

“Does Genesis 2 Support Same-Sex Marriage? An Evangelical Response” by Brian Neil Peterson, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, December 2017.

Peterson is distracted by *recent* “cultural changes in the West”, but he fails to take note of the far greater *conceptual* and *cultural* changes from *ancient* times to ours. He fails, too, to take note of *progressive* revelation that runs throughout scripture, and runs beyond that, through *common* grace.

Dallas Seminary biblical scholar Daniel Wallace has urged, wisely: “We need to nuance our faith so that we are in line with progressive revelation, especially the revelation that has come through God’s Son. The NT gives plenty of evidence to this effect.” Calvin College’s Theodore Plantinga has said: “Biblical history [is] the history of revelation [so] we must *make progress* in our study of God’s revelation.”

In contrast to legalists’ burdens and *self-righteousness*, Jesus’ “yoke is easy”, in part, because Jesus’ call for a moral life can be *intuited* from our experienced awareness of how *we* want to be treated. So, we *do* know how to treat *others*. Jesus met religionists’ trap questions by replying: “Love God with all you are and all you have” – including, he added, “with all your *mind*” – and, “love your neighbor as yourself.” Then came his punch line that left them speechless: “This sums up all scripture!”

But Peterson’s “argument” against marriage for those of same-sex orientation veers away from Jesus’ summation and gets stalled in texts related to eras before the Law and even before The Fall. For now, we can’t return to sinless Eden, nor are we in a world of but one man and one woman. Some men and women *need* to “be fruitful and multiply”. Some do, some don’t; some can, some can’t.

Wallace asked: “On what basis would [the pro-gay] condemn bestiality?” Adam knew the answer: A beast can’t meet my need for *intimacy with another like me*. But *Huff Post* puffs a guy who has sex with a dolphin! Well, Leftist blogs and odd balls don’t get it.

So, God gave Adam *another like him*. And he was thrilled! This was another *person*, “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh!” (Gen 2:23) Their bond would surpass the *kinship* of parents. (Gen 1:24) Both heterosexuals and same-sex couples know such bonds. And persons of both orientations know that, alone, it can be bondage. (Gen 2:18; Eccl 4:9-12)

Progressive revelation entails what we can learn from God’s gifts of *common grace*, of concepts of the cosmos, cultural history, social conventions over time and territories, and complexities of sexuality itself, along with our need to sidestep *our own* historically situated views and personal experience, so naively projected as universally timeless.

Peterson diminishes sexual “otherness”, reducing it to mere *genitalia*, as if *anyone* but a rapist is so fixated on a mere body *part* instead of on an embodied *person*. Today, in the West, whether heterosexual or homosexual, we’re *involuntarily* drawn to *another person* whom we perceive sexually as *fascinatingly other*. People commonly say: “I don’t see what he (or she) sees in *her* (or *him*). Of course not, silly! They use *their own* eyes, *their own* brains, *their own* formative years – not *yours*.”

C. S. Lewis, in his profound *Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, and other scholars, have pointed out that *our* assumptions, expectations, experience of *romantic* love are relatively new, indeed, *foreign* to classical and Ancient Near Eastern eras, not to mention, in

Eden. Marital sex back then and over there – whether by pairs or polygamy – was between a *possessor* and *his property*. Today, this is counterintuitive to *our personal experience* and *expectations* for *peer* partnering with *parity*.

It’s impossible to sidestep ignorance without more data, yet it’s ignorance of history that foists *our* married life onto Abraham’s and Sarah’s or “gay” romance into David’s love for Jonathan or homosexuality as understood today into whatever Paul had in mind in his evident coining of *arsenokoitai*.

Marten Woudstra, Evangelical Theological Society president, NIV Old Testament chair and Calvin Seminary’s most conservative professor and defender of an *historical* Adam, recognized, that there was “nothing in the Hebrew Bible that corresponded to homosexuality, as we understand it today”.

Of course, in this fallen world, there’s always been *sex abuse* by powerful men against the powerless – slaves, prisoners of war, sojourners (as at Sodom) or anybody that the powerful tried to shame by misusing as a woman, i.e., property.

Peterson contends: “The only real answer to the same-sex marriage dilemma facing evangelical Christians today is to rely on sound biblical exegesis as opposed to emotional appeals and cultural shifts.” *Emotional* appeals? Like the Golden Rule? *Cultural* shifts? Like *progressive* revelation? Sound biblical exegesis requires awareness of the baggage of *unexamined assumptions* and *historical anachronisms* that we so easily bring with us to the text. We need discipline to digest data we try to resist.

Checkered church history shows we’ve had to change interpretations of Bible texts. What used to be “unscriptural” is no longer said to be so – yet the old “proof texts” are still in the Bible. In his first sentence on “Conclusions”, Peterson’s so preoccupied with *today’s* controversy, he doesn’t notice his blunder. He complains: “The recent Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage has opened the proverbial Pandora’s box for pastors and counselors who are now faced with the dilemma of how to deal with same-sex married people who may convert to Christianity or who are already Christian and get married.”

His misuse of the Bible to attack *same-sex* marriage comes in this 50th year of *Loving v. Virginia*, that other controversial Supreme Court ruling that, in 1967, rescued Mildred Loving, a “colored” woman, and Richard Loving, a white man, who’d been sentenced to prison for marrying each other. The 1924 Racial Integrity Act outlawed such marriage and Bible-spewing Christians clung to that Racial Integrity Act for *their* brand of “Bible” integrity. In sad embarrassment, their children defanged their parents’ “proof texts”.

Peterson teaches at Lee University, founded on a newfound Pentecostalism, in racist Tennessee, 100 years ago. With abused Bible verses, blacks were abused and kept out of Lee until 1966. “Race-mixing” marriage, with all its “unbiblical mongrelization”, was forbidden until *Loving* called a halt to racism’s *unloving* ways.

It’s a very old tale: Bible *truths* take far too long to take root when Bible verses get twisted by a selfish, self-righteous refusal to love others as we love ourselves.

