

Espousing Nuptial Theology in Christian Tradition:
A Study of Marriage in Augustine, Calvin and Keller

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Abstract

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For centuries Augustine's thought has been influential in the development and understanding of Christian Doctrine. His treatise *On the Good of Marriage (De Bono Coniugali)* is one of the most authoritative treatises on marriage in Christianity. This study examines how Augustine's view is manifested in John Calvin and Timothy Keller's exegesis of the household code (*haustafeln*) in Ephesians 5:18-33. Therefore, the contents of Augustine's treatise, Calvin's sermons and commentaries on Ephesians as well as Keller's book about marriage based on his exegesis of Ephesians are reviewed. I conclude that despite Augustine's "goods" influence upon these two Protestant churchmen, their reading of Ephesians leads them to somewhat different conclusions about the chief purpose of marriage in Christian life. While Augustine upholds the goodness of marriage for its role in keeping the couple faithful and legitimate childbearing, Calvin's view is informed by his preoccupation with maintenance of social order; whereas Keller purports marriage as a journey on which spouses embark as mutual, self-sacrificing helpers, becoming their God-intended-self along the way.

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INTRODUCTION

In a society in which the divorce rate is as high as the odds of flipping heads at the beginning of the big game, it is not too hard to fathom that a barely-twenty-year-old student would be at a loss when her sister, just three years older than her, who was in the process of attaining her Bachelor's degree, announced that she was getting married right after graduation. At that moment my interest, or rather curiosity, in the meaning of marriage was born. Little did I know that my sister's announcement would propel the next ten years of my life and my career as a post-secondary student. What started out as a simple term paper for a Theological Studies course on the Christian Mysteries, quickly became a quest to try to understand how and why anyone could vow to join her life to someone else's; leading me through a maze of social and psychological studies, papal encyclicals, patristic scholars, a certificate of Pastoral Ministry and finally to graduate studies where I found myself looking to biblical and historical studies to finally get to the root of what marriage means to the church, so that I may know what it is supposed to mean to me.

My quest has culminated, in this study of the way in which the three goods of marriage put forth by Augustine of Hippo in his *On the Good of Marriage (De Bono Coniugali)* in 401CE, have been interpreted by John Calvin who wrote in Geneva in the Early modern era, as well as by twenty-first century theologian Timothy Keller in their respective studies of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

Through this research I expect to find that the household code (*haustafeln*) found in chapter five of the Epistle to the Ephesians has become more influential in the Protestant theory of marriage than the Augustinian view that had previously dominated Christian theology. I wish to demonstrate the effects of the evolution of the Christian study of marriage from the scriptural preaching about marriage in the gospels and Paul's epistles, to the way in which early Christians interpreted what He preached, and the way the Church "defined" the sacramentality of marriage based on Jesus' teachings; as well as how those interpretations compare to present-day dealings of both scripture and marriage theology. I expect that by examining how marriage was approached by Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century compared to the reformers' approaches and conclusions in both the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries, we will see a return to emphasising scripture and tradition in the modern development of the first vocation.

As comparative theologians affirm, it is through the study of other traditions that one comes to understand one's own faith;¹ this is one of my reasons for studying Augustine, Calvin and Keller. From an historical perspective their work offers a broad scope for developmental study. Augustine was not the first to write about marriage, but his work has become the backbone of so many theologians who followed. Calvin has written an extensive collection of sermons and commentaries, which were influenced by Augustine's work. Most interesting from a developmental perspective, is the fact that Calvin lived and worked in the Reformation age, not to mention the influential role he had in defining the relationship between Church and State in Geneva. Finally we come to

¹ Francis X. Clooney, S.J., "Comparative Theology," *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Timothy Keller whose book about marriage was serendipitously published while I was in the midst of researching contemporary Christian theologians.

At first glance this seems like an unconventional selection of theologians to study together; however a closer look reveals three men who are astute to the aforementioned elements of a theology of marriage relevant to their own time. Augustine is one of the better known converts to Christianity since Saint Paul; his *Confessions* are noted as being the first autobiography ever written and fifteen hundred years after his death his writing is still studied, challenged, reproduced and valid. Moreover, he is a saint and doctor of the church. John Calvin transformed the church-state relationship in Geneva in a tumultuous time. Keller founded his own church in New York City, one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the city, preaches to an unconventional crowd made up of “young professional and artists who do not fit the prototypical evangelical mold,” and he ministers to other preachers who wish to establish city-based churches across the US and around the world.²

Augustine of Hippo

Augustine’s treatise *On the Good of Marriage* was the basis of Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *On Christian Marriage (Casti Connubii)* issued in 1930³ testifying to the importance of Augustine’s view in the Catholic Church’s teaching on marriage. Written at the turn of the fifth century, Augustine’s thirty-five section long treatise, “is the first

² Michael Lou, “Preaching the Word and Quoting the Voice,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2006, accessed January 31, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/26/nyregion/26evangelist.html?ex=1298610000&en=bd2c8ed6c62e68f5&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

³ Elizabeth Clark, ed., “Introduction,” in *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 1.

systematic theological discussion of marriage, and its influence on later Christian thought has been immense.”⁴ *On the Good of Marriage* is the first half of a two-part response to a late fourth century debate between Jerome, an advocate of virginity and aesthetic life over married life, and Jovinian “who had extolled the goodness of marriage.”⁵ In his rejoinder to the debate, “Augustine attempted to explain the value and the purpose of Christian marriage,” his objective was to find a ‘happy-medium’ between Jovinian and the Manichees, while avoiding the extremes to which Jerome was inclined.⁶ Augustine, in his response, endeavoured to “concede the superiority of virginity but nonetheless upheld the goodness of marriage.”⁷ As Cavadini points out “Augustine certainly thought virginity superior to marriage, but both were equally liable to succumb to temptation (marriage to lust and virginity to pride).”⁸ In the treatise, Augustine builds his teaching concerning the three goods of marriage on the notion that propagation of children is the “primary good of marriage” because it leads to the bonding of society.⁹ However physical union is not the sole good, and with the example of Mary and Joseph, Augustine “pointed the way to an understanding of marriage that rested less on physical relationship and more on the acts of mind and will that brought a couple together.”¹⁰

There have been several studies of the Church’s teaching on marriage, but not all have had Augustine’s *On the Good of Marriage* as their starting point or even as the

⁴ David Hunter, “Introduction,” in *Marriage in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 22.

⁵ Clark, *St. Augustine*, 42.

⁶ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 22.

⁷ Clark, *St. Augustine*, 43.

⁸ John Cavadini, “Harmony and Tradition: Latin Theology, 4th-10th centuries,” in *Christian Thought: A Brief History*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67.

⁹ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 22.

¹⁰ Clark, *St. Augustine*, 7.

primary focus. For example Philip Lyndon Reynolds asks whether the indissolubility of marriage is due to its sacramentality, or if its sacramentality is due to its indissolubility, but admits that the answer to this question is not attainable without first taking “account of the history of the doctrines involved and the doctrine of marriage as sacrament.”¹¹

Likewise, Ladislav Orsy sets out to “examine two frequently asked, and disputed, questions concerning Christian marriage: is faith necessary to receive the sacrament and can covenant and contract be separated from sacrament?”¹² Nonetheless, he begins by giving a brief overview of the “tradition on the uniquely sacred nature of Christian marriage” which does lead through a brief examination of scripture, but no mention of Augustine is found anywhere in his study.¹³

Authors like Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, Jack Dominian and Michael Lawler, who set out with the specific purpose of writing about the theology of marriage and its development throughout the history of the Church, tend to take a more historical approach in their studies. Generally these authors begin with Hebrew and Christian scriptural support for a theology of marriage, then work their way through the teachings of the early Christian Church Fathers –at times emphasising dialectical discrepancies between these works and contemporary teaching– before bringing the focus onto the modern theology of marriage post-Vatican II.

Some authors like Richard M. Price, Elisabeth Clark, and Willemien Otten, set out with the intention of studying the history and development of the theology of

¹¹ Philip Lyndon Reynolds, “Marriage, Sacramental and Indissoluble: Sources of the Catholic Doctrine,” *The Downside Review* 109 (1991): 105.

¹² Ladislav Orsy, “Faith, Sacrament, Contract and Christian Marriage: Disputed Questions,” *Theological Studies* 4 (1982): 379.

¹³ Ibid..

marriage. These authors are often concerned with a specific period in the history of the church and its doctrines; or on a specific person's work –Augustine or Aquinas.

Meanwhile, other authors –Carl J. Laney and Jeremy Moiser in particular– focus on the interpretation of biblical passages of Jesus' and Paul's teaching about marriage, or in most cases, divorce and remarriage, rather than looking historically at the factors that influence the notion of marriage held today.¹⁴

Reynolds describes the history of marriage as sacrament as “the development that led from Augustine's theory that indissolubility should be understood as *sacramentum* in marriage to the theory that marriage itself is one of the seven sacraments.”¹⁵ In explaining this statement Reynolds looks first at Augustine's work on marriage and what has been written about it, then at the biblical sources which influenced writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the medieval theology of marriage.

In Orsy's brief review of the uniqueness of the sacramentality of Christian marriage, his interest is in scripture and the results of the Second Vatican council. Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Ephesians are the focus of Orsy's examination of scripture. While his discussion of the results of the Second Vatican council is centered on the allegorically rich language of its documents and the council's focus on gifts and covenant. Orsy also discusses the criteria which need to be met in order for a sacrament to be considered a sacrament, the necessity of faith in order to receive a sacrament, as well as the separation of sacrament and contract.

¹⁴ See: Carl J. Laney, “Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 283-294; and Jeremy Moiser, “A Reassessment of Paul's View of Marriage with Reference to 1 Cor 7,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (1983): 103-122.

¹⁵ Reynolds, “Marriage, Sacramental and Indissoluble,” 105.

Taking a more developmental stance on the theology of marriage, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza divides his article into three sections: “Biblical teaching on marriage,” “Marriage in the history of Roman Catholic theology,” and “Marriage as a sacrament in current systematic theology.”¹⁶ In the first section he acknowledges that a theology of marriage will not be found in the Bible, yet it does hold diverse views and images of marriage that “have decisively influenced Christian theology.”¹⁷ He proceeds to present these images from Hebrew scriptures –Genesis, the Song of Songs, Wisdom of the Son of Sirach and Qoheleth; as well as Christian scriptures –the synoptic gospels and Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians and Ephesians. Next he outlines four points which he identifies as “salient points from the history of theology:” Augustine’s *On the Good of Marriage*, medieval conceptions of marriage, “the affirmations of the council of Trent and recent official teachings of the Roman Catholic church.”¹⁸ In the third section of the article we find a brief overview of three contemporary directions for a clearer understanding of marriage: a Christocentric view, a salvation-historical view and an anthropological-ecclesial view of marriage. Finally the article ends with a brief look at how those three directions effect the conception of the sacramentality of marriage. This treatment is a systematic yet general description of marriage yet it lacks a probing analysis of what the church presents as theology of marriage and its reception by society.

In *Christian Marriage* Jack Dominionian begins by stating that Hebrew scripture, specifically the first two chapters of Genesis, are where “the essentials of marriage in

¹⁶ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Marriage,” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 2, eds. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

¹⁷ Ibid., 309.

¹⁸ Ibid., 317.

God's plan for man" are found.¹⁹ He then contrasts this with divorce as described in the book of Deuteronomy as well as Jesus' exchange with the Pharisees on the subject of divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19. Dominian sets up his argument that through His teaching, Jesus "restored marriage to its former and primal indissoluble unity and introduced a new era of virginity which he himself and his mother graced and inspired with their unique examples."²⁰ Next he examines Paul's epistles to the Corinthians and Ephesians, as well as three factors which influenced the changes marriage endured during the five centuries between Paul's letters and Augustine's work: the new state of virginity, heresies and Greek thought. After a breakdown of Augustine's work, we find an overview of Thomas Aquinas' view on the subject of marriage. Dominian explains that marriage, as it is understood today, only came about in the twelfth century; and that the church only recognized marriage as a sacrament beginning in the thirteenth century, listing several theologians who disagreed with the view that matrimony is a vehicle for receiving God's grace. He discusses the issues that plagued medieval theologians: "at what point does the couple become married and at what moment is the sacrament conferred upon them?"²¹ Dominian points out that in the centuries following the Council of Trent, the major issues were brought about by the people who felt that man had the natural right to "contract marriage in a civilian setting and to terminate the contract under certain circumstances."²² He also notes that for the past century there have been only two major encyclicals on marriage in 1880 and 1930, by Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI respectively.

¹⁹ Jack Dominian, "Marriage," in *Christian Marriage: The Challenge of Change* (London: Libra Books, 1968), 17.

²⁰ Ibid., 23.

²¹ Ibid., 36.

²² Ibid.

Michael G. Lawler's book *Marriage and Sacrament: a Theology of Christian Marriage* is a study of how the Catholic tradition's teaching on marriage and sacrament speaks to what he calls "the crisis in the understanding of sacramental marriage."²³ In it he devotes two chapters to the biblical and historical aspects of the sacrament of marriage. In chapter three "Biblical Basis" Lawler primarily focuses on Genesis, Deuteronomy and Hosea in the Hebrew scripture and the epistles to the Ephesians, and to the Corinthians as well as the Mark's gospel in Christian scripture to explain that marriage is a gift to man and woman from the Creator; a gift that forever sacramentally binds the giver, the gift and the recipients. Through marriage a man and a woman become "one body-person" reflecting the "one body-person" union of Christ and the church; and Christian marriage is a "covenanted community of steadfast love," a "permanent and exclusive state and a prophetic symbol of the steadfast covenant and love between Christ and his Church."²⁴ In the fourth chapter "History" Lawler focuses on the work of the Greek and Latin Fathers of the church whose views formed the foundation of the development of the doctrine of marriage. Lawler focuses on the responses of the Greek Church Fathers –Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus of Lyons– in the development of the marriage doctrine, emphasising the influence of the negative view of sexuality held by Gnostics and Stoics on Christian thought. Tertullian and Augustine of Hippo –the Latin Fathers, whose work later influenced the scholastic theologians Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great, as well as nineteenth and twentieth century Popes– are discussed

²³ Michael G. Lawler, *Marriage and Sacrament: A Theology of Christian Marriage* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1993), ix.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

followed by a brief overview of the medieval and modern teachings of the church on the sacramentality of marriage.

Augustine of Hippo's writing on marriage is the focus of both Elizabeth Clark's book *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality* and of Willemien Otten's article "Augustine on Marriage, Monasticism, and the Community of the Church."²⁵ However each author approaches the material in his or her own way. Clark divides her book into four parts and reproduces large excerpts from Augustine's work to give the reader a sense of what Augustine claimed. She includes a short introduction to the book as well as each section, providing information about the context of Augustine's work and history about his life. Otten's article links Augustine's view of marriage to his conception of virginity and monasticism in an attempt to locate his theology of marriage into the historical and theological context of the early church.²⁶ Otten begins by giving a brief summary of Augustine's *Confessions* along with a succinct biography, explaining that she thinks Augustine's views on marriage, virginity and monasticism "show how Augustine develops what is not only a synthetic, but a newly constructive vision of the church as an earthly community drawn to holiness."²⁷

Protestant Marriage Theology

Until this point the focus has been on Roman Catholic theology of marriage as influenced by Augustine. However both Calvin and Keller work from a Protestant perspective, so it is important to outline the similarities and differences between the

²⁵ Willemien Otten, "Augustine on Marriage, Monasticism, and the Community of the Church," *Theological Studies* 52 (1998).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 388.

Catholic and Protestant views. The next section will concentrate on the theology of the age reform and the Middle Ages that Calvin would have been familiar with, as well as contemporary theology in which Dr. Keller's thought is conceptualized.²⁸

Reformation Theology and John Calvin

The Protestant Reformation challenged the way the church viewed and communicated doctrine and tradition that had been in place for over fifteen hundred years. By adopting scripture as the ultimate authority from God, thus rejecting the Pope as head of the church, the reformers dismantled and reconstructed the Roman Catholic catechism into what they felt better represented the Christian church preached in scripture. As a result marriage lost its sacramental status; it was now considered an institution governed by civil offices yet still sacred. This 'demotion' did not deter people from getting married, in fact the clergy, who had previously been forced into celibacy, were some of the most enthusiastic reformers entering into marriage, and they "still found ample biblical basis for exalting marriage over celibacy."²⁹ Through all this change, the one theme that my research seems to reveal is that marriage theory in Protestantism is highly correlated with salvation theology.

Wilson Yates offers a review of the Protestant view of marriage via an interpretation of the metaphor of covenant. He identifies six characteristics as being central to the Protestant view of marriage, and presents them through the paradigm of covenant. The first characteristic is intimate companionship, which Yates explains is a Calvinist understanding of the moral and spiritual bond between husband and wife. Next

²⁸ By contemporary I mean Modern and Post Modern theology, basically from 1900 on.

²⁹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 648.

he explains that the second characteristic is in fact a network of the virtues of honesty, trust, openness and acceptance. The third characteristic is that the couple is in partnership on the pilgrimage of Christian life; and as such each partner nurtures and strengthens the other as pilgrim and disciple, all the while actively participating in the life of the church. The next characteristic is living an ethic of covenantal wholeness exemplified through love –both compassionate and romantic; justice as fairness; responsible freedom and structural order– involving both stability and change. The fifth characteristic that is common to the many denominations of Protestantism is “the need for [establishing] boundaries, rules or agreements regarding the form and style” of the relationship, and the ability to modify them as the relationship grows and changes.³⁰ The last characteristic Yates identifies, involves the breakdown of a covenant relationship. Specifically he is referring to the couple’s ability to recognize when a problem that will prevent their marriage from developing arises, searching for help and if necessary –only as a last resort– ending the relationship. Yates concludes his article by acknowledging that the covenantal image of marriage is present in the three major divisions of Christianity, and that although the different denominations of Protestantism will differ in their manifestation of marriage as covenant, these common threads characterize those churches’ approaches.

Similarly, James Turner Johnson looks at what it meant for early Protestant theologians to consider marriage to be a covenant, in his essay “Marriage as Covenant in

³⁰ Wilson Yates, “The Protestant View of Marriage,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 22 (1985): 53.

Early Protestant Thought: Its Development and Implications.”³¹ Beginning by exploring the Catholic traditions which were rejected or reformed by sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, Johnson guides the reader through the Puritan development of the idea of covenant, to an examination of the effects of this idea on one’s understanding of “sexuality, marriage, and society in the context of the United States.”³² After briefly summarizing Augustine’s three goods of marriage and Aquinas’ adaptation of them, Johnson outlines Luther’s rejection of Catholic doctrine and the reformers’ emphasis on Augustine’s notion of *fides*. He points out that the basis for Luther’s rejection was his “assumption that marriage is the normal state for all, clergy included,” and that the reformers’ focus on scripture, particularly chapter two of Genesis, guided their understanding of marriage.³³ Next Johnson offers an overview of the Puritan view of marriage as covenant which he explains is linked to the notion of covenant theology: that each member of the Christian community has “common and mutual responsibilities [toward each other and ...] the authority given to the head of the household implied the care of imposing discipline where it was not being observed [...].”³⁴ He then offers examples from Massachusetts and Connecticut to demonstrate how this model of marriage and community was reshaped in the American colonies.

Rosemary Radford Ruether examines how marriage and family has evolved from Christianity’s Judeo-Christian roots to the multi-faith reality of the twenty-first century,

³¹ James Turner Johnson, “Marriage as Covenant in Early Protestant Thought: Its Development and Implications,” in *Covenant Marriage in Comparative Perspective*, ed. John Witte and Eliza Ellison (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, 2005).

³² *Ibid.*, 124.

³³ *Ibid.*, 127.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

in her book *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family*.³⁵ In the third chapter of her book Ruether describes how gender roles shifted in regard to work and the church in the Middle Ages. She begins with an overview of how gender roles began to shift from the tenth century to the sixteenth centuries, noting that the home was the first place that gender roles were defined and became segregated, influencing the formation of state regulations that shifted responsibilities from regional nobility to a centralized national state. Ruether's focus is on women's role in political positions of power, so she examines how women were refused political office in the early fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, unless they were of royal or noble blood. She then goes on to discuss how the early Reformers' marital ideology in Germany was influenced by the guilds that governed specialized workers, but also by Catholic, especially Augustinian, practices. Finally Ruether explores Luther's theology of marriage, sexuality and gender relations contrasting it with the Catholic view in order to establish a foundation for the Reformers' views. She finds that Luther dealt with many of these topics by renewing and adapting Augustine's views and teaching, focusing on "human sinful depravity and the loss of free will in the fallen state" as well as Augustine's goods of marriage.³⁶ Finally the chapter concludes with an overview of the Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation. She outlines how the Catholics rebuked the Protestant challenges to the traditional teaching on celibacy and marriage.

