate, familial, and clan, and dynastic relationships that patriarchal marriage represents. But all our texts reveal David, the *mashiah*, as a person whose instincts are fundamentally homophilic—Jonathan, Joab, all the sons and especially Absalom. Again, it is a superficial read to say that this is simply the nature of relationships in the ancient world. By drawing attention to this aspect of David's life in narrative form (which the authors and redactors were not obligated to do—see the counter-version in Chronicles for the most obvious example), the texts draw our attention to the reality that the dysfunction and collapse of David's kingdom lies in part in the patriarchal assumption that homophilic instincts

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61. Obviously, this is most true in the long narrative that unfolds beginning with Amnon's rape of Tamar, and David's unwillingness to act, but it proceeds then through the increasingly disrupted familial relations, the rebellion of Absalom which points to the breakdown of civil justice external to David's family in parallel with its internal breakdown (1 Samuel 15), and ultimately to the second civil war which follows his death. The narrative nowhere allows us to consider all this merely as "political;" it is constantly refracted through the lens of the "familial."

must be desocialized precisely because they are a threat to the entire elaboration and construction of patriarchy's normalizing order. This is precisely a part of the prophetic message of Samuel as a former prophet. What most warps David's natural gifts and instincts for productive human partnership and allegiance (presumably the reason God chooses him in the first place) is the process by which these instincts are abnegated by the process of his socialization until they become the root of personal inability to act wisely or justly, the root of familial chaos, the root of social and political chaos, and finally the root of a cycle of increasing violence extending into the opening narratives of 1 Kings.

The other body of texts where we see a similar portrayal of a socio-political process articulated through an "ideology" involving marriage is in Ezra and Nehemiah where ethnic cleansing is enacted through social opprobrium exerted with the objective of disrupting existing marriages and putting away wives and families for socio-political objectives. Even more obviously here we see the way in which religious motivation becomes attached to this process. In Ezra the ostensible "purpose" of analyzing the purity of bloodlines is to ensure obedience to the regulations regarding priestly marriages. In Nehemiah we see this process extended to a "purification" of all the people, a process by which xenophobia becomes normalized through being instituted and interpolated into a fundamental societal institution.

Ruth and Song of Songs as Critique of Marriage as a Socio-Political Tool

If there is a text which sits both in response to Ezra and Nehemiah and to the accounts of David's socialization through marriage in 1 and 2 Samuel, it would be Ruth.[62] This short narrative centres around a woman's desire and need for marriage to ensure economic stability for herself and her mother-in-law in a patriarchal structure where men are operating out of self-interest and unwilling to accept even the basic obligations articulated by their particular form of patriarchal social structuring. When Ruth goes to glean, the narrative implies at a variety of points a climate where unmarried women are subjected to harassment and potential rape, from which she is protected only by the "sponsorship" of Boaz. The text is clear that Ruth is obliged to offer herself as a sex object to Boaz, despite having drawn his attention to her situation, in order to provoke him to action. The crucial issue in the text is her foreign status as a Moabite woman (thus the perceived link to Nehemiah 13) and therefore a proscribed marriage partner in the Deuteronomic laws.[63] Ruth, through her marriage to Boaz becomes the grandmother of David, but the text goes further in tracing Boaz's ancestry in the Judahite clan to Perez, one of the twin offspring of Tamar, who for similar reasons of male refusal to fulfil marital obligations found it necessary to trick her father-in-law Judah into sleeping with her and impregnating her. Thus not only is David, the *mashiah*, not eligible to be a part of the assembly of Israel because he is only three generations descended from a Moabite woman, but the genealogy back to Judah through Perez is only just ten generations. The narrative by implication makes the great David ineligible

62. Significantly, the text itself bears this ambiguity within it. Most scholars judge the narrative to be a product of the post-exilic period, and an explicit response to and critique of the xenophobia of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the narrative of Ruth is told in an antique form of Hebrew, going so far as to distinguish carefully the speech patterns of the older and younger generations in the story. The narrative places itself in the pre-Davidic era, identifying itself with the period of social breakdown and chaos at the end of the book of Judges (whence its placement in the Greek ordering of the canon).

63. "Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord…" (Deuteronomy 23:2-3).

for two Deuteronomic reasons—Ruth's and Boaz's inappropriate marriage, and Judah's and Tamar's illicit relationship. Here again, the inner-biblical dialogue stands in critique of the norms and assumptions even of its own legal proscriptions, and of the model of patriarchal marital order adopted during the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. The text articulates this not only by the tracing of David's ancestry to Ruth, but by intimating that from the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, Naomi (Ruth's mother-in-law) herself is restored to wholeness of identity and purpose which is no longer dependent on her own marital status or that of her deceased sons(1:19ff and 4:13ff). Wholeness, fertility, stability, and the future restoration of the brokenness of the entire people of Israel arise from this foreign woman who chooses loyalty to Israel's God, who chooses loyalty to another woman, and who chooses fidelity and integrity in all her relationships. From this, not from the failed norms and structures of patriarchal marriage, comes the promise of salvation.

The second significant text, which I understand as a critique of all other biblical texts portraying or regulating marriage is the Song of Songs. At its basic level the text is a collection of love poems, articulating in charged erotic language the longing of two lovers for one another. The text suggests at various points that they have been sexually intimate, but it is very clear that they are not married, although the form and context of some part of the text suggest that they may be "marriage" songs. The text is in the canon because from early times it was interpreted as an allegory of the passionate love between God and Israel, and the text has a long history in the Christian tradition of similar allegorical interpretation. I understand the text to function within the canon in several ways.

1. Insofar as Song of Songs speaks about erotic human relationships, it conveys these as **mutual interactions—** these are almost the only biblical texts in which both partners (female and male) speak openly and freely and extensively to one another. The texts thus represent a restoration of fallen human language as well as fallen human sexuality.
2. The Song portrays the restoration of fallen human sexuality not as the successful implementation of some norm or pattern of marriage but as **freedom of erotic longing and congress** (in fact portions of the text intimate the disapproval of the city fathers and guardians of propriety for the woman who dares to express her love and desire so openly).
3. The Song appears to have taken on its allegorical freight in a very early period, and therefore functions in part as a critique of the sacral marriage ideology of both the *Baʿal* cult (and all its social ramifications) and in other near-eastern forms of religion (e.g. divine kingship cults). Marriage in the Song is **not linked in any way to procreation or fertility but to mutual responsiveness and pleasure—**if this is what Divine love and marriage is to be, then procreation and fertility must also be delinked from our understanding of human marriage.
4. By connecting the Song to the person of Solomon (an extension of the connection of the entire wisdom tradition to Solomon) there is an implicit critique of marriage as a socio-political form (Solomon marries all the women to forge foreign alliances). But it also an implicit overturning and disruption of the intimate connection between marriage and religion (Solomon's idolatry is the result of his marriages where sexual intimacy and social structure implicitly draw him more and more away from Israel's God and into the practice of "religion"). Song of Songs intimates that **only through the abandonment of the social construct and institution of marriage as a foundational presupposition for intimate relationship can we free ourselves of the temptation to fall into "religion" and offer ourselves wholly and unreservedly to God as partner**.[64]

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64. Luke 20, Mark 12, Matthew 22 on marriage and the resurrection. The Song only refers to the partner as "bride" in a brief sequence in chapter 4, and at each occurrence of the actual term for "bride" it couples it with the term "my sister."

Marriage as Changing Social Institution

I understand the Bible as a whole to portray marriage not only as the social institution in which the fallen state of humanity is most acutely played out (as well as the surreptitious grace of God), but also as a human institution which changes form and structure over time. This is made evident both in the different forms of marriage which we see in the scriptures: unions of two partners, unions of one male with multiple females, unions with multiple partners and harems etc, unions in which a male has a "married" wife and another form of "spousal arrangement" located in a different place. Again, we simply cannot state that there is one biblical norm of marriage—the texts will not sustain such a proposition. Against this we could say that across the entire spectrum of the canon (both parts of the canon) we can perceive a growing preference for a form of marriage in which two individuals partner in a committed relationship. The very fact that an early Christian canonical text has to specify that those charged with *episcope* should be the husband of only one spouse indicates that even the early Christian community was one in which there were divergent patterns of marital norms.[65]

Judges and the Dynamics of Change in Marriage as an Institution

From this perspective the most significant book of the entire Bible is the book of Judges in the Former Prophets. I understand the primary force of its prophetic function to relate to precisely this matter of change in marriage from one form of social construct to another, and its ramifications in relation to how such social changes are negotiated and managed by communities.[66] While the book points to dynamics which would be arguably true for all social groups, the prophetic force of the book comes from its narration of the disastrous way in which God's people negotiated this particular form of social change—prophetic because the narrative of the past (as presented) becomes warning for the future.

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65. But whether this is theological or purely pragmatic in 1 Timothy is a matter for discussion. The rest of the passage gives no evidence of particular theological concern, being almost exclusively preoccupied with pragmatic matters of capacity, energy and credibility. I would identify Timothy as marking a distinct turning away from the gospels and much of Paul on matters relating to marriage—it shows us (as noted earlier) the decline of Christianity into "religion" and forms of "religion" marked by social acceptability, and exercise and structures of power and control. In saying this I am not offering a new argument. Again, I would identify all these parts of the canon as mutually dialogical—all are faithful testimonies in their context. Note that Origen in his hermeneutic introduction to the Commentary on John articulates the well-established established principle that the Epistles, even those of Paul, while worthy and carrying authority, carry it only in subsidiarity to the Gospels and the actions and teachings of Jesus.

66. My thinking rests on the foundation of the important 1988 study by Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: the Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press). Her work moves in a different direction than mine, but was crucial in clarifying for me what was the prophetic function of Judges. Her crucial insights lie first in her insistence that the redacted canonical form of the book was intended to be understood as a whole and that previous scholarship with its focus on historical issues of the settlement of Israel, the nature of political government in the period of the Judges, and the superficial focus on disobedience and idolatry, had systematically sidelined the most problematic portions of the book (the last five chapters and in particular the final three with its narrative of escalating violence and intra-communal tension). Against this she offers a substantially more coherent reading that integrates all parts of the book and offers a richer account of all aspects of the book. Her second crucial insight lies in her articulation of the alternate forms of marriage coded in Judges by the repeated use of the term *pilegesh* to indicate a different type of spousal arrangement. While subsequent scholarship has questioned Bal's premise, I see no better account that bases itself in the texts themselves—the distinctions she evokes are all there in the language and narratives of the book itself.

The book of Judges presents a series of narratives in which the term *pilegesh* appears frequently (more than in any other single book of the canon). Conventionally translated as "concubine," the term is likely more accurately rendered, based on the distinctions of the narratives themselves, as "patrilocal wife." A patrilocal wife is one who continues to reside in the household of her father (patrilooal—located with the father); the husband thus must move away from his own clan/family and knit into the socio-economic ambit of the spouse's family. The alternative is virilocal marriage (virilocal—located with the man). In virilocal marriage, by contast, the woman moves to her husband and thus becomes more tightly knit into the socio-economic ambit of his family/clan. What is clear in the narratives (including narratives that do not use the term specifically) is that there are at least these two types of operative family structure—not simply multiple wives and families, but wives and families of significantly different status—and that the coexistence of these is the source of considerable social stress that then manifests itself in the particular characters of several of the Judges.

The narrative in which this is most acute is the account of the Levite and his *'issah pilegesh*, his "*pilegesh* or patrilocal wife" (chapters19-21), and it is here that the alternative structure of the marriage is also most evident. The pilegesh wife leaves him to live with her father, and when he goes to bring her back to live with him a prolonged struggle ensues between himself and her father, in which the father seeks to persuade the Levite to stay with him. This is not merely good hospitality, but the crux of the marital issue. The *pilegesh* wife's father seeks to hold the Levite in this older social form of marriage in which the man moves into the woman's father's house (thus patrilocal, "with the father"). The Levite himself wants the woman to return to his own household, to live as a virilocal wife as has become the norm in the region in which he lives. In Judges 19-21 this is made quite clear, but retrospectively, it illuminates the origins of the repeated social tensions articulated within the narratives. Many of the male characters (most notably Samson) are involved in relationships that require them to travel and live with their women (in Samson's case, with an enemy Philistine woman).

Re-examined, the opening narrative of the book, about Caleb, his daughter Ahsah, and Othniel, the man to whom Caleb gives her, appears to be a non-narrative. Othniel, dissatisfied with the "dowry" provided, sends Ahsah back to Caleb to ask for better land. Caleb acquiesces in the request and the story concludes. But the internal tension is the same—whether the property moves with the wife from the economic and power ambit of the father (patrilocality) to the husband (virilocality). The narrative manifests little tension because Caleb recognizes and acquiesces in the social change under negotiation. The social change is not insignificant in a clan system with an economic base of subsistence agriculture or herding—the location of both people, progeny, and the flow of economic resources are crucial matters, and alteration to a fundamental institution such as marriage carries huge implications for potential destabilizing and reshaping of the existing bases of power and order. The book of Judges enacts various aspects of this across its narrative material, where it is often implicit or in the background of other forms of social disruption.

The concluding narratives focus on the same tension between marital forms, but this time the social change is not acknowledged or successfully negotiated. The Levite takes his wife away, but is forced to spend the night in the Benjaminite city of Gibeah. The men of the city demand the man to rape him, but his host demurs. In the end the Levite puts his pilegesh wife outside the door and she is raped and abused all night by the men of Gibeah. In the morning the Levite throws the woman on his donkey, takes her home, cuts her up into pieces (the narrative never discloses whether the *pilegesh* wife is dead or alive) and sends them to all the other tribes demanding that they come to punish the Benjaminites. In the battle that ensues, all the Benjaminite men are killed, and so an annual ritual of "rape" is instituted so that the Benjaminite women will not be without "men" and progeny.

Clearly more is going on in the story than punishment for bad hospitality. Nor is it the Levite who suffers rape and violence—so the story cannot be construed as a disapproval and punishment of male rape. I understand this story with several other contemporary interpreters to be a narrative in which the threat/desire to rape the Levite and the actual rape of his *pilegesh* wife are both real, in the sense that they narrate an account in which both the desire to rape and the actual act of rape are real, but also symbolic. The sin of the inhabitants of Gibeah and more broadly of

the Benjaminites for which they must be punished by the other Israelites is their refusal to accept virilocal marriage (made doubly clear in the outcome of the annual ritual of rape and forced marriage). The relationship of the Levite and his *pilegesh* wife, his refusal to stay with the father, his passing through the Benjaminite territory on the way to his own home—all these are both real and symbolic narrative enactments of the process of change in social structures. So too is the violence of the Gibeahites against the Levite and the *pilegesh* wife a real and symbolic enactment of their refusal to accept the change in social structures and the concomitant desire to enforce a return to the older social structure. The narrative re-enacts with ever increasing violence the process of enforced social change. Killing the Benjaminite men ensures that they will never again be able to practice patrilocal marriage,[67] and it equally ensures that the women can be forced to practice virilocal marriage. Judges 21 opens by recalling that all the other Israelites had taken an oath not to allow their daughters to marry Benjaminites as another mechanism for withholding their "participation" in patrilocality. But in a patriarchal clan and tribal structure, the only way the males can now envision preserving the nearly defunct tribe is by a further act of violence in slaying all the men and married women of the one community that had not participated in the violence and oath (Jabesh-Gilead). This creates yet another violated female "body." Jabesh-Gilead's unmarried, "pure" and now "communityless" women to become victims in a new annual formalized ritual of rape for the remaining few Benjaminite men to enact as a mechanism for finding wives.

The book of Judges portrays this process of social change as one which takes a long period of time. By framing the book with an account at the outset of the successful negotiation of change in the form of marriage, and at its conclusion with the sequel of violence where after substantial time the negotiation of social change has not been effected or accepted, the book highlights both the reality of the process of social change, and the implications of our choices in responding to and accepting social change. But the book is also about change in the form of marriage, a foundational institution. So Judges functions as a prophetic book in at least three important ways:

1) It calls into question and judges our illusions about the stability of even our most intimate institutions, and particularly our illusions that there is one "correct" form of marriage.
2) It again demonstrates the link between violence, patriarchy and embedded forms of institutional life, especially of marriage.
3) It reminds us that we are judged by the choices we make in negotiating our way through processes of social change—and this judgement lies on the one hand in the increasing violence we will participate in as displacement for our anxiety and resistance (we too can become like the men of Gibeah), and on the other hand in the increasing and spiraling violence which will be the fate of the weak (in matters of marital and family structure, always the women and children).

In this complex way, by making us aware of the historical reality of change in the form of marriage, of the time frames over which such change unfolds (more than one human lifetime), of the tensions at all levels such changes evoke, and of the implications of well-negotiated and of unnegotiated or refused change, Judges renders all icons or images of the institution marriage as subject to historical process, contingent, and thus matters indifferent. What Judges is not indifferent to is the violence that springs from our overinvestment in such matters indifferent. Who is the last Judge in the book? I understand this figure to be the *pilegesh* wife of the Levite, whose violated body,

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67. Note that Judeges 21 opens by recalling that all the other Israelites has taken an oath not to allow their daughters to marry Benjaminites as another mechanism for withholding their "participation" in patrilocality.

dismembered live by the hands of her husband (a religious leader), poses to the Israelites the Spirit's question: "Has such a thing ever happened since the day the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day? Consider it, take counsel, and speak out."

Marriage in Early Christianity: Compromise and Counter-culture in Greco-Roman world

Understanding the institution of marriage in the Old Testament as a fundamental manifestation of the fallen state of humanity, captive to patriarchy and the embodiment of its worst abuses and manifestations, captivated by the power and seductive force of religion, and subject to historical and social evolution in form and norms, yet also occasionally the locus of the mystery of the workings of God's grace and salvation—this entire broad framework forms the background for what I understand to be essential elements in the early Christian approach to marriage. I will not take up every detail, but wish to elucidate what I understand to be key threads.

First, the Gospels portray an ambivalence toward marriage at several levels. The most notable of these is the conflicting accounts of Jesus teachings and participation in rabbinic debates and about divorce.[68] It is a longstanding and probably accurate truism that Jesus siding with the more conservative rabbinic tradition in not permitting divorce except on the grounds of unchastity is a choice on Jesus' part to insist on better treatment of women, since it prohibits men from divorcing on whim, mere dissatisfaction, desire for a new partner or a more fertile partner, or more frivolous grounds. The opposite side of this proposition is that the prohibition on marrying a divorced woman thus renders her in double jeopardy.

The version of this discussion in Matthew 19 (paralleled in Mark 10), however, renders this a more complex discussion.[69] On the one hand Jesus appears to point to texts from Genesis 1 and 2 as a divine foundation for marriage

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68. Matthew 5:31ff: "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

69. Matthew 19:3ff: "Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?' He said to them, 'It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but at the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.' His disciples said to him, 'If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But he said to them, 'Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.'"

Mark 10:2ff: "Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'"

as an institution, thus making it inviolable. When challenged with the provision of Mosaic law permitting divorce, Jesus shifts ground, evoking the failure of human love and forgiveness—the need for divorce is a manifestation of the fallen nature of humanity ("at the beginning it was not so"). Here Matthew and Mark part ways. Matthew's disciples now proceed to a further discussion about whether marriage is then a desirable good at all. In response, Jesus articulates first of all a qualification, which in the logic of the conversation would seem to refer back to the earlier comments about divorce and adultery. He then proceeds to praise the state of eunuchs (emasculation) and those who choose to be eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom.

Where Matthew frames Jesus' teaching about marriage and divorce with a more extreme model (beyond the simple non-marriage proposed by the disciples to a cessation of propagation and desire completely by becoming non-sexual beings for the sake of the kingdom), Luke frames the teaching about divorce and adultery with discourse about economic desire and justice and about the immutability of the commandments.[70] If we are to understand the gospels as the first commentaries on these pieces of the Jesus tradition, then they point us to understanding Jesus' interpretations of the legal tradition as critiques of two motivations for divorce. On the first premise, if a man (the text explicitly addresses men) divorces and remarries through his failure of love or compassion (i.e. the premise of 'marital' breakdown), Jesus says this is adultery. On the second premise if one divorces and remarries for progeny (because the woman is deemed infertile for whatever reason), Jesus says this is adultery. On the third premise, if one divorces and remarries for economic reasons (i.e. treating marriage as a mechanism for improving one's socio-economic status), Jesus says one is committing adultery, and the follow-up with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus we should then reasonably read as implying a serious failure of economic justice toward the abandoned wife. If we are to take seriously the Matthaean and Lukan frames, they understand Jesus teaching on divorce to be more than a mere statement of respect for marriage, but to be a lively critique of the dominant dynamics of the norms of patriarchal marriage—enforcement of male wishes, preoccupation with progeny, and socio-economic strategic alliances.

The Rejection of Marriage in Early Christianity

More profound still is the wider implication of the passage about eunuchs. What becomes eminently clear at several levels in the early layers of tradition (and also in several places in Paul) is an early and complete Christian rejection of marriage for an alternate vision of social community. From a narrative point of view the text models this in Jesus himself. Not only is he apparently unmarried (which would render him socially abnormal in his period), but all four gospels portray him as cultivating open, affectionate, and mutually dialogical relationships with women and men—in particular with individuals who are not infrequently themselves victims of forms of social opprobrium. The texts construct not only a model of open table fellowship which disrupts social boundaries and categories, but

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70. Luke 16:13ff: "'No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.' The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God.

'The law and the prophets were in effect until John came; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped. 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

'There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores….'"

of open relational community which the texts portray as disrupting and challenging assumptions about marriage (the disciples appear to leave their wives and families), sexual boundaries, gendered work, and all institutions that normalize perceptions of social status. To a considerable extent the Acts of the Apostles in its much later re-construction of the emergence of the early Christian communities portrays a continuation of this openness.

I understand this outright challenging and denormalization of the status of marriage in early Christianity as the embodiment of as profound a critique of the Greco-Roman manifestation of fallen humanity as the Cross itself. In discussing the critique of patriarchy in Ephesians I noted that the three pillars of Greco-Roman empire were the sanctity and inviolability of the marital household, the extension of power through an elaborate network of patronage and military force that both defined social layers and bridged them in controlled ways, and the slave economy. A community that rejects marriage, practices open table fellowship and worships a crucified man forms the exact inversion of all the foundational values of the Greco-Roman world.[71] Ultimately, of course, as Christianity became simply another form of "religion" all these disappeared. The cross became a symbol; marriage adopted even more rigid and abusive patriarchal forms; and the open table of fellowship became a ritual for privileged initiates.

This points to the profound importance of Paul's letters and the other letters of the New Testament. While they mark the beginning point of this decline into "religion" they also manifest and model the entire problem of speaking such a radical Word faithfully into changing contexts and cultures. So while we see Paul negotiating, retaining, and embodying in new language and expressive forms much of the profound shock of the Cross and open table fellowship, [72] the texts also show him encountering great difficulties in maintaining the stance of blatant rejection of marriage. This is hardly surprising since it is the attack on marriage that most easily provokes public comment since it implies immediate disruption of existing familial norms and expectation. What emerges in one approach is a sort of articulation of the ideal of open community without marriage—preferentially celibacy, but also judging by some of the polemics there must have been in some circles an understanding that open community really did mean some form of open relationality including sexual intimacy.[73] Over against this ideal is a series of compromises with the realities and diversity of the expanding Christian community, and with the norms and values of Greco-Roman family structures. The other approach, to which I alluded in discussing Ephesians, is the adoption of normative expressive forms connected to household management such as the "house-table" and adapting and rewriting it to embody the values and relations understandings of the Christian community.

So while at one level I understand this entire evolution to be an abandonment of the radical Word as experienced in Jesus Christ, at another level, I understand the texts to point again precisely to the constant demand for

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71. So for instance, other relatively early Christian works like the *Acts of Paul and Thecla, and the Martyrdoms of Perpetua and Felicity*, demonstrate a sort of frenzy at both familial and public levels that adherents of Jesus Christ provoked. Again, this offers an inversion of Elijah's frenzy with *Baʿalism*—the energy represents more than disapproval of bad behaviour by Roman authorities and *patribus familiarum*, it represents a profound apprehension that taken to together all these behaviours fatally undermine the foundations of the entire social, economic, and political order.

72. For instance the discussion of the Eucharist in Corinthians which is in part a forthright critique of the transformation of table fellowship into religious ritual.

73. Whatever might have been the genuine understanding of the earliest Jesus community regarding the latter form of open community it is easy to see why it comes under internal criticism because of its flagrant offensiveness to the most principled Greco-Roman citizens. In Paul it is not always easy to distinguish what we might want to label as "morality" from "pragmatics." Note too in this regard various attempts to understand Paul's use of the term "sister-wife" precisely in a passage where he commences by evoking his freedom in Jesus Christ.

reinterpretation and the necessity that such reinterpretation be shaped by the forces of context and contingency.[74] There is not one form of household order—each is an attempt in a particular setting and moment to articulate as faithfully as possible the critique of the order worshipped by the fallen world and chaining it to its fallen state, within the limitations and realities of that world. So we find throughout the letters far more articulation of values and virtues than we find articulations of correct structures and normalizing institutions.

So far I have pointed to three strands I understand to be part of the New Testament discourse about marriage: the critique of the assumptions of patriarchal marriage in Jesus' teaching about divorce; the extreme radical early Christian rejection of marriage; and the necessary accommodation of the radical with the reality of interpreting and living the gospel in diverse cultures. All these I understand as at some level (as in the Old Testament) the living out of the now and the not yet implicit in the fallenness of humans and creation.

The fourth strand takes us back to Ruth, the Song of Songs and Genesis 2. Here we find the language and imagery of marriage and human partnership as envisaged in the creation as metaphor for the relation between Christ and the Church. Much of the commentary on how this is used in Ephesians 5:31-32 is quite wrongheaded. Usually the argument is made that the relation between Christ and the Church is a metaphor for human marriage. In fact the writer explicitly says the opposite, quoting Genesis 2:24, and continuing by saying that this verse and the behaviour it describes is a mystery. The mystery is that one human would abandon their closest relations (father and mother) for the individual they recognize as their true partner, their *ʿezer kenegdo*. And the passage goes on, this human mystery illuminates for us the inner life of God, because this is exactly what Christ does, leave the Divine parent to cleave to the true partner, the Church. Even more fundamentally, we might see the mystery to which this alludes as that of the Incarnation—Christ leaving the Godhead to become one with humanity, enfleshed and totally intimate with us.

So I understand this passage in Ephesians to point in two directions—the first as indicated, is to an understanding of the marriage of divine and human in the Incarnation. The second direction is to an ecclesiological reality. This is a different version again of the image of the Body that Paul's epistles often adopt in speaking about the Church. In those metaphors the Body is alternately an image of the necessity and interdependence of all the faithful, or an image of the coordination of the faithful through the mind and will of Christ the head. Each of those alternatives implies a profoundly different understanding of ecclesiology. This image of the mystery of human cleaving to the *ʿezer kenegdo* offers still another ecclesiological metaphor—one in which the Body of the Church is as essential to Christ as Christ is to the Church, and in which Christ becomes one flesh in and with the Church. This extended passage in Ephesians speaks about Christ perfecting and nurturing the church for its work here so that it will continue to be his own perfect gift to himself.

The Apocalypse of John takes up the image of the Church as bride of Christ from the heavenly perspective, and integrates it with the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth so that the divine presence will once again dwell with humans. Linked to this is the promise that God will make all things new. This marriage metaphor is not simply a recapitulation by Paul and John of older biblical images (although this is certainly a part of what they are doing); it has its origins in the diverse parables of Jesus in which the wedding feast is a central metaphor for some element of the in-breaking of the kingdom.

74. This is why Paul is so essential as part of the canon—not because he provides us with a new set of laws and propositions to follow (as so many interpreters in the tradition have insisted on reading him) but because he models this process of reinterpreting the gospel in each new context and situation, of exploring both the danger and necessities of cultural compromise while at the same time holding passionately to the freedom found in Christ Jesus.

One of the problems posed by John's Apocalypse is the reversion to a form of the wisdom (and prophetic) dualism of "whore" (Babylon) and "bride" (Jerusalem/the Church). So while there is a participation in patriarchal forms of language and imagining, there is also in the Apocalypse's description of Babylon the image of the totality of fallen and patriarchal forms of power, economic, religious, and sexual life—it is these things and our spiritual investment in their forms and institutions that we bewail as we look on to the destruction of Babylon. The world is in distress because it has invested in a lie about power, because it has invested in the lie and violence of religion, because it has invested in the lies about structures of social and familial order ("the voice of the bridegroom and the bride will be heard in you no more"), and because it has invested in the lies about economic order.

This totality of oppressive forces (which I have identified as the object of God's action and judgement in the Exodus and in the Cross) so cogently articulated in John's vision of the fallen Babylon, is also what I understand Paul to refer to when he speaks about the Law in reference to the freedom given us in Christ. The term "Law" is not a simplistic reference to Jewish Law (Paul is much more complex than that), but a reference to any system, structure or institution in which we invest ourselves imagining that it will be a source of grace and salvation. It is for this reason that Paul takes his multiple and almost contradictory perspectives on the institution of marriage. When we make Paul's account of salvation or specific aspects of human moral behaviour a shibboleth, it too becomes another form of Law. Paul too can lead us to live in Babylon.

Finally, at the most broad level, it seems to me that beginning with the account in Acts 15, the general direction of the New Testament is to confine comment on human sexuality to the repeated warning against "fornication."[75] It seems to me this choice of term is deliberate, not merely because it was part of a conventional moral language within Judaism about the minimum terms defining righteousness for those outside Judaism, but because it provides great scope for contextual application and interpretation. While there would be good reasons to argue that "fornication" technically refers only to the breach of the marital relationship, and not to any other specific sexual behaviour, it is one of those blanket terms that can be filled with meaning depending on where it is spoken. Again, this is a crucial process for the faithful witness to the Word.[76]

This leads to one additional question. If we are to take seriously that being "in Christ" makes possible the renewal of our lives and our relationships, that being in Christ indeed makes us a new creation, does this mean that we are genuinely restored to the hope and possibility of our state in Genesis 2—that being in Christ genuinely undoes the Fall? This clearly matters in terms of how we understand marriage or any other human relationship in which we discover our *ʿezer kenegdo*. While I have here and elsewhere evoked the dynamic tension in the canon of the now and the not yet, the question can be pressed another way. If being "in Christ" cannot truly transform us and our relationships then what is the point of being "in Christ" or what was the point of Christ's salvific work? If the salvific work of Christ is merely a spiritual ephemeron, or a way of speaking, or a clever idea, and bears no relationship to an actual change in the material conditions of human life, then we would be better off with the first Exodus.[77]

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75. Richard Hooker at one point in his discussion of Acts 15 indicates that he understands "fornication" to refer only to adultery—that is, the direct interfering with the marital relationship.

76. This is why, it seems to me, the "sexual anthropologies" of the *Recognitions of Clement*, though much later, are so non-anxious. These and parallel examples almost always conclude with a comments to the effect that "We Christians do not behave in these ways, but in this way ..[followed by a list of values]." Fornication really does look different in different societies, and Christians need to be aware of those societal distinctions as well of the values by which they live.

77. Jesus in the garden, and Paul, both speak of the struggle between the Spirit and the Flesh—but the human being is not bifurcated. Any account that sees our bodies as saved and our minds as corrupt, or conversely, our minds and spirits as saved and our bodies as corrupt, seems to me inadequate. That said, most of us likely share some element of Paul's experience: "Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'"

7. Same-Sex Relationships, Human Dignity and Rights, and Scripture

I have laid out this much larger framework for how I understand the Bible both in its broad preoccupations and inwardly indicated modes of interpretation, and then in relation to what I consider critical related themes. I now turn to the matter of same-sex relationships.

First of all, I think that any mode of historicism that pretends to articulate how ancient Near Eastern men and women felt or thought about sexuality or specific sexual acts (e.g. the notion one sometimes encounters that Hebrew men had an intense fear of being penetrated) is sheer silliness. Particularly with regard to prohibitive regulations there may be a variety of reasons or motivations. Prohibitions may be articulations of a larger system of meaning and understanding. They may represent cultivated distastes or taboos of religious systems. They may represent the fact that everyone enjoys doing it but that someone thinks it to be bad or dangerous for some reason. Secondly, virtually all the relevant portions of scripture are subject to considerable ambiguity when we try to understand to what exactly they refer.

With regard to the scriptural materials, I simply see no rational grounds for including Genesis 19 or Judges 19 as relevant to the specific question of same-sex relationships and partnerships. Both texts focus on expressed desire by groups of males to rape other males. I have already indicated why in Judges 19, I understand this to be an enactment of a group desire to punish or enforce a particular set of social conditions on other males. In both cases the event points to breaches in fundamental hospitality to strangers, forms of xenophobia, with excessive violence, and in both cases the texts, by permitting women to be the substitutionary objects to release males from the threat of sexual violence, seem to me to be pursuing what I have already articulated as a prolonged inner-biblical critique of patriarchy in all its manifestations. These stories should and do appal us, not because they are about male-male sex but because they are about male violence against weaker males and against women. Male sexual violence against males is thus exposed as a part of patriarchy, and as one of the forces used to maintain its power and order within society.

Other passages (2 Kings etc), would suggest that male cultic prostitution is an issue.[78] Here too, it seems to me we are not in any way talking about the specific question of same-sex relationships and partnerships. As I have already indicated, such prohibitions and disapprovals connect to the much larger critique of natural religion and patriarchal religion, and to he confusion of sexuality with religion in understandings of economic fertility and in understandings of the rights of powerful men to dominate women, children, and other weaker men.

Likewise, I am not convinced that Romans 1 is germane to this discussion, not simply because once again it is not entirely clear what particular behaviours are being described, and whether these bear any relationship to what we are discussing as same sex-relationships and partnerships.[79] Insofar as the passage articulates a view that such

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78. I have already noted the scholarly debate about whether any forms of cultic prostitution existed in the ancient Near East. Whatever may be the historical reality, the presence of the matter in the texts would suggest that it needs to be considered as a class of "same-sex" activity under scrutiny.

79. I quote here Archbishop Rowan Williams' treatment of this passage in his recent Larkin-Stuart Lecture. "My second example is even more contentious in the present climate; and once again I must stress that the point I am making is not that the reading I propose settles a controversy or changes a substantive interpretation but that many current ways of reading miss the actual direction of the passage and so undermine a proper theological approach to Scripture. Paul in the first chapter of Romans famously uses same-sex relationships as an illustration of human depravity – along with other "unnatural" behaviours such as scandal, disobedience to parents and lack of pity. It is, for the majority of modern readers the most important single text in Scripture on the subject of homosexuality, and has understandably been the focus of an enormous amount of exegetical attention.

behaviours stand under divine judgement, the text in its most typical rendering is also absolutely explicit: this judgement or penalty has already been incurred and is over. But a key verb in the text *katergazomenoi* has the sense of overpowering and controlling in its classical sense, and likewise the term *antimisthian* carries the weight not simply of requital, but derives from a verb that means "giving hatred in return." Such a reading, "Males overpowering males indecently received the deserved hatred in return, receiving back in their own persons their errors," points us once again to the much more complex realm of patriarchal assumptions about the rights of powerful men to control and sexually use others. In this reading, the judgement is still complete, but it reflects more the hatred among men, and the responsive resentment and violence that such use of sexual power generates in a patriarchal society. This would hold true for the terms in 1 Corinthians 6, although here it seems to me that Paul is adopting a language that shares the assumptions and values of Corinthian culture about maleness—the text differentiates between weak and effeminate men and men who are penetrators of others.

Whatever we may want to understand about Romans and Corinthians, it seems to me that the single fundamental passage of relevance is the material in Leviticus 18. While Paul may be adopting the Greco-Roman cultural values as part of his strategy for proclaiming the gospel (which does not mean that we are obliged to adopt the same language, values or distinctions when we seek to proclaim the Word faithfully in our own cultural setting), he is also at some level engaged with the canonical tradition he inherits. But again, as I think my earlier discussion makes clear, because Paul understands something in the scriptures in a specific way in his own period does not mean that there is no other way to understand the material, or even that Paul is correct. What Paul does is give faithful testimony to Jesus Christ to first-century Corinth, or Rome, or Galatia or Thessalonika.

We should note first that some of the material from Leviticus 18 is already reinterpreted in Leviticus 19-20, where it reappears as part of a larger context often called the Holiness Code. Leviticus 19 and 20 in themselves suggest different layers—the injunctions in chapter 19, while diverse, focus primarily on economic and social equity and justice. The injunctions in chapter 20 begin by focusing on particular cultic and religious practices, then shift to a series of sexual practices. Both chapter 20 and chapter 18 have concluding "sermonettes" that identify the proscribed behaviours with the Canaanite nations that God will be driving out of their lands. By linking this material to the Canaanite cities and culture, I understand the text itself to be signaling that this is part of the larger biblical discourse about the linkage between patriarchy and "religion." The sexual behaviours involved are all manifestations of the socio-economic order of patriarchy and the cultic and religious practices and forms that sustain that order. This is why they are reprehensible to God. The penalties for the most part are death and cutting-off from the community.

"What is Paul's argument? And, once again, what is the movement that the text seeks to facilitate? The answer is in the opening of chapter 2: we have been listing examples of the barefaced perversity of those who cannot see the requirements of the natural order in front of their noses; well, it is precisely the same perversity that affects those who have received the revelation of God and persist in self-seeking and self-deceit. The change envisaged is from confidence in having received divine revelation to an awareness of universal sinfulness and need. Once again, there is a paradox in reading Romans 1 as a foundation for identifying in others a level of sin that is not found in the chosen community.

"Now this gives little comfort to either party in the current culture wars in the Church. It is not helpful for a "liberal" or revisionist case, since the whole point of Paul's rhetorical gambit is that everyone in his imagined readership agrees in thinking the same-sex relations of the culture around them to be as obviously immoral as idol-worship or disobedience to parents. It is not very helpful to the conservative either, though, because Paul insists on shifting the focus away from the objects of moral disapprobation in chapter 1 to the reading /hearing subject who has been up to this point happily identifying with Paul's castigation of someone else. The complex and interesting argument of chapter 1 about certain forms of sin beginning by the "exchange" of true for false perception and natural for unnatural desire stands, but now has to be applied not to the pagan world alone but to the "insiders" of the chosen community. Paul is making a primary point not about homosexuality but about the delusions of the supposedly law-abiding."

What chapters 19 and 20 thus juxtapose are the preoccupations of the culture of Exodus values (justice, generosity and mercy at all levels of communal interaction), and the preoccupations of Canaanite natural religion.[80]

Based on the form of the injunctions in Leviticus 18:6-18, I do not understand these as laws relating to incest. They do relate to kinship relations, but the form of the law in most cases is addressed to a male and describes the forbidden individual as possession of another male (e.g. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is the nakedness of your father.") They are thus, in my view, laws of limit within a patriarchal structure (the nakedness usually belongs to another male). There is another more particular reason for my reading in this way. There is one category of relationship completely omitted from proscription, namely that of a man and his daughter. The Hebrew of verse 17, which might be seen to cover this category, addresses the more generalized issues of sexual relations with a woman and her offspring and grand-children—simply because "they are blood relations among themselves." The Greek version of the text "reads in" the possessive adjective to make the text cover the missing category—"they are your blood relations." This omission is not accidental—it is precisely the assumption of patriarchy that female offspring are possessions of the father and he cannot come into conflict with himself over what he already possesses. Thus I understand the initial part of Leviticus 18 as regulating potential struggle and conflict between men in a patriarchal order over the sexual access to and possession of women and children. This is different in my view from the framework of morality usually attributed by the careless glossing of this passage as incest prohibitions.

It is in this light then, that I begin to interpret the final series of injunctions which break the pattern of kinship prohibitions. I think there are two perspectives on this material. First, in the light of the framing of the material with the denunciation of Canaanite religious practices, these may all be instances of cultically related behaviours. Their proscription is thus in relation to their linkage to foreign religious usage. But in this case, the prohibition of same-sex coitus cannot be understood in any way to be related to the matter of same-sex relationships in our present context, since we are not talking about particular forms of sexually related cultic practice.

Alternatively, their proscription may be a continuation of the preoccupation with male power in a patriarchal order. Certainly all of these prohibitions can be reasonably construed in this light (compelling sex during the menstrual period, taking a kinsman's wife, the absolute power over children including the right to sacrifice them, overpowering another male sexually, taking an animal sexually, or forcing a woman to have sex with an animal). [81] Where there is no consistent link between the prohibitions is if we take them (as some do) as related to the waste of semen without producing progeny (both of the first two categories do not preclude progeny, and the sacrificing of children is a bit of a stretch of the principle). Nor is this group of texts preoccupied with the necessity of male-female complementarity as a ritual category that manifests "divine intention" (the prohibition of child sacrifice has no relationship to this whatsoever, and only the prohibitions of same-sex coitus and coitus with animals breach such a notion).

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80. It is this juxtaposition, it seems to me, that leads very early on to an abandonment of the death penalty in Judaism not only for sexual offences but for most offences. The rabbinic tradition witnesses with some consistency that any court that executed anyone within a hundred year period must be labelled a "killer court." See Rabbi Steven Greenberg's *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2004) on how the rabbis deal with the death penalty for same-sex sexual behaviour.

81. It seems to me that the prohibition on women having sex with animals must be either in reference to some form of cultic sexual practice or in reference to their being forced to do so by men who have power over them. While I do not pretend to be an expert on women's sexual practice, it seems to me there is considerably more cross cultural evidence of men having sex with animals than of women doing so. Surely God was not totally preoccupied in the desert of Sinai with the anticipated future existence of Catherine the Great?

