

MAN AND WOMAN HE CREATED THEM: SAME-SEX
DESIRES, GENDER TROUBLE, AND GAY MARRIAGE
IN THE LIGHT OF JOHN PAUL II'S
THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

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To the reader in 2013, there is an obvious lacuna in John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* (hereafter cited as TOB).¹ In over six hundred pages of rich catechesis on sex, marriage, and sexuality, there is no mention of same-sex sexual desire, gay marriage, or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender experience. This is surprising from the historical perspective of the original catecheses;² thirty years later it leaves unanswered some of the most pressing questions of sexual ethics and public policy that face the church in the West. TOB does explore, at length, the meaning of gender and the body, but it does not address more recent accounts of the plasticity of gender. This article constitutes a partial attempt to fill that hole, drawing on TOB, and exploring what it might say a generation later about gender confusions, same-sex sexual desires, and gay relationships. It originated in a much longer paper that followed the biblical-theological structure of TOB, and explored what we can learn about this topic from the perspectives of creation³ and fall,⁴ redemption and consummation.⁵ I hope to develop each of these perspectives more fully in the future, but the focus of this article is limited to the creational pattern for sexuality and gender, and its consummation in the marriage of Christ and the Church.

In relation to marriage, I shall attempt to recover a traditional definition, which includes procreation as one of its primary goods, but drawing on Christopher Ash's work, I shall locate the goods of marriage more broadly in the purpose of marriage to serve the kingdom of God. From this context, I shall assess recent claims in favor of gay marriage and consider the validity of same-sex relationships more broadly. Finally, I shall consider eschatology and ecclesiology in the light of Scripture's marital typology and apply this to our practice of discipleship in community, particularly as it relates to those called to a life of celibate chastity.

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¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

² Given from September 5, 1979 to November 28, 1984.

³ "Christ Appeals to the Beginning," TOB, 1-23.

⁴ "Christ Appeals to the Human Heart," TOB, 24-59.

⁵ "Christ Appeals to the Resurrection," TOB, 64-85; "The Dimension of the Covenant of Grace," TOB, 87-102.

I regard the traditional understanding of biblical texts prohibiting same-sex sexual practices as established, and shall not articulate it here.⁶ Rather, I shall assume it and build on it. This essay, in other words, is primarily an exercise in faith seeking understanding. There is a place for attempts to argue, for example, from a natural law perspective in favor of a traditional understanding of marriage, seeking to persuade non-Christians on grounds they might find convincing.⁷ However, that is not my intention here. I hope that what I say will provide reasons for thinking that the Christian position on same-sex relationships is wholesome, coherent, and beautiful, but I am writing as a Christian pastor and theologian primarily for Christians, and particularly for other pastors. In other words, my purpose is pastoral rather than apologetic: I aim to teach healthy doctrine that will enable God's people to think his thoughts after him, and to live in joyful obedience to his word.

I. CREATION: THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF MARRIAGE

John Paul begins with Jesus, who, in his controversy with the Pharisees, begins "in the beginning" (Matt 19:3-12).⁸ When the Pharisees come to him with a question about the lawfulness of divorce, "Christ does not accept the discussion on the level on which his interlocutors try to introduce it... instead, he appeals twice to the 'beginning.'" (TOB 1:2) In considering same-sex sexualities, we must do the same. If we do not, our discussion of marriage and sexuality will float untethered to reality, and will not cut with the grain of the universe as it truly is. In current debates on gender and sexuality, appeal to Genesis will challenge widespread assumptions that sex, gender and sexuality are plastic, malleable into whatever form a particular individual may desire. In current debates on marriage, appeal to the beginning will challenge contemporary misunderstandings about the true nature of marriage. I shall consider marriage first, then sexual dimorphism.

⁶ For exegesis of the relevant texts in their canonical context, see Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 379-406; Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001); David G. Peterson, ed., *Holiness and Sexuality: Homosexuality in a Biblical Context* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004): 1-50. The best articulation of a revisionist reading of these passages is James Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013).

⁷ For excellent recent examples, see Sherif Girgis, Robert P. George, and Ryan T. Anderson, "What is Marriage?" *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 34.1 (Winter 2010): 245-87; Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York; London: Encounter Books, 2012); Alastair Roberts, "Just Cause Against Same-Sex Marriage: Why We Cannot Hold Our Peace," *Ecclesia Reformanda* 3.1 (2011): 48-73; Idem, "The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage. Part Two," *Ecclesia Reformanda* 3.2 (2012): 95-117; Idem, "The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage. Part Three," *Ecclesia Reformanda* 3.2. (2012): 118-39.

⁸ "Christ Appeals to the Beginning," TOB, 1-23.