Michael G. Parsons examines Luther's and Calvin's theology of marriage as a product of their time and place and as influenced by Augustine's work. He compares

³⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

Luther's theology to his dealing with scripture by questioning "which came first:" does scripture take the foundational role in the development of his doctrine, or is society the determining factor from which his scriptural exegesis is drawn. He finds that three themes in Augustine's work are carried on and expanded on by Luther and Calvin. First both Luther and Calvin preserve Augustine's theory of *Ordo* (order) in their respective dealings with marriage. Second, stemming from this notion of "a divinely established, hierarchical order of the universe" Luther and Calvin maintain Augustine's notion that woman was created as a servant for man, but they emphasize conjugal love to soften the teaching, so that woman is meant to serve man as man serves Jesus and the church.³⁷ Finally, both Luther and Calvin preserve Augustine's idea that sexual intercourse is sinful when it is not intended for procreation. Luther especially, preaches about God's willing grace as a way for the couple to be saved from that sin. While Calvin moves away from "the procreational and remedial aspects of marriage," concentrating on social order and preservation of creation in its God-intended state.³⁸

Parsons explores the medieval understanding and practice of marriage, with particular interest in Aquinas' work on the subject. Next focus shifts to how Luther's ideas on marriage fit into his "theological-ethical concept of vocation within his teaching of the two kingdoms of God's rule."³⁹ After a review of Luther's doctrine of "vocation within the concept of the two governments of God's rule,"⁴⁰ Parsons points out that having a good understanding of Luther's views on vocation as a "station" that directs

³⁷ Michael G. Parsons, *Reformation Marriage: The Husband and Wife Relationship in the Theology of Luther and Calvin* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2005), 52.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 337.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

one's life toward doing good for one's neighbour is key as it is the foundation for his view of the marriage relationship.

Parsons acknowledges that in Calvin's writing there are "few specific references to marriage and the husband-wife relationship in the *Institutes*, [whereas] his commentary material and particularly his sermons are peppered with reference and instruction on the subject."⁴¹ He identifies four underlying characteristics of Calvin's writing on marriage: his work is highly influenced by Augustine; societal order is a central focus of his ethical thought; he has a view of equality of the sexes, but his understanding of hierarchically ordered creation is more dominant; and that at times he "brings preconceived ideas to his exposition of scripture."⁴² His study concludes that both Calvin and Luther preach that humanity was created with the *Imago Dei* thus both sexes are equal in that respect, but the fact that the temporal world was corrupted by sin means that otherwise sinless acts – like God given sexual attraction– need to be restrained. As a result, societal order works to maintain decency in marriage, with each member's vocational duty and obligations clearly defined.

Modern/Post-Modern Theology and Timothy Keller

In researching the work and the circumstances that surrounded and led to the preaching and writing of Martin Luther and John Calvin, I found that many of the issues these men were faced with and found themselves fighting for and against, are the same controversies and crises that plague contemporary society. In *The Reformation: A History* Diarmaid MacCulloch describes how sixteenth century Protestants and Catholics began

⁴¹ Ibid., 3.

⁴² Ibid., 35.

to change society's attitude toward marriage, more specifically pre-marital intercourse and 'church weddings.'⁴³ Beforehand the laity considered church marriages to be optional, and that what really 'made' a marriage was the consent of the man and woman, which, once conferred, marked the beginning of the couple's physical relationship. This sounds to me very much like contemporary society in which, even though the church teaches that sexual relations outside of a marriage are sinful, the lay community, which may or may not adhere to a specific 'organized religion' considers marriage to be optional, and 'church marriage' is largely felt to be obsolete. Keller begins his book with a few of the current opinions that he has found in different surveys of the US population comparing information from the mid-to-late twentieth century to surveys from the early twenty-first century which support my observation:

[younger adults] believe their chances of having a good marriage are not great, and, even if a marriage is stable, there is in their view the horrifying prospect that it will become sexually boring.[...] that is why many aim for something in the middle between marriage and mere sexual encounters –cohabitation with a sexual partner. [...] Today more than half of all people live together before getting married. In 1960, virtually no one did.⁴⁴

Theologians concerned with the development and progress of marriage as an institution were given a forum to share their observations, opinions, and concerns in the fifty-fifth volume of *Concilium*. Included in this collection is an essay by Heinrich Baltensweiler entitled "Current Developments in the Theology of Marriage," in which he discusses the shift in focus of Protestant marriage theology, beginning in the 1940s, grounded in an understanding based on the gospel as opposed to laws and natural order.

⁴³ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 634-5.

⁴⁴ Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York:Dutton, 2011), 22.

After first cautioning against falling into the trap of imposing current views onto the biblical text, as well as mistakenly amalgamating all scriptural references to marriage into a ‘doctrine of marriage,’ he presents his examination of the New Testament literature to support his observation that the Protestant view of marriage has shifted. Baltensweiler uses evidence from Paul’s letters to Ephesus and Corinth to support what he identifies as the Protestant view of Christian marriage which, although it is very closely tied to the order of creation, is to be understood as a means of salvation for the couple because of Christ’s presence in it. All the while he emphasises that marriage is a transitory worldly vocation in which the spouses serve God by attending to each other’s needs. He also discusses the Protestant stance on divorce and remarriage, stating that he believes that Paul’s letters would be different had he not been anticipating the parousia. Thus his reading of 1 Corinthians 7 supports the understanding that marriage is indissoluble, yet that there are rare, but concrete, cases in which divorce is permitted; and in these cases remarriage too is permissible.

Timothy Lincoln offers a concise review of diverse approaches to marriage in Protestant thinking through time. In his article “Sacramental Marriage: A Possibility for Protestant Theology,” he argues that even from a Reformed perspective, Christian marriage, when viewed as what James F. White terms a “natural sacrament,”⁴⁵ demonstrates both sacramental and ecclesial dimensions. Lincoln examines the underlying theological foundations of popular Protestant views of marriage: Luther and Calvin’s firm rejection of qualifying marriage as sacrament; the Reformers’ categorising

⁴⁵ According to White, a natural sacrament is “a rite tied to significant life passages whose meaning has been transformed into sacraments for Christians.” Marriage and burial fall into this category; Timothy D. Lincoln, “Sacramental Marriage: A Possibility for Protestant Theology,” *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 49 (1995): 210.

it as a necessary element of God's creative action; and the modern understanding that allows for rich theological language to be employed and for conversation with Catholic theologians to take place. Then Lincoln incorporates an ecclesial view of sacramentality, based on Ephesians, which upholds key Reformation beliefs, to the typical Protestant understanding of marriage.

Jana Marguerite Bennett's book *Water is Thicker than Blood* is a modern Christian interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of salvation, and is a framework from which to model our present study. Bennett argues for a shift in focus from a theology of marriage to a theology of households focused on ecclesiology. She concludes that for Christians, baptism and the relationships forged with other baptised Christians are more powerful in regard to one's connection to the church, than family relations are.⁴⁶ She comes to this conclusion by studying different models of household, relating these to ecclesiology all the while working from a framework she finds in Augustine's hermeneutic: "the understanding of households cannot be intelligibly separated from the understanding of liturgical and sacramental practice in the church."⁴⁷

Bennett begins her examination of household codes by first delving into an exposé of Augustine's "absorption of the scriptural world;" she claims that his extensive writing on various states of life in respect of the church make him relevant to her cause.⁴⁸ She acknowledges that although Augustine does not make use of the term "household,"

⁴⁶ Jana Marguerite Bennett, *Water is Thicker than Blood: An Augustinian Theology of Marriage and Singleness* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

when he does consider the states of life he relates them to, what is considered in her view, to be household.

Bennett views both marriage and single life from the perspective of the economy of salvation. She finds that through this approach it becomes clear that both states are interconnected in her understanding of Christian life as the point of time in salvation history that is between Christ's death and second coming. She focuses on how Augustine's view of marriage is based on man's friendship with God as well as his understanding of redemption. She then points out that Augustine considered singleness – more specifically celibacy– to have been erroneously pitted against marriage as the 'preferred' way to achieve holiness and, by extension, to be saved. The final three chapters of Bennett's book are devoted to analysing Augustine's teaching that the Church is a household upon which Christian households should be modelled; how *the City of God* offers a view of the Church as a political entity that is the body of Christ oriented toward God; and what the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the Church and familial households entail, all in keeping with the underlying theme of Augustine's salvation theology.

Methodology

The literature in the field of marriage theology offers a broad library of voices and opinions from which to launch an inquiry into the evolution of that theology. In this study we focus on the effects of the divergence of the Protestant movement from the traditional Augustinian view to one that has scripture as its primary source. As is evidenced by the literary review above, Augustine's three goods of marriage form the foundation for

virtually every theory and theology of marriage that followed. It is also clear that when the Reformers splintered from the Catholic Church and began developing their own theology of marriage –no longer considered a sacrament– the Patristic view was gradually replaced by the scriptural image of marriage. For this reason this study will examine the effects of the competition between the Patristic influence of Augustine’s writing and the household code (*haustafeln*) embedded in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians as interpreted by Protestant theologians Calvin and Keller.

Concentrating on the three goods of marriage expounded by Augustine in his treatise, this study will serve as a measure by which to evaluate Calvin’s interpretation of the three goods in his commentaries and sermons on Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians. We will also be looking into Keller’s examination of Ephesians 5 with specific interest in how the three goods of marriage are manifested in his work.

We will begin with a brief but thorough survey of Augustine’s *On the Good of Marriage* to familiarise ourselves with what the three goods are and what role the letter to the Ephesians played in their development. Next we will examine John Calvin’s hermeneutic as it is applied to Paul’s epistle to the church in Ephesus, paying particular attention to how Augustine’s goods are manifested and dealt with in Calvin’s work. Finally, I will analyze Keller’s adaptation of Ephesians into contemporary culture, noting how the three goods are implicated in this process. My hypothesis is that although the three men addressed audiences in three very different times, the cultural issues surrounding marriage have not changed enough throughout the centuries to warrant a drastic, noticeable change in the core message of Calvin and Keller’s work. Precisely because both men are working from a Protestant perspective that has Augustine as its

roots, I expect that Keller may have an undertone of gender equality that will be lacking in Calvin's work, but which would align with Augustine's view as I understand it.

CHAPTER 1: AUGUSTINE (353-430)

*Augustine's Good of Marriage*¹

Augustine's treatise *On the Good of Marriage (De Bono Coniugali)* is cited as being the basis for Pope Pius XI's encyclical *On Christian Marriage (Casti Connubii)* issued in 1930 testifying the importance of Augustine's view to the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage.² Although it is not the first Christian authoritative document on, (or Augustinian, document on) the subject of marriage, *On the Good of Marriage* "is the first systematic theological discussion of marriage, and its influence on later Christian thought has been immense" according to David Hunter.³ *On the Good of Marriage* along with *On Holy Virginitate (De Santa Virginitate)* are Augustine's two-part response to a late-fourth-century debate between Jovinian a monk "who had extolled the goodness of marriage" and asceticism in regards to spirituality, and another monk by the name of Jerome who denigrated marriage in favour of virginity and aesthetic life; it is also his argument against the Manichaean attack on Christian teaching.⁴ With the objective of finding a middle-ground between Jovinian and Jerome, Augustine endeavoured to "concede the superiority of virginity but nonetheless upheld the goodness of marriage" in his explanation of the value and purpose of Christian marriage.⁵ Augustine builds his argument that marriage is good on the notion that begetting and educating children in the

¹ For Augustine, and this study, marriage is defined as the union of one man and one woman.

² Clark, *St. Augustine*, 1.

³ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 22.

⁴ Clark, *St. Augustine*, 42; and Charles T. Wilcox, trans. "Introduction" to "The Good of Marriage" in Saint Augustine, *Treatise on Marriage and Other Subjects*, in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, vol.27, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church Inc., 1955), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43; Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 22.

faith is the “primary good of marriage” because it leads to the bonding of human society as God intended when He created “all human beings from one.”⁶ Citing the marriage of Mary and Joseph, Augustine “pointed the way to an understanding of marriage that rested less on physical relationship and more on the acts of mind and will that brought a couple together.”⁷ This chapter will provide a map for the study of the three goods Augustine identifies in his treatise. First we will examine the circumstances that led to Augustine’s composition of the text; while taking into consideration his use and interpretation of scripture.

*Proles, Fides and Sacramentum*⁸

In the thirty-second section of *On the Good of Marriage* Augustine writes: “all these things which make marriage good –offspring, fidelity, sacrament– are goods.”⁹ Augustine uses these three benefits of marriage to build his case that marriage is not sinful. As John M. Rist puts it, for Augustine, “marriage is concerned more essentially with the intended birth of children than with their conception through sexual intercourse” because, the purpose of marriage in Augustine’s view is the propagation of children.¹⁰ Thus, the first benefit or purpose of marriage Augustine identifies is offspring (*Proles*). Augustine treats the topic of marriage as a means to salvation, but he states that the desire to have children is carnal and no longer valid for salvation. Since Christ’s coming the

⁶ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 22; and Wilcox, “Introduction,” 4; and David G. Hunter, “Bono Coniugali, De,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1999), 110.

⁷ Clark, *St. Augustine*, 7.

⁸ Three translations of Augustine’s work have been consulted for this study, when a direct quote is cited from either version the following annotation will accompany the traditional citation: The Fathers of the Church (FOTC), David Hunter (Hunter trans.) and Oxford Early Church Texts (OECT)

⁹ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, XXIV.32 (OECT 59).

¹⁰ John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 246.

need to propagate in order to fill the earth so that a holy people may arise to form spiritual friendships and grow closer to God, has been replaced by a need to prepare for the return of the Saviour. Nonetheless, he realizes that not all of God's people are capable of fighting their human urges and like Paul, he recommends marriage for those who desire to have children. Interestingly, the desire to have children is just part of the good of *Proles*, the couple is to raise their children in the ways of Christ, i.e. in the Church, as Christians. "So marriage is a good, and the spouses in it are the better as they fear God with greater chastity and fidelity, especially if they nurture also in the spirit the children which they desire in the flesh."¹¹

Fidelity (*Fides*) is the second good of marriage that Augustine identifies. Fidelity is the aspect of marriage that makes the marriage monogamous. In essence it is the vow between husband and wife to remain chaste within their marriage. They fulfill this vow by "pay[ing] the debt they owe to each other" and not having "intercourse with another contrary to the marriage compact."¹² As part of *Fides*, a husband and wife take on the responsibility of "ministering, so to say, to each other, to shoulder each other's weakness, enabling each other to avoid illicit sexual intercourse."¹³ That is, it is the duty of the husband and wife to prevent one another from giving into the temptation to fulfill sexual desires with a partner who is not one's spouse (adultery).

Sacramentum, usually translated as 'sacramental bond' is the uniquely Christian good of marriage; Augustine himself likens it to holy orders, while Rist compares it to the

¹¹ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, XIX.19 (OECT 44).

¹² Augustine, "The Good of Marriage" IV.4 (FOTC13; OECT 9).

¹³ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, VI.6 (OECT 15).

baptismal ‘character.’¹⁴ It is the good that makes marriage indissoluble; Reynolds identifies it as the starting point for tracing the history of marriage as sacrament. When recognized as sacrament, marriage cannot be ‘undone’ once it has been entered into; as long as both spouses are living, there will always be the sacred bond of marriage that is from God holding them together –even if they are incapable of having children together. Like Holy Orders or Baptism, once God’s grace has been received it cannot be un-received.¹⁵ Augustine argues that marriage between a man and a woman is meant to signify the indissoluble union between Christ and the church; therefore it too must be indissoluble.

Augustine identifies two secondary benefits of marriage in addition to the three primary goods or benefits mentioned above: “companionship between the sexes and the turning of concupiscence to the honorable task of procreation.”¹⁶ Augustine’s notion of a “natural companionship between the sexes” stems from his theory that God created humans to be social beings, interacting with one another in holy friendship. This friendship is only achieved through the community that results from the generation of offspring through marriage. Another good of marriage is its ability to turn the lust of concupiscence of the flesh into the honorable task of life giving conjugal debt. Marriage is the place where the sin of concupiscence is transformed into venial sin.

¹⁴ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage” VII.7, XV.17; Rist, *Augustine*, 246-7.

¹⁵ This becomes particularly interesting in this study as the Protestant faith does not recognize marriage as a sacrament; ergo the couple does not receive God’s grace at their wedding. The next chapters will deal with this issue.

¹⁶ Wilcox, “Introduction,” 5; Rist explains that for Augustine *concupiscentia* is a weakness for things that becomes sinful when we consent to it, 136.

Augustine's Hermeneutic style

One of the most important aspects of Augustine's thought about marriage is his use of scripture as the backbone of his viewpoint. Augustine's method of hermeneutics is laid out in his treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* which he wrote in two sittings, beginning his work in 396 and ending in 426.¹⁷ In this four book volume Augustine develops and elaborates his principles for exegesis based on his doctrine of sign; as well he puts forward a method for teaching scripture.

According to Augustine "there are two things in which all interpretation of scripture depends: the process of discovering what we need to learn, and the process of presenting what we have learnt."¹⁸ Augustine explains that the reader goes through seven stages when encountering scripture: fear of the Lord, holiness, knowledge, fortitude, the resolve of compassion, cleansing of the eye of the heart and wisdom.¹⁹ The first two steps refer to the reader's inner motivation for approaching the text, the third step 'knowledge' is relayed back to what Augustine identifies as the central 'knowledge' of the bible. i.e.: love, while the next three steps involve the readers social consciousness, creative receptivity and contemplation to the text. The ultimate result of this encounter with scripture is self-transcendence.

¹⁷ F. Van Fleteren, "Principles of Augustine's Hermeneutic: An Overview," *Augustine: Biblical Exegete, Collectanea Augustiniana*, eds. J. Schnaubelt and F. Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 12.

¹⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 13.

¹⁹ Pamela Bright, "Augustine and the Ethics of Reading the Bible," in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Montreal Colloquium in Honor of Charles Kannengiesser, 11-13 October 2006*, eds. Lorenzo DiTommaso & Lucian Turcescu (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 60-61.

In book one, as a prelude to his theory that all words are signs and that God uses signs and symbols to communicate with humans,²⁰ Augustine makes sure to clearly distinguish ‘things’ from ‘signs:’ he explains that ‘things’ can be divided into three categories, “some things which are to be enjoyed and some which are to be used, and some whose function is both to enjoy and use.”²¹ He specifies that “the things which are to be enjoyed, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” while scripture would be a ‘thing’ to be used “to build up love.”²² The first book focuses on how scripture can be used as a means for salvation rather than how to perform biblical exegesis.²³

Augustine’s background as a professor of rhetoric influences his method of exegesis; he uses its basic elements as the basis for building his method. Augustine’s method is also largely influenced by Ambrose under whom he studied in Milan. Like Ambrose, Augustine adopts the use of allegorical interpretation but only “when literal meaning does not suffice.”²⁴

Book two, along with the bulk of book three, are dedicated to developing Augustine’s doctrine of signs. In book two he concentrates on distinguishing between unknown literal and unknown figurative signs, while in book three his focus is on ambiguous signs. He articulates his opinion that a “thorough understanding of Hebrew and Greek” is necessary so that the exegete can “resolve any doubts that arise from

²⁰ Van Fleteren, “Principles of Augustine’s Hermeneutic,” 13.

²¹ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 15, 17.

²² Ibid.; Pamela Bright, “St. Augustine,” in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York University Press, 2006), 42.

²³ Ibid., 42.

²⁴ Van Fleteren, “Principles of Augustine’s Hermeneutic,” 14.

conflicting translations” of the pericope he is working with.²⁵ As well, he underlines the importance of recognizing and dealing with the “ambiguities of punctuation and construction.”²⁶ Recognizing that knowledge of language is only one aspect of exegesis, Augustine suggests that it is useful for an exegete engaged in biblical interpretation to develop a familiarity with the arts and sciences.²⁷ Book four, the final volume in the set, is dedicated to presentation.²⁸ This book deals with the pastoral aspect of Augustine’s scriptural theory. Augustine teaches the reader how to employ scripture as a tool for teaching people about truth. The majority of the last book is dedicated to discussing Cicero’s pairing of *officia* with *genera*.²⁹

Knowing that Augustine views scripture as the means by which “to make known God’s will, to reveal what God wants to reveal to humans,” this chapter will focus on his manipulation of scripture in his treatise on marriage.³⁰ Exploring the specific passages Augustine uses in his treatise, the way in which they are used as well as the reason certain passages are chosen to build his argument for the three goods of marriage – “fidelity/faithfulness” (*fides*), “offspring” (*proles*) and the “sacramental bond” (*sacramentum*)– will bring to light his understanding of the fundamental union between a man and woman. First we will examine the circumstances that led Augustine to write *On the Good of Marriage*.