Obviously, we could simply assume this is a random grab bag of prohibitions with no real formal connection or unity. I have indicated above why I consider the context of material significant for its interpretation. In this light, it seems to me we have to see the prohibition of same-sex coitus either as a practice prohibited because of its connection to Canaanite cults, or because of its place in the larger critique and limitation of male power in the patriarchal context. But neither of these explicitly bears relationship to the contemporary discussion of same-sex partnerships and unions.[82]

I note one further thing. Leviticus uses technical terminology to classify actions. The particular action described in Leviticus 18:22 is classified as a *toᶜebah*. This term, typically translated as "abomination" appears almost universally in the texts as a classificatory term. "Abomination" is a meaningless term, one of a class of verbal containers for whatever feelings and meanings we choose to pour into it. If we seek to find a foundational meaning for the term, however, we must turn to Genesis 46, which is the single instance where the word appears in a purely narrative context. There we are told that the family of Jacob were permitted to settle in the land of Goshen, "because all shepherds are *toᶜebot* to the Egyptians." What this makes clear is that the primary and foundational meaning of *toᶜebah* (because here it is applied to the Israelites as an object in the view of the Egyptians) is "a strong distaste/disgust distinctive to a particular cultural or national group." For this reason, beyond the much broader considerations of the place and intent of this prohibition, I think there is a plausible argument to be made that the prohibition of same-sex coitus is a matter that is *toᶜebah* particularly to Israel, not a matter of general "morality," and that in the same way that the early Church set aside other prohibitions it deemed particular to the identity of Israel, the Church is at liberty to set this aside.[83]

Human Dignity, Human Rights and Scripture

Whatever the scriptural view of gay and lesbian relations, there remains the much broader question of their fundamental dignity and rights as human beings. It has become a convention in some theological circles to argue that the Bible nowhere talks about human rights, and that therefore, to advance claims that any group or category of people have "rights," is contrary to scriptural modes of thought.[84] Clearly, all that has gone before points in a very different direction. There are several foundational issues.

First, our dignity as human beings flows from our creation in the image of God (Genesis 1). Most fundamentally, therefore, human dignity is the same dignity as God's dignity. When another human comes before us we owe them the same obligation we would owe God.[85] And this is reinforced in Genesis 2—any other human being is

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82. The prohibition in Leviticus 18:22, given the context of the entire passage could be more reasonably seen as referring to sexual misconduct of males in authority with their students or protégés.

83. This terminological usage is, I think, one root of the argument made by the scholar Jacob Milgrom that the prohibition on same-sex coitus applies only to Israelites, and only to Israelites living in the land of Israel.

84. This sort of argument has a long history in the Church—it has always been foundational to its policies of exclusion, power and control. It is important to remember that the language of "human rights" so excoriated as part of "modernity" was invented in the seventeenth and eighteenth century by Christian philosophers who were increasingly appalled by the way that the Church connived with the state at the imprisonment, torture, and sometimes execution of individuals it disagreed with. It is the philosophers' response precisely to a church which has become nothing more than "religion", invested in its power and authority.

85. Thus the Summary of the Law articulated already by the rabbis in Jesus' time and echoed by him, and adopted into Anglican liturgical formularies in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

potentially our *ʿezer kenegdo*, and therefore the one who confronts us face to face, to hold us accountable, and in whom we find relationship and wholeness.[86] The other human thus has a claim, a "right" over against us, that is fundamental to God's purpose in creating him or her. The other person was created because it was not good that I should be alone—their human rights lie in the fact that they are God's gift to me, not for abuse and domination, but for equality, collaboration, integrity and partnership.

This dignity is reasserted very clearly in Psalm 8, where God's glory over creation is set in juxtaposition with human insignificance. But this proclamation of human insignificance ("What is the weak human [*'enosh*] that you remember them; and the human one [*ben-'adam*] that you care about them?") is immediately turned upside down by the assertion "You have made them little less than God; and with glory/dignity and honour you crown them." This word *kabod*, meaning dignity or honour is more often applied to God (e.g. Psalm 29). The Psalter frames Psalm 8 with two psalms that articulate the rights of humans to freedom and safety from persecution and oppression. It is precisely the human propensity to single out others for persecution, to deny their fundamental rights as human beings, that causes Psalm 7 to describe God as "a just/righteous judge, who is denouncing [such mistreatment of others] with indignation every day." Psalms 9 and 10 (in some traditions considered a single psalm) hold together the divine judgement on nations that ignore the rights of human beings and oppress them alongside the divine attention and openness to those individuals who are being subjected to exclusion, oppression and persecution—precisely, as the pair of psalms conclude, "so that those [oppressors] will never again cause terror and dread for a weak human (*'enosh* as in Psalm 8:4).

The Psalms throughout insist on this human dignity, not simply as a matter of propositional assertion, but in their very form. An overwhelming proportion of the psalms are complaint psalms, in which the speakers, who are suffering oppression, often at the hands of others, cry out to God for deliverance and safety, insisting and demanding that God protect and reassert on his/her behalf their fundamental human dignity and rights for justice and security.[87] This tradition is more widespread throughout the Old Testament than simply the psalms—human beings have a right to talk back to God, to insist that God act for them. Human beings have a right to assert their innocence in the face of all the religious forces that seek to create a social order in which no one can be innocent (Job generally, but articulated explicitly by God in Job 42 in condemning the views expressed by his religious friends). If humans have these rights before God, then at the very minimum they must have these rights before other humans.

The texts consistently set before us these obligations:

- to treat others, as the image of God, as if they were God before us;
- to treat others, as our *ʿezer kenegdo*, as the face confronting us as gift for love, companionship and respect;
- to set in primary place of importance the interests of the weak, the dispossessed, and the stranger in fulfilling the obligations of the law of justice;
- to choose to limit ourselves in the face of the weakness or disposability of others;
- to act for and seek to create societies and conditions of justice and equity.

These are fundamental elements of the traditions of the Torah and the Prophets.

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86. This I understand to be one of the crucial foundations of the late twentieth century philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' exploration of the significance of the human "face" as a foundational category of being and for our understanding of fullness of being.

87. See also Walter Brueggemann's handling of this theme in his lecture "The Fearful Thirst for Dialogue."

Finally, our fundamental human dignity and rights are articulated in the parable of the last judgement (Matthew 25). The judgement of both nations and individuals hangs on their treatment of the poor, the weak, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned (the text nowhere says only those unjustly imprisoned)—all these whom the eternal Judge describes as "the least of these my brothers and sisters." It has become fashionable in some commentaries (a fashion which reasserts itself every few centuries when the church wants to find ways to exclude others from justice), to argue that by using the term "my brothers and sisters" that the text means only our attention to those who are members of the Christian community. We need to remember who is the speaker in this text. As the parable opens we are told that it is the Human One (the *huios tou anthropou*, literal Greek for the Aramaic bar '*enosh*)[88] who is coming in glory, to sit on the throne of glory and to judge the nations. This One, replete with all the rights and dignity the Human One has, is the one who judges nations and people; it is the Human One who asks us how we have treated his brothers and sisters—all the other Human Ones.

We know that in the Gospels, this phrase is one of the ways Jesus refers to himself. Ultimately, the Divine One who judges us at the eschaton for our respect of the human dignity and human rights of others, is none other than Jesus, the Human One, with whom we are bound up in a single humanity as the image and beloved of God. And like Jesus, we find our full humanity in two ways: by setting aside ourselves and our claims to attain the healing, wholeness and reconciliation of the world; and by insisting, at every moment of judgement public and private, on the dignity and rights of every One who is a brother or sister of that Human One. Only when we do that can we participate in undoing our share in the cross of Jesus, and only then do we begin to be drawn into the divine life of freedom and responsibility.

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88. Traditionally translated as "Son of Man," "Human One" seems to me more accurate, both in the light of the various scholarly arguments about the meaning of the term and its Aramaic derivation, which is also linked to the Hebrew term we find in Psalm 8. The term *ben* in both languages does not simply mean son, but can also mean of the "clan" or "family" or "class" of some type, and here clearly points to the notion "of the class identified as human."

FOUR

IS THERE A NATURAL READING OF ROMANS 1:24-27?

Stephen Andrews

ROMANS 1:24-27 IS widely regarded as the clearest biblical proscription against same-sex sexual behaviour. In his recent Larkin Stuart Lecture delivered in Toronto in April 2007, Archbishop Rowan Williams said, "[Romans 1] is, for the majority of modern readers the most important single text in Scripture on the subject of homosexuality, and has understandably been the focus of an enormous amount of exegetical attention." It is safe to say that the "enormous amount of exegetical attention" to which he refers is little more than thirty-years old. Before the advent of the sexual revolution, commentators were more interested in the theological causes and effects of such behaviour than they were in the salacious details.[1] It wasn't until the 1970s that contemporary psychological models began to be appealed to as offering anthropologies that were superior to pre-modern understandings of human personality. Up until that point the notion that Romans 1 condemned all forms of homosexual activity was never questioned. After that time we begin to find various attempts to reinterpret Romans 1 based on the assumption that Paul's way of thinking was grossly naïve or even intentionally misleading (rooted as it was in his own pathological dysfunction), thus rendering the passage at least irrelevant to some contemporary expressions of same-sex desire.

Many modern textual and theological readings of Romans 1 and Pauline thought in general have now been articulated that question the Church's earlier assumptions and seek to make space within a contemporary Christian conscience for "committed, adult, monogamous, intended lifelong, same-sex relationships which include sexual intimacy".[2] Textually, Romans 1 is now being construed to refer either to a form of behaviour which St. Paul thought ought to be avoided because it was characteristic of the heathen Gentiles, or to heterosexual individuals who engage in homosexual activity (since homosexuality is "unnatural" for them), or to behaviour that amounts to little more than a Jewish taboo and needs therefore not to be regarded as "sin" by those who don't share the same cultural outlook. Theologically, it has been suggested that, whatever Paul's particular take on this matter is, the broader biblical (or even dominical) demands of love, justice and toleration require us to supersede his teaching.[3] In the following discussion, I would like briefly to summarise these modern approaches to the passage and evaluate their cogency.[4]

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1. Athanasius, for example, displays a prudish reluctance in describing the πάθη ἀτιμίας ("degrading passions"), but traces them quite readily to their origin in the pagan cults (*contra Gentes*, 1.26). Meanwhile Chrysostom, who is perhaps the most censorious of homosexual behaviour of any patristic source, understands them cosmologically as coming from the design of the Devil (*Homily IV on Romans 1:26-27*). The creation narrative of Genesis 2–3 features prominently in his line of reasoning.

2. Footnote to Section 1 of the *St Michael Report*.

3. Here I have in mind, for instance, the very insightful article by Gary Hauch, "Same Sex Unions and Biblical Fidelity: Discerning the Spirit in Text and Context" (2005).

4. I regret that the following summary does not give sufficient credit to the arguments discussed. Though I have tried to avoid caricature the reader is encouraged to consult the works listed and the more comprehensive critiques of scholars such as Robert Gagnon (e.g., *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: texts and hermeneutics* (Abingdon : Nashville, 2001).

Novel readings of Romans 1

The Apostle Paul writes:

> [24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. [26] For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, [27] and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1.24-27, NRSV)

1. Doing what comes naturally

The late Yale historian, John Boswell, in his influential work, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*[5], described by Robert Wright of General Seminary as "the most sophisticated revision of church history to date from a pro-gay or pro-homosexual viewpoint,"[6] argued that the phrase *para physin*, translated above as "unnatural" (v. 26), should be translated "*beyond* nature in the sense of 'extraordinary, peculiar.'"[7] He wrote, "The persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual," rather "what [Paul] derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons."[8] This line of thought is related to a distinction made by D. Sherwin Bailey between homosexual "inverts," those who are homosexual by constitution, and homosexual "perverts," whom the Bible condemns.[9]

A detailed analysis of Boswell's exegesis has been undertaken by a number of scholars, most notably Richard Hays of Yale Divinity School.[10] Hays demonstrates that the phrase *para physin* was frequently used in Hellenistic Jewish sources as a way of identifying behaviour which was thought to be immoral, not just awkward or misdirected. Consequently, in the context of Romans 1 he says that *para physin* means "contrary to the structure of creation" (and not "contrary to the innate inclinations of the individual"). He writes, "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."[11] Moreover, in discussing Paul's exegetical argu-

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5. University of Chicago Press, 1980.

6. "A Case Undemonstrated", *Anglican Theological Review*, 66:1 (1984), pp. 89f.

7. *Op. cit.*, pp. 111-14.

8. *Op. cit.*, p. 109; Jeffrey John repeats this argument in "Christian Same-Sex partnerships" in *The Way Forward? Christian voices on homosexuality and the Church*, ed. Timothy Bradshaw (London : Hodder, 1997), pp. 44-59. Bishop John Shelby Spong makes the same case without citing Boswell in *Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality* (San Francisco : Harper & Row, 1988) p. 150.

9. See Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (New York : Longmans, 1955).

10. Bernadette Brooten of Brandeis University and University of Helsinki professor Martti Nissinen have also offered critiques. Hays's work is "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 14/1 (1986), pp. 184–215; cf. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Femal Homoeroticism* (University of Chicago, 1996), p. 241; and Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Fortress Press, 1998), p. 109.

11. *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

ment, Hays points out that the object of the Apostle's opprobrium is not a specific group of heterosexuals choosing to engage in homosexual behaviour, but all humanity in its rejection of the Creator.[12]

2. Pederasty

Another new reading of Romans 1 has been put forward by former Union Seminary New Testament Professor, Robin Scroggs. Scroggs asserts that "[a]part from certain exceptions of an adult male prostitute [. . .], *I know of no suggestions in the texts that homosexual relationships existed between same-age adults*."[13] He maintains that Paul's interests in Romans 1 are primarily theological and not ethical, and that the Apostle is not "especially incensed" against homosexuality except when it involves pederasty (sexual relations with "effeminate call boys"[14]). In this he says that Paul is adopting a perspective, common in Hellenistic Judaism, which censures all relationships that are unequal and exploitative.

Once again, a number of scholars have found Scroggs's argument unconvincing. In the first place, he does not pay sufficient attention to the presence of non-pederastic relationships, particularly sexual relationships between women.[15] This is a particularly important deficiency in light of the reference to female homoerotic activity in Romans 1:26. Secondly, his contention that pederastic relationships were dehumanising has been described as anachronistic and ignores evidence that there were some pederastic relationships that were regarded as mutually fulfilling.[16] A more natural reading of the passage is that Paul rejects all forms of homosexual behaviour and not just a particular expression of it.[17]

3. Purity

A third approach to Romans 1 has been proposed by William Countryman, Associate Professor of New Testament at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, that is anthropological in nature.[18] According to Countryman, Paul

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12. Brooten criticises Boswell's assumption that homosexuality was understood to be an "ordinary part of the range of human eroticism", pointing out that such was not the case for same-sex love between women (*Op. cit.*, p. 11), while Nissinen repeats the common observation that the notion of sexual "orientation" is anachronistic (*Op. cit.*, p. 109). What Nissinen and others say is true if by "orientation" we mean that the ancients shared our assumptions that sexual orientation is "the result of a complex interaction of environmental, cognitive and biological factors" (American Psychological Association). Boswell doesn't clearly define his construct, however.

13. *The New Testament and Homosexuality: contextual background for contemporary debate* (Fortress Press : Philadelphia, 1983), p. 35 (italics his).

14. *Op. cit.*, pp. 106-8.

15. See Brooten's concerns in *op. cit.*, p. 253.

16. See Mark D. Smith, "Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26-27" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXIV/2 (1996), pp. 223-56.

17. A related argument is that Paul could not have understood the contemporary phenomenon of same-sex relationships that are lifelong and monogamous because he had no word to describe them. This, of course, is a fallacy that was debunked by James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1961). A concept may exist even though there is no single word to describe it.

18. His work, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today* (Fortress Press, 1988; rev. 2007), draws on the theories of Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966).

defines the deeds done in Romans 1 as an impure aspect of Gentile culture, but not as sinful: "While Paul wrote of same-gender sexual acts as being unclean, dishonourable, improper, and 'over against nature,' he did not apply his extensive vocabulary for sin to them. Instead, he treated homosexual behavior as an integral if filthy aspect of Gentile culture."[19] Countryman bases his conclusion on a perceived distinction between two ethics in the Bible: the purity ethic and the property ethic. The first is an "avoidance of dirt" and involves "all rules that govern the boundaries of the human body."[20] The second understands property as "something which is [. . .] an extension of the self, so that a violation of my property is a violation of my personhood."[21] Countryman says that Gentiles were never expected to live up to Israel's purity standards. He concludes that we cannot make the purity or property systems of antiquity the basis of today's sexual ethics.

However, Countryman's distinction between sin and impurity does not make sense in the context of Romans 1. In the first place, the reference to "unnatural" relations is followed by a list of behaviours that are not matters of impurity, but are clearly sinful for Paul. These involve "every kind of wickedness," including envy and murder, and they leave those guilty with "no excuse" (1.29-2.1). Additionally, one of the chief arguments of Romans is that divine salvation and judgement are universal in their scope, thus placing Jew and Gentile on equal footing before a God who "shows no partiality" (2.11).[22]

4. Theological superiority

Gary Hauch, an Anglican priest and Old Testament scholar from Ottawa, wrote a moving paper in 2005 entitled, "Same Sex Unions and Biblical Fidelity: Discerning the Spirit in Text and Context." His discussion of the biblical texts that appear to proscribe same-sex unions places those texts in the context of a larger narrative of divine grace and hospitality. Just as the Spirit brought the early Church to the place where they embraced Gentiles (Acts 10-15), he argues, perhaps that same Spirit is leading us to the full inclusion of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in the Church's life, witness and sacraments. Dr Hauch suggests that even if the five key biblical passages usually appealed to in the debate about same-sex unions mean what they have appeared to mean over the course of the last two millennia, there are sufficient examples within the biblical corpus itself of tradition being overturned by Jesus and apostolic authorities that we ought to be able to detect and join a Spirit-led trajectory of receptiveness. Dr Hauch thinks that there is enough scholarly uncertainty about the meaning of these texts that we ought to act with courage and imagination to open the doors to same-sex marriage.

In his analysis of continuity and change in the biblical story, Dr Hauch actually pays scant attention to Paul's argument in Romans 1. He says that the passage expresses a common conviction in Judaism that all Gentiles are sinners. In his reading this makes the action of the early Church in admitting uncircumcised Gentiles into the economy of God's salvation all the more extraordinary.

A similar argument to Dr Hauch's can be found in the work of one theologian in particular who discusses the teaching of Romans 1 in the context of a broader theological framework. An insightful and erudite analysis is developed in the book by University of North Carolina professor Eugene F. Rogers Jr, *Sexuality and the Christian*

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19. *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

20. *Op. cit.*, pp. 9, 11.

21. *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

22. For a more detailed analysis, see Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove : InterVarsity Press, 1995), pp. 68-85.

Body: Their Way into the Triune God.[23] In exploring the Christological, ecclesiastical, sacramental, soteriological and anthropological dimensions of same-sex desire, Rogers also contends that the Spirit is doing a new thing in the Church. A significant part of the book is taken up with a reading of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth that seeks to open a space for his revised Christian ethic. I don't have the space or the competence to offer a critique of Rogers's theological method, but of course he does have to deal with the biblical witness, and particularly with the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1.[24] How does he answer the contention that the Apostle condemns same-sex eroticism because it diverges from God's design at creation? To the objection that homosexual behaviour is "contrary to nature" Rogers responds that it is God's own way to act "contrary to nature" — he did so after all by incorporating Gentiles into the Jewish olive tree (cf. Romans 11.24 where the phrase *para physin* is also used). In expounding on this thesis Rogers assumes that nature is thus morally neutral and that the male-female duality is a contingent rather than a constitutive feature of human existence (*contra* Barth). This gives sexual intimacy a recreational as opposed to a procreational priority. Procreation, he says, is an option for heterosexual couples, just as adoption is an option for same-sex couples (indeed, the biblical use of the language of adoption to describe God's elective purposes would seem to make adoption the more noble of the two).

While Hauch and Rogers clearly understand just how socially revolutionary the Jewish Church was in suspending prejudice against the Gentiles and in admitting them to the household of faith without the usual ritual restrictions placed on Gentile converts to Judaism, I am not sure that they have paid sufficient attention to what Romans 1 actually says about the gravity of homosexual behaviour as being immoral. In the first place, it should be recognised that same-sex behaviour is described as a manifestation of idolatry (v. 25: they "worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator"). Moreover, as we have indicated above, homosexual behaviour is mentioned in close proximity to a list of sins, including "wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice;" "envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness;" gossip, slander, God-hating, insolence, haughtiness, boasting, conniving, insolence, foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness, and ruthlessness (vv. 29-31). Do these novel readings mean to imply that if the Spirit is leading the Church to accept same-sex behaviour, the Church should also be prepared to endorse other behaviours that are described as debased? Even if it is supposed that the description of Gentile behaviour in Romans 1 is a gross generalisation and that Paul is indulging in a bit of hyperbole in order to demonstrate just how generous God's benevolence is, it does not obviate the need for repentance. "Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" writes Paul in the next chapter (2.4).

Now it may be possible to isolate Paul's description of same-sex behaviour from its context in Romans 1 by affirming that homosexual individuals actually belong to a category of humanity akin to Gentiles. This is a move made by Rogers when he adds the phrase "gay or straight" to the Apostle's great manifesto in Galatians: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (3.28).[25] Of this two things could be said. First of all, there is no indication in Romans 1 that Paul has

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23. (Oxford : Blackwell, 1999). See also the volume he edited entitled *Theology and Sexuality: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford : Blackwell, 2002).

24. Those interested in a theological critique of Rogers's work are encouraged to consult Douglas Farrow, "Beyond Nature, Shy of Grace" in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5.3 (November 2003), pp. 261-86; Gilbert Meilander "What Sex Is – and Is For" in *First Things* 102 (April 2000), pp. 44-49; Berndt Wannenwetsch, "Old Docetism – New Moralism? Questioning a New Direction in the Homosexuality Debate" in *Modern Theology* 16.3 (July 2000), pp. 353-64; and Francis Watson's review in *Studies in Christian Ethics* 14.1 (2001), pp. 102-05.

25. Galatians 3.28 is regularly appealed to as a programme of radical inclusiveness that crosses identity barriers (e.g., Brian K. Blount, "Reading and Understanding the New Testament on Homosexuality," in Choon-Leong Seow, ed., *Homosexuality and the Christian Community* (Louisville : Westminster/John Knox, 1996), pp. 28-38). What Paul is talking about here is not an obliteration of social distinction (since he clearly continues to recognize and honour these), however, but the incorporation of differentiation into a new community.

in mind a category of human identity labelled "homosexual." What he addresses is human behaviour; behaviour that may be characteristic of Gentiles, admittedly, but behaviour that is unacceptable in any social or ethnic class. This brings us secondly to Rogers's emended manifesto. It is conceivable that Galatians 3.28 could be revised infinitely. To the dualities listed by Paul one could add "rich or poor," "Francophone or Anglophone," or even "liberal or fundamentalist." But the question of Romans 1 isn't whether God's rule abolishes human political barriers, but whether human beings in all of their diversity respond to the truth of God in living righteously by faith: "As it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'" (v. 17).

Romans 1 Again

For these reasons, the proposed reinterpretations of Romans 1 have not held up to scholarly scrutiny. In each case it would appear that insufficient attention is being paid to the Old Testament context of Paul's thought. It would seem clear that however Paul's reasoning runs, it doesn't begin with observations about culture or "natural" inclinations, but rather it takes its ethical bearings from the creation story of Genesis 1 and 2. But more needs to be said concerning the assumptions Paul had about the Genesis creation account. begins his elucidation of humanity's wretched condition by arguing that God's wrath, his righteous reaction to human unrighteousness, is revealed from heaven against "all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth." What is "the truth" to which Paul refers? It is the truth of God's character as it is manifest in creation.[26] Paul contends that "what can be known about God is plain" to anyone who ponders the created order (v. 19). The NRSV translation of the phrase to τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ("what can be known about God") reflects the Hellenistic Jewish tradition that God makes himself evident in what he has created.[27] In other words, the created order is so designed that humanity ought to perceive that there is a Designer while distinguishing the creature from the Creator.[28] This is a major theme in the Hellenistic wisdom tradition and it carries with it the notion that the cosmos was created for a particular purpose.[29] Indeed, Paul believes that the divine purpose is so evident in creation that all people can not only know "God's decree," his general will for human behaviour (v. 32), but also the consequences for those who choose to ignore it.[30] In a moment we shall consider how this will is to be known with respect to sexual behaviour, but Paul concludes that, although people should have known better, they chose to suppress the truth.

How do people suppress the truth? While the created order clearly reveals the hand of a Creator, Paul affirms that people are nevertheless unwilling to acknowledge "God's eternal power and divine nature," and to respond in worship and submission (v. 20: "they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him"). Many commentators point

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26. I say "character" here because ἡ ἀλήθεια may in Paul's mind have something of the OT notion of אֱמֶת (God's covenant fidelity) behind it. Nevertheless, as the vocabulary of vv. 19f. demonstrates, the primary context is Hellenistic.

27. Cf. the use of the word γνωστός in the LXX Gen 2.9; Wis 16.28; also the cosmology of Plato in Timaeus 28A-30C, 32A-35A and Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 1.29.70. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A new translations with introduction and commentary*, Anchor Bible (Chapman, 1993), p. 280, for other antecedents in Greek philosophy and the Hellenistic Jewish tradition.

28. E.g. *Test. Naph*. 3.1-5: "in all the products of his workmanship discern the Lord who made all things."

29. E.g. Philo in *Op. mund*. 3: "purpose and will of Nature."

30. The word δικαίωμα is commonly used in the LXX to translate words coming from the Hebrew roots חק/חקה (92x) and מִשְׁפָּט (41x), meaning "decree" or "ordinance."

out that the result of this rejection of the Creator and his purposes is a distortion of relationship in two directions, both vertically and horizontally. Not only does such denial incur God's wrath, it manifests itself in distorted human relationships. This, of course, is a pattern discerned in the biblical story from the creation account itself. It is dramatically patent in the chronicle of the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.8-19): following their disobedience, the first couple are estranged from God (they hide from him in their nakedness), from the created order (which now requires hard labour for a crop of thistles), and from each other (the woman's desire will be for her husband, but he will rule her).

Those who no longer worship the true God nevertheless have a need to worship, and so the creation ("images"), rather than the Creator, becomes the object of their worship (v. 23). It is important to note echoes of the creation narrative in this verse, since it is arguable that what St Paul calls "unnatural" in the next few verses is informed by the Genesis account.[31] But then, secondly, when people found a substitute for God, they discovered that their relationships with other human beings no longer functioned as God intended them, and God gave both women and men over to the custody of their degraded ἀτιμίας passions: "women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another" (vv. 26, 27). Of course, the key question for biblical interpreters is the meaning of the term "unnatural" (v. 26). It is generally held that the Greek phrase, παρὰ φύσιν means, literally, "contrary to nature."[32] So by this, given the background of Genesis, we may understand Paul to mean that such relationships do not conform to God's intention for sexual congress, since, among other things, they cannot fulfil the creation mandate to procreate (Genesis 1.28).

Now, as related above, it is commonly asserted that Paul's teaching is limited by his ignorance of sexual dispositions we now describe as God-made. It is true that Paul knew nothing of modern theories of developmental psychology, or of genetic factors in determining sexual inclination. But this is not to say that Paul was naïve. In the Roman world, sexual liaisons were complicated by social factors (whether it was public or private, whether it involved people of different status, and whether it involved boys) and could be related to environmental factors as well (Ptolemy related sexual orientation to astrology). Paul would have been cognisant of the variety of ways people expressed their sexuality, and so it is conceivable that no modern argument about the origin of sexual preferences would have changed Paul's mind. Bernadette Brooten, who has conducted one of the most extensive analyses of ancient sources in this matter, and who utters a fervent hope that churches today "will no longer teach Rom 1:26f as authoritative," has written, "I see Paul as condemning all forms of homoeroticism as the unnatural acts of people who had turned away from God."[33]

Brooten comes to the conclusion that Paul's views of same-sex love and the template of gender that underlies them make him a more or less typical product of the cultural world in which he was formed, one that viewed women as inferior, unfit to rule, passive, and weak. Whatever the exceptions in practice, she maintains that in the typical Roman view, some behaviour is inherently masculine and some inherently feminine, and these categories of behaviour are not supposed to be confused. In sexual relations between members of the same sex, one man becomes "like

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31. Gen 1.26 describes humankind being made in God's "image." There are many other allusions to the Genesis creation account that might be identified in the early part of Ropmans: the emphasis on knowledge in Rom 1.19 may find an echo in Gen 2.9; the phrase "like birds, four-footed creatures, or reptiles" (1.27) finds a parallel in Gen 1.20, 24. See Morna Hooker, "A Further Note on Romans 1" *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966-67), pp. 181-83; James Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, Word Biblical Commentary (Word, 1988), pp. 53–62; C.K. Barrett, *Paul: An introduction to his thought* (Westminster/John Knox : Louisville, 1994), p.62. That the opening chapters of Genesis are in Paul's mind as he writes to the Romans is also evident from explicit allusions at 5.12 (Gen 2.17; 3.19); 7.11 (Gen 3.13); 8.20 (Gen 3.17–19) and 16.20 (Gen 3.15).

32. E.g., Brooten, *op. cit*., p. 241.

33. *Op. cit*., p. 244.

a woman," the ancient commentators argue, because that man is penetrated; conversely, in female-female relations, one woman becomes "like a man." Underlying all this is a worldview that, Brooten contends, saw the distinction between "active" and "passive" as more fundamental even than distinctions of gender. It was the basis of social order and hierarchy, a conceptual framework that defined the categories of superior and inferior. In Brooten's analysis, to erase or ignore this distinction was "unnatural."[34]

But is this an adequate explanation of Paul's perspective? I don't believe it is sufficient simply to say that Paul reflected his culture. Some accounting needs to be made for why Paul supported some ethical standards, but opposed others. Why could the Jewish dietary law be abrogated, for instance, but not Old Testament legislation governing sexual behaviour? I believe that there is more to the Apostle's censure than an ethic based on broadly held gender biases.

Although the Apostle Paul is not explicit in this matter, it should be noted that one of the recurring arguments in the ancient world among those who disapproved of homosexual behaviour was the contention that sexual relationships were unnatural if they did not manifest an intention to procreate. As early as the fourth century BC, the Greek philosopher Plato wrote that male and female nature (*phusis*) is intended for procreation, and that sexual acts between males and between females are therefore contrary to nature (*para physin*).[35] This argument was endorsed by other philosophers, and was embraced by Hellenistic Judaism. One example would be the author of *Pseudo-Phocylides*, a Jew (probably) writing between 30 BC and AD 40: "Do not remain unmarried, lest you are nameless. Give nature her due, you also, beget in your turn as you were begotten."[36] An even more notable example, because of the significant overlap with Romans 1, is the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. The conviction that a sexual relationship is "contrary to nature" if it cannot lead to procreation was enough to cause this contemporary of Paul's to denounce not only homosexuality, but also male sexual relationships with menstruating women, a boy, or even a sterile woman.[37]

The Jewish endorsement of a Greek philosophical ideal may strike some as odd. But perhaps one of the reasons Hellenistic Judaism felt free to adopt an essentially Greek understanding of the nature of sexuality is because Jews recognised that all of creation expresses God's law and moral purpose, and that built into the created order was the intent to procreate. This brings us back to Romans 1 and St Paul's contention that "ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made. So they are without excuse" (v. 20). His point is that there is nothing abstract about the natural moral code governing sexuality, and it should be superfluous to codify it. It does not need to be rationalised, since it is more akin to common sense. Some forms of behaviour do not require written laws to classify them as immoral. When Dinah's brothers are informed of her rape, for instance, they are outraged on the simple grounds that "such a thing ought not to be done" (Genesis 34.7). Similarly, Romans 1 could be read to say that if a sexual relationship does not conform to the pattern of a relationship designed to produce offspring, then it is obviously "unnatural."

Such arguments are common in rabbinic Judaism as well. In particular, the ban on homosexuality came to be

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34. *Op. cit.*, pp. 190-92.

35. See Leg. 636c; cf. Roy Bowen Ward, "Why Unnatural? The Tradition behind Romans 1:26–27," *Harvard Theological Review* 90:3 (1997), pp. 263-84.

36. 175-76; for his teaching on homosexuality, see 190–92.

37. See *Abr*. 133, 137; *Spec*. 3.3-42; and Op. *mund*. 151; while Philo's definition of "unnatural" may be in some respects narrower than Paul's, Professor Henry Chadwick has noted significant overlap with Romans 1 in "St Paul and Philo of Alexandria," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48 (1965-66), pp. 286-307.

regarded as a universal law included among the "seven commandments of the sons of Noah" (the so-called "Noachide Commandments," which, because they were dispensed before the Law came down from Sinai, were regarded as applying to gentiles as well as Jews).[38] According to one rabbinic source, homosexuality was deemed unnatural because it frustrates the procreative purpose of sex, just as do any other forms of "spilling the seed in vain."[39]

So it can be seen that Paul's teaching on the matter of sexual ethics is in accord with the implied teaching of Genesis, and Hellenistic and rabbinic Judaism.[40] In his commentary on Romans, Joseph Fitzmyer has written that "nature" expresses for Paul "the order intended by the Creator, the order that is manifest in God's creation or, specifically in this case, the order seen in the function of sexual organs themselves, which were ordained for an expression of love between a man and a woman and for the procreation of children."[41]

The "Natural" Reading of Romans 1.24-27

One of the reasons many scholars have a hard time accepting the conclusions of those who would seek to revise Paul's teachings is that they sound too ingenious. In some cases they make assumptions about the pathology and classification of homosexuality which would have been unintelligible to the ancient ear. While there is ample evidence that all manner of sexual expression was a feature of ancient society,[42] there was also a strong philosophical and religious conviction, particularly in Judaism and Christianity, that homosexual behaviour was "unnatural." And by that the ancient philosopher or theologian didn't mean that homosexuality went against a man or a woman's inner nature (so that it was "unnatural" for a heterosexual individual to engage in homosexual relations). And neither did they mean that since heterosexual partnerships were dominant in animal nature, therefore they ought to be deemed "natural." What, then, was meant by the claim that erotic relationships between two members of the same sex was "unnatural?" The answer is that that such a relationship is "unnatural" because it does not conform to the intention of procreation.[43]

This would seem to be the natural or "plain sense" of the text, and it is a meaning that has been understood universally by Christian commentators throughout the history of the Church until the twentieth century. Of course, when we apply the term "plain sense" to a reading we must take care to remember that our determination of mean-

38. *Sanh*. 57b-58a.

39. *Sefer ha-Hinnukh*, 209. Furthermore, a homosexual man was believed to be likely to abandon his wife, which would also hinder the appropriate purpose of marriage (*Tos. Ned*. 51a).

40. W.D. Davies wrote that "the dress in Rom. 1, 2 is Hellenistic, but the body Rabbinic" (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London : SPCK, 1955), p. 117. It is now generally thought that Paul's understanding of what constituted "unwritten law" is Stoicism filtered through rabbinic Judaism; that is, it is a "common sense" philosophy rooted in ancient doctrines of creation. Paul's Platonism was common in the Jewish world according to Daniel Boyarin (*A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* [Berkeley : University of California Press, 1994]). For example, καθήκω (v. 28) was a technical term of Stoic philosophy denoting what constituted proper or fitting conduct. Wisdom 7.20 is regularly cited as an example of Jewish Platonizing of the creation account.

41. *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), p. 286.

42. Amy Richlin, ed., *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (NY : OUP, 1992).

43 Indeed, from the ancient perspective, "unnatural" would apply to heterosexual relations where there was no procreative intent. See Plato, *Timaeus* 30a–b; 41a–d; *Leg*.841d, and *Phaed*. 250e–251a.

ing depends a great deal on our social and imaginative location.[44] But in the Christian community the imagination is formed and informed by the reading of the whole of Scripture, and it is in this context that individual texts are read.[45] As we have tried to demonstrate, the primary context for matters of ethics related to sexuality for the Apostle Paul was the creation account. It is also a rational assumption that this account would be foundational for our Lord's own opinions on this matter. It is true, as many point out, that Jesus does not directly address the subject of homosexuality. And yet, when Jesus does discuss sexual propriety in marriage, his reference point is also the story of creation (see Mark 10.4–9; Matthew 19.3–12, etc.). Is it unwarranted to assume that he would view same-sex erotic relationships as "fornication"? Probably not. Jesus frequently used the word "fornication" (Greek *porneia*) to describe unhealthy sexual behaviour (Mark 7.21; Matthew 5.32, 15.19, 19.19), and in Greek literature this term could also apply to homosexual practice. The fact that Jesus uses this word to refer to adultery and not homosexuality explicitly probably has more to do with the comparative incidence of infidelity in marriage. Moreover, we know that Jesus endorsed the Old Testament ("I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets", Matthew 5.17), so why would he differ in any way from what other Jewish teachers (including Paul) regarded as the teaching of Scripture on the question of the proper expression of human sexuality?[46]

It is reasonable to assume that God's mandate to "be fruitful and multiply" stands behind biblical texts addressing the themes of sexuality and the marriage relationship, and indeed the evolutionary development of the doctrine of marriage in the Church.[47] It should be not be surprising, therefore, to find that any reference to the proper or improper use of human sexuality in the New Testament would presuppose the procreative purpose of marriage. And where Jesus' convictions may be regarded as implicit in his teachings on marriage, the convictions of St Paul are quite

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44. Programmatic in the thinking of Roland Barthes; cf. E. Schüssler Fiorenza's statement: "What we see depends on where we stand." ("The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentring Biblical Scholarship," in H. Räisänen, et al., eds., *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki* (Atlanta, 2000), p. 109.) Stephen Fowl reminds us that the "literal sense" can have a diversity of meanings ("The Importance of a Multivoiced Literal Sense of Scripture: the example of Thomas Aquinas," in *Reading Scripture with the Church: toward a hermeneutic for theological interpretation*, A.K.M. Adam; Stephen E. Fowl; Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Francis Watson, eds (Grand Rapids : Baker, 2006), pp. 35-50. In her monograph, Ad Litteram: *How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the "Plain Sense" of Genesis 1–3* (New York and Frankfurt : Peter Lang, 1999), K. Greene-McCreight explains how "plain sense" reading is also in some respects ruled by the community's *regula fidei* (pp. 22; 243).

45. Rowan Williams describes the "interiority" that comes through the diachronic reading of the canonical Scriptures in his 1991 essay, "The Literal Sense of Scripture," *Modern Theology* 7:2, pp. 129-30.

46. Walter Deller's paper *The Bible, Human Sexuality, Marriage and Same-Sex Unions*, appears to understand Paul's teaching as initiating a descent into religion from the openness of Jesus. The relationship between Paul's ethics and Jesus' teaching is complicated by the fact that the Gospels were written *after* the Pauline corpus. A number of studies have appeared recently that argue that Paul's ethics are in fact a logical development of Jesus' ethics, and that both share in a programme of a critique of religion. See Paul Barnett, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus*, After Jesus Series 2 (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 2008); Michael Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, Society for the New Testament Monograph Series 59 (Sheffield : JSOT Press, 1989).

47. In rabbinic tradition, this is regarded as the first *mitzvah* of the Torah. This mandate has been affirmed in virtually every wedding ceremony performed in the Anglican Church since the period of the Reformation. At one time, the stated "causes for which matrimony was ordained" began with "the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord" (1662 Book of Common Prayer). In a revision of the 1662 rite, the 1918 Canadian *Book of Common Prayer* demoted this cause to secondary status, giving "the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman" pride of place. Procreation remained in the middle of the matrimonial causes in the 1959 revision, but was dropped to third place in the 1985 *Book of Alternative Services* (where it is also bracketed, presumably so that it can be omitted in cases where couples are incapable of bearing children).

explicit and in accord with commonly held ideas about the proper use of human sexuality in the ancient Jewish and Hellenistic world.[48]

Concluding Thoughts

While we may acknowledge that many gay and lesbian relationships approach (or even surpass) heterosexual relationships in their ability to foster love and support, they must still be regarded as unnatural and contrary to God's design for sexuality on the basis of St Paul's teaching. We believe that this is because an essential component of a healthy expression of sexuality is whether or not it conforms to the pattern of relationship which gives rise to the bearing of children. The obligation human beings have to gratify their sexual desires only in relationships of heterosexual monogamy is not satisfied by the fact that gay and lesbian couples can adopt and raise children. Once again, this is not based on a judgement regarding the social or psychological advantages or disadvantages of rearing children outside the context of a heterosexual monogamous relationship. The point is that these relationships, for reasons of gender, are not capable of producing children and therefore stand outside of the divine ideal. We moderns may not understand why openness to procreation is a *sine qua non* of properly ordered sexual relationships any more than we understand the dynamics of divine election. But there are many things in theology and in life that Christians must accept until what is hidden to human understanding is fully revealed.[49] The celibate option for Christian gays and lesbians may be painful (as it is for many unmarried heterosexual individuals), but if we believe that God is good, then we believe that his intentions for a proper expression of human sexuality must also be good.

This having been said, there are related dimensions to the discussion that are worth exploring, even if only briefly in what follows.