II. MARRIAGE: INTROVERTED COMPANIONSHIP OR EXTRAVERTED SERVICE?

In their recent defense of the historic, conjugal definition of marriage, Girgis, Anderson, and George warn that redefining marriage to include same-sex partners will lead many to misunderstand marriage. “They will not see it as essentially comprehensive, or thus (among other things) as ordered to procreation and family life—but as essentially an emotional union.” This in turn will undermine assumptions about marital permanence and sexual exclusivity.⁹ However, most people in contemporary western cultures already regard marriage as essentially a companionate or emotional union. Intercourse is no longer restricted to marriage and has been separated from procreation, and procreation is no longer understood as one of the primary goods of marriage. Thus, rather than same-sex marriage altering our understanding of marriage, the reverse seems more likely. It is our novel cultural understanding of marriage that makes same-sex marriage plausible, even obvious. If we understand marriage as an emotional union, on what grounds would we deprive gay couples of the right to marry, particularly given widespread acceptance and affirmation of same-sex love? Legalizing gay marriage will do no more than entrench the already accepted definition.

This companionate view of marriage also holds sway within the church, at least in the Protestant churches, often buttressed by a misplaced appeal to Genesis 2:18: “It is not good for man to be alone.”¹⁰ Two recent conservative evangelical books on marriage, both very helpful in their own ways, illustrate this implicit redefinition.¹¹ Neither book reduces marriage to a means of meeting an emotional or sexual need; both are critical of such a self-centered view. Instead, they focus on marriage as a God-ordained means for spouses to love and serve one another sacrificially, and as a context in which they grow, as friends and lovers, into the likeness of Christ. However, even though one of the books contains chapters called “The Essence of Marriage,” “The Mission of Marriage,” and “Sex and Marriage,”¹² neither volume discusses procreation as one of the central goods of marriage, nor do they address the issue of raising children; they

⁹ Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What is Marriage?* 7.

¹⁰ For a representative sampling, including Protestants and Roman Catholics, academic and popular writers, see those cited in Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing; Leicester: IVP, 2003), 108-110.

¹¹ Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011); Paul Tripp, *What Did You Expect?? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). For a more problematic example, with a far greater emphasis on sex, see Mark Driscoll and Grace Driscoll, *Real Marriage: the Truth About Sex, Friendship, and Life Together* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012). A refreshing exception is Christopher Ash, *Married for God: Making your Marriage the Best it Can Be* (Leicester: IVP, 2007), especially chapter 3, “What is the Point of Having Children?”: “welcoming children [including nurturing them to serve God] is part and parcel of God’s plan for marriage. If you regard children as a curse and don’t want them, don’t get married!” (61).

¹² Keller and Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, chapters three, four, and eight respectively.

exclusively emphasize the character of the husband-wife relationship in relation to Christ. Both books contain much that is beneficial for marital and pre-marital counseling, but judged both by Scripture and historic Christian teaching, both are incomplete in their understanding of marriage.

To take one Protestant example of the older view—one that shaped the understanding of marriage in English and American society for centuries and that remains (theoretically) authoritative in most of the worldwide Anglican Communion—the *Book of Common Prayer's* marriage service calls for “due consideration of the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.”

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 the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.¹³

On this account, God ordained marriage for three reasons. The first and third (procreation and companionship) are inherent to the institution because they would have pertained even before the fall,¹⁴ whilst the second (marriage as a remedy against sin and fornication) can be regarded as accidental because it is only necessary in a postlapsarian world. The importance placed on procreation and the nurture of children is common also to Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and even early Enlightenment accounts of marriage.¹⁵ Therefore, it is striking that, whilst contemporary evangelical views of marriage focus particularly on the third, and somewhat on the second of these goods, they usually pass over procreation in silence.

¹³ *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), “The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony.”

There are minor changes of wording, but the substance is identical with that of Cranmer's liturgy of 1552.

¹⁴ Although there is some disagreement in church history over the presence of sexual differentiation, sex, and procreation in a prelapsarian world, the view that humans would have procreated sexually before the fall is, following Augustine's mature teaching, the consensus in the West (see Christopher Chenault Roberts, *Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage* [New York, NY; London: T & T Clark International, 2007]; and also Paul Ramsey, ‘Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption’, *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16.1 [1988]: 56-86). In the East there is some diversity, but the majority position, although not indebted to Augustine, appears to be the same (see John Behr, “A Note on the Ontology of Gender,” *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42 [1988]: 363-72).

¹⁵ John Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

For John Paul, the unitive and procreative goods of marriage properly belong together.¹⁶ He reads Genesis 2:24 in the light of Genesis 1:28:

Uniting so closely with each other that they become “one flesh,” they place their humanity in some way under the blessing of fruitfulness, that is, of “procreation,” about which the first account speaks (Gen 1:28). Man enters “into being” in the consciousness that his own masculinity-femininity, that is, his own sexuality, is ordered to an end. (TOB 14:5)

In distinction from the lower creatures, for humans procreation is not the only purpose of the sexual act, because “The human body, with its sex” also “contains ‘from the beginning’ the ‘spousal’ attribute, that is, *the power to express love*” in the gift of the lover to the beloved. (TOB 15:1) John Paul speaks frequently and beautifully of sexual intercourse as a gift of self. It is not merely instrumental: the man must not turn the woman into an object, an instrument to gratify his desires, nor she him; but neither is it merely an instrument for reproduction; it can only be understood in the context of the mystery of the gift of the self in the “communion of persons.” But this gift, as man and woman give themselves and accept each other, is not to be separated from “the creative perspective of human existence which always renews itself through ‘procreation.’” (TOB 19:1) Indeed, it was precisely as Adam knew his wife that she conceived and gave birth to Cain (Gen 4:1). For John Paul, this knowledge “indicates the deepest essence of the reality of shared married life.” It is “part of the consciousness of the meaning of one’s body. In Genesis 4:1, when they become one flesh, the man the woman experience the meaning of their bodies in a particular way.” (TOB 20:4) As they give themselves to one another, and so discover together the meaning of their bodies, she conceives, and “the mystery of femininity manifests and reveals itself in its full depth through motherhood.” Eve now stands before Adam as mother; and the meaning of his masculinity is revealed in “the generative and ‘paternal’ meaning of his body.” (TOB 21:2) Thus knowledge—union—and procreation belong together.