²⁵ Thomas Williams, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 197.

²⁹ Adolf Primmer, “The Function of the *Genera Dicendi* in *De Doctrina Christiana* 4,” in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Culture*, eds. Duane W.H. Arnold and Pamela Bright (University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 68.

³⁰ Karlfried Froehlich, “‘Take up and Read’ Basics of Augustine’s Biblical Interpretation,” *Interpretation* 58 (2004): 10.

The Jovinian-Jerome debate

Debates about marriage took place in the church as far back as the time of the apostles Paul and Peter in their struggle to advance the movement that would become Christianity. Marriage is after all, an institution that predates the religion; as such it would need to be interpreted, if it were to be regarded as good for the Church. This notion of the adoption of civil marriage into the theology of the church is one of the factors that David G. Hunter's *Marriage in the Early Church* seeks to expose. The introduction to this collection of early-Christian literature on the topic of marriage offers an overview of "early Christian thought and practice on the subject of marriage."³¹ Beginning from New Testament texts, Hunter guides the reader through the historical factors that shaped the Church's traditions. After noting that Jesus' teaching on marriage and its indissolubility is strongly linked to his teaching of the imminent end of the world, Hunter points out that Christians from Paul onward tend to base their teaching on Jesus' two fundamental messages: marriage has been part of God's divine plan for humanity from creation, and once entered into, marriage cannot be dissolved.

Hunter points out that once the fear of the impending judgement day had subsided, Christians began to adapt to societal norms regarding marriage and family life. This is most evident in the epistles which include household codes that have been identified as adaptations of the Roman and Hellenistic cultures –Colossians, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy and Titus. Interestingly, Hunter remarks that the household code found in the epistle to the Ephesians differs from the others in that it is modeled on the relationship

³¹ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 1.

between Christ and the church rather than Greco-Roman society. Next Hunter summarizes the Greco-Roman treatment of marriage; he explains how it was a legal, yet private act. He also explains that marriage was a highly intentional act: a couple who lived together with the intention of being husband and wife were considered to be legally married; and that concubinage was widely practiced –he mentions Augustine’s own relationship with a concubine as a better known example of this practice.³² Next he discusses the influence of the moral and philosophical ideals of the Roman world in shaping Christian thought through the work of Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo, claiming that these men used philosophy to link Christian belief with Greco-Roman society. This leads Hunter into a discussion of how Tertullian was influenced by the Montanists; how the second century apologists presented Christian marriage as a monogamous union intended toward the propagation of society, in order to make it more compatible with the societal ideals; as well as how the third century saw a shift in Christian writers’ focus from marriage to asceticism. Constantine’s conversion and the subsequent legalization of Christianity in Roman law affected Christian thought and practice: marriage was threatened by the popularity of monasticism as well as the non-Christian ideals that new converts brought to the religion. This is the environment which fostered Jovinian’s teaching that through Christian baptism married men and women were equally sanctified as their celibate counterparts. This teaching was not well received by many Western Christians, especially Jerome and Ambrose who as leaders of the ascetic movement felt that Jovinian was proclaiming heresy. As a result “Jovinian and his followers were condemned by synod at Rome and Milan” but this did not deter other

³² Ibid., 6.

writers from spreading his views.³³ Augustine wrote *On the Good of Marriage* a decade after Jovinian's censure by the Bishops failed to stop his views from spreading in an attempt to counter these views as well as the Manichean teaching that was also gaining popularity.

Willemien Otten also offers an overview of the events that led to Augustine's composition of *On the Good of Marriage* in her examination of Augustine's treatises on marriage, virginity and the work of monks in order to understand his development of "a particular model of the church in which different modes of life [...] all have their specific place."³⁴ Otten recognizes the importance of acknowledging the effects of Augustine's past, which is available via his firsthand account *Confessions*, on his opinion of sin, sexuality, virginity, marriage and celibacy. She also takes into account the major works that preceded and may have influenced the church's and Augustine's opinions. Specifically she examines Gregory of Nyssa's treatise on virginity and John Cassian's *Conferences*, pointing out that many early-Christian writers were influenced by the viewpoint that virginity was the Christian alternative to the Roman institution of marriage. This practice is identified as a possible motivator to the –at times unintentional– slandering of marriage by early-Christian theologians. Otten explains that the Constantinian conversion brought with it a new contrast, between Christians who practiced asceticism and those who chose to be married, which threatened Christian unity. In response to the division of these two groups, and perhaps as a means to re-unite them, Jovinian claimed that Christians' identity could only be defined through baptism

³³ Ibid., 21.

³⁴ Otten, "Augustine on Marriage," 388.

and that asceticism only enhances one's public commitment to the baptismal vows rather than make one superior to married Christians. Many ascetics were offended and angered by Jovinian's views, motivating several to respond to the perceived attack of ascetics. One such monk, Jerome was so aggressive in his protection of asceticism and its proponents that "he completely demolished marriage in the process."³⁵ This is when Augustine, as the newly-ordained bishop of Hippo, intervened in this controversy that hit especially close to home for him –his own conversion to Christianity had been lengthened by struggles with celibacy. Nonetheless, he thought it possible to defend virginity while upholding the integrity of marriage.

David G. Hunter also addresses the controversy that aroused Augustine's attention in his book *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy*. Hunter's study puts Jovinian and his teaching into context for contemporary readers, learning about the controversy sixteen centuries after Jovinian wrote his treatise. Through the study of fourth century Christian aristocracy and asceticism, the development of the anti-heretical tradition, the development of Marian theology as well as the various opponents to Jovinian's work, Hunter concludes that Jovinian "was closer to early Christian 'orthodoxy' than his condemnation for 'heresy' would suggest. Not only did he have clear anti-heretical intentions, but he also shared many arguments and tactics with previous anti-heretical writers."³⁶

In the final chapter of the book "After Jovinian: Marriage and Celibacy in Western Theology," Hunter focuses on the effect Jovinian's views had on the Christian

³⁵ Ibid., 395.

³⁶ David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 285. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199279784.001.0001

discussion on marriage and celibacy, after his condemnation in 393 CE; arguing that the extreme views put forth by Jerome in his response to Jovinian impelled others to find a middle-ground between the poles of asceticism and marriage. Pammachius and Domnio are identified as two of the first opponents to Jerome's response to Jovinian; both men criticized Jerome's "excessive praise of virginity and depreciation of marriage" and had requested that he either explain his position or retract it.³⁷ Jerome did write apologetic letters to these men in an attempt to defend his rhetoric, inconsistencies and interpretations of questionable sources that could be construed as heresy. While clarifying his views, Jerome asserts that although he did not condemn marriage as his *Adversus Jovinianum* made it appear, he did value celibacy more highly than marriage. It is this negative view of marriage that prompts several treatises in the defense of marriage.

Hunter also reviews different Roman authors' attempts to defend marriage: the anonymous document *Consultationes Zacchaei et Apollonii*, Rufinus of Aquileia's *Apology Against Jerome*, and Pelagius's commentaries on the Pauline epistles as well as letters and treatise on virginity and asceticism in response to the "Origenist controversy." He notes that each author had his own personal connection to Jerome whose responses to his opponents often only resulted in recalling the awkwardness of his *Adversus Jovinianum* and that, at least in the case of Pelagius, these opinions divided the authors' own followers.³⁸ Finally Hunter examines Augustine's contribution to the Jovinian-Jerome debate, noting that like Pelagius before him, "Augustine attempted to strike a

³⁷ Ibid., 246.

³⁸ Hunter explains that on the one hand Julian attacked Augustine's theology of Original Sin in defense of Pelagius' promotion of the integrity of human nature, going so far as to state that *concupiscentia* is a requirement for a successful sexual union; while other Pelagian disciples argued that married life hindered one's ability to live in 'perfect discipleship' as described by Jesus.

balance between Jovinian's equation of marriage and celibacy and Jerome's denigration of marriage."³⁹

Prior to writing *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Holy Virginit*y Augustine dealt with the topics of marriage and celibacy in his treatises against Manichaeism especially *Contra Faustum*; and his first interaction with Jerome on the subject of marriage was in response to Jerome's interpretation of the epistle to the Galatians.⁴⁰ The arguments in these documents are presented by Hunter as precursors to the arguments developed in *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Holy Virginit*y. In his anti-Manichaean writing Augustine fought to defend the integrity of the saints of Hebrew Scripture in light of the New Testament texts. Specifically he argues that the Old Testament mothers' and fathers' sexual practices –which include polygamy– were carried out in obedience of God's command to 'be fruitful' thus they could not be considered to be sinful; he also suggests that "stories [in Hebrew Scripture] that appeared to be unedifying could be interpreted symbolically as prophecies of the coming of Christ and the Church."⁴¹ Augustine consistently defends the truth of the scriptures, warning that if any falsity was attributed to the text "anytime a person found the testimony of scripture to be difficult to understand or follow, he would recourse to 'this most destructive principle of interpretation'" –that the apostle did not mean what he wrote, thus undermining the authenticity of the text and the message.⁴² Another argument revisited by Augustine is initially found in *De Moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, where he attacks Manichaean ascetic rigour by noting that even

³⁹ Hunter, *The Jovinianist Controversy*, 277-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 272.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 273.

Paul in his first letter to Corinth suggests marriage to the Corinthians who wish to “avoid the ravages of fornication” but are too weak to remain celibate.⁴³

The Jovinian–Jerome debate attracted the attention of men from both sides of the argument, yet Augustine is careful to defend marriage against defamation while “upholding the superiority of celibacy.”⁴⁴ *On the Good of Marriage* was written in 401 CE, a decade after Jovinian was condemned in Rome. It has been touted as being the foundation for the Catholic Church’s teaching on marriage.⁴⁵ Otten states that like Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine begins his treatise on marriage with the creation narrative from Genesis. In his literal interpretation of the scripture, Augustine emphasises the point that “in paradise there had been a natural bond between the first man and the first woman;”⁴⁶ this is the bond of friendship which for Augustine is the “ultimate good” of marriage, it is “extended by parenthood.”⁴⁷ Otten highlights two characteristics of this friendship that are fundamental in Augustine’s thought: the bond is inherent and thus cannot be undermined by the sin of concupiscence and that the relationship between a man and a woman is hierarchical.⁴⁸

It is also important to note that for Augustine the begetting of children is the only good that comes from intercourse; this becomes a primary benefit of marriage as the innate goodness of marriage negates the evil of concupiscence of the flesh,⁴⁹ when it

⁴³ Ibid., 271.

⁴⁴ Hunter, “Bono Conjugali, De,” 110.

⁴⁵ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 22.

⁴⁶ Otten, “Augustine on Marriage,” 398.

⁴⁷ Reynolds, “Sources of the Catholic Doctrine,” 119.

⁴⁸ See note 28 in Otten, “Augustine on Marriage;” Otten explains that Augustine’s view that man rules over woman stems from his interpretation of creation order.

⁴⁹ Sometimes translated ‘lust’ or simply concupiscence.

produces children of God.⁵⁰ On the other hand, Augustine does indicate that contrary to the Old Testament patriarchs “the propagation of children no longer serves any necessary function in the history of salvation,” meaning that celibacy is better than marriage for the present time, “since it is better not to make use of something for which there is no longer a need.”⁵¹ He spends a significant portion of his treatise “defending the nature of marriage in the Old Testament.”⁵² Against the Manichees he explains that the polygamous patriarchs’ engagement in intercourse and procreation was out of religious obligation to “build up the people of God, not out of carnal desire;” however since Jesus’ death and resurrection changed the signification of marriage and the “desire for children in the present age is no longer spiritual but carnal [...] spiritual perfection is to be sought in celibacy, not in marriage.”⁵³

Augustine’s purpose for writing in response to Jerome and the Manicheans is to defend marriage as a good in itself, rather than as the lesser of two evils.⁵⁴ By extension he encourages virgins and married persons to have a relationship of “harmonious variation” between them, for as Otten observes, in Augustine’s mind “it is not true under all circumstances that virginity is better than marriage. [He warns ...] intercourse can be used for friendship, while abstinence can lead to misplaced pride.”⁵⁵ This is significant

⁵⁰ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage” III.3 (FOTC 13)

⁵¹ Hunter, *The Jovinianist Controversy*, 279.

⁵² Hunter, “Bono Conjugali, De,” 110.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 23.

⁵⁵ Otten, “Augustine on Marriage,” 405.

when one realizes that for Augustine “the propagation of the human race in which friendly association is a great good” only comes through marriage and intercourse.⁵⁶

On the Good of Marriage

Augustine’s perception of scripture shapes his understanding of the fundamental union between a man and a woman through marriage. By studying the way scripture is used to support his argument in *On the Good of Marriage*, one gains insight into Augustine’s appreciation of the role of marriage in Christian life. Augustine uses or refers to scripture seventy-six times throughout the thirty-five sections of *On the Good of Marriage*. Of those seventy-six references seventeen are from the Old Testament. Of the fifty-nine references from the New Testament, twenty-one are from chapter seven of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians –the apostle’s response to the questions of the Corinthian church in which he develops his view on marriage– while the epistle to the Ephesians is only cited once. Scholars recognize that for the most part, the scriptural passages used by Augustine in *On the Good of Marriage* are the same “ones that Jerome and Jovinian had used in their respective arguments,” lending credence to the argument that Augustine intended to point out and correct their misinterpretation with his treatises.⁵⁷

Augustine begins *On the Good of Marriage* by referring to the creation story from the book of Genesis to build his case that humans are social beings who were created to live a social reality attuned with God’s intentions. He claims that the union of a man and

⁵⁶ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” IX.9 (FOTC 22).

⁵⁷ Clark, *St. Augustine*, 43.

woman is “the first natural tie of human society,” and that this tie is stronger than any other because woman was made from man.⁵⁸ In section two Augustine quotes Genesis in his discussion of offspring, intercourse and original sin. First he hypothesises what the world would have been like if there had been no sin, thus no need to engage in intercourse to bring about children. He suggests three possibilities: that procreation would occur through non-physical coition; interpreting Genesis in a “mystical and figurative way” such that ‘increase and multiply’ refers not to physical, rather to intellectual development and “abundance of virtue,” as seen in Psalms 137 and 138 in which the Psalter talks about an increase in mind and virtue, not physical fecundity, thus eliminating the need for procreation; or that humans were made spiritual and animal achieving immortality through obedience;⁵⁹ and humans may have had children through intercourse but since there would not have been death without sin they would only have had enough children so that God’s promise of a multitude of blessings would be reached.⁶⁰ Here he turns to the book of Wisdom in his explanation that death is the product of Adam and Eve’s original sin, and came about “through the envy of the devil” (Wis. 2:24). He then cites Deuteronomy 29:5 to explain that if humans were created without the intention of death, God would not have allowed the bodies of the faithful humans to decay before the time of “the multiplication that was promised,” much like the clothes of the faithful Israelites were kept in their original state for the forty years they spent in the desert.

⁵⁸ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” I.1 (FOTC 9).

⁵⁹ This is the transformation which will be undergone at the end of time when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead; the living bodies will transform into celestial beings in order to enter into heaven as described in 1 Thess. 4:17.

⁶⁰ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” in *Marriage in the Early Church*, ed. David G. Hunter (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), II.2 herein cited as (Hunter trans. 103).

Next Augustine begins his examination into “why the good of marriage is good.”⁶¹ He uses Jesus’ words against divorce in Matthew’s gospel and His attendance of the wedding in Cana in the gospel of John in support of his argument that the Lord endorses the union between man and woman, making it good. Building on his premise that the fundamental union between husband and wife is a natural bond in friendship, Augustine explains that through this bond intercourse sought for progeny nullifies the sin of concupiscence. By extension he advises that abstaining willingly from intercourse will strengthen the bond between spouses.

Augustine relies on Paul to help explain what he identifies as one of the goods of marriage, that as husband and wife, man and woman owe *fides* –mutual fidelity– to each other; to violate this fidelity is to commit adultery.⁶² Augustine states that Paul recognizes this debt of *fides* and its importance to the marital relationship so much that he refers to it as a power in his first letter to Corinth. Augustine goes so far to say that it is more important to remain faithful to one’s spouse than to stay in good health because he sees fidelity as the means for keeping the soul pure. Approaching fidelity from the perspective of adultery, Augustine acknowledges that adultery breaks the fidelity between the married couple, and explains that a cheating spouse who is faithful to the new partner is less “wicked” (from a fidelity standpoint) than a cheating spouse who also cheats on the new partner. However he asserts that it is always best for the couple when the cheating spouse returns to the abandoned marriage; this is due to his understanding of marriage as indissoluble which he develops later in his treatise.

⁶¹ Ibid., III.3 (104).

⁶² Ibid., IV.4 (105).

Next Augustine addresses the Roman practices of concubinage and marriage by intention. He is aware that in Roman law as long as a couple lives together with the intention of being married they are considered to be legally married, but he places some limitations or criteria for these types of ‘marriages.’⁶³ He asserts that only when the couple has agreed to live as though they were married until the death of one of the partners, and that they do not intentionally impede the begetting of children, could this living arrangement be considered a (legal) marriage. However in the case of a concubine who has been abandoned for the pursuit of a legitimate marriage, he admits that even if the concubine remains unmarried to try to avoid the label of adulteress, she does fit the description. He also considers whether the sin of concupiscence is less severe for a concubine who enters into the relationship for the purpose of begetting children, than for a wife who “make[s] use of a husband for purposes of lust” or husbands who “do not spare their wives even when pregnant,” ultimately resolving that marriage redeems the wife.⁶⁴ Augustine points out that although Paul does concede intercourse that is not intended to lead to procreation, he intends for it to be a preventative measure against adultery and fornication for the Corinthians. However, Augustine is careful to emphasize the point that this kind of intercourse is forgivable *because* the couple is married, but marriage does not grant the couple carte-blanc.⁶⁵ He reiterates this idea by again quoting 1 Corinthians 7:4, explaining that the “power” Paul writes about, owed by each spouse to the other is “a sort of mutual service for the sustaining of each other’s

⁶³ Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 6.

⁶⁴ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” V.5 (FOTC 16).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, VI.6 (FOTC 16).

weakness, so that they may avoid illicit intercourse.”⁶⁶ This is also where Augustine reiterates his point that marriage is good but chastity is better, repeating his message that concupiscence outside of marriage leads to adultery and fornication which are mortal sins, but through the indissoluble bond of fidelity in marriage “it finds a means of chaste procreation.”⁶⁷ Reinforcing his position that the dilemma always involves two goods, he informs us that abstinence from all intercourse is better than even the ‘sinless’ intercourse that is engaged in for the intention of procreation –i.e. marital intercourse.

Augustine builds on Jesus’ teaching against divorce found in Matthew’s gospel as a foundation for what he calls *sacramentum*. Following the logic that divorcing one’s wife “makes her commit adultery,” Augustine concludes that the marriage vows cannot be nullified, even through separation. Of course, Jesus does state in Matthew 19 that divorce is permissible in the event of fornication –sometimes translated marital unfaithfulness or unchastity– and Augustine agrees that adultery “must be punished;” however he warns against acting selfishly, as one’s actions affect one’s spouse. To this Augustine describes two situations, one in which the ‘conjugal debt’ is sought from a spouse in an unlawful manner and one in which a spouse that is left behind commits adultery if he or she re-marries, but the cause of this sin is the spouse who left.⁶⁸

Augustine then points out a conundrum encountered in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians with regard to re-marriage. Whereas Paul recommends that a wife remain unmarried after leaving an adulterous husband, there is nothing in scripture about a man’s rights to remarriage after leaving an adulterous wife. Augustine concludes that although

⁶⁶ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” VI. 6 (Hunter trans., 107).

⁶⁷ Ibid., V.5 (107); Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” VI.6 (FOTC 17).

⁶⁸ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” VII.6 (Hunter trans., 108).

the bond of marriage is “created for the purpose of procreation” it cannot be dissolved for the same purpose. Moreover, although many lives could be created if divorced people were allowed to remarry, the fact that divine law prohibits remarriage attests to the strength of the conjugal bond imposed by a force greater than man; support for this claim that the law comes from “the city of our God” is found in the Psalms.⁶⁹

Augustine expands on the issue of divorce, referring to both Hebrew and Christian scripture. He mentions Moses allowing divorce for the Israelites in Deuteronomy 24 and Jesus’ explanation for that allowance –their hardness of heart– in Matthew 19. He feels that the divine rule has been bent in order for it to better conform to pagan law, insisting that if his understanding of scripture is correct Jesus rebuked divorce.