1. Procreation considered theologically

It is perhaps inevitable that in the "libidinal economy of Western capitalism" we might have difficulty in understanding procreation in anything other than clinical terms.[50] Moreover, the socially permissive attitude of our culture (with its gender agnosticism and "buddy sex") makes arguments promoting the necessity of procreation seem like a form of medieval consequentialism designed to satisfy some ecclesiastical prurience. But if the command to "be

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48. Walter Deller's paper (*op.cit*) pays little attention to Romans 1 because he deems it as "irrelevant." Consequently, I have not included his analysis in the discussion above. I do want to say, though, that I don't read such negative nuances into the words *katergazomenoi* and *antimisthian*. The former simply means "do, accomplish; produce, bring about, work out; prepare, make ready" in nearly all of Paul's use of the term (16x for the word and its cognates). Only in Eph 6.13 does it have the sense of "overcome, conquer," and that is easily understood by the context. The latter word is used only once more by Paul, and then to mean, benignly, "response, return:" "Our heart is wide open to you. [. . .] *In return* — I speak as to children — open wide your hearts also" (2 Cor 6.11, 13). Finally, the senses of patriarchal overpowering and hatred that Walter imports into the passage do not fit well with Paul's description of homoerotic behaviour between women in v. 26.

49. I well remember the first set of vaccinations our elder daughter received when she was just an infant. Her usually placid face took on a look of surprise and then anguish when the needle pierced her skin. As she howled, her mother and I tried to comfort her. How I wished to be able to explain our apparent betrayal of trust, and to tell her that what she was undergoing was because of our love and care for her. Surely we are as infants when it comes to our understanding of why God's will for us requires certain ethical ideals.

50. The phrase is Jane Barter Moulaison's and was used in her paper delivered at the Nuptial Mystery conference in Winnipeg in 2008.

fruitful and multiply" is located in a canonical text that has been regarded as describing a covenantal relationship between humanity and its Creator, and is, moreover, part of a "blessing formula," it would be in order to attempt to consider procreation in a broader theological framework.

One way of approaching the subject of procreation in the biblical witness is to see it as a missiological matter. In his discussion of Romans 7, Daniel Boyarin makes the remark that for "old Israel procreation as the means of continuation of God's People was *the* central and highest of goods and of religious values."[51] Missiological language of this sort permeates the Old Testament and was readily adopted by Christian authors. New Testament writers are accustomed to describe the growth of the Church and the expansion of the kingdom in procreative terms. The genealogies of the Synoptic Gospels draw genetic lines of continuity with the redemptive purposes of God beginning, in the case of Luke, with Adam (3.38; cf. Romans 1.3 and especially Galatians 3.16). St John the Evangelist uses the phrase "being born from above" to indicate the process by which an individual becomes a child of God (3.3–6; 1.12). The believing community itself is referred to as descendents (lit. "seed") of Abraham (Romans 4.16, 18; 9.7–8; Galatians 3.29) and as "family" (on at least five occasions, e.g., 1 Peter 2.17: "Love the family of believers"). In 1 John 3.9 those who have been "born of God" can actually be described as "God's seed." The language of procreation is expressive of God's purpose in the world, coming to the aid of ancient authors in their attempts to document the unfolding of salvation history.

Now, this terminology is clearly analogical. But it must be added that the social constructions of the first century also understood conversion as embracing the literal *oikos* or "household" (e.g. Acts 10). The entities that we differentiate as the social and the spiritual were not so readily distinguished in the ancient world. Consequently, one way of thinking about the place of procreation in Christian ethical ideals regarding sexuality is to see the begetting of children as a way in which believers physically participate in the divine mission of bringing salvation to the world. The Pauline directives around church leadership in the Pastoral Epistles may be seen as an explication of this. When it is required that candidates for church leadership have children who are believers (Titus 1.6), it would seem that what is at stake is more than the ability of a candidate to maintain domestic order. The aspiration of the Christian community is that children brought up "in the fear and nurture of the Lord" will themselves become ambassadors of God's kingdom and agents of his love.

2. Procreation considered teleologically

Considered in this way, that is, as an embodiment of God's missiological purposes, we can hopefully transcend the literalistic framework that attends so much of the discussion about procreation. The ethical issue is not a matter of fecundity (e.g., what about couples who are unable to have children?), but of intention. We ask rather, "Does this relationship honour the divine intention that the earth be filled by those bearing the *imago Dei*, and by those who will exercise a responsible stewardship over the created order?" (Genesis 1.26-28).

Relationships that are not based on the male-female complementarity described in Genesis 1 would seem to be deficient because they cannot be ordered toward these ends. A potentially useful analogy might be drawn from Jesus' Parable of the Talents. The story itself focuses on the third servant, a man who was ill prepared for the master's return because he had not properly valued and treated what he had been given. For when entrusted with the master's property, this servant had buried it. Now, burying, according to rabbinic law, was regarded as the best security against

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51. *Radical Jew,* p. 159. A Babylonian Talmudic tradition affirms that procreation has a national and soteriological significance in that it provides the conditions whereby the Shekinah dwells in the midst of Israel, and can even bring the Messiah (*B. Yev*. 63b-64a; *Mekilta de* R. *Simeon Yitro ba-Hodesh* 3; de R. *Simeon b. Yohai* 19.11).

theft.[52] Anyone who buried a pledge or deposit immediately upon receipt of it was free from liability. Understandably, the servant did what he thought was best by making sure that he was not legally defenceless and at the same time comforting himself in the knowledge that the money was as safe as it possibly could be. But when the master returned, the servant's shrewdness and practicality actually incurred the master's anger: "You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest" (Matthew 25.26-7).

It is instructive that the master was not angry that his money had been misused. In fact, we are left to wonder how the master would have reacted if his servant had bought forty-two acres of desert in the Sahara. The master was not upset because his money was *misused*, but rather because it was *disused*. The master's property had the possibility of growth and maturity; it was like a living thing. But the servant had treated it like a dead thing by burying it.[53] In other words, the servant had not understood that the purpose of the master's property was to be wagered in a situation that could attract a profit.

A similar argument could be made with respect to procreation as an intended result of coitus. If one of the purposes of sexual intercourse is to produce offspring, it would be inconsistent of the Church to endorse a form of union where the sexual relationship was not open to the possibility of bearing children. This is not to say that every union must produce children, just as not every investment is required to bear profit. The question is whether or not sexual congress occurs in a manner that is befitting its divinely ordered nature and purpose.

3. A hermeneutics of consent

In my paper I have been trying to establish a reading of Romans 1 that might be regarded both as the "plain sense" of the text, and as rooted in a historically commonly accepted (if not theologically compelling) rationale regarding the procreative goal of the sexual act. My effort can be easily dismissed, however, by the objection that the biblical witness is so historically and philosophically contingent as to be irrelevant, or that Paul's bigotry is only superseded by my own.

Such objections cannot be adequately treated here, but it is the case that many modern attempts to read Paul are undertaken in a hermeneutic of suspicion. I once received an undergraduate essay entitled, "St Paul the Little Rascal." Although such a title may strike the teacher as adolescent, it is remarkable how often one encounters similarly dismissive attitudes towards Paul in both the Church and the academy. Susanne Heine has written: "In feminist literature Paul is [. . .] clearly the most attacked person in the New Testament: he has been made responsible for all the misfortunes of a Christian tradition which is hostile to women and indeed leads to neurosis."[54]

For this reason a related discussion is necessary regarding the nature of Paul's writing as the word of God. My

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52. *'Abot* R. *Nat*. 14

53. One of the peculiar features of the Greek language is that the word that is used here to mean "interest" (τόκος in v. 27) is also a synonym for the word "child" in Classical Greek. Plato plays on the double meaning of the word in *Republic* 507a. Very literally, as the adage goes, "interest is the child of capital."

54. *Women and Early Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (London, 1987 (Ger. 1986)), p. 82. An example may be cited from Karen M. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: a history of misogyny in literature* (University of Washington, 1966): "[Paul] was the first Biblical writer to emphasize the misogynistic implications of the Jahvist's account of the Creation and Fall. He gave unprecedented emphasis to the Fall, in part no doubt because the story gave support to his natural misogyny, in part because it was the cornerstone of his theology; without the Fall there would have been no need for redemption by Christ, and hence no need for his own mission. The more catastrophic the Fall was, the more important it became to exonerate Adam as much as possible by placing the major guilt on Eve" (p. 9). Paul Gibson, without substantiation, avers, "Paul's unquestioning acceptance of an ancient tribal rejection of homosexuality as a social norm had become the basis of an inflexible regulation" (*Discerning the Word: The Bible and Homosexuality in Anglican Debate* (Toronto : ABC, 2000), p. 85).

predisposition in this paper could be described by Peter Stuhlmacher as a "hermeneutic of consent," that is, a "readiness to receive trustingly what a loving God desires to give us through the testimony of those who have preceded us in the faith."[55] This is not a naïve or thoroughly uncritical stance. A hermeneutic of trust does not discard suspicion, but is chary of applying it too readily to Scripture.[56] Some may regard this as a cop-out, as an example of what Bonhoeffer called a *sacrificium intellectus*. But I would reply, with Bonhoeffer, that this is simply an expression of humble Christian faith — the same kind of faith that affirms that God is revealed in the Bible, even when we can't understand it completely. As Richard Hooker wrote in *Laws* 3.10.1:

> The nature of every law must be judged of by the end for which it was made, and by the aptness of things therein prescribed unto the same end. It may so fall out that the reason why some laws of God were given is neither opened nor possible to be gathered by wit of man. [. . .] Such laws perhaps cannot be abrogated saving only by whom they were made: because the intent of them being known unto none but the author, he alone can judge how long it is requisite they should endure.

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55. Richard B. Hays, "Salvation by Trust? Reading the Bible Faithfully" in *The Christian Century*, February 26, 1997, pp. 218–223.

56. An authentic hermeneutic of faith is suspicious of suspicion (see Rowan Williams, "The Suspicion of Suspicion: Wittgenstein and Bonhoeffer" in *The Grammar of the Heart: New Essays in Moral Philosophy and Theology*, ed. R.H. Bell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 36–53). Ben Meyer draws attention to the approach of the respectful inquirer when he writes, "[The interpreter] does not confront mute nature; he enters into a dialogue, questioning and being questioned. He knows in advance only that without attention and sympathy he may not 'hear' the text." p. 17; "The primacy of consent and the uses of suspicion" in Ex *auditu* 2 1986, pp 7–18.

Five

NOTES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

Lisa Wang

THIS BRIEF COLLECTION of notes gathers a number of observations from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox perspectives, by engaging portions of three works: Kevin Vanhoozer's *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*, John Henry Cardinal Newman's *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, and Peter Bouteneff's *Sweeter than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth*.

K. Vanhoozer: The Drama of Doctrine

I begin with a number of Vanhoozer's statements:[1]

- "Doctrine is a vital ingredient in the well-being of the church, a vital aid to its public witness." (xii)
- "Christian doctrine directs us in the way of truth and life…" (xii)
- "Christian doctrine is necessary for human flourishing: only doctrine shows us who we are, why we are here, and what we are to do." (xiii)
- "Christian doctrine [is] the considered result of faith's search for biblical understanding…" (2)
- "Employing the gospel as its primary … resource for dealing with life's most persistent questions, Christian doctrine teaches us how to cope with various real life crises." (2)
- The purpose of doctrine is to "lead us" in the "way of Jesus Christ." (2)
- Doctrine is "derived from Scripture" and "developed in the believing community." (2)
- "Doctrine helps the church understand where it has been 'thrown' and what role it is to play there." (2)
- "Sound doctrine – authoritative teaching – is vital for the life of the church, and hence for the life of the world." (3)
- "Christian doctrine … should serve the purpose of fostering truthful ways of living." (14)
- "Doctrine seeks not simply to state theoretical truths but to embody truth in ways of living." (15)
- *"The proper end of the drama of doctrine is wisdom: lived knowledge, and a performance of the truth."* (21, author's italics)

For Vanhoozer, doctrine is distinct from Scripture, but ordered towards the application of Scripture to our lives. Doctrine is what happens when we faithfully try to make sense of the Bible. Vanhoozer uses the metaphor of "drama" to describe what doctrine is and how it works: the Bible is the "script" and doctrine is our effort to read that script and "perform" it (i.e. live on the basis of it). The end of doctrine, the goal towards which it is ordered, is simply the Christian life – the living of the gospel.

1. All from Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), pages as cited.

It appears that Vanhoozer, in affirming the principle of *sola Scriptura*, would not regard the Church's doctrine as "the deposit of faith," or as Apostolic in that sense. This means that doctrine is not a form of revelation, not inspired, and therefore not primary. What, then, makes doctrine "authoritative"? Vanhoozer affirms that doctrine is both "necessary" and "vital" – that "only doctrine show us who we are, why we are here, and what we are to do." But how can doctrine be said to be "necessary" when a principle of *sola Scriptura* is affirmed? Vanhoozer seems to suggest that while God's revelation is made to us "only" in Scripture, it is nevertheless impossible to *understand* Scripture without doctrine — not because doctrine is a necessary hermeneutic for reading Scripture, but that, quite simply, it *is* reading Scripture.

Thus, Vanhoozer seems to suggest that doctrine is always being developed, because we are always reading Scripture. He seeks a corrective to the kind of "cultural-linguistic" understanding of Biblical meaning and authority — which he claims underlies much postliberal theology — by affirming instead a "canonical-linguistic" approach that reclaims the Bible itself as the norm by which doctrine is known to be "sound" and therefore "authoritative."[2]

J. H. Newman: The Development of Doctrine

The main weakness in Vanhoozer's approach is that it fails to give a sufficient explanation for how doctrines are and remain authoritative. However, Newman's *Essay* gets to the heart of this theological dilemma. Newman of course accepts an understanding of doctrine as the Apostolic "deposit of faith," handed down through the centuries, authoritative because it is inspired — revealed to the Apostles by Christ himself. As such, it is in some sense inherent within Scripture, the written expression of the Apostolic witness. Yet while the Church teaches that God's revelation has been completed in Christ, at the same time it has continued through the centuries to proclaim certain doctrines which were never discussed explicitly in the Bible, and even to identify them as articles of faith — the hypostases of the Trinity, the being of the Godhead, the natures of Christ, the hypostatic union. If these "new" doctrines are binding, then are they not effectively new *revelation*? If they are *not* new revelation, aren't they then "secondary," and therefore not binding? How can doctrines that were never discussed by the Apostles be said to be part of their enduring, authoritative witness?[3]

Newman's epistemology of "implicit" and "explicit" knowledge offers an explanation. He observed that the human mind can "know" something without having to have a conscious thought about it. He calls this "implicit" or "unconscious" knowing. (For example, we "know" far more than we can ever actually "think about" at any given moment.) So, while the Apostles were not consciously aware of the Church's subsequent dogmas and theological vocabulary, this doesn't mean that they had no knowledge of what was later articulated as doctrine. Rather, "the Apostles had the *fullness* of revealed knowledge, a fullness which they could as little realize to themselves, as the human mind, as such, can have all its thoughts present before it at once."[4] That is, they implicitly believed what the Church later explicitly professed.

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2. The difficulty here is that, if doctrine *is* our reading of Scripture, it is impossible to appeal to the Bible as the norm which verifies doctrine without engaging in *another* act of reading the Bible. We are then effectively verifying doctrine with doctrine. This is not necessarily a problem but it should be unacceptable to Vanhoozer.

3. The Scholastics and subsequent theologians argued that later developments were not "new" because either they were the logical conclusion of the original or earlier doctrines, or were "clarifications" of the same; yet such a logical relationship is not always in evidence.

4. John Henry Cardinal Newman, unpublished paper on the development of doctrine, 1868, cited in J. Derek Holmes, ed., *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Biblical Inspiration and on Infallibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 156.

So in Newman's view, if we were to propose to the Apostles the three hypostases in one substance, the two natures in one person, but without the formulas, without the vocabulary, they would be able to say that this doctrine is indeed what they affirmed to be true, without the formulas, without the vocabulary. "Thus the holy Apostles would without words know all the truths concerning the high doctrines of theology, which controversialists after them have piously and charitably reduced to formulae, and developed through argument." [5] This means that the doctrines which have developed throughout the centuries, and which the Church has affirmed to be genuine, are and remain authoritative, precisely because they *are* the authentic Apostolic witness to the one divine revelation completed in Christ. This is a bold claim indeed, yet it makes sense of the reality of what we profess. [6] For Newman, doctrine — the "deposit of faith" — is not a series of propositions, "not a number of formulas" [7] that the Apostles had all worked out, but a *way of thinking* with the mind of Christ — a kind of "living idea" in God's own Heart.

P. Bouteneff: Dogma and Truth

Unlike Vanhoozer and Newman, Bouteneff does not offer a systematic theology of doctrine but presents a sketch of the various features of Orthodox understandings of doctrine and its authority, sources, and development. For Bouteneff doctrine is the teaching of the Church and the means by which the Holy Spirit teaches and "guides us into all truth." [8] This activity of the Spirit within the Church begins with the event of Pentecost and the Apostolic witness to Christ that it empowered. It continues with the teachings of the Fathers and the councils, up to the present day. Though it sounds as if Bouteneff is describing an ongoing process of pneumatic activity, and therefore of revelation, he insists that "since God's final revelation in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ … there are effectively no new teachings. There are, rather, new formulations, new expressions, and new implications…" (135). [9]

Bouteneff draws a distinction between doctrine and dogma — that is, between the teachings of the Church, and the teachings of the Church *that are binding*. Doctrines become dogma when they have been "clearly defined" by ecumenical councils and "universally accepted" by the Orthodox churches (198). They define what make us Christian. To oppose them is to place oneself "outside the communion of faith that is the Church" (197).

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5. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th ed., repr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 191-192.

6. In addition, Newman offers a number of "notes" or characteristics of "genuine" doctrinal developments: preservation of type (the development remains essentially the same kind of thing as the original); continuity of principles (the principles that underlie the development remain the same); power of assimilation (the development has absorbed or overshadowed other developments); logical sequence (the theological and intellectual fruits of the development are logically coherent); anticipation of its future (the development was clearly anticipated in the earliest stages of the original doctrine); conservative action upon its past (the development tends to preserve the original doctrine and build on it, not contradict or eliminate it); chronic vigour (the development has a lasting rather than a transitory character).

7. Holmes, ed., 157.

8. Peter Bouteneff, *Sweeter than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 118. Subsequent page references given parenthetically.

9. As an example of this, Bouteneff cites St Gregory of Nazianzus on the humanity of Christ's body and soul: "this was not a new teaching but the formulation of a truth already revealed in the Scriptures… Although Gregory did seem to say something new, he was only giving expression to something that had been believed everywhere, always, and by all who were of the Church" (135).

Bouteneff also identifies a second distinction between "source" dogmas and "consequent" dogmas, that is, dogmas directly about Christ and the Trinity, and dogmas that "follow inexorably from the christological and trinitarian dogmas" (201). An example of a consequent dogma is Mary's virginal conception of Christ, which is inexorably contingent upon the dogma of Christ's divinity (202). An example of a doctrine which is *not* consequent dogma would be the sinlessness of the Virgin Mary which, though proclaimed by the Church's liturgy, is *not* inexorably contingent upon its Christology. Bouteneff claims that such non-dogmatic doctrines do not deal with matters of salvific consequence: "in discerning dogmas, the Church asks whether our salvation is truly at stake in the matter. Is it a matter of our spiritual life and death? If not, we do not dogmatize" (206). [10]

Like Vanhoozer, Bouteneff insists that Scripture remains the norm for all doctrine: "To discern whether a teaching is of the Church, our primary criterion is Scripture" (133). He also, like Vanhoozer, recognizes that "Scripture is not self-interpreting" (149): "we read Scripture 'in the Church' … in the light of the Church's tradition" (133) — "through the patristic legacy, the Church's liturgical life, the ecumenical councils, the saints, and even the Church's iconography and architecture" (142). Bouteneff's view of Tradition seems to mirror Vanhoozer's view of doctrine: "Tradition represents the right reading of Scripture" (146). It is "a way of reading Scripture," an "activity" (144), "the unique *mode of receiving the truth* that is found in Scripture" (145). Unlike Vanhoozer, however, Bouteneff recognizes up front that "the relationship between Scripture and Tradition is circular" (146) and "there is no escape from the circularity" (192): "Tradition represents the right reading of Scripture. But how do we identify what is of Tradition? By referring to Scripture" (146).

Bouteneff also admits that the process of determining whether or not a doctrine is genuine, and further, whether or not it is dogma, "requires time, and often a good deal of it" (138). In fact, "strictly speaking, we can't know, here and now" (132). For example, in the case of the Nicene Creed, it was neither the council itself, nor the bishops, but the *reception of their teaching*, which took decades, that finally "answered" the question of whether it was a genuine development of doctrine.

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10. This distinction between doctrines related or unrelated to our salvation is problematic because acceptance of dogma entails a *way of life*, which in turn entails acceptance of a whole series of doctrines that may or may not be dogma, but that define *what it means to accept the dogma*. In this sense, there is no such thing as a doctrine which is not a matter of our salvation. Bouteneff himself admits that faith "is never just a matter of subscribing … it is a vital conformity to Christ as he is revealed to us" (209-10).

To summarize:

	Protestant / Reformed Vanhoozer	Roman Catholic Newman	Orthodox Bouteneff
View of Doctrine	"Low" doctine is distinct from and contingent upon Biblical revelation; it is our act of reading the Bible	"High" doctrine is conterminous with Biblical revelation; it inheres with the Apostolic witness	"Broad" doctrine is not the content of revelation but is the means of our receiving it
Doctrine is authoritative because	the Bible is	being conterminous with the Apostolic withness of Scripture, it is divinely inspired	the Church's lasting integration of them into her life and worship (Tradition) validates them as genuine
Doctrinal development is a function of	the ongoing interpretation of Scripture necessary for living the gospel	the Church's ongoing reflection on the Apostolic witness	the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit, at work in and through us

In markedly different ways, all three perspectives agree that doctrine is and must be Scriptural. They would all affirm, as Bouteneff says, that "there is no truth in the Church that is not Scriptural truth: nothing that isn't based on what is given to us in the Bible" (143). Vanhoozer's post-postliberal approach wants to re-locate the authority of doctrine in Scripture itself (rather than in the believing community's reading of Scripture), yet is caught in the hermeneutical circle to which his *sola Scriptura* principle binds him: how can the Bible be the ultimate norm for doctrine when it cannot be read *apart* from doctrine? Newman doesn't encounter this problem because for him doctrine is conterminous with or inherent in Scripture, and therefore shares in its divine authority and inspiration. Bouteneff doesn't go so far, but while asserting the primacy of Scripture, takes the path to which Vanhoozer objects, namely, that of grounding the authority of doctrine in its reception by the Church. This is inevitable if doctrine is understood to be distinct from and secondary to Scripture: it must then turn to Scripture as its norm, requiring a further act of interpretation, thus falling into the hermeneutical circle. This trap is only avoided when doctrine is understood to be essentially *the same thing* as Scripture — the Apostolic witness to the revelation of Christ — and therefore authoritative.

What would a faithful development of the doctrine of marriage look like?

According to Vanhoozer, it would have to:

- be derived from Scripture and developed in the believing community
- contribute to the well-being of the Church and its understanding of its role and witness
- show us who we are, why we are here, and what we are to do
- help us to be people who truly live the gospel of Christ

According to Newman, it would have to:

- be present either explicitly or implicitly in the original Apostolic witness
- be something that the Apostles themselves would have affirmed

and it ought to:

- be essentially the same kind of teaching as the original doctrine of marriage
- be founded on the same principles
- have absorbed or assimilated other developments of the doctrine of marriage
- contribute to the formation of a logically coherent theology of marriage
- have been clearly anticipated in the earliest stages of the doctrine of marriage
- preserve and build on, not contradict or nullify, the original doctrine of marriage
- not fade away with time

According to Bouteneff, it would have to:

- be founded on the Church's reading of Scripture
- "derive its trustworthiness from the tradition of the Fathers" (170) and the councils
- resonate with the liturgy, hymnody, and iconography of the Church
- be fully received by the faithful of the Orthodox churches

All of these sound like excellent criteria and are valuable guidelines for the consideration of the development of doctrine. Though as Anglicans we may feel no small affinity for the Orthodox tradition of reserve in the definition of dogma and the systematization of belief, as Western Christians we have been shaped by centuries of cultural and philosophical influences that have had no place in the Orthodox tradition. It is not possible for us as a church to restore a "lost innocence" by jumping into epistemological waters that we don't know how to navigate. Rather, while we may be daunted by the way Newman obviously sets the bar of his criteria at its highest, the insight he gives us into the limits of Anglicanism are invaluable and, I would venture to say, has the most at this juncture to offer us. For better or worse, we are children of the Reformation, and of the Enlightenment, and must address the difficulties this heritage has left us, neither turning a blind eye to them nor seeking simply to escape them.

When we know that doctrine matters because the truth matters, and that God's making Himself known to us in that truth is a gift of His love, then we may at last allow doctrine to do what it was made to do — teach us.

SIX

DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

Stephen Andrews

CAN THE BLESSING or marriage of same-sex partnerships be coherently understood as a faithful and Spririt-led development of doctrine in coherence within the terms of the Solemn Declaration?

a. Re. the institution of marriage in the Prayer Book tradition: It may well be that marriage was originally a social institution into which Christians entered, but it is clear that this institution has at least been "theologised" in the sense that certain Christian values and expectations have been laid upon the institution. In whatever way Christian marriage is reconceived these values and expectations ought to be maintained. In part these include:

   - a recognition that the partners already bear a relationship as siblings in the family of God
   - a recognition that marriage is an instrument of sanctification
   - a recognition that marriage is the only proper context for sexual union
   - a recognition that one of the purposes of marriage is to produce offspring
   - a recognition that marriage is intended to provide companionship

b. Given the priority placed on the Scriptural witness, and what I perceive to be the biblical perspective on the matter of the proper expression of human sexuality, the answer would have to be "no." I believe that there are two general requirements that must be met: it must be endorsed or at least permitted by the Bible when read "plainly;" and it must be endorsed or at least permitted by the Catholic Church in some ecumenical manifestation. I recognize that both of these criteria are complex and interrelated.

c. By requiring the "plain reading" of Scripture, I am aware that it is ultimately the Catholic Christian community that decides what this is. What may at one time have been considered a "plain" reading can to us seem arbitrary or bizarre and is no longer regarded as a coherent way of approaching the Bible (here I am thinking of some of the more notorious examples of allegorical readings of the Bible). Nevertheless, I believe that there are more general rules for reading the Bible that have been operative for the Church in all times and in all places.[1] Inter-

1. Augustine's allegorism, for instance, is not unprincipled; firstly because any of the various meanings produced by allegorical interpretation must be harmonious with the teaching of the rest of Scripture and, secondly, because all Scripture is the work of the Holy Spirit who, he says, must have known that these various meanings would occur to the readers of Scripture (*De doctrina* 3.27.38). Moreover, a proper reading is contingent on the predisposition of the reader: "In this every student of the Divine Scriptures must exercise himself, having found nothing else in them except [. . .] that God is to be loved for Himself, and his neighbour for the sake of God." (2.7.10) Alan Richardson writes: "The doctors of the Church were well aware of the dangers of subjectivism, and they insisted that all allegorical interpretations of any given passage of Holy Scripture must be controlled by the Church's understanding of the teaching of the Bible as a whole." (*Christian Apologetics* (SCM : London, 1947), p. 181.

preters have always attempted to discern authorial intent; both human (*sensus literalis*) and divine (*sensus plenior*); have valued linguistic or verbal analysis; and have paid credit to the notion that scripture *sui ipsius interpres* (a principle formulated by the Reformers, but evident in practice in all interpretative traditions where the Scriptures are approached as a canonical whole). [2]

d. By requiring the consent, explicitly or implicitly, of the Catholic Church I am conscious of the way that the interpretation of particular doctrines, particular passages of Scripture, and biblical theology as a whole, has evolved over the past two millennia. There is a kind of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (reception history) which, I believe, is contiguous with the trajectory of God's progressive revelation evident in the Bible itself and which reveals the work of the Spirit in the Church. The difficulty comes in recognizing Catholic consent if it happens in a non-conciliar fashion. Anglican experience would indicate that Spirit-led movements do not require a democratic process to validate them (see Article XXI, Articles of Religion, (*The Book of Common Prayer*, 1962, Canada), p 698).

e. Now to the matter of the blessing of same-sex unions: I confess that I am not prepared at this point to receive this innovation as a legitimate development of doctrine. For reasons I am explaining in a paper entitled "Is there a Natural Reading of Romans 1.24-27?," I do not find any of the proposed readings of Romans 1 that would permit or endorse contemporary expressions of same-sex sexual behaviour to be sufficiently plain. My perception is that the anatomical complementarity of the genders and the explicit procreational purpose of sexual congress in the creation narrative are at the root of the apostolic proscriptions and are compelling reasons for the Church to maintain the tradition of heterosexual union. Moreover, I do not believe that the church in any denominational expression, at least, should feel the liberty to embrace this innovation without a broader acceptance in the Church universal. This is unlikely to come about without a more persuasive biblical and theological case being made.[3]

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2. See *Ad Litteram: How Augustine, Calvin, and Barth Read the "Plain Sense" of Genesis 1-3*, by K. E. Greene-McCreight (Issues in Systematic Theology, vol. 5. New York and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999).

3. For instance, I am mindful of the challenge of Kathryn Greene-McGreight: we must first be persuaded "that genital gratification is indeed such a fundamental part of our identity that to deny it would be to diminish our humanity" (in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense"' of Scripture*, ed. David L. Balch (Grand Rapids/Cambridge : Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 253-4.

SEVEN

SAME-SEX BLESSINGS:

A Systematic-Theological Rationale

Paul Jennings

A. Introduction

1. The impulse for a re-examination of the previous understanding of same-sex unions comes from the experience of Western churches of the presence in our midst of gay and lesbian Christians living in committed relationships of fidelity, caring and love. The concept of "experience" refers to the practical discernment of the working of the Spirit in the life of the church. It is a Biblical principle that this discernment is based on the spiritual fruits manifested in the lives of Christians (Matthew 7:15-20; Galatians 5:22-23). With the growing openness in our society towards homosexuality, we have realized that homosexuals are not someone else: they are members of our church (and often of our families), living Christian lives and often living in relationships that show the fruits of fidelity and kindness over the course of a lifetime.
2. Experience alone is an insufficient basis for the church's theological judgements; we are required to measure and test the phenomena against our core understanding of the truth of the gospel, as reflected in the Scriptures and the core texts of our tradition. This is the process of theological reflection proper. Although it has been ongoing on this topic for decades, many in the Communion have not yet heard the arguments made with sufficient clarity. There is accordingly an onus on our church, as we consider the possibility of changing our practice, to give a theological account, to seek to articulate with ever greater clarity how this innovation relates to the Gospel. The minimal result of this work would have to be to show that same-sex blessings are compatible with the Gospel, so that they are permitted in the church. A further potential result might be the discovery that they are demanded by the Gospel, a discernment that the church is actively called to change its teaching and practice.
3. It is perhaps best to avoid the language of "making the case" for or against same-sex blessings; the courtroom metaphor tends to cast the question in oppositional terms, which does not do justice to our calling to thoughtful and prayerful common discernment. While opposition may be the reality of how the church is approaching the issue, we should not reinforce or normalize this through our language. This reflection will not attempt to formulate binding proofs that wish to compel assent. No argument offered can clinch the dispute; counter-arguments can be made to each. This lies in the nature of theological discourse: it is rational, but it is not the rationality of the strict and cogent syllogism. Theology cannot force our assent, any more than God compels our worship. Both rest on the willing engagement of faith. In methodological terms, this means that theology convinces not by linear syllogisms, but by offering a coherent rational vision of God and reality that rings most true to our faith in Jesus Christ.
4. The approach taken here will be systematic: grounding specific questions of human behaviour in a broader Christian vision of what it means to be human, and what Christian holiness consists of. This in turn must be

grounded in a still more fundamental understanding of who God is, and how God relates to us. This understanding is the core of the gospel, as revealed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, as witnessed in Scripture and interpreted by the credal tradition of the church. The path of theological argumentation thus begins with the core nature of God, proceeds to a Christian anthropology, and from there to a consideration of human sexuality and the fact of homosexuality.

B. Theological and Anthropological Context

5. The starting-point of theological reflection is the nature of God — not as derived from general philosophical principles, but from the self-revelation of God as witnessed in Holy Scriptures. For the Christian doctrinal tradition, God is understood in God's inmost being as Trinity, the eternal relationship of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Love is not an incidental attribute of God, one divine characteristic among many, but is at the very centre of who God is; not as an abstraction, but a real and eternal activity. God is not the monolithic principle of absolute monotheism (nor certainly the conflicting and relative projections of polytheism!), but most fundamentally being in relationship, the specific eternal perichoresis of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Faith in the Trinity has consequences for all the rest of our theology. Whereas absolute monotheism implies an ethic of hierarchy, subordination and uniformity, the doctrine of the Trinity privileges relationship, mutuality and diversity.
6. The Trinitarian nature of God is also the key to our own identity as human beings. Our creation is itself an act of the overflowing love of the Trinity, which in its infinite generosity reached beyond its perfect self-sufficiency to create another. We exist, beings distinct from God, because we are loved by God and in order to love God. We exist as individual human beings, in all the diversity of the human condition, in order to cultivate relationships of love with one another. God's love is not the attraction of like to like, but the challenging and reconciling love of the other. Human diversity, then, is not a fall from grace, but the gift that enables us to fulfill our calling to love. In the Spirit's action at Pentecost (not reversing, but blessing, the diversity of Babel), in the mission to the Gentiles which arose from it, in the Pauline vision of a community defined by the reconciliation of diversity (Galatians 3:18), the practice of this love takes communal form in the church.
7. The Biblical creation story expresses the human capacity to be in relationship in the concept of the imago Dei. "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27). The passage links the image of God to the fact of our gender diversity. What cannot be meant by this passage is that this gender diversity is constitutive of God's own being: this would place God on the level of the fertility deities consistently rejected by the Biblical witness. God is neither male nor female nor some combination of both; while God is the origin of both the masculine and feminine equally, these categories do not define God. The image of God we bear is thus not gender complementarity (that is shared by many life-forms, whereas the imago is clearly a *proprium* of humanity); it is rather the capacity to be in relationship, the capacity to exercise the divine love of the other, symbolized by the fundamental human diversity of male and female.
8. The purpose of human existence, then, is to love. We are created to be in relationship, with God and with one another. This primary theological purpose is the basis of all Christian ethics. Sin, in its most fundamental nature, is all that destroys these two relationships. The New Testament expresses this explicitly by designating the Great Commandment to love as the summary of the law and the prophets — a theme central to the Synoptic, Johannine and Pauline traditions. [1]

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1. Cf. Mt 22:34-40; Mk 12:28-31; Lk 10:25-28; Jn 13:34, 15:12; 1 John 3:11; Rom 13:8-10.

C. Marriage and Sexuality

9. The purpose of living in loving relationships finds its concrete shape in particular more or less institutional relationships: the church community, family relationships (such as parent-child or sibling), friendship, workplace communities, political institutions, etc. Among these, marriage has a distinct place: not the most important theologically (that would surely be our relationships in the body of Christ), but with its own distinct shape. This shape has been defined by the Christian tradition and our wedding liturgies in terms of the three purposes of marriage: mutual support, procreation, and sexual expression. These three purposes of marriage are to be understood in terms of our fundamental calling to be in loving relationship.[2]

10. Marriage is most fundamentally a community of and school for Christian love, characterized by the "mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other." This particular relationship is defined by the commitments of love, fidelity and permanence made in the marriage vows: marriage is that form of Christian community where we take on the responsibility of loving one particular individual in the unremitting intimacy of daily life, over the course of a lifetime.

11. Secondly, and on the basis of the preceding purpose, marriage has been seen as the ideal context for the procreation and raising of children. It must be noted, however, that this purpose is not absolute in the Anglican tradition: we have always recognized childless couples as fully married; our liturgy provides for the marriage of couples beyond childbearing age; and, on the other hand, we recognize single parents, extended families, and adoptive relationships as valid forms of parenting.[3]

12. Marriage is also (in the context of this agapic love) the community where we live out the erotic aspects of love, our desire and need to be desired, with the one person we can trust to share the joy and burden of our sexuality. The Christian tradition has recognized sexuality as a fundamental human need.[4] When we have lost sight of this, it is when we have denied our nature as incarnate beings, to our great detriment.[5] This recognition of a fundamental need is clearly not a licence to act out all of our impulses. This need goes beyond any specific acts and desires; it is at root our need to be cherished, to be desired, to be found wholly beautiful in body and soul. It is a place of great intimacy and vulnerability.

13. By this very intimacy, our sexuality is an area of heightened moral danger. Sex is not intrinsically sinful, but neither is it, in a post-Edenic world, exempt from our fallenness. As we come so close to another person's sense of worth, the responsibility to be trustworthy, gentle and generous is great. In our sexuality we are confronted in

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2. Much has been made of the differing order of the three purposes in the *BCP*, Canadian *BCP* and *BAS* liturgies; and it is indeed probable that the reordering in the *BAS* is intended to emphasize the primary importance of "mutual comfort and help." However, it does not follow that the original *BCP* order means conversely to imply a primacy of procreation. Not until 1662 was the word "first" used, which might be open to this construction; the 1549 wording, "one cause," clearly is not. Furthermore, the precedent of Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*, which names "friendship" as primary, makes it unlikely that the *BCP* intends to teach that child-bearing is a primary purpose.

3. The historic collusion of the Church in civil society's discrimination against illegitimate children is increasingly recognized as an unchristian adoption of the values of secular society. This particular prejudice is untenable in a community that confesses that its Lord is a "bastard" — as we effectively do in the Nicene Creed.

4. Cf. 1 Cor 7:3,5,9; note also the Prayer Book's reference to "those that have not the gift of continency" (from 1552 on).

5. This is of course not to deny the role of celibacy as an honourable alternative to marriage in the Christian tradition; but our tradition, at least since the Reformation, sees it as a special vocation for some, not as a morally superior choice for everybody.

graphic clarity with the shadow side of ourselves: the temptation to gratify our own needs selfishly, to dominate and objectify the other. The ethical value of our sexual expression is defined by the quality of relationship; to the extent that a relationship is trustworthy, caring, committed and mutual, healthy sexual expression can flourish. The covenant of marriage promotes this kind of relationship, but it cannot guarantee it. It must be lived out in genuine love.[6]

14. Christian faith has come to recognize (somewhat belatedly and hesitantly, it is true) the fundamental goodness of sexuality as a gift of God to be celebrated.[7] In the context of a committed relationship, as it serves to deepen the couple's love and care for one another, sex brings not only physical pleasure, but much more importantly the experience of being known and loved, expressed through the body. The Christian tradition has seen a quasi-sacramental function in sexuality as an expression of love. The experience of being beloved, accepted and desired by another human being, and its bodily expression in sexual love, is one of the fundamental existential corelates by which we can understand experientially (sacramentally) the wonder of God's love for us (parental love being another).[8] Thus both Scripture and the Christian tradition have developed the sexual metaphor: for example, in the allegorical reading of the Song of Songs, or the Bride imagery of Ephesians (5:25-33) and Revelation (21:2; 22:17). Unlike pagan religions which sacralized the fertility inherent in sexuality, in the Judeo-Christian tradition it is the "delight and tenderness" of sexual love that serves as a symbol of God's love.

D. Homosexuality

15. It is in the context of this account of the nature of God, human destiny and the purpose of marriage and sexuality that the Church has been brought to confront the phenomenon of homosexuality. The fact of homosexuality is new to the church, as to our culture at large. While same-sex eroticism is certainly familiar to the ancient world, Biblical as well as classical, the phenomenon of sexual orientation has been recognized only in the past century and a half.[9] Sexual orientation refers to a basic orientation of desire towards one gender or the other, as a fundamental aspect of a person's character. This orientation is not chosen, but given in a person's self-experience. There is no indication that the Biblical texts anywhere address homosexuality as an orientation; it is specific sexual acts that are mentioned.[10] Homosexual orientation is a "new" fact for the church; not because it did not exist before, but because until recently the church has remained ignorant of it. As with other "new" facts (such

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6. One of the chief weaknesses of traditional Christian sexual ethics has been its tendency to rely completely on external criteria to determine what sexual activity is acceptable. Most commonly the criterion is solely the presence or absence of a marriage contract, although in some cases (esp. in parts of the Roman Catholic Church) the moralists have attempted to regulate the particular physical shape of sexual acts themselves. The problem is that such a purely external standard cannot reflect the complexities of human relationships. It has led the church to condemn and forbid many caring and godly relationships, while at the same time shutting its eyes to abusive and loveless marital relations.

7. "That they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love" (*BAS*, p 528).

8. Parental love is the category by which we understand the doctrines of creation and providence, acts of grace primarily associated with the first person of the Trinity. Sexual love is a metaphor for the doctrine of election: the wonder that God has chosen humankind as objects of divine love, through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

9. The first use of the word "homosexual" dates to 1869.

10. This is evident in the oft-cited passage in Romans (the men likewise gave up the natural use of women and were consumed with passion for one another 1:27), which clearly envisages homosexual activity as a culpable turning away from heterosexuality. As some gay men have argued, the passage can hardly apply to them, as the "use" of women is not natural to them, and indeed they cannot be said to have given it up if they have never practised it.

as the heliocentric solar system, biological evolution or liberal democracy) we cannot simply apply old texts intended to answer other questions; we must make sense of it by thinking of it critically in the context of our Christian faith as a whole.