Christopher Ash’s treatment of Genesis 2 broadens the horizon of this sexual union ordered towards procreation. Ash argues from the overall context of Genesis 1 and 2 that God does not give the woman to the man to cure his loneliness. Rather, she is given to him because it is not good for him to be alone in his task of filling and subduing the world (Gen 1:28), and guarding and serving the Garden (Gen 2:15). Companionship is not the purpose, or end, of marriage. But neither is procreation. Both are marital goods ordered towards a higher end: serving God’s kingdom. Marriage “ought to be considered under the governing ethic of human responsibility (to the Creator) and of the human task (over the creation).”¹⁷

¹⁶ For the sake of this paper I shall bracket TOB’s teaching on artificial contraception, as the position we take on contraception need not alter our view of procreation as one of the central goods of marriage.

¹⁷ Ash, *Sex in the Service of God*, 112–122. In common with many commentators, Ash treats Gen 1:28 and 2:15 as saying essentially the same thing, rather than recognizing

Marriage is therefore not an introverted relationship, primarily aiming to meet the need of loneliness. But nor is its aim to produce an introverted family of parents and children. "They have children not for their own sakes as parents, nor for the children's sakes, but for the sake of contributing to the great task entrusted to humankind."¹⁸ And so, in the Old Testament, procreation is strongly correlated with the task of fruitful work.¹⁹

As we argued above, to the extent that an introverted, companionate view of marriage holds sway (marriage as cure for loneliness) it will be proportionately difficult to argue that same-sex marriage is impermissible. But, in the beginning, God ordained marriage as a delightful context in which a man and woman would come to know themselves as male and female as they gave themselves to one another in love for the sake of worshipful obedience to their Creator and joyful service of his kingdom. The fullness of this knowledge, and an intrinsic part of serving his kingdom, was to be the fruitfulness of this marriage in procreation, which is a central aspect of the meaning of our creation as male and female and of the gift of self to the other. This understanding of the interconnected meanings of marriage, gender, and sexual relations immediately rules out the possibility of same-sex marriage. Arguably one can no more have a same-sex marriage than one can have a bovine horse, for same-sex marriage is inherently sterile; it cannot fulfill one of the basic goods that is central to marriage as an institution as it has always and everywhere been understood, namely that of procreation.²⁰

Advocates of gay marriage commonly reply by citing the obvious examples of heterosexual marriages that are infertile. If infertile gay couples can't marry, why can infertile straight couples? However, such a response fails to attend to marriage as an institution. Individual marriages are not autonomous, but derive their meaning from the wider understanding of marriage as an institution outlined above. To focus so closely on individual instances of marriage, without paying attention to the "underlying institutional grammar" is to miss an important part of the picture.²¹ Alastair Roberts draws a comparison with football (soccer!). "Many genuine football matches end in goalless draws, some without a single attempt on goal. The skill of goal-scoring is only one part of the game, and only one aspect of the striker's role. However, a form of 'football' without scoring would not be football at all."²² Similarly, many marriages

that the former speaks of a kingly task in the world, the latter of our primary, priestly task in the Garden-Sanctuary. He therefore misses the liturgical significance of manhood and womanhood. On this see James B. Jordan, "Liturgical Man, Liturgical Woman: Part One," *Rite Reasons* 86 (2004); *idem*, "Liturgical Man, Liturgical Woman: Part Two," *Rite Reasons* 86 (2004). On the Garden as a sanctuary and Adam as a priest more generally, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 29-122.

¹⁸ Ash, *Sex in the Service of God*, 157.

¹⁹ Ash, *Sex in the Service of God*, 161-62. Ash briefly discusses Deut 28:30 (as a negative example of coordinated covenant curses) and, positively, Ps 127; Isa 65:20-23.

²⁰ cf. Girgis, George, and Anderson "What is Marriage?"; Girgis, Anderson, and George, *What is Marriage*; Roberts, "Just Cause."

²¹ Roberts, "Just Cause," 68.

²² Roberts, "Just Cause," 69.

remain infertile, but a form of marriage in which procreation is no longer part of the definition of the institution would not be marriage at all.

We can go further. Given the close interconnections we have seen between marriage, sex, gender, procreation and knowledge, any form of sexual relationship outside of marriage is illegitimate. Although the sexual aspect of marriage is about much more than procreation, it is not, ultimately, about less. And, in Scripture, marriage is presented as the only licit context for sexual relations. Therefore, any kind of same-sex relationship, married or otherwise, is a denial of God's purposes in creating us as sexual beings. Same-sex sex cannot, by its very nature, be procreative. The nurture of children within a same-sex partnership relies on male-female fertility located outside the partnership itself, whether through adoption, or artificial means of conception involving a third party (sperm or egg donor, surrogate mother).