Augustine cites Hebrews 13 in his discussion of marriage and adultery in relation to sinfulness. In his opinion marriage is honourable in itself and he cautions against the tendency to compare marriage to fornication or adultery or other less honourable deeds, citing Ephesians 5:12 to emphasize that such comparisons would be endless. Rather he invites the reader to consider a comparison between two goods –marriage and continence; health and immortality; knowledge and love– of which the better of the two goods is chosen, precisely because it is the better good. Again Augustine turns to Paul’s letter to the Corinthians for support of his argument writing that “‘knowledge will be destroyed’ the apostle says, and yet it is needed in this life; but ‘love will never fail.’”⁷⁰ In addition, he uses an example of this choice between two goods from Luke 10 to deter the reader

⁶⁹ Ibid., VII.7 (Hunter trans., 109).

⁷⁰ Ibid., VIII.8 (Hunter trans., 110).

from making a decision based on what is being given up rather than what will be gained. He explains that because humans should aspire to be like angelic beings that do not need to engage in physical intercourse, continence is the better choice over marriage. In the same vein, Augustine explains that a married person-of-faith is less sinful than a chaste non-faithful because he or she is faithful; however remaining chaste because of their faith is the better option for a faithful person. In Augustine's line of thought the person-of-faith who marries does so only to gain pardon for concupiscence or because of the carnal desire to beget children however this is no longer necessary in order to achieve the promises of the kingdom of God, so refraining from marriage, and remaining chaste is the best way to avoid sin.

Augustine builds on his theory of things and signs to support his notion that marriage is good because it is one of the things that are used to achieve friendship which is, as he repeats throughout his treatise, the ultimate good for humanity. He expands this thought explaining that even though marriage is necessary to propagate the human race, there is no longer a need to 'fill the earth' since the saviour has already come; instead the need is for chastity and purity in preparation for the return of Christ.

Plunging more deeply into Paul's thought and criteria for living righteously based on his first correspondence with Timothy and the Church in Corinth, Augustine points out that Paul discloses the three characteristics required to make a virtuous decision for the Kingdom of God: "a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). Augustine sees the final verses of 1 Corinthians 7 as the explanation of what it means "to be as I [Paul] am" (1 Cor. 7:7) and comes to the conclusion that marriage was meant for people who have difficulty repressing their corporal desires. Augustine's view is that

Paul realises that unmarried men and women are able to concentrate more fully on “the Lord’s affairs” than married men and women; but there is a caveat to Paul’s teaching. Paul acknowledges that it is not easy to abstain and remain holy, so he offers marriage as a means for being holy. Augustine realizes that misinterpreting this passage could lead one to believe that Paul concedes the right to marriage to the Corinthians. Thus Augustine feels the need to defend the “sinlessness of marriage.”⁷¹ He does this by explaining that it is good to marry and to be married, and that what is offered as concession to the Corinthians is the fornication that may occur without intention of conception, which is forgiven through the marriage of a righteous couple. He expands his notion that “the crown of marriage is the chastity of procreation and the faithfulness in rendering the carnal debt” by cautioning against the ‘unnatural’ activities that are “more abominable” when they occur in marriage than with a prostitute.⁷²

Focusing on Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 7 to elaborate his goods of marriage, Augustine explains that Paul teaches that marriage is good when spouses are chaste and respectful of each other, which is very important since marriage does not change the fact that the body “is the temple of the holy spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). Nor does marriage make one less capable of serving the Lord while serving the spouse, as may be concluded by misinterpreting Paul’s message that people who are married –especially women– are less inclined to spend as much time and effort in serving God than people who are not married. Rather, when a husband and wife are faithful and serve each other they are also serving the Lord to such an extent that the faith of one spouse carries the other non-

⁷¹ The notion that there is no sin in marriage and that marriage is not a sin. (see Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” X.11).

⁷² By unnatural Augustine means any intercourse that cannot result in pregnancy; Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XI.12 (FOTC 25).

faithful in the relationship making him or her holy, thus faith has precedence to marriage. He also cautions against generalizing to all married or unmarried women, pointing out that not all unmarried women focus on pleasing God, neither do all married women focus on pleasing her husband. However he does acknowledge that some married couples do live according to scripture and orient themselves toward the Lord, even if they initially entered into marriage for the same reason as other couples; through marriage and with each other's help, the couple is able to transform into a couple whose life is oriented toward what pleases God.

Turning his attention to male Christians of his day, Augustine reiterates his notion that marriage is indissoluble stating that: men who married to avoid the sin of concupiscence, but no longer have the desire for it cannot dissolve their marriages; however they can and should live chastely with their wives, “rendering the carnal debt” when required.⁷³ He also affirms that those who are not married and choose to remain so out of devotion to scripture do well, because he feels that is what Abraham would have done had he been given the option. Thus, according to Augustine, since the multiple marriages of the Old Testament patriarchs were entered into piously, with the desire to remain faithful to scriptural instructions to ‘fill the earth’ they would, if they lived in Augustine’s time, choose to “contain themselves more easily for their whole life from all intercourse than to hold to the norm of not uniting except for offspring.”⁷⁴

Returning to the question of concubinage Augustine reaffirms that even if the man and concubine only engage in intercourse for the purpose of producing children, this does

⁷³ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XIII.15 (FOTC 28).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

not justify the concubinage, and that marriage is the only place for such intercourse.⁷⁵

Next he explains that if a couple who are in an illicit relationship later decide to enter into marriage because they want to have children together, theirs is a marriage in the church and cannot be dissolved if they are unable to produce children. Nor is it acceptable to take on another partner to attempt to have children, even though the patriarchs were allowed to take on several wives to have children; in Augustine's time this is adultery and against the law. In fact in Augustine's thought it is more pious for men and women of his era to remain unmarried, than to marry in order to have children; as in the time of the Apostles it was better to sustain life to be able to spread the good news about Jesus Christ and care for others than it was, as Paul writes to the Philippians, "to desire to be with Christ;" while for Abraham and his contemporaries it was better to take on as many wives as could be supported for the purpose of having as many offspring as possible to fill the earth.⁷⁶

Building on the underlying thread that it is better to use things for their intended use than to use them unlawfully, and that using unlawful things in lawful ways or to produce lawful outcomes makes up for the illicitness of the thing, Augustine turns his attention to the issue of raising children –which is one aspect of *proles*. According to Augustine it is much better to marry in order to have children than "to seek progeny from an unlawful union."⁷⁷ However he does recognize that not all children are born of lawful marriages, and counsels that as long as the child "observes due worship of God, they will

⁷⁵ Augustine, "The Good of Marriage," XIV.16 (FOTC 30).

⁷⁶ Ibid, XV.17 (FOTC 31); Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, XV.17 (OECT 35).

⁷⁷ Ibid., XVI.18 (FOTC 32).

gain both honor and salvation.”⁷⁸ He uses this opportunity to recapitulate his comparison to the Old Testament patriarchs, explaining that just as an illegitimate child’s devotion to God does not legitimize his parents’ union, and a legitimate child’s reluctance to follow God does not negate the good in marriage, the laws under which the patriarchs lived forcing them into marriage counteracted any carnal pleasure they experienced in intercourse.⁷⁹

Augustine returns to 1 Corinthians 7:9 (“*if they cannot control themselves, they should marry*”) this time to weigh in on the issue of procreation. He warns his readers not to compare marriages that were entered into because of this lack of self-control with the marriages of ancient times. He argues that just because these couples have done good to marry so that their actions are forgivable, this should not have been their reason for entering into the marriage covenant. Since, as he sees it, “marriage was instituted for this purpose, so that children might be born properly and decently,” couples should enter into marriage primarily because they desire to have children together.⁸⁰

Augustine cites the laws of nature as applied to hierarchical relationships to reinforce his theory that the Patriarchs were able to have more than one wife because as the ‘dominant partner’ it is natural for the man to have multiple subjects, but each subject can only have one master. He also connects this to the Christian notion that one God rules over all the souls of the earth.⁸¹ Continuing his discussion on polygamy Augustine turns to Paul’s letters to Titus and Timothy as the authority behind the sacramental bond –

⁷⁸ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, XVI.18(OECT 36).

⁷⁹ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XVI.18 (FOTC 33).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, XVII.19 (FOTC 33).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, XVII.20 (FOTC 34).

sacramentum— of marriage as being between one man and one woman, repeating the message that marriage is not a sin found in 1 Corinthians 7. This union of one man and one woman is meant to reflect the union between Jesus and the church, a unity that “will be perfected in the future” as is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:5. This union is compromised when a man takes more than one wife. However, because it is a symbol of the heavenly city of God it cannot be weak, therefore men can only have one wife with whom the bond is unbreakable and more important than fecundity.⁸²

Augustine explains that the mothers and fathers of the Hebrew Scriptures did all that they did because the Lord commanded it, citing the episode in Genesis 22 when Abraham is ordered to sacrifice Isaac but an angel stops him before he goes through with it, in support of his argument. Therefore these men and women could not be compared to married men and women of Augustine’s time. He then ponders whether continent men could be compared to the Patriarchs, but concludes that even though continence is preferable to marriage, the marriages of the Patriarchs are preferable to the marriages of his contemporaries and therefore are incomparable to celibacy; especially because the Patriarchs “were seeking from their marriage children for the sake of Christ.”⁸³

To further support his argument that marriage is sinless, Augustine points out that in the book of Numbers the faithful are called to purify themselves before entering into prayer after having engaged in intercourse, just as they are required to purify themselves after burying the dead. He tries to get the reader to see that in the same way as it is not a sin to bury a dead body, it is not a sin for a husband and wife to engage in marital

⁸² Ibid., XVIII.21 (FOTC 35).

⁸³ Ibid., XIX.22 (FOTC 37).

intercourse, even though the law requires purification after either act. Augustine then returns to his quest for a worthy comparison to the patriarchs. Reaffirming that the married men of his time cannot compare to Abraham in piety, he looks to the continent men of his time for a suitable comparison.

This quest leads Augustine to a discussion of virtue in which he calls to mind Job 1:8 and 1 Timothy 5:3 to show how not all gifts and virtues are apparent, and that for the sake of the health of the body these virtues can be countered without being violated. Continence is one of these virtues that every person possesses and is free to exercise or not. Marriage, as Paul and Matthew's gospel both explain, is an area in life in which not honouring the virtue of continence is not a negative thing. The anguish experienced trying to practice abstinence, which Augustine admits is easier for some than others, is a normal part of life, as Paul writes to the Philippians. He then repeats his lesson that although it is good to use things for the purpose they were intended and only sporadically in the way that was not intended, but is not sinful; it is better to only use the thing in the way that is intended but it is best to not need to use it at all.⁸⁴

To support his argument that virtue can be possessed "in habit even if not practiced" Augustine cites the comparison of Jesus and John the Baptist found in Matthew 11.⁸⁵ He explains that in the eyes of their contemporaries Jesus lacked continence while John the Baptist was virtuous; this gospel passage clearly represents how it is possible that the seeming lack of virtue can indeed be virtuous.

⁸⁴ Augustine, "The Good of Marriage," XXI.25 (FOTC 40-41).

⁸⁵ Ibid., XXI.26 (FOTC 41).

Augustine tries to answer questions that he feels might be asked of a Christian in the fourth and fifth century “who practices continence and rejects marriage.”⁸⁶ After explaining that Abraham was not able to exhibit his continence because the law forbade it, Augustine points out that as Paul tells the Galatians that “the fullness of time came” (Gal. 4:4) allowing future generations to freely practice continence, and that Jesus himself encourages this exercise in Matthew’s gospel telling his followers “let him accept it who can” (Matt. 19:12). Augustine acknowledges that a Christian may enter into marriage because he is obliged to do so but can remain chaste in marriage, again using the example of Abraham who was obliged by the law to marry and have children, and dutifully obeyed, but did so chastely. He reminds his readers that those people who Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “who try to corrupt good morals by evil conversation” will question the purity of continence, and will attempt to compare them to the patriarchs. However because the law no longer obliges that the faithful enter into marriage and produce offspring, Augustine’s contemporaries can live a chaste life and remain single. Consequentially these chaste singles are ‘better’ than their married peers.

Building on his message that for comparison to be valid two goods should be compared, Augustine compares marital chastity to virginal chastity. He comes to the conclusion that virginal chastity is better than martial because it is the ‘practice’ of the continence that all Christians have in ‘habit.’ By extension men who exhibit this continence to the fullest are better than those who will not put it into practice if they are not presented with the opportunity to do so. Then Augustine cautions that judging one’s peers on specific qualities is misleading since the person may lack the quality being

⁸⁶ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, XXII.27 (OECT 51).

judged but abounds in a quality of greater merit. He uses the example of obedience stating that it is better to abound in obedience and lack in continence than to abound in continence but lack in obedience, to emphasise his opinion that “it is better to have everything that is good in a lesser degree than to have a great good with great evil.”⁸⁷ He then concedes that obedience to God’s Commandments is the greatest of all virtues, but it is not a necessity for virginity, thus a married person who is obedient to the Commandments is better than a virgin who is sinful and disobedient.⁸⁸

Augustine then explains that the continent Christians of his time cannot be compared to the patriarchs because, even though they choose to live “free from all intercourse” they are “inferior in the virtue of obedience” of the Commandments; and that even if the Patriarchs could have remained celibate, they would have done so while obeying God’s laws.⁸⁹ Augustine refers to Revelation 14:4 to reiterate this point, explaining that marriage is needed in order for intercourse that is not for the purpose of procreation to be pardoned, because it is with this pardon that the patriarchs fulfill the call to “have not defiled themselves with women” while remaining obedient to God. However the young men and women Augustine refers to who are being compared with the patriarchs “have not defiled themselves with women” by remaining virgins, but are not obedient to God’s laws.⁹⁰

It is in section thirty-two of his treatise that Augustine explicitly names his three goods of marriage: *proles*/offspring, *fides*/fidelity (or faithfulness), and

⁸⁷ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XXIII.29 (FOTC 45).

⁸⁸ Ibid., XXIII.30 (OECT 55).

⁸⁹ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XXIII.31 (FOTC 47).

⁹⁰ Ibid. (OECT 58).

sacramentum/sacrament. He supports his argument that marriage “exists for the sake of generation” by citing Paul in 1 Timothy 5:14 and then 1 Corinthians 7:4, 10-11 as support for fidelity in marriage. He sets *sacramentum* apart from *proles* and *fides*, stating that only in Christian marriages is the good of marriage “also in the sanctity of the sacrament.”⁹¹ Likening *sacramentum* to Holy Orders he explains that this benefit of Christian marriage renders it indissoluble. Augustine also reminds us that although “these are all goods on account of which marriage is good: offspring, fidelity and sacrament” it is still “better and indeed holier” for a Christian to remain celibate and have only Christ as “authority over one’s body” and to desire obedience for thinking about “how to be pleasing to God.”⁹²

At this point Augustine addresses the fact that he has been writing in part as a response to heretical claims against Christianity. He identifies three reasons why the Patriarchs cannot be accused of being incontinent: they did not sin against nature, against the customs or against the Commandments. He explains that because they married and had children they obeyed the laws of nature and the commandments; and because their customs allowed polygamy they took multiple wives. Augustine then warns 4th- and 5th-century Christians who judge the patriarchs in respect to their own weaknesses, fail to understand the great “strength of the soul” that enabled the patriarchs to obey the law.⁹³ It is this strength that separates the patriarchs from Augustine’s married contemporaries who “have chosen marriage because of incontinence or they make use of their wives

⁹¹ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XXIV.32 (FOTC 48).

⁹² “Ibid.; 1 Cor. 7:4; 1 Cor. 7:32.

⁹³ 2 Cor. 10:12; Augustine, “The Good of Marriage” XXVI.34 (FOTC 50).

immoderately.”⁹⁴ Addressing the widows and widowers who have chosen to remain celibate, Augustine explains that their continence is preferable to the marriages of their peers, however the marriages of the patriarchs are not comparable to their continence and will always rank higher than their commitment to celibacy.⁹⁵

In the final section of his treatise Augustine addresses the young men and maidens. He repeats his position that the “young men and virgins dedicating their virginity to God [...] are not better than [the married patriarchs and married women of the Old Testament], because if they were married they would not be equal.”⁹⁶ However, he does acknowledge that if their actions are suitable for their vows of chastity, the virgins surpass the married people of their time, in “what pertains to the integrity of the flesh.”⁹⁷ For this reason they can be content in knowing that they are certain to obtain the reward Jesus talks about, because they have remained chaste for the sake of Christ.⁹⁸

Augustine, Scripture and Marriage

Augustine uses scripture in *On the Good of Marriage* as an source for his own thought. He weaves passages from the sacred texts into his argument with ease, demonstrating his great command of the Word. Otten recognizes that “a deep scriptural foundation underlies many of his arguments. Scripture colours Augustine’s theology and ecclesiology, as pieces of disciplinary writing become veritable tapestries of exegetical

⁹⁴ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage,” XXVI.34 (FOTC 50).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Augustine, “The Good of Marriage” XXVI.35 (FOTC 51).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ In Matt. 8.11 Jesus tells the crowd that the faithful will be rewarded by feasting with the Patriarchs in the Kingdom of heaven.

skill.”⁹⁹ Anne Marie La Bonnardière points out that Augustine’s command of the Pauline epistles was due to the fact that “they were the part of liturgical life for which [he] was responsible during the thirty-five years of his episcopate.”¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, Augustine only mentions Paul’s letter to the Ephesians once in his treatise on marriage. Interestingly, he does not mention the household code of Ephesians 5. Rather he cites verse 12 to emphasize his early point that in order for something to be truly judged as being good – marriage– it must be compared with another good –virginity or chastity–, because there will always be something more sinful to compare it to.

Augustine has a thorough understanding of the book of Genesis; he wrote two exegetical expositions on the book: “Commentary on Genesis, Against the Manichees” just before he was ordained a priest; and “Literal Commentary on Genesis” late in the fourth century; he even dedicated Book 12 of *Confessions* to the first chapter of Genesis.¹⁰¹ He incorporates passages from scripture as the seed for his thought and guides his reader through the development with great command and ease. His conversational approach to writing allows the reader to follow his argument with interest in what is being expressed.

As is evident in the brief examination above, Augustine’s thought stems from the notion of society and “natural companionship” that he reads into the Genesis creation narrative. It is upheld by Paul’s and Jesus’ teaching in the New Testament as well as the tradition in the Old Testament. Augustine’s appreciation of marriage is apparent in the

⁹⁹ Otten, “Augustine on Marriage,” 397.

¹⁰⁰ Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, “Augustine Minister of the Word of God,” in *Augustine and the Bible*, ed. Pamela Bright (University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 250.

¹⁰¹ Williams, “Biblical Interpretation,” 59.

way he discusses and develops the goods of marriage. He skilfully and cautiously tackles his opponents' views and manages to uphold both the sinlessness of marriage and the virtue in chastity and abstinence. Marriage, in Augustine's mind, is a fundamental institution which leads to the growth of society and fosters self-transcendence.

CHAPTER 2: JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

Born in France at the beginning of the sixteenth century, John Calvin is best known for his role in the Reformation movement in Geneva as well as for writing what he regarded as being “a kind of theological key for Christian ministers,” *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*—known in English as *The Institutes*.¹

Although Calvin relies on Augustine as a conversation partner and mentor, he does not follow in his footsteps by writing a treatise about marriage. Instead, Calvin did write a section in *The Institutes* on the (non-)sacramentality of marriage. Furthermore he wrote commentaries and sermons based on those passages in scripture which deal with the topic of marriage and the relationship between husband and wife. This chapter will focus on Calvin’s commentaries and sermons on Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians in order to deduce Calvin’s stance on marriage. First we will briefly put Calvin into context by summarizing his hermeneutic style before analysing his commentaries and five of his sermons on Ephesians to gain insight into his thoughts on marriage.

Calvin in Context

John Calvin was educated in two fields, having begun his studies with the intention of joining the priesthood which he abandoned to pursue a career in law, before finally finding his niche in classical scholarship. Shortly after his father’s death in 1531, Calvin became attracted to and influenced by the Evangelical movement in France which ultimately resulted in his conversion to it. In the preface to his *Commentary on the*

¹ Paul Helm, *Calvin: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark: 2008), 5.