16. A second fact must be immediately added to the above: that, as mentioned in §1, gay men and women are living in committed partnerships, often within the Christian community, that show the same characteristics of love, compassion, fidelity, support and permanence (as well as the same struggles and weaknesses) as heterosexual married couples. This suggests that what is at stake with same-sex relationships is not just an alternative between sin or ethical indifference, but the positive good of a mature agapic partnership. The close structural parallels between these partnerships and traditional marriage means that we must consider them in light of the traditional purposes of marriage.[11]

17. Same-sex unions between Christians are forms of Christian community that fulfill the primary purpose of marriage: "the mutual society, comfort and help that the one ought to have of the other." They are a form of friendship given particular shape by vows of fidelity and permanence; same-sex couples share the task of loving one individual in intimacy and depth, "for better for worse, for richer for poorer" over the course of a lifetime. This is not something we should lightly dismiss, as though love were just a special privilege or unnecessary extra. While some people are called to celibacy, for those who are not, a love relationship is a major Christian responsibility, one of the key ways in which they are called to live out the ethic of Christ-like love, and so is an essential part of their realizing the full humanity to which they are called. We must pay due heed to the traditional understanding that the commitment to this kind of relationship articulated in the marriage vows should be expected of all serious love relationships.

18. As for the second purpose of marriage: these friendships are also sexual in nature.[12] This is, obviously, the core of the controversy: whether the sexual aspect of these relationships is acceptable to God.[13] The question must be contextualized in two ways. Sexuality exists in the context of the broader and deeper relationship just mentioned, and cannot be discussed apart from it. Sex is only part of any marriage, measured against decades of companionship and domestic life; it is a significant part, but one we should beware of taking out of its context.

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11. This is not to prejudge the question as to whether same-sex unions are ultimately most appropriately seen simply as identical to heterosexual marriage (to be regulated by amending the Marriage Canon) or as a parallel category of covenanted relationships. The St. Michael Report recognized committed same-sex unions as "analogous" to marriage, leaving the question of the precise identity and difference open. More theological work would be necessary on this question if the church were to proceed with a revision of the Marriage Canon. Should the canonical provisions be identical? Would we use identical liturgies for heterosexual marriage and for same-sex blessings? These are theological questions, that must be decided independently of the civil status of same-sex relationships. What is currently at stake, however, is not the ultimate form of these blessings, but the preliminary question of whether the church should bless these relationships.

12. For this reason it seems to me that the proposal to model same-sex blessings on the analogy of monastic friendship covenants, rather than on the analogy of heterosexual marriage, is inadequate. Although I would argue that the *details* of a couple's sexual expression (for both hetero- and homosexual couples) is no one's business but their own, the *fact* that it is a sexual relationship is to be acknowledged and celebrated by the community.

13. Much of the discomfort around the blessing of same-sex unions appears to revolve around a misunderstanding of the relationship between marriage and sexuality: that marriage is a rite by which the church endorses specific sexual acts, in the concrete sense of blessing whatever goes on in the couple's bed. It is, rather, the relationship that we bless; in the context of that relationship the church leaves it up to the couple to discern those forms of physical expression appropriate to the dignity of their relationship. It has, mercifully, not been the custom for some time in our Anglican tradition to preach on which particular sexual acts or positions are acceptable — at least, for heterosexuals. Neither in marriage nor in the blessing of a same-sex relationship is the church passing any judgement, positive or negative, on any specific forms of sexual expression.

Secondly, a theological consideration of gay sexuality is not a licence to take a prurient and graphic interest in specific sexual acts. Sexual intimacy (anyone's sexual intimacy) is far too subtle a business to be caught by mechanical descriptions of what body part comes in contact with what other one. What is tender and intimate to the grace-filled eyes of love can always appear shameful when viewed by others with hostility or indifference.

19. As for the third purpose of marriage, the procreation and raising of children: clearly same-sex couples are not able to conceive a child together. The same can be said for many heterosexual couples, whose marriage is nonetheless recognized by the church as fully valid. And many same-sex couples do choose to raise children, and provide loving and healthy homes.

20. Covenanted same-sex relationships, then, are analogous to marriage. They are similar in structure, in terms of the commitments made by the couple, the quality of relationship, the dimension of sexuality, and the capacity, if not to conceive, to nourish children or otherwise provide a home for others. The only significant difference is that the partners are of the same gender. In seeking to enter covenanted relationships, homosexual Christians are striving to live out their orientation as a form of agapic love to which all Christians are called (1 Cor 13), by taking on the same responsibilities to one another and to the community as heterosexual Christians do. On the basis of the purposes of marriage it would seem not only that there are no significant obstacles to same-sex blessings, but that they are a positive good in terms of a Christian understanding of relationship.

21. There remains the question of "complementarity:" whether the "natural" complementarity of male and female is an essential element in love relationships (whether marriage or a parallel category of blessings). The argument is sometimes made, on the basis of Ephesians 5, that sexual complementarity is essential to the nature of marriage, precisely in its "sacramental" function of imaging the relationship between Christ and the Church.[14] On this account, it is precisely the differentiation of roles in the couple (the husband loving, the wife obeying) that makes marriage a fit metaphor for Christ's relationship to us. Same-sex blessings then would be an erosion of this vision.[15] It could be answered that such a reading of Ephesians emphasizes precisely the point on which the text is most caught in the cultural assumptions of its contemporary society, and so fails to rise to that vision of a community where gender differences have been transcended expressed in the earliest Christian witness.[16] The theologically more significant aspect of the passage is the call to be Christ to one another: husband to wife, but also, surely, wife to husband. This vision of marriage as a community liberated from patriarchal structures leaves room for differently patterned heterosexual as well as same-sex relationships.[17] The complementarity argument must be rejected because it reflects a fundamentally pagan conception of marriage, in which the "natural" complementarity of male and female trumps the new creation of Christian community; so that marriage becomes ultimately reproductive in nature, rather than ecclesial.

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14. "Sacramental" is used here, with the patristic tradition, as a translation of the *mysterion* of Eph 5:32 , not in the later scholastic sense disputed by the 39 Articles.

15. As would the view of heterosexual marriage that sees man and woman as undifferentiated partners without pre-determined gender roles, suggested by the dropping of "obey" from the woman's marriage vow. Note that the same pattern of thought, the semantic step of absolutizing a Biblical metaphor into a literal norm to regulate all human behaviour, may be observed in a number of similar arguments: the insistence on exclusively masculine language to designate God, the argument against the ordination of women, and, formerly, Christian anti-Semitism and the Christian defence of slavery or class distinctions. This is not meant to denigrate the argument against same-sex blessings by association with any of these causes, but simply to point out a common logical move, which I suggest is a fallacy.

16. Gal 3:28.

17. It should be noted that the critique of the patriarchal assumptions of "complementarity" does not imply the erasure of all gender characteristics in a bland unisex humanity. It simply claims that gender differences need not be normative in the sense of limiting the created diversity of the individual.

22. With respect to the handful of Biblical texts referring expressly to homosexual behaviour,[18] a few comments will have to suffice for this context:

   a. As mentioned above, none of the texts address either the phenomenon of homosexual orientation, or the context of long-term covenanted relationships. Indeed, there is no indication that either possibility was even remotely within the awareness of the Biblical writers.

   b. Only Leviticus articulates a prohibition on same-sex activity, or is even talking primarily about same-sex relations. All of the New Testament passages simply cite promiscuous same-sex behaviour as examples: Romans in an argument that links compulsive promiscuity to idolatry, 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy in broad lists of vices. As the context is clearly one of promiscuity, the behaviour cited would be equally reprehensible if it were heterosexual. The attempt to draw a general prohibition of same-sex relationships from these passages is an act of exegetical extrapolation.

   c. The Leviticus passages are part of the "holiness code," marking out the specific identity of the people of Israel, which has never been understood as binding on Christians. The attempt to claim that "moral" law is binding, while ceremonial law is not (Article vii, Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1962, Canada p. 698) is not practicable, as the text does not recognize this distinction. It amounts to an arbitrary imposing of our cultural values upon the text.[19]

23. Reading this handful of negative references in Scripture as a prohibition binding on Christians — in the face of the evidence of faithful, caring, godly relationships — is problematic on a deeper level, because it ignores the strong Scriptural tradition of the critique of the law. A differentiated and conflicted relationship to the law is an essential feature of Jesus' ministry, as seen in his repeated and intentional violation of Sabbath and purity laws in the name of mercy,[20] and in his bitter critique of the Pharisees.[21] In the Sermon on the Mount he radicalizes the commandments (Mt 5:21-48), understanding them as guiding and convicting our attitudes on a deeper level. In his proclamation of the Great Commandment[22] as the summary of all laws, Jesus places the practice of love as the ultimate criterion of Christian moral action. This teaching is taken up and reinforced by Paul (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:13-14), to the point that Paul can accept the phrase "all things are lawful" (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23) as

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18. Specifically, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10: a total of six out of over 30,000 verses. One might add a seventh, Genesis 19:5, from the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is often cited in this context, although the crime of the Sodomites has more to do with the violation of hospitality than with the gender of the guests they were intending to rape.

19. It is sometimes suggested that a distinction can be made on the basis of the Council of Jerusalem's interdiction on "fornication" (πορνεια; Acts 15:29). This is problematical on a number of grounds. First of all, there is the question of the meaning of πορνεια, which clearly applies equally to heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity. Secondly, there is the embarrassing fact that the church has tended to ignore the other three stipulations of Acts 15:29 ("abstain from foods offered to idols and from blood and from what is strangled"). Most serious is the fact that Paul's first-person account in Gal 2:10 directly contradicts Acts' assertion that there were any stipulations. This is of course not to suggest that fornication was acceptable to Paul (or for that matter to the Christian tradition in general); but it is not so because it does not "build up," not because it is forbidden by Biblical law.

20. Mk 2:27; 3:4; Lk 11:37; 13:10-17.

21. Mk 7:6-7; Mt 23; Lk 11:42-52.

22. So the Synoptic tradition (Mk 12:28-34; Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28); "New Commandment" in the Johannine tradition (Jn 13:34; 15:12).

an expression of Christian liberty, limited only — and that is a large reservation! — by what is "beneficial," what "builds up." The story of the Peter's vision of the net let down from heaven (Acts 10:9-16) provides a narrative expression of this primitive Christian critique of the law. To suggest, then, that supposed Biblical prohibitions against homosexuality are not binding on Christians is not a modern liberal evasion, but is consistent with a major theological concern of the New Testament. For Paul especially, this Christian freedom from the law was not about permissiveness, but about the fundamental integrity of the gospel (Gal 5:1-2). If we cite Biblical prohibitions, without paying attention to the extent to which covenanted same-sex relationships are "beneficial" and "build up" both the couple and the community, we are in danger of betraying the evangelical freedom proclaimed by Paul.

24. A central feature of Jesus' ministry, building on the prophets' call to justice, is the radical inclusiveness of the community he gathered. In his healings, teaching and table-fellowship, Jesus consistently reached out to those who were marginalised politically, socially and religiously: the poor, women, lepers, the mentally ill, Samaritans, tax-collectors, the ritually unclean, criminals, even Gentiles. A similar ethos of inclusiveness is evident in the earliest Christian community, in which Jew and Gentile, men and women, slave and free came together as equals. For this reason, modern liberationist movements have found inspiration in the Christian gospel, and their concerns have (often belatedly) been accepted by the wider church as necessary consequences of the gospel: we may think of the development of parliamentary democracy, the anti-slavery movement, the civil rights movement, liberation theology, and the women's movement. The full and equal inclusion of those of homosexual orientation in society and the church cannot be dismissed as a merely secular development; it is a plausible consequence of Jesus' own practice of including those who suffer contempt and religious marginalisation in their society.

25. Finally, we must consider the pastoral situation of gay men and women in our society. Despite considerable progress in liberal Western society, they still face prejudice, hostility even from family, religious condemnation and occasionally violence. For many, especially young people, this hostility can be internalized as self-loathing. "Coming out" is still an act that demands great public courage and a challenging inner journey towards self-acceptance. What is the church's responsibility in ministering to these people, who may be strangers to us (but not to Jesus), but also may be our neighbours and children and clergy — ourselves? Our present position of denying them an appropriate form of partnership has only destructive results, encouraging dishonesty, sham marriages, loneliness, perhaps promiscuity, and more self-loathing. We would do well to remember that in our tradition life-long celibacy is seen as a particular and positive vocation, not something that can be imposed on an entire group of people.[23] If the church fails to affirm gay Christians and healthy same-sex relationships, it risks throwing up unnecessary stumbling-blocks to their faith development, and thereby sinning against the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:13; Mk 3:29; 9:42). The blessing of unions is a crucial element in any true welcoming of people of homosexual orientation in the church, because only when the church signals that it values their relationships does it accept homosexuals as homosexuals, not only when they are pretending not to be.[24]

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23. This was recognized by the apostle Paul, even as he recommended celibacy: "it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor 7:9).

24. A word must be said here about the suggestion that homosexuals ought to seek "healing" of their condition through prayer. While the testimony of some who claim to have experienced this kind of healing must be respected as their personal experience, we cannot lose sight of the fact that they are a very small minority of the gay population. The catastrophic rates of "relapse" encountered in such ministries make it clear that they are not a solution for most people of homosexual orientation. Many of these ministries have been condemned as psychologically abusive. While the opportunity should not be denied those few who feel they could benefit from this kind of prayer, it is simply denial to focus on "healing" as a general solution for the gay "problem."

E. Conclusion

26. In the preceding we have attempted to root the blessing of same-sex relationships in a vision of the breadth of Christian faith. An acceptance of same-sex unions is made possible by our faith in the Trinity — our knowledge that God's very being is a reaching out to the other in love, rather than an absolute principle to which all else must conform. It is supported by an understanding of humanity that sees our created purpose as transcending that of the animals, to be fruitful and multiply: in the imago Dei, we are called to respond to and imitate that love which is the dynamic heart of God's being. It is implied by an account of marriage and human sexuality which sees its prime purpose to be that of developing a caring and faithful community in which two people can incorporate something of the love of Christ for one another, and together to the wider community. It is consistent with a conception of holiness, preached by Jesus and Paul, that defines the Christian life not in terms of law, but as the practice of radical love; a life governed by the sole criterion of what builds one another up in community. It is urged upon us by the liberationist practice of Jesus and the early church, consistently breaking down boundaries of prejudice and exclusion in the interests of an ever fuller representation of God's universal love. Taken together, the vision of God and God's purposes set forth here certainly allows us to respond to the pressing pastoral need of gay and lesbian Christians by supporting healthy partnerships. But theological reflection may do more. It may be that we come to realize in time, as the Spirit guides us further into all truth, that we have not permission, but a gospel imperative, to affirm same-sex partnerships. We may come to see our refusal to do so as springing from inadequate and alien conceptions of the nature of God; and by continuing in this refusal, we may find that not only our sexual ethics, but also our ecclesiology, soteriology, anthropology and fundamental theology implicated by these alien assumptions. What is at stake is not just the health of our gay brothers and sisters, but possibly our very theological integrity.

EIGHT

THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST SAME-SEX BLESSINGS

in The Anglican Church of Canada today

Gary Thorne

Introduction

This paper is part of a series of fifteen papers published by the Primate's Theological Commission (PTC) of The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) in June 2009 to explore the theological dimensions of the question whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine. Paul Jennings' contribution to this series is a clear and persuasive argument in support of same-sex blessings (SSB). This paper is something different. It is not simply the other side of the argument — I am incapable of such a task. Rather, I will attempt to point to the need for a similar credible theological argument against Same Sex Blessings (SSB) in the ACC, and I will suggest what such an argument might look like. The role of the PTC and its members is not to enter into the debate in order to convince the ACC of one position or other, but solely to make the Church aware of the theological questions that relate to the debate. This is my intent.

The context of my remarks is the theological thinking of this matter in the ACC in recent years. Of course this thinking has been informed by the wider debate about gay marriage in Canadian society. As well, Canadian Anglican theologians have engaged with the various forms of emerging theological discourse around this question throughout the Christian world generally, and within worldwide Anglicanism in particular. The literature that seeks to describe the historical and cultural development of marriage generally in western civilization is enormous, and there are plenty of accounts of the more limited focus on the "Christianization of Marriage."[1] The many published bibliographies of literature relating to the debate within the Christian and Anglican Church shows an impressive, if daunting, amount of material available for the Canadian Anglican who wishes to become theologically literate on the question. A review of the sustained Biblical and theological arguments against SSB will not be found in this paper.

Instead, this paper is very limited in scope and is a very personal reflection on the current status of the debate in Canadian Anglicanism. I will attempt to engage the actual conversation that is continuing to shape our common life together in the ACC in 2009 to ask if a substantial theological argument against SSB is possible within the ACC today.

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1. See Reynolds, P.L. *Marriage in the Western Church: the Christianization of marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods*, Leiden, 2001, who coins this phrase and offers a select bibliography of material to the ninth century where his study concludes.

What we mean by Same-Sex Blessings — not Same-Sex Marriages

If the ACC decides to begin the practice of SSB I understand that the Church through its ordered clergy will give public blessings to gay couples who have been married civilly. Further, I think that the following are reasonable expectations that follow from a SSB: acknowledgement that such a couple might wish a SSB in the context of a Eucharistic celebration to be a visible sign of their desire to be spiritually nourished in their relationship through the Sacraments, encouragement of the gay couple to invite others (both in the local congregation and beyond) to join with them in the celebration of the blessing of their union, expectation of ongoing pastoral counselling from the Church with a view to strengthening the life together of the gay couple, and an encouragement of the couple, as individuals and together, to participate fully in the life of the Church without hindrance or exclusion.

This paper does not address directly the question of Same-Sex Marriage (SSM). For some, the question of SSM raises additional issues that go beyond that of SSBs, evidenced by the fact that within the conversation in ACC some strong supporters of SSBs have been non-supporters of SSM. Whether such a distinction is ultimately legitimate, or will continue to be made in the future, is uncertain, but at this stage of the conversation in Canada many people do understand the nature of SSB to be different from that of SSM.[2] The series of papers published by the PTC to which this paper contributes all address the question of SSB as well.[3] On the other hand, I judge that there is increasing consensus with the suggestion of the Saint Michael Report (SMR) that SSBs are at least analogous to the Christian understanding of marriage and must be considered in the light of that understanding. Para 39 of SMR says this:

> It is the view of the Commission that any proposed blessing of a same-sex relationship would be analogous to a marriage to such a degree as to require the church to understand it coherently in relation to the doctrine of marriage.

Why this question now?

Today in Canada, for reasons both scientific and cultural, persons who discover themselves romantically and sexually attracted to persons of the same-sex, and who are inclined emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and physically to enter into intimate loving relationships with persons of the same-sex, identify themselves as lesbian or gay.[4] This self-designation carries with it the notion that the disposition to same-sex intimacy is part of the character of a gay person, usually with the inference that the same-sex attraction is a disposition with which they are born, or at least

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2. It is interesting to reflect upon this attempted distinction in light of the generally acknowledged fact that marriages were not performed at all by the Church in the early centuries. Rather those married by civil authorities would be fully recognized as married by the Church, and as baptized Christians they would accept the specific Christian teachings of Scripture. The unraveling of the precise history of when and how the Western Church (the history of marriage in the Eastern Church is different) instituted a nuptial liturgy is complicated and controversial.

3. The tasks given to the PTC by the Primate, upon request of the General Synods of 2004 and 2007, have been to consider the doctrinal status of SSBs and not SSMs.

4. Of course this is a simplification. The movement in Canadian culture that has been successful in expanding the provision of marriage to include same-sex couples is supported as a human-rights issue for all persons who do not self-identify as exclusively heterosexual. This includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexual persons. I shall use "gay" as a shorthand to include all those persons who romantically are attracted to persons of the same sex and who form intimate emotional, psychological, and spiritual relationships with persons of the same-sex, whilst having the desire to share physical intimacy as well.

has developed at such an early age that their character is unalterably shaped to same-sex attraction by the time that typical sexual exploration occurs during adolescence. Since the late 1960's in Canada, through long and difficult advocacy that has met with and overcome terrible bigotry, persecution, and violence,[5] the self-designation of gays has won overwhelming social acceptability. A significant element in the case for the recognition of gay lifestyle as an issue of basic justice and human rights for gay persons has been the supposed consensus of the scientific community that same-sex attraction in many instances is a biological disposition that is present from birth. As I write this in 2009, Canadian federal legislation protects gays from discrimination in any form. In 2004 the Supreme Court interpreted the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as not only allowing but actually leaning toward or pointing to same-sex marriage. The civil marriage of same-sex couples is practiced in most provinces.

In The Anglican Church of Canada this relatively recent and rapid societal interpretation that there is a significant population that is not heterosexual and thus by nature (or irreversible early nurture) is capable only of significant intimate bonding with persons of the same sex has issued an urgent challenge. More to the point, many Anglicans, both clergy and lay, have been emboldened by the general societal acceptance of gay lifestyle to disclose their own gay orientation and character, and some Anglican gay couples revealed their long-term faithful, loving, and monogamous relationships about which previously they had remained silent for fear of censure by the Church. Thus gay couples shared with their Church that they were living in such relationships without the benefit of the Church's blessing or the opportunity to exchange vows in the Church. Nevertheless they described to the rest of the Anglican Church a relationship that they were convinced was blessed by God (though not formally by the Church), and that this relationship included the forms of mutuality of love, intimacy, and monogamous commitment that seemed equal to the experience of heterosexual Christian marriage. Many of these gay couples now ask for the same opportunity as their heterosexual colleagues to receive the Blessing of the Church in recognition of the sanctity of their relationship. Such a blessing would be a public witness to the legitimacy of their vows as a witness to their life-long commitment of faithful love in which they seek the active presence of God and support of the Christian community.

The place of theological reasoning in the debate

Theology is a reflection upon the world through the lens of revealed Scripture as guided by the Holy Spirit in the ongoing and continuous tradition of the Church, in an attempt to understand God's created order with "the mind of Christ." Thus the present theological challenge is to determine whether a SSB is coherent with revealed Scripture as it has been received and interpreted within the tradition of the Church.

The theology of Christian Marriage before the final quarter of the 20th century

For almost 2000 years the Christian church did not seriously entertain the notion that marriage could be other than the union of one man and one women to the exclusion of all other, and that one of the purposes of marriage was procreation.[6]

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5. Cf. Larocque, Sylvain, *The Story of a Canadian Social Revolution: Gay Marriage*, Toronto, 2006.

6. That elderly people could marry was seen to be consistent with the intent of marriage, for the couple would at least have to be open to the possible of childrearing, if the "very unlikely" happened! Since the 1930's artificial contraceptive has been permitted by the Anglican Church for its members, but for purposes of family planning and responsible stewardship of resources — not to dismiss the possibility of procreation altogether.

Thus the theological reflection on marriage in the history of the Church assumes heterosexual marriage. It addressed such questions as the "mystery" of marriage as illustrative of the relation of Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5), marriage as a sacrament, the necessary role of procreation in marriage, the indissolubility of marriage and Jesus' teaching on divorce, the relative merits of the married and single life, the various duties of husband and wife to one another, hierarchy within marriage, whether the Bible teaches that marriage was an original purpose of God or the consequence of the fall, marriage as a remedy for sin and the God-given institution for the safe expression of our natural concupiscence, etc.

Suddenly, with the general cultural acceptance that gay persons had the right and expectation to enter into same-sex relationships, and as same-sex couples in the Church began to ask for the privilege to exchange vows in a public ceremony in the Church at which they would receive a nuptial blessing akin to that of heterosexual couples, the Church was required to consider the application of the traditional theology of Christian marriage to same-sex couples.

The need for a renewed theological reflection

In the past three decades The Anglican Church of Canada with increasing urgency has attempted to think theologically about this new phenomenon in the history of the Church: same-sex monogamous relationships that claim to be at least analogous to marriage, if not an instance of marriage itself. The question itself is clear: are such same-sex unions consistent with the revelation of Scripture and doctrinally coherent with the teaching of the Christian tradition over the centuries such that they are understood to be a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine?

The strong theological argument against homosexual behaviour

For almost 2000 years it would have been exceedingly difficult for any theologian to introduce the notion of SSB, and impossible for such a theologian to argue persuasively in favour of SSB. Homosexual sexual behaviour was thought to be contrary to natural law and promiscuous in nature. It was clearly condemned in both the Old Testament and New Testament as sinful in passages such as Leviticus 18.22 "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." and Romans 1:

> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct.

The introduction of the gay person into the conversation

As late as the 1960s in Canada homosexuality generally was seen to be an expression of unnatural sexual behaviour, morally reprehensible and punishable by law. More "compassionate" persons, both within and outside the Church,

advocated that those who practiced homosexual behaviour should not be sent to jail but rather receive psychiatric treatment to heal them of the disorder.[7]

Today, less than fifty years later, it would be reprehensible to suggest psychiatric treatment or prison for gays. This remarkable shift in societal attitude can be attributed almost entirely to a vigorous advocacy on behalf of those who insist that same-sex desire is not a choice, but an unalterable part of the character of about ten percent of the population. The current conversation in the ACC thus is placed within a cultural understanding that claims a scientific basis to remove any responsibility of the individual for his or her same-sex desire, or sexual "orientation." "Homosexual acts" that were until recently understood to be "unnatural" are now considered by many to be only unnatural from the heterosexual point of view, and the only type of physical intimacy possible for that ten percent of the population. Thus, the theological challenge of the ACC today is not to consider the nature of "homosexual acts" in isolation, wickedly committed by heterosexual persons outside committed relationships for reasons of selfish pleasure and unnatural lust. Rather, the ACC is challenged to consider the nature and appropriateness of such acts within a same-sex monogamous relationship of loving commitment between two persons whose character is unalterably "gay": i.e. those who are able to know the intimacy of love only within a same-sex relationship.

The strong case for SSB

The theological argument in favour of SSBs has been repeated many times throughout the ACC. It is so clear and strong that I need not spend much time in describing it. The argument begins with the Biblical revelation of God as a Trinity of Love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Humankind has been created in that divine image[8] and thus by our very nature we are created to be in relationships of love with God and one another. These creative and divinely sanctioned relationships with others take many forms, and one of those forms is marriage: "instituted by God in the time of man's innocency," as the BCP puts it. The Christian understanding of marriage is that it represents "the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church"[9] and in the developed tradition three purposes of marriage were articulated: procreation, mutuality of a supportive relationship in which the couple grows in Christ, and the context in which sexual acts have their proper and only place.

Within this understanding of God and Christian marriage, theologians in the ACC have argued that the monogamous intended life-long gay relationship between two baptized Christians fulfills the requirements, intention and purposes of marriage "to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part...." The testimony and witness of gay couples in

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7. The American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association pride themselves on having removed homosexuality from their list of "mental disorders" in 1973 and 1975 respectively. But it was they (in their "scientific" wisdom) who added homosexuality to such a list in the first place. The Church throughout its history generally has not suggested that those with same-sex desires were mentally ill, but that the same-sex erotic act is sinful, regardless of the "orientation" of the persons involved.

8. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness … So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" Genesis 1:26, 27.

9. Prayer from the "Solemnization of Matrimony," in *The Book of Common Prayer,* Canada, 1962 p. 564, echoing Ephesians 5:20-32.

the ACC, including those married within the ACC[10] speak undeniably of the love, self-sacrifice, fidelity, mutual support, compassion, faithfulness to the exclusion of all other, the positive role of consensual sexual acts of tenderness and intimacy in the expression of mutual love and the building up of the other and of the relationship, stability of home life, and a witness to the broader community of the sustaining love of God. If marriage is for "sanctification,"[11] or growing in Holiness through openness to the life-giving Holy Spirit, then same sex couples testify to this experience of this sanctification, and many in the church witness to the spiritual fruit and benefit to the whole community that results from the apparent sanctity of same-sex couples. Theologians point out that although same-sex couples cannot naturally conceive and bear children, neither can many heterosexual couples bear children because of impotency, disability, or being married at an elderly age. Heterosexual couples that have medical procedures to make it impossible for them either to impregnate or to bear children are married in the ACC without hesitation. Finally, it is argued reasonably and convincingly for most that same-sex couples are just as likely as other-sex couples to provide safe and loving homes for the raising of children.

The case for SSB is strong and compelling.

The challenge to present a theological case against SSB

The challenge is twofold. First, arguments from Scripture simply based on passages denouncing homosexual erotic acts will not convince because the conversation in the ACC doubts that these passages refer to same-sex physical acts of intimacy in a faithful, monogamous, life-long gay relationship in which the gay couple seeks the Church's involvement and blessing. Second, the current conversation will be unaffected by any argument that shows that such gay relationships are outside of the imagination or intention of the Scriptural witness and the weight of the Tradition. The only theological argument against SSB that will have currency in the ACC today will be one that acknowledges Christian gay couples living in a manner analogous to heterosexual marriage, who are devoted to a life of discipleship in the Anglican Church and who seem to bear spiritual fruit in the offering of themselves to the service of God and others.

The only possible theological argument remaining for those opposed to SSB

This means that the onus of argument has shifted 180 degrees. No longer is it the proponent of SSB that must show a Scripture-based theological argument to convince the Church to initiate the practice as an innovation supported by a careful discernment of a legitimate development of doctrine. Rather, it is the contrary side that now must demonstrate that in the light of the presence of apparently faithful same-sex couples in the Church, these couples are disobeying God's will by living together in a manner analogous to heterosexual marriage. That is, the only significant case against SSB possible in the ACC today is one that shows that these gay relationships in the ACC today are incompatible with, and contrary to, Scripture and Tradition.

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10. A few dioceses in the ACC have allowed the blessing and the marriage of gay couples.

11. Eugene Rogers, Jr., professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. One of the first of a series of articles and talks on this theme appeared in *The Christian Century*, June 15, 2004,. The article begins: I WANT TO CONSIDER gay marriage by first reflecting on the theology of marriage, and I want to reflect on the theology of marriage under the rubric of sanctification. This approach is consistent with the tradition of the Orthodox Church, which regards marriage as a way of participating in the divine life not by way of sexual satisfaction but by way of ascetic self-denial for the sake of more desirable goods. Theologically understood, marriage is not primarily for the control of lust or for procreation. It is a discipline whereby we give ourselves to another for the sake of growing in holiness — for, more precisely, the sake of God.

First objection to the assumptions of the present conversation: gay ain't nothin' new!

Many opponents of SSB will disagree with my paper thus far and will say that I have already given away the farm in describing the present state of the conversation. For these persons the notion of "gay" carries a weight that ought to be resisted. First of all, "gay" suggests the contemporary claim that same-sex orientation is a modern notion unknown in the ancient world. The reasoning thus concludes that Saint Paul does not address sexual behaviour related to the loving intimacy of gays, but could only be condemning homosexual behaviour that is an instance of pederasty or child abuse.[12] To claim that same-sex orientation is a "modern notion" is sheer nonsense. I know that this is a strong statement but the statement is made so often as a matter of fact that "same-sex orientation" was unknown to the Biblical writers that this notion must be corrected. Any one who has read Plato's *Symposium* (5th century BCE) knows that the ancients were well acquainted with adult same-sex life-long love, and that same-sex desire was acknowledged to be part of the character of some persons. Aristophanes' speech is a beautiful and touching evocation of homosexual love, as a union of two souls that would be one forever.[13]

Second objection to the assumptions of the present conversation: we don't live in Paradise!

Second, not only is the term "gay" misleading because of the myth it bears that sexual orientation is a modern notion, "gay" also carries the nuance that same-sex orientation has been scientifically shown to be a biological category that belongs to the essential understanding of our humanity. Many opponents of SSB insist that there has been no such scientific proof. Further, and more to the point perhaps, even if science discovered a biological link between a specific gene, configuration of the brain, etc. that would allow science consistently to predict homosexual desire in an individual, such a physiological cause would not suggest that "God made the homosexual that way." Because of the theological reality of the Fall of humankind, all of nature bears witness to the fallen character of the created order. A person might be born with any one of countless chromosomal configurations. It is cruel to suggest, for example, that a person born with a chromosomal configuration that leads to early death, or to a lifetime of low functioning intellect, was "made that way by God." The way we find ourselves in chromosomal make-up is not "right or wrong," but simply the physical, intellectual and emotional condition in which we are born and we are shaped in our early years. There is no "judgment" attached. In the context of both the potential and limitation of our physiology our moral life develops as we make decisions about how we relate to the world around us, to other persons, and to God. It is often said that ten percent of the population has unalterable homosexual desire, another one in fifteen-hundred are intersexual, one in ten-thousand males and one in thirty-thousand females are transsexual, and so on. These scientific facts say nothing at all about God's plan for humankind. We cannot discern God's plan for his creation, or for any part of that creation, simply by how we find ourselves, nor by the use of unaided reason alone.

Rather, to know God's plan for humankind, we must turn to the divine revelation of God in Jesus Christ as reflected in Holy Scripture. And clearly God's plan that we find in Scripture must include a Love for all persons regardless of sexual orientation, along with an account of how all persons can respond to that Love and be found in Him eternally.

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12. See Bishop Michael Ingham's comments as quoted by Michael Valpy's article on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*, Thursday, 8 March 2007 — "Bishop demands 'better theology' of sex." Bishop Ingham is said to deny that the ancient world knew about homosexual love, and is quoted: "St. Paul understood same-sex relationships only in terms of the older-man and younger-boy relationship of the Greeks, which we call pederasty, or in other words child abuse."

13. In quoting the *Symposium* here I am not suggesting that Plato is promoting same-sex relationships — Aristophanes' speech is criticized for its failure to appeal to the transcendent. Nonetheless same-sex desire and relationships are described without qualification.

"Gay" is here to stay in the conversation in the ACC today

But since I am committed to engaging in the current conversation of the ACC I will continue to use the word "gay" in spite of the reasonable objections of some opponents of SSB to the term. By "gay person" I simply mean an adolescent or adult who has a same-sex orientation: i.e. an attraction and desire for same-sex persons such that they are able to enter into intimate bonds of relationship only with persons of the same-sex.

In the rest of this paper I simply point to where an argument against SSB might be found. First, I shall outline in the briefest way that the Scriptural revelation of salvation for humankind restricts sexual acts of intimacy within the context of heterosexual marriage and generally for purposes of procreation. Second, I shall suggest how both gay and straight persons can live obediently in response to God's eternal Love for us.

The creation of man and woman: complementarity in the Book of Genesis

The early chapters of Genesis include clear notions of complementarity and procreation that become foundational for the notion of marriage throughout Scripture (including Romans 1) and equally throughout the history of the Christian Tradition. Indeed, our Lord pointed to the opening chapters of Genesis as illuminating the practice of marriage in his day (St Matthew 19:3-15). Inasmuch as Christians have disagreed about aspects of the practice of marriage through the centuries, all Christian tradition has followed the example of Christ in turning to these same chapters of Genesis as a primary source and measure of the theological understanding of marriage. In Genesis God crowns the act of creation with creatures made in His image and likeness. God creates "Adam" (singular), and creates *them* (plural) male and female (1:26), and blesses them that they may be fruitful and multiply. In a somewhat different way, the unity and complementarity described in the first chapter of Genesis is also indicated in the second. There Adam names the other animals as he goes searching among them for one like himself in answer to God's purpose to create "a helper fit for him" (2:20). God names "Adam." And when Adam awakes to discover Eve, he names her as his equal. "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." (2:23). All this is recalled in the exhortation to the Marriage liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer when we read that marriage was "instituted by God in the time of man's innocency."

The Fall: disobedience and shame

Genesis 3 describes how Adam and Eve yield to the serpent's temptation: a spiritual pride leads to disobedience. The consequences of such disobedience had been foretold by God: immediate spiritual death and eventual physical death for humankind. Not only is their relationship with God corrupted, but likewise they are known especially in their changed relationship (3:16-19). What had been created good and given for joy, disobedience has made the occasion of sorrow and agony.[14] Thereafter, shame enters a relationship in which there had been no shame. Adam and Eve must hide from one another and from God. Henceforth they live in exile from the original union in which the distinction and complementarity between male and female did not obscure their essential likeness as creatures of earth made in the image of God. In this way Genesis describes and interprets theologically the common experience of the human race and the yearning of the human soul to find companionship in the other, created by God for this purpose.

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14. Gen 3.16-19: "To the woman he said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, "You shall not eat of it," cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'"

The autonomous rational individual: complementarity re-defined and marriage re-imagined

Today most of western culture rejects the Biblical understanding of the relationship between male and female as rooted in the Genesis images of an original likeness, distinction, and complementarity. The integrity of individuals, whether male or female, is no longer understood as requiring a fulsome relationship to God and to the other, but the integrity of the human person is rather understood as the autonomous rational individual as complete and whole — seeking a partner with whom to enter into a contractual relationship whereby each partner will achieve a measure of happiness through the loving devotion of the other. This new understanding of the person as an autonomous individual leads to a view of marriage very different from that of the Christian tradition. Such a secular view of marriage, dominant in Canada today, is rooted in the yearning for a relationship that will bring happiness, joy, and fulfillment to each of the two autonomous individuals. This happiness, joy, and fulfillment is almost universally sought in a relationship that includes sexual intimacy, within or outside of marriage. Further there is no reason in this secular understanding of contractual marriage that the individuals involved be of different genders. This secular teaching of the stand-alone integrity of the autonomous individual has informed contemporary Canadian culture to such an extent that it has shaped the thinking of most members of the ACC and has led to the subsequent rejection of the Biblical teaching of complementarity.[15]

But only male/female complementarity gives coherence to the Biblical witness of marriage

It cannot be contested that the Scriptural images of marriage begin with gender complementarity. Throughout the Old Testament, God consistently rejects the cults of fertility to which the people of Israel are tempted, yet He is clear that the union with Himself that He wills for his people is a fruitful one. The fruit is holiness or sanctity, and the call to holiness is the measure of all other forms of fruitfulness and the context in which they are understood and lived out. The images of marriage are extensive and cannot be referenced and considered here. They are also sometimes strikingly sexual, as in *The Song of Songs*, but always male/female. In the astonishing story of the prophet Hosea, he is called to be a sign of God's faithfulness to an unfaithful people by marrying a prostitute and having children with her. Through the prophet God declares to His people, "I am your husband." That is, in the Book of Hosea, God identifies Himself as the one who will make His people truly fruitful. In Him alone is found what is blindly sought in unfaithfulness. At the root of this unfaithfulness is turning their desire towards other gods, spiritual and earthly. The people of Israel broke their Covenant vows of faithful love (through obedience to the Law) and forgot the love of God that had been made known to them especially by the great act of deliverance by which He brought them out of slavery in Egypt and into a promised land. In the seventh and eighth chapters of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, Solomon takes Wisdom, a feminine image of the divine Word, as his bride, reversing the male/female imagery, but still referring to that divine-human union as marriage.

These images are taken up in the New Testament as keys to understanding who Jesus is and the relationship between God and His people. The Gospel begins with stories of the barren giving birth through miracle: Elizabeth

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15. Since the debate over SSB has begun there has been a concerted effort to re-interpret Genesis in ways that define complementarity as not dependent upon the male/female distinction. Such interpretations argue that the gender of the "companion" sought by Adam is of no relevance. These strained interpretations run against the entire history of Biblical interpretation and are counter to any plain reading of the text.

bears John and Mary bears Jesus. In St John's Gospel Jesus directly takes up the images of marriage and fruitfulness. His first miracle is at a wedding — a sign that He is Israel's divine Husband, come to turn the water of disobedience to the wine of intimate and loving union in obedience (chapter 2). From the union of divinity (Divine Word) and humanity in the Person of Jesus springs a new birth (chapter 3). The spiritual children born of this "marriage" or union will include even Samaritans (chapter 4). John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the bridegroom (3:29). Jesus refers to himself explicitly as the bridegroom when explaining why his disciples do not fast (Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34). Jesus uses parables of invitations to a wedding feast of a king's son (Lk 14:7-11; Mt 22:2-14) and of wise virgins ready for marriage (Mt 25:1-13) to describe the kingdom of heaven. The union of Christ with His Bride is made possible by the Cross, and consummated and made fruitful in that faith which recognizes in the holy mysteries of Water and Blood His own life opened to the unworthy (Jn 19:32-37). In both the letters of St Paul and the Apocalypse, the Church turns toward Christ in expectant prayer as a Bride looking to her Bridegroom in response to His call. Thus the images of marriage found throughout the Bible constantly refer back to the early chapters of Genesis and interpret these chapters as requiring the male/female union that holds open the possibility of fecundity that informs the Biblical notions of union, sacrifice, and holiness. The fifth chapter of Ephesians describes marriage between a man and a woman as a reflection of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church:

> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

To summarize: the whole of Scripture from its beginning in earthly paradise to its culmination with the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem adorned as a bride ready for her bridegroom (Revelation 19:7–9: "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.") describes God's purposes of uniting us with him in a bond of spiritual marriage — that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us. Earthly marriage points to this divine purpose if it is so consecrated (i.e. if it is Christian marriage) through its openness to bearing fruit in procreation, through the complementarity of the relation between a man and a woman, and by revealing Christ-like love. [16]

Procreation

Thus the Christian notion of marriage rooted in Scripture as consistently interpreted in the tradition of the Church reflects a theology of marriage that requires a man/woman complementarity that excludes the marriage of same-sex couples because sexual intimacy must be open to bearing fruit in procreation. This is not to say that every act must

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16. It is important to add that for Christians, a clear alternative suggested in Scripture is the single life consecrated to God. It is also meant to point to this spiritual marriage and, while it may be a more or less powerful witness depending on the individual, it is nonetheless a more explicit witness, since *in heaven they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage but will be like the angels.*

be open to procreation. The use of contraceptives in marriage for the purpose of family planning and proper stewardship of the created order is consistent with the notion that the three goods of marriage as described in the Anglican tradition (procreation, mutual up-building of one another in a permanent relationship, and the sanctification of the sexual act in a relationship of exclusive fidelity) can serve one another as a whole, but all three goods must be present within the totality of the relationship. Sometimes it is said that theologians who insist on procreation as an essential element in marriage define procreation in a very narrow way. This is not necessarily the case. Couples, both straight and gay, "bear fruit" in many holy ways, giving "new life" and hope to the human community by their witness of love, faithfulness and a life of sacrifice and service to others: all to the glory of God. Nevertheless Scripture does point to a specific type of procreation that is possible only between a man and a woman — a procreation that is a participation with God within the created order whereby the created order renews itself through the institution of marriage.