Moreover, the very structure of same-sex sexual relationships also fails to provide deep knowledge of a sexual other, and so do not share the meaning of the sexual act as a gift of the self to another. Although he is extremely tentative, and is reluctant to condemn same-sex desire and same-sex acts as a perversion, Roger Scruton captures the distinction nicely, a distinction rooted in a dimorphic understanding of gender, in which distinctions between the genders "play a constitutive role in the sexual act":²³ "In the heterosexual act, it might be said, I move out *from* my body *towards* the other, whose flesh is unknown to me; while in the homosexual act I remain locked within my body, narcissistically contemplating in the other an excitement that is the mirror of my own."²⁴ Thus, in the language of TOB, same-sex sexual acts are, by their very structure, perversions, because by their very nature they are turned in on the self, rather than giving the self to the other. This claim will be offensive to contemporary ears. But these ears have been attuned to think of sex and gender as something less than fully ontological, and of differences of sex and gender as no more significant than differences of eye or skin color.²⁵ Again, we see the importance here what John Paul calls the spousal meaning of the body, of a strong ontological understanding of our sexual and gender dimorphism as not simply an attribute of the person, but as constitutive of the person. We are created *male and female* in the image of God, for personal communion with one another through the gift of self.

Teaching these things will not win us any popularity contests. To the sensibilities of our contemporaries, we will appear arbitrary and intolerant. The life-stories of people we know, and the positive portrayals of gay and lesbian relationships in films and sitcoms, mean that claims about the naturalness of same-sex erotic desires and relationships feel intuitively obvious. How can such an apparently common experience be anything but natural? How can opposition to it be anything but arbitrary? However, in answering the Pharisees in Matthew 19, Jesus made it clear

²³ Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* (London; New York: Continuum 2006 [First published Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1986]), 311.

²⁴ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 310.

²⁵ On which, see the more extensive discussion below.

that our experience is not the only guide in issues of sexual ethics; indeed, it is an unreliable guide. The fall has placed a veil over our understanding of gender and sexuality, blurring and confusing our vision. But, according to Jesus, we are not trapped within the boundaries of our own experience of the world, nor even the boundaries of the experience of others. By going back to Genesis 1 and 2, we can see behind the veil, to the way creation ought to be. And what we see is a distinct pattern and structure to human sexual relations: man and woman, male and female, revealed truly to themselves and one another through their bodies, and united to one another in knowledge and love in the one flesh union of marriage.

Until recently, evangelicals have been relatively united on the exegesis of particular texts prohibiting same-sex sexuality. But we have been relatively weak in articulating the structure and coherence of God's design for human sexuality. Same-sex relationships are not merely violations of an arbitrary commandment. They are declensions from reality. Whatever position we take in the complementarian-egalitarian debate on gender roles, it is important that in our teaching and preaching we take seriously the givenness of creation, and particularly the givenness of our embodied existence as male and female. Scripture's prohibitions on same-sex sexual relationships are not arbitrary. Nor are they simply cultural constructions of an ignorant, repressive age. Creation has a pattern, like the grain of a piece of wood or marble. A wise sculptor recognizes the givenness of this grain and works with it, knowing that this constraint frees her to bring what is most beautiful out of her materials. Likewise, biblical sexual ethics call on us to cut with creation's grain in our sexual lives, and warn that a life or a society that cuts against the grain will warp, and splinter, and fragment.

This is true for our understanding of same-sex acts and relationships; it is also true of our understanding of the essential genderedness of humanity. However, thus far, I have simply assumed the rightness of a dimorphic understanding of human sex and gender. But this is far from obvious in contemporary discourse on sex and sexuality, so we must now consider this further, examining the opening chapter of TOB in relation to contemporary understandings of gender identity.

III. SEXUAL DIMORPHISM: THE SHOCK OF THE BODY

The two accounts of the creation of humanity in Genesis 1-2, and Jesus' authoritative interpretation of them from a postlapsarian perspective, teach a sexually dimorphic view of humanity: in the beginning, God made them male and female. In western societies, however, this is increasingly controversial.

As we consider these issues, it will be helpful to distinguish sex and gender, and also to distinguish the philosophical terms "concept," "conception," and "ideal." "Sex" refers to our biological sex: male or female. It is a creational given, a distinction between natural kinds, although the effects of the fall mean that even here the categories are sometimes a little blurry: some babies are born with ambiguous sex, some with both male and female sexual characteristics. "Gender" refers to social categories such

as boy or woman, masculine or feminine. It is linked to biological sex, but not identical with it: sex refers to natural kinds, gender to different patterns of life and behavior that flow from how we respond to the differences of sex. The distinctions of gender are profoundly shaped by culture,²⁶ and it is here that the distinctions between concept, conception, and ideal are important. Our *concept* of gender is of “a perceivable division between... masculine and feminine.”²⁷ Our *conception* of gender relates to the varying *ideals* we associate with masculinity or femininity: in what does ideal masculine behavior consist? Given these distinctions, we may share a *concept* of gender (though, as we shall see, even this is contested) while disagreeing profoundly on our *conceptions* and *ideals* of masculinity or femininity. Similarly, cultures that share a common concept of gender may hold vastly different ideals and conceptions concerning it. They will therefore shape men and women to inhabit their gender in very different ways. Compare the masculinity associated with medieval ideals of courtly love with that shaped by those of a contemporary frat house, or the version of femininity forged by the domestic economy of a seventeenth century smallholding with that formed by the appropriation of second wave feminism on a university campus in the 1960s. Or consider the differences between male fashion in early eighteenth century England with its powdered wigs, abundant lace, and heavily embroidered clothes and that expressed in the sober suits and bowler hats of the London stock exchange in the 1930s.