Psalms he states that he feels that his purpose for writing is to promote and defend “true religion” by preaching the gospel. Calvin did not consider himself a theologian, and he even came to despise the term; rather as Paul Helm observes, Calvin is “a Christian person who devoted his talents to the service of God.”² Two other observations that can be drawn from the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* are that Calvin felt that God’s direction led him to the path of the reformation, and that through his conversion he realized that he was meant to promote Protestantism as he had come to see it: as the “nurse and guardian of ‘true goodness.’”³

Thomas Torrance calls John Calvin the “father both of modern theology and of modern biblical exposition,” citing the *Institutes* as well as his commentaries as the foundational work for biblical and dogmatic theology and systematic interpretation of scripture, respectively.⁴ Torrance explains that Calvin’s disciplined method of biblical and theological studies allows for an easy relation of one to the other, as well as a combination of “biblical exposition and constructive thinking in such a way that he created the norm of a positive theology resting upon its own foundations in the Word of God.”⁵

B. A. Gerrish asserts that in order to understand Calvin’s stance on a specific topic we must try to understand how this topic fits into the whole of his understanding of Christianity; for this reason, and because the *Institutes* were intended by Calvin to be a companion to his commentaries as well as a manual for instruction in Christian religion,

² Helm, *Calvin: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*

we will briefly look into his *Institutes* in order to understand how his notion of Christianity affects his interpretation of marriage.⁶

First published in 1536 when the French Protestants were being persecuted, the *Institutes* — believed to have been modelled after Martin Luther’s catechisms — served the dual purpose of catechism and apology for the Reformation.⁷ Calvin revised the original version of the *Institutes* in 1539, 1543, 1545, 1550, 1553 and 1554 before publishing the final version in 1559. The 1536 version remained true to the structure of Luther’s catechism, the main differences being Calvin’s treatment of the two evangelical sacraments together, the addition of a chapter on the “five spurious ‘Roman’ sacraments,” and a final chapter dealing with “Christian freedom in relation to ecclesiastical power and the civil government.”⁸ The 1539 version was intended to help theology students navigate the key topics in the Bible, while the final 1559 version which is composed of eighty chapters in four books whose sequence roughly corresponds to the order of the Apostle’s Creed, is an exposition of how knowing God as creator and redeemer affects one’s understanding of self.⁹ The editions published between 1539 and 1559 are considered by scholars such as Jean-Daniel Benoît as revisions of the preceding editions, with only slight modifications and additions to the 1539 version.¹⁰ According to Benoît, the final 1559 edition is considered by many scholars to be the culmination of Calvin’s life-work.

⁶ T. H. L. Parker, “Calvin the Biblical Expositor,” in *John Calvin*, ed. G. E. Duffield (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans publishing, 1966), 182.

⁷ B. A. Gerrish, “John Calvin,” in *Key Thinkers in Christianity*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyper (Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁰ Jean-Daniel Benoît, “The History and Development of the *Institutio*: How Calvin Worked,” in *John Calvin*, ed. G.E. Duffield (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans publishing, 1966); Benoît explains that each new edition published reflects a new development in Calvin’s thoughts through the addition of quotes and hypothetical retorts and objections to his original work.

The Institutes, which Calvin intended to be an instructional manuscript, “a book destined to teach the Christian religion,” became one of the most influential and shaping works of Protestant theology.¹¹ Herman Shelderhuis states that recent interest in and studies of Calvin’s sermons and commentaries indicate that in *The Institutes* Calvin deals with the same themes he treats in his exegetical work, but to a degree which is not permitted by the limited scope of the commentaries.¹² Shelderhuis also points out that the common concept of knowledge of God and self present in other Reformers’ work is central to Calvin’s development of doctrine. Of interest here is the content of the 1539 version of *The Institutes* which focuses on Biblical themes and the 1559 version which is considered to be a more inclusive theological text book. While the contents of the 1539 edition seems to be based on the structure of Paul’s letter to the Romans, the 1559 version is divided into four themed chapters including knowledge of God as creator and trinity, Christology, the Holy Spirit and Church.¹³

Calvin’s understanding of Christian life is laid out in 1559 version of *The Institutes*. Günther H. Haas describes four central features to Calvin’s view. First Christians are to participate in Christ’s death by acknowledging that they belong to God, so by extension every Christian’s action is carried out with the purpose of advancing the glory of God. As participators in Christ’s death Christians also “bear the Cross” by “following and sharing in [Christ’s] suffering.”¹⁴ Haas explains that, according to Calvin, any suffering or hardship endured by a Christian helps him or her to live in devotion to

¹¹ Ibid, 103; Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: the Basics* 3rd ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2012).

¹² Herman J. Selderhuis, “The Institutes,” trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres, in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Cambridge: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).

¹³ Ibid., 204.

¹⁴ Günther H. Haas, “Ethics and Church Discipline,” in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Cambridge: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 334.

God's will, especially when these hardships are "in defense of scripture and in the cause of righteousness."¹⁵ The third feature of Christian life in Calvin's view is characterized by meditating on life after death. Calvin asserts that by placing their hope in Christ, believers will not only enjoy "the benefits of God's generosity" but will be aided in dealing with the troubles and afflictions of the sinful world.¹⁶ The last feature is the consumption of God's gifts which are essential for living. Haas explains that this feature is closely related to the Christian "calling of lordship and dominion over the rest of creation" which was awarded to humanity in the Genesis creation narrative.¹⁷ Calvin feels that using and enjoying God's gifts of creation should be regulated. Thus he offers several guidelines: they should be acknowledged as gifts from God the creator; they should be used in moderation, accepting them in whichever way God sees fit to offer them; as stewards of these gifts, as of all creation their use should be accounted to God. Finally, God's calling for the Christian delineates their use of these non-essential gifts.¹⁸ These four features of Christian life serve the purpose of bringing the Christian closer to God by participating in the body of Christ, the Church. For Calvin, one's union with fellow members of the church is a reflection of one's connection to Christ.¹⁹

Calvin's Hermeneutic Style

As stated above, due to the lack of a detailed treatise on marriage in Calvin's repertoire, this chapter will examine those portions of Calvin's scriptural commentaries and sermons that deal with marriage. Before we do this however, it will be beneficial to

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 335.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 341.

outline a few of the main characteristics of Calvin's hermeneutic style, as we examine the contents of the commentaries.

According to Calvin, scripture is the Word of God whose authority is derived from its author the Holy Spirit. Its function is to direct the reader to the Truth of God, and to persuade him or her of this truth.²⁰ As Helm points out, Calvin "undoubtedly thinks of scripture as a divine revelation, an unveiling of God's salvific purposes for the race and God's remedial revelation."²¹ Thus when one reads and interprets scripture not only does the authority of God's Word become apparent, but the Holy Spirit as divine author of scripture helps the reader to understand the scope of the truth that is necessary for salvation.²² George Stoup finds that Calvin reads scripture without regard for its historical authenticity. Rather Calvin is concerned with the literal meaning of the text, and while reading these texts "figurally" Calvin sometimes "make[s] the text say more than it does," by elaborating on the characters' thoughts and emotions.²³ Peter Opitz lays out Calvin's understanding of scripture in three major divisions based on what he finds in Calvin's *Institutes*. Scripture is the source of knowledge of God the creator, God the Redeemer and of Christ.²⁴ Both Stoup and Opitz explain that Calvin stresses the connection between the Old and New Testaments because as he understands it, the covenant God made with the Israelites in the Old Testament is renewed and re-established through Christ in the New Testament. Consequently, the two testaments must

²⁰ Torrance, *Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 67.

²¹ Helm, *Calvin: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 30.

²² Torrance, *Hermeneutics of John Calvin*; Helm, *Calvin: A Guide for the Perplexed*.

²³ George W. Stoup, "Narrative in Calvin's Hermeneutic," in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 168.

²⁴ Peter Opitz, "Scripture," trans. Rebecca A. Giselsbrecht, in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Hermann J. Selderhuis (Cambridge: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).

be taken together as one since the Old Testament points to Christ and the New Testament unveils how Christ fulfills the Old Testament prophecies.

Torrance explains that as a result of his studies in law, Calvin's approach to interpretation is modeled on Cicero's indications for interpreting law documents. Calvin approaches the task of interpreting scripture cautiously, with the purpose of uncovering the author's intentions, without letting his own intentions or ideas get in the way.²⁵ Where the meaning of specific words or phrases is ambiguous, Calvin will "set opposing views side by side for the reader's judgement."²⁶ Torrance also points out that Calvin was influenced by Humanist scholarship that was gaining popularity at the time. R. Ward Holder also acknowledges the Humanistic influence on Calvin's writing and identifies three indicators of Calvin's Humanistic disposition: his insistence on use of original language texts for textual criticisms; his emphasis on context and the historical basis of the text; and his emphasis on rhetoric.²⁷

In his article "Calvin as Commentator on the Pauline Epistles," Holder offers a brief history of the publication of Calvin's commentaries on the Pauline epistles. Holder examines how historical circumstances affect Calvin, namely what, if any, effect writing *The Institutes* has on his commentaries. In doing so he considers the sources used in the development of the commentaries. He explains that the dates of many of the commentaries are derived by cross-referencing the dates of publication with the dates of Calvin's lectures.²⁸ He outlines the instances in Calvin's prefaces to *The Institutes* which highlight his intention for it to be a hermeneutical guide and companion to his

²⁵ Torrance, *Hermeneutics of John Calvin*, 111.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁷ R. Ward Holder, "Calvin as Commentator on the Pauline Epistles," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 239.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

commentaries. He also notes that Calvin's confidence in offering advice in the commentaries is a reflection of his confidence as a pastor which increased with time.

Finally Holder examines the contents of the commentaries with particular attention to what they can teach us about Calvin. He argues that Calvin's hermeneutic is based on an Augustinian understanding of Christianity, but his exegetical method is more humanistic and influenced by Chrysostom.²⁹ He identifies Calvin's strong grounding in the original language of the text at hand, as well as Calvin's notion that first century Christians and sixteenth century Christians have more in common than not. He also underlines Calvin's dependence on accommodation as a key characteristic of Calvin's hermeneutic.³⁰

Calvin's hermeneutic is tied to his definition of faith as God's revelation of himself to humanity. Scripture is the means God uses to make himself known and Christians — at least in Calvin's day — come into contact with scripture through preaching. Thus, Calvin feels that it is the work of the preacher to bring the community together in faith through clear explanation of the Word.³¹

Calvin's Sermon style/method of preaching

Teachers & Pastors

It will be beneficial at this point in this study to look at Calvin's directives for preachers of the reformation movement before examining Calvin's own sermons. Wim

²⁹ Ibid., 250.

³⁰ Ibid., 247-249.

³¹ Dawn DeVries, "Calvin's Preaching," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Moehn points out that Calvin was not supportive of having his sermons published because he felt that the message he preached was specific to the Genevan church, and therefore was not appropriate for other communities. Yet, many of his sermons were published without his approval or revision, and were indeed used by other communities in worship services.³²

The role of the preacher is an important one for Calvin, so much so that towards the end of his own ministry when he was too weak to walk, he asked to be carried to the pulpit in a chair in order to preach. He expected all ministers in Geneva and the Reformation movement to treat their preaching ministry with the respect and importance he felt it required. Exegesis is one facet of preaching. Calvin expected ministers to be able to apply the exegetical method outlined in the *Institutes* to the everyday life of the congregation. He also expected his ministers to lead by example: “It is the task of the preacher to set a good example by his conduct before he speaks, and that he shows that he presents the Word of God with a clear conscience.”³³ Calvin expects the congregation to treat the minister of the word as God’s mouthpiece whose words are God’s words spoken.

Randall Zachman describes Calvin’s hermeneutic style, informing the reader that Calvin was not only “concerned with the authority of scripture [...] but also with the true interpretation of scripture and its proper use in the church.”³⁴ Along with the belief that scripture is divinely inspired, Calvin stresses the importance of bringing scripture into the

³² Wim Moehn, “Sermons,” trans. Gerrit W. Sheeres in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 173; DeVeries, “Calvin’s Preaching,” 176.

³³ DeVeries, “Calvin’s Preaching,” 178.

³⁴ Randall C. Zachman, “John Calvin” in *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 115.

hands of the people. His belief that the teaching found in scripture is adapted to the abilities of the audience propels his efforts to teach the people of Geneva through his own sermons and commentaries.³⁵ Zachman goes on to explain how Calvin understands that there are two types of interpreters in the church who, working as God's translators for the 'unlearned' have the 'job' of teaching and guiding God's people via their interpretation of scripture: pastors and teachers. The teacher trains the pastor to read scripture with the purpose of understanding the author's true meaning through linguistic cues in order to be able to draw doctrine from it and then teach said doctrine to the people. The pastors are responsible for preaching entire books of scripture, a few verses at a time, teaching the congregation how to apply the meaning of scripture to everyday life. Pastors also are charged with teaching of piety drawn from scripture through catechism. Both these activities should "teach the pious what they are to seek in their own reading of scripture."³⁶

Elsewhere Zachman demonstrates a three-step teaching style he has identified in Calvin's sermons on Ephesians, which Calvin used to teach the Genevans how scripture should be applied to everyday life.³⁷ According to Zachman, Calvin begins his sermons by determining the author's meaning and intention in his writing – Calvin felt that each word was used with a specific purpose and the reader should be aware of this fact. Second, Calvin emphasises the importance of the reader keeping both the words and their meaning and intent close to her heart. Finally Calvin instructs the congregation how to

³⁵ Ibid., 117.

³⁶ Ibid., 122.

³⁷ Randall C. Zachman, "Expounding Scripture and Applying it to Our Use: Calvin's Sermons on Ephesians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003). Accessed October 19, 2011, doi: 10.1017/s0036930603211169.

put the doctrines in Paul's writing to practice in their daily activities. He is aware that the congregation is made up of converts from the Roman church who have friends and family who may not have converted with them. Therefore he preaches with the intention of helping them keep "from being led astray by the folly of the papists."³⁸

Calvin stresses the importance of recognising and interpreting the minds of two authors for each passage of scripture: the human author and the Holy Spirit who inspired the human author. Calvin also emphasises the importance of acknowledging the historical and linguistic context in which scripture was written when reading and studying it. He feels that since God's teaching is accommodated to the intellectual ability of its audience, understanding 'what' scripture says is just as important as understanding 'why' and 'how' it is being stated to 'who.' For this reason, and because the Church fathers recommend it, teachers and pastors must be skilled in both biblical languages Hebrew and Greek, as well as the language of the church, Latin.³⁹ Calvin cautions against interpreting all of the events in Israel's history exclusively as spiritual indicators of Christ. He warns that these events happened for several specific reasons, which are not reducible to revealing the coming of the Messiah. He also suggests that the relationship God has with Israel should not be contrasted with the one God has with the Church. He feels that God's covenant with Israel is the same one made with the Church through Christ. The Law in Hebrew scripture is a symbol of a hidden reality that is exposed in the

³⁸ Ibid., 502.

³⁹ Zachman, "John Calvin," 120.

Gospel.⁴⁰ Calvin's own sermons illustrate how he expects other preachers to adhere to these guidelines.

Calvin's Commentaries

Originally published in 1548 as part of what is referred to by Calvin scholars as the 'Galatians group' of commentaries, Calvin's Commentaries on the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, is the author's fourth published commentary in his series on the Pauline epistles.⁴¹ This section will examine the contents of Calvin's commentaries of verses eighteen to thirty-three of chapter five of the epistle to Ephesians wherein Paul sets out a household code of conduct for husbands and wives.⁴²

Calvin begins his treatment of Paul's household code in verse eighteen by explaining that he interprets Paul's instruction to the Ephesians to "not be drunk" as prohibition of drinking any amount of alcohol because drinking, Calvin observes, quickly leads to demonstrating a lack of modesty and shame which results in lax self-restraint. He tells the reader that Paul's message to the Ephesians is that the joy one receives from drinking pales in comparison to the holy joy that comes from following Christ's way through the spirit. This is the joy that naturally leads to the behaviour Paul writes about in verse nineteen, "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns" (Eph. 5:19). Calvin understands Paul's instruction to the Ephesians to "get drunk on the spirit" and speak to each other from the heart using psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. This outlook

⁴⁰ Ibid., 127.

⁴¹ T.H.L. Parker, "Calvin the Biblical Expositor," in *John Calvin*, ed. G.E. Duffield (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1966); the 'Galatians Group' consist of the sermons on Paul's letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

⁴² These verses will also be the focus of the next section of this study in which Calvin's sermons are examined.

contrasts with those who speak without meaning or who believe what they say about petty and unchaste subjects. Paul then reminds the Ephesians that they should always be happy when giving thanks because of the “innumerable benefits” this brings.⁴³

Next Calvin explains that even though God made humanity with a “built-in” bond that evokes mutual servitude when grounded in love, Paul recognizes that submitting to others is not a natural behaviour, so he ascribes it to the fear of Christ. Calvin points out that only Christ has the power to help humans overcome their pride to unashamedly serve one another; this is why Paul tells the Ephesians to “subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph. 5:21). Calvin also includes a brief note regarding the translation of the verse, pointing out a discrepancy among manuscripts.

Calvin then explains that Paul narrows his instructions for submission by societal group or class which is determined by individual calling. Each of these classes has specific obligations which are more binding than the general ones that bind all of humanity.⁴⁴ Paul begins by outlining the obligations involved in the bond between husband and wife. Calvin first lays out the reasoning behind Paul’s instruction to wives to be “in subjection to your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Calvin posits that the order in Christian marriages has been determined by Christ who wishes to convey the importance of the bond between husband and wife by making it analogous to His relationship with the Church. This analogy, according to Calvin, asserts two claims about Christian marriage: “God has set the husband over the wife; and an image of this

⁴³ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. T.H.L. Parker, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: WM.B Eerdmans, 1965), Eph. 5:20; herein cited as Comm. Eph. 5:vv.

⁴⁴ Comm. Eph. 5:22.

headship is found in Christ, who is the Head of the Church, as the husband is of the wife,”⁴⁵ a notion grounded in Eph. 5:23 (“*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is also the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body*”). Calvin once again focuses on a discrepancy in translation that may cause reticence for some.

Specifically, here Calvin is concerned with the proper attribution of the pronoun ‘He’ to Christ rather than to the husband, in the second half of the verse. Calvin explains that ‘He’ must refer to Christ because the church is saved through Christ’s headship and that Paul uses this fact to rationalize that wives should submit to their husbands because this is the best, most useful thing for the wife to do: “nothing is more useful or good to the wife than to be subject to her husband. To refuse that subjection, in which they can be saved, is to choose destruction.”⁴⁶ Similarly his comment on verse twenty-four (“*Moreover, as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in every thing*”) also revolves around Paul’s choice of words, in this case the conjunction ἄλλα (alla), which he translates “moreover” to indicate that although husbands are not equal to Christ, they do have authority over their wife.

Calvin points out that in the next verse, which is directed at husbands, Paul instructs men that they are required to love their wife. However he cautions that they are not to love their wife in an ‘ordinary’ way, rather they are to use Christ as their model for loving. He explains that since Christ has honored the men by letting them represent Him while bearing His image, they should also imitate Him when fulfilling their duty as head to the wife. Paul points to Christ’s death on the cross as the gauge by which husbands should measure their imitation of His love; noting that Christ gave up his life for the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Comm. Eph. 5:23.

church in order to “separate it to himself”—Calvin’s understanding of “sanctify.” Calvin explains that Paul also includes a physical attribute of Christ’s sanctification: cleansing.⁴⁷ At this point Calvin engages the reader in a mini-catechism on the significance of the celebration of the sacrament of baptism, to which he feels Paul alludes when he talks about cleansing. Undoubtedly, it seems as though Calvin feels it is important for the reader to truly grasp the subject. After expounding the significance of the water during baptism, Calvin points out that Paul purposely adds “in the word” at the end of his statement about the cleansing waters of baptism to reiterate Christ’s role in validating the sacraments, through scripture.⁴⁸ Calvin interprets the next verse as Paul’s explanation of why the church, and by extension the wife, needs to be washed: “so that we may live holy and blameless to God.”⁴⁹ He says that this washing into holiness and innocence of the church is an ongoing work which culminates in Christ’s “present[ing] it to himself.”⁵⁰

Calvin then explains how Paul’s argument for the love between a husband and wife is based on his notion that the love of self is intrinsic to humanity. Calvin outlines how Paul’s argument reinforces the church’s standpoint that husband and wife become one when they are joined in marriage. He argues that if this is the case, a husband must love his wife because she —by virtue of marriage— is part of himself, which he by his very nature is inclined to love. Calvin quotes the prophet Isaiah (58:7) to emphasize that Paul’s argument for love of one’s wife by virtue of nature is applicable to humanity as a whole. However, he argues, that because of their marriage husband and wife are more

⁴⁷ Comm. Eph. 5:26.

⁴⁸ Eph. 5:26; Comm. Eph. 5:27.

⁴⁹ Comm. Eph. 5:27, original text uses unblameable in its translation.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

deeply connected to one another than they are to any fellow human. He also points out that their marriage is made holy when it is modelled on Christ's with His church.