The status of the Old Testament Law for Christians[17]

Another paper in this series deals with the New Testament witness against SSB (Stephen Andrews, "Is There a Natural Reading of Romans 1.24-27?") but I want to say a word about the Old Testament witness. The Anglican Reformers in the 16th century thoughtfully clarified the Anglican Church's teaching about the Law in the Old Testament in Article VII of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. In keeping with the previous universal tradition of the Church, Article VII carefully and correctly describes three kinds of laws in the Old Testament. Two of these types of law are not binding upon Christians, viz. the laws related to "Ceremonies and Rites" (such as laws governing sacrifices and laws related to purity — food laws, washings, circumcision etc.), and the laws of "Civil precepts" (how a society orders itself). But the third category of law, "Moral Law," is binding. Article VII reads: "no Christian…whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral."

The Moral Law of the Old Testament is a reflection of Natural Law that is a reflection of Eternal Law. In the Christian tradition the source of all just law is ultimately God (Eternal Law) and God reveals that law to humanity, even prior to revelation in Scripture, by Natural Law. This is not what is meant by what today we call "the laws of Nature" discerned by scientists, but Natural Law is what is imprinted on every human soul by general revelation.[18] St. Paul, speaking of those who are not Jews or not converts to Christianity, speaks of Natural Law when he says, "When Gentiles who have not the law (the Law of Moses) do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness" (Rom 2:14-15). Of course certain instances of the application of the Moral law might be particular to a culture and time, but it cannot be thus concluded that all particular Moral laws of the Old Testament are "culture relative" as is often claimed. Some Moral laws are true in all times and places as concrete articulations of universal Natural Law. The Moral laws of the Old Testament are summed up in the Ten Commandments (received directly by Moses from God) and are in turn summed up by Jesus in the two great Commandments. "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Mk 12.29-31).

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17. I am dependant upon an unpublished paper by the Rev'd David Phillips upon which he based his presentation for the Intentional Listening Group on Sexuality of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, for bits of the remainder of this paper. Father Phillips is the Rector of the Parish of Petite Riviere and New Dublin, Nova Scotia.

18. Human cooperation with Natural Law is commonly described as the participation by the rational creature in the Eternal Law.

In the current controversy in the Church, people have approached the question of the interpretation of the law in Leviticus — "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman …" (18:22) — in one of three ways:

1) They have tried to show that this moral law, while binding, does not speak to the modern question of sexual relations within a committed monogamous life-long same-sex union.[19] This is an appropriate question to raise, and consistent in the understanding of the Law within the Anglican tradition and the wider Church, i.e. that the moral law *is* binding on Christians.

2) Another approach has been to try to undermine the Law of Moses generally in one of the following ways:

   (a) Some bring up a law from "Ceremonies and Rites" (e.g. don't eat shellfish) or "Civil precepts" (e.g. put adulterers to death) and then say that since we don't follow that law, why should we follow this law. Although this reasoning often appears in editorial letters to the Anglican Journal or at the microphone at Synod gatherings, it is declared to be a false argument by the historic universal church: Article VII was written precisely to help people see that rejection of the ceremonial law or civil precepts does not affect the legitimacy of the Moral Law.

   (b) Some say that as followers of Jesus we are Gospel people who no longer follow any part of the Law. This reasoning is called Antinomianism, and it is condemned both within the New Testament and throughout Church history.

3) A third approach, accepted by many, is to suggest that this particular law ("a man shall not lie with a man as with a woman") may be true as it always has been simply read by Jews and Christians until the past few decades, and that this law is a gift to us, not a curse.

A plain reading of both the Old and the New Testaments condemns same-sex physical intimacy. But that cannot be the end of the matter. For this "plain reading" of Leviticus to become convincing, the task of the theologian is to articulate why and how it is the case that abstinence from same-sex intimate physical acts by gays is a *gift*, for from our modern perspective it seems to be a *curse* for those who have same-sex desire.

Then what about same-sex couples whose love and partnership bear the marks of the Spirit?

That is, we must ask *why* same-sex physical intimacy is forbidden by Scripture in same-sex unions that are analogous to marriage and which seem to bear the fruit of the Spirit,[20] Archbishop Rowan Williams gave an address in 1989 called "The Body's Grace"[21] that has been described as representing "the best 10 pages written about sexuality in the twentieth century." [22] In this article he outlines five features of a relationship involving sexual intimacy that is nurturing and brings about growth: that it is a relationship with another (he describes why masturbation is not helpful);

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19. See Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, pp. 235-239, where she argues that this law is related to the condemning of male temple prostitution that was practiced by other nations surrounding Israel. While the law refers to cult practices, there is no reason to suppose that this prohibition is limited to acts committed within an idolatrous cult.

20. "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" — Galatians 5:22–23.

21. Reprinted in Williams, R.D., "The Body's Grace," in *Theology and Sexuality*, Eugene Rogers (ed.) (England, Blackwell Publishing) 2002, pp 309-321,

22. This is the judgment of Eugene Rogers, editor of *Theology and Sexuality, ibid*, p 309.

that there should be recognition of a certain risk involved, a vulnerability which enables one to be changed by the perceptions of the other; that there must be a mutuality in that relationship with the other (free of power over the other etc.); that the commitment of marriage enables the couple to "have a certain freedom to 'take time' to mature and become as profoundly nurturing as they can be;" and that ultimately, for the relationship to be healthy requires that the couple also know that they are loved by God. Surely Williams eloquently articulates here the majority view of members of the ACC in this listing of the "good" of a relationship that includes sexual intimacy.

Moreover, since all these characteristics are present in faithful, monogamous life-long same-sex unions it is not surprising that Williams concludes as follows:

> In a church that accepts the legitimacy of contraception, the absolute condemnation of same-sex relations of intimacy must rely either on an abstract fundamentalist deployment of a number of very ambiguous texts, or on a problematic and non-scriptural theory about natural complementarity ... [23]

In other words, if procreation is no longer seen as an aspect of sexual intimacy in heterosexual marriage, there is no legitimate argument against SSB. Many theologians who disagree with SSB would concur with Williams that as soon as sexual acts are divorced from any notion of physical procreation, the argument against same-sex physical acts is hopelessly weakened. Only an understanding of the meaning of sex acts as generally open to physical procreation[24] can restore the integrity of the Scriptural argument, and the Scriptural notion of complementarity as indicated above. If sexual activity is de-linked from the possibility of procreation, then it is difficult to imagine how it is reasonable to expect same-sex Christian couples to be celibate.

Indeed, our difficult question can be broadened. In the New Testament it seems that everyone is called to a chaste life. If you are not married you are not to have sex, if you are married you are free to have sexual relations if you are open to procreation, and lustful thoughts are to be put to death by all. How can this be good news? Only if somehow this chastity makes possible the life for which we were knit together in our mother's womb and born into this world: to live in the Life of God the Holy Trinity.

In Dante's Divine Comedy, in Purgatory, he describes in an allegorical way, the experience of purging that he believes must happen in our lives on earth if we are to be purified in heart to see God. He constructs a mountain in his poem with seven cornices on which are people who are struggling with a particular sin (one cornice for each of the seven deadly sins). In the highest and last cornice on the mountain, these folk are being purged of lust; their loves are being perfected, so they can enter earthly paradise. The three categories of people are married couples seeking to be chaste, those with heterosexual lust and those with homosexual lust — i.e. no one is left out! The groups run in opposite directions (signifying their different kinds of excessive desire) and when they meet, they kiss one another — those with heterosexual lust kiss those with homosexual lust, and then part from each other recalling an example of violators of the particular law that they had broken or might break if they are not careful. What is wonderful here is the leveling that Dante brings to this — there is no hypocrisy here, they are all in the same boat, there is a mutual recognition that all are struggling, there is a mutual love of each other shown in the kiss, they have all come to love God's law which is being written on their hearts, and all are just about to make their way to paradise, together.

This image from the 13th century seems remarkably modern: Dante tells us that whether same-sex or other-sex desire, we are all seeking the same thing: chastity to bring us to the Kingdom of God to live in God forever. Chastity is everybody's business because it is linked to our spiritual growth. The path of spiritual growth to the heights is a

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23. "The Body's Grace," p. 320.

24. Or in a relationship that is generally open to physical procreation — not every sexual act must be for the purpose of procreation, but such acts have their place only within a husband/wife relationship that is generally open to procreation.

well worn path, though narrow, one that has been laid out for us through the centuries by the theologians and the mystics who have gone before us — it is not unknown and it has a characteristic shape which comes to us from a careful reading of the Scriptures. Jesus calls us to divine perfection — *you must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt 5:48). But we see in Christ's promise of the Spirit in John the idea of growth towards that perfection — the disciples could not bear all the truth about themselves and about God but the Spirit would draw them, as they were able, into all truth (16:12f). Jesus tells us that loving obedience to him leads us to the vision of God. "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

St. Paul, speaking to baptized and converted Christians often makes these distinctions: between babes in Christ and the mature; between those who are still carnally minded and those who are spiritual; between the new creation being formed in them and that which is dying away; between the old Adam and the new man; between the outer man and the inner. Growth in holiness, our sanctification, is a major teaching of the Epistles. "Work out your salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12); "this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (Phil 2:13); "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thess 4:7); "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

Progress along this spiritual journey to God requires our passions to be reordered so that all our earthly loves are "taken up" (not denied, but re-directed) into our love for God. James says, "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:1-3).

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

The desire of same sex couples to receive a Blessing from the Church and perhaps even to exchange eternal vows of fidelity before God in the Church is a wonderful testimony to a commitment to their life in God. Their intent is to journey deeper into the life of God in a relationship that is supported and sanctified by Christ's Holy Catholic Church. Those who oppose SSB in the ACC today are suggesting that in such deep and loving gay relationships, same-sex physical acts of intimacy must be sacrificed for the Kingdom of God. In that sacrifice of physical acts of intimacy, as difficult as it will be, their true love, both for each other and for God, will be found.

Whether straight or gay, if we stay in the lusts of the flesh and try to serve or satisfy them, we will get stuck in those earthly lusts and not be able to lift up our hearts and see God. Heterosexuals who marry must seek to become chaste in their marriage. Heterosexuals outside marriage must seek celibacy. Likewise, single gays must seek celibacy. This paper has tried to be true to those who oppose SSB in the Church and who are making a real attempt to enter the present conversation in love. For these persons, the entire weight of Scripture and the overwhelming witness of the Tradition of the Church teach that same-sex physical intimacy is not permitted. These persons remain convinced that even in faithful, life-long same-sex relationships which are lovely and beautiful, the two gay partners must seek to be celibate in that relationship, offering their desire to its true end, towards God and the building up of same-sex friendships that are fruitful because they remain chaste.

Ask, and it shall be given you;
Seek, and ye shall find.…
(Matthew 7:7)

Conclusion

The debate about SSB in the ACC has many dimensions, of which the theological is but one. Ecumenical and inter-faith relations, the unity of the Anglican Communion, fellowship in the ACC, the relevancy of the ACC to Canadian culture and societal norms, pastoral concerns, Canadian law, the concept of human rights especially as described in the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, are just a few of other considerations that play a part in the overall conversation and debate. In this paper we have restricted ourselves to theological concerns.

The whole of Scripture from its beginning in earthly paradise to its culmination with the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem adorned as a bride ready for her bridegroom describes God's purposes of uniting us with him in a bond of spiritual marriage — *that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us*. The Christian understanding of earthly marriage points to this divine purpose if it is consecrated through its openness to bearing fruit in procreation, through the complementarity of the relation between a man and a woman.

I realize that there is no sustained argument in this paper but only a pointing toward the type of theological argument that might be possible in the conversation in the ACC today. Such a sustained theological argument must recognize the current conversation in the ACC, acknowledge the presence of many gay relationships within the Church community, and directly engage the thinking of those who offer a theological rationale for SSB. Such a theological argument against SSB must not simply appeal to authority, but give a reasoned account for the truth that is found within our authoritative texts of Scripture and the authority of Christian tradition itself. Theological thinking seeks to discern and articulate Christian truth so that revealed truth might be not only believed, but also known and understood. In the current debate it is the responsibility of those who oppose SSB to provide a theological reasoning and clear articulation of their position so that the theological thinking of all members of the ACC might be challenged to appreciate the proper weight of such an argument against SSB.

NINE

FRIENDSHIP: THE END OF MARRIAGE[1]

Gary Thorne

THESE THOUGHTS ON friendship are intended as a contribution to the present debate in The Anglican Church of Canada about whether the Church should perform a wedding ceremony for two men or two women, or at least give its blessing to such a wedding previously performed by civil authorities.

I begin with an assumption that I shall maintain throughout: that the quality and depth of love between two men or two women can be as deep and profound as the love experienced between two persons of opposite sex. Two men or two women can be struck by cupid's arrow in much the same way as a man and a woman, and have similar experiences of "falling in love" with one another. In the tradition of the Church, when a Christian man and woman discover themselves to be "in love," often this couple will prayerfully seek discernment as to whether it is God's will for them to live together for the rest of their lives in a marriage established by the exchange of vows of mutual fidelity to "love and to cherish, till death do us part." The tradition of the Church has never formally allowed a man and man, or woman and woman couple who find themselves "in love" to take these same vows. Many argue that the time has come for the Church to offer marriage as an option for same sex couples.

But what does this have to do with friendship? Friendship love at first might seem to be something very different from the "romantic" or erotic love of marriage. In this paper I shall suggest that erotic love (along with *philia* love and *agape* love) is present in many types of friendship love, whether that friendship love is found inside or outside of marriage. Indeed, I believe that the Church has inadequately understood friendship love in recent times and that this lack of understanding has contributed to a confusion in the Church about the relation of friendship love and marriage.

In my pastoral ministry of twenty-five years I have many times felt handicapped by the shallow valuation given to "friendship" in Christian discourse. In my experience "friendship" is seldom acknowledged as including the possibility of particular relationships of profound intimacy, spiritual union and mutual "exchange." Rather, friendship is considered to be a less intimate and inferior form of relationship than that found in marriage. Thus the same-sex "covenanted friendship" in the Christian tradition, described most recently in authors such as Paval Florensky, John Boswell and Alan Bray, is almost always immediately equated with marriage, or a parody of marriage, rather than be seen as a distinct and profound instance of friendship. I hope that this paper will contribute in some small way to restore confidence in the divine beauty and eternal character of friendship. My overall conclusion is that a recovery of a fuller Christian appreciation of friendship and friendship-love is urgently needed in our present debate.

It is difficult to begin with a definition of friendship because there are many different types of friendship. Nevertheless, I suggest that most people today might think of friendship as a particular relationship or activity of mutual

1. An earlier version of this paper, "Friendship and the Good Life" was given at the 25th Annual Atlantic Theological Conference in 2005 and published in *Christian Friendship*, Susan Harris (ed.), Charlottetown, 2005, pp 201–238.

and reciprocal goodwill, characterized by qualities of honesty, trust, respect, self-disclosure, caring, and affection, between people who seek to spend time together. Cicero defines friendship as "agreement in all things divine and human, with benevolence and charity" (*De Amicitia* 6,20). Both these definitions — modern and ancient — serve to distance our discussion of friendship from the two types of friendship that Aristotle says are only friendships "incidentally" – viz. friendships of pleasure or friendships of usefulness. (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1156a). Finally, within the broad spectrum of human friendships, we will be considering only those friendships that have a "lasting," "lifelong," or even "eternal" character.

For the past four hundred years or so there has been very little philosophical consideration of friendship as an essential force in the shaping of culture, the moral life and human happiness. Writing in the 1950s, C.S. Lewis remarks on the lack of attention given to the subject of friendship in modern times:

> To the Ancients, Friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. … If a man believes (as I do) that the old estimate of friendship was the correct one, he can hardly write a chapter on it except as rehabilitation.[2]

I begin my consideration of friendship generally with a remarkable study that appeared in Russia in 1914, though translated into English only in 1997. Its author, Pavel Forensky (1882-1937), a Russian Orthodox priest, was one of the most remarkable polymaths of the twentieth century. His study of friendship is contained in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* which takes its theme from I Timothy 3.15:

> I hope to come to you soon, but I [Paul] am writing these instructions to you [Timothy] so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.

Florensky's argument is that in the household of God we are meant to relate to one another as friends, with friendship love, and only in this way will we know the truth of the Christian faith. In form and style Florensky's work consists of twelve letters addressed to the reader as if to a friend. The book has been criticized because it does not proceed as a systematic study but it is rather full of digressions, excurses, appendices and labored footnotes. But Florensky intentionally writes in this manner, as if he was having a conversation over a period of time with a friend. Somehow it is in this way, through an encounter in friendship, that the truth of the Christian faith will be known.[3]

Friendship is the eleventh letter of the series of twelve. He has already revealed to the reader in previous letter on Holy Sophia that Sophia, Truth and Friendship are connected. Friendship is required to know Sophia and experience Truth. Only in friendship do we participate in "that spiritual activity in which and by means of which the knowledge of the Pillar of Truth is given." [4] Florensky suggests that in Christianity the most fundamental unit

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2. Lewis, C.S. *The Four Loves*, (San Diego, New York, London: G. Bles., 1960), 87, 90.

3. This is a traditional mode of expression in Christian theology, reaching back through the genres of *eratopokriseis* (Mark of Ephesus, Michael Glykas, Nicholas of Methone, Psellus, Photius, Maximus the Confessor, Anastasius of Sinai) and *kephalaia* (Gregory Palamas, Maximus the Confessor, Diadochus of Photike, Evagrius Ponticus) all the way to *apophthegmata* and their early transmission via letters (cf. Barsanouphius and John). This style rests upon a definite epistemological assertion and an important pedagogic approach. The *Stromateis* (or "Ragbag") of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) is more or less a collection of jottings in the precise way that Florensky identifies his work (p. 5), full of themes difficult to sort out and state systematically.

4. Florensky, P. *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters*, trans. and annotated by Boris Jakim, (Princeton University Press, 1997), p. x.

is not the individual man understood as an atomic unit, but rather the pair of friends as the basic molecule. It is a brilliant study in which Florensky mines the intellectual history of east and west, ancients and moderns, Christians, Jews and pagans.

> *Philia* knows a friend not by his outward pose, not by the dress of heroism, but by his smile, by his quiet talk, by his weaknesses, by how he treats people in ordinary human life, by how he eats and sleeps … the true test of a soul's authenticity is through life *together*, in the love of friends …
>
> What is friendship? Self-contemplation through a friend in God. Friendship is the seeing of oneself with the eyes of another, but before a third, namely, the Third. … Friendship gives people self-knowledge. Friendship reveals where and how one must work on oneself. [5]

Drawing upon his masterful familiarity with the classical tradition, Florensky describes the friend as like a mirror in which we see ourselves, both what is lovely and what needs to be re-arranged in our own soul. *Agape* love — that rational willing of the good for all persons — is dependent upon a friendship love (*philia*), and *vice versa*:

> In order to treat everyone as oneself [*agape* love] it is necessary to see oneself at least in one person, to feel oneself in him; it is necessary to perceive in this one person an already achieved — even if only partial — victory over selfhood…But for philia love of a Friend not to degenerate in a peculiar self-love, for a Friend not to become merely the condition of a comfortable life, for friendship to have a depth, … what is necessary is *agape* love … *philia* is the "leaven," while *agape* is the "salt" that keeps human relations from spoiling.[6]

In his discussion of the four Greek words for love (*eros, storge, philia and agape*), Florensky acknowledges that these notions inform one another and are not really four different "things." For example, he uses the word *philia* as relating closest to friendship love, but insists that *eros* and *agape* must also be present in the love of friends. He concludes this discussion with a moving meditation on the conversation of Jesus and Peter in the last chapter of John's Gospel. Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him. The Greek text suggests that Jesus understands *agape* as a lesser love than *philia* or friendship love. Peter is upset that Christ asks him if he loves him with *agape* love. *Philia* is the love with which Peter seeks to love Jesus. In *philia* (friendship love), *agape* is embodied and made real.[7]

Florensky also presents the ancient Christian rites of *adelphopoiesis* (brother-making, or the pledging of brotherhood) in which two males or two females are joined together in a covenant of chaste bonds of friendship love. He describes a typical expression of the rite as containing the following elements: (1) the brothers stand before the lectern upon which are the Cross and the Gospel; (2) prayers and litanies are said that ask that the two be united in love and that remind them of examples of friendships from church history; (3) the two are tied with one belt, their hands are placed on the Gospel, and a burning candle is given to each of them; (4) readings from Scripture, including the Gospel of John 17.18-26; … (7) the brothers partake of the pre-sanctified gifts from a common cup; (8) they are led around the lectern while they hold hands, as the *troparion* is sung: "Lord, watch from heaven and see;" (9) they exchange kisses; and (10) the following is sung: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133:1). The exchange of the cross takes place either before or during the rite, as a sign that the brothers will bear each other's cross, and as a reminder of self-renunciation and faithfulness to his friend. [8]

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5. Florensky, 314.
6. Florensky, 297.
7. Florensky, 291, 326.
8. Described in Florensky, 327, 328.

Florensky concludes that Friendship love is the highest love, inclusive of *eros* and *agape* in the divinely ordered particularity of *philia*. In this he truly reflects the philosophical and tradition from Plato and Aristotle through to Aelred of Rievault (12th c.), Aquinas and Dante.

Unfortunately, around the time of the sixteenth century Reformation, this rich understanding of friendship was largely forgotten, or intentionally put aside. Friendship began to receive very little philosophical and theological consideration in the west. The reason is simply, in the words of a contemporary theologian, "Within Christian thought *agape* displaced *philia* [friendship], and it is impossible to think theologically about love without giving that simple fact careful consideration." [9] Luther, for example, refused to allow friendship to have any role in ethics since he interpreted it narrowly as but a form of self-love. In Anglican circles the name of Jeremy Taylor (1613-67) might come to mind as an exception, but in actual fact he did not encourage particular friendships as much as he understood friendship in a universal way, describing the Christian as a friend with all the world. Of particular friendships he writes: "…when friendships were the noblest things in the world, charity was little."[10] Further, for Taylor marriage becomes the single particular state of life in which highest friendship finds an appropriate place.

The problem that was identified with friendship or *philia* is that it is an exclusive, preferential, reciprocal love. Jealousy and possessiveness belongs to friendship. *Agape*, on the other hand, is an inclusive, unconditional, universal love, blind to merit or demerit that goes out to everyone, even to the enemy who will not return such love. Soren Kierkegaard and Anders Nygren remain true to this modern notion that Christian *agape* must leave the preferential love of friendship behind. In the nineteenth century Kierkegaard writes:

> Christianity has thrust erotic love and friendship from the throne, the love rooted in mood and inclination, preferential love, in order to establish spiritual love in its place, love to one's neighbour, a love which in all earnestness and truth is inwardly more tender in the union of two persons than erotic love is and more faithful in the sincerity of close relationship than the most famous friendship. … the praise of erotic love and friendship belong to paganism … what belongs to Christianity [is] love to one's neighbour, of which not a trace is found in paganism. …
>
> In … friendship one's neighbour is not loved, but one's other-self. If anyone thinks that … by finding a friend he has learned Christian love, he is in profound error.[11]

Nygren's criticism of friendship in the mid twentieth century is dependent upon Kierkegaard's reasoning, but is even more fundamental in that he recognizes and despairs that St. John, in his Gospel and in his letters, speaks of friendship as divinely sanctioned. In John 15 Jesus speaks of his disciples becoming his friends: "You are my friends if you do as I command you." He commands his disciples to be friends, and the specific nature of the love of the new commandment is that his disciples should love one another "as I have loved you." This love is of such a quality and nature that it will be recognized by others: "…by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The love here is the distinct love of friendship of the new community, which was to be the continuation of his body in the world. Nygren cannot understand how this can square with the *agape* love he finds in the synoptics and in St. Paul. That *agape* love is described by Nygren as being undeserved, spontaneous and unmotivated. Johannine friendship love, on the other hand, is preferential and thus Nygren concludes that "it loses something of its original, all-embracing scope; it becomes love for those who bear the Christian name."[12]

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9. Meilaender, G. *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics*, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1981), 2.

10. Taylor, J. "A Discourse on the Nature and Offices of Friendship" in Taylor, *Whole Works* v. 1, ed. R. Heber, 1847-54, 72.

11. Kierkegaard, S. *Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong, (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) 58, 68.

12. Nygren, A. *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson, (London: S.P.C.K., 1953) 154.

But the preferential aspect of friendship not only has drawn fire from Christian theologians in the modern world. It has equally created problems for moral philosophy. If friendship is emotional, partial and personal, then how can it find a place within contemporary ethical theories which are rooted in the Enlightenment notion that moral decisions must be rational, impartial and universal?

In a simplistic manner of speaking it might be said that the Enlightenment project was to "make secular" a particular understanding of the Christian religion in an attempt to form and inform culture itself with Christian principles. Thus, for example, that process of secularization involved the transformation of divine law into the universal rule of rationality; tribalism is overcome and the impartial principle of universal *agape* love and the absolute value of and respect for each individual soul becomes incarnated in a principled, enlightened society in which everyone must willingly and freely sacrifice personal desires to the extent they encroach upon the rights of others who also have absolute value. Contemporary Canadian society is profoundly shaped by just such an Enlightenment or "liberal" understanding which is praised as that which holds our pluralistic nation together. Our social institutions and commitment to such universal moral principles insure cooperation among people who share no common notion of the good or the virtuous life.

Thus, whilst the reformation theologians were championing *agape* love over a narrowly understood *philia* love, the Kantian moral philosophy model established a discipline of ethics in terms of the moral agent as a rational, abstract, solitary individual who makes moral choices by a reflection that removes all particularity. The rational moral agent seeks the universal rule or principle that always applies in this situation or, better still, in all situations. In the Kantian frame, the moral life is that life which is true to a continual reflection upon the question: "What would be the duty of any rational being in this particular situation?" Iris Murdoch suggests that much contemporary moral thinking depends on this Kantian view of the individual as,

> …rational and totally free…. He is morally speaking monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him…. We no longer see man against a background of values, of realities which transcend him. We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world. For the hard idea of truth we have substituted a facile idea of sincerity.[13]

Generally speaking, contemporary ethical theories fall under two main headings. There are theories which develop from *deontology*, which identifies moral reasons for action as those that are universalizable and impartial, and there are theories which develop as instances of *consequentialism*,[14] according to which a moral agent does whatever action produces the greatest aggregate welfare for all human beings: universal benevolence. In either case, the partiality of friendship on the one hand, and its exclusivity on the other, makes friendship ethically problematical and suspect. As long as these Enlightenment notions of self and ethics were not seriously *challenged*, there was little interest in the notion of friendship.

This challenge came in the last quarter of the twentieth century when a *virtue* approach to ethics was promoted directly as the result of a critique of the understanding of the ethical life that has its roots in the Enlightenment. "Virtue ethics" proposes that the central concern of the moral life is the formation of a good and worthy character. The task of becoming a good person is dependent upon the development of virtues that will help guide us to the

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13. Murdoch, I. "Against Dryness: A Polemical Sketch," in *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy*, ed. S. Hauerwas and A. MacIntyre, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983) 44.

14. Utilitarianism can be seen as an instance of consequentialism.

good life, happiness (*eudaimonia* = "the best possible life"[15]), or the life worth living. This development and growth in virtue requires relationships with people who share a common vision and desire of the good: our best and closest friends. We cannot acquire the virtues nor flourish in the virtuous life apart from our friendships. Firstly, in our friends, we have a mirror of our souls — we see ourselves in the other and we achieve a continual self-awareness and self-examination that can only come from trusting, open, honest communication and interaction. Secondly, the friend wishes happiness, "the good and fulfilling life," for her friend, and in so doing becomes herself the person she wishes her friend to become. By seeking happiness or the 'life worth living' for one another, friends are transformed precisely into that "life worth living."

Whereas the Kantian approach asked, "how should I act" or "what shall I do?" the virtue approach asks "how shall I live and how shall I become a person who lives in this way?"

The role of friendship in the modern ethical theory influenced by Kant is minimal, and even seen as an obstacle to the ethical life. The moral agent is not a person who has developed a moral character, but rather a person who is best able to act on abstract and universal principles of justice. The view of the moral self as purely rational implies that the emotional intimacy of particular friendship can provide no significant insight into one's moral self. In virtue ethics, on the other hand, the development of the moral character is accomplished precisely through friendships. Thus in the return to a consideration of virtue ethics, friendship becomes necessary for the development of virtues as states of soul or character.

Thus has occasioned the return of interest in the understanding of friendship as constitutive of our very humanity. Descriptions of friendship from the ancients onward have been re-discovered and made popular again. The long standing overly simplistic and reformation objections to friendship that *philia* love is a lesser love than the ideal Christian *agape* love will no longer convince. Rather, we read in recent western literature that only in and through particular friendships of *philia* is *agape* love learned and achieved. Paul Wadell, a proponent of virtue ethics, puts it nicely:

> … when friends are brought together by a mutual love for God and a desire to follow Christ, their friendship is a relationship in which they learn the ways of God, imitate Christ, and thus learn to embrace those they hitherto ignored. In this context, *agape* is not something other than friendship, but describes a friendship like God's, a love of such generous vision that it looks upon all men and women not as strangers but as friends.[16]

As a proponent of virtue ethics, Stanley Hauerwas has argued for more than a decade that the Christian Church must become the type of community in which the demands of mutuality present in the highest friendships are to be discovered and nourished.[17] In terms of the relation between *agape* and *philia*, Hauerwas says:

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15. cf. Ackrill, J.L. "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, (California: University of California Press, 1980) 24. For Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* as "final end" see his *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b1–7.

16. Wadell, P. *Friendship and the Moral Life*, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) 96.

17. In this discussion, of course, we are speaking consistently of friendships based on goodness and virtue. This is the third of the types of friendship described by Aristotle. The first two types of friendship are firstly, of pleasure and secondly, of usefulness. Aristotle says that "these two kinds are friendships only incidentally…" (*Nicomachaen Ethics*, 1156a).

…one might say that *philia* in the Christian church forms Christians to embody the love theologians have described as *agape*. … it is not that that we Christians are formed by *philia* to become individuals who can individually practice *agape*. Rather it is that we are formed by *philia* in the church to become a community which in its corporate life in the world loves the world in the manner of *agape*, whose practice it has learned in seeking to conform itself to the God who is in Christ.[18]

In the communion of the Church we become friends with those who share a common vision of the Good, the Truthful, and the Beautiful. We do not grow in grace by acquiring "knowledge" about how we ought to live, but by the Spirit's prompting we develop friendships within the Church in which we seek the fullness of Christ for the other. Thus the Christian is called to rebuke his friends in the church community, "… if your brother sins against you, go to him and tell him his fault" (Matthew 18.15). This text is immediately followed by Peter's query as to how many times he should forgive his brother: "not seven times, but seventy times seven" (18.22). Rebuke of friends in the community of the Church is always within the context of love and forgiveness, desiring the very best for the other in Christ. St. Augustine wrote to his old friend Marcianus, rejoicing that Marcianus has become a catechumen, "and thus fully a friend" (*Ep* 258, 3). [19] "Although you seemed to love me greatly," says Augustine, "you were not yet my friend." (*ibid*). Only when Marcianus became a catechumen did they have a united devotion to a shared vision of the good in which they would journey together and assist each other in the acquisition of virtues. Augustine points to the two great commandments of love of God and neighbour and writes to Marcianus, "If you with me will hold these two most firmly, our friendship will be true and everlasting and will unite us both with one another, and with the Lord himself" (ibid.). In Aelred of Rievault's 12th century treatise *On Spiritual Friendship* Aelred will intensify the previous teachings on Friendship by suggesting that the Tradition's reflection on Scripture leads to the formulation "*Deus amicitia est*" [God is friendship].

But something more needs to be said about the nature of the *erotic* that is present in friendship love, especially in the light of our culture's appropriation of the teaching of Freud at the beginning of the 20th century and his reduction of the erotic to the sexual.[20]

I have suggested that the erotic was understood to be an element of friendship-love for the Ancient Greeks and Latins — Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, etc. At least as early as the third century of the Christian dispensation, Origen's "fruitful alliance of Christian agape and Platonic Eros" ensured that the Christian mystical theology would embrace *eros* as accompanying both *agape* and *philia* love. Gregory of Nyssa says that *eros* is *agape* "stretched out in longing." In his *Divine Names*, Denys the Areopagite in the sixth century sometimes suggests that *eros* is more divine than *agape*, and in the end simply says that the sacred writers regard *eros* and *agape* as having one and the same meaning. The erotic component of friendship love is clearly manifested in the continuing interest in and interpretation of the Song of Songs until the very end of the Middle Ages.

But, to continue a theme, the place of the *erotic* in the divine activity of creation and redemption, in the soul's longing for God, and in human relationships generally, was largely devalued and put aside at the same time as friendship-love was devalued in the sixteenth century. Not surprisingly, in the mid-twentieth century erotic love

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18. Hauerwas, S. and Pinches, C. *Christians among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*, (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) 82.

19. As cited by R.D. Crouse in "Love and Friendship in Medieval Theology: Aristotle, St Augustine, St. Thomas and Dante," *Christian Friendship*, op. cit., 140, 141.

20. In the following discussion I am especially indebted to Sarah Coakley, "Pleasure Principles: Toward a contemporary theology of desire," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol 33, No. 2 (Autumn 2005) 20-33.

suffered an even worse trashing by Anders Nygren, than he had given to friendship-love. By now you can guess the movement of Nygren's critique: *agape* is the Christian love of Jesus in the New Testament — graced, God-given, sacrificial, downward-moving, unselfish. Nasty *eros*, "desire", or "longing", in contrast, is acquisitive, human-centred, upward moving, egocentric, and needy. For Nygren the erotic urge is frightening and alarming, entirely uncontrollable. Nygren's false characterization of both *philia* and *eros* has been shown by many. Sarah Coakley suggests that "… it is Anders Nygren's famous study of *Agape and Eros*, rather than the secular Freud, that has actually played a wider cultural role here than is normally recognized in undermining the efforts at a modern Christian theology of desire."[21] She rejects Nygren's misinterpretation of Freud that the erotic is to be understood only in terms of sexual attraction. Coakley locates in Freud's early writings the roots of the present sexualization of all forms of relationships in western culture, but she also traces a development in his writings that shows that Freud later came to define eros in much more traditional terms as the drive that presses toward the future and new life. In his later writings Freud assents explicitly to Plato's theory of the erotic "ascent" to Beauty in the *Symposium*. She argues that Freud did not at all counsel that the repression or sublimation of libido (physical, biological, sex drive) was necessarily harmful. In fact Freud argues that very often such repression of libido simply is necessary.

In her analysis of Gregory of Nyssa's *de virginitate* Coakley points out how Gregory recollects the positive role of *eros* in all human relationships. Gregory explains that all erotic desire, whether for the married or for the celibate, requires a proper channeling toward God through the disciplines of deep prayer and ascetic perseverance. A key point for Coakley is that these spiritual disciplines required for the proper and salvific channeling of desire are required for all Christians, whether married or celibate. She concludes:

> Gregory's vision of desire as thwarted, chastened, transformed, renewed, and finally intensified in God, bringing forth spiritual fruits of agape and *leitourgia* [service to others, esp. to the poor] in a number of different contexts, represents a way beyond and through the false modern alternatives of repression and libertarianism, between agape and Eros, and has curiously more points of contact with the real Freud than the imaginary Freud of American popular consciousness.

To summarize thus far: lately there has been a renewed interest in philosophical and theological literature of the nature and role of friendship in contemporary political life generally, ethical thinking, and the Christian life of holiness. I began this paper with a look at Florensky's letter on friendship that gathered in many of the classical and Christian themes in the Tradition that have regained currency in the past several decades. Friendship love is inclusive of *eros, philia* and *agape*. It is the means by which we grow in virtue. For the Christian life it is the means by which we are made holy, by degrees. Thus we learn to live with a reality that we can't mould to our own purpose. Through the activity of friendship love within the community of the Church our lives are transformed and made capable of *agape* love of both friend and enemy. Christian friends look to their Lord who exemplifies the virtues consistent with divinity: both friends will seek, in common, to imitate their Lord and thus grow slowly into the character of God.

But within his discussion of friendship, Florensky also drew attention to the notion of formal "covenanted friendships" within the Christian tradition. In 1914 he spoke of the "indissolubility" of friendship, as strict, he says, "as the indissolubility of marriage." Yet for Florensky these friendships, which would later be called 'same-sex' unions, though erotic, are not sexual in nature at all. The exchange of the crosses during the rite symbolizes the mutual *ascesis* or life of renunciation within the friendship. In this renunciation Florensky locates the essential difference between friendship and marriage. He says,

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21. Coakley, 2005.

… marriage is "two in one flesh," while friendship is two in one soul. Marriage is unity of flesh, *homosarchia*, while friendship is unity of souls, *homopsuchia*.[22]

Now we turn directly to the question before The Anglican Church of Canada and ask how our consideration of friendship-love might contribute to the debate about the permissibility of same sex marriages in the Christian Church?

A dominant theme in modern American culture, expressed in many ways in Christian Churches, is that this friendship love is given its highest expression in marriage. As the hallmark wedding bulletin cover puts it: *"Today I will marry my best friend."* But is friendship (or the "sanctification of friendship") the essence of marriage? Is marriage but another particular form of friendship?

Some of the strongest Christian advocates for same-sex marriages describe marriage as a state of life in which gay or lesbian couples take life-long vows of monogamous fidelity so that they can grow in sanctification. Eugene Rogers argues in several articles that Christian theologians understand marriage only shallowly as the making licit of sexual satisfaction. Rather, Rogers insists that marriage is better understood as a state of life that provides opportunity for sanctification. Homosexual orientation is described as the inability of the gay or lesbian to experience the fullness of friendship-love in persons of the opposite sex. Gays and lesbians encounter the other (and thus discover themselves) in relation to persons of the same sex.[23] In fact Rogers eloquently describes how the married couple provide for one another the friendship-love that I have described in this paper, being a mirror for each other's soul and "exposing and healing each other's flaws over time." Rogers tries to clinch his argument for same-sex marriage, "No conservative has yet seriously argued that gay and lesbian couples need sanctification any less than heterosexual ones. … it is evil to attempt to deprive people of the means of their own sanctification." In the light of our presentation of friendship-love I would say that Rogers presents a convincing argument that same-sex couples must not be deprived of the deep friendship that is required for their sanctification.

His conclusion follows, however, for same-sex *marriage* only if marriage is understood *solely* as a specific type of friendship. There is no doubt that in the Tradition of the Church friendship is an extremely important part of any Christian marriage. When children are involved, the parents must model, as much as they are given grace to do so, a friendship love that includes a fullness of *agape* and a positive and healthy affirmation of the erotic, directing the erotic in such a way that the Third person in every Christian relationship (God) is made present.

Further, there is no doubt that wonderful and grace-filled friendships of man/man and woman/woman have been present in the Christian Community throughout its history. It is not only a recent phenomenon for two Christian men or two Christian women to know the congruent grace of a romantic "falling in love" with one another and desiring to spend their lives together in joy and fidelity. But why is it only now that the Church is challenged doctrinally and pastorally to define these loving and grace-filled relationships as "marriage"?

The most common answer is that we now know more about the psychology of persons such that we have "discovered" that some/many men can only have the deepest emotional, physical, spiritual and romantic intimacy with other men, and likewise that there are some/many woman who can only know the joy of sharing their souls profoundly and intimately with other women.

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22. Florensky, 325.

23. This particular claim is found in an unpublished article, "Marriage as a discipline of sanctification," 2005. Rogers cites David M. McCarthy, "The Relationship of Bodies: A Nuptial Hermeneutics of Same-Sex Unions'," in *Theology and Sexuality*, 1998 4: 73-95. The other quotations in this paragraph are from the unpublished 2005 article.

But this “discovery” still begs the question. Why should the Church consider “marriage” to be the appropriate state of life for two Christian men or two Christian women who love each other deeply and commit themselves to lives of fidelity, intimacy and sacrifice for each other?

Ultimately, it is the church’s understanding of marriage that will determine whether marriage is the appropriate state of life for such grace-filled relationships. In what follows I suggest that the creeping sexualization of human relationships in the twentieth century that convinces us that we are “sexual beings” and that all relationships are ultimately sexual, has prompted the contemporary Church to begin to understand marriage in a way that deviates from the understanding of marriage as known in the Tradition of the Church. The Church has come to see marriage as a state of life intended for the living out of a profound, intimate and sexualized friendship. Intimacy has been confused with sexual expression such that the highest friendship is understood to require marriage because marriage is that state of life where the Church allows the type of sexual expression that nourishes and fulfills our deepest needs for intimacy and friendship love.