So far, the picture is still relatively straightforward. However, under the influence queer theory, and of what Scruton has called “Kantian feminism,” the picture becomes far more complicated. On this understanding, what I really am is a person, and my personhood is distinct from its bodily form.²⁸ There is therefore “no real distinction between the masculine and the feminine, except in so far as human freedom has been bent in certain directions, by whatever social pressures, so as to take on two contrasting forms.” Because I am distinct from my body in this way, and the form of my body is not inherent to who I am—the outward expression of my soul—gender distinctions “cannot lie in the nature of things.” The connection between myself and my body is severed, and so the connection between sex and gender is also severed. With this severing comes a rejection of gender and sexual binaries: if I am a free person, not chained to my outward bodily form, then I must be free to bend my sexual and gender identity in any way I desire, unconstrained by biological “nature.” “There is no *fact of the matter*” even about the concept of gender, let alone our conceptions of it. There are “only distinctions of attitude that can be redrawn at any time.”²⁹

²⁶ Jenell Williams Paris, *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex is Too Important to Define Who We Are* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 31-35; Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 254-257.

²⁷ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 255.

²⁸ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 258-60.

²⁹ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 260.

Rejection of sexual and gender binaries can be seen in the ever-growing acronym LGBTQIAO.³⁰ There are many legitimate sexualities, not just gay and straight. And, just as sexual desire is not binary, but a spectrum from exclusively straight to exclusively gay or lesbian, so also sex and gender identity are a spectrum: not just male or female, but also transgender, transsexual, intersex, asexual. Moreover, one's sexual and gender identity is not rooted in ontology, in what one *is* by nature; it is constructed by cultural discourses; it is also something one is free to (re)construct for oneself. Recently, this has led to public confusion and controversy when the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued guidelines banning discrimination on the basis of gender identity within its public schools. These guidelines instruct schools that a student who claims to be a girl (regardless of biological sex) is to be respected and treated as a girl. This includes, among other things, use of names and pronouns, gender markers on student records, and access to bathrooms and changing rooms. So, for example, a male-to-female transgender student who is biologically male, but who self-identifies as female, must be permitted to use female bathrooms. In an indication of how flexible gender identity can be, the guidelines also assert that "The statute does not require consistent and uniform assertion of gender identity as long as there is 'other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held as part of [the] person's core identity.'" In another recent case that illustrates how even the most progressive institutions can be wrong-footed by this gender plasticity, the all-female Smith College refused to consider a transgender applicant on the grounds of her gender because, although she listed herself as female on her college application, she listed herself as male on the FAFSA federal financial aid form.³¹

This constructivist view of gender is based on a denial that gender is inherent to us, a denial that we are ontologically male or female. It is famously expressed in the oft-quoted line of Simone de Beauvoir: "One is not born, but becomes a woman."³² Being female is not a biological given, rather it is something produced by "civilization as a whole." Although I may have a male body, with male genitals and xy chromosomes I am not thereby male. There is a separation between myself and my body such that I may identify as transgender. My body is not self-interpreting; my gender is not given by my biology, but rather by discourse: when I was given my boy's name, I moved from being an "it" to being a "he,"³³ and this gender identity was then "tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts." Gender is therefore "a performative accomplishment."³⁴ And, so, I am free to inscribe a

³⁰ Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender / Transsexual, Questioning / Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Other.

³¹ Jaelyn Freedman, "Smith's Unsisterly Move," *The American Prospect*; online at <<http://prospect.org/article/smiths-unsisterly-move>> (Last Accessed April 8, 2013).

³² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantam, 1952), 249.

³³ cf. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993), 7-8.

³⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY; London: Routledge, 1990), 140-41.

different identity on my body through a different performance. We could summarize, paraphrasing Keats: here stands one whose gender identity is writ in water.

John Paul's reading of Genesis 1-2 offers a radically different understanding of what it means to be male and female. For him, our *personal subjectivity*, our awareness of ourselves as male and female (expressed particularly in the creation account of Genesis 2) "corresponds to the *objective reality* of man created 'in the image of God'" (expressed particularly in the creation account of Genesis 1; TOB 3:1).³⁵ Thus, there is an ontological reality to our masculinity and femininity, a givenness in creation. This depends on an anthropology that places a high value on the body. My body is not something other than myself. I, the "real I," am not just a ghost in the machine. This is not to deny that I have both soul and body, but rather to insist that, although my body is not all there is to me, it does adequately express and reveal me (TOB 7:2; 8:4; 9:4).