Commenting on Paul's appeal to the most authoritative example of marriage he has at his disposal to demonstrate the unique and significant bond between Christian spouses—the marriage of Christ and His Church— Calvin writes “this is a remarkable passage on the mystical communication which we have with Christ.”⁵¹ He explains that although Paul likens the love between Christian spouses to that between Christ and His church, he is in fact making a stronger statement about how the magnitude of the love Christ has for His church unites Christians to Jesus.

Calvin goes on to explain the significance behind Paul's use of the creation narrative in Genesis 2.⁵² Once again Calvin relies on the original Greek text in order to emphasise the meaning of Paul's choice to quote Moses, which he interprets as Paul's deliberate connection of marriage to the Eucharist. He makes the case that this verse likens the one-body-ness of Adam and Eve (husband and wife) to the one-body-ness that occurs when the gift of the body of Christ is received at Eucharist. He also sees this excerpt as Paul reinforcing the strength of the bond between husband and wife; explaining that Paul's original audience immediately would have recognized that by placing the husband-wife relationship above the inviolable father-son relationship Moses and Paul emphasize the holiness of the husband-wife bond.⁵³

⁵¹ Comm. Eph. 5:29.

⁵² Here Calvin is referring to Paul's quotation of Gen. 2:24 “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they two shall become one flesh” in Eph. 5:31.

⁵³ Comm. Eph. 5:31.

Calvin informs the reader that Paul's lessons about Christ are well adapted to fit the context of the subject at hand, in this case marriage. He supports this claim by pointing to Paul's tendency to make a general statement on the subject, then immediately follow it with a congruent statement about Christ. According to Calvin, Paul's message about marriage hinges on the fact that husband and wife are made of the same substance, which explains the reference back to the creation narrative. With this as his starting point Calvin takes us through Paul's line of thought: woman was created out of man and marriage brings the two back together as one person; by extension Christ became man so that he can be joined in one body with his people the church.

Again Calvin gets caught-up in another translation debate. He argues against the Roman Catholics who, according to him, misinterpret Paul's use of 'mystery' in verse thirty-two ("*This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church*"). He claims that this misinterpretation, based on the Latin translation in the Vulgate and "their ignorance of the Greek language," causes the Papists, as he calls them, to falsely include marriage as a sacrament.⁵⁴ He states that they are mistaken in their recognition of marriage as sacrament because it "has not been appointed as a solemn symbol of the grace of God, to declare and represent to us something spiritual."⁵⁵ Rather Calvin feels that Paul intentionally stresses that the mystery to which he is referring is the bond between Christ and the church.

Finally, Paul ends chapter five with a brief summary of what he expects from the husbands and wives of Ephesus. Calvin underlines Paul's emphasis on reverence, stating

⁵⁴ Comm. Eph. 5:32.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

that when Paul instructs the wives to fear their husbands he is actually calling on them to revere them so as to willingly subject to their husband, as they do God. In summary Calvin's commentaries offer one vantage point for understanding his view of Christian marriage. We see that Calvin is interested in expounding the root meaning of the text; nevertheless he presents it in the framework of an underlying hierarchical societal structure as well as Christ's saving work.

Calvin's Sermons

Calvin's biographers report that Calvin preached more than two thousand sermons from the pulpits of three churches in Geneva between September 1541 and February 1564.⁵⁶ Of these two thousand sermons, forty-eight deal with Ephesians, of which ten correspond to the fifth chapter (sermons thirty-two to forty-two). In this section we will examine the five sermons (sermons thirty-eight through forty-two) which cover verses eighteen through thirty-three of the fifth chapter of the epistle. Calvin's biographers attest that he did not write out his sermons and lessons before he delivered them, rather he had a team of secretaries who recorded his words as he preached.⁵⁷ Therefore the date and place that each sermon was preached has been estimated based on other publications as well as what is known of his teaching schedule. The publisher's note which prefaces the 1973 publication of the sermons on Ephesians informs the reader that Calvin preached this series on Sundays between May 1st, 1558 and March 1559, from the pulpit of the

⁵⁶ Moehn, "Sermons," 173; DeVeries, "Calvin's Preaching," 106.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Cathedral church of Saint Peter's in Geneva.⁵⁸ Below each sermon will be summarized and examined individually.

In sermon thirty-eight which takes into account Ephesians 5:18-21⁵⁹ Calvin explains that Paul uses gluttony and drunkenness as examples of what happens when people become slaves to bodily desires and ignore what God wants for them. He reminds the congregation that nourishing one's soul is just as, if not more, important as nourishing one's body, and the best nutrition comes from feeding upon the spiritual gifts that God supplies. Moreover, since everything that is important for salvation is provided by God in abundance, each person should gorge themselves on God's gifts in order to be unaffected by the temptation of non-Godly 'foods.'

Calvin also explains that Paul tells the Ephesians that instead of gossiping about their neighbours they should be "talking to one another in songs and hymns;" that is, spreading the word of God instead of gossiping.⁶⁰ He tells his listeners that their words should always be of praise for God and that their actions are meant to bring their friends and neighbours closer to God, so that they too may praise God with their words and actions. Thus it is one's duty as a Christian not only to praise and worship God, but to be a model of how to praise and worship God appropriately for others.

⁵⁸ Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians*. Trans. Arthur Golding, eds. Leslie Rawlinson and Sidney S. Houghton (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987).

⁵⁹ Eph 5:18-21 reads "And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is looseness, but be filled with the Spirit. Talking among yourselves in psalms, praises and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, Giving thanks always to our God and Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Being subject one to another in the fear of God." This and all subsequent passages from the epistle are from Arthur Golding's translation of Calvin's sermons.

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 552.

Next Calvin clarifies that when Paul tells the Ephesians to thank God, it should be for the ‘good gifts’ as well as those perceived as bad or undesirable, because everything God offers is meant to lead to salvation even if the receiver does not see how or why. He reminds the congregation that it is important to thank God through Jesus because it is through Jesus that one comes to find faith in God. Furthermore, it is only with this faith that God can truly be praised. He stresses that God gives man everything needed for salvation. Therefore the least and only thing, humans can do is to profess indebtedness to God.

Calvin develops his understanding of mutual subjection, expressed in verse twenty-one, in the context of his understanding of the previous verses; that is, Christians are subject to one another in the sense that each is called to be models of faith, praise and worship for each other. He explains that every member of a relationship has a responsibility toward at least one other person to whom he or she is in relation. Thus, one’s actions and decisions affect those people in the relationship, be they the subordinate or dependant member. Calvin uses the examples of politicians and monarchy to illustrate this point. He explains that as elected officials, politicians have some power over the citizens who vote them into office, but they are also servants to these citizens given that their actions and decisions affect the citizens’ lives. This also relates to his previous point that Christians are charged with the duty of being models for one another. He explains that part of being a servant of God includes being submissive and serving those above us in rank, stating that “we cannot live together without mutual assistance [...] all mutual

assistance means servitude. Therefore we must be of service by necessity.”⁶¹ For Calvin, all Christians are equally subject to God—regardless of social standing or gender.

However, because he asserts a social order based on a hierarchical relationship especially between man and woman, he is clear to establish that submission is mutual in all cases.

In sermon thirty-nine Calvin discusses Ephesians 5:22-26.⁶² After reviewing what was mentioned in the previous sermon, Calvin outlines his understanding of mutual subjection between husband and wife. Stating that when a man and woman are bound by God in marriage they become one body, the wife is offered to the husband as a help, but the husband is also under obligation to his wife “for she is his companion both to live and die with him.”⁶³

Calvin goes on to explain that in view of the fact that Christians are all subject to God, and that God wants Christians to be subject to one another, husbands and wives should be subject to one another as a duty to God, even if they may have ‘valid reasons’ not to. Calvin points out that the problem in any marriage arises when the couple stops putting God above all else, and turns away from religion. He supports this observation by explaining that marriage is a holy covenant authored by God, recognized by the church as being divine; it is a union that cannot be invalidated by humans. Therefore, when the husband and wife do not dutifully submit to each other’s needs, as Paul indicates they should, the couple acts in offense to God who, as the father of the Christian family, has

⁶¹ Ibid., 561.

⁶² Eph. 5:22-26 reads: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to our Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, and likewise he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be subject to their husbands in all things: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. To sanctify it, cleansing it in the washing of water through the Word.”

⁶³ Calvin, *Sermon on Ephesians*, 565.

united them to work together as one unit. Calvin tells his listeners that in these short verses Paul tells husbands and wives that remaining faithful to God will help them be faithful to their spouse, because when one lives according to God's will, everything one does—including serving one's spouse—is done out of duty to God the father.

Calvin calls to mind the Genesis creation narrative in his explanation of Paul's notion of the subjection of a wife to her husband as two-fold. He says that Paul reasons that women have to be obedient to their husband, the man from whom they originate (metaphorically speaking) and who, by extension, is their head, because woman was made from man. This is also the reason a man has to care for his wife—she is a part of him. The second element of subjection in Paul's view is that woman's subjection to man is a result of Eve's betrayal of God in Eden; seeing as all Christian women are descendants of Eve, they all bear her sin as well as her punishment for having committed it. Calvin is quick to point out that men too are subject to the repercussions of the 'original sin,' stating that the world would be more like paradise, with husbands and wives living in harmony, had "Eve and Adam continued in the righteousness that God had given them."⁶⁴

Calvin goes on to explain that Paul is not equating men to God, "therefore let us note that St. Paul has not used this similitude to join husbands [...] in equal rank with Jesus Christ[...]," instead he is emphasising the connection between serving God and serving one's husband.⁶⁵ He explains that man must remain faithful to Christ, who ranks above him, in order to be a good husband. In the same way a wife is to remain faithful to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 568.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Christ, who is head of the church, as well as to her husband who is her head. He tells women that God wants them to “keep themselves holy and modest” by submitting themselves to their husband’s authority.⁶⁶ Calvin tells the congregation that husbands are subject to their wives, yet not in the same way as wives are subject to their husband’s authority. Husbands must accept the responsibilities that accompany the “honor of superiority” over wife and children, remembering that “he must have discretion in himself to guide his wife and his household” using “kindness and mildness.”⁶⁷

Calvin tells his listeners that in order for the marriage to work, even before spouses submit to one another, God the author of marriage, who “holds people’s hearts in his hands and bows them as he pleases,” must be invoked.⁶⁸ He counsels that if husbands and wives live the way God desires, with the husband dealing equitably with his wife, she will more willingly submit to his authority, and the house will be more peaceful.⁶⁹ Calvin uses this opportunity to address two issues that affect his congregation. First he speaks to the husbands, telling them that the superiority that God allows each to have over his wife is meant to lead to positive outcomes, especially a peaceful and orderly society. It is not meant as permission for the husband to be cruel and physically dominating over his wife. Next he advises the women in the congregation to pray over their decision to marry, and once married to “give attention to the things that God shows and teaches them by his Word.”⁷⁰ He then describes how a wife and husband who do not “invoke God” and refuse to submit to one another might think and act, explaining that their relationship suffers

⁶⁶ Ibid., 569.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 569-70.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 570.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

greatly when they are too stubborn to ask God for help being obedient and humble. He tells his listeners of Paul's insistence that it is in the best interest of the spiritual health of the church for husband and wife to remember that their union is the physical embodiment of the union between Christ and the Church; this obliges them to submit one to the other as they would to Christ.⁷¹

Calvin reasons that if Christians know and acknowledge Jesus as God and that He "lowered himself" to take on human form for them, then the lack of fear of God in Christian men and women leaves them either too filled with pride, or lacking the intelligence to grasp the meaning of Christ's actions on their own life.⁷² He tells the wives in the congregation that God, knowing what is best for woman, expects them to submit to their husband. He admits that women, as a result of their human nature, may not understand God's reason for wanting this, causing them to contest their husband's authority over them, but he suggests they consider "who will be found wiser in the end, God or women?"⁷³ He then tells the husbands that they are to be subject to their wife as she is to be subject to him because as husbands they hold the role of head of the family. As such they have a significant role in maintaining the friendship that is at the root of their relationship with their wife. Calvin explains that Christians are children of God before they are husband or wife, so they should always act in accordance with the will of God. When they do, they bring their less-than-ideal-Christian spouse to God, while submitting to each other.

⁷¹ Ibid., 571.

⁷² Ibid., 573.

⁷³ Ibid., 572.

Calvin tells the congregation that Paul teaches the Ephesians that the best way to overcome issues between husband and wife is to recall Christ's sacrifice of self for the sanctification of the church. He tells the husbands that they will never live up to Christ's sacrifice, but they should fulfill their duties to the best of their ability, treating one's wife as a part of his own body. He ends his sermon by telling the congregation that only in light of Jesus' sacrifice can husband and wife live out their calling the way God intends.⁷⁴

Calvin begins his sermon on Ephesians 5:25-27⁷⁵ by presenting an overview of what the three verses entail. He then enters into a discussion of what Paul means when he writes "to sanctify her [the church]" in verse twenty-five. He explains that Paul alludes to the sacrament of Baptism here because sinful humanity needs baptism to be cleansed of sin, and because the sacraments —baptism and Eucharist— are the means by which Christians come to understand the importance of Christ's death.⁷⁶

Continuing his discussion of Baptism, Calvin explains that through Christ's passion and death the water of baptism gains the ability to wash away sins. He tells his listeners that they should not be afraid of presenting their troubles to God because Jesus' death cleansed them of sin and through the Holy Spirit God offers all his goods for enjoyment and possession. He then moves into a discourse of how the Eucharist must also be viewed in light of the passion of Christ because it too serves as a channel through which the Holy Spirit works to help them recognize Christ as their Saviour. Calvin goes

⁷⁴ Ibid., 576.

⁷⁵ Ephesians 5:25-27 reads: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved and gave himself for it, To sanctify it, cleansing it by the washing of water through the Word, To make it for himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or anything else, but that it might be holy and unblameable."

⁷⁶ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 578.

on to explain how Jesus' sacrifice is made accessible to humanity through the Holy Spirit. He then describes the works of the Holy Spirit through the sacraments.

Calvin explains that as important as it is to celebrate the sacraments, Christians must be careful not to separate the sacraments from Scripture –the Word. He tells his congregation that “the Word is the promise by which our Lord Jesus Christ has told us truly that he has been given to us to be our righteousness.”⁷⁷ It is through the Word that Christianity is informed of God's fatherhood, that God cares for humanity and that Christians are drawn to serve and honour God. It is also the means by which one learns that Jesus' death acts as absolution of humanity's sins.⁷⁸

Calvin points out that Paul moves from a discussion of the marriage between a man and a woman to that between Jesus and the church. Calvin tells the Genevans that sacrifices are made in both marriages, and that God expects humanity not to take Jesus' sacrifice for granted. In doing so, people will more willingly be humbled to ask for forgiveness for “our own wretchedness,” spending life yielding to the Holy will of God.⁷⁹ Calvin then explains that in Paul's teaching it is clear that Jesus gave up his life in order to be humanity's “redemption [...]wisdom, righteousness and sanctification” thus these three saving actions cannot be separated, because it would be akin to dividing Jesus himself.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., 584.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 585, 587.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 588.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Throughout his sermon Calvin contrasts his understanding of the purpose of the sacraments to the Catholic view. When discussing the meaning of Baptism he tells the congregation that the Catholics have become so entwined in the ritual that they seem to have lost sight of the fact that “the true and lawful use of the sacrament is to lead us directly to our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸¹ From his commentaries on these verses we see that Calvin’s focus in his sermons on the sanctification that comes from Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross is meant to underline the degree to which marriage bonds the couple together. This also serves as an example of the type of commitment husband and wife should have in their relationship: that a husband should be ready to give up his own life for his wife and family.

Calvin begins sermon forty-one which deals with Ephesians 5:28-30⁸² by discussing how God intervenes in humanity because humanity insists on acting against our nature to love one another; he even points to scriptural evidence in Isaiah 58:7 in support of this observation that the prophet’s command to “not despise your own body” hinges on the Christian teaching that humans are of one body and nature. This leads to a discourse of how the bond between husband and wife is the holiest bond God has set. Calvin explains that marriage turns the two individuals into one being ‘tied’ together by God. He uses the analogy of head and body to explain that the bond is unbreakable, and that any honor possessed by the head (husband) extends to the body (wife).⁸³ Calvin points out that the bond between husband and wife is not a uniquely Christian notion,

⁸¹ Ibid., 580.

⁸² Ephesians 5:28-30 reads: “Men ought so to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself, For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but (rather) he nourishes and cherishes it, as the Lord also does the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

⁸³ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 594.

thus Paul asserts that scripture is not necessary for understanding marriage. However, Calvin implores his listeners to heed the advice Paul offers for being Christ-like, because that is what sets Christians' marriages apart from non-Christians' marriages.⁸⁴

He tells the Genevans to remember that God has united them to their spouse, thus when they are bothered by something their spouse has said or done, it is their duty to bring it to the spouse's attention to help him or her comply with God's desires.⁸⁵ This is also an opportunity for introspection; however he warns that focusing on oneself, neglecting one's spouse and children is not the way to live a Christian life. Calvin points out that Paul uses examples to emphasise the way in which one's relationship with his or her spouse is indicative of one's relationship with Christ. This, Calvin explains, is because no one can love oneself without loving one's body, and since all Christians are part of Christ's body, Christ loves all Christians and does what is best for each.⁸⁶ Here Calvin deviates from the topic of marriage to investigate how and why Paul considers Christians to be "of the bones of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his flesh."⁸⁷ He makes use of both Hebrew and Christian scripture to explain that Paul believes and tries to teach the Ephesians that Christ is both the new Adam and a descendant of Abraham. As such Christ restores humanity to God, and the Holy Spirit joins Christians to the 'body of Christ.'⁸⁸ Calvin ends his sermon by telling the congregation that husbands and wives

⁸⁴ Ibid., 595.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 597.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 599; Calvin argues that Paul's reference to the body in verses 29 and 30 makes this clear.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 600.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 601-603.

should be careful in their dealings with each other since, as he has shown, their relationship is the means by which Christ will come into their hearts.⁸⁹

Sermon forty-two is the final sermon Calvin delivered concerning Ephesians 5; in it he deals with the last three verses (31-33) of the chapter.⁹⁰ Calvin begins his sermon by explaining the significance of Genesis 2:24 quoted in Ephesians 5:31; he tells the congregation that it is important to note that God made Eve from Adam, and not from the earth as he made Adam. This is important because it emphasises the oneness of husband and wife:

[...] so that the husband might know that he breaks the whole order of nature if he is not joined in happy accord to his wife; and the wife likewise, if she does not submit herself peaceably to her husband, acknowledging him to be her head.⁹¹

This is also important because Paul applies this concept to the marriage between Christ and the church, calling it a ‘great mystery.’ Calvin chooses to emphasis two points about what this means for Christians: one is that the marriage bond between husband and wife was created by God simultaneously with man and woman; the second is that Christians—the church—are joined to Christ so that they can live up to the potential God intended when he created humans.⁹²

Once again Calvin explains to the congregation that their ‘papist’ neighbours and friends have been misinformed by the Roman church that marriage is a sacrament, due to

⁸⁹ Ibid., 604.

⁹⁰ Ephesians 5:31-33 reads: “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great secret. Yes, I say, in Christ and in the church. Therefore, so do that every man may love his wife as himself, and let the wife fear her husband.”

⁹¹ Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 605.

⁹² Ibid., 606.

poor translation of Ephesians 5:32 (“*this is a great secret. Yes, I say, in Christ and in the church*”) so, he argues that what the Roman Catholics translate ‘sacrament’ should be ‘secret’ or ‘mystery.’ In short he tells the people that they should not get hung up on the errors of the past —Church Fathers— rather they should be grateful that God has awarded them the opportunity to separate themselves from these erroneous churches.

Calvin harkens back to Paul’s quote of Genesis 2:24, explaining that just because the married couple are to be more intimately connected to each other than they are to their parents, their duties to their parents are still valid and should not be neglected. He tells the people that the Lord connects all Christians to each other, the same way husbands are connected to wives and children to parents.

Next Calvin tells the congregation that although there is evidence in scripture that sometimes husbands and wives do not heed the command to be “two in one flesh” letting their lustful desires take them away from their spouse, resulting in divorce, God’s original intention for marriage can only be fulfilled when husband and wife “have an eye to the beginning.”⁹³ This leads into a clarification of Paul’s instructions in verse thirty-three for “husband to love his wife and wife to honor, or fear her husband.”⁹⁴ While pointing out the differences in the wife’s and husband’s duties Calvin explains that although the verse has been translated ‘fear’ the Greek word usually indicates reverence. He also explains that although it seems that the husband does not have to honor his wife, in reality the husband has to love his wife as a part of himself. He then introduces passages in Colossians (3:19) and Peter’s first letter (3:7) where this same message is

⁹³ Ibid., 610.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

conveyed.⁹⁵ Next he tells the Genevans that the reason Paul states God's indications for spouses so bluntly here is because he understands that some people may try to avoid fulfilling their duties by claiming ignorance of them.