Recent changes to the Marriage Canon of The Anglican Church of Canada, and the marriage liturgy of *The Book of Alternative Services* reflect this shift in understanding and push The Anglican Church of Canada decidedly in the direction of same-sex marriages.

The solemn Declaration of 1893, the founding document of The Anglican Church of Canada, locates its formal doctrinal understanding of Christian marriage in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Its description of marriage is coherent with that of the history and tradition of the Church. There we read that there are three purposes of marriage: (1) “it was ordained for the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord;” (2) “it is a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication;” and (3) “it is for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other in both prosperity and adversity.” It should be noted that, in the second reason given for marriage, we still see the ancient Christian view that marriage is for those who not have “the gift of continency,” (i.e. virginity and the single life). Canada introduced its own Book of Common Prayer in 1918, outlining the same purposes but removing the reference to the gift of continency, happily replacing the language of “remedy for sin, and to avoid fornication” with the much more positive language of the “hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman.” In this articulation of the purpose of marriage friendship, the hallowing of the spiritual, emotional, psychological bond, and procreation, were all somehow related.

The Book of Alternative Services of 1985 introduced the most significant shift in an understanding of marriage in the Canadian Anglican context. Marriage is now described as being for: (1) “the mutual comfort and help;” (2) “that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love;” and (3) procreation as optional.

This liturgy thus institutionalizes the notion that the relationship between the couple — the friendship — is the primary purpose of marriage. The optional character of procreation cannot be interpreted as an attempt to be pastorally for those who cannot have children for physical reasons of age, infirmity, impotency, etc. Rather, young people today are simply choosing not to have children — that marriage will not be open, morally or physically, to the procreation of children. The role of sexual activity is tied to procreation only as an option, but its primary role is to enrich the relationship itself. This new understanding of the purpose of marriage is reflected in the 1967 version of the Marriage Canon which gives as a purpose for marriage, “the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfillment in a community of love.” In other words, the creation of a friendship in which “sexual intimacy” plays a significant part.

Thus the deepening and lifelong expression of profound Friendship becomes the sole purpose for marriage. It is thus little wonder, given this understanding, that when married couples feel that friendship dissolving, or not blossoming as they would like, they will think their marriage has come to an end. How else should they think? As “church” we have taught them to think in this way. In sincerity, in piety, with integrity, couples that do not develop or

sustain friendships in their marriages will get out of one marriage, and try another, and perhaps even another, until they find the friend and friendship in Christ that they seek.

This development of the understanding of marriage through liturgical development and revision of the Marriage Canon in The Anglican Church of Canada is consistent with (and encouraged by) shifts of thinking evidenced by successive Lambeth Conferences in the first half of the twentieth century. The 1908 Lambeth Conference referred to the "reverent use of the married state," (Resolution 43) and the 1920 Conference to "the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control." (Resolution 68) Both of these comments are related to the Conference's rejection of birth control.

At the Lambeth Conference in 1930, however, the Anglican Church made a fundamental departure from the Christian moral tradition in matters of sex and sexuality when it shifted from the thinking of the previous two Lambeth Conferences and declared that there is a role for artificial means of birth control in the sexual relationships of married persons. Whether or not the participants of Lambeth 1930 understood the significance of their determination, certainly Pope Pius XI recognized that Lambeth 1930 represented a major departure from the tradition of the Church. His encyclical *Casti Connubii (Chaste Marriage)* can be interpreted as a direct response to Lambeth 1930. The encyclical reads in part:

> 54. … Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.
>
> 56. Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin. [24]

What Pius XI pointed out here is that at Lambeth 1930, *for the first time*, a church claiming to stand within the Christian moral tradition had explicitly and officially said that sexual intercourse in itself, as an act unrelated to procreation, is one of the goods of marriage.[25]

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24. The following paragraph is also interesting:

78. "These enemies of marriage go further, however, when they substitute for that true and solid love, which is the basis of conjugal happiness, a certain vague compatibility of temperament. This they call sympathy and assert that, since it is the only bond by which husband and wife are linked together, when it ceases the marriage is completely dissolved. What else is this than to build a house upon sand? — a house that in the words of Christ would forthwith be shaken and collapse, as soon as it was exposed to the waves of adversity 'and the winds blew and they beat upon that house. And it fell: and great was the fall thereof.' [59] On the other hand, the house built upon a rock, that is to say on mutual conjugal chastity and strengthened by a deliberate and constant union of spirit, will not only never fall away but will never be shaken by adversity."

25. I am indebted to the Rev'd Eric MacDonald for this example, in an unpublished paper presented to a local Anglican Clericus meeting in Nova Scotia in 2005.

Almost two decades ago now the present Archbishop of Canterbury boldly reflected upon the Anglican Communion's approval of the use of contraception. His words are even more clearly truthful for a church that imposes no limits on the use of conception — i.e. a church that marries young people who intend to use conception to prevent any children being born within the marriage, and for whom sexual intimacy is solely for building and maintaining relationship, never open to procreation.

> In a church that accepts the legitimacy of contraception, the absolute condemnation of same-sex relations of intimacy must rely either on an abstract fundamentalist deployment of a number of very ambiguous texts, or on a problematic and non-scriptural theory about natural complementarity, applied narrowly and crudely to physical differentiation without regard to psychological structures.[26]

In the light of the current widespread teaching that marriage is the highest friendship, and that the role of sexual activity within marriage is formative, expressive and productive of that friendship (that the couple "may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love") the argument of Eugene Rogers is sure. It is simply wrong to deprive same-sex couples of this highest form of friendship.

Likewise, it is little wonder that thoughtful, pious and sincere Anglicans should conclude that the type of covenanted same-sex friendships found in the Christian tradition (*adelphopoiesis*), is akin to same-sex marriage: either fully or pointing toward. Our culture has sexualized intimacy such that marriage has become the form of which all other friendships are lesser imitations. To suppose that these covenanted life-long brotherhoods and sisterhoods in the Christian Tradition were a grace-filled type of profound friendship that demonstrated philia, agape and erotic love but without sexual intimacy, is to see these relationships as "just short" of marriage. In our sexualized culture, these relationships are lacking something that could be provided if only they became full "marriages."

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to suggest that friendship is necessary to becoming fully human. Friendship, in its very many forms and manifestations, is the means by which we grow in Christian virtue and holiness. Our friendship with God in Christ transforms our character such that we become holy, and our friendships with one another are part of that activity of the formation of this virtuous life. It is in this context that the whole question of same sex relationships must be understood. Christians should not be denied any of the forms of human friendship by which we come to know our holiness and communicate the character of God. Some forms of deepest friendships include the desire to live together in community, at least the Church community.

The Scriptures, as understood within the unbroken tradition of the Church, speak of marriage as a state of life in which a male and female couple enters into a relationship that is at least morally open to the possibility of the procreation of children. The married relationship is "outward looking" in that it is also for the sake of others: of the potential children to be born and raised within family. This relationship is permanent until the death of one or other of the married partners. It is a relationship that echoes the love that eternally binds together Christ and His Church. Thus marriage is not simply friendship even though it is a relationship in which there is every expectation that friendship love, inclusive of *philia, agape* and *eros*, should flourish.

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26. Williams, R.D., 'The Body's Grace', in *Theology and Sexuality*, Eugene Rogers (ed.) (England, Blackwell Publishing) 2002, pp 309-321, 320.

Finally, throughout the history of the Church, particular friendships that have developed between man/man and woman/woman have been recognized as such a means of God's grace that these friendships have been blessed, offered to God in prayer, and expressed in covenant form. Such friendships include living together in the light of God's presence and Love, sharing in a life of sacrifice for the other, and seeing one's soul mirrored in the other by which such friends grow in holiness. These friendships, (expressive of *philia, agape* and *eros*) reflect God's character and His Kingdom is made more real among us when we celebrate these friendships. If we *either* deny the reality of God's grace as expressed in this particular form of the highest of friendships, *or* if we equally deny these friendships by turning them into marriages, the Kingdom will be less present among us.

And thus the title of this paper: Friendship: the end of marriage. That is, if friendship is the end (the sole purpose) of marriage, then friendship is the end (the destruction) of marriage.

TEN

THE GRACE OF EROS[1]

Paul Jennings

SUCH A TITLE, I am aware, awakens expectations. And such expectations are no doubt almost inevitably going to be disappointed in a theological essay. So let us be clear from the beginning: this essay is not about sex (at least, not directly, not in the narrowest sense). There is much theological thinking and writing that desperately needs to be done on the subject of sex, but this essay is not attempting that. By the "eros" of the title I mean not the physical manifestations, but more fundamentally that emotional and social state or event or experience which, one hopes, would underlie our sexual encounters as well as our institution of marriage. It is the event referred to in our culture as "falling in love." I propose to reflect on the connection between this basic anthropological phenomenon — so idolized in our society, so neglected in our theology — and Christian marriage; and more particularly on how a positive theological valuation of this love can inform our understanding of what we are doing in the marriage liturgy.

To call this experience "erotic love" is to invite misunderstanding on two fronts. Popularly, eros and its derivatives are associated with mere physical sexuality: "erotic" is commonly used as a euphemism for pornographic. Theologically, there is an equally reductionist tendency to discredit eros as mere "need-love," functioning as a negative foil to the Christian virtue of *agape*. One might use instead the expression "romantic love" to name the state of being "in love." But I hesitate to do so, as "romantic" has its own problems, invoking as it does certain popular cultural associations specific to the West over the last 200 years. The poverty of our language suggests the poverty of our thought in distinguishing various aspects of love.

And this poverty of thought in turn impoverishes our understanding of marriage. Beginning with Augustine's *On the Good of Marriage*, Western theological thought on marriage has been dominated by a defensive approach that begins from negative premises. Marriage, because it is intimately involved with sexuality, was seen as something that needed to be justified, particularly vis-à-vis the supposed greater good of virginity. The traditional three purposes of marriage were thus commonly interpreted from the perspective of one of them, that marriage serves to hallow sexuality. On this reading, the gift of children is seen less as a grace in itself than as the only thing that excuses sex; and the purpose of mutual companionship and support comes in a distant third, resulting in an effective separation of love from sexuality.[2] Even after the Reformation clearly affirmed the full goodness of marriage as in no way

1. An expanded version of a paper first prepared for the Primate's Theological Commission. The first half (sections I-IV) has been published on the PTC website (http://www2.anglican.ca/primate/ptc/may06.htm) and in the September 2006 edition of *Ecumenism* (42nd Year, No. 163, pp. 12-19).

2. Augustine himself, it should be noted, begins with an affirmation of the priority of fellowship in marriage; but this emphasis was soon buried by the church's concern for sexuality and child-bearing.

secondary to celibacy, the Reformation churches largely failed to develop a positive theology of marriage which could articulate the sexual love of married couples as not just acceptable, but as an instance and means of God's grace.[3] It is our centuries old failure to formulate a positive theological account of marriage, as much as any specific challenges coming from the culture around us, that has led to a crisis in the church's teaching on marriage, sexuality and relationship.

I

Marriage is relational in character. As a relationship, it involves two specific individuals, a particular man and a particular woman. One does not simply marry *a* wife or *a* husband, in the sense that any one will do. Such an instinctive desire for any partner — while undoubtably natural to us — falls short of the relational quality of Christian marriage. This dilemma lies at the root of many tragedies of modern dating: the biological and social drive to find *a* mate can interfere with the personal discernment that keeps us open and waiting to find and be found by *the* right person. We do well to be sceptical about the romantic notion of "a match made in heaven," but there is a kernel of truth in it for all that — at least, when we strip it of its pseudo-theological pretensions. In Christian marriage, one marries a specific person, who is anything but interchangeable: Rachel and *not* Leah.

This is fairly obvious, at least within our culture, but it makes a difference when we take it as our theological starting-point. For example, as the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov points out, the recognition of the essentially relational character of Christian marriage compels us to a critique of the traditional teaching on the purposes of marriage. While child-bearing is certainly an important aspect of marriage, the Western tendency to make it the chief end of marriage has the result of functionalizing marriage. One can conceive a child with any number of people. Similarly the "avoidance of fornication" runs the risk of turning marriage into a form of sanctioned prostitution. One's spouse is surely not just someone with whom one can satisfy sexual longing, but first and foremost the unique individual with whom one is covenanted in a lifelong personal relationship. As Evdokimov wryly remarks: "There has quite likely never existed a fiancé who would declare to a girl that he is marrying her 'with an eye to pleasure,' nor the one who would crudely say that he and she are cheerfully going to dedicate themselves to procreation."[4]

The name which our culture gives to this personal aspect of marriage is love. It is almost universally accepted in our society that one should "fall in love" before marriage. That is, one's partner is not just someone one happens to find sexually attractive, nor just someone with whom one has a strong personal affinity, nor simply an advantageous match from the perspective of social and economic interests: but above and beyond that, a *unique* individual who embodies a new sense of future, a promise of personal fulfilment. Our popular notions of falling in love invoke a sense of destiny: lovers are somehow meant for each other.

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3. Luther's reflections on marriage (to which we shall return) are an important exception to this generalisation, but one which unfortunately was not broadly taken up in the Protestant churches. A taste of his theological valuation of marriage can be glimpsed in the letter he sent to congratulate Spalatin on his wedding: "While you are clinging to Catherine in bed with the sweetest hugs and kisses, may you think to yourself 'Lo this person, this best little creation of God, has been given me by Christ, to whom be glory and honour.' And I also, guessing the day when you will receive this, will love my Catherine in the same way as soon as night falls, in memory of you." (WABr 3:635,22-28) The last sentence proved too much for Luther's followers, and disappeared from later editions of his letters!

4. Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love. The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985, p. 21, note 8.

This image of romantic love is one that permeates our contemporary Western culture. Nineteenth century novels, Hollywood movies and pop songs all collaborate in making the experience of romantic love the normative basis of partnership and personal happiness. While the particular contours of popular expectations around love and marriage may be culturally conditioned, however, the association itself goes much deeper. The ending of any comedy of Shakespeare, for example — indeed, the Song of Songs in the Scriptures — bear witness that this association is archetypal. It shapes the experience of most of us: in our culture, we come to our own marriages through a experience of "falling in love" (deeply personal, and so different for each of us) which leads us joyfully to the commitment of marriage. Whenever we attend a wedding, we come to celebrate the gift of love. Whether it comes across as kitschy, commericalized and sentimental, or as fresh, heartfelt, and full of wonder, the love that this couple has found is basic to what is going on.

It is clear that not every couple would express their relationship in these terms; indeed, every person might describe his or her relationship somewhat differently. There is a wide variety of emotional sensibilities and styles, from the love-drunk romantic to the more soberly restrained. Not everyone will be able to articulate the dimensions of their relationship, and different people will articulate them in different ways. This account is not meant to be prescriptive. But it does seem to me that some sense of joy and awe at having found the other; some sense of being loved as an undeserved gift; some sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the irreducible uniqueness of the beloved are and should be part of the relationship of any couple coming for marriage. As a pastor I would have concerns if I had reason to believe these elements were lacking, or only on one side.

II

If I seem to belabour this point unnecessarily, it is because precisely this notion of romantic love, and its association with marriage, appears to be problematic in the Christian tradition. This tradition, with its insight into the fickleness of the human heart, knows what lovers cannot believe: that emotion is not eternal, and is in itself not sufficient to build a lasting relationship on. It distrusts the self-absorption of lovers, their distorted perspective that can have destructive consequences. Most of all, Christian tradition must resist the idolization of romantic love in our society, which seems to accord it redemptive status as the path to personal fulfilment. The Church has been rightly and wisely aware of the limitations of "romantic" love, and has focussed instead on the agapic love of 1 Corinthians 13 as a model for married life. However, neither rightly nor wisely, it has often gone beyond *distinguishing* these two aspects of love, and has *contrasted* them by denigrating the former.

Liturgically, the Church does this quite simply by ignoring the love which the couple have already found in each other as irrelevant. It is remarkable that even the contemporary Anglican liturgy nowhere acknowledges any previous relationship whatsoever between the parties, except for the rather sobering observation that "they have complied with Civil and Canon Law and have been duly prepared to enter into marriage."[5] Our liturgy could fittingly be used for a Moonie wedding between two people who are virtual strangers. Indeed this impersonality was presumably originally intentional, as our older wedding liturgies stem from a time in which considerations of status, property, family alliance or economic necessity were much stronger factors than they are today. Historians will be quick to remind us that marrying for love is a modern phenomenon, the implication being that the Church should distrust such newfangled notions, and stick to the traditional values around marriage. We should, however, beware of trusting too blindly to this dictum. Notions of what love looks like have changed, but people have always (where social

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5. *The Book of Alternative Services* of the Anglican Church of Canada. Anglican Book Centre, 1985. P. 529.

attitudes permit) fallen in love, and desired to marry the one they love. The Church should beware of adopting too uncritically the attitudes of Western modernity; but neither is there any particular merit in practices like marrying for money or trading our daughters for political gain, even if these are part of society's "traditional" understanding of marriage. In the age-old Romeo-and-Juliet struggle between romantic love and bourgeois interests, the Church may rightly resist being taken in by the former — but we would surely not want to come down on the side of the latter either. Whatever the historical reasons for the impersonality of the wedding liturgy, they have little theological weight. And so it is a serious failing that our liturgy nowhere articulates and interprets in a Christian sense what is undoubtably one central purpose of a wedding: to celebrate and give thanks for the love the couple has found in one another.[6] This love (though it may be articulated in superficial and sentimental ways) is in fact far from something merely sentimental that we can take for granted. That two human beings experience mutually such a strong bond, that each no longer wishes to be him- or herself without the other,[7] is a significant and wonderful event. A wedding is a celebration of this love.

If our liturgy has simply ignored the couple's relationship leading up to the wedding, our preaching often adds insult to injury. There appears to be a well-established homiletic tradition at weddings that attempts to inculcate a Christian understanding of love by denigrating romantic love. When the two aspects of love are too severely contrasted, the laudable and necessary attempt to proclaim the agapic qualities of selflessness, patience, forgiveness and kindness can turn into a killjoy lecture that warns couples that their passion will not last long, and suggests that the sooner they abandon these illusions and see marriage as a matter of grim duty, the better. This is, granted, a caricature; our preaching is seldom so egregiously negative. But it is fair to say that it is very easy for clergy to fall into a kind of carping distrust that contrasts unfavourably with the expectations and mood not only of the couple (who in fact, despite being in love, may not be nearly as naive as we tend to assume), but of the rest of the congregation as well. Our teaching about agapic love, our attempt to inform the congregation's understanding of love by reference to the example of Jesus, will be effective only if we are able to speak convincingly of the joy and delight the couple has found in each other. Not only will our words be better heard, but our doctrine of love itself will have more depth and integrity if we can find a place in it for the experience of lovers.

III

The root theological problem with our doctrine of love lies in the tendency to turn the helpful and necessary distinction between *eros* and *agape* into an absolute dichotomy. *Eros* is defined as "need-love," characterized by being self-serving; *agape* ("gift-love") is then defined, in reaction, by its selflessness. This distinction quickly acquires a moral weight: when *agape* is seen to be the true Christian form of love, it appears imperative that we should love in such a way that we get nothing out of it! Such a negative criterion for agapic love is quite destructive, because it is an abstraction that does not begin to do justice to the complexity of human relationships. Even in the purely agapic

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6. Some of the new liturgies begin to move towards an acknowledgement of the fact of the couple's love for one another. For example, in The United Church of Canada's *Celebrate God's Presence* we read in the Statement of Purpose "We are gathered here to celebrate the love of N. and N." (p. 403).

7. The phrase is Eberhard Jüngel's. Jüngel's profoundly theological reflections on the structure of love as an analogy to the Trinitarian nature of God have shaped the theological considerations that follow. cf. *God as the Mystery of the World. On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*. Translated by Darrell L. Guder. Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark, 1983, esp. Section 20 "The God who is Love; On the Identity of God and Love," pp. 314-320.

context of Christian service, it is a dangerous illusion to pretend we get nothing out of serving others; on the contrary, we receive our very salvation in this new identity as members of the redeemed servant community. How much less can or should a marriage be a purely selfless relationship. No one, surely, desires to be loved by one's spouse in this way, believing that he or she is only making a sacrifice, and is in no way gratified by the relationship. Relational love is not selfless, but rather involves the self profoundly in a dialectic of self-sacrifice and self-fulfilment. As such it is a powerful experience of grace. And this points to the biggest problem with opposing eros to agape: it reduces love from a great gift of God's grace to a moral duty.

A positive theological account of the experience of falling in love must interpret it in terms of grace. The category of grace points to the sacramental potential of human love, which can serve as both a sign or analogy of God's love, and an effective instrument of that love. Erotic love is, as we noted above, personal through and through: the love for a unique and irreplaceable human being. As such it recalls particularly the intensely personal aspect of God's love, that God loves not humanity in general, but each human being in his or her singular individuality. Human love is an analogy — perhaps the strongest analogy we have — to the doctrine of election.

The mutual love of a couple is in fact quite a complex relational grace. It is not simply that we receive love as a gift: in a mutual relationship, this grace is complemented by others. Being loved is something we experience by grace, but we also love another by grace; and the fact that my love and my partners coincide is another quite distinct gift. In order to begin to do justice to the relational structure of love, we might define it more precisely as *the graceful coincidence of the grace of loving with the grace of being loved*. It is not by chance that this structure, the "graceful coincidence of the grace of loving with the grace of being loved," is trinitarian, an analogue to the ultimate mystery of God's being as lover, beloved, and *vinculum amoris*. Let us unpack each of the three aspects of this structure in turn.

The grace of loving. That we love another is something we often take for granted, as a natural occurrence rooted in the relational and sexual nature of our being. And so it may be, initially, quite simply natural that an attractive face should captivate our attention. This is often the beginning of falling in love. But if the relationship is to move beyond mere attraction, another process sets in. Lovers begin to know each other in a less superficial way. They see beneath the mask, the public persona each of us sets up to hide our weaknesses. The idealized image that each has of the other is corrected. The beloved's irreducible uniqueness comes more and more fully into view; and the lover finds him or herself no longer attracted to just another pretty face, but loving the particularity that is this other person, "warts and all."

In the 28th thesis of the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther distinguishes human and divine love: "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it."[8] Human beings love the beautiful; that is a Platonic axiom. In other words, Luther is suggesting that human love naturally tends to come only to the attractive, the lovable, those who are deemed deserving of love. God, in contrast, loves the unlovable, the disfigured, the hateful: sinful humanity. God's love is undeserved. It is by definition grace. By loving the unlovable, God's love then creates the beauty that is not naturally there. This is a fundamental distinction, indeed an aspect of *the* fundamental distinction between the creativity of God and the nature of humanity as derivative and reactive. It is in fact a version of the agape/eros dichotomy, and points out the fundamental truth of that as a logical distinction.

For our purposes, Luther's distinction is particularly interesting when we attempt to apply it to lovers. Here the clear dichotomy between human and divine love becomes more complicated. For lovers seem to exhibit an odd

8. LW vol 31, p 57.

combination of the two kinds of love. They are governed not just by the love of what is objectively beautiful, the love of a pretty face, though it may begin that way. If the love has any depth, it will have moved beyond the glittering image to know the other's weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Indeed, the love will gain in depth to the extent that it incorporates a fuller understanding of the other. It grows in its agapic dimension. But — and this is the fundamental difference to a purely agapic love, exercised as a Christian virtue — it does so not just by pitying what is ugly and broken in the other, but by finding the other more beautiful. In this respect it remains erotic. What happens when people fall in love, it seems, is that they are given the grace to see the other as beautiful. Not simply superficially beautiful, the beauty that many can see; the lover sees the beauty of his or her beloved in a way that no other person can. It is given to the lover to share, however imperfectly, in the way God sees the other: clearly, with his or her limitations, but also with his or her true beauty. And in seeing the other as beautiful, the lover reflects this back to the beloved, allowing him or her to discover and grow into a vision of their own beauty that they would not have on their own. In this way, the love of the lover can also be analogous to the creative love of God. In this respect loving is a grace, a possibility that is in no way innate, but given to us.

The grace of being loved. On the basis of these reflections, we can now see more fully why the experience of being loved is an experience of grace: not just in the general sense of being a pleasant thing, but specifically how it can be an analogy and sacrament of the love of God. No lover experiences the fact that they are loved merely as their due (as a child may experience the love of a parent, for example); if they do, one might well fear that their conviction of their own innate lovability will be an obstacle to a deeper mutual relationship. But neither, as we noted above, does anyone wish to be loved as an act of charity. The grace of being loved is, at its fullest, the experience that the love of the other makes one beautiful. The other *finds* one beautiful; and so one can lay aside the mask of a public image, the attempt to earn the respect and admiration of others, and find the freedom of knowing that here is one who loves me for who I really am, not who I am pretending to be. But the other also *realizes* in me new potential. Through this love I learn to see myself in a new way, through another's eyes. My partner has seen beauty in me, where I cannot alone perceive it, and so I begin to live up to this vision of myself. I discover new aspects of who I am; I discover, in effect, a new identity. I become myself in a new way: a lover, who no longer wishes to be himself without the other. And so the experience of being loved — in both its aspects, as merciful acceptance and conferring of new being — parallels that mode of God's love for humanity which our tradition calls the justification of the ungodly. The grace of being loved is perhaps the strongest experiential analogy to the doctrine of justification.

Graceful coincidence. That one may love or be loved are common human experiences, and not necessarily happy ones; that both fall together may also be natural, but it is not self-evident or inevitable, and so already a particular grace. It is this coincidence that allows both aspects, the loving and the being loved, to grow towards a greater fullness. Love grows step by step in mutuality, as we move towards that place where (to paraphrase Paul) we know fully, even as we are known. A relationship can of course develop one-sidedly (as when only one partner has the emotional maturity to move from mere attraction to love). Such relationships can easily take on abusive characteristics; at best, they fall short of the fulness of relationship to which we are called. It is precisely the mutuality of a relationship that compels us to experience it as grace. In a genuine relationship we are not a solitary "I" who can manipulate and control the other as an object; we can only learn to approach the other as a "Thou," another subject. And so a relationship implies vulnerability, in that we can not force or compel the other, but only hope to be loved as a free gift. On a practical level, the point is obvious to anyone with an ounce of emotional maturity: one does not behave in a manipulative manner in a love relationship. What is perhaps less obvious, and needs to be reiterated by the church, is that any mature relationship already implicates the couple in a dynamic of grace and intersubjectivity that runs counter to the logic of control and instrumentalization dominant in our society, and echoes in a real if imperfect way the trinitarian life of God.

IV

When we interpret the phenomenon of erotic love in terms of grace, it sets new emphases for our understanding of what the marriage liturgy is about. Firstly, it suggests that one purpose of the wedding is an act of celebration and thanksgiving for the love that the couple has found. Thanksgiving for God's grace is a central motive in Christian worship; if then we consider erotic love as a gift of God, it would be very odd of us not to acknowledge this motive clearly in our liturgy. Here, as mentioned above, the instincts of popular expectation seem to be ahead of the Church's formal liturgy: while weddings are easily understood by most people to be a celebration of love, it is difficult to find this perspective in the wording of our traditional marriage liturgies.

This understanding of celebration or thanksgiving as the first purpose of a wedding then in turn sets the context by which we might exegete the rest of the marriage liturgy in terms of the category of grace. There appear to be in fact three more principle features of the liturgy, three more things we do at a wedding, and these correspond to further stages in the phenomenology of grace. We gather to listen to the Word, in Scripture readings, psalms, and the homily; and we listen to it in the specific context of our celebration of the couple's love. As such the Scriptures do not just impart general precepts about marriage, but rather qualify the couple's relationship theologically as a gift of God. Luther, again, makes much of the importance of receiving one's spouse according to God's Word, by which he means not according to particular precepts, but rather as a gift of God: it is the Word (and here he is thinking particularly of the creation account) that identifies each partner as God's gracious gift to the other.[9]

The next central purpose of the marriage liturgy is the covenanting of the partners, expressed in the consent, the vows, and the exchange of rings. From the standpoint of the civil institution of marriage, these acts involve the establishment of a legal contract; but when we approach them from the perspective of the recognition of grace, they receive a different, more theological emphasis. Grace is by definition an act of God towards us that is unearned and unexpected. However, it is not the nature of God's grace to leave us in passivity, but to invite our response by affirming and accepting this gift in faith. If the love that has brought a couple together is an experience of grace, then the exchange of vows is the event in which the couple formally, intentionally and publically says "Yes" to what has happened to them. They "take ownership" of their love, becoming active participants in this gift that God is working in their lives.

It is important perhaps to state clearly, so as to avoid possible misunderstandings, that the grace of falling in love discussed in the previous section is connected with the step of covenant faithfulness as part of a whole; it leads to covenant and receives its meaning from it. The grace of eros is real, but it must not be isolated from agapic commit-

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9. Cf. for example this passage from a sermon on Mt 5: ". . . it would be a real art and a very strong safeguard against [adultery] if everyone learned to look at his spouse correctly, according to God's Word, which is the dearest treasure and the loveliest ornament you can find in a man or a woman. If he mirrored himself in this, then he would hold his wife in love and honour as a divine gift and treasure. And if he saw another woman, even one more beautiful than his own wife, he would say: "Is she beautiful? As far as I am concerned, she is not very beautiful. And even if she were the most beautiful woman on earth, in my wife at home I have a lovelier adornment, one that God has given me and has adorned with His Word beyond the others, even though she may not have a beautiful body or may have other failings. Though I may look over all the women in the world, I cannot find any about whom I can boast with a joyful conscience as I can about mine: 'This is the one whom God has granted to me and put into my arms.' I know that He and all the angels are heartily pleased if I cling to her lovingly and faithfully. Then why should I despise this precious gift of God and take up with someone else, where I can find no such treasure or adornment?" (LW, vol. 21: "The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat" (J.J.Pelikan, H.C.Oswald & H.T.Lehmann, Ed.), on Mt 5:31.

ment and upheld as an end in itself. It is an instance and sacrament of God's grace, not its consummation. It must not be invested with salvific meaning apart from the whole process of growth in relationship. So, for example, it would not be sound to conclude that God is calling one to leave one's marriage just because one feels one has fallen in love with someone else.

This affirmation the couple makes in the vows is in turn met by another act of God's grace, expressed in the nuptial blessing, as well as in the intercessions and the nuptial eucharist. Behind this blessing lies the recognition that neither the original gift of erotic love alone, nor the couple's good intentions to own and affirm this love, are sufficient to allow them to keep the commitment they have made for the rest of their lives. The success of the marriage is dependent upon grace alone, the ongoing grace of God by which he crowns our often poor attempts to respond in faith with his blessing, by which we may flourish. It is interesting to note that newer liturgies invoke God's blessing not only upon the fertility of the couple, or their common life, but also specifically upon their love.[10]

Seen under the premise that love is itself a gift of God's grace, the marriage ceremony then reveals a fourfold purpose: it is a celebration of God's grace as experienced, an interpretation of this experience by the Word, an act of assenting and self-commitment to live out this gift, and an invocation of God's blessing to complete the good work begun. The pattern is, in fact, a reflection of the fundamental pattern that governs all our relations with God: a grace which comes to us unexpectedly, invites our participation, and is carried by God's ongoing blessing. It is the very pattern of Christian life, modelled in marriage.

V

That marriage should naturally follow and complete a love relationship is a premise that is no longer plausible for increasing numbers in our society. Traditional marriage is, notoriously, under assault, and has been since the sexual and feminist revolutions of the 1960s. And, to a large extent, justifiably so. The rejection of standardized gender roles confining women to the home, of hierarchical views of partnership that disenfranchise women by advocating a duty to obey, of institutional respectability that guards outward appearance at the cost of tolerating abuse – all these point to a change of mind (a *metanoia*) that the church can and should embrace, and for the most part has. At its most visceral, the contemporary critique of marriage appears to be rooted in a horror of the loveless marriage, the all-too-common spectacle of two people trapped in a bitter, hateful co-dependancy. As well, the high divorce rate we have become accustomed to raises the question whether these vows really do mean anything. This disgust and this scepticism are surely also sentiments that all Christians can share. It is against this background that many in our society are asking whether there is any point to the kind of formal commitment that marriage involves. The church will need to respond with a careful account of why we believe this commitment to be ultimately freely and life-giving; but if this response is to have integrity and is to be helpful, then it must be a response that has heard and understood contemporary concerns about traditional understandings of marriage.

We have suggested that the progress of love, in which each partner discovers the other and in so doing finds a new future, is to be understood as an overwhelming experience of grace. Lovers experience the reality of their relationship as both different from and infinitely more interesting than all the romantic fantasies they could have

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10. Cf. *The Book of Alternative Services*, p. 534: "Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads." Also *Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services for The United Church of Canada*, p.384.

dreamed up for themselves. As the expression "falling in love" indicates, the economy of this kind of love is passive; it is something that happens to one. The act of self-commitment that a marriage embodies is, then, an opportunity for the lovers to affirm actively and intentionally what has happened to them, to say "yes" to this relationship that has changed their life. They will of course have already said "yes" to the relationship in a thousand small ways. But the wedding liturgy gives them the opportunity to affirm it in a solemn, ceremonial, public, once-and-for-all way, in the face of their families and communities, in the eyes of the state, and in the presence of God.

As the word "opportunity" indicates, this is itself a gift. In the face of appallingly high rates of marital breakdown, and the scepticism towards vows that this engenders, it is important to hold on to the insight that it is not our ability to live up to them that gives these vows meaning. They are a good and life-giving ordinance of God. God entrusts this act of commitment to us not because our moral stature has somehow earned us the right to be taken seriously; but because God has graciously chosen us to be capable of partnership. The problem of marriage breakdown cannot be adequately addressed simply by an inflation of moral obligation, as though it were just a matter of people not trying hard enough. In some specific situations, this may be the case (though it would be foolishly arrogant to judge someone else's marriage from the outside); but from a theological point of view, the problem lies deeper, in our human limitations. Our human nature is fallen: left to our own strength, we constantly fall short of our ideals. And, as temporal beings, our lives are radically out of our control. None of us can say (especially in these restless contemporary times) what our lives will look like in five or ten years time. Under these conditions, to speak a vow committing oneself for the rest of one's life is a foolishly unrealistic act – unless, that is, we do so trusting not to our own power, but to God who calls us to this.[11] Only by God's graceful permission can we make this commitment, because only by God's grace can we hope to live up to it. The marriage vows give us a place to co-operate actively and freely by affirming what God is doing with us in this relationship. Our free will is not an alternative to God's grace; rather God's grace makes a space for our free will.[12]

The particular nature of the marriage commitment is expressed in the Biblical word "covenant," which the church applies to marriage.[13] Marriage is a covenant in the sense that it is a commitment involving the whole person. One

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11. The sense in which we make these vows is most obvious in the case of couples remarrying after a divorce, who make vows they know they have once been unable to live up to. I was once a witness to a pastoral encounter in which the pastor suggested to the couple he was preparing for their wedding that, since they had once failed to live up to these vows, they couldn't make them in good conscience and they should just leave them out. The couple's apparent shame and disappointment were heart-breaking. The pastor was wrong not just in his treatment of this couple, but in his understanding of the marriage vows. All of us who make these vows can only do so in the knowledge of our inability to live up to them, and in our faith that by God's grace we will be able to.

12. As such the logic of the wedding vows is an illustration of the Reformation teaching on the bondage of the will. At no point can our good intentions *in themselves* play a part in our salvation, as we are simply not capable of choosing the good with any reliability. However, neither are we to remain merely passive objects of God's grace. God has determined us not to be objects, but to be people in relationship, responding in free faith and love to God's love. And so, instead of the *liberum arbitrium* we lack, God gives us a *arbitrium liberatum*, set free by God's grace to allow us to play our part as partners of God. In this sense the marriage vows are not primarily moral obligation, but graceful opportunity.

13. The original Biblical sense of the word appears to have been political, rather than matrimonial; although Ezek. 16:8 uses it of marriage. Since both covenant and marriage are parallel metaphors used of God's relationship to Israel or the Church, the transferral of the concept of covenant to the church's understanding of marriage is appropriate.

is not simply contracting to give something or to do something specific for the other, but rather to be there as a partner. The word "covenant" names a self-giving, which, while certainly not absolute, is quite comprehensive.[14]

The terms of the marriage covenant are stated most succinctly in the Declaration of Intent (and later repeated in the Vows). I quote simply the man's version, the woman's being identical in content:

> *N*, will you give yourself to *N* to be her husband: to love her, comfort her, honour and protect her; and forsaking all others, to be faithful to her so long as you both shall live?[15]

We note that the commitment has two aspects. Its content is an undertaking about the quality of relationship: the couple gives themselves to each other, to love, comfort, honour and protect one another. This content is then given a formal framework of exclusivity ("forsaking all others") and permanence ("as long as you both shall live"). It is important to remember that both aspects of the covenant are central. Indeed it could be argued that the commitment to love is primary, exclusivity and permanence being not so much ends in themselves as supports for this relationship of mutual love, comfort, honour, and protection. This may seem self-evident; but it appears that there has been a strong tendency in the church's moral thought to focus on the formal requirements alone, as though exclusivity and permanence were themselves sufficient to constitute a Christian marriage without mutual respect and affection. This tendency is part of a general pattern of defining sexual ethics in purely formal terms, without respect to relationship, a pattern which is the greatest weakness of much traditional judgement on sexual ethics. If we pay attention to what is being promised, it is clear that a person who fails to love or honour his or her spouse has broken the marriage covenant just as fully as one who commits adultery or abandons the relationship. We will consider these elements of the covenant in turn, beginning with the formal commitments of exclusivity and permanence, and proceeding to the relational aspects.

VI

The formal commitments are in effect the *proprium* of marriage vis-à-vis unmarried relationships.[16] These are the elements that are challenged in the widespread rejection of marriage in our society. How do we explain exclusivity to sexually promiscuous singles (or, for that matter, to people from a polygamous culture)? How do we justify permanence in a society of constant personal change?

We can, of course, answer these questions simply by appealing to authoritative rules that settle the issue. Such an answer, however, will carry no weight with those who do not accept the authority we invoke; increasingly, even Christians will not find it helpful. A truly constructive answer would be one based in Christian anthropology, in a careful and sustained reflection on the nature of our human existence and what we are called to be. Such a process of reflection and rearticulation of our basic beliefs about being human, in the face of the radical anthropological uncertainty of our society, remain an urgent task for the church. Here we can only gesture towards a possible answer.

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14. For this reason we should guard against the tendency towards an inflationary use of the term in church circles. A church that "covenants" with its secretary, for example, is in danger of using religious rhetoric to enforce intrusive demands; a contract, which clearly specifies and limits expectations, is the appropriate type of agreement in this context. A marriage, however, is more than a contract, as it requires of the partners a personal investment that goes beyond what can be specified concretely.

15. In the *BAS* liturgy; but the content of the traditional *BCP* is similar, with the exception (until 1962) of the notorious gender-specific promise to "obey him and serve him."

16. At least the explicit formal commitment to permanence is; most serious relationships in our society carry with them an expectation of exclusivity.

What are people for? One major strand in the theological tradition suggests that we exist primarily as social beings: our purpose is to be in community with one another, and ultimately with God. "Being in community" is not a political designation, as it was for the Greeks, but in the Christian tradition is qualified as love. The New Testament, for example, consistently sets forth the commandment to love God and neighbour as the great imperative of human life.[17] In light of Jesus' non-legalistic approach to the law, it seems appropriate to read this "commandment" teleologically. "Love" is not an arbitrary rule God has given to test our obedience; it is the nature of our full humanity, as realized in Jesus Christ. This vocation to love can be traced back to the very nature of God as trinitarian community of love. Our creation, understood in trinitarian terms, is God's gracious extension of this perfect and eternal exchange of love to include a creature who is loved by God and who, in turn, is called to love God and other creatures. The *imago Dei*, the image of God which humankind bears in distinction to the rest of creation, is most comprehensively understood as precisely this ability and vocation to love.[18]

This suggests that the living out of a loving community with other human beings is not just one thing we do among others in our life, but (together with the living out of a loving community with God) is fundamental to who we are as human beings. This community can and should take other forms besides that of marriage: it can be lived out with friends, other familial relations (esp. parent-child and sibling relationships), in the church, in an ordered religious community, in our work communities, and even in more abstract forms of communication (such as the relationship between an author or artist and his or her audience). Among all these possible ways of being in community, Christian marriage represents one particular shape for those who are called to it. It is that form of community in which one is called to practice mutual love most deeply and sustainedly with another single individual.

In addition to this fundamental call to community, a theological anthropology will also understand human nature in terms of its finitude. As much as we bear the image of God, we are not God, and this image is a weak and partial reflection of God's original love. It is the nature of God to love with a universal love: a love that extends to all creatures, but without thereby becoming general or abstract; a love that is infinitely personal and intense for each one of us. We, in contrast, are capable of loving only a small number of people, and that only very imperfectly. We can claim to love all people only in the most general way. We are called to live out that love of humanity, both in the body of the church, and in public service. In marriage, however, we are called to the specific task of loving one individual in depth — and in that attempt we quickly discover our limitations in new ways.