What does the body reveal? According to Genesis 2:23, it reveals both "sexual difference" and "somatic homogeneity" (TOB 8:4), a difference and homogeneity so obvious that when the man awakes from his sleep, he says "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh [bodily homogeneity]. She shall be called woman because she was taken from man [sexual difference]."

In the light of this, John Paul argues that being male or female is not just an attribute of the person—and therefore something that can be (re)constructed. Rather, it is *constitutive* for the person. The sexual differences between male and female are far deeper than differences of hair color, or the size or shape of one's ears. Masculinity and femininity are "two reciprocally completing ways of 'being a body' and at the same time of being human...femininity in some way finds itself before masculinity, while masculinity confirms itself through femininity." (TOB 10:1) Masculinity and femininity are mutually enriching and mutually interpreting; together, for the first time, they give a new consciousness of the meaning of one's body. When God brings the woman to Adam, he understands himself, and the meaning of his body, precisely in relation to her. (TOB 9:4-5) In recognizing their bodily difference from one another, the man and the woman are revealed to one another through their bodies. What is revealed is their existence *for* one another as a gift. According to John Paul, what Adam is exclaiming in Genesis 2:23 is "Look, a body that expresses the 'person!'" But, precisely because she is feminine, not masculine, her body "expresses femininity 'for' masculinity" even as his expresses "masculinity 'for' femininity." (TOB 14:4) In our embodied gender distinctions as male and female, we exist for one another in the communion of persons in which we live 'in a relationship of reciprocal gift.' (14:2)

According to John Paul, this is not a violent power claim, an oppressive heterosexist construction. This is who we are, and so this is our true freedom. Although queer theorists like Judith Butler deny that there is such a thing as "nature," they are wrong. It should, in any case, be noted

³⁵ Italics mine.

that Butler is inconsistent here. Building on Freud she *does* articulate an ontology of sexuality in which heterosexuality is built on repressed homosexual desire.³⁶ But why should we accept this less than intuitively obvious ontology in preference to the far more intuitively plausible claim that our bodies reveal the truth about our sex and gender? As Scruton notes, “The important point is not whether a particular *conception* of gender is a human universal, but whether the *concept* of gender is such.”³⁷ Even transgender experience depends upon this reality. In any case, our true freedom is not freedom to remake ourselves however we wish, as if we had no nature, or as if our natures did not matter or could be mastered and remolded. Rather, our true freedom is to live according to our nature as created in God’s image. It is freedom to find ourselves reciprocally in the meaning of ourselves as male and female in the free gift of the self to another.

In an unfallen world—the world of Genesis 1 and 2—our subjective experience would have corresponded to this reality. In encountering the opposite sex, and so knowing ourselves truly as masculine or feminine, we would, with Adam, have felt neither repression, nor confusion, but awe, wonder, and joy in the mystery of ourselves as seen in the gaze of another. But in the fallen world we inhabit, our experience is not so easy. Our experience of our bodies, and of our gender and sexuality, is marred by both natural and moral evils. Natural evils mean that tragedies of deformed genitalia and a certain blurring of sexual dimorphism should not surprise us (though we should not overstate the frequency of this, tragic as it is). Morally, the noetic effects of sin mean that to a greater or lesser extent we fail to discern our bodies as they truly are, and gender confusion should not surprise us.

Once again, in our teaching, the importance of articulating clearly and confidently the intrinsic shape and reality of God’s creation design is vital in resisting these contemporary trends. However, pastorally the issues will be difficult to navigate, not least because we are caring for real people, in situations that are often emotionally fraught, and extremely complex. Pastors will need to be equipped for a variety of situations. What should a pastor say to the couple whose young daughter wants to be a boy, and whose school has been encouraging her to express her true gender identity as male? How should we counsel the new convert seeking baptism who lives as a married woman following a sex change operation twenty years previously? These may be extreme cases, but for some pastors they represent the reality of pastoral counseling.

Our human condition in Adam as ‘self-loathing narcissists’,³⁸ turned in on ourselves, but loathing ourselves in so far as we bear the image of the God against whom we rebel means that a disordering of our desires, including our sexual desires, and confusion over gender and sexuality

³⁶ See Peter Sanlon, *Plastic People: How Queer Theory is Changing Us* (Latimer Studies 73; London: Latimer Trust, 2010), 21-28.

³⁷ Scruton, *Sexual Desire*, 268.

³⁸ David Field, “Radical Disorientation (I),” in Peterson, ed., *Holiness and Sexuality*, 51-87, at 77.

is, tragically, only to be expected. Thus, a comprehensive consideration of this topic would require examination of our fallen condition and its implications for our sexuality. Unfortunately, constraints of space prevent this in this article. However, in order to grasp the full shape of the creational pattern of marriage, some consideration of its typological consummation in the marriage of Christ and the church is necessary. Such consideration will shed further light on same-sex relationships.