Finally Calvin revisits the 'great secret' reference to marriage made by Paul in verse thirty-two. He notes that rather than trying to teach the Ephesians how or why God chooses to join Christ to Christians, Paul humbly admits that he is not capable of explaining God's work because it is beyond the scope of human reason. Calvin then reaffirms his message that by living according to Christ's words and partaking in the Eucharist, Christians become one with Christ as his church, by virtue of being made in God's image.⁹⁶ Calvin repeatedly links Paul's message about Christians being joined to Christ with his own understanding of the meaning and significance of celebrating the Eucharist and Baptism. He tells the Genevans that they must "forsake all our natural understanding" in order to follow Christ the way Paul instructs in his epistle.⁹⁷

Calvin's Notion of Marriage

Calvin does not consider marriage to be a sacrament the way it is for Christians of the Catholic rite. This is emphasized by Calvin's treatment of marriage in *The Institutes* where it is the focus of sections thirty-four to thirty-seven of chapter nineteen titled "Of the Five Falsely named Sacraments" in Book IV. Nonetheless, Calvin does consider marriage to be imperative for maintaining societal order.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 611.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 614.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 617.

In Michael Parsons' study of the similarities and differences between Martin Luther's and John Calvin's theologies in regard to the relationship between husband and wife, he notes that "Calvin approaches the doctrine of marriage with an obsessive concern for order within society's diverse relationships."⁹⁸ Parsons explains Calvin's notion that the only way to restore the world to its pre-sin existence is to have order in all aspects of society and especially in "structured institutions –primarily the church, the state and the family" through God's constant providential presence.⁹⁹ Calvin's emphasis on order stems from his belief that God created the world in an ordered fashion, thus "order comes from God" and is a manifestation of God's grace, authority and love for creation.¹⁰⁰ He claims that Calvin's concern for order allows him to commend non-Christian marriages because their relationship, like all marriages, contributes to restoring order by preserving respectability in society, regardless of whether these couples recognize God as the author of their marriage or not.¹⁰¹

Parsons observes that Calvin sees the family as a church, but his focus is on the order and structure of family life rather than how the man, as head of the family, is meant to bring the Word to his wife and children, which is Luther's focus. Calvin's belief that sin is the primary cause of disorder propels his teaching that the vocation of marriage helps maintain order because it restrains the spouses from promiscuity and excess while maintaining order between family members. Parsons argues that although Calvin considers all believers to be equal on a spiritual basis, he teaches that God created humanity with an intrinsic hierarchy thus he considers right ordering of the household as

⁹⁸ Parsons, *Reformation Marriage*, 215.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

evidence of righteousness and godly living.¹⁰² Parsons notes that one way for married couples to maintain societal order, in Calvin's view, is to have and raise children.

In his review of Calvin's commentaries on scriptural passages which focus on marriage, Parsons finds that several considerations stand out. First, his notion that the hierarchy between man and woman was "instituted by God at creation" underlies his exegesis, even in texts where this notion is not prevalent.¹⁰³ Second, although Calvin identifies his view as one which promotes mutual submission, his tendency is to measure a "woman's worth by her usefulness to fulfill the man's need."¹⁰⁴ In addition Calvin uses this notion of mutual submission and companionship to lighten his harsh presentation of hierarchy between the sexes which underlines much of his reading. Finally Parsons points out Calvin's tendency to focus on the order-maintenance characteristic of marriage in his exegetical work, especially when working with passages that deal with the relationship between husband, wife and the family.

In Claude-Marie Baldwin's study of Calvin's use of language in his sermons she observes that he uses language as a vehicle for communicating his "two fundamental principles about marriage: hierarchical order and mutual accountability."¹⁰⁵ She points out that in ' sermon thirty-nine on Ephesians 5:22-26 Calvin builds his argument for a three-fold basis of the hierarchy of marriage on the notion that God is the origin of marriage. He claims that the hierarchy is part of human nature; it was intended by God before "the fall." Baldwin explains that in Calvin's view, the creation of man and woman as set out in Genesis is inherently hierarchical precisely because God makes Eve using

¹⁰² Ibid., 226.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 334.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Claude-Marie Baldwin, "Marriage in Calvin's Sermons" in *Calviniana: Ideas and Influence of John Calvin*, ed. Robert V. Schnucker (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Press, 1988), 121.

Adam's bone, and not from the earth as he made Adam. Therefore woman is literally part of man, an appendage like a branch of a tree, subordinate by design.¹⁰⁶ Baldwin also notes that Calvin attributes woman's present condition to Eve's role in the fall; that humanity's nature causes issues between spouses such as drunkenness, laziness, rebellion and greed.¹⁰⁷

Baldwin concludes that Calvin's eagerness to teach his congregation along with his careful study of scripture curb his sexist views and allow him to communicate his doctrinal views. She notes that his use of hypothetical situations is meant to emphasize his message that husband and wife serve God by serving each other in the way they serve Christ. She explains that when reflecting on the roles of husband and wife Calvin is noticeably influenced by the predominant thinking of his time in regard to gender roles. However, when he addresses marriage his 'take-home-message' is of mutual responsibility, which Baldwin argues is warranted by the biblical text itself.¹⁰⁸

John Witte Jr. outlines the major reforms of marriage and family life regulation and practice inspired, and instituted by Calvin, in Geneva in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Witte begins by pointing out Calvin's use of the doctrine of covenant to explain that the relationship between husband and wife is dependent on the spouses' relationship with God. This is evident in his sermons on Ephesians 5:22-26 and 31-33 where Calvin cites the biblical texts in which marriage is referred to as the "covenant of God." Calvin's understanding of the covenantal nature of marriage is influential in the development and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Calvin's opinion is that Eve was the primary party responsible for the fall, thus women have to bare a greater punishment; see page 76 above.

¹⁰⁸ Baldwin, "Marriage in Calvin's Sermons," 127.

¹⁰⁹ John Witte Jr., "Marriage and Family Life" in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 458.

integration of the marital formation rules he sets out in the Genevan Marriage Ordinance of 1546. The requirement of consent from both sets of parents as well as the couple along with the public ceremonies involved in marriage and its preparation attest to the communal nature of the covenant which Calvin feels is at the heart of marriage.¹¹⁰ Witte lists different practices and types of relationships condemned by Calvin for being “unnatural,” exploitive, and not true “to the biblical story of creation and redemption,” explaining that above all else Calvin sees adultery as “the most fundamental violation of the created structure of the marital covenant” because it involves a fracturing of the bonds between spouses, God and the community.¹¹¹

Witte also points out three main goals which Calvin feels marriage serves: fostering mutual love and support between spouse; enabling legitimate procreation and nurturing of children; and protecting from sexual sin and temptation.¹¹² To ensure that all marriages in Geneva would reach these goals Calvin introduces norms for courtship which include suggestions of qualities to look for in a mate, to avoid prematurely entering into marriage lustfully. Among these suggestions is one to avoid “courting or marrying unbelievers [non-Christians]” who Calvin feels will not be able to love their spouse and children in a way that reflects Christ’s love.¹¹³ He also prohibits marriage to a person who suffers from any impediments to normal sexual function as the marriage of these individuals, if it were to take place, would violate the three goals. However if a spouse were to become afflicted by a sexual dysfunction during the course of the marriage, Calvin implores the other spouse to recall the marriage oath to “remain together

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 458.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 459.

¹¹² Ibid., 461; one may notice how these goals resemble Augustine’s 3 goods of marriage.

¹¹³ Ibid., 462.

in sickness and health.”¹¹⁴ Along the same lines he encourages married couples to keep a healthy sex life. For, as Paul explains in his letter to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 7:6), when intercourse occurs within a marriage between spouses who devote themselves to God, it sanctifies and cleanses the vile and profanity of extra-marital lust. Interestingly, as much as Calvin promotes marriage as a channel for childbearing, he does not consider barrenness a valid reason for divorce. Rather, he encourages barren couples to explore other avenues for having a family, and counsels that they will have to work harder to achieve the other goals of marriage.¹¹⁵

As for Calvin’s stance on divorce, Witte notes that for him, the only acceptable reason for divorce is adultery. Even then, Calvin encourages the couple to try to reconcile before opting to dissolve their marriage. If reconciliation is not possible, the spouse who was betrayed, be it the wife or husband, has the right to sue for divorce. Then if the court grants the divorce the guilty spouse faces severe sanctions; while the innocent party would be allowed –even encouraged– to remarry.¹¹⁶

This study of Calvin’s sermons and commentaries has identified several underlying themes that the reformer shares with Augustine. Foundational to Calvin’s view and appreciation of marriage is his notion of societal order and the inherent hierarchy within society. It is clear from Calvin’s exegesis, as well as from the work of Calvin scholars, that the husband-wife relationship in Calvin’s view is defined by the vocational duties of both man and woman at creation. Namely that although men and women are spiritually equals, their residence in the temporal world results in a

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 463.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 464.

necessarily patriarchal relationship between husband and wife who live biblically oriented lives.

CHAPTER 3: TIMOTHY KELLER (b.1950)

As the founder of one of the largest Presbyterian churches in New York City, Timothy Keller is a well-known contemporary evangelical minister and New York Times bestselling author. This chapter will focus on Keller's view of Christian marriage as it is laid out in his book *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (Dutton, 2011), which he co-authored with his wife Kathy. Before presenting his vision of Christian marriage we will briefly review the circumstances surrounding Keller's work and success in New York.

Keller's New York Mission

Before Keller moved to New York and founded Redeemer Presbyterian in 1989, he was a professor at Westminster Theology Seminary in Philadelphia, and part-time head of the Presbyterian Church's mercy ministries there.¹ His formal pastoral experience was acquired in Hopewell, Virginia, a small blue-collar town, where he spent nine years preaching and fostering growth of the congregation. While in Philadelphia, the head of the Presbyterian church of America's missions department recruited Keller to lay the groundwork for a church in Manhattan. He spent months interviewing executives who had been attending services at Campus Crusades for Christ's DeMoss House on the Upper East Side, learning about what New Yorkers need from a church, and falling in love with the metropolis.² Redeemer Presbyterian was founded in the spring of 1989 in a

¹ Lou, "Preaching the Word," §21.

² Tim Stafford, "How Tim Keller Found Manhattan," *Christianity Today* 53 (2009): 22.

space rented from Seventh-day Adventists; by the end of the year the hall was filled to its 250 person capacity, and the people kept coming.³

In his 2004 article, Tony Carnes describes the evolution of the New York City boroughs from the mid-1960s to the early 2000s. He depicts a grim vision of New York City in the 1960s and 1970s describing how parts of the city were affected by gangs and organized crime. He then describes the re-growth in areas such as Queens, Bronx and Brooklyn, focusing on the impact of the development and growth of new Christian churches in these boroughs.⁴ Among the churches Carnes credits with the “glorious urbanism” of New York is Timothy Keller’s Redeemer Presbyterian Church, noting that the number of congregants has grown to 4200 in the fifteen years since its founding.⁵ The church has also implemented a neighborhood-church planting program which has led to the establishment of some 100 churches in and around New York City and neighbouring states as well as in Europe. Carnes explains how the cultural diversity of New York’s inhabitants was a contributing factor to the rise of certain churches yet the fall of others. He describes how immigrants of different denominations have been instrumental in establishing new places of worship throughout the city, often because the existing churches were shrinking due to their non-innovative constitutions. Meanwhile other churches, like Keller’s Redeemer Presbyterian, benefited from the influx of young professionals drawn to the city by the positive image portrayed in film and television.

³ Ibid., 24.

⁴ Tony Carnes, “New York’s New Hope: From Inner-city gardens, to fine-art exhibitions, to political activism, street-smart churches are changing the culture of America’s largest and most dynamic city,” *Christianity Today* 48 (2004).

⁵ Ibid.

Michael Lou notes that the young professionals and artists who attend Keller's services "do not fit the prototypical evangelical mold," to which he attributes the popularity and growth of Redeemer Presbyterian.⁶ He also cites this growth as the reason for Keller's popularity in the Evangelical movement, noting that pastors from around the United States and the world visit New York in hopes of learning the art of establishing a successful church in a metropolitan area.

Lou quotes an Evangelical minister from Boston, Stephen Um, who has been successful in adopting Keller's approach to ministry which he characterizes as emphasizing on "delving into the prevailing culture almost as much as into the biblical text."⁷ Lou then informs the reader that Redeemer meets in three seemingly traditional facilities across Manhattan where Keller celebrates four neo-traditional Sunday services, which by 2009 had grown to five services.⁸ One of the congregants explains that Keller's appeal is his style of preaching which is more intellectual than other ministers. In an interview with *Christianity Today* journalist Tim Stafford, Keller offers another possible explanation for Redeemer's popularity: he "always preaches with a non-Christian audience in mind, not merely avoiding offence, but exploring the text to find its good news for unbelievers as well as believers."⁹ This is part of what Keller calls "Gospel DNA."

Keller's notion that God's grace is the underlying theme throughout the gospel that unifies all aspects of its parables and characters defines his "Gospel DNA." His

⁶ Lou, "Preaching the Word," §3.

⁷ Ibid., §11.

⁸ Ibid.; Stafford, "How Tim Keller Found Manhattan."

⁹ Stafford, "How Tim Keller Found Manhattan," 24.

starting point is that the first commandment –to have no other Gods– is the benchmark for measuring sin, as breaking this commandment is the ultimate sin.¹⁰ He identifies his goals as a city-minister: a focus on Jesus as the God who gave up His life for humanity; and preaching the “gospel DNA of grace” to believers who are struggling with the ambiguity and diversity inherent in city-life. Coupled with the church’s focus on charity work, Keller’s success at Redeemer in Manhattan and around the world in churches ‘planted’ under his guidance is attributable to Keller’s modest and accepting approach to ministering in urban centers.

Keller’s Analysis of Ephesians

Much like Augustine, Keller writes with the intention of demystifying the biblical meaning of marriage in light of cultural belief and practice. He chooses to focus on “St. Paul’s great passage on marriage in Ephesians 5,” explaining his choice to do so because “it is so rich and full in itself, [and] because it connects and expounds on the other most important Biblical text on marriage, Genesis 2.”¹¹

Keller’s discourse of marriage, like Augustine and Calvin’s, is based on the premise that the Genesis creation narrative, specifically Genesis 2:22-25,¹² clearly illustrates God instituting marriage at the time of creation of man and woman. He observes:

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹¹ Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 15.

¹² Gen. 2:22-25 reads: “And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.’ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.”

According to Genesis 1 and 2, we were made for marriage, and marriage was made for us. Genesis 3 tells us that marriage, along with every other aspect of human life, has been broken because of sin.¹³

Building on this notion, Keller's first consideration of Ephesians 5 is Paul's use of *mysterion* to refer to marriage in verse thirty-two ("*This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church*").¹⁴ Keller indicates that Paul uses this term elsewhere to refer to unsolicited revelations of God's saving purposes. Thus his decision to use it in reference to marriage speaks to his understanding of the role of marriage in God's plan for salvation. According to Keller, since Paul refers here to his previous statement about marriage, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25), the marriage is not the mystery. Rather, the "profound mystery" is that a husband is to "give himself up" for his wife, as Christ did for the church.¹⁵ Thus the gospels which tell about Christ's sacrifice also provide readers with an understanding of marriage, a purpose of which is to "unveil the depth and beauty of the gospel."¹⁶ Stemming from this notion, Keller asserts that contemporary arguments against marriage as oppressive, restrictive and demanding are misinformed and faulty because God had Christ's self-sacrificial-relationship with the church in mind when instituting marriage.¹⁷

Keller outlines his theory of Spirit-empowered mutual submission of husband and wife based on his reading of Ephesians 5:21. ("*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*") He explains that in the original Greek text, this verse is the final clause of Paul's

¹³ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴ In this translation provided by Keller at the front of his book, *mysterion* is translated "profound mystery," 19.

¹⁵ Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 45.

¹⁶ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷ Ibid.

list of characteristics of a “Spirit-filled” person. As such this selfless, humble service to others Paul describes is the final mark of a “Spirit-filled” person, and the launching pad for his description of spousal duties. Keller notes the interconnectedness of Paul’s description of “Spirit-filled” people and the duties of husband and wife, claiming that Paul’s teaching on marriage depends on both parties’ “being filled with God’s Spirit.”¹⁸ As Keller sees it, in Paul’s teaching, men and women are able to overcome the challenges of marriage only when each is “filled with the Spirit,” because “Spirit-filled” people are aware of God’s plan for them and they understand that their hearts and souls depend on God’s Word for strength and sustenance.¹⁹

Noting that the work of the spirit “unfold[ing] the meaning of Jesus’ person and work to believers” is laid out most fully in the gospel according to John, Keller explains Paul’s reference to singing and making music in one’s heart as a natural consequence of the work of the Spirit.²⁰ He also states that this song will not wane in trivial times because it is fueled by the truth of God’s grace and Christ’s saving work, as such it becomes the source of fuel for the spouses’ soul, helping make their marriage work.

This notion leads Keller to a discourse of Paul’s instructions for submission between spouses in Ephesians 5:22-25. (*“Wives, submit 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, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ wives also should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church*

¹⁸ Ibid., 51

¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

²⁰ Here Keller is referring to Eph. 5:19-20: “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord;” 51.

and gave himself up for her.”) He points out that living a spirit-filled life provides each spouse with the strength and discipline required to emulate Christ’s self-sacrifice.

Building on Paul’s emphasis on the Christian principle of service to others, Keller notes that Paul tells the Ephesians that a wife should be putting the needs of her husband before her own; likewise husbands are to put their wife’s needs above his own. Nevertheless, the husband has the added responsibility of balancing his “headship” with his self-giving service to his wife. Keller, with Paul, recognize the difficulty inherent in this arrangement, both men recommend that the couple revisit the gospel for guidance, especially when they have not succeeded in self-sacrificial service. For, in the gospel story of Christ’s self-sacrifice, the couple will find that God’s love is present even in their failings, which should encourage them to keep serving each other selflessly.

Keller acknowledges that contemporary couples are often quick to resist and contest the call to submission because of the negative connotation. He refers to the definition of the Greek “submit,” as a military term suggesting that Paul also understood that this call to submission is “unnatural, but it is the very foundation of marriage.”²¹ He explains that according to the Greek definition, surrendering the self for the ‘glory’ of the whole is necessary for soldiers to become an army; thus, the same is true with marriage. Each spouse has to surrender –or submit– his and her own desires in order for their marriage to work. This is because, according to Keller, personal-growth occurs when, after recognizing that Christ fulfills our needs, Christians overcome their selfishness by serving others.

²¹ Ibid., 60.

Next Keller addresses the second half of verse twenty-one: “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” His first comment is in regard to translation; he states that the commonly used English word ‘reverence’ is too weak to convey the message of the original Greek, arguing for the use of ‘fear’ instead. He explains that in the Hebrew text and tradition ‘to fear the Lord is to be overwhelmed with wonder before the greatness of God and his Love.’²² Keller counsils that in order to serve others selflessly, the primary motivating factor for a Christian’s actions should be the reality of God’s unfaltering and liberating love for his creation. The way to develop this “fear of the Lord” and truly integrate Christ’s words and actions into one’s life is through prayer; bible study and reading; participating in worship and reflection.

In his treatment of the significance of covenant relationships in regard to marriage, Keller comments on Paul’s citation of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31 (*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*) Again, he begins by noting that in the Hebrew text, the word translated here “cleave” and in modern translations “united to” signifies being glued to something. Like Calvin, Keller describes the marriage covenant as horizontal and vertical between the spouses and God:

the covenant made between a husband and a wife is done ‘before God’ and therefore with God as well as the spouse. To break faith with your spouse is to break faith with God at the same time.²³

He explains that because the marriage vows are made with God then to each other, the partners are reinforced by God’s love in their ‘horizontal covenant.’

²² Ibid., 68.

²³ Ibid., 83.

After discussing covenants, Keller illustrates his point that marriage vows are a promise of future love through Paul's directive to husbands in Ephesians 5:28: "Husbands ought to love their wives." He explains that if love here is understood as merely an emotion, Paul's instruction cannot be met. Instead, Keller suggests that Paul is actually persuading husbands to exhibit loving actions and behaviour toward their wives, whether they feel emotionally loving towards her or not.²⁴ This notion of acting loving even when the "feeling is not present" is central to Keller's preaching on marriage.