The vows of exclusivity and permanence provide the outline for this specific task of dedicating ourselves to practice loving one person in depth. Their necessity is rooted in our recognition of our own finitude; it is perhaps this fact that makes them so difficult to accept for many in our culture. As a human being I am one among many, each one just as real and valuable as I am. This is of course a fundamental discovery that each small child must make as part of growing up; and, in its abstract form, is axiomatic in our society. And yet, it is precisely the nature of human sinfulness — and we see the evidence of it all around us — that we appear unable to accept this truth completely. We slip so easily into that childish self-centeredness that sees ourselves and our needs as infinitely more important than

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17. "Consistently" is, of course, a dangerous word ever to apply to the New Testament. However, the agreement of the Synoptic tradition (Mt 5:43ff. par.; Mt 22:37ff. par.), the Johannine corpus (Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 3:11), and Paul (Rom 13:8ff.; Gal 5:14; 1 Cor 13) is a strong witness to the centrality of this commandment.

18. The Genesis account is particularly interesting on two accounts: the plural pronoun "let us make humankind in *our* image," which Christian commentators have read as a Trinitarian trace; and the words "male and female," which appear to be an explication of what it means to be made in the image of God. Yet it cannot be gender in itself that is the image of God in us, as we share that with the animals. One might suggest it is rather our structural propensity towards community, represented by male and female, which is an analogy to the trinitarian sociability of God.

other people's. Instead of genuine human beings in community, we become, in Luther's phrase, proud and unhappy gods,[19] egos that treat others not as partners, but as objects to be used.

The commitment to exclusivity keeps us rooted in our reality as one human being among many, relating in community and not in exploitation. The refusal to accept exclusivity leaves us with alternatives that demean our human vocation to community. Most obviously, a polygamous marriage implies a fundamental inequality of personhood. By setting up different levels of commitment (the woman is expected to be faithful to the man, while the man commits himself only partially to the woman as one of several wives), polygamy precludes truly mutual community. This applies not only to the institutionalized polygamy of other cultures, but also to the "double standard" with respect to fidelity which traditionally was accepted in large sections of Western society. The modern single, seeking self-realization through a number of sexual partners, also represents a failure to engage in genuine community. While there may be *social* equality in such encounters, in the sense that both partners are free to live in the same way, there cannot be true interpersonal equality. A casual encounter does not engage the full humanity of the other. The other person does not come into view as a complete human being, with all their complex needs and gifts, but only insofar as they fulfil *my* particular need. Even with the friendliest intentions, such a relationship instrumentalizes the other, and leaves me as a lonely ego using others to fulfil my needs, not as a human being capable of entering into mutual community. In a similar fashion marital infidelity is a rejection of the mutual community to which we are called — more grievous because we are turning our backs on an already existing community. The tacit implication of adultery is that the spouse's self-giving is not enough, that I am somehow entitled to more than one partner: that I am not simply one human being whose life is bound to another's, but a superior being who can use the lives of others without myself being fully implicated. In contrast, the purpose of the commitment to exclusivity and fidelity is to provide a framework in which we can live out our deepest human vocation to true community.

The vow of permanence ("as long as we both shall live") interprets that commitment of our whole persons in temporal terms. It is significant that the measure of permanence is the human life. The Christian tradition does not envisage marriage as eternal.[20] The vow of permanence is the giving of the whole self to the whole self of the other, the commitment to love not just one phase of that person, but the whole person unfolding over time. Here the uncertainty and sorrows of human life are invoked: "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health." The commitment to the whole person is explicitly a commitment to a shared experience of mortality, to the loss, infirmity and ultimately death that is part of every life, is part of the fullness of our humanity. We may and often do fail in that commitment; marriages may die, and the church recognizes and accepts that sad reality, through its willingness to remarry divorced people.[21] But this is in no way a compromise on the intention of every marriage to be permanent.

The rationale, then, of the marriage covenant is based in fundamental Christian anthropology, in our nature as social beings, created and called to love one another and God. The vows of fidelity and permanence provide the framework for one particular way of living out that vocation, that of an intimate and in-depth mutual relationship

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19. WA 5:128,36.

20. Cf. Mt 22:30 (Mk 12:25; Lk 20:35). For this reason our Church does not see marriage as indissoluble, in the way that the Roman Catholic Church does: as an ontological reality existing beyond human control. Whatever indissolubility marriage has, it is that of the "one flesh" — the human reality that when two lives grow together they cannot be separated without a very painful tearing that will leave permanent scars. With respect to the marriage bond not extending beyond death, it is interesting to call to mind one of the many forgotten changes the church has made in its teaching on marriage: the acceptance of remarriage after the death of a spouse, which in the Early Church was generally considered bigamous ("digamy").

21. The *Book of Occasional Celebrations* includes a liturgy for the ending of a marriage, as a liturgical recognition of that pastoral reality.

with a single human being. They are thus primarily descriptive in nature, in that they name the context in which this relationship is possible. When we choose freely and joyously to enter the marriage covenant, we are accepting a vocation to love this one specific human being. Through our free choice to make these vows, we accept the conditions as prescriptive for our behaviour.

VII

We turn now from the formal framework of permanence and fidelity to consider the material content of the marriage covenant. The Declaration of Intent expresses this in a series of verbs: "to love, comfort, honour and protect;" to which the Vows add the lovely word "cherish." What attitudes and commitments underlie these words? What is the nature of the love the couple commits themselves to? As a covenant, a commitment of the whole person, the marriage covenant is lived out on many different levels.

It is a practical and economic commitment (as implied particularly in the word "protect"). Married spouses are allies who have pooled their interests and their resources for survival against a hostile world. This aspect of practical partnership has always been part of the civil institution of marriage, whether it be the consolidation of family interests of the wealthy, or the survival strategies of the poor. It is a reality that can be demeaning, when it becomes dominant over other aspects of relationship, so that marriage is entered into without love and respect for the partner. But in its proper perspective, it is part of the social reality of marriage, and not necessarily to be despised.

The theme of partnership extends also to the emotional level: spouses covenant to "comfort," support and care for one another, to take one another's side, to be a refuge to the other in the face of the indifference or hostility of others. This is, in effect, a fundamental duty of friendship, and without this stratum of friendship, a marriage is dysfunctional. Like friendship, marriage does not necessarily imply a sharing of interests. What it does imply is that husband and wife can rely on one another, emotionally as well as practically.

In marriage, however — and here it differs from other forms of friendship — the relationship is sexual.[22] The word "cherish" names the sexual aspect of marriage, and makes it clear that the sexual aspect of a relationship is not only, or even primarily, physical. Spouses share with one another also and specifically this side of themselves, the joys, desires, vulnerability and brokenness we carry as sexual beings. Through this sharing in love they are vehicles of healing, forgiveness, freedom and ecstasy for one another. This is the real reason behind the Church's traditional teaching that our sexuality is properly lived out in marriage: that this most fundamental level of human vulnerability, the level on which we see ourselves most intensively and existentially as beloved or despised, needs to be embedded within the strongest possible friendship, a friendship characterized by exclusivity and permanence. Beyond this primary insight, however, the Church's account of the role of sexuality in marriage has tended to be deficient and often destructive. By teaching couples that their sexual desires were fundamentally shameful, and by instrumentalizing sex as an evil necessary for reproduction and for defusing dangerous carnal lusts ("the avoidance of fornication"), the Church has in effect isolated sexuality from the noble purpose of Christian love in marriage, and confined it to the dark and dirty cellar of marriage.

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22. This observation is meant in a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive sense. I do not mean to suggest that sexual intercourse defines the essence of marriage, so that marriage should be forbidden if physical "consummation" is not possible, because of a handicap, for example (as some interpretations of Roman Catholic practice seem to indicate).

All of the above aspects of marriage — practical support, friendship, sexuality, and one might add, social role and procreation — are phenomenological observations that would apply in some degree to all marriages; they do not serve to articulate the particular theological identity of Christian marriage. They define marriage as a civil institution, but not in its sacramental significance as an institution of Christian life. This identity, as suggested above, is to be found in the practice of a specific and intentional community of love. It is the ultimate purpose of marriage that people live out, in the intensive context of exclusivity and permanence, the calling to love one another as God has loved us. We live it out very imperfectly; yet even in this imperfection our love is graced to be a sacrament of the central mystery of God: Christ's love for his Church.

This love is not something distinct from or even contrasted to the erotic love that brought the couple together: it is the continuation, transformation, and deepening of that same love. "Falling in love" is, as I argued in the first half of this paper, the beginning of an ever deepening process of finding joy in the other's unique being. From the very beginning, from the moment in which we move beyond our projections and illusions to perceiving and affirming the other as they really are, we have begun to see them as God does: with clarity, tenderness and affirmation. The purpose of marriage is to live out this particular and intensive form of Christian community to the fullest.

VIII

If this Christian community is to be lived out to the fullest, there is another dimension that must be mentioned. We have so far paid insufficient attention to the third of the purposes of marriage (in the *BAS* numeration): the gift and heritage of children. The birth of a child is a powerful experience of the grace of God the creator. As any parent quickly discovers, each child is so much its own personality, so much more than the sum of the parents, that one is daily overwhelmed by the experience of the newness and openness of God's creativity. In the love for a child one discovers new dimensions of what love means. The dialectic of self-sacrifice and self-fulfilment we discussed above has different contours: the love for a child has a structural pre-disposition towards self-denial, as we rejoice in the coming of a new life that will, we pray, continue after we are no more. The experience of parenthood, interpreted from a Christian perspective, is another and different sacramental experience of the love of God whom we name as Father and Mother. All that was said above about the sacramental grace of erotic and relational love applies, but wonderfully changed again.

And yet, for all that, child-bearing is not a necessary purpose of marriage. That marriages may be childless has always been a reality; as much as this may be an occasion for grief, it does not make these marriages in any way inferior or defective. If the essence of Christian marriage is the mystery by which our covenanted love represents and embodies the love of Christ for the church, then that essence is as fully realized in a childless couple. Our tradition has always married couples past the age of child-bearing, and the *BAS* has recognized this by bracketing this as the third purpose of marriage.

But if the actual bearing and raising of children is not an essential element in every Christian marriage, it points to something that is, something that must be named in somewhat broader terms. In Christian marriage, every couple is called to move beyond themselves, to make their love fruitful to a wider community: children and family, friends and strangers. If it is indeed the case that the love of a couple is rooted in God's love, and has as its purpose to be an instance and example of that love, then this dimension of openness must necessarily be part of it. For it is fundamental to Christian belief that God was not content to rest in the eternal love of the Trinity as a closed system; rather, the love of the Trinity was intrinsically a love which overflowed into creation, seeking out the other. So too, our marital love, if it is to reflect God's love, cannot remain a purely self-absorbed couple relationship, but must open itself and become fruitful for others. The birth and raising of children is a fundamental sign and realization of this fruitfulness, but it is not the only way. A couple (whether they have children or not) is called to live their relation-

ship in community. They are, as the Marriage Rite reminds us, “linked to each other’s families, and are called to begin a new life together in the community.” It is a call to hospitality: towards family, friends and neighbours, but also towards the stranger and the friendless. If marriage is a training ground for love, where one learns to love one person with depth and perseverance, it is not for all that separate from the totality of our Christian commitments to love others. They are called not just to incarnate God’s love towards each other, but to live their couplehood in such a way that “their lives together may be a sacrament of God’s love in this broken world, so that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy overcome despair.”

IX

In our present context, a discussion of the theology of marriage invites also reflection upon the question of same-sex unions, with which many of our churches are struggling. And so I will close by asking what the above considerations have to say to the question of same-sex couples. If the love of a couple, the whole rich history of mutual discovery and affirmation a couple experiences before they come to church to be married, is potentially a gift and sign of God’s grace, what light does this viewpoint shed on same-sex relations?

It seems evident that same-sex couples who approach the church seeking a blessing of their relationship do so on the basis of a previous experience of falling in love that is comparable to that described above. This dimension is often lost sight of in our current debates about same-sex unions, which tend to deal with generalized abstractions. When the church is asked to bless a relationship, what is at stake is not primarily whether certain sexual practices are pleasing to God, or even whether homoerotic love in general is pathological; what is being asked is first of all a response to the grace-filled and unique experience of two people who have fallen in love. That is not to say that the other questions are not important, and they must be addressed in turn. But they can only be addressed with honesty if we approach them from a basic recognition of the fact of two people in love.

The primary question which the church must decide, then, is whether it can recognize, in the phenomenon of two people of the same gender falling in love, a potential gift and sign of God’s grace. In Luther’s terms, can same-sex partners be recognized as God’s gift to one another? Which is to say, can they be seen to receive one another according to God’s Word? The question is thus an exegetical one. But Luther refers to the Word in this context in a particular sense: not as a compendium of general principles, but as the living voice of the gospel, spoken to and heard by a Christian couple in the context of their particular, and for them overwhelmingly real, experience of grace. As such the question cannot be solved by analytical exegesis alone (although that is an essential tool), but by a communal listening for God’s Word alongside those who believe they are discerning God’s call for their lives.

This question is fundamental in how we see same-sex blessings, and it is for this reason difficult. But our reflections above suggest that there may be an additional factor in making this decision so difficult for us: if we as a church have not been able to articulate with any great fullness heterosexual love as a gift and sign of God’s grace, it is to be expected that we will find it difficult to say the same of homosexual love. And so, it seems, the question about same-sex love points to a still more fundamental question: whether we as a church are able to recognize the grace of God at work when two people enter into a love relationship. If our answer to this question is negative, then we will presumably see little reason to be open to homosexual relationships. Without a valuing of emotional and interpersonal factors in a relationship, we are left only with an impoverished understanding of sexuality as dealing merely with the gratification of subconscious urges, and of marriage as a duty for the propagation of the species. On this view, it is then not surprising that many conclude that the suppression of these urges in a celibate lifestyle is the appropriate response to homosexual orientation.

If, on the other hand, the church is led to affirm the action of God’s grace when two people fall in love, then a certain degree of openness at least to the possibility of same-sex unions would probably follow. Such an affirmation

would not settle the issue; other questions, such as the symbolic importance of gender complementarity, or the ethical evaluation of sexual practices, would still need to be addressed. But if we take seriously the possibility that God may be at work when two people develop a mature love relationship, then it is scarcely enough to ask what reasons we would need to find same-sex unions acceptable. We would have to ask ourselves also what reasons we have for denying what may be a work of the Spirit, and at least to understand the gravity and danger of rejecting what God has found acceptable. It is not so much a matter of reversing the burden of proof (such forensic language is not conducive to constructive, consensus-seeking theological reflection), but rather of understanding the moral seriousness of our dilemma. There will be a right and a wrong answer to these questions; but there is no risk-free default position. Each answer has its own risks, and its own cost.

But such a risk is ultimately inherent in the theological enterprise. With heterosexual couples as well, we have suggested, the church has traditionally neglected to value theologically their experience of falling in love. This experience is part of a couple's history before they come to church to be married; they may well not bring sufficient resources of conscious faith to be able to articulate their relationship as a gift of God's grace. We are dealing with an experience of grace that is prior to and independent of any mediation through the church, and for this reason, presumably, the church has such difficulty in even acknowledging this experience. We choose instead to ignore it in setting forth our liturgy and even theology of marriage, treating it only as a problem to be regulated. Presumably, it seems safe to do so, as erotic love is an irreducibly intimate affair, always outside the ecclesiastical box. But God's grace is at work in this world outside the church. It is not "safe" to ignore it, because to do so distorts the living fullness of God's goodness into the cramped staleness of our parochial vision. This lack of vision has too long crippled our theology of interpersonal relationships. Whatever we may decided about the blessing of same-sex unions, we are being called as a church to an intentional, critical and imaginative interpretation of the grace of eros.

ELEVEN

THINKING FAITHFULLY ABOUT SEX AND MARRIAGE

Jamie Howison

IT HARDLY NEEDS to be said that as a society, we are both intrigued and challenged by issues of sexuality and sexual expression. "Sex sells," they say, and if the billboards, magazine covers and television sit-coms provide any accurate reading of the times, "they" are right. It has doubtlessly always been so, but in the current cultural milieu it would seem an all but indisputable fact.

At the risk of oversimplifying matters, the Christian church has tended, at least in its more public manifestations, to fall into two fairly distinct camps. The "conservatives," emphasizing personal and marital holiness, react to the proliferation of sexual imagery (and to the perceived breakdown of traditional sexual mores) with a critical defensiveness. In this view, sexual intimacy belongs exclusively within the context of heterosexual marriage, where it can be boundaried, domesticated and marked by mutual accountability. The culture's steady diet of sexual imager is destructive of God's good purpose for a redeemed and sanctified humanity. [1]

The "liberals," on the other hand, have tended to dismiss conservative insights as puritanical and repressive. They will point, rather selectively, to portions of Paul's teaching on marriage and celibacy, or to Augustine and some of the other church fathers, and argue that a latent gnosticism lies at the heart of the tradition's inability to find a more affirming and positive place for sexual desire and intimacy. These liberal voices tend to want the church to find a more life and body-affirming anthropology; something more celebratory than what they hear in those voices calling for holiness. While feminist writers have alerted the liberal church to the problems posed by a media and popular culture that seeks to objectify bodies and sexual desire, the drive to *not* be puritanical and to *not* appear to be repressed often makes liberal voices unsympathetic to the deeper call to holiness.

This, of course, is a drastic oversimplification, yet it does tell us something of what is going on. Which churches, for instance, might be found protesting the establishment of an adult video store in the neighborhood? Which churches seem entirely unconcerned with pre-marital sex and common-law relationship within the membership of their congregations? Which churches have difficulty speaking openly about sexual violence or sexual infidelity as issues impacting their own members? And if they do speak, what sort of language is used? Are these issues seen as instances of sin and fragmentation, or as social and relational problems to be solved?

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1. Eugene F. Rogers, *Sexuality and the Christian Body* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp 67f. I am indebted to Rogers for his identification of the core concern of the "conservatives" as being one of "holiness."

A deep challenge for the Christian community is to begin to recognize that both sides of this oversimplified dichotomy hold truth, and each, in its own way, is deficient. Both the call to holiness and the instinct for a celebratory body-affirming sexuality are truthful, yet each holds only part of the puzzle. This paper represents one attempt to wrestle beyond the either/or impasse, and to offer something that takes seriously the place of celebratory and mutual sexual intimacy within the holiness of the people of God. Part of what must be taken seriously in such an exploration is the power of sex. No ecstasy is quite like sexual ecstasy, but at the same time no wound is as cutting as sexual wounding. There is no easy formula to be produced here, because the reality is that we are playing with something more powerful than dynamite. Any theology of sexuality must take that very seriously, and proceed with a profound humility.

A brief tour through the marriage liturgies of the Anglican tradition is instructive. The 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England (still the recognized and normative prayer book of that church) betrays a fairly deep ambivalence about sex. On the one hand, marriage is upheld in very positive terms:

> (Marriage) is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church.[2]

This framing of marriage as sacramentalizing to us something of the very relationship of Christ and church is key, and will form part of the core of this essay's final theology. The positive frame, however, is quickly and rather starkly qualified:

> (It) is not to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding.

"Careful, then, how you think about and experience your sexual desire," is the implied warning offered as the priest begins to outline the causes or purposes of marriage.

- "First, it was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name."
- "Secondly, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication: that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body."
- "Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity."

In short, two positive "causes," both either directly or by implication laden with sexual shadings, and one rather more negative purpose. On the positive side, there is the procreation of children, understood unequivocally as a "good," and then this rather wonderful business of "mutual society, help and comfort" which has, in its vision of mutuality and closeness, clear implications for the sexual self. Squeezed between the two is a rather prophylactic cause, that of avoiding fornication. Instructed by Paul ("For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion," 1 Cor 7:9b NRSV), and no doubt influenced by Augustine's dark and fragmented sexual theology, the 1662 prayer book speaks at once to the gift of marital intimacy and to the complexity of sexual desire. It is content to let these two strands stand side by side in striking contrast; one can only wonder what the blushing brides and grooms of the seventeenth century made of their own sexual desires as they heard such words pronounced.

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2. *The Book of Common Prayer (and administration of the Sacrament, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Use of The Church of England*), 1662. The citations are from "The Order for Solemnization of Matrimony."

The marriage liturgy of the first Canadian prayer book, authorized in 1918, represented an attempt to reduce both this tension and the starkness of language. The opening lines, which present marriage as signifying the mystical union of Christ and church, are retained, but the phrase about "carnal lusts" and "brute beasts" is gone. The purposes of marriage are maintained, but the order is changed and the language of "avoidance of fornication" is replaced by the phrase, "the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman." Insofar as the 1662 liturgy had spoken openly about sex, it had spoken with that plain and cautionary voice; the 1918 liturgy chooses to speak in a far more genteel voice, and ends up speaking of sex in rather euphemistic terms. The Canadian prayer book of 1959/1962, with only minor revisions, follows the text of 1918, and so once again sex is addressed in only the most polite of terms.

This is all quite revolutionized in the 1985 *Book of Alternative Services*.[3] The language of "Christ and his Church" is retained, yet somehow softened and downplayed. There is nothing about "mystical union", and while marriage is named "a means of God's grace," the specific language chosen to replace that of "signifying" and "mystical union" seems to downplay the power of sacramental signification:

> It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love, they shall grow together and be united in that love, as Christ in united with his Church.

The traditional purposes of marriage are restated, and for the first time in its marriage liturgies the Canadian church found itself speaking positively and openly about sex.

> The union of man and woman in heart, body, and mind is intended for their mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love (and that they may be blessed in the procreation, care, and upbringing of children).

That the procreation of children has become a bracketed option is telling. Whereas the 1662 liturgy had listed procreation of children as the first purpose of marriage, and the 1918 version had moved it into the second position (following "the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman," no less), the *Book of Alternative Services* lists it as the third, and clearly optional, place. This speaks, of course, to the current pastoral realities of remarriage and blended families, as well as to the marriage of older, post-menopausal persons. It also reflects, however, the fact that even younger couples may choose to forge a childless marriage; it reflects this, but neither the liturgy itself nor the introductory rubrics offer any reflection on the meaning of such a monumental shift.

Even more telling, though, is that we can now speak liturgically about sex; that for the first time since we ceased using the 1662 liturgy, the bride and groom might have a moment of blushing. What is more, sex is addressed as an altogether positive thing. There is no indication that it is a mightily powerful, even dangerous thing; it is simply "to know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love." Where the 1662 liturgy spoke of the avoidance of fornication, the *BAS* speaks only in positive tones. In a very real sense, both liturgical voices are deficient, for neither is able to tell the whole truth. What is required is a liturgy that can speak of marriage and sexuality in a more complete and truthful manner, and for that to occur we need to revisit and reinvigorate our theology of sex; we (and here I mean the whole *laos*, and not just the members of theological commissions…) need a theology that pushes beyond both the liberal/conservative impasse and the entirely deficient sexual ideologies of our popular culture. We require a critical theology of sex that will equip us to begin to live with this powerful thing that is our sexual desire. We need something akin to a celebratory holiness, which might give us a fighting chance to indwell our own desires in all of their power and ambivalence.

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3. *The Book of Alternative Services* of the Anglican Church of Canada (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985). The citations are from "Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage."

St. Paul may seem a strange place to begin, particularly if one has been influenced by the position that says Paul is anti-sex and hard on women. Entire books have been written on Paul's take on women or on body or on sex, and to mount any thorough overview here is well beyond the scope of this essay. However, we do need to give Paul his due: he believes that sex *means* something. Paul understands that sexual desire is a powerful force, and he is unflinching in his call that husband and wife meet each other's sexual needs/rights mutually and non-coercively. These are fairly strong insights from a writer often accused of being anti-sex!

Paul understands that sexual union is unitive at a deeper level; that in sexual intercourse the two become one flesh. His concerns that Christian men not get involved with prostitutes is born not of a prudish moralism, but rather of a theology that says sexual intercourse *means* something, effects something, does something (1 Cor 6:15-16). This is far from a dualism that wants to separate pure spirit from base body; Paul knows that what is done with the body is done by the whole self and has repercussions for the whole self; he also knows that this is peculiarly so with sex. There is a profound ontological dimension to sexual activity. To use the traditional language of sacrament, "it effects what it signifies." Between husband and wife, sexual intimacy can effect and deepen their oneness and their mutuality. With a prostitute, it deepens only the disintegration of the self. [4]

Paul clearly recognizes that he is dealing here with a powerful force. From his eschatological perspective, he is content (or at least seems so) to accept his own celibacy as a gift given by God for a life in the last days of the old order, but he freely accepts the fact that most will not share his contentment. Paul advises people to marry, and to work out their sexual desire in the context of that marriage (1 Cor 7:32f). He quite comfortably accepts the power of female sexual desire, for it is to widows that he writes the aforementioned "better to marry than to be aflame with passion." He quite specifically addresses sexual activity as being the "conjugal right" of both husband and wife, and forbids each from "depriving" the other. (1 Cor 7:3-7) For Paul, sex in Christian marriage cannot be about power; it is not a weapon or a level to be yielded by one to gain something from the other. It is truly mutual.

The questions of power, conjugal rights and mutuality are not, however, so easily resolved in most relationships. I recently heard a radio interview in which a marriage counselor said something to the effect that, "falling in love is like handing someone a loaded gun." A bleaker version comes courtesy of the pop band, *The Pursuit of Happiness*: "Sex is a weapon, but only she's allowed to use it."[5] Clearly, for all of the cynicism, power and vulnerability are enormous issues in intimate relationships. Even the most mutual of marital sexual encounters has moments both of great empowerment and of deep vulnerability. When trust has been betrayed (and not exclusively sexual fidelity), or when hurt has been inflicted; when one or the other comes to the marriage with some sexual wound or with latent trust issues (second marriages can be powder-kegs here); when, for various reasons one is not comfortable with one's body or one's sexual desire, then there is always a sense that sex is risky … maybe overwhelmingly so.

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4. In his short story, "Transaction," John Updike narrates the tale of a married traveling businessman who, in a sort of mid-life crisis of boredom, impulsively decides to procure the services of a prostitute. Typical of Updike, the story is quite explicit, yet entirely without erotic or sensual appeal. The protagonist, known only as "Ed" (the false name he gives to the prostitute), finds the experience dispassionate, strangely cold and detached from any real desire. After the woman has left his hotel room, "Ed" checks their used condom to make sure it has not leaked. "The rubber held… Good girl. A fair dealer. He had not given her a baby, she had not given him venereal disease. What she had given him, delicately, was death. She had made sex finite." The story quite brilliantly illustrates what lies at the heart of Paul's concern, namely that the problem posed by so-called illicit sex is not so much moral as it is ontological. John Updike, "Transaction," *Problems and other stories* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1981), p. 131.

5. "Two Girls in One," lyrics by Mo Berg, from *One Sided Story,* The Pursuit of Happiness (Chrysalis Records, 1990).

In his article on "Sexuality," R. Paul Stevens makes the suggestion that because the woman "receives the man … she makes herself extremely vulnerable." [6] The male lover, meanwhile, is "directed outward," and, citing Thielicke, Stevens speculates, "Perhaps it is less total for him."[7] There is no question that the woman's experience of sexual union is different from that of the man, and that the union is experienced from a posture (both literally and figuratively) of reception and openness. There is a real vulnerability in the act of intercourse for the woman, but it is foolish and probably ultimately a bit chauvinistic to claim that there is a "less total" unitive experience for the man. Further, men bear a particular vulnerability in their bodies. Not only are their genitals sensitive organs unprotected by any body tissue or bone, but when are aroused they are so *obvious*. There is no being coy or hiding arousal on a naked male body, and this makes the man more than a little vulnerable to the rejection or disinterest of his lover. Both male and female bear their vulnerabilities on their bodies, and both experience sexual power (among other ways) in the place of vulnerability. "At least one reason for sex being limited to marriage," writes Stanley Hauerwas,

> is that marriage provides the context for us to have sex, with its often compromising personal conditions, with the confidence that what the other knows about us will not be used to hurt us.[8]

It is significant that Augustine's fairly condemning theology of sex has its origins, at least in part, in his own experience of vulnerability in arousal. It is with his father at the communal baths that a spontaneous erection causes him shame over his whole sense of self. [9] Later, in *The City of God*, he writes that on account of the Fall,

> (Adam and Eve) experienced a new motion of their flesh, which had become disobedient to them, in strict retribution of their own disobedience to God. For the soul, reveling in its own liberty, and scorning to serve God, was itself deprived of the command it had formerly maintained over the body.[10]

Augustine felt no end of shame that his penis was beyond the control of his will. Involuntary, physical, sexual arousal, with all of the attendant emotions, was proof positive of the sinfulness of humanity. Had Adam and Eve not fallen, sexual reproduction would have been entirely under the control of the will; arousal at will, with no passion or sense of ecstatic or uncontrolled desire. It would have been a neat clinical act, for the sole sake of procreation.[11]

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6. R. Paul Stevens, "Sexuality," in Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens, eds. *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 881.

7. Ibid, p 881

8. Stanley Hauerwas, "Sex in Public," *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 181.

9. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Book II, part 3, translated by R.S. Pine-Coffin (Penguin Books, 1961).

10. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIII, part 13, translated by Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1950).

11. While the notion that sexual intimacy could even be imagined as a passionless act probably strikes us as a complete contradiction, for Augustine it seemed not only an entirely attractive thing, but also a completely reasonable one. In Chapter XIV, part 24 of *The City of God* he writes, "The man, then would have sown the seed, and the woman received it, as required, the generative organs being moved by the will, not excited by lust. For we move at will not only those members which are furnished with joints of solid bone, as the hands, feet, and fingers, but we move also at will those which are composed of slack and soft nerves: we can put them in motion, or stretch them out, or bend and twist them, or contract and stiffen them, as we do with the muscles of the mouth and face." He goes on from there at some length, and includes the following example to illustrate his point: "Some have such command of their bowels, that they can break wind continuously at pleasure, so as to produce the effect of singing." While some might read in this a humourless man citing ridiculous examples, it is also possible to read his more unusual examples as being intentionally ironic and playful. For all that he struggled to make sense of his fallen nature, Augustine never renounced a joy in what God has created. Thanks to fellow commissioner Paul Jennings for directing me to this passage.

Such was Augustine's sense of shame over his previous sexual misadventures, and due to a profound sense that his shameful sexual appetite was, at some level, a part only of his sinfulness. As Evdokimov notes,

> For the doctor of the theology of original sin, concupiscence, which most strongly reveals that sin, is always mingled with the conjugal act; man is embarrassed about it, but the positive goal of procreation pardons it. The act is a means entirely determined by the end that one has in sight.[12]

In the end, it is risky to psychoanalyze a great thinker from the distance of 15 centuries. What all fuelled his theology of sex is too complex to boil down to one thing, yet this much at least we can say: his experience of his sexual body was one not of power but of shameful weakness, and this experience deeply affected how he lived and what he wrote.

A question that Augustine could never have framed nor answered in positive terms is asked by Eugene Rogers in his *Sexuality and the Christian Body*: "How does the Christian community think God sanctifies and upbuilds it with sexual desire?"[13] Presuming we can safely set aside Augustine's entirely negative take on desire (which, after all, fails to take seriously even Paul's utilitarian acceptance of sexual intimacy in marriage, to say nothing of the positive renderings of sexuality given in the Old Testament creation stories, in the Song of Solomon, and in other places), where can such a new question lead us?

It leads, in fact, into the prospect of a deep theology of sex and intimacy. How is it that we can think of sexual desire as being "of God," given as a gift to bless and build us both in relationship and in community? Karl Barth offers the surprising statement that, "Because the election of God is real, there is such a thing as love and marriage."[14] God weds Godself to humanity through Jesus Christ, and in so doing God declares Godself to be relational. There is first the inner relational nature of God as triune, as Father, Son and Spirit, caught eternally in the Holy Dance that is the divine life.[15] No dispassionate monad here, the God revealed in the Christian tradition is relational. All of the created order echoes the great dance, and never more than in the life of the creature made in the image of God. If we take seriously our Trinitarian faith, then no Christian — in fact no human — can afford to stand alone. We are in the community of relations, as God is in the Trinity. We echo only impartially, and can convince ourselves that the "I" that I am is self-evident and self-existent apart from the "thou" that is you, or the "Thou" that is God.[16] Betrayed by the Enlightenment, we keep imagining that we dance alone, as self-contained participants in the social contract. Yet "no man is an island," and no one can attain to the fullness of his or her calling to be human so long as island existence is being played out. Not to say that the married life is for all, just that even true hermits are in need of an anchoring community of prayer and accountability.

There is also God's other coterminous relational life to which Barth makes explicit reference. This is "the mystical union betwixt God and his Church," and the recapitulation of humanity through the self-giving life, death and

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12. Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), p.p. 24-25.

13. Rogers, p. 18.

14. Karl Barth in Rogers, p. 14.

15. I am particularly indebted here to Baxter Krueger for alerting me to the theology of perichoresis, or mutual indwelling, so central to the Trinitarian thought of the Cappodocians.

16. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). Buber has been so influential that this work hardly requires a citation. For Christians, though, Buber's work is not altogether complete, as it does not take into account the triune character of God. The doctrine of the Trinity proclaims that our inherent relationality is always poised to move us into a *community* of relations.

resurrection of Christ Jesus. Jesus is God's efficacious declaration that the wedding is on, that the feast is beginning, that we are home free in the unstoppable love affair between God and humanity. We are, as a people, desired by God, and though we have a story of infidelity on our side, we have been romanced home. Our "election"— our being desired, loved, and courted by God — is real, and we hear it echoed, however imperfectly, in our romances and our marriages. Hence desire and sexual intimacy do not just sacramentalize that particular love between *this* man and *this* woman, but also stand as sacraments of the triune God who dances as Father, Son and Spirit, and who dances us home as the beloved.

Never mind, incidentally, which partner is analogous to Christ and which to the gracefully redeemed humanity. Because our desire sacramentalizes both the great desire of God for humanity and the surprising revelation that, once desired, we feel desire, human sexual desire echoes both. Each lover is also the beloved, each also is returning what is first given.

Rowan Williams offers a most helpful insight here,

> The whole story of creation, incarnation, and our incorporation into the fellowship of Christ's body tells us that God desires us, *as if we were God*, as if we were that unconditional response to God's giving that God's self makes in the life of the Trinity… The life of the Christian community has as its rationale – if not invariably its practical reality — the task of teaching us to so order our relations that human beings may see themselves as desired, as the occasion of joy.[17]

"… that human beings may see themselves as desired, as the occasion of joy." What is powerful here is the acknowledgement of the profound and moving impact of *being desired*. The experience of feeling sexual desire and having that met and satisfied is one thing; the experience of *being* desired, and of knowing that as joyous, is another altogether. This, it would seem, is the moment of true mutuality, where to each of the lovers the beloved is their heart's (and mind's and body's …) sole desire.

To be desired — and to be "cherished" as the old liturgies phrased it — is an extraordinary and formative human experience. This is quite different from being ogled or cat-called, which is to experience oneself as an object of someone's raw lust. To be desired by a beloved is to be recognized by them as a wholly desirable person, as a subject. It is to have some rumour, in your very body, of God's desire for you. It is also to be so taken by the beloved that all fears of being hurt in vulnerability fade, at least for that time.

Meeting, lover to beloved, person to person, in that experience of mutual desire we can risk (again) letting our fears of vulnerability fade, letting the self meld for a time with the other. This is not always or even usually about intercourse. The lightest, seemingly casual, brush of a lover's hand down one's arm or across one's face can be a powerful sacramental sign of being loved, desired, cherished and recognized by this person.

It is a profound insight that one of the Hebrew words used for sexual intercourse, "yada," is most literally translated "to know." The experience of lovers in mutual desire is one of empowerment and vulnerability, in which each is utterly *known* to the other and to the self. This is why after years and years of monogamous marriage lovers can still see the beloved as the most desirable partner on earth. Here desire has two subjects, and no objectified other. Arousal *is* arousal for the beloved, who is a whole embodied person. Asked to choose who is more desirable, the lover of 25 years or the latest *Vogue* magazine super-model, and (perhaps completely surprising to some who have been narcotized by the culture), the beloved is named without hesitation.

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17. Rowan Williams, "The Body's Grace," in Charles Hefling, ed. *Our Selves, our Souls and Bodies* (Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications, 1996), p. 59.

This transcendent experience of desire and mutuality is, of course, an ideal. Many will experience this some of the time, a few will be graced to live it virtually all of the time, but most will only have glimmers of it in their own lives. The glimmers are fine; they too are inklings of the divine life, and can be treasured as icons of hope and of promise. Yet we do need to be realistic, and admit that this side of the City of God, we always see as through a glass darkly. More, we will desire and be desired only imperfectly, and sometimes we will turn our beloved into a body object, or we will wield her/his desire as a lever, or we will find ourselves feeling vulnerable and even as shameful as Augustine himself.

"The Bible understands that sexuality is the ultimate arena of cost and joy,"[18] writes Brueggemann, and we too need to know that in our theologies of sex. No wound is quite so deep as a sexual wound, but its close second is the more general relational wounds of betrayal or abandonment or violated trust. Most of us will limp into our marriages with some such wound or a personality quirk or foible, and there will be days when desire will be difficult, both to express and to receive. The self-help books will attempt to correct our thinking, improve self-esteem, or enhance pure technique, but none will heal the wounds, and some such approaches may in fact deepen the sense of alienation. It is all fine and good to read endlessly about how things should be, could be and might be, but if the reader has any experience at all with such books, she/he will realize that the quick fix textbook approach is likely to fail. Besides, one partner might be completely convinced and motivated to follow a book's advice, but if the other partner does not buy in, what then? The convinced book reader may end up feeling more hopeless, even trapped, in what they see as a one-sided hunger for more. The same, of course, holds for marriage counseling. Further, in a culture that sometimes seems therapy-mad, experts will offer to plumb the depths of your soul to help you fix the problem, but this is far from a guaranteed process and may even form people who are fixated on the self.

This is probably an appropriate point to offer a cautionary word against treating sex too earnestly, making it so fraught with meaning that it all but paralyzes us. Eugene Rogers makes the following observation:

> Worried about the sort of idolatry that comes from too high a view of sex and marriage, a friend has complained that "all married couples need is to have a theologian telling them that they should not only expect great sex but *spiritually significant* sex, God help us."[19]

Expecting each sexual encounter to be both technically stellar and ontologically significant is not only idolatrous, it is not a whole lot of fun. "Most of us know," writes Williams, "that the whole business is irredeemably comic… (with) many opportunities for making a fool of yourself." [20] If intimacy can't have about it something of play and laughter, but is instead all seriousness and technique, we are doomed to disappointment. In my undergraduate course in child psychology and development, I was taught that children (including the "children" of apes and other primates) *need* to play as they grow and develop; not simply as a way of learning about social interaction, but also to learn something of the self and of the power of imagination. Maybe there is something analogous in keeping our sexual intimacies "playful," and our readings of them suitably and humbly "comic."

Not, of course, that our marriage covenants are not matters of gravity. The vows in our marriage liturgies call us to be together through thick and thin,

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18. Walter Brueggemann, "Sexuality" in *Reverberations of Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 194.

19. Rogers, p. 212.

20. Williams, p. 58.

> … for better, for worse,
> for richer, for poorer,
> in sickness and in health,
> to love and to cherish
> for the rest of our lives,
> according to God's holy law. [21]

There are a whole series of anthropological and sociological theories as to the source of the tradition of taking such vows (many having to do with property rights and the securing of familial lines), yet from the church's perspective perhaps the strongest reason is that we need at least a life-time to make our way through this stuff. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13 NRSV), which, as Charles Williams pointed out, may have more to do with the habits and disciplines of a lifetime than with a single self-sacrificial act:

> Many men (sic) have exhibited their will of life in such a surrender, but many — perhaps more — have exercised among all kinds of hardship a steady tenderness of love besides which the other seems almost easy. The "greater love" is distinguished by the "laying down the life"… [22]

The real weight of these life-long vows is in a steady and insistent willingness to be prepared to make *that* sort of surrender. Marital fidelity may have less to do with morality than it has to do with the mutual formation of two people. As Hauerwas puts it,

> … we always marry the wrong person. We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. For marriage, being what it is, means we are not the same person after we have entered it. The primary problem morally is learning how to love and care for this stranger to whom you find yourself married. [23]

We always face being formed and re-formed in our marriage relationships, and not least of all in our sexual play. The elements of deep familiarity and of deep, yet still elusive, trust and respect are what elevate us to the place where we might actually make love. Free to sleep with anyone and ready to move to a new partner every time things became too risky, people dis-integrate sex from soul; and for all the sex, they never grow up as a lover… or as a beloved. The phenomena often called "serial monogamy" is profoundly limiting in terms of any real development of the "I" that I am in an "I-thou" relationship. In fact, it may well be a recipe for stunted growth. Again, witness the insight of Williams:

> In other words, I believe that the promise of faithfulness, the giving of unlimited time to each other, remains central for understanding the full "resourcefulness" and grace of sexual union. I simply don't think we'd grasp all that was involved in the mutual transformation of sexually linked persons without the reality of unconditional public commitments: more perilous, more demanding, more promising.[24]

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21. *The Book of Alternative Services*.

22. Charles Williams, *He Came Down From Heaven* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), p. 114.

23. Stanley Hauerwas, "The Family: Theological Reflections," *A Community of Character,* p. 172.

24. Rowan Williams, p. 63.

Is it possible that sexual desire *is* risky and finally beyond domestication, and as such is almost sure to be experienced as both blessing and curse? That like wine, it can both make the heart glad yet also intoxicate and depress? Again, from the liturgy of the BAS, "that they might *know* each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love." But when being known is filled with risk, or when acts of love are laden with other meanings and with the politics of the relationship, it is not so easy a thing to feel delight. An adequate theology of sex has first to deal with the reality of human brokenness, and with the fragmentation of ourselves into so many discrete bits. If we come to our marriage beds in truthfulness, we may occasionally be surprised by the dance. To know that we are wounded and may be wounded this night; to know that we have hurt our beloved, and may do so again; to know the power and vulnerability of this desire and its consummation, and to chose again to risk all: this is our hope, and this is our pattern. For in risking all to love us and carry us home to the feast, God risks all. When we muster the courage — again — to die to the fears and games and power — again — "when we are naked and making the clumsy gestures necessary to 'make love,'"[25] there is much more going on than just sex. "The beloved being," Evdokimov reminds us, "is not a god, but a royal gift, radiating the presence of the Giver."[26] Our marriages, our bodies and our desires, are then finally not for us or for our personal gratification. They are for the other, and ultimately for God.