IV. CONSUMMATION: THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

In his instructions on marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul provides a rich theological rationale for the way husbands and wives are to relate to one another. He draws together creation, redemption, Christology, and ecclesiology, and shows that in marriage as in all things, protology is ordered towards eschatology. Therefore, human marriage is ordered to our redemption in Christ. In this passage, Paul interprets Genesis 2:24 as referring to Christ and the church, not to exclude human marriage (the Genesis text has been in the background since v. 28),³⁹ but to set up a typological and symbolic relationship between human marriage and Christ's marriage to the church. The mystery of marriage, now revealed in Christ, is that from the beginning God created it as a type of which Christ's relationship to the church is the antitype. This immediately relativizes marriage: it is not the be-all and end-all of human life; nor are human marriages eternal; like the moon, which reflects the glory of the sun, they reflect the glory of Christ's relationship to the church; but at the consummation of that marriage, when the Sun rises in full strength, the moon shall be no more. Paradoxically, however, it also raises the dignity and importance of marriage: "as God's salvific plan for humanity, that mystery is in some sense the central theme of the whole of revelation, its central reality. It is what God as Creator and Father wishes above all to transmit to mankind in his Word" (TOB 93:2).

In a moment of profound insight, John Paul reads Ephesians 5:31 in the light of God's plan to elect a people in Christ to be holy and blameless before him (Eph. 1:3f; TOB 96:2-3). Creation is the beginning, but there was a beginning before the beginning: God's electing purposes in Christ. Thus, when we read the creation account of Genesis 1-2 in the light of Ephesians, "we must deduce that *the reality of the creation of man* was already permeated by the perennial election of man in Christ: *called to holiness through the grace of adoption as sons*" (TOB 96:4). We can go further: reading Genesis 2:24 together with Ephesians 1:3f, 10 and 5:31, it seems that creation, and within that the creation of marriage, is ordered towards the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose of electing a people in Christ to be brought into the divine family as the bride of the Son.⁴⁰ Even before creation and fall, the purpose of God's eternal decree was the union of Christ and his bride.⁴¹

³⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *Ephesians* (PNTC; Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 427, 432.

⁴⁰ See Jonathan Edwards, *The Miscellanies: 501-832* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 18; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), §741, p. 367.

⁴¹ As an aside: this seems to me to be a particularly interesting and pastorally

This implies that in addressing human sexuality in general, and same-sex practices and relationships in particular, we are not dealing with peripheral issues. These are not areas of indifference where Christians can afford to disagree. Marriage testifies to the central reality of creation and its *telos*: God and his relationship to his creatures. *Nothing* is more fundamental than this, and therefore the symbolism of marriage, and the sexual behavior of humans more generally, takes on profound importance.⁴² To distort this symbolism is to lie about Christ, his office as bridegroom of the church, and his love in laying down his life to sanctify his bride for himself. It is also to lie about the fundamental reality of human identity, which finds its fulfillment as part of the church that will be presented without blemish to Christ on the last day.

It is therefore of the deepest possible significance for the issue at hand that the relationship between Christ and the church is a *gendered* relationship:⁴³ he is the husband, she the bride; he is a New Adam, she a New Eve. And this relationship is irreversibly ordered. Husband and wife are not simply two interchangeable partners. Christ, as husband, is head of the Church. The union is a union in love of persons who are profoundly different from one another: it is the union of God and the creature. Thus, in the symbolism of marriage, the ontological difference between the man and the woman is no trivial thing. Rather, it symbolizes the ontological difference between Christ and the church. To be sure, the analogical interval means that there is a far greater dissimilarity in the analogy than there is similarity. The ontological gap between human persons and a divine Person (even one with a human nature) is far greater than that between a man and a woman. Still, the point stands. As the husband and wife union is a union of those who are both ontologically alike and equal and yet ontologically different from one another, so *a fortiori*, the union of Christ and the church is a union of One who as a man is ontologically one with us, but who as God is ontologically vastly different. Thus, to remove this ordering in human sexual relationships, whether by changing the definition of marriage or by permitting forms of sexual behavior forbidden by Scripture, is to distort our knowledge of God and to obscure his astonishing love for us in redeeming and uniting to himself those who are so utterly different from him, both as creatures and all the more as sinners.

This typology lies at the heart of the new creation theology of the entire epistle. In Genesis 2, it was not good for Adam to be alone: in his priestly and kingly tasks he needed a helper corresponding to him. So, now that the Last Adam has come, it is not good for him to be alone either. As he fulfils Adam's commission to fill the earth, he does so in and through his Eve, his bride, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:22-33). As members of the body of Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we share with him,

significant argument in favour of a supralapsarian Christology.

⁴² This may well provide a "deep" reason for the severity of the penalties in the *Torah* for sexual transgressions.

⁴³ *Pace* Deirdre J. Good *et al*, "A Theology of Marriage Including Same Sex Couples: A View from the Liberals," *ATR* 93/1 (2011): 51-87.

under his headship, in completing Adam's task. The dominion promised to Adam, which he forfeited by prematurely eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is now ours; indeed, being enthroned in the heavenlies, we have progressed beyond the first human pair to rule as the fitting helper of our Adam who fills and rules all things in heaven and on earth (1:20-22; 2:5-6). In union with our exalted head, and in obedience to his Word, we are called to the mature manhood that Adam failed to attain when he prematurely ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (4:11-16).⁴⁴ Through the Spirit breathed into us by the Last Adam, who is Life-Giving Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:45), and wearing the armor of God first worn by him, we are also called to stand firm in the holy warfare where the first Adam failed, and to wield, rather than deny, the Word of God by which he rules us (6:17; cf. 2:20; 4:11; contrast Gen. 3), and so resist the crafty schemes of the devil in the strength of the Last Adam's mighty power (6:10-18).