Keller then enters into an exposition of the mission or purpose of marriage, which he identifies as friendship. After appealing to both Hebrew and Christian scripture for characteristics and examples of Christian friendship, he notes that the characteristics of friendship in Christian marriage are set out by Paul in Ephesians 5:26-27 ("*...to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*"). Keller explains that in these verses Paul describes the goal of Christ's sacrifice for the church, and that Christians are called to imitate Christ's sacrifice in their marriage. He asserts that while in the gospels Jesus acts out of friendship to his followers, in Ephesians 5 Christ acts both as lover and friend in his sacrifice for the church.²⁵ According to his view, Paul's instructions in verse twenty-eight "directly link the purpose of every marriage to the purpose of the Ultimate marriage" between Christ and his church.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 103.

²⁵ Ibid., 119.

²⁶ Ibid.

Keller refers to Ephesians 5:28 again in his treatment of what he calls the “power of marriage.”²⁷ His focus here is on Paul’s likening marriage to physical health. He sees this parallel as a metaphor for life as a whole, because marriage has the power to set the course of each spouses’ life. He posits that if the spouses work to keep their marriage strong and healthy by prioritizing it in their life, the same way they work to keep their bodies healthy, then they will find that they have the strength and courage to face any troubles they may face. The way to keep one’s marriage strong and healthy, in Keller’s view, is through spiritual friendship. This is the relationship between husband and wife who are married knowing that their primary role as spouse is to “help one another know, serve, love, and resemble God in deeper and deeper ways.”²⁸ Keller affirms that Ephesians 5: 26-28 (“*to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*”) rightfully portray marriage as challenging, but those couples who enter marriage knowing that it “is meant to make us holy,” that in Christ they have a companion and model for the hard work, theirs will be a happy marriage.²⁹

I would argue that Keller’s stress on socio-psychological and economical information about society as well as his tendency to introduce contemporary authors and theorists into his arguments, suggests that he approaches the epistle to the Ephesians from a decidedly contemporary perspective. He demonstrates that through the epistle one can

²⁷ Ibid., 131.

²⁸ Ibid., 132.

²⁹ Ibid., 133.

expound two fundamental teachings about marriage: marriage is instituted by God and marriage is a reflection of God's love for humanity. He then builds upon these two teachings from a pastoral perspective. We will now explore his vision of Christian marriage resulting from his interpretation of Paul's epistle.

Keller's view of Marriage

Marriage has unique power to show us the truth of who we really are. Marriage has unique power to redeem our past and heal our self-image through love. And marriage has unique power to show us the grace of what God did for us in Jesus Christ.³⁰

When *The Meaning of Marriage* was published in the fall of 2011, the publishers hosted a discussion with Keller and his wife Kathy.³¹ After discussing the book and marriage, the authors responded to questions from the audience about how to live as married Christians. The Kellers openly and honestly discuss marriage, responding to the audience's questions using examples from their own experience as a married couple and counselors to other couples, as well as biblical and non-biblical texts.

The Kellers' response to the moderator's question "What is the point or advantage of getting married at all" offers an interesting insight into Dr. Keller's view of marriage. He starts by explaining why, in his view, 'the vow or contract or covenant' as he calls it, of marriage is good, even beneficial to the marriage. He explains that although the common contemporary view is that vows limit one's freedom, in his judgment the marriage vows free the spouses and make intimacy between them possible. Kathy then

³⁰ Ibid., 167.

³¹ Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage Webcast*, Livestream API, November 1, 2011, New York, NY: Penguin Books, http://redeemercitycity.com/resources/library.jsp?Library_item_param=620.

introduces the notion that the contemporary idea of freedom as having unlimited options leads to a debilitating fear of commitment which gives rise to superficial relationships. The Kellers explain that it is the marriage vows that allow the couple to commit to their relationship and overcome what is otherwise superficial in a relationship. The vows allow each to help the other to grow into the person God designed them to be, which is the meaning and purpose of marriage.³²

When asked about the modern-day-single-person's tendency to search for a mate who is compatible, the Kellers explain their vision as based on "what the bible says about marriage" and humanity.³³ Keller's view of marriage is deeply informed by the biblical teaching that sin makes humanity selfish, and self-centered thus "no two people can really be compatible [...] two people coming into a Christian marriage should say to each other 'we're here to help change each other.'"³⁴ Their suggestion is to look for the person who "understands you, who can be your best friend, your best counselor and is going to go on a journey with you to become all that God wants you to be."³⁵ They explain that a marriage based on helping one another become the person God wants each to be, is a marriage with a mission in which the spouses are friends instead of business partners and sexual playmates, which is what they claim some marriages can be when the focus is on reaching career and financial goals and having sexual romantic fun.³⁶

Related to this idea that marriage is the concept of a journey, wherein the spouses become the person God intends for each to be, the Kellers are asked about the chapter in

³² Ibid., 7:20.

³³ Ibid., 9:19.

³⁴ Ibid., 9:35-45.

³⁵ Ibid., 11:35.

³⁶ Ibid., 14:35.

their book entitled “Loving the Stranger” in which they deal with the issue of realizing and adapting to the change in one’s spouse. The Kellers explain that when couples are first married they begin to see each other’s flaws; the result of these discoveries is a period of disillusionment at which point each spouse has to choose to love the other. To explain this concept of deciding to love they use the analogy of parents loving a newborn. They state that this is a unique non-reciprocal relationship in which the parents’ loving-actions of caring for the child foster their love for it. In a similar way, the tendency for couples is to act as loving as they feel toward each other. They point out two problems here, first it is easy for the spouses to fall into a common trap in which one feels that the other is not acting as loving as they used to or should thus she will not act as loving as she can. The second problem is the spiral effect whereby the less loving one acts towards one’s spouse the less loving one will feel toward the spouse, and the less loving one feels the less lovingly one will act, resulting in a total loss of the love between the spouses. The Kellers suggest that when the spouses choose to love one another, or at the very least to act lovingly toward one another this spiral effect is disrupted, and the marriage benefits.

In response to a query about gender roles in a marriage the Kellers point out that gender differences are not just physical, and what is more, these differences make the marriage work. They state that it is the complementary strengths and weaknesses that each spouse brings to the marriage that enrich the relationship. Kathy also discusses the significance of the Hebrew term *‘ezer* “suitable helper” used to refer to woman in the Genesis creation narrative, to explain that the complementarities between the sexes are

created purposefully by God who intends for marriage to bring the genders together enhancing and completing each other.

On the topic of sexual intercourse, the Kellers discuss 1 Cor. 7:3-4 (*“The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does”*). They explain that these verses underline the biblical stance that “your sexual capacity is not for you” which is what happens when sex is used outside of marriage to entice or as a means of self-gratification.³⁷ Keller calls sex “covenant cement [...] a way of re-giving yourself completely to somebody” emphasising its place and importance inside marriage as a gift.³⁸ He says that biblically speaking, sex is a covenant renewal ceremony between husband and wife thus it should only be used to re-affirm the total entrusting of oneself to one’s spouse.

Presenting his book as part of a series of talks sponsored by Google, Keller explains that the book is a positive exposé of what the bible says about marriage. He outlines the Christian view of marriage in three points.³⁹ The first point is the essence of marriage. To illustrate the Christian perspective of the meaning of marriage, he contrasts it with the contemporary ‘Hollywood view’ that the essence of marriage is passion and feeling that is destroyed by “the piece of paper” –the law or contract. He explains that in the Christian view the essence of marriage is a “long-term binding commitment

³⁷ Ibid., 30:08.

³⁸ Ibid., 31:34

³⁹ Timothy Keller, “Authors@Google: Timothy Keller,” recorded November 14, 2011, YouTube video, posted by “AtGoogleTalks,” November 29, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9THu0PZwwk>.”

epitomised in a covenant or legal contract” which makes marriage more intimate.⁴⁰ He presents his notion of two types of relationships in order to illustrate how that is possible: consumer relationships and covenant relationships. He tells the audience that a consumer relationship is akin to what happens in dating where one finds him or herself constantly “marketing and promoting oneself [...] putting [his or her] best face on” for fear of the other person leaving the relationship; whereas in a covenant (marriage) relationship the vows create a “cradle of security for one’s vulnerability” making it possible to be “more yourself.”⁴¹ The contract also creates stability to get the couple through the hard-times that will come up. He also says that the “long-term binding commitment” of marriage creates freedom. He presents Kierkegaard’s theory that making and keeping a promise frees us from being slaves to our impulses and desires. Keller’s interpretation of Kierkegaard’s theory is that one can only truly love someone when we take the time to get to know that person, thus making a vow or oath to be with this person no matter what happens creates a safe environment for the couple to get to know each other without fear of either abandoning the relationship.⁴² He explains that the marriage vows are promises made by each spouse to “be loving” to the other even when they do not feel loving towards each other.

Another aspect of Christian marriage is its mission or goal which is “deep character change through deep friendship.”⁴³ He contrasts this to the contemporary view of marriage as a means of merging financial assets in order to build a more comfortable life of romance and fun, in which one’s mate is chosen based on compatibility –usually

⁴⁰ Timothy Keller, “Authors@Google,” 4:47.

⁴¹ Ibid., 6:30; 6:45.

⁴² Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 96-98.

⁴³ Ibid., 12:57.

involving very little change or work. He explains that our flaws and selfishness prevent us from being truly compatible with one other person; that marriage brings out these flaws; and that perhaps the most significant point is that people change. This leads him to a presentation of three ways Christianity responds to spouses' incompatibility. First, couples are encouraged to embrace the Christian biblical view of humanity as sinful, expect conflict and make it their mission to "help each other grow into people [they] would never grow into if [they] were not married to each other."⁴⁴ Second, the richness of a long term marriage is based on the Christian idea that it is important to get a glimpse of the person our mate is and is becoming, and want to go on the journey with him or her. Third he counsels that one looks for a life-long-best-friend and partner with whom one can develop a deep friendship out of which deep character change can occur.

The final point he outlines in the Christian view of marriage is what he calls "the secret of marriage." He says the secret of marriage is loving one's spouse at times when the love is not reciprocated.⁴⁵ To explain this point he describes a notion he calls "love philanthropy."⁴⁶ He establishes that to be philanthropic financially there needs to be a constant external source of income which replenishes one's donated funds. The same is true in love, whereby if marriage means loving one's spouse even when the spouse is not returning that love, there needs to be an outside source of love which will replenish the lover offered to the spouse; that source, according to Keller's view, is God.

Unlike Paul, Keller has not written with the purpose of answering specific questions about married life. He is neither preaching to a specific congregation like

⁴⁴ Ibid., 18:41.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 25:34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 29:03.

Calvin;⁴⁷ nor is he specifically addressing a blatant attack on marriage like Augustine.⁴⁸ Keller's view as presented in the book is admittedly based on a biblical view of marriage which he is quick to remind readers and listeners, especially when asked to comment on same-sex marriage.⁴⁹ This is apparent from the introductory chapter where the Kellers describe the threefold source of guidance and inspiration for writing their book: their personal experiences in their own marriage; Keller's pastoral work as counsellor to married and single congregants; and the bible. They are also quick to identify the primary function of their book is "to give both married and unmarried people a vision for what marriage is according to the Bible."⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the Kellers' book is less of a theological treatise on marriage, than it is an introductory, somewhat-catechetical, presentation of a Christian understanding of marriage that uses Ephesians 5: 18-33 as a framework. This is not to say that the insights and explications offered by the Kellers in this work are invalid or even helpful in a quest to identify a Christian view of marriage, however there lacks a theological richness that is present in Augustine and Calvin.⁵¹

The four foundational points of his view –the secret, power, essence and mission of marriage– are clearly presented in the first four chapters of the book while the last four chapters present ways in which they manifest in different situations. Keller's view of

⁴⁷ It is important to note that the material in Keller's book is based on a series of sermons preached at his church in New York City in the mid-1990s; although the book is intended to reach a wider audience.

⁴⁸ It is beneficial here to mention that Keller may not be intentionally addressing the ever changing cultural opinion regarding marriage, especially same sex marriage; however he does identify cultural ambiguity as a motive for writing this book.

⁴⁹ He repeatedly explains that in the biblical view one of the main purposes of marriage is to bring the genders together with their differences, which are the same reasons they fit well together. These differences allow a man to learn from a woman and vice versa; this learning from our differences is not possible in same-sex relationships.

⁵⁰ Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 12.

⁵¹ This reader feels that this lack of theological depth is partly due to Keller's contemporary all-embracing approach to his ministry.

Christian marriage as a journey the spouses embark on as mutual, self-sacrificing helpers has many aspects that are beneficial to married and unmarried Christians alike. His view is similar to both Augustine's and Calvin's views in many ways, yet there are some points where the men do not quite see eye-to-eye. The following and final chapter will examine these similarities and differences more closely.

CONCLUSION

Having surveyed Augustine's, Calvin's and Keller's marriage theologies, this final chapter will focus on the nuances between the three theologians. Our primary objective will be to demonstrate that although Calvin's and Keller's exegesis reveals undertones of Augustine's three goods of marriage, the Reformers are more concerned with upholding the hierarchical order of society and marriage's position in salvation history as set out in scripture.

All three men include some aspect of hierarchical order among the sexes in their marriage theologies, stemming from their interpretation of Genesis 2:24, cited by Paul in Ephesians 5:31. For Augustine the order of creation becomes justification for the polygamous relationships of the Fathers and Mothers of Hebrew scripture. Whereas for Calvin it is the means by which humanity restores the natural order intended by God at creation. Keller focuses on how the call to mutual submission can be balanced with the inherent hierarchical order.

Keller and Augustine both preach that through mutual service to one another spouses help one another live a life oriented toward God and God's will. Augustine clarifies Paul's message to the Corinthians that married women often have less time than non-married women to serve God. He explains that when husbands and wives remain chaste, and serve one another in marriage, their service is to the Lord. Augustine stresses that this mutual service, when undertaken with pure hearts as the fulfillment of marriage vows, is significant enough to lead to the sanctification of a non-Christian spouse. Keller's notion is based on his understanding of Paul's call to live a "Spirit-filled" life.

According to Keller's reading, Paul calls spouses to serve one another selflessly, mirroring Christ's self-sacrifice for the church. For Keller, marriage only works when each spouse lets go of their insecurities and selfishness, orienting their love and actions toward their spouse, with the intention of helping them blossom into their God-intended self.

Meanwhile, Calvin's view of societal order is that it is necessary, especially the hierarchy between the sexes, so that humanity may return to the original state God intended at creation. Keller also sees marriage as a means for achieving God's intended status, however for Keller there is an evolution, a growth that takes place while Calvin seems to want to preserve and even return to an "original" status.

While Augustine's primary focus is the friendship between husband and wife in his analysis of the Genesis creation narrative, Calvin chooses to emphasize the connections to baptism and Eucharist present in marriage. Like Augustine, Keller identifies friendship as the primary purpose of marriage.¹ This nuance seems to me, to be the product or maybe even the cause of each man's opinion of the purpose of marriage. All three acknowledge that marriage has a soteriological role, however each sees this role as something different. For Augustine, marriage is one state of life, among many respectable options, for people of faith to manage life in a sinful world. It is a means for protecting oneself from sin while upholding God's intentions for humanity, his church. Husbands and wives are to be joined in a relationship of loving friendship which will strengthen the "union of society" through progeny.² Calvin sees marriage as the way to keep order in the world. Marriage reflects Christ's relationship with the church, and was

¹ Keller and Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 110.

² Hunter, "Bono Conjugali, De," 110.

instituted by God, thus it is closely tied to the sacraments, without being one itself. It represents important aspects of Christ's involvement in the sacraments, specifically his role in the sanctification of the Church –his death and resurrection. Marriage serves to remind the couple of the saving grace of Christ to which they should aspire. In Keller's view, husband and wife are bound together in a covenant relationship of love and friendship. Spouses are entrusted with the role of helping the other grow into the model Christian God created them to be, and their relationship is modeled on Christ's relationship to the church.

Keller and Augustine have similar theories of spouses' obligation to "render the carnal debt" to one another.³ In Augustine's treatise, he claims that in cases where marriage was entered into as a means of safe-guarding against the sin of concupiscence, the marriage cannot be dissolved when this desire for intimacy no longer exists. As a result spouses should continue to fulfill their spousal duties to one another in order to prevent either one from searching outside the marriage to fulfill these needs. Keller's theory also states that the spouses should fulfill their spousal duties in regard to "carnal debt," however he extends his definition of spousal duties to include non-intimate acts of love. To boot he counsels couples to exert the effort to act lovingly toward each other especially when their feelings may not provoke acts of love.

In *Mere Christianity* C. S. Lewis writes "some people think the fall of man had something to do with sex, but that is a mistake. (The story in the Book of Genesis rather suggests that some corruption in our sexual nature followed the fall and was its result, not

³ Augustine, "The Good of Marriage," XI.12 (FOTC 25).

its cause.)”⁴ Augustine seems to share this sentiment. In *On the Good of Marriage* he explains that intercourse between a husband and wife is one of the goods of marriage precisely because their relationship represents the relationship between Christ and the Church. Not only does Augustine condone intercourse, but he condemns concupiscence. This concupiscence, in Augustine’s view, is the result of the corruption of humanity’s sexual nature after the original sin was committed. Calvin seems to share this sentiment with regard to extra-marital intercourse. He preaches that married couples should maintain a healthy physical relationship as a means of sanctification of an otherwise vile and lustful act. Keller seems to have the least negative view of sex, perhaps because of society’s lax attitude toward it.⁵ He writes about how married couples do not use sex to entice their partner like couples who are not married might. Instead he tells the spouses to consider sex as a vehicle for strengthening and renewing their marriage covenant. He also explains that when a married couple engages in intercourse, the freedom awarded by their vows allows them to experience the thrill of self-giving that is at the heart of marriage and by consequence sex; rather than trying to entice one’s partner, to keep him or her interested in the relationship.

This may have been the most unanticipated finding of this study for me. I was expecting to find that the three men would share a relatively negative view of sex, as has come to be the consensus of secular culture –as Lewis wrote: the church thinks sex is evil, so priests are not to get married, and people who are not married should not be having sex, and even if you are married, sex is only a necessity for having children, it

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fontana Books, 1952), 50.

⁵ Perhaps Keller’s view of extramarital intercourse is just as negative as Augustine’s and Calvin’s yet it is not evident in his work.

should not be engaged in for pleasure. In light of Augustine's notion of 'carnal debt' all three men seem to have a positive –even if it is minor– view of sex, at least within marriage. All three are adamant about the important role sex plays in marriage, bringing the couple to the 'one flesh' state first mentioned in Genesis 2. However, both Calvin and Keller seem to acknowledge that it should not be used solely to 'be fruitful and fill the earth' (Gen. 1:28). Both men, in my opinion, understand that it should be used as an extension of the wedding vows; Keller goes so far to refer to sex as covenant cement – which is also the view of the Roman Catholic church that is often lost in the secular sphere.⁶

Not altogether surprisingly, Calvin and Keller both start from the premise that humanity is selfish, as well they share similar opinions on topics such as mixed-religion marriages and the dual nature of the marriage covenant. Humanity's selfishness is a consequence of the sinful nature inherited through the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve. In this respect Calvin and Keller start from the same premise as Augustine: humanity is sinful. Both men counsel against inter-religious relationships because of their concept of Christian marriage as the reflection of Christ's marriage to the church. Even though Paul claims that the faith of one spouse sanctifies the non-faithful spouse (1 Cor. 7:14), both Calvin and Keller's conception of marriage require spouses to love one another the way Christ loves the church. Non-Christian partners cannot fulfill this requirement. In the

⁶ For more on the Roman Catholic teaching on sexuality see: Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy: Catechesis on Marriage and Celibacy in the Light of the Resurrection of the Body*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986.

same way, their focus on the covenantal nature of marriage is founded on the notion that the couple's vows are made first with God then to each other.

Augustine's three goods of marriage do seem to be an underlying premise for both Calvin and Keller's message about Christian marriage presented in Ephesians 5. Nevertheless, both men's notions of the primary mission, purpose or good of marriage do not necessarily align with Augustine's. Marriage, in Calvin's view, is 'good' because it is a means for achieving order in society which encourages Christians to live their lives in accordance to God's will. While for Keller, as in Augustine's view, friendship is the primary purpose for marriage; profound friendship that leads each spouse to profound change, becoming the person God intends each to be. Although Augustine does not cite the Ephesians 5 *haustafeln* in his *On the Good of Marriage*, the influence of the concepts he set forth in the treatise are evident in Calvin's and Keller's interpretation of the biblical text.

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