25. Hauerwas, "Sex in Public," p. 181.

26. Evdokimov, p. 107.

TWELVE

WHAT IS HOLINESS AND WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

+Victoria Matthews

IN RECENT DECADES, Anglicans across the Communion have been rather obsessed with the matter of Anglican identity. "We are Anglicans and they're not" has become a rather silly game played at all levels of our church. However when the conversation turns to spiritual practice and the thirst for holiness, a broader common understanding emerges. It may be as simple and profound as the three weeks of daily Eucharist at the 1998 Lambeth Conference where the liturgies differed yet a common shape prevailed. Or the fact that in the midst of our present disputes and disagreements, we continue to be fed by Holy Scripture and the spiritual works of poets and priests. Indeed one identifying trait of Anglicanism is a wariness about definition. We know we worship One who will always be beyond our understanding. Consequently the poetry of George Herbert and T.S. Eliot are as influential as *The Laws Ecclesiastical Polity* by Richard Hooker. We warm to that which draws us closer to the divine flame. Anglicans are far less likely to be participants in angry debates when they recognize that, regardless of agreeing on this point or that, they are in the presence of the Holy. Consequently a leader such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been able to hold theological opinions about homosexuality without being attacked viciously because it is widely acknowledged that he is a man of God who has both suffered for, and served well, the people of God.

Anglican understandings of holiness agree that one never arrives but is always on a journey. There are stages and degrees but always a pilgrimage.

> God gave me the light of nature when I quickened in my mother's womb by receiving a reasonable soul. And God gave me the light of faith when I quickened in my second mother's womb, the Church, by receiving baptism. But in my third day, when my mortality shall put on immortality, he shall give me the light of glory, by which I shall see himself. To this light of glory the light of honour is but a glow-worm the majesty itself but a twilight; the cherubims and seraphims are but candles; and that Gospel itself, which the Apostle calls the glorious Gospel, but a star of the least magnitude. And if I cannot tell what to call this light by which I shall see it, what shall that which I shall see by it, the essence of God himself? And yet there is something else than this sight of God intended in that which remains. I shall not only "see God face to face," but I shall "know" him (which you have seen all the say, is above sight) and "know him, even as also I am known."[1]

What is totally lacking in this picture is the abhorrence of the human person before the individual knows God in Christ. Rather God is always granting grace. It is the individual who gradually awakens to the accompaniment

1. Easter sermon by John Donne, in *Love's Redeeming Work*, Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson and Rowan Williams, eds., New York: Oxford, 2001, page 144).

of the Redeemer and Sanctifier. Thus William Perkins, a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, from 1584-1595 wrote "Vivification is the second part of sanctification, whereby inherent holiness being begun is still augmented and enlarged. First we receive the first fruits of the Spirit, then a continued increase of them." Perkins goes on to list the various parts of such holiness: knowledge of the will of God; the sanctity i.e. longevity, of the memory of good things; the sanctity of conscience which bears the fruit of inward peace; sanctity of will; and finally sanctity of affections including a zeal for God's glory and "sanctity of body whereby it is a fit instrument for the soul to accomplish that which is good." [2] (*Ibid*, page 121).

It is the focus of his final point and a subsection of that point in Perkins' *A Golden Chain or Description of Theology* which has caused so much unrest in Anglican circles. In the 21st century can a Christian involved in a monogamous same-sex relationship, which may or may not be called marriage, be understood to be growing in holiness? If compared with serial monogamy or random sexual encounters, or even self-destructive acts, the affirmative seems obvious. In a society which has little tolerance of the single adult, unless he/she is clearly in transition, it is hard to support the expectation of celibacy for gays and lesbians. Nevertheless the question remains whether the human body, if it is to be a "fit instrument for the soul" can commit to such a relationship.

One simple way to decide the question is by reference to John 15:4-11. "Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." If there are examples of outstanding gay and lesbian Christian life and ministry, and there are, it is only possible because of "abiding in Christ."

One argument against this approach is posed by the Zacchaeus Fellowship a group of deeply committed Anglicans who experience same-sex attraction and believe they are called by God in Christ to not engage in that lifestyle. Some are celibate. Others are in heterosexual marriages. They call on The Anglican Church of Canada to abandon our permissive ways and return to obeying Scripture. To the Zacchaeus Fellowship it could be offered that while some are called to celibacy, and the forsaking of certain lifestyles, others are called, in that lifestyle, to bear fruit to the glory of God. Equally, those who have been healed by God in Christ might be said to be healed so that glory is given to God. At no time however would we then say that everyone will be so healed. The story of the man born blind, receiving his sight in John 9, might be a helpful chapter to guide our understanding of both healing and the human tendency to blame those on every side of a complex situation.

One gradual change in Anglicanism over the last two hundred years has been the movement from passive obedience, as an ideal, to the belief that the Gospel calls for social action and particularly social justice. Hence we have participated in the abolition of slavery, women receiving the right to vote, racial de-segregation and anti-apartheid action. While these can still be understood theologically as the leading of Christ, there is nevertheless a degree to which the Christian advocating for justice is a partner with Christ. In the same way that one says "yes" to a vocation to holy orders, every Christian has to decide if he/she will live a life of sacrifice and service in the context of Christian community. The gift of human freedom, for the Christian, is a gift to be enjoyed by the grace of God, to the glory of God, while rooted in community. To this point one could easily argue that the use of money by Christians in the first world is a far greater scandal than any relationship between consenting adults deemed contrary to Christian sexual morality.

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2. William Perkins on The Christian Household, *Ibid*, p. 122.

What is holiness and what does it look like? Holiness is a scent carried by each life lived in relation with God and neighbour, and in response to the Good News of God in Christ. Holiness is an attribute that comes when one knows God's forgiveness of one's sins and God's forgiveness of other people's sins. It is knowing you are the beloved of God and learning day by day to recognize others, all others, as God's beloved sons and daughters. Growth in holiness is growth through prayer, silence, the art of listening. One becomes holy in relationship with the Holy: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

THIRTEEN

TRADITION

Gertrude Lebans

THE PRIMATE'S THEOLOGICAL Commission has been asked to think about the question "whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine." As we deliberated, argued, and reflected together, what emerged as an issue was the very nature and assumptions inherent in the language we were using in our debates. Words like "tradition,""orthodoxy," "liberalism" were freighted with assumptions and emotion beyond the definition we might otherwise expect of them.[1] As this is the conundrum of communication, that we can only approximate intentional meaning for each other[2], I offer this essay to examine some of the perspectives and definitions we have brought to the task assigned to us. Of course, this analysis is inevitably incomplete as the discussion enters wider circles creating the potential for greater and greater diversity. However, merely discussing the terms we have been employing and the weighted value they have for us may allow us to continue to speak to each other across the issues that divide us. Therefore, I offer this brief reflection in the hope that others will find the discussion equally helpful in encouraging respect for each other's integrity and commitment to the good news of Jesus the Christ beyond the limitations of our own definitions and intentions. I have greatly simplified our historical debates in the interest of working from the underlying generalizations we bring to the discussion. Those of you who find yourselves in one "box" or another will be able to assign more of your own theologians and detail, but sometimes we employ our knowledge as a barrier to mutual respect or as a shield against intellectual assault, so I would caution about our abuse of erudition. As Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew: "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." (Matthew 13:52) Neither the old nor the new need to compete to retain value for us in the long memory of the faith.

Various ideas about authority undergird every discussion we can have about theology and the practice of the faith. Is the lived experience of certain parts of the church authoritative for all or at least for identifiable cells within

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1. Dorothy Solle. *Thinking about God*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 5. "It [an inability to believe that communication is possible] expresses not only great loneliness but also an ideology of solitude. It says: we cannot share all the important things with one another; no one understands anyone else; there is no agreement about our central feelings and experiences; they escape language. This ideology is widespread: faith contradicts it.... It is the faith of the church – even if we often cannot see it because the church has been distorted to the point of being unrecognizable. But despite this the church represents a continuity; it lives by remembrance and promise. It listens to the witnesses of faith and recalls them, and it hands on the promises of the community."

2. Paulo Freire and Jürgen Habermas have written extensively on this subject, offering fruitful insight. Of particular note are: Jürgen Habermas. *The Theory of Communicative Action.* Trans. Thomas McCarthy. (Cambridge: Polity, 1984-1987), volume 1. Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: Continuum, 2007).

the church?[3] Can scripture be definitive for questions beyond the context in which a piece of sacred writing was created?[4] What are the boundaries around the letter of the so-called law and the spirit of that law?[5] Who decides when change will happen and how it is to happen? Has the church always had a diversity of opinion, even about core doctrine, or has there always been consensus about the basics of the faith; and what would those basics be?

Tradition is	Scripture is	The Church is
Tradition is the foundational revelation of God's will based on scriptural understandings and the pre-reformationteachings of the faith. As revelation unfolded in the world, it coalesced into foundation stones of the faith. At certain points in history, some stones became fixed as doctrine and can never be changed.	Scripture is the divine utterance to human beings. It is authoritative despite human limitation because it is a divine product. Because human history and culture change, the truth of scripture is held in the security of its agent, the church.	The church speaks with authority because it is both the agent of the apostles where the first witnesses to the resurrection and because it is charged with maintaining the truth of scripture. The church creates and maintains doctrine as part of its mandate of truth and order in the community of the faithful.
Tradition is "semper reformanda," not perhaps always being changed, but with an openness to new insights into what had previously been understood as true and doctrinal. The scriptural foundation contains everything we need to gain insight.	Scripture is mostly a divine product. Although not always clearly understood and requiring constant study, scripture is authoritative. Scripture does not change; humans may deepen in discovering the truth embedded within scripture through the use of historical, linguistic and cultural insights.	The church, as the agent of God's mysteries and truth, is the principal interpreter and re-assessor of the meaning of scripture.
Tradition is organic and changes as we learn insight into past ideas. In this sense, the revelation is evolutionary, unfolding and changing along with human understanding about what has transpired in the past.	Scripture is alive and responds to the reader and listener of every generation in new ways. It is authoritative, but requires constant study so that humans respond to it in increasingly accurate ways.	The church is the nexus of current knowledge and traditional wisdom and truth. Scripture, the church, and tradition are all incomplete in human understanding. Thus, their deeper truths are still unfolding.
Tradition is the interaction between what we have previously received as true and what we must now deconstruct in order to find acceptable understanding.	Scripture is a record of the writing of the past that attempted to convey a deep truth about the nature of human existence. It is impossible to fully apprehend what it has meant in the past, and what it means in the present is fluid and subjective.	The church has been an agent of stasis. It needs to become an agent of transformation, responding to the truth of the moment and prepared to divest itself of the illusions of a definite or definitive past. Apprehension of what is true is entirely subjective and relative to many factors.

3. Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 262. "No single image or model of the church is capable of saying all that must be said about its nature and mission. …By word, sacrament, prayer, and life together, the church participates, in a provisional and incomplete way in the triune love of God; by its manifold ministries of witness and compassion and its service of justice, reconciliation, and peace in the world, the church participates, always imperfectly, in the mission of the triune God."

4. This question is of critical importance in discussions about ethical and communal decision making. It was the core question when the church debated together about slavery and the role of women in the church, to name but a few modern issues.

5. If we speak of the law as relationship rather than as legislation, the various covenants between God and humanity describe ideal relationship rather than a system of rules. In the First Letter to the Corinthians 9:20-21 (NRSV), Paul deals with this question of the relativity of law: "To the Jews I became as a Jew in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one

The above chart attempts to present various ways of looking at how we come to theological, pastoral and ethical ideas. These ideas have arisen in certain historical eras, but none has ceased to exist. Indeed, each lives within its own logical and defensible reality. Should one constellation of ideas triumph over another? Should we engage in hierarchical thinking, or do we understand ourselves as in the midst of God's wisdom? The process of growing into God's own is still so obviously incomplete for humanity and for the church. When we cannot think with one mind, perhaps it is time for us to consider that challenge and resistance are natural and helpful forces, calling us to renew our trust and covenant with one another as the people of Christ. The image of the cross, the dynamic tension of opposites held together by the loving body of our Lord, needs to be the image for the church just as the resurrected Body is our hope and our promise. What that image demands of us is trust in the Holy One's presence in all that we do, perhaps even nudging and pushing us into these debates.

More difficult yet: to believe those who inhabit a different theological space may be involved in an equally important mission as valid as our own and, therefore, might understand the gospel in ways that may be unacceptable to us as constructs.

Are any of these perspectives on tradition a final solution? I think not, because it is clear that we continue to learn at least as much about ourselves and our world as we learn about the Holy One, the Beloved Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth. As in the quote from the gospel of Matthew, nothing is lost in the storehouse of wisdom. Everything is there for us to revisit and renew at the pulse of human need; it is not our storehouse, after all, but the wealth of the ages of intellectual faith filled reflection.

Together at the table where Christ is the host, we each offer our humble and partial truth, trusting that as these ideas are accepted, they will be corrected where in error and improved where they are healthy. As we work from these simple basics, it may be possible to hear each other's integrity and more clearly understand our mutual commitment to the faith, before we assume we know what each other means.

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under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law."

FOURTEEN

PASTORAL PRACTICE AND DOCTRINE—Two Instances of Change and Some Questions They Raise

Walter Deller

THIS BRIEF PAPER is not intended to be an exhaustive study, but rather to surface two instances where there are observable bifurcations between the inherited doctrinal stance of the Church and its contemporary pastoral practice. In each case I offer a description of the issue, and some exploratory questions that in my view are pertinent to the broader questions of consistency, doctrine, and practice often raised in relation of same-sex blessings or marriages.

1. Suicide

The work of Wilma Woods, a senior year student at the College of Emmanuel and St Chad, toward a final year integration project recently drew my attention again to suicide as an issue where there is a recent history of change in pastoral practice (certainly among most Anglicans and across many denominations). It is important here to differentiate between the Church's general handling of the question of suicide, and more recent discussions about assisted suicide or forms of personally undertaken euthanasia. The latter is a much more complex question of ethics.

The article available on the web at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,892856,00.html from the November 2, 1959 issue of *Time* magazine, and reprinted below would mark a popular documentation of the shift in pastoral practice in Anglican circles, and the concomitant shifting in terms of doctrinal consideration.

Article from *Time* magazine, 2 November, 1959.

> Once a schoolmaster, the Archbishop of Canterbury relentlessly assigns papers to his church—and on subjects fit to make a county curate spill his tea. In recent years the Anglican Church has issued opinions on artificial insemination, birth control, homosexuality and prostitution. Out last week was the latest: Ought Suicide to be a Crime?
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> The 56-page pamphlet is the work of a five-man committee appointed by the Archbishop in March 1958 under the chairmanship of J. T. (for John Traill) Christie, principal of Oxford's Jesus College. The committee members (a lawyer, a psychiatrist, a philosopher and a theologian) investigated the subject of self-destruction from almost every conceivable angle—historical, legal, medical, moral—and came to the conclusion that considerably more charity is needed all around.
>
> "Most Fatal Sin." Suicide was not always frowned on; in eight instances in the Bible*suicide is not mentioned in condemnation, and the ancients in the Hellenic times tended to look upon the power to take one's

own life as an inalienable privilege. But St. Thomas Aquinas summed up the reason for the Roman Catholic Church's severity toward suicide when he wrote: "[It] is the most fatal of sins, because it cannot be repented of." Protestantism was even harder on suicides than Catholicism.

State backed up church with its own sanctions. In England until 1823 a suicide's body was buried at a crossroads with a stake through the heart; until 1882 it was buried at night. All the property of a suicide was confiscated until 1870. Today in England, suicide is still considered at law a felony (both in England and the U.S. an attempted suicide is a misdemeanor).

This legal attitude, says the Anglican committee, is plainly wrong, and "public opinion has outstripped the law. With regard to attempted suicide, the law is not uniformly enforced, and it ought to be repealed or amended." The committee recommends that in addition to abolishing the felony of suicide, a new offense should be written into law "of aiding, abetting or instigating the suicide of another."

Running Away. For those who commit suicide, the committee recommends a special burial service. Those who are tempted or fail in an attempt should "be specially commended to the pastoral concern of the clergy," and the clergy should be "offered more help in understanding this part of their pastoral duty."

Explaining the report on the BBC last week, Committee Chairman Christie summed up: "If any member of the committee were asked if he considered suicide wrong he would say it was. Of course there are always exceptions. But in general, Christians—who are a minority in this country at present—would say no man or woman had the right to terminate life entrusted to him by God. There is also a feeling that to take one's own life when things are difficult is rather like running away in battle. On the other hand psychologists have made us more tolerant than we used to be ... To punish by fine or imprisonment someone who found life intolerable and tried to end it is ridiculous."

*Judges 9:54 (Abimelech), Judges 16:30 (Samson), Samuel 31'4-5 (Saul and his armor bearer), Samuel 17:23 (Ahithophel), I Kings 16:18 (Zimri), Maccabees 14:41 (Razis), Matthew 27:5 (Judas), Acts 16:27 (the jailer).

Some observations and questions:

1) The shift in pastoral practice took place in part because of new perceptions about human psychology and mental health. By and large the act of taking one's own life came to be viewed as something that was done when an individual was "not in sound mind." [Here we have a clear instance of how new insights of science, etc affect pastoral practice and interact in the process of doctrinal and pastoral change.]

2) Insofar as the biblical material is concerned, it is much more ambiguous than the much stronger position taken for many centuries by Christians—in fact the discussion in Judaism, as far as I have encountered it, is much more aware of this ambiguity, despite its general very strong foundational "pro-life" affirmation. Some thirty years ago a lecture by a leading Jewish rabbi and philosopher sponsored by Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto indicated that the question of suicide was raised and commented on in rabbinic *responsa* during the pre-WWII period in the eastern European ghettos and also among the more general holocaust *responsa*. [This offers an instance of how a particular dominant reading of the scriptural tradition has shaped a doctrinal tradition, where the witness of the scriptures is much more ambiguous.]

3) At the same time, the "not of sound mind" approach to suicide provided a way of bridging/finessing/blurring pastoral matters with family and community—it provided a way to frame moral questions and ultimate ques-

tions about the fate of the loved one. [Here we see how a particular pastoral need requires of the Church that it find new ways to frame theological discussion.]

4) On the contrary, we might argue that the basic pastoral issue posed by suicide is not that of the individual who has killed him/herself, but the impact on family, friends, community etc.—residual guilt etc. In fact, from an anthropological perspective it could be argued that the former ritual/burial practice more effectively addresses these issues—since by implication they make clear that responsibility for what has happened rests **not** with the community (who should not therefore legitimately bear and feel guilt) but with the individual concerned (whose choice to reject human community etc. is now visibly represented in permanence, which representation also gives permission to the community to feel and process the anger, hurt etc caused.) [Here this offers an instance of how the pastoral practice of the Church relates to broader sociological/anthropological needs and processes.]

5) In terms of how it understood and offered pastoral care in relation to suicide, the changes in the Church were not running ahead of society in this shift in practice and teaching. [This is thus also an instance for exploring the relationship between societal change and the doctrinal/pastoral change that will probably of necessity follow.]

2. Baptism of Children Born out of Marriage

This issue was drawn to my attention in a public presentation at a recent diocesan synod and also in subsequent conversation with a bishop from the diocese concerned. This issue of pastoral practice is also noted in the House of Bishops Statement of May 2007, in their observation early in the statement that "We certainly hope no child is denied baptism solely on the basis of the sexual orientation, or the marital status, of the parents. It is inconsistent and unacceptable to deny baptism to children as a way of imposing discipline on the sexual behaviour of the parents." I should note that the bishop in question was arguing for the position taken by the House of Bishops in relation to what had been historical practice in some parishes in the diocese.

As the synod presentation made clear it is still the practice in some parts of the Canadian Church not to baptize children who are born to parents who are not married. I am aware of clergy who have encountered in their ministry individuals who have been alienated from the church for long periods of time because of such refusals within living memory. This offers an interesting reflection point, since this instance is one where pastoral practice is in outright contradiction of doctrine, and also of the historical teaching of the Anglican Church in *The Book of Common Prayer* 1662 which states:

> For every child to be baptized there shall be not fewer than three godparents, of whom at least two shall be of the same sex as the child and of whom at least one shall be of the opposite sex; save that, when three cannot be conveniently had, one godfather and one godmother shall suffice. Parents may be godparents for their own children provided that the child shall have at least one other godparent. The godparents shall be persons who have been baptized and confirmed and will faithfully fulfil their responsibilities both by their care for the child committed to their charge and by the example of their own godly living. Nevertheless the Minister shall have power to dispense with the requirement of confirmation in any case in which in his judgement need so requires.
>
> The Minister shall instruct the parents or guardians of an infant to be admitted to Holy Baptism that the same responsibilities rest on them as are in the service of Holy Baptism required of the godparents.
>
> No Minister shall refuse or, save for the purpose of preparing or instructing the parents or guardians or godparents, delay to baptize any infant within his cure that is brought to the church to be baptized, provided

that due notice has been given and the provisions relating to godparents are observed. If the Minister shall refuse or unduly delay to baptize any such infant, the parents or guardians may apply to the Bishop of the diocese who shall, after consultation with the Minister, give such directions as he thinks fit.

Note the final paragraph here—the only legitimate obstacle to the baptism of any infant is the lack of at least two godparents. The stipulation that parents have the right to recourse to the Bishop for refusal of baptism makes this even clearer.

Some observations and questions:

1) As noted this is an example where historical pastoral and liturgical practice in some dioceses and communities outright contradicts doctrine. [Some would argue that pastoral practice must follow from established doctrine, but this is an obvious case where the question emerges about whether pastoral practice and doctrine are bound together at all, or whether local custom and convention can simply override the doctrine of the church even in matters as significant as the dominical sacrament of baptism. If the clear positive teaching of the Church with regard to a sacrament such as baptism can be, and has been over a long time, set aside then why is the church's teaching about marriage or same-sex relationships any different?]
2) The pastoral practice of refusing baptism to children born out of wedlock clearly has to do with sociological and anthropological needs within the community. Here the pastoral practice is functioning as "admission" not primarily to the Body of Christ, but as a mechanism for making public statements about who or who is not part of the social community, who or who is not "morally acceptable" to the church. [This thus offers an instance of the relation between socio-anthropological needs and practice and the liturgies and praxis of the church. If the church's historic practice in some communities is shaped by social and anthropological considerations, in outright contradiction of established doctrine, why can it not be shaped by the social and anthropological needs of other communities even if it also may contradict traditional teaching?]
3) If it is acceptable pastoral practice to refuse a sacrament to one individual contrary to doctrine merely to provide support for an accepted local set of social mores, why is it any less acceptable to use a sacrament [such as marriage] to provide support for another set of social mores? And if pastoral practice has more generally changed with the change in social mores in the case of baptism of such infants, why could the pastoral practice with regard to marriage not be equally open to change in the light of changed social mores in reference to marriage. [If pastoral practice and doctrine can be unlinked in one instance, why can they not in another instance?]

FIFTEEN

ANGLICANS AND THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

Robert Moore

THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENT of Wilberforce and the Clapham sect, in alliance with Quakers, was to turn the Slave Trade from an economic affair into a moral one with political implications. The Clapham Sect was a fellowship of some of the best intellects in England, Evangelical Anglicans all of them and mostly rich.

To the supporters of the Trade, Africans were commodities to be bought and shipped to the West Indies. "Were they not Human?" They considered that question irrelevant.

Not so for Wilberforce and company. It was against everything Christ stood for. Africans were God's children, and both the economic principle of the trade and its inhumanity were an outrage against the Christian faith.

The movement to abolish the Slave Trade began in 1787 and took on the most powerful vested interest in the United Kingdom: the West India Lobby — British plantation owners and their bankers. Wilberforce did not realise how immensely powerful those people were when he introduced his Bill to abolish the Slave Trade. And It took him 20 years to get Parliament to declare the Trade illegal. He began with the audacity of hope and continued with the doggedness of faith until in 1807 when he achieved his purpose.

Wilberforce's great ally outside Parliament was Thomas Clarkson, a mountain of a man, an Anglican by affiliation and a Quaker by temperament. " His strength is as the strength of ten because his heart is pure." And his tenacity of purpose was legendary.

He worked comfortably with the Quakers and they were masterful at creating groups to change public opinion. Being business people, they had printing presses producing pamphlets and small books showing the evil of the Slave Trade. They were wizards at networking and their superbly worded petitions to Parliament sent shivers down the spines of many of the members of the West India Lobby.

They invented the logo: one that became famous: a chained slave, with an arm out-stretched, appealing to someone with the words, "Am I not a man and a Brother?" And it was everywhere.

These Quakers were the originators of Civil Society which we Canadians hold in high esteem. The Quakers held debates about slavery all over Britain and women were allowed to speak at them, which appalled men of the upper and middle classes. Even more , Quakers doffed their hats to nobody, royalty not excepted.

The day after the great Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was passed, William Wilberforce said, to another member of the Clapham Sect, "What else shall we Abolish?" The answer that came back was "the lottery." Not that he expected it to be "slavery" at that point. Wilberforce and his Clapham colleagues assumed that, with no new arrivals from Africa, planters would be compelled to treat their slaves more humanely, especially female slaves as the expected mothers of healthy broods. Humane treatment would lead to better field and factory work by the

slaves who would, over time, buy themselves out of slavery. And so Slavery would die a natural death. And, in its place there would be a contented labour force with no strong desire to leave the plantations.

In short, they believed in the **gradualness of inevitability**. Slavery was too horrible an institution to endure for very long. But it was better to have it expire peacefully than abolish it immediately and create chaos in West Indian society. This was thinking in Technicolor.

The plantation owners and operators were tough realists. Slavery had become a social system from which the white plantation hierarchy derived their sense of importance in the world. The plantation bosses saw themselves as aristocrats — **aristocrats of the skin**. Corrupted by absolute power over human beings, they could not envision life any other way. So it would take a revolution from above or one from below to change the system. Further, the West Indian planters of, say, the period 1810–1820, watched the institution of American slavery in the US growing ever more vigorous and gaining ever more ground. There was no breaking of the chains there. So why, they asked, should it happen in the West Indies?

Answer: The British West Indies were colonies of a Mother country where slavery was being severely questioned — difficult to hide that from the slaves!

Methodists and Moravians and Baptists got newspapers from England and those slaves who could read told the others. Besides, the planter class talked about what the opponents of slavery were doing in Britain at table as if the slaves were not there.

Barbados, then and now, has always had a reputation for "political sobriety." So, no one expected a slave uprising on that island. But, in 1816, a major Slave uprising broke out — on Easter Sunday (with its message of new life!). It was crushed, with difficulty, by white troops, and alarm bells went off right across the West Indies. Emancipationists, with their abolition talk and writings in Britain, got the blame.

In 1823, Another major slave revolt occurred in Guyana , led by a deacon of a London Missionary Society chapel. It was brutally put down. But the blame was not put on the slave leaders but on the Minister of the London Missionary Society, John Smith — who was sentenced to death. Reprieved by Order of Parliament, he died before this decision could be effected. An Anglican priest, Rev. Stanton Austin, thought it was scandalous that John Smith could be considered the "leader" of the rebellion. And he had said so in public. His defence of Smith caused him to be drummed out of the colony.

Both these rebellions undermined the conviction that, with no Slave Trade, the slave system would become kinder and gentler. By 1818, Wilberforce and Clarkson had reluctantly come to the view that Slavery would not slowly fade away. Emancipation would have to come from above, from Westminister.

But it still bothered many of the abolitionists that a sudden end to slavery could leave in its wake mayhem. In other words, a race would be freed — but what had become "acceptable" social norms would be destabilized. They were in a state of in-betweenity: they wanted slavery abolished from Westminster, but they also wanted the ex-slaves to remain on the plantations as paid labourers to sustain the sugar industry — and by the regularity of unforced labour — begin to be civilised.

After all, their conviction could be summed up as follows: "Those who work for their betters are the industrious peasants; those who work for themselves are the idle peasants."

Noticing that the rebel leaders were likely to be literate Christians, the policy makers at Westminster concluded that more revolts were highly possible.

So Parliament decided, in 1824, to start taking the savagery out of the slave system. The process was called "Amelioration" and much of the thinking that went into it was Anglican.

Instructions were sent to the West Indian Legislatures to pass laws that would:

1. Ensure religious instruction "of the right type" to the slaves
2. Permit and legalise the marriage of slaves
3. Stop Sunday labour
4. Forbid flogging and curtail the planter's power to punish slaves.

Inevitably, these instructions were largely ignored, except in Guyana and Trinidad where there were no planter legislatures. In the islands with legislatures, the watchword was, "comply but do not enforce."

Of course, for most of the Parliamentarians, the "right type" of Christianity was the Church of England. The religion of the Baptist, Moravian and Methodist bodies took the Bible too literally. So the Church of England presence was to be "beefed up." The Anglican Church did not have Elders and all the clergy would be white. So the Blacks could not rise to positions of authority , thus giving them the confidence to buck the system. Besides, at Sunday worship Blacks and whites would be made to sit separately, thereby discouraging any ideas of equality.

Accordingly, Parliament created two dioceses in the West Indies: one for Jamaica including the Bahamas and Belize; the other for Barbados, including the Windward and Leeward Islands and Guyana, with one Bishop for each diocese.

Their task? Make deferential Anglicans of the slaves and uncruel masters of the planters. Therefore, the Anglican Church was required to go straight down the middle, pulling both sides closer together.

It was an enormously difficult undertaking. The Anglican clergy were expected by most of the planter class to de-emphasise the more inflammatory parts of the Bible (like the Book of Exodus), and tone down the language of the Old Testament prophets.

Desmond Tutu has said that the Bible in the hands of oppressed people is a ticking time bomb.

Clearly, this form of Anglicanism could not nurture a capacity for Black leadership in its worship or organisation. That is why no leaders against slavery emerged from it.

Back in Britain, in 1824, an extraordinary thing happened. A woman named Elizabeth Heyrick, a Quaker, published a pamphlet called Immediate, Not gradual Abolition. It was full of mockery for those in Parliament, like Wilberforce who spoke the language of gradualness. One demand proved quite shocking, even to those in favour of Emancipation: Parliament should compensate the slaves, not the slave owners. Its effect? Some 70 anti-slavery women' organisations sprang into being across the country. Another woman activist, Lucy Townsend, an Anglican, founded another crop of anti-slavery societies. The members of these societies used the boycott of sugar and any by-product of sugar, like cake or biscuits, to drive home their point. They campaigned door to door, like modern political candidates before an election.

Wilberforce and his associates were mystified. Theirs was not a world in which women did such things.

But all this effort did not budge Parliament. For the majority of parliamentarians, the death of slavery was simply not on the cards.

Although these women failed to achieve their objective, they set the pattern for the next round of anti-slavery campaigns, led by male activists.

By 1830, it was clear that Britain was in a ferment: all over the country, groups were agitating for a parliament that would reflect the changes in the country. The anti-slavery movement, with strategic wisdom, seized the opportunity to link the reform of Parliament with the abolition of the slavery.

Between 1830 and 1832, the reform of Parliament was a hot topic everywhere in Britain. But another topic arose from an event that had occurred not in Britain but in Jamaica.

An immense slave rebellion.

It started on the day after Boxing Day in 1831 and spread throughout the northern part of the island and it is estimated that some 20,000 slaves were involved in burning and looting. More than 200 plantations in north-west Jamaica suffered 1.1 million pounds damage.

The rebel leader, Samuel Sharpe by name, was literate, widely respected, a spellbinding speaker, and chief deacon of the Baptist chapel in Montego Bay. He told his followers that the King of England had decreed their freedom, which was being withheld from them. Beginning with something like a "sit-down strike," it escalated into a full-scale revolt which took the army over a month to subdue. Sharpe was caught, imprisoned and hanged. His words on the scaffold were memorable: "I would rather die on the scaffold than live in slavery."

The news of this rebellion sent a shock-wave through Members of Parliament and His Majesty's government. The reaction was clear: if slavery was not abolished by the government in Britain, it would be abolished by violence in the West Indies as many people expected more, and increasingly violent revolts.

One Member of Parliament put the matter wittily:

"If, as some say, the slave is unfit for freedom, he is even more unfit for slavery."

This was grist for the abolitionists' mills, and, when Parliament was finally reformed and the franchise slightly expanded, a bill was passed bringing an end to slavery in the West Indies.

Wilberforce died shortly afterwards with the knowledge that emancipation had come at last.

But, there was a "catch" to the Emancipation Act. Legally free though the ex-slaves were, they were required by law to give 7 ½ hours, 6 days a week, to their former plantation owners without wages. This was called, euphemistically, "Apprenticeship" and lasted for six years. The compensation that was so vehemently called-for by the radical women of the early 1820's was given not to the slaves.... but to the former slave owners: 20 million pounds (2.2 billion dollars in today's money).

The widespread fear among the plantocracy that the complete liberty of the ex-slaves would be accompanied by violence was completely misplaced. They went to all the churches to celebrate their total emancipation and behaved with great dignity.

The Anglican contribution to the end of slavery was largely concentrated in Parliament, which, even after it was reformed, had a large majority of Anglicans. But, as I mentioned, there were anti-slavery movements in the society where Anglicans shared their opposition to slavery with Quakers, in particular, but also with Methodist, Moravians and Congregationalists. These were the fore-runners of what we now call civil society action.

The two Anglican Bishops sent to the Caribbean in 1824, and their clergy, spent much of their energy in trying to make the slaves not so much docile as respectful of the plantocracy and industrious in their work . But the Bishops reported confidentially to the Archbishop of Canterbury that slavery was on its last legs. Their opinions were pivotal in strengthening the resolve of the British Government to abolish the institution.

For me, Thomas Clarkson best symbolizes the movement to abolish slavery. He was both an Anglican and a Quaker, thus uniting in himself two of the most important aspects of the campaign to abolish slavery. He died in 1848 at the age of 85, having outlived all of his colleagues in the struggle.

At his funeral, which was held at an Anglican church, an unprecedented thing happened — as they lowered his body into the grave, the many Quakers who attended the funeral, most of them of a new generation, did what they would not even do for the King of England — they took their hats off!

SIXTEEN

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA:

An example of change in doctrine & practice

Linda Nicholls

AS THE CHURCH wrestles with a variety of pastoral issues, not least of which currently is the blessing of same-sex unions, it is instructive to ask how the church has handled similar issues in the past. One of these issues, within the current memory of many in the church, is that of the permission for divorced persons to be remarried with the blessing of the church. Although The Anglican Church of Canada gave permission for the remarriage of divorced persons in 1967, the path to arrive at that decision began in the 1800's.

The earliest conversations on this issue began due to pastoral concern for the status of the "innocent party"'in a divorce. The Episcopal Church in the United States gave permission for the innocent party in a divorce to remarry in 1808 however no other Church of the Anglican Communion officially did so until the next century. Lambeth 1888 maintained the indissolubility of marriage, though recognized the Matthean exception of adultery and fornication, and affirmed the prohibition of the remarriage of persons divorced for any other reason during the lifetime of the other party. Some leeway was presumed for the innocent party though this was disputed as an increasing emphasis on indissolubility of the marriage covenant strengthened within Anglicanism.

A Joint Committee of the Provincial Synod of Canada in 1892 examined various aspects of the debate and submitted a report in which the majority opinion upheld the then current practice and even suggested that the Matthean Exception (for adultery) was abrogated "…when Jerusalem was destroyed and when the full Christian law came into operation."[1] It left open the possibility of remarriage of the innocent party through a civil marriage with permission to take Holy Communion but only after Episcopal approval. A minority opinion was appended and noted: "The undersigned also begs to represent that to refuse marriage to the innocent party is a violation of natural justice, inasmuch as it deprives him arbitrarily, without any offence, or fault of his, of one of the most sacred of natural rights."[2]

As the debates continued the primary tensions in the discussions were between the sacramental indissolubility of the marriage covenant, the pastoral status of divorced persons in the ongoing life of the Church re admittance to Holy Communion and the possibility of remarriage within the Church as an issue of pastoral grace and justice.

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1. Millman, T.R. *Marriage Legislation of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (paper – no date) Anglican Church of Canada Archives, pg 3.

2. Report on Marriage and Divorce, Provincial Synod of Canada. 1892 Anglican Church of Canada archives.

These tensions ran alongside the changes in civil society in Britain and Canada that loosened restrictions and access to divorce and remarriage.

The Lambeth Conference of 1920 reiterated the indissolubility of marriage and the Council for Social Service that same year restated that, since Jesus had declared that the remarriage of divorced persons initiated adultery, it must be opposed. In subsequent years the discussion shifted to focus on the grounds for ecclesiastical annulment. If marriage was indissoluble, the only way to address the pastoral concerns was to look at the initial formation of the marriage bond and address its credibility.

However, continued concern for the innocent party led to an attempt again at General Synod 1949 to permit the remarriage of the innocent party in the church after divorce. It was still deemed too radical a departure from the existing practice of most of the Anglican Communion and was rejected. The only slight change was to that admittance to Communion for a remarried innocent party no longer required Episcopal permission (as long as the person was otherwise qualified to receive communion).

A further Commission on marriage was established in the 1950's to continue to explore the tension between the principle of indissolubility and the pastoral needs of individuals and families, alongside the changes in secular practices. This finally came to a conclusion with the approval in principle at General Synod 1965 for a change to the Marriage Canon such that divorced persons could make an application to the Bishop for remarriage in the church. With revisions to the Canon, including the establishment of Matrimonial Commissions under the authority of the Bishop to review applications for remarriage, it was finally authorized in 1967. The Commission on Marriage and Related Matters came to the understanding that the doctrine of indissolubility could not be sustained theologically or in tradition, noting that the doctrine of indissolubility had at no time in history been accepted unanimously across the Christian church.[3]

A trajectory that began in the late 19th century reached an official conclusion in 1967, nearly seventy years later. As with other changes to tradition and practice, the received theological tradition came under pressure from pastoral and social changes. Discernment of the interpretation of scripture engaged with historical reflection on the nature of marriage across the Christian community and social realities. Different parts of the Anglican Communion made changes at different times with Canada near the forefront of changes in the 20th Century. As noted in a report for the Church of England in 1971 "...it appears that the steps taken by the Church of Canada in 1967 are providing a pattern for other Churches to follow…"[4]

A further revision to Canon XXI was made in 2004 which permits the Bishop to delegate the authority to approve an application for remarriage either to a Matrimonial Commission or to the incumbent of the parish where application is made, with the proviso that the necessary preparation is undertaken. At all times there has been provision for clergy whose conscience will not permit them to remarry divorced persons, a symbol of the ongoing tensions present in our decisions.

Although the doctrine of indissolubility came under question in the course of the discussions the Marriage Canon maintains an emphasis on continuing and shared core principles of marriage consistent with tradition and practice. The current Canon XXI on Marriage in the Anglican Church of Canada is clear that '…marriage is a

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3. Winnett, A.R. *The Church and Divorce: A Factual Survey*. London: Mowbray, 1968. p. 45-46.

4. Waddam, Herbert "Marriage and Divorce in the Anglican Communion," in *Marriage and Divorce and the Church: The Report of a Commission Appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to Prepare a Statement on the Christian Doctrine of Marriage*, London, SPCK, 1971. pg. 155.

lifelong union in faithful love, and that marriage vows are a commitment to this union for better or for worse, to the exclusion of all others on either side." Divorced applicants for remarriage must "understand the Christian Doctrine of marriage as defined in this Canon, and intend to enter into such a marriage, and believe on reasonable grounds that they have the capacity to enter into and sustain the marriage during their joint lives." (Canon XXI Section 2 Part IV).

What does the example of divorce and remarriage say to The Anglican Church of Canada in the 21st Century wrestling with different moral issues? It is clear that there is a direct connection between what is happening in the social milieu around the church and its response. The church is part of that milieu and must engage with it to meet pastoral needs. Those needs are recognized and appropriate response is sought in dialogue with key doctrinal themes including creation, covenant, justice, grace, forgiveness, and redemption. Scripture is essential to the discussion yet is also influenced by current interpretative models in a dynamic conversation with the pastoral concerns and our tradition. It is clear that the Church, through Synod, remained willing to engage the concerns brought to it by dioceses and provinces through those seventy year with careful discussion and reflection in an ongoing dialogue. There is nothing to indicate that the dialogue is finished, for concern for marriage and family relationships continues as do revisions to our Canons. As in current debates, attention was paid to the place of The Anglican Church of Canada within the Anglican Communion, sometimes holding back on change as being too radical within the Communion and ultimately choosing to make the changes after serious, extended deliberation. Attention was paid to the wider Christian community to see how the doctrines associated with marriage are engaged there and discovered diversity in tradition and practice on the matter of indissolubility.

The Anglican Church of Canada has established a pattern of careful deliberation in dialogue with scripture, our tradition and the wider Church that continues to be practiced in ongoing moral debates. It is a complex process that engages people at all levels and is never fully completed. Our Church has the resources, in these patterns of engagement to discern future moral challenges and hold together the tensions that may take us many years to resolve.