None of this undermines the importance of human marriage, procreation, and nurture of children within the not-yet of the new creation in Christ (cf. 5:22-6:4). But it does indicate the end to which these things are ordered. As in Genesis 1-2, marriage, and the good of children, are ordered towards obedient service of God and his kingdom. Our ecclesial family is of far greater import than our natural family. The fatherhood of God has ontological priority: human *patria* derives from it (3:14f). The marriage of Christ and the church has teleological ultimacy. Therefore, children are not their parents', but the Lord's, and owe their parents allegiance for the Lord's sake and in obedience to his command (6:1-3). For the members of Christian families, this higher identity and allegiance is reaffirmed and reinforced liturgically. We are those who have been cleansed by baptism (5:26), and each week we renew that baptismal identity as we confess our sins and hear Christ's word of absolution, we are built up together by the Word read and preached (5:26; cf. 4:11ff), and we are nourished by the eucharist (5:29) before being sent out for dominion.

In light of the contemporary American idolatry of the family, it would be hard to overstate the pastoral importance of this for both married and single people. Water is thicker than blood.⁴⁵ The water of baptism, conferring the name of the Triune God, marks out a more fundamental family identity than a husband's name received in marriage, or a father's name at birth. The primary family to which each of us belong is the family of God. And within that family, as members of the bride of Christ, we have a common task, whether single or married: to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. The primary distinctions within humanity as a whole are not Jones or Smith, nor are they single or married, nor "straight" or "gay," nor even male and female, but "in Christ" or "in Adam." Either

⁴⁴ On the relationship between the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, wisdom, and maturity see James B. Jordan, "Merit Versus Maturity: What Did Jesus Do for Us?" in Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner, eds, *The Federal Vision* (Monroe, LA: Athanasius Press, 2004): 151-203; William N. Wilder, "Illumination and Investiture: The Royal Significance of the Tree of Wisdom in Genesis 3," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 51-69.

⁴⁵ To borrow a phrase from Peter Leithart.

we bear the image of the man of dust for death, or we bear the image of the man of heaven for life. And, if we bear Christ's image and share in his Spirit, our identity is fundamentally that of the divine family: sons of God, co-heirs with Christ, brothers and sisters of one another.

This has obvious pastoral implications for the deep pain of loneliness typically felt by celibate gay people (and, we must not forget, single people of all kinds). In an otherwise very fine book, Wesley Hill claims wrongly that in the Old Testament marriage was seen as the solution to loneliness. He also somewhat romanticizes the companionship provided by marriage:⁴⁶ a loveless marriage is one of the loneliest places in the world; in every fallen human marriage husband and wife sometimes feel surprisingly, agonizingly alienated from one another; and even at their healthiest, marriages on their own cannot bear the weight of our need for human love and companionship, which can only be met by a network of friends and community. However, as he writes movingly of his struggle with loneliness, and his longing for the affection of marriage, Hill is profoundly right to observe that the church is "the primary place where human love is best expressed and experienced."⁴⁷

John Paul describes the eschatological state as not only a fulfillment of the spousal meaning of the body in intimate communion and giving and receiving with our divine spouse. Rather, this union with and participation in God will also lead to an intimate communion among created persons. The fullness of this awaits the consummation. But in the now and not-yet of biblical eschatology, as we await with longing our revealing as the sons of God, the redemption of our bodies, we are already members of one another, already participants in the communion of the saints, called to hold all things in common.

The loneliness of celibate people is not just a problem for them; nor is it a situation for which marriage is the remedy. Rather, it is a call for the church to be the church, to take our family relationships seriously. One of the virtues of the LGBT community is precisely a sense of mutual support, acceptance and belonging to a meaningful community. They know how to practice hospitality, and place a high value on it.⁴⁸ If the church is to be a welcoming, nurturing body in which celibate people find a home, we must do the same. A simple call to celibacy is not enough; it must be come, and be heard, in the context of real, concrete family relationships of self-giving love. For a man or woman in a same sex relationship, embedded in the LGBT community, conversion will be a train wreck; in turning to Christ, they may find themselves with little or nothing of their former life intact.⁴⁹ For a celibate who longs for intimacy with someone of the same sex, the life of discipleship may sometimes feel like a long, lingering death from debilitating disease. But God sets the lonely in families (Ps

⁴⁶ Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), chap. 2.

⁴⁷ Hill, *Washed and Waiting*, 111-12.

⁴⁸ See Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Pittsburg, PA: Crown and Covenant, 2012), chaps 1-2.

⁴⁹ Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts*, chaps 1-2.

68:8, NIV). Jesus promised that those who leave father, mother, brothers, sisters, family, home will receive not only eternal life in the age to come, but also fathers, sisters, brothers, mothers, home, family a hundredfold in this life (Mk 10:29-30). The challenging question for the church, as we proclaim Jesus' teaching on sexuality, is will we also be faithful in practice to Jesus' promise, or will we, by our actions, falsify